

Chapter 42_No Dove, No Covenant ...

In this chapter of "Mother Night," the narrator ascends to their attic, reflecting on the cold, sharp air that fills the space. The once-familiar scents of coal dust and cooking are gone, replaced by an unsettling cleanliness reminiscent of earlier traumatic experiences in Berlin during the bombings. The narrator, alongside Helga, had faced destruction multiple times, recalling moments of climbing stairs to roofless, windowless homes while feeling temporarily free, akin to Noah and his wife on Mount Ararat.

This fleeting sense of freedom vanishes quickly, reminding them that they are ordinary people lacking the reverence of a dove or covenant, realizing that the threats are far from over. The tension rises as the air-raid sirens wail, signaling an imminent danger that they must confront. The memory unfolds to a shelter deep underground where the relentless sound of bombs looms ominously above. Within the cramped space, a family sits opposite Helga and the narrator as the mother begins to address the unseen forces above.

Her voice starts softly but soon builds with urgency as she acknowledges the anger prevailing above them. In a moment of desperation, she implores for guidance, demanding to know what is expected of them. When a bomb detonates nearby, her panic escalates, and in a mix of surrender and relief, she cries out for the chaos to cease, declaring their defeat. Tragically, her husband knocks her unconscious, reflecting a grim reality in which reactions to trauma can diverge into violence.

The husband's instinctual need to control the situation leads him to approach a vice-admiral present, seeking to absolve his wife's moment of hysteria, framing her breakdown as typical and expected. The vice-admiral, maintaining a composed demeanor, reassures the husband, affirming that such moments of weakness are understandable. This interaction captures the harsh reality of their circumstances, where the ongoing bombardment continues to dictate the characters' responses, ultimately leaving an indelible mark on the children present, as well as on the narrator, who senses an enduring change within themselves.