

## Chapter 5\_“Last Full Measure ...”

In the opening chapter of "Mother Night," the narrator reflects on his encounter with Rudolf Hoess, the Commandant of Auschwitz, at a New Year's Eve party in Warsaw in early 1944. Hoess, expressing envy for the narrator's writing talent, confides that he has incredible stories to share but can only do so once the war is over. He admits a creative block when attempting to write, illustrating a chilling contrast between his life and the moral implications of his role in the Nazi regime.

The narrator reveals he is in Warsaw at the behest of Dr. Paul Joseph Goebbels, the head of the German propaganda ministry. Goebbels desires a pageant that honors German soldiers who died during the suppression of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. He envisions this pageant as an annual tribute, allowing the ruins to serve as a dramatic backdrop. When the narrator questions the presence of Jews in the pageant post-war, Goebbels humorously suggests they will “ask Hoess” to “save some” as he runs a health resort for Jews.

Despite the morbid concept of the pageant, which is tentatively titled "Last Full Measure," the narrator contemplates the idea's ramifications on his moral standing. He admits he might have written it under pressure, and he reflects on how this task unexpectedly draws attention to Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. He translates it for Goebbels, who finds its sentiments valuable for Nazi funeral oratory, even expressing that Lincoln's words could resonate deeply within German military dedications.

The conversation leads to further discussion about Lincoln's background, where Goebbels shows concern over the possibility of Lincoln being Jewish, a reflection of the regime's deeply entrenched anti-Semitism. Two weeks after their discussion, the Gettysburg Address returns from Hitler, with praise for its emotional weight, emphasizing a shared bond among northern peoples.

The chapter closes with a glimpse into the narrator's psyche, revealing his dreams are filled with memories of women rather than the tyrannical figures of his past. He reminisces about his wife Helga and her sister Resi, recognizing the finality of their absence. This reflection illustrates a poignant juxtaposition between his present life in Israel and the haunting memories of his previous life in New York, which he describes as purgatory, a fate worse than Hell.