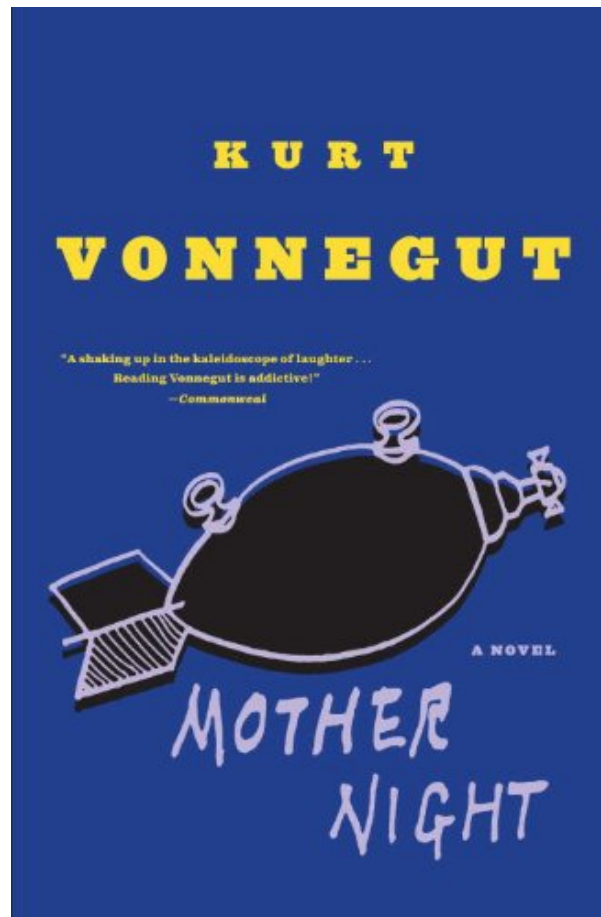


MOTHER NIGHT BY KURT VONNEGUT

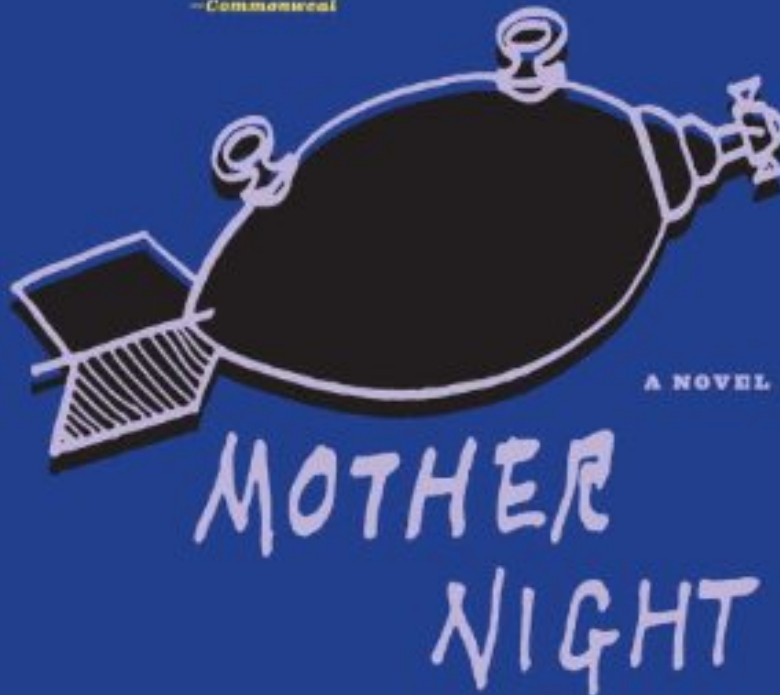


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Chapter One

Tiglath-Pileser

The Third . . .

My name is Howard W. Campbell, Jr.

I am an American by birth, a Nazi by reputation, and a nationless person by inclination.

The year in which I write this book is 1961.

I address this book of mine to Mr. Tuvia Friedmann, Director of the Haifa Institute for the Documentation of War Criminals, and to whomever else this may concern.

Why should this book interest Mr. Friedmann?

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The symbol is the twin lightning strokes used for the dreaded S.S., the Schutzstaffel, the most fanatical wing of Nazism.

I used such a typewriter in Germany all through the war. Whenever I had occasion to write of the Schutzstaffel, which I did often and with enthusiasm, I never abbreviated it as "S.S.," but always struck the typewriter key for the far more frightening and magical twin lightning strokes.

Ancient history.

I am surrounded by ancient history. Though the jail in which I rot is new, some of the stones in it, I'm told, were cut in the time of King Solomon.

And sometimes, when I look out through my cell window at the gay and brassy youth of the infant Republic of Israel, I feel that I and my war crimes are as ancient as Solomon's old gray stones.

How long ago that war, that Second World War, was! How long ago the crimes in it!

How nearly forgotten it is, even by the Jews--the young Jews, that is.

One of the Jews who guards me here knows nothing about that war. He is not interested. His name is Arnold Marx. He has very red hair. He is only eighteen, which means Arnold was three when Hitler died, and nonexistent when my career as a war criminal began.

He guards me from six in the morning until noon.

Arnold was born in Israel. He has never been outside of Israel.

His mother and father left Germany in the early thirties. His grandfather, he told me, won an Iron Cross in the First World War.

Arnold is studying to be a lawyer. The avocation of Arnold and of his father, a gunsmith, is archaeology. Father and son spend most all their spare time excavating the ruins of Hazor. They do so under the direction of Yigael Yadin, who was Chief of Staff of the Israeli Army during the war with the Arab States.

So be it.

Hazor, Arnold tells me, was a Canaanite city in northern Palestine that existed at least nineteen hundred years before Christ. About fourteen hundred years before Christ, Arnold tells me, an Israelite army captured Hazor, killed all forty thousand inhabitants, and burned it down.

"Solomon rebuilt the city," said Arnold, "but in 732 B.C. Tiglath-pileser the Third burned it down again."

"Who?" I said.

"Tiglath-pileser the Third," said Arnold. "The Assyrian," he said, giving my memory a nudge.

"Oh," I said. "That Tiglath-pileser."

"You act as though you never heard of him," said Arnold.

"I never have," I said. I shrugged humbly. "I guess that's pretty terrible."

"Well--" said Arnold, giving me a schoolmaster's frown, "it seems to me he really is somebody everybody ought to know about. He was probably the most remarkable man the Assyrians ever produced."

"Oh," I said.

"I'll bring you a book about him, if you like," said Arnold.

"That's nice of you," I said. "Maybe I'll get around to thinking about remarkable Assyrians later on. Right now my mind is pretty well occupied with remarkable Germans."

"Like who?" he said.

"Oh, I've been thinking a lot lately about my old boss, Paul Joseph Goebbels," I said.

Arnold looked at me blankly. "Who?" he said.

And I felt the dust of the Holy Land creeping in to bury me, sensed how thick a dust-and-rubble blanket I would one day wear. I felt thirty or forty feet of ruined cities above me; beneath me some primitive kitchen middens, a temple or two--and then--

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Chapter Two

Special Detail . . .

The guard who relieves Arnold Marx at noon each day is a man nearly my own age, which is forty-eight. He remembers the war, all right, though he doesn't like to.

His name is Andor Gutman. Andor is a sleepy, not very bright Estonian Jew. He spent two years in the

extermination camp at Auschwitz. According to his own reluctant account, he came this close to going up a smokestack of a crematorium there:

"I had just been assigned to the Sonderkommando," he said to me, "when the order came from Himmler to close the ovens down."

Sonderkommando means special detail. At Auschwitz it meant a very special detail indeed--one composed of prisoners whose duties were to shepherd condemned persons into gas chambers, and then to lug their bodies out. When the job was done, the members of the Sonderkommando were themselves killed. The first duty of their successors was to dispose of their remains.

Gutman told me that many men actually volunteered for the Sonderkommando.

"Why?" I asked him.

"If you would write a book about that," he said, "and give the answer to that question, that 'Why?'--you would have a very great book."

"Do you know the answer?" I said.

"No," he said, "That is why I would pay a great deal of money for a book with the answer in it."

"Any guesses?" I said.

"No," he said, looking me straight in the eye, "even though I was one of the ones who volunteered."

He went away for a little while, after having confessed that. And he thought about Auschwitz, the thing he liked least to think about. And he came back, and he said to me:

"There were loudspeakers all over the camp," he said, "and they were never silent for long. There was much music played through them. Those who were musical told me it was often good music--sometimes the best."

"That's interesting," I said.

"There was no music by Jews," he said. "That was forbidden."

"Naturally," I said.

"And the music was always stopping in the middle," he said, "and then there was an announcement. All day long, music and announcements."

"Very modern," I said.

He closed his eyes, remembered gropingly. "There was one announcement that was always crooned, like a nursery rhyme. Many times a day it came. It was the call for the Sonderkommando."

"Oh?" I said.

"Leichtentarger zu Wache," he crooned, his eyes still closed.

Translation: "Corpse-carriers to the guardhouse." In an institution in which the purpose was to kill human beings by the millions, it was an understandably common cry.

"After two years of hearing that call over the loudspeakers, between the music," Gutman said to me, "the position of corpse-carrier suddenly sounded like a very good job."

"I can understand that," I said.

"You can?" he said. He shook his head. "I can't," he said. "I will always be ashamed. Volunteering for the Sonderkommando--it was a very shameful thing to do."

"I don't think so," I said.

"I do," he said. "Shameful," he said. "I never want to talk about it again."

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The guard who relieves Andor Gutman at six each night is Arpad Kovacs. Arpad is a Roman candle of a man, loud and gay.

When Arpad came on duty at six last night, he demanded to see what I'd written so far. I gave him the very few pages, and Arpad walked up and down the corridor, waving and praising the pages extravagantly.

He didn't read them. He praised them for what he imagined to be in them.

"Give it to the complacent bastards!" he said last night. "Tell those smug briquets!"

By briquets he meant people who did nothing to save their own lives or anybody else's life when the Nazis took over, who were willing to go meekly all the way to the gas chambers, if that was where the Nazis wanted them to go. A briquet, of course, is a molded block of coal dust, the soul of convenience where transportation, storage and combustion are concerned.

Arpad, faced with the problem of being a Jew in Nazi Hungary, did not become a briquet. On the contrary, Arpad got himself false papers and joined the Hungarian S.S.

That fact is the basis for his sympathy with me. "Tell them the things a man does to stay alive! What's so noble about being a briquet?" he said last night.

"Did you ever hear any of my broadcasts?" I asked him. The medium of my war crimes was radio broadcasting. I was a Nazi radio propagandist, a shrewd and loathsome anti-Semite.

"No," he said.

So I showed him a transcript of a broadcast, a transcript furnished to me by the Haifa Institute. "Read it," I said.

"I don't have to," He said. "Everybody was saying the same things over and over and over in those days."

"Read it anyway--as a favor," I said.

So he read it, his face becoming sourer and sourer. He handed it back to me. "You disappoint me," he said.

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"It's so weak!" he said. "It has no body, no paprika, no zest! I thought you were a master of racial invective!"

"I'm not?" I said.

"If any member of my S.S. platoon had spoken in such a friendly way about the Jews," said Arpad, "I would have had him shot for treason! Goebbels should have fired you and hired me as the radio scourge of the Jews. I would have raised blisters around the world!"

"You were already doing your part with your S.S. platoon," I said.

Arpad beamed, remembering his S.S. days. "What an Aryan I made!" he said.

"Nobody ever suspected you?" I said.

"How would they dare?" he said. "I was such a pure and terrifying Aryan that they even put me in a special detachment. Its mission was to find out how the Jews always knew what the S.S. was going to do next. There was a leak somewhere, and we were out to stop it." He looked bitter and affronted, remembering it, even though he had been that leak.

"Was the detachment successful in its mission?" I said.

"I'm happy to say," said Arpad, "that fourteen S.S. men were shot on our recommendations. Adolf Eichmann himself congratulated us."

"You met him, did you?" I said.

"Yes--" said Arpad, "and I'm sorry I didn't know at the time how important he was."

"Why?" I said.

"I would have killed him," said Arpad.

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Mother Night is a daring challenge to our moral sense. American Howard W. Campbell, Jr., a spy during World War II, is now on trial in Israel as a Nazi war criminal. But is he really guilty? In this brilliant book rife with true gallows humor, Vonnegut turns black and white into a chilling shade of gray with a verdict that will haunt us all.

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- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.00" h x .60" w x 5.20" l,
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Timeless, simple, touching and original

By Anastasiya Koroleva

I have yet to read a more multifaceted author. He never ceases to surprise me. I have been waiting for years to grow out of Kurt Vonnegut, the way we have grown out of denial of authority, teenage nihilism,

adolescent maximalism and overwhelming passions and beliefs. His writing though doesn't become any less relevant, not with us ageing , not with the passage of time. The writing is what you have come to expect, simple straightforward, fluent. The plot is unexpected at every turn. Characters are fluid and relatable while completely absurd. Your beliefs come into question on every pageturn. Good thing he is also extremely prolific. I have yet to run out of books.

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A New Perspective On Nazi Germany

By Rob Port

This book is fantastic. The plot itself is worth the price of the book but the ending will throw you for a loop, I know it did for me.

The book is a very quick read and doesn't really have alot of historical facts or detailed descriptions. This book is no different than any other Vonnegut book in that its very ambiguos. We never find out why the Nazi's decided to give Campbell his own show or why the OSS decided to use Campbell as a spy.

Despite this the book is a very fun read. Its funny and often hilarious (especially when describing aging racists in America). I would reccomend this book to any reader of any age. Its, quite simply, a good story.

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Mother Night

By Ashley Love Holmes

I got this for class but I enjoyed the book a lot. This was the cheapest place I could get the book.

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I am behind bars in a nice new jail in old Jerusalem.

I am awaiting a fair trial for my war crimes by the Republic of Israel.

It is a curious typewriter Mr. Friedmann has given to me--and an appropriate typewriter, too. It is a typewriter, too. It is a typewriter that was obviously made in Germany during the Second World War. How can I tell? Quite simply, for it puts at finger tips a symbol that was never used on a typewriter before the Third German Reich, a symbol that will never be used on a typewriter again.

The symbol is the twin lightning strokes used for the dreaded S.S., the Schutzstaffel, the most fanatical wing of Nazism.

I used such a typewriter in Germany all through the war. Whenever I had occasion to write of the Schutzstaffel, which I did often and with enthusiasm, I never abbreviated it as "S.S.," but always struck the typewriter key for the far more frightening and magical twin lightning strokes.

Ancient history.

I am surrounded by ancient history. Though the jail in which I rot is new, some of the stones in it, I'm told, were cut in the time of King Solomon.

And sometimes, when I look out through my cell window at the gay and brassy youth of the infant Republic of Israel, I feel that I and my war crimes are as ancient as Solomon's old gray stones.

How long ago that war, that Second World War, was! How long ago the crimes in it!

How nearly forgotten it is, even by the Jews--the young Jews, that is.

One of the Jews who guards me here knows nothing about that war. He is not interested. His name is Arnold Marx. He has very red hair. He is only eighteen, which means Arnold was three when Hitler died, and nonexistent when my career as a war criminal began.

He guards me from six in the morning until noon.

Arnold was born in Israel. He has never been outside of Israel.

His mother and father left Germany in the early thirties. His grandfather, he told me, won an Iron Cross in the First World War.

Arnold is studying to be a lawyer. The avocation of Arnold and of his father, a gunsmith, is archaeology. Father and son spend most all their spare time excavating the ruins of Hazor. They do so under the direction of Yigael Yadin, who was Chief of Staff of the Israeli Army during the war with the Arab States.

So be it.

Hazor, Arnold tells me, was a Canaanite city in northern Palestine that existed at least nineteen hundred years before Christ. About fourteen hundred years before Christ, Arnold tells me, an Israelite army captured

Hazor, killed all forty thousand inhabitants, and burned it down.

"Solomon rebuilt the city," said Arnold, "but in 732 B.C. Tiglath-pileser the Third burned it down again."

"Who?" I said.

"Tiglath-pileser the Third," said Arnold. "The Assyrian," he said, giving my memory a nudge.

"Oh," I said. "That Tiglath-pileser."

"You act as though you never heard of him," said Arnold.

"I never have," I said. I shrugged humbly. "I guess that's pretty terrible."

"Well--" said Arnold, giving me a schoolmaster's frown, "it seems to me he really is somebody everybody ought to know about. He was probably the most remarkable man the Assyrians ever produced."

"Oh," I said.

"I'll bring you a book about him, if you like," said Arnold.

"That's nice of you," I said. "Maybe I'll get around to thinking about remarkable Assyrians later on. Right now my mind is pretty well occupied with remarkable Germans."

"Like who?" he said.

"Oh, I've been thinking a lot lately about my old boss, Paul Joseph Goebbels," I said.

Arnold looked at me blankly. "Who?" he said.

And I felt the dust of the Holy Land creeping in to bury me, sensed how thick a dust-and-rubble blanket I would one day wear. I felt thirty or forty feet of ruined cities above me; beneath me some primitive kitchen middens, a temple or two--and then--

Tiglath-pileser the Third.

Chapter Two

Special Detail . . .

The guard who relieves Arnold Marx at noon each day is a man nearly my own age, which is forty-eight. He remembers the war, all right, though he doesn't like to.

His name is Andor Gutman. Andor is a sleepy, not very bright Estonian Jew. He spent two years in the extermination camp at Auschwitz. According to his own reluctant account, he came this close to going up a smokestack of a crematorium there:

"I had just been assigned to the Sonderkommando," he said to me, "when the order came from Himmler to

close the ovens down."

Sonderkommando means special detail. At Auschwitz it meant a very special detail indeed--one composed of prisoners whose duties were to shepherd condemned persons into gas chambers, and then to lug their bodies out. When the job was done, the members of the Sonderkommando were themselves killed. The first duty of their successors was to dispose of their remains.

Gutman told me that many men actually volunteered for the Sonderkommando.

"Why?" I asked him.

"If you would write a book about that," he said, "and give the answer to that question, that 'Why?'--you would have a very great book."

"Do you know the answer?" I said.

"No," he said, "That is why I would pay a great deal of money for a book with the answer in it."

"Any guesses?" I said.

"No," he said, looking me straight in the eye, "even though I was one of the ones who volunteered."

He went away for a little while, after having confessed that. And he thought about Auschwitz, the thing he liked least to think about. And he came back, and he said to me:

"There were loudspeakers all over the camp," he said, "and they were never silent for long. There was much music played through them. Those who were musical told me it was often good music--sometimes the best."

"That's interesting," I said.

"There was no music by Jews," he said. "That was forbidden."

"Naturally," I said.

"And the music was always stopping in the middle," he said, "and then there was an announcement. All day long, music and announcements."

"Very modern," I said.

He closed his eyes, remembered gropingly. "There was one announcement that was always crooned, like a nursery rhyme. Many times a day it came. It was the call for the Sonderkommando."

"Oh?" I said.

"Leichtträger zu Wache," he crooned, his eyes still closed.

Translation: "Corpse-carriers to the guardhouse." In an institution in which the purpose was to kill human beings by the millions, it was an understandably common cry.

"After two years of hearing that call over the loudspeakers, between the music," Gutman said to me, "the position of corpse-carrier suddenly sounded like a very good job."

"I can understand that," I said.

"You can?" he said. He shook his head. "I can't," he said. "I will always be ashamed. Volunteering for the Sonderkommando--it was a very shameful thing to do."

"I don't think so," I said.

"I do," he said. "Shameful," he said. "I never want to talk about it again."

Chapter Three

Briquets . . .

The guard who relieves Andor Gutman at six each night is Arpad Kovacs. Arpad is a Roman candle of a man, loud and gay.

When Arpad came on duty at six last night, he demanded to see what I'd written so far. I gave him the very few pages, and Arpad walked up and down the corridor, waving and praising the pages extravagantly.

He didn't read them. He praised them for what he imagined to be in them.

"Give it to the complacent bastards!" he said last night. "Tell those smug briquets!"

By briquets he meant people who did nothing to save their own lives or anybody else's life when the Nazis took over, who were willing to go meekly all the way to the gas chambers, if that was where the Nazis wanted them to go. A briquet, of course, is a molded block of coal dust, the soul of convenience where transportation, storage and combustion are concerned.

Arpad, faced with the problem of being a Jew in Nazi Hungary, did not become a briquet. On the contrary, Arpad got himself false papers and joined the Hungarian S.S.

That fact is the basis for his sympathy with me. "Tell them the things a man does to stay alive! What's so noble about being a briquet?" he said last night.

"Did you ever hear any of my broadcasts?" I asked him. The medium of my war crimes was radio broadcasting. I was a Nazi radio propagandist, a shrewd and loathsome anti-Semite.

"No," he said.

So I showed him a transcript of a broadcast, a transcript furnished to me by the Haifa Institute. "Read it," I said.

"I don't have to," He said. "Everybody was saying the same things over and over and over in those days."

"Read it anyway--as a favor," I said.

So he read it, his face becoming sourer and sourer. He handed it back to me. "You disappoint me," he said.

"Oh?" I said.

"It's so weak!" he said. "It has no body, no paprika, no zest! I thought you were a master of racial invective!"

"I'm not?" I said.

"If any member of my S.S. platoon had spoken in such a friendly way about the Jews," said Arpad, "I would have had him shot for treason! Goebbels should have fired you and hired me as the radio scourge of the Jews. I would have raised blisters around the world!"

"You were already doing your part with your S.S. platoon," I said.

Arpad beamed, remembering his S.S. days. "What an Aryan I made!" he said.

"Nobody ever suspected you?" I said.

"How would they dare?" he said. "I was such a pure and terrifying Aryan that they even put me in a special detachment. Its mission was to find out how the Jews always knew what the S.S. was going to do next. There was a leak somewhere, and we were out to stop it." He looked bitter and affronted, remembering it, even though he had been that leak.

"Was the detachment successful in its mission?" I said.

"I'm happy to say," said Arpad, "that fourteen S.S. men were shot on our recommendations. Adolf Eichmann himself congratulated us."

"You met him, did you?" I said.

"Yes--" said Arpad, "and I'm sorry I didn't know at the time how important he was."

"Why?" I said.

"I would have killed him," said Arpad.

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