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The Reader

By David Hare

You didn't wake me.
You were sleeping.
It was because you can't bear
to have breakfast with me.
I've boiled you an egg.
I'd hardly have done that
if I didn't want to see you.
Tea or coffee?
Does any woman ever stay
long enough to find out
what the hell goes on in your head?
What are you doing tonight?
I'm seeing my daughter.
Your daughter?
You've kept very quiet about her.
Have I?
Well, she's been abroad for a year.
Did you say tea?
I'm going.
Have fun with your daughter.
Tickets, please.
Tickets.
Tickets.
Hey, you!
Your feet.
Hey, kid.
Up, up.
It's all right.
There now.
Where do you live?
It's just up here.
I'll be fine now.
Thank you.
Goodbye.
Look after yourself.
I'm worried about him.
He looks terrible.
The boy's saying
he doesn't need a doctor.
He does.
- I don't need a doctor.
- Good, then.
Peter!
We're not going to argue

about this.
Remind me,
how old are you now?
Michael's fifteen.
It's scarlet fever.
He'll be in bed
for several months at least.
Complete isolation.
Emily, keep away,
he's contagious.
Emily!
How are you feeling?
Better.
I meant to tell you,
the day I got ill
a woman helped me.
She helped you?
Yes, she brought me home.
Do you have her address?
Hello?
Yes?
I brought you these flowers
to say thank you.
Put them over there in the sink.
I've been in bed
for three months.
You are better now?
Yes, thank you.
Have you always been weak?
No, I've never been sick before.
It's incredibly boring.
There's nothing to do.
I couldn't even be bothered to read.
Well,
thank you again.
Wait.
I'll walk with you,
I have to go to work.
Wait in the hall while I change.
There are two more buckets
downstairs.
You can fill them
and bring them up.
You look ridiculous.

Look at you, kid.
You can't go home like that.
Take off your clothes.
I'll run you a bath.
Do you always take a bath
in your trousers?
It's all right.
I won't look.
I'll get you a towel.
So that's why you came back.
You're so beautiful.
What are you talking about?
Look at me, kid.
Slowly.
Slowly.
You've inconvenienced your mother.
How many more times?
I said I'm sorry.
You scared her.
I got lost, that's all. That's why
I was late. Can I have some more?
How can anyone get lost
in their own town?
I was going to the castle
and ended up at the sports field.
- They're in opposite directions.
- It's none of your business.
He's lying.
He's not lying.
Michael never lies.
I want to go back to school
tomorrow.
- You need another three weeks.
- Well, I'm going.
Peter!
Like this?
That's right.
Not so fast.
It's all right.
Do it again.
What's your name?
What?
Your name?
Why do you want to know?

I've been here three times.
I want to know your name.
What's wrong with that?
Nothing, kid.
There's nothing wrong with that.
It's Hanna.
You looked so suspicious.
What's yours, kid?
Michael.
Michael?
So I'm with a Michael.
Hanna.
The notion of secrecy is central
to Western literature.
You may say
the whole idea of character
is defined
by people
holding specific information which,
for various reasons,
sometimes perverse,
sometimes noble,
they are determined not to disclose.
You never tell me
what you've been studying.
Studying?
At school.
Do you learn languages?
Yes.
What languages?
Latin.
Say something in Latin.
"Quo, quo scelesti ruitis?"
"Aut cur dexteris aptantur
enses conditi?"
It's Horace.
It's wonderful.
Do you want some Greek?
"Oi men ippeon stroton
oi de pesedon"
"ego de ken otto tis eratai".
It's beautiful.
How can you tell?
How do you know

when you've no idea what it means?
What are you studying in German?
I'm studying a play.
By Gotthold Ephraim Lessing.
Have you heard of him?
It's called Emilia Galotti.
You can read it.
I'd rather listen to you.
All right.
"Act 1. Scene 1".

"The setting:

One of the prince's chambers".
"The prince".
I'm not very good.
Go on.
"Complaints,"
"nothing but complaints".
"For goodness' sake,
is there anything in life but work?"
"Just imagine
that people actually envy us".
You're good at it, aren't you?
Good at what?
Reading.
What's funny?
I didn't think
I was good at anything.
What are you doing?
What is this?
Why did you behave
as if you didn't know me?
You didn't want to know me.
You saw I was in the first carriage.
So why did you sit in the second?
What did you think I was doing?
Why the hell
did you think I was there?
How should I know?
Now, I've been working,
I need a bath
and I'd like to be by myself.
Would you please leave?
I didn't mean to upset you.

You don't have the power
to upset me.
You don't matter enough
to upset me.
I don't know what to say.
I've never been
with a woman before.
We've been together four weeks.
I can't live without you.
I can't.
Even the thought of it kills me.
I sat in the second carriage
because I thought you might kiss me.
Kid, you thought
we could make love in a tram?
Is it true what you said?
That I don't matter to you?
Do you forgive me?
Do you love me?
Do you have a book?
Yes, I have.
I took one with me this morning.
What is it?
The Odyssey, by Homer.
It's my homework.
We're changing the order
we do things.
Read to me first, kid,
then we make love.
"The Odyssey, by Homer".
What's an odyssey?
It's a journey,
he sets out on a journey.
Good.
"Sing to me of the man, Muse,
the man of twists and turns"
"driven time
and again off course"
"once he had plundered
the hallowed heights of Troy".
Come here.
"He pressed her hand
to his lips".
"She was dead,"

"and past all help, or need of it".
"I poked into the place"
"and came to a little open patch
as big as a bedroom"
"all hung around with vines"
"and found a man
lying there asleep."
"And, by jinks, it was my old Jim!"
"When you landed, I reck'ned
I could ketch up wid you"
'doubt havin' to
shout at you"
"but when I see dat house,"
"I begin to go slow..."
"Lady Chatterley"
"felt his naked flesh against her"
"as he came into her".
- "For a moment he was still..."
- This is disgusting.
Where did you get this?
I borrowed it
from someone at school.
You should be ashamed.
Go on.
"Billions of blue
blistering barnacles"
"in a thundering typhoon!
It is water!"
"What did you expect it to be?"
- Whiskey.
- "Whiskey,"
"by thunder, whiskey".
"Whiskey?"
- "Come now, captain..."
- That's enough for today, kid.
I was wondering.
Could you get some time off?
Maybe we could go on a trip.
What sort of trip?
A cycling holiday.
Just two days.
I've got a guide book.
I've worked out the route, look.
What do you think?

I think you like planning,
don't you?

"I'm not frightened".

"I'm not frightened of anything".

"The more I suffer,"

"the more I love".

"Danger will only
increase my love".

"It will sharpen it.

Forgive its bias".

"I'll be the only angel
you'll need".

"You will leave life even more
beautiful than you entered it".

"Heaven will take you back,
and look at you and say:"

"Only one thing
can make us so complete".

"And that thing"

"is love".

- Hello.

- Hello.

- Excuse me.

- Hello.

Do you know what you'd like?

What are you having?

- You order, I'll have what you have.

- OK.

Two frankfurters,
two potato salads,
and two beers, please.

- Thank you.

- Thank you.

- I hope your mother was happy.

- Thank you.

She enjoyed her meal very much.

Come on.

Here, let me show you
where we're going.

It's OK, kid,

I don't want to know.

What are you doing?

I'm writing a poem.

About you.

Can I hear it?

It's not ready.

I'll read it to you one day.

- Morning, Hendrick.

- Morning, Mr. Berg.

- You're in court 306.

- Thank you.

- You all right, Michael?

- I'm fine.

- Hurry, you know what she's like.

- Yeah, I'll see you later.

- Good luck.

- Thanks.

Please stand.

Please sit down.

The defendant, please.

They're coming.

Hello.

Hello.

- Did you see that?

- Good morning, ladies.

Gentleman, welcome your new
fellow students and be courteous.

Sit down.

Hello.

- My name's Sophie.

- I'm Michael.

The Odyssey.

Take out your books.

Everyone believes Homer's subject
is homecoming.

In fact, The Odyssey
is about a journey.

Home is a place you dream of.

Berg, I don't mean to distract you,
but you're studying Homer,
not Sophie.

It's wonderful.

Wonderful.

It's going to be a great summer.

- Why do you leave early?

- He always leaves early.

- Do you have somewhere to go?

- See you tomorrow.

I'm sorry I'm late.
I got held up at school.
I've got a new book.
The Lady with the Little Dog.
By Anton Chekhov.
"The talk was that a new face
had appeared on the promenade".
"A lady with a little dog".
Schmitz, one moment, please.
I read the reports on you.
Every single one excellent.
You'll be working in the office.
You got promoted.
Congratulations.
Let's get out of here!
Come on.
Michael, we're leaving, let's go.
Michael.
It's meant to be a surprise,
for your birthday.
- Come on.
- What's the matter?
- I'm sorry, really.
- We thought you'd like it.
We've got beer!
We're going to dance!
I promised someone.
Michael, please!
"Here and there the reflection
of the stars and the lights"
"on the bank quivered and trembled".
- Oh, kid, kid...
- What?
Stop.
What's wrong now?
Nothing's wrong.
Nothing.
You know,
you never ask.
You never bother to ask how I am!
You never say.
It just happens to be my birthday.
It's my birthday, that's all.
You've never even asked when it is.

If you want a fight, kid...
No, I don't want a fight!
What's wrong with you?
What business is it of yours?
It's always on your terms,
everything.
We do what you want.
Always what you want.
My friends were giving me a party.
Why are you here then?
Go back to your party.
Is that what you want?
It's always me
that has to apologize.
You don't have to apologize.
No one has to apologize.
War and Peace, kid.
Now you must go back
to your friends.
Are you all right?
It's him.
Good.
Get the boy something to eat.
I think we all knew
you'd come back to us eventually.
Mr. Berg?
It is eight o'clock.
Your daughter.
Thank you.
Julia.
I've not kept you waiting?
I was early.
Welcome back!
So,
how will you decide?
I don't know.
I'm happy back in Berlin, I suppose.
You've seen your mother?
I wanted to get away, that's all.
It was Paris, but it could
have been anywhere.
Away from your parents.
I'm aware I was difficult.
I wasn't always open with you.

I'm not open with anyone.
I knew you were distant.
You know,
I always assumed it was my fault.
Julia,
how wrong can you be?
- I'll see you very soon?
- I'll see you soon.
- Good night, dad.
- Good night, Julia.
Those in the special seminar group,
please stay on in this room.
Professor Rohl will be here
in a moment.
Well,
we seem
to be quite a small group.
A small group and a select one.
Really, this is going to be
a unique seminar.
We are going to start
with a reading list, gentlemen.
Karl Jaspers...
And ladies.
The Question of German Guilt.
So, this is where you are.
Yes.
Come in.
You take work seriously.
I don't know.
You're rather a serious boy.
It's how I was brought up.
What about you?
Are you serious?
Sure you want to work tonight?
Yeah.
But I won't work every night.
See you tomorrow.
Do you need a hand?
Why all the police?
They're worried
about demonstrators.
For or against?
Both.

Wow, it's a circus.

All rise.

All photographers

are now asked to leave.

This court is now in session.

Please sit down.

First I'm going to hear motions from

each of the defendants' lawyers.

They argue that there is no reason

to keep their defendants in jail

until the outcome

of their trial.

- I'll take it case by case.

- Want a pen?

I've got a pen.

Hanna Schmitz.

Your name is Hanna Schmitz?

Yes.

Can you speak louder, please?

- My name is Hanna Schmitz.

- Thank you.

You were born on October 21, 1922?

Yes.

At Hermannstadt.

And you're now 43 years old?

Yes.

You joined the SS in 1943?

Yes.

What was your reason for joining?

You were working

at the Siemens factory at the time?

Yes.

You'd been offered a promotion.

Why did you prefer to join the SS?

Objection.

I'll rephrase my question.

I'm trying to ascertain

if she joined the SS freely,

of her own free will.

I heard there were jobs.

Go on.

I was working at Siemens

when I heard the SS was recruiting.

Did you know the kind of work

you'd be expected to do?

They were looking for guards.

I applied for a job.

- And you worked first at Auschwitz?

- Yes.

Until 1944.

Then you were moved

to a smaller camp near Krakow.

- Yes.

- Are you OK?

- You then helped move prisoners...

- Yes.

To the west, in the winter of 1944,
in the so-called "death marches"?

So what did you think?

I don't know.

It wasn't quite

what I was expecting.

Wasn't it?

In what way?

What were you expecting?

I thought it was exciting.

Exciting?

Why? Why did you think

it was exciting?

Because it's justice.

Societies

think they operate

by something called morality,

but they don't.

They operate

by something called law.

You're not guilty of anything

merely by working at Auschwitz.

8,000 people worked at Auschwitz.

Precisely 19 have been convicted

and only six for murder.

To prove murder

you have to prove intent.

That's the law.

The question is never

"Was it wrong?",

but "Was it legal?"

And not by our laws.

No.
By the laws at the time.
But isn't that...
What?
Narrow?
Oh, yes, the law is narrow.
On the other hand,
I suspect people
who kill other people
tend to be aware that it's wrong.
Miss Schmitz,
you're familiar with this book?
Yes.
Parts of it have already
been read out in court.
It's by a survivor,
a prisoner who survived,
Ilana Mather.
She was in the camp
when she was a child, wasn't she?
- She was with her mother.
- Yes.
In the book, she describes
a selection process.
At the end of the month's labor,
every month,
60 inmates were selected.
They were sent from the satellite
camp back to Auschwitz.
That's right, isn't it?
Yes, that's right.
And so far,
each of the defendants has denied
being part of that process.
Now I'm going to ask you.
Were you part of it?
Yes.
So you helped make the selection?
Yes.
You admit that?
Then, tell me,
how did that selection happen?
There were six guards,
so we decided

we'd choose 10 people each.
That's how we did it every month.
We'd all choose 10.
Are you saying
your fellow defendants took part?
We all did.
Even though they've denied it?
Saying "We", "We all" is easier
than "I", "I alone",
isn't it, Miss Schmitz?
Did you not realize
that you were sending these women
to their deaths?
Yes, but there were new arrivals.
New women were arriving
all the time.
The old ones had to make room
for the new ones.
I'm not sure you understand.
We couldn't keep everyone.
- There wasn't room.
- No.
What I'm saying is...
Let me rephrase.
To make room,
you were picking women out:
"You and you have to be
sent back to be killed".
Well,
what would you have done?
Should I never have signed up
at Siemens?
Ms. Mather, they're ready for you.
Go, go, go, go.
- Where's Michael?
- I don't know.
In your book you describe
the process of selection.
Yes.
You were made to work and then,
when you were no longer any use,
they sent you back to Auschwitz
to be killed.
Are there people here today

who made that selection?

Yes.

I need you to identify them.

Can you please point them out?

Her.

And her.

Her.

And her.

Her.

And her.

Thank you.

Please continue.

Each of the guards would choose
a certain number of women.

Hanna Schmitz chose differently.

In what way differently?

She had favorites.

Girls, mostly young.

We all remarked on it.

She gave them food
and places to sleep.

In the evenings,
she asked them to join her
and we all thought...

You can imagine what we thought.

And then we found out
she was making these women
read aloud to her.

They were reading to her.

At first we thought:

"This guard is more sensitive,
she's more human".

"She's kinder".

Often she chose the weak, the sick.

She picked them out, she seemed
to be protecting them almost.

But then she dispatched them.

Is that kinder?

I want to move on now to the march.

As I understand it, you and your
daughter were marched for months.

In the winter of 1944 our camp
was closed down.

We were told we had to move on.

But the plan kept changing
every day.
Women were dying
all around us in the snow.
Half of us died on the march.
My daughter says in the book:
"Less a death march,
more a death gallop".
Please,
tell us about the night
in the church.
That night we thought we were lucky
to have a roof over our heads.
Go on.
We'd arrived in the village.
As always, the guards took
the best quarters,
the priest's house.
But they let us sleep in a church.
There was a bombing raid
in the middle of the night.
The church was hit.
At first we could only hear
the fire that was in the steeple.
Then we could see burning beams
and they began to crash
to the floor.
Everyone rushed...
rushed to the doors.
But the door had been locked,
on the outside.
The church burned down
and nobody came to open the doors.
Is that right?
Nobody.
Even though you were
all burning to death?
How many people were killed?
Everyone was killed.
But you survived.
Thank you.
I want to thank you
for coming to this country
today, to testify.

I don't know.
I don't know
what we're doing here anymore.
Don't you?
You keep telling us to think
like lawyers, but there is something
disgusting about this.
How so?
This didn't happen to the Germans,
it happened to the Jews.
- What are we trying to do?
- We are trying to understand!
Six women locked 300 Jews
in a church and let them burn.
What is there to understand?
Tell me, I'm asking!
What is there to understand?
I started out
believing in this trial,
I thought it was great.
Now I think...
It's just a diversion.
Yes?
Diversion from what?
You choose six women,
you put them on trial,

you say:

"they were the guilty ones".
Because one of the victims
happened to write a book.
That's why they're on trial
and nobody else.
Do you know how many camps
there were in Europe?
People go on about
how much did everyone know.
Who knew? What did they know?
Everyone knew.
Our parents, our teachers.
That isn't the question.
The question is
"How could you let this happen?"
And better, "Why didn't you

kill yourself when you found out?"
Thousands. That's how many camps
there were. Everyone knew.
Look at that woman.
Which woman?
The woman you're always staring at.
I'm sorry, but you are.
I don't know which one you mean.
You know what I'd do?
Put the gun in my hand,
I'd shoot her myself.
I'd shoot them all.
Why did you not unlock the doors?
Why did you not unlock the doors?
I've asked all of you
and I'm getting no answer.
Two of the victims
are in this court.
They deserve an answer.
This is the SS report.
You all have copies.
This is the report written,
approved and signed by all of you
immediately after the event.
In the written report
you all claim you didn't even know
about the fire until afterwards.
But that isn't true, is it?
Well?
It's not true.
I don't know what you're asking.
The first thing is
why didn't you unlock the doors?
Obviously.
For the obvious reason.
We couldn't.
Why couldn't you?
We were guards.
Our job was to guard the prisoners.
We couldn't just let them escape.
I see.
- If they escaped, you'd be blamed.
- No.
- Maybe even executed.

- No.

Well, then?

If we'd opened the doors,
there would have been chaos.

How could we have restored order?

It happened so fast. It was snowing,
the bombs, the flames...

There were flames all over the
village, then the screaming began,
and got worse and worse.

If they'd all come rushing out,
we couldn't just let them escape.

We were responsible for them!

So you did know what was happening.

You made a choice.

You let them die
rather than risk
letting them escape.

The other defendants
have made an allegation against you.

Have you heard this allegation?

They say you were in charge.

It isn't true.

I was just one of the guards.

- She was in charge.

- She was.

It was her idea.

Of course she was.

- Did you write the report?

- No, we all discussed what to say.

We all wrote it together.

She wrote the report.

She was in charge.

- Is that true?

- No.

- Yes, you did.

- Does it matter?

She wrote it.

I need to see a sample
of your handwriting.

- My handwriting?

- Yes.

To establish who wrote it.

Your Honor,

it's not appropriate...
Take her a piece of paper.
Counsel, approach the bench.
- You're going to compare...?
- Approach the bench.
I will not accept this in my court.
I'm sorry.
I'd rather listen to you.
There's no need.
I wrote the report.
Silence, please.
Order!
You've been skipping seminars.
I have a piece of information
concerning one of the defendants.
Something they're not admitting.
What information?
You don't need me to tell you
it's perfectly clear
you have a moral obligation
to disclose it to the court.
It happens this information
is favorable to the defendant.
It can help her case.
It may even affect the outcome.
Certainly the sentencing.
So?
There's a problem.
The defendant herself is determined
to keep this information secret.
- One moment, please.
- Sorry.
What are her reasons?
Because she's ashamed.
Ashamed of what?
Have you spoken to her?
Of course not.
Why "Of course not"?
I can't.
I can't do that.
I can't talk to her.
What we feel
is utterly unimportant.
The only question is what we do.

If people like you don't learn from
what happened to people like me,
then what the hell
is the point of anything?

Schmitz.

You have a visitor.

Quiet, please!

Gertrud Bauer.

Andreas Michael Springer.

Michael Berg.

Walter Schrllich.

Time's up.

Are you coming in?

You took your time.

What is it?

Where are you going?

I'm sorry.

I need to sleep by myself.

I'll just be a minute.

Nazi!

Nazi whore!

Silence in the court!

Silence in the court!

All rise.

The court finds guilty
the defendants Rita Beckhart,
Carolina Steinhoff,
Regina Kroit, Angela Zeva
and Andrea Lumen
of jointly aiding and abetting
murder in 300 cases.

The court finds guilty
the defendant Hanna Schmitz
of murder in 300 cases.

The court sentences the accused

as follows:

Rita Beckhart, Carolina Steinhoff,
Regina Kroit,
Angela Zeva and Andrea Lumen
to each serve
a total sentence in prison
of four years and three months.
Hanna Schmitz,

in view of your own admissions
and your special role,
you're in a different category.
The court sentences
the accused Schmitz
to imprisonment for life.
- Where are we going?
- I said
I'll tell you when we get there.
You told me you like surprises.
I like surprises.
She's grown, hasn't she?
I don't know, it's so long
since I saw her, how can I tell?
It's my fault.
We shouldn't have come unannounced.
Daddy's going to live
in his own house.
Mother, I'm afraid
I have some bad news.
Julia knows,
we've already told her.
Gertrud and I,
we're getting a divorce.
You don't come for your father's
funeral, but you come for this?
It's not easy for me
to visit this town.
Were you really so unhappy?
That's not what I'm saying,
and it's not what I meant
Well, then?
You mustn't worry about Gertrud.
I'm going to look after her.
Anyway, she's a state prosecutor.
- She earns far more than I do.
- Michael.
I'm not worried about Gertrud.
I'm worried about you.
"Sing to me of the man, Muse,"
"the man of twists and turns"
"driven time
and again off course"
"once he had plundered

the hallowed heights of Troy".
215, mail.
217, mail.
220, mail.
Number?
Open it.
Testing, testing,
One, two, three, testing.
The Odyssey, by Homer.
The Odyssey,
by Homer.
"Sing to me of the man, Muse,"
"the man of twists and turns"
"driven time
and again off course"
"once he had plundered
the hallowed heights of Troy".
"...and back he went
to the house of death".
"But I held fast in place hoping
that others might still come,"
"shades of famous heroes,
men who died in the old days"
"and ghosts of an even older age
I longed to see".
"Come, sheath your sword,
let's go to bed together."
"Mount my bed and mix
in the magic work of love".
"We'll breed deep trust between us".
"Not for all the world, not until
you consent to swear, goddess,"
"a blinding oath you'll never plot
some new intrigue to harm me".
"And she began to swear the oath
that I required".
"Never, she would never
do me harm".
"And when she'd finished,
then, at last,"
"I mounted Circe's gorgeous bed".
"When young Dawn with her
rose red fingers shone once more"
"they yoked their pair again, and

out through the echoing colonnade"
"they whipped the team to a run
and on they flew,"
"holding nothing back, and as the
princes reached the wheatlands..."
"In my end is my beginning".
"Astonishing. I'd always said it was
a trick but he went off to sleep".
"...the table and began stamping
his feet and flourishing the stick".
"...even a cake,
rather like a baba au rhum"
"known as a Zhivago bun".
The Lady with the Little Dog,
by Anton Chekhov.
"The talk was
that a new face had appeared"
"on the promenade.
A lady with a little dog".
"Dmitri Dmitrich Gurov"
"had spent two weeks in Yalta,
so he was bored with it"
"and always looking
for fresh faces".
"Sitting in the pavilion
at Vernet"
"he saw a young woman
walking on the sea front,"
"fair haired..."
I want to take out a book.
Which book?
Do you have
The Lady with the Little Dog?
Your name?
Hanna Schmitz.
The Lady with the Little Dog.
The lady with the little dog.
The lady with the little dog.
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.
"The lady with the little dog".
"The..."
The.
The, the, the...
The.

- No letter?

- No letter.

Sign.

You are Michael Berg?

Yes.

Thank you for calling me.

You got my letter?

I have it here.

As I say, Hanna Schmitz
is coming up for release very soon.

Hanna has been in prison
for over 20 years.

She has no family.

She has no friends.

You're her only contact.

And Im told you don't visit her.

No, I don't.

When she gets out she'll need
a job and somewhere to live.

You can't imagine how frightening
the modern world will seem to her.

I have no one else to ask.

If you don't take
responsibility for her,
then Hanna has no future at all.

It's kind of you.

Thank you for letting me know.

- You are Michael Berg?

- Yes.

- Louisa Brenner. Good morning.

- How do you do?

We were expecting you earlier.

I should warn you.

For a long time, Hanna held herself
together. She was very purposeful.

In the last few years, she's
different, she's let herself go.

I'm taking you
straight to the canteen.

They've just finished their lunch.

Table four.

You've grown up, kid.

I've got a friend who's a tailor.

He'll give you a job.

And I've found you
somewhere to live.
It's a nice place,
quite small, but it's nice.
- You'll like it.
- Thank you.
There are various social programs,
cultural staff
I can sign you up for.
The public library is very close.
You read a lot?
I prefer being read to.
That's over now, isn't it?
Did you get married?
I did. Yes, I did.
We have a daughter.
I'm not seeing as much of her
as I'd like.
I'd like to see
a great deal more of her.
The marriage didn't last.
Have you spend a lot of time
thinking about the past?
You mean with you?
No.
No.
I didn't mean with me.
Before the trial
I never thought about the past.
I never had to.
And now?
What do you feel now?
It doesn't matter what I feel.
It doesn't matter what I think.
The dead are still dead.
I wasn't sure what you had learned.
Well, I have learned, kid.
I've learned to read.
I'll pick you up next week, OK?
That sounds a good plan.
We can do it quietly
or we can make a fuss.
Quietly.
OK, quietly.

Quietly.
Take care, kid.
You too.
See you next week.
I've come to collect Hanna Schmitz.
Please take a seat.
She didn't pack.
She never intended to leave.
"The talk was that a new face"
"had appeared on the promenade".
"A lady with a little dog".
She left me a message.
A sort of will.
I'll read the bit
that concerns you.
"There is money
in the old tea tin".
"Give it to Michael Berg".
"He should send it, alongside
the 7,000 marks in the bank"
"to the daughter
who survived the fire".
"It's for her".
"She should decide
what to do with it".
"And tell Michael I said hello".
This way.
- Ms. Mather?
- Yes.
- You're Michael Berg?
- Yes.
I was expecting you.
- Please.
- Thank you.
So, you must tell me exactly what
brings you to the United States.
I was here already,
I was at a conference in Boston.
- You are a lawyer?
- Yes.
I was intrigued by your letter
but I can't say
I wholly
understood it.

- You attended the trial?

- Yes.

Almost 20 years ago.

I was a law student.

I remember you, I remember
your mother very clearly.

My mother died in Israel
a good many years ago.

I'm sorry.

Go on, please.

Perhaps you heard
Hanna Schmitz recently died.

She killed herself.

She was a friend of yours?

A kind of friend.

It's as simple as this.

Hanna was illiterate
for the greater part of her life.

Is that an explanation
of her behavior?

No.

- Or an excuse?

- No.

No.

She taught herself to read
when she was in prison.

I sent her tapes.

She had always liked
being read to.

Why don't you start
by being honest with me?

At least start that way.

What was the nature
of your friendship?

When I was young

I had an affair with Hanna.

I'm not sure

I can help you, Mr. Berg.

Even if I could, I'm not willing to.

I was almost 16

when I took up with her.

The affair only lasted a summer.

But...

But, what?

I see.
And did Hanna Schmitz
acknowledge the effect
she'd had on your life?
She had done much worse
to other people.
I've never told anyone.
People ask all the time
what I learned in the camps.
But the camps weren't therapy.
What do you think these places were,
universities?
We didn't go there to learn.
One becomes very clear
about these things.
What are you asking for?
Forgiveness for her? Or do you
just want to feel better yourself?

My advice:

if you want catharsis.
Please, go to literature.
Don't go to the camps.
Nothing comes out of the camps.
Nothing.
What she wanted...
What she wanted was to leave you
her money.
I have it with me.
To do what?
I don't know...
As you think fit.
Here.
When I was a little girl,
I had a tea tin for my treasures.
Not quite like this, it had
Cyrillic lettering.
I took it with me to the camp,
but it got stolen.
- What was in it?
- Sentimental things.
A piece of hair from our dogs,
tickets to the operas
my father had taken me to.

It wasn't stolen for its contents.
It...
It was the tin itself
that was valuable.
What you could do with it.
There's nothing I can do
with this money.
If I give it to anything associated
with the extermination of the Jews,
then to me it seems
like absolution
and that's something
I'm neither
willing nor in a position to grant.
I was thinking maybe an organization
to encourage literacy.
Good.
Good.
Do you know if there is
a Jewish organization?
I'd be surprised if there isn't.
There is a Jewish organization
for everything.
Not that illiteracy
is a very Jewish problem.
Why don't you find out?
Send them the money.
Shall I do it in Hanna's name?
As you think fit.
I'll keep the tin.
Thank you.
Where are we going?
I thought you liked surprises.
I do.
I do like surprises.
Hanna Schmitz.
Who was she?
That's what I wanted to tell you.
That's why we're here.
So tell me.
I was 15.
I was coming home from school.
I was feeling ill.
And a woman helped me.