

Chapter 45

In Chapter 45, Howard W. Campbell, Jr. finds himself in Israel, awaiting a trial that feels unavoidable and inescapable. As the day draws near, he reflects on his situation with a sense of resignation, fully aware that although his body is physically confined, the narrative of his life and the broader forces of history continue to unfold around him. The trial looms large in his thoughts, and Campbell knows that numerous individuals will testify against him, each bringing their own perspective of his actions and character. Yet, he feels a profound isolation as no one will stand to defend him. The prosecution plans to present recordings of Campbell's own broadcasts, turning him into his own fiercest critic, an act that deepens his sense of vulnerability. His actions, once lauded by his followers, are now used against him, adding weight to his feeling that his past is permanently inescapable.

Among the figures involved in the trial proceedings is Bernard B. O'Hare, a character who complicates the process by offering irrelevant and distracting testimony. His intention seems to be to irritate the prosecution, though it serves little purpose beyond confusing the court. Heinz Schildknecht, a former close friend of Campbell's, now turned adversary, plays a significant role in the unfolding drama. His background, particularly his Jewish heritage and his active role in the anti-Nazi underground during the war, gives his testimony a weight that others lack. Schildknecht's accusations are deeply personal, bringing with them not just the facts of Campbell's actions but the emotional and moral judgments shaped by his own painful experiences. The personal nature of his testimony, combined with the credibility he carries due to his history, makes it impossible for Campbell to dismiss the accusations lightly. It is a stark reminder of how betrayal and loyalty can shift, especially when ideological lines are drawn and personal survival is at stake.

The involvement of two other former associates, Dr. Lionel J. D. Jones and Iona Potapov (also known as George Kraft), further complicates Campbell's position. Although neither individual can appear in person, both send affidavits that offer little in the way of support. Jones refers to Campbell as a martyr for the Nazi cause, a characterization that paints Campbell as a symbol of ideological extremism rather than a victim. Kraft, conversely, reduces Campbell's role to that of a naive pawn, calling him an "idiot" when it comes to understanding the intricacies of political movements. This dichotomy of opinions underscores Campbell's complex legacy: to some, he was a committed ideologue; to others, he was merely an impressionable fool who fell into dangerous convictions. The letters and testimonies continue to cast doubt on Campbell's true identity, contributing to his growing sense of confusion and uncertainty about the choices he made during the war. He finds himself surrounded by conflicting accounts, each piece of his past calling into question the truth of the person he has become.

As Campbell contemplates the upcoming trial, his thoughts are interrupted by letters forwarded to him from New York. The first letter comes from Creative Playthings, Inc., a company that attempts to connect him to an educational cause that he never truly embraced. The letter discusses the role of toys in fostering creativity among children, appealing to him as though he had been a lifelong advocate for the importance of play. Campbell, ever cynical, responds with bitterness, dismissing the notion that children should be shielded from the harshness of reality. He argues that life itself is the best teacher, far beyond any toy that attempts to paint a picture of innocence and idealism. This letter is but one more reminder of the dissonance between how the world perceives him and who he truly is, deepening his disillusionment with the pretensions of others.

The second letter offers a commercial proposition, pitching an investment opportunity in a tungsten mine, an attempt to exploit Campbell's name for financial gain. While this is more in line with his reputation as a figure of interest, it feels transactional and detached from the personal turmoil Campbell is undergoing. However, the final letter is the most unexpected and unsettling: a letter from someone identifying himself as

Harold J. Sparrow, who reveals that he is, in fact, Frank Wirtanen. Sparrow claims to have recruited Campbell as an American agent during World War II, offering to confirm Campbell's effectiveness in that role. This letter casts Campbell into further confusion, as it forces him to confront the blurred lines of his past identity and actions. He begins to question whether his role in the war was truly his own or a series of manipulations, adding to the feeling of powerlessness that consumes him.



In the midst of this turmoil, as Campbell prepares for his trial and reflects on his past, he experiences a deep crisis of identity. The impending trial and the revelations about his life force him to confront the very essence of who he is and what he has become. The fear of freedom, ironically, begins to take hold of him; the notion of shedding his former self, of moving forward in a new direction, feels almost as terrifying as the prospect of punishment. Campbell contemplates symbolically hanging the person he was—the person who made the decisions, the one who believed in the ideas that now seem so false. He is faced with the overwhelming realization that his actions, his choices, have brought him to this point of no return. It is here, in this moment of reflection, that Campbell recognizes the full weight of his past and begins to grasp the magnitude of the consequences he now faces. The chapter encapsulates the conflict between the man Campbell once was and the man he must confront in the face of his trial. The complexities of his identity, once clear and defined, are now deeply intertwined with guilt, regret, and the looming threat of total erasure.