

Chapter 28: Target ...

In Chapter 28 of *Mother Night*, the protagonist finds himself in the basement of Dr. Jones' home, where George Kraft is absorbed in a strange exercise—shooting at a target designed to resemble a caricature of a cigar-smoking Jew. The target, which the protagonist himself had created back in 1941, is disturbing in its portrayal, showing the figure standing on broken crosses while holding symbols of greed and dishonesty.  The protagonist is taken aback by the sheer crudeness of the image and reflects on how it managed to resonate so strongly within the Nazi circles, despite its lack of artistic quality. What began as an attempt to align himself with the regime's ideals has led to an unintended consequence: the piece has been praised by influential Nazi figures, including Heinrich Himmler, which strikes the protagonist as both absurd and chilling. The realization that his artwork, created in an effort to demonstrate loyalty, was later celebrated highlights the manipulative power of propaganda and the ease with which ideologies can shape public opinion, often distorting the truth for the sake of a narrative. This revelation forces the protagonist to confront the power of symbolism and how his actions have inadvertently supported a system built on distortion and violence.

As Kraft continues to miss the target with his underpowered Luger, the conversation between the two men delves into more introspective territory. Kraft, in a moment of reflection, discusses the upheavals in their lives, suggesting that their suffering might lead to personal growth and artistic insight. He believes that the vibrant tropics, a place he hopes to visit, could inspire him to become a better painter, providing him with the creative rejuvenation he desperately seeks. The protagonist listens, pondering the possibility of growth through adversity, even though the chaos around them seems to offer little hope for redemption. Kraft's idealism contrasts with the protagonist's increasing disillusionment, but his perspective serves as a reminder that personal

transformation can arise from even the most challenging circumstances. The conversation shifts from the pain of the past to the potential for reinvention, suggesting that even in times of darkness, there is an opportunity for creativity and renewal. Their exchange brings into focus the complexities of human nature, with both men seeking meaning in a world that seems intent on stripping away any sense of purpose.



The discussion takes on a more personal tone as Kraft, reflecting on his losses, expresses a deeper appreciation for the value of genuine human connections. Having lost his wife, Kraft reveals that he no longer sees any merit in ideological commitments or material pursuits, but instead values the connections he has with those who understand him. He offers to join the protagonist on his journey, indicating that their bond is stronger than any external affiliation. This moment of emotional vulnerability marks a shift in Kraft's character, as he moves away from a life centered on political ideologies to one that embraces true companionship and shared experience. Kraft's willingness to support the protagonist, no matter where fate may lead them, underscores the importance of loyalty and trust in a world marked by chaos and betrayal. The protagonist, moved by Kraft's sincerity, realizes that their relationship has evolved from mere comradeship into something more profound—a connection rooted in mutual understanding and shared struggles. Their conversation emphasizes the power of human relationships, suggesting that in the midst of political and ideological turmoil, it is the bonds we form with others that provide the most stability and meaning. This chapter deepens the exploration of friendship, loyalty, and the search for purpose, illustrating how even in the darkest moments, personal connections can serve as a beacon of hope.