

Chapter 32_Rosenfeld ...

In this chapter, the protagonist recounts a critical meeting with Colonel Frank Wirtanen. The narrator's lawyer, Mr. Alvin Dobrowitz, believes that securing a witness who saw the two together could turn the legal tide in his favor. Their interactions unfolded during three significant meetings, with the first being on a park bench before the war, where casual observers wouldn't have noted their significance. The subsequent meeting occurred in Wiesbaden, Germany, after the war, in a former officers' mess hall, a setting adorned with a mural of war glories overshadowed by impending destruction.

After being transferred from a prisoner-of-war camp, the protagonist enters the dining hall alone, where he sees Wirtanen, now dressed in an American soldier's uniform. They exchange formalities, with Wirtanen commenting on the war and the narrator's survival through it, leading to the painful realization that his wife, Helga, is likely dead. This kind of information, relayed unconsciously via a coded broadcast, distresses him deeply, as it highlights a fractured sense of self and the tragic separation from his wife.

Their dialogue also highlights the bitter reality of espionage, betrayal, and the roles they both played in the war. Wirtanen candidly notes that the narrator was the only agent from his team to survive the war unscathed, recalling the sacrifices of seven women who helped him. As they ponder the protagonist's future and identity, he receives grim news about his parents' passing, a revelation that only adds to his emotional burden.

Wirtanen sketches out the next steps for the protagonist, offering a way to vanish and assume a new identity, but downplays the significance of such an opportunity. The narrator battles with feelings of worthlessness as Wirtanen acknowledges that despite the horrors they endured, the past actions must be rationalized or discarded. Towards the end of their meeting, an unexpected twist reveals another figure from the protagonist's life: Franklin Delano Rosenfeld, who had listened to his broadcasts with glee—an irony underscoring the complex nature of their world and lives intertwined through deceit and survival.