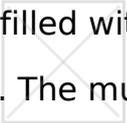


# Chapter 10

The chapter opens with Theo committing to a visit with Xan by writing "YES" on a postcard, an act that feels weighty with unspoken significance. He then visits the Cast Museum, a place filled with relics of ancient civilizations, where an elderly custodian sleeps at his post.  The museum, once introduced to Theo by Xan, holds personal meaning for him, serving as a refuge during difficult times, particularly after his wife Natalie's death. The quiet, almost sacred atmosphere of the museum contrasts with the outside world, offering Theo solace and a connection to the past.

Theo wanders through the museum, revisiting familiar artifacts like the Attic gravestone and the Diadoumenos, reflecting on how his emotional response to art has dulled over time. He discreetly hides the postcard for Rolf, a clandestine act that underscores his growing involvement in a resistance movement. Memories of Hilda's death and the brutality of the Quietus resurface, challenging his self-image as a detached observer. The chapter highlights Theo's internal conflict between his desire for safety and his mounting sense of moral obligation to act against the regime's atrocities.

A poignant encounter occurs when Theo recognizes the sleeping custodian as Digby Yule, a retired classics don. Yule's nervous demeanor reveals his fear of being deemed a burden in a society that discards the vulnerable. Theo considers offering Yule shelter but ultimately rationalizes his inaction, illustrating his lingering detachment. The scene underscores the pervasive dread and dehumanization under the regime, as even the elderly live in fear of being reported to the authorities. Yule's fragility and Theo's hesitation emphasize the moral decay of their world.

The chapter closes with Theo imagining Yule dying alone in the museum, a metaphor for the slow collapse of civilization. The silent, timeless space of the museum contrasts with the brutality outside, serving as a sanctuary for both art and human frailty. Theo's

reflections on art, mortality, and duty culminate in a sense of inevitability—his role as a passive spectator is no longer tenable. The chapter masterfully intertwines personal grief with broader societal decay, setting the stage for Theo’s reluctant but necessary engagement with resistance.

