

THE END USE

Written by

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WE OPEN WITH A BLACK SCREEN.

Silence.

Then—

A faint, rhythmic DRIP.

Not loud. Not dramatic. Just persistent.

FADE IN:

EXT. BARBED WIRE FENCE - DAWN

Rainwater gathers on twisted BARBED WIRE.

A drop swells. Trembles.

Falls.

Another takes its place.

The fence stretches into fog. Endless.

A WATCHTOWER looms beyond it, barely visible.

A FIGURE stands inside the tower, motionless.

No music.

Only rain.

CUT TO:

EXT. INDUSTRIAL ROOF - DAWN

Concrete. Wet. Featureless.

Steam rises faintly from somewhere below, dissipating into the cold air.

A metal door sits flush with the roof.

Bolted shut.

A RED WARNING SIGN beside it, in German:

AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY

A pair of highly polished boots step into frame.

They stop.

We do not see the man wearing them.

The boots do not move.

We hear the faint hum of machinery from inside the building.

Steady. Controlled.

A watch clicks open.

A hand enters frame – gloved.

Checks the time.

Closes the watch.

The hum continues.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAME – LATER

The rain has slowed.

The hum stops.

Silence returns.

The boots turn.

Walk away.

We never see what's behind the door.

CUT TO BLACK.

Silence holds.

One beat too long.

CUT TO:

INT. CORPORATE WASHROOM – MORNING

Bright. Clean. Orderly.

A porcelain sink.

A man in his late 40s washes his hands carefully.

This is HANS KELLER.

He scrubs with precision. Fingertips. Knuckles. Nails.

The water runs.

He turns it off.

Dries his hands.

Looks at himself in the mirror.

Calm. Focused. Unremarkable.

On the counter beside him lies a file folder.

Cream-colored. Official.

A red stamp on the cover:

APPROVED FOR DISTRIBUTION

Hans closes the folder.

Picks it up.

For just a moment, he hesitates.

Then he tucks it under his arm.

CUT TO:

INT. CORPORATE CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

A long corridor of offices.

Men and women pass with purpose.

Phones ring.

Typewriters clatter.

Doors open. Doors close.

Hans joins the flow, indistinguishable from everyone else.

As he walks, we hear voices overlapping:

VOICE (O.S.)
-shipment confirmed-

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 -compliance has signed off-

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 -no deviation from procedure-

Hans disappears into the crowd.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - MORNING

A long table. Polished wood.

Morning light filters through tall windows. Frosted glass.
 Muted city noise beyond.

Men in suits take their seats with practiced efficiency.
 Folders are opened. Pens aligned.

Hans Keller sits midway down the table.

At the head sits DR. OTTO VOGEL (50s), precise, academic.
 Beside him, ERNST BAUER (40s), commercial, impatient. At the
 far end, FRAU LINDEMANN (30s), a stenographer, sets up.

Coffee cups steam quietly.

No one rushes.

VOGEL
 Good morning.

A murmur of acknowledgment.

VOGEL (CONT'D)
 We'll begin.

He opens a folder. Adjusts his glasses.

VOGEL (CONT'D)
 Item one. Distribution approvals.

Bauer slides a stack of documents forward.

BAUER
 We've received confirmation from
 regional partners.
 Delivery schedules remain
 unchanged.

Hans flips open his folder. Reads. Calm. Focused.

HANS
Clarify "unchanged."

BAUER
Volume, routing, and packaging
remain consistent with prior
quarters.

Hans scans a line. Stops.

HANS
And destination classifications?

A beat.

BAUER
Listed as before.

Hans looks up.

HANS
Listed as what, precisely?

Bauer exhales – not annoyed, just used to this.

BAUER
Government facilities. Public
health applications.

Hans nods slightly. Makes a note.

HANS
Any deviation requests?

VOGEL
None submitted.

HANS
Any informal inquiries?

VOGEL
No written ones.

Hans closes the folder halfway.

HANS
Then our position remains the same.

Bauer leans back.

BAUER
Which is?

Hans doesn't look at him.

HANS
End use is the responsibility of
the purchaser.

Silence as Frau Lindemann types.

VOGEL
And compliance?

Hans opens the folder again. Reads a specific paragraph.

HANS
We provide material in accordance
with existing regulations. We do
not oversee application.

He looks up.

HANS (CONT'D)
Nor are we obligated to.

Vogel nods. Relieved.

VOGEL
Then we're aligned.

Bauer smiles faintly.

BAUER
Good. Because delays are becoming-
difficult to justify.

Hans meets Bauer's eyes now.

HANS
Delays are justified when procedure
requires them.

A quiet challenge.

Bauer shrugs.

BAUER
Of course.

Hans flips the page.

HANS
Next item.

CUT TO:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER

The meeting continues.

Different papers. Same rhythm.

Hans listens more than he speaks.

A junior EXECUTIVE clears his throat.

EXECUTIVE
There has been... curiosity.
From certain partners.

Hans looks up.

HANS
Curiosity about what?

EXECUTIVE
Usage conditions.

A small shift in the room.

Vogel watches Hans carefully.

HANS
Define "usage."

EXECUTIVE
Environmental parameters.
Temperature. Ventilation.

Hans considers this.

HANS
And our response?

EXECUTIVE
That such considerations fall
outside our remit.

Hans nods.

HANS
Correct.

He writes something. The sound of pen on paper is loud in the quiet room.

HANS (CONT'D)
We are not inspectors.
We are suppliers.

No one disagrees.

VOGEL
Then that concludes—

Hans interrupts, gently.

HANS
One more thing.

The room stills.

HANS (CONT'D)
Any returns?

Bauer hesitates.

BAUER
Empty containers.
Standard practice.

Hans looks at him.

HANS
Increased volume?

BAUER
Slightly.

Hans makes another note.

HANS
Ensure accounting reflects that.

BAUER
Of course.

Hans closes his folder.

HANS
Meeting adjourned.

CUT TO:

INT. CORPORATE CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

People spill out of the conference room.

Voices overlap.

Hans walks alone.

As he passes a window, we see his reflection. Briefly doubled.

Then singular again.

He continues down the corridor.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. HANS KELLER'S OFFICE - LATE MORNING

Orderly. Minimal. Functional.

Shelves of binders, each precisely labeled. A framed certificate on the wall. Another beside it.

Hans sits at his desk, reviewing paperwork.

A CLOCK TICKS.

He turns a page. Makes a small notation. Turns another.

A knock.

HANS

Yes.

The door opens. This is ELLEN KELLER (40s), Hans's wife. Well-dressed. Efficient. Warm, but not indulgent.

ELLEN

They're holding lunch for you
downstairs.

Hans checks his watch.

HANS

I'll be there shortly.

Ellen steps inside, closes the door behind her.

She notices the open files.

ELLEN

You're late.

HANS

I'm on time.
I'm just not finished.

She smiles faintly. Used to this.

ELLEN
You promised to walk.

Hans nods, distracted.

HANS
After lunch.

Ellen turns to leave, then stops.

ELLEN
Did you sleep?

Hans looks up.

HANS
Yes.

A beat.

ELLEN
You hesitated.

HANS
I was thinking.

ELLEN
About work.

HANS
About tomorrow.

Ellen accepts this. She always has.

ELLEN
I'll see you downstairs.

She exits.

Hans returns to the paperwork.

He flips to the back of one folder.

A RETURN FORM.

He reads it carefully.

The form is stamped:

EMPTY CONTAINERS - RECEIVED

Hans frowns slightly.

He checks another file.

Same stamp.

He compares dates.

His frown deepens – just a fraction.

He reaches for the phone.

Dials.

HANS
(into phone)
Accounting.
Yes. Keller.

A pause.

HANS (CONT'D)
I'm reviewing container returns.
I'm seeing an increase.

Another pause.

HANS (CONT'D)
No, I'm not concerned.

I'm clarifying.

He listens.

HANS (CONT'D)
Yes.
Mm-hmm. I understand.

He glances again at the dates.

HANS (CONT'D)
Ensure it's reflected accurately.
That's all.

He hangs up.

The clock ticks.

Hans closes the folder.

Stares at it for a moment longer than necessary.

Then he places it neatly on the stack.

Straightens the pile.

Stands.

CUT TO:

INT. CORPORATE DINING ROOM - LUNCH

Bright. Civilized.

White tablecloths. Quiet conversation. Cutlery clinks.

Executives eat in small groups.

Hans sits with Vogel and Bauer.

Bauer eats heartily.

BAUER
Delays are finally easing.
Transport's cooperating again.

VOGEL
It won't last.

Hans sips water.

HANS
Nothing lasts.

Bauer smiles.

BAUER
You always say that.

Hans doesn't respond.

VOGEL
There's pressure from above.
To increase output.

Hans sets his glass down.

HANS
Pressure is not instruction.

VOGEL
No. But it precedes it.

Hans cuts his food carefully.

HANS
Then we wait for instruction.

A waiter clears plates.

BAUER
 You know, sometimes I envy you.
 Compliance is a comfortable place
 to hide.

Hans looks at him.

HANS
 It's not hiding.
 It's definition.

BAUER
 Same thing.

Hans returns to his meal.

For the first time, the clink of cutlery sounds loud.

CUT TO:

INT. HANS' OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Hans sits alone again.

The same folder lies on his desk.

He opens it.

Reads the return form once more.

He reaches for a pen.

Stops.

Does not write.

Closes the folder.

Places it in his briefcase.

Locks it.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. COMPLIANCE OFFICE - AFTERNOON

A smaller room. Less polished.

Shelves of manuals. Regulatory binders. Reference volumes.
 Everything labeled. Everything indexed.

Hans sits across from FRIEDRICH WEBER (late 20s), earnest, precise, newly promoted.

A notepad rests on Weber's lap. Unused.

Hans slides a document across the desk.

HANS
Read that aloud.

Weber hesitates, then picks it up.

WEBER
(reading)
"Request for clarification
regarding application
conditions and environmental
parameters."

He looks up.

WEBER (CONT'D)
They're asking about usage.

HANS
They're asking about
responsibility.

Weber nods, unsure.

WEBER
How should I respond?

Hans folds his hands.

HANS
You don't respond to the question
they ask.
You respond to the one you're
authorized to answer.

Weber writes that down.

WEBER
Which is?

HANS
(reading from memory)
"Material supplied in accordance
with existing regulations.
Application falls outside supplier
oversight."

Weber nods again.

WEBER
Should I include—

HANS
No.

A beat.

WEBER
Even if—

HANS
Especially if.

Hans leans back.

HANS (CONT'D)
Language is a boundary.
Once you step beyond it, you
inherit obligations.

Weber absorbs this.

WEBER
So... we stay precise.

HANS
We stay correct.

Weber considers that distinction.

WEBER
And if they push?

Hans stands, moves to a shelf.

Pulls down a thick manual.

HANS
Then you cite procedure.

He opens the book. Points to a paragraph.

HANS (CONT'D)
Procedure doesn't argue.
It replaces argument.

Weber nods, impressed.

WEBER
Understood.

Hans returns to his seat.

HANS
One more thing.

Weber looks up, attentive.

HANS (CONT'D)
Never speculate.
Speculation is how intent is
assigned.

WEBER
Assigned to whom?

Hans meets his eyes.

HANS
To us.

Silence.

Hans slides the document back.

HANS (CONT'D)
Draft the response.
Bring it to me before sending.

WEBER
Yes, sir.

CUT TO:

INT. COMPLIANCE OFFICE - LATER

Weber types.

The sound of keys is deliberate. Careful.

On the page:

"-application falls outside supplier oversight-"

He stops. Looks at the sentence.

Then continues typing.

CUT TO:

INT. HANS' OFFICE - SAME

Hans reviews another file.

The door opens. Weber enters, holding a typed response.

WEBER
I've drafted it.

Hans takes the page.

Reads.

His face reveals nothing.

He reaches for a pen.

Marks a single word.

Changes it.

Hands it back.

HANS
Remove "regarding."

Weber blinks.

WEBER
It softens the sentence.

HANS
It implies interest.

Weber nods.

WEBER
Of course.

Hans sits back.

HANS
Send it.

Weber hesitates.

WEBER
Sir?

Hans looks up.

WEBER (CONT'D)
Is there ever a point when—

Hans cuts him off gently.

HANS
—when what?

Weber searches for the right phrasing.

WEBER

When procedure is no longer
sufficient?

Hans considers this.

Then:

HANS

Procedure is always sufficient.

Weber nods.

Leaves.

Hans remains seated.

The clock ticks.

CUT TO:

INT. MAILROOM - EVENING

Stacks of envelopes.

A clerk stamps outgoing mail.

The stamped response is sealed into an envelope.

The stamp comes down:

APPROVED.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. CORPORATE RECORDS OFFICE - MORNING

A cavernous room.

Rows of filing cabinets stretch into the distance. Clerks
move methodically between them.

Hans walks beside MARTA KOHLER (50s), head of records.
Efficient. Precise. Unsentimental.

She carries a clipboard.

KOHLER

We've received a request.

Hans stops.

HANS
From whom?

KOHLER
External.

That word lands heavier than it should.

HANS
Define "external."

Kohler flips a page.

KOHLER
A regulatory liaison.
Not one we normally deal with.

Hans considers this.

HANS
What are they asking for?

KOHLER
Transaction histories.
Delivery confirmations. Return
records.

Hans's expression remains neutral.

HANS
Over what period?

KOHLER
The last eighteen months.

Hans exhales slowly.

HANS
That's unusually broad.

KOHLER
Yes.

They resume walking.

HANS
Have we responded?

KOHLER
Not yet.
We were advised to wait for
guidance.

Hans nods.

HANS

Good.

They stop at a cabinet.

Kohler opens it. Pulls a folder.

KOHLER

There's also this.

She hands it to him.

Hans opens the folder.

Inside: a LETTER. Typed. Official.

He reads.

INSERT - LETTER

"Requesting clarification regarding material application conditions and supplier awareness thereof."

BACK TO SCENE

Hans closes the folder.

HANS

Who approved release of this language?

KOHLER

No one.
It was forwarded as received.

Hans nods.

HANS

Then it remains unacknowledged.

KOHLER

For now.

Hans looks down the rows of cabinets. So many records. So much order.

HANS

Prepare the files.
Do not compile them yet.

KOHLER

Understood.

She makes a note.

KOHLER (CONT'D)
There's one more matter.

Hans waits.

KOHLER (CONT'D)
Some of the return logs don't align.

Hans looks at her.

HANS
In what way?

KOHLER
Volume versus frequency.

HANS
Explain.

KOHLER
We're receiving empties faster than expected.

Hans absorbs this.

HANS
Accounting flagged it?

KOHLER
Not formally.

HANS
Why not?

KOHLER
Because each entry is correct.

Hans nods slowly.

HANS
Correct entries don't always tell the same story.

Kohler studies him.

KOHLER
Do you want me to reconcile the data?

Hans thinks.

HANS

No.

A beat.

KOHLER

No?

HANS

Reconciliation creates narrative.
Narrative invites interpretation.

Kohler nods.

KOHLER

Then we leave the data intact.

HANS

Exactly.

CUT TO:

INT. HANS' OFFICE - LATER

Hans sits alone.

The letter lies open on his desk.

He reads it again.

This time, slower.

He reaches for a pen.

Hovers it above the page.

Does not write.

He folds the letter carefully.

Places it in a folder marked:

PENDING

He slides the folder into a drawer.

Closes it.

Locks the drawer.

The click is loud in the quiet room.

CUT TO:

INT. CORPORATE HALLWAY - EVENING

Lights dimmed.

Most offices dark.

Hans walks alone now.

His footsteps echo.

As he passes a glass partition, he pauses.

Sees his reflection.

Behind it, rows of filing cabinets.

For a moment, it's unclear which one contains him.

He moves on.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. EXECUTIVE BOARDROOM - AFTERNOON

Larger than the conference room. Colder.

Tall windows. Heavy curtains. A long table that dwarfs its occupants.

Hans sits at one end.

At the opposite end is DR. WILHELM KRAUSE (60s), senior board member. Immaculate. Unhurried.

Two other EXECUTIVES flank him. Silent observers.

Folders are already laid out.

Krause studies Hans over steepled fingers.

KRAUSE
We've received an inquiry.

Hans nods.

HANS
I'm aware.

KRAUSE
That's reassuring.

Krause opens a folder.

KRAUSE (CONT'D)
It is... unusually phrased.

Hans remains still.

HANS
External parties often lack
precision.

Krause smiles faintly.

KRAUSE
Yes. They do.

He slides a document across the table.

Hans does not take it immediately.

KRAUSE (CONT'D)
Read it.

Hans picks it up.

Reads.

The room is silent except for the paper shifting.

KRAUSE (CONT'D)
What do you see?

HANS
Ambiguity.

KRAUSE
And what does ambiguity invite?

HANS
Interpretation.

Krause nods.

KRAUSE
Which we cannot allow.

Hans sets the document down.

HANS
Our obligations remain unchanged.

KRAUSE
Precisely.

Krause leans back.

KRAUSE (CONT'D)
The board has no interest in
application.
Only compliance.

HANS
As do I.

A beat.

KRAUSE
There has been concern.
That compliance is being
interpreted too broadly.

Hans looks up.

HANS
In what sense?

KRAUSE
That questions are being
entertained.
Where none are required.

Hans chooses his words carefully.

HANS
Questions are a function of
diligence.

Krause considers this.

KRAUSE
Diligence is admirable.
But it must not evolve into
curiosity.

The word hangs.

HANS
Curiosity implies motive.

KRAUSE
Exactly.

One of the other executives clears his throat.

EXECUTIVE #1
Returns have increased.

Hans does not react.

HANS
The data remains internally
consistent.

EXECUTIVE #2
But externally suggestive.

Hans looks at Krause.

HANS
Suggestion is not evidence.

KRAUSE
No.
But it invites it.

Krause folds his hands.

KRAUSE (CONT'D)
The board wishes to be very clear.

Hans listens.

KRAUSE (CONT'D)
We do not require you to ignore
irregularities.

Hans relaxes - just slightly.

KRAUSE (CONT'D)
We require you to classify them
correctly.

Hans absorbs this.

HANS
As operational variance.

KRAUSE
As normal distribution.

HANS
As purchaser responsibility.

Krause smiles.

KRAUSE
You understand us perfectly.

A beat.

HANS
Then nothing changes.

KRAUSE
On the contrary.

Krause slides a new document forward.

Hans takes it.

INSERT - MEMO

"ALL INQUIRIES REGARDING APPLICATION TO BE ROUTED THROUGH
EXECUTIVE REVIEW."

BACK TO SCENE

Hans reads it.

KRAUSE
This protects you.

HANS
It centralizes interpretation.

KRAUSE
It removes it.

Hans closes the memo.

HANS
Understood.

Krause stands. The others follow.

KRAUSE
You've served the company well,
Herr Keller.

Hans stands.

KRAUSE (CONT'D)
Continue to do so.

Krause extends his hand.

Hans shakes it.

The grip is firm. Final.

CUT TO:

INT. HANS OFFICE - EVENING

Hans enters alone.

He sets his briefcase on the desk.

Opens it.

Inside: the PENDING folder.

He removes the new memo. Places it inside.

Closes the folder.

He hesitates.

Then removes the folder entirely.

Carries it to the file cabinet.

Opens a drawer labeled:

EXECUTIVE OVERSIGHT
Slides the folder in.

Closes the drawer.

Locks it.

The sound echoes.

Hans stands there.

The clock ticks.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. CORPORATE LOBBY - MORNING

Quiet. Controlled.

Marble floors. High ceilings. The faint echo of footsteps.

Hans crosses the lobby toward the elevators.

At the security desk stands a MAN in his 50s, neatly dressed, understated. Not military. Not corporate.

He holds a leather portfolio.

The man steps forward.

MAN
Herr Keller?

Hans stops.

HANS

Yes.

MAN

My name is DAVID MORROW.
I'm with the Allied Control
Commission.

That lands.

Not loudly. But definitively.

HANS

I wasn't informed of a visit.

MORROW

I didn't request one.

A beat.

Hans studies him.

HANS

You should speak with Executive
Oversight.

Morrow nods.

MORROW

I intend to.
After I speak with you.

Hans considers this.

HANS

Then you should follow procedure.

MORROW

I am.

Morrow opens his portfolio just enough for Hans to see:
official credentials. Real. Boring.

HANS

How long do you require?

MORROW

Ten minutes.

Hans checks his watch.

HANS
Five.

CUT TO:

INT. SMALL INTERVIEW ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Unremarkable. A table. Two chairs.

Hans sits. Morrow sits opposite.

A recorder rests on the table.

Hans notices it.

HANS
Is that necessary?

MORROW
Only if you say something worth
recording.

Hans nods.

MORROW (CONT'D)
You oversee compliance.

HANS
Yes.

MORROW
Specifically distribution.

HANS
Correct.

MORROW
And return handling.

HANS
Within defined limits.

Morrow opens his portfolio. Removes a document.

Slides it across.

Hans does not touch it yet.

MORROW
Are these your figures?

Hans looks.

HANS

They appear consistent with our records.

MORROW

Do they strike you as unusual?

Hans chooses his words.

HANS

Unusual is not a regulatory category.

Morrow smiles faintly.

MORROW

No. It isn't.

He leans back.

MORROW (CONT'D)

Help me understand something.

Hans waits.

MORROW (CONT'D)

Why are empty containers being returned at a higher frequency than full ones are delivered?

Silence.

Hans folds his hands.

HANS

I'd need to see the methodology.

MORROW

You're seeing the result.

Hans glances at the recorder.

HANS

You should direct this inquiry upward.

MORROW

I will.

A beat.

MORROW (CONT'D)
But upward answers tend to be
rehearsed.
I prefer first answers.

Hans holds his gaze.

HANS
Then you misunderstand my role.

MORROW
I don't think I do.

Morrow slides another paper forward.

MORROW (CONT'D)
This was your language.

Hans reads.

It's familiar. Precise.

HANS
Yes.

MORROW
"Application falls outside supplier
oversight."

HANS
Correct.

MORROW
Does frequency fall outside
oversight?

Hans pauses.

HANS
Frequency reflects usage.

MORROW
Exactly.

Silence again.

Hans leans back.

HANS
You're assigning inference.

MORROW
I'm following arithmetic.

Hans considers this.

HANS
Arithmetic is not intent.

MORROW
No.

Morrow clicks the recorder ON.

The sound is small. Final.

MORROW (CONT'D)
But it's where intent begins.

Hans looks at the recorder.

Then back at Morrow.

HANS
This meeting is concluded.

MORROW
Of course.

He clicks the recorder OFF.

MORROW (CONT'D)
For now.

Hans stands.

MORROW (CONT'D)
Herr Keller?

Hans pauses.

MORROW (CONT'D)
When oversight removes
interpretation—
someone else eventually supplies
it.

Hans says nothing.

He exits.

CUT TO:

INT. CORPORATE CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Hans walks quickly now.

Not panicked. Just purposeful.

He passes offices.

Sees people working. Unaware.

Hans reaches the elevator.

The doors close.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. EXECUTIVE OVERSIGHT OFFICE - AFTERNOON

A smaller, more secure office than Hans's.

Thick walls. Frosted glass. No personal effects.

Hans sits across from KRAUSE.

The PENDING folder rests on the table between them.

Krause opens it without urgency.

KRAUSE
You were approached.

HANS
Yes.

KRAUSE
Unscheduled.

HANS
Yes.

KRAUSE
That's irregular.

HANS
So was the inquiry.

Krause studies him.

KRAUSE
What did he ask?

HANS
About frequency.

Krause nods.

KRAUSE
Arithmetic again.

HANS
Yes.

Krause exhales faintly.

KRAUSE
They're fond of numbers.
They believe numbers are neutral.

HANS
They aren't.

KRAUSE
No.
They only appear to be.

Krause closes the folder.

KRAUSE (CONT'D)
You didn't answer his question.

HANS
I redirected it.

KRAUSE
Good.

Hans waits.

KRAUSE (CONT'D)
However—
There it is.

KRAUSE (CONT'D)
—he's not wrong to ask.

Hans looks up.

HANS
In what sense?

KRAUSE
In the sense that arithmetic
doesn't disappear
when authority is invoked.

HANS
Authority exists to prevent
interpretation.

KRAUSE
Authority exists to manage it.

Hans absorbs this shift.

HANS
Then how should I proceed?

Krause stands. Moves to the window. Looks out, though nothing is visible.

KRAUSE
You should remain available.

HANS
Available for what?

KRAUSE
Clarification.

Hans frowns slightly.

HANS
Clarification implies—

KRAUSE
—control.

Krause turns.

KRAUSE (CONT'D)
You're still protected, Hans.
But protection doesn't mean
silence.

Hans considers this.

HANS
Then oversight is no longer
insulating.

KRAUSE
Nothing insulates forever.

A beat.

HANS
Should I prepare documentation?

KRAUSE
Already done.

Hans blinks.

HANS
By whom?

KRAUSE
By us.

Hans realizes something.

HANS
Then my role—

KRAUSE
—has narrowed.

Silence.

KRAUSE (CONT'D)
Which is not a demotion.

HANS
It's a removal.

Krause doesn't contradict him.

KRAUSE
It's adaptation.

Hans nods slowly.

HANS
Then I'll adapt.

KRAUSE
I expect you to.

CUT TO:

INT. HANS' OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

Hans enters.

The room feels slightly smaller now.

He sets his briefcase down.

Opens it.

Inside: fewer folders than before.

He notices.

Removes one.

It's stamped:

EXECUTIVE PREPARED
Hans reads the contents.

They're familiar. But not his language.

He flips pages.

Margins are clean. No room for annotation.

Hans closes the folder.

Looks at his desk.

His pen sits exactly where he left it.

He picks it up.

Turns it in his fingers.

Sets it down again.

CUT TO:

INT. CORPORATE ARCHIVE ROOM - EVENING

Lights dimmed.

A clerk finishes shelving documents.

Hans stands alone at a terminal.

He types.

Search results populate the screen.

RETURN LOGS

DELIVERY FREQUENCY

CONTAINER COUNTS
Hans scrolls.

Numbers. Patterns. Alignment.

Then —

A discrepancy.

Small. But unmistakable.

Hans stops scrolling.

Stares.

He checks the date range.

Expands it.

The discrepancy widens.

Hans leans back.

The hum of the archive room fills the silence.

He looks around.

No one else is present.

He prints the screen.

The printer WHIRS loudly in the quiet room.

Hans freezes.

The paper slides out.

He takes it.

Folds it carefully.

Does not label it.

Slips it into his jacket pocket.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. KELLER APARTMENT - NIGHT

Quiet. Meticulous.

A modest but well-appointed apartment. Everything in its place.

Hans enters, removes his coat. Hangs it carefully.

The folded printout remains in his jacket pocket.

ELLEN sits at the dining table, reading. A single lamp illuminates her.

ELLEN
You're late.

HANS
I was detained.

ELLEN
By whom?

Hans considers.

HANS
By work.

She nods. Accepts this.

ELLEN
Dinner's cold.

HANS
That's fine.

He moves to the kitchen. Sets water to boil.

ELLEN
They called.

Hans pauses.

HANS
Who?

ELLEN
Your office.
Twice.

Hans turns off the burner.

HANS
Did you answer?

ELLEN
I said you were unavailable.

HANS
Good.

She watches him now.

ELLEN
You're distracted.

HANS
I'm tired.

ELLEN
You're never tired.

A beat.

Hans pours himself a glass of water. Drinks.

ELLEN (CONT'D)
Did something change?

Hans shakes his head.

HANS
No.

ELLEN
Then why does it feel like it did?

Hans doesn't answer.

He reaches into his jacket. Removes the folded paper.

He places it on the table.

Does not open it.

ELLEN (CONT'D)
What is that?

HANS
A reference.

ELLEN
To what?

Hans unfolds it.

Numbers. Columns. Dates.

ELLEN (CONT'D)
I don't understand.

HANS
You're not meant to.

He sits.

Stares at the paper.

ELLEN
Then why bring it home?

Hans hesitates.

HANS
Because I couldn't leave it.

ELLEN

Why?

Hans studies the numbers again.

HANS

Because they don't align.

ELLEN

With what?

HANS

With procedure.

ELLEN

Then procedure is wrong.

Hans looks at her.

HANS

Procedure is never wrong.

ELLEN

Then the numbers are.

Hans doesn't respond.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Do they matter?

Hans folds the paper again.

HANS

Only if someone asks the right question.

ELLEN

Who would do that?

Hans thinks of Morrow.

HANS

Someone with time.

Silence.

ELLEN

Are you in trouble?

Hans considers the word.

HANS

No.

ELLEN
Are you being watched?

Hans doesn't answer.

ELLEN (CONT'D)
Hans—

HANS
—I'm fine.

He stands.

HANS (CONT'D)
I have work in the morning.

He carries the folded paper to the desk. Opens a drawer.

Places it inside.

Locks it.

The sound echoes.

ELLEN
You never lock that drawer.

HANS
I do now.

ELLEN
Do they know what it's being used
for?

HANS
That determination is not ours to
make.

ELLEN
Someone is making it.

HANS
Someone always is.

ELLEN
Then why does it feel like you're
the one making sure no one asks?

Hans doesn't answer.

He gathers the papers on the table. Stacks them neatly.

HANS
This conversation isn't productive.

ELLEN
Neither is silence.

Hans turns off the light.

The room goes dark.

He turns off the lamp.

The room falls into darkness.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Hans lies awake.

Ellen sleeps beside him.

Hans stares at the ceiling.

The faint sound of a clock ticking.

Each tick feels louder than the last.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. CORPORATE BUILDING - MORNING

Normal activity.

Employees arrive. Coats are hung. Doors open.

Hans enters, composed.

But something is different.

People glance at him. Not openly. Just long enough.

Hans notices.

INT. HANS' OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Hans sets his briefcase down.

His desk is clear.

Too clear.

The EXECUTIVE PREPARED folder is gone.

Hans stands still.

He presses the intercom.

HANS
(to intercom)
Frau Kohler.
Please come to my office.

A beat.

KOHLER (V.O.)
I'm afraid I can't, Herr Keller.

Hans frowns.

HANS
Why not?

KOHLER (V.O.)
Because the files were removed.

Hans absorbs this.

HANS
By whom?

KOHLER (V.O.)
Executive Oversight.

Early this morning.

HANS
Without notification?

KOHLER (V.O.)
There was a directive.

Hans hangs up.

He opens his desk drawer.

The locked drawer.

He unlocks it.

The folded printout is still there.

For now.

CUT TO:

INT. EXECUTIVE OVERSIGHT OFFICE - LATER

Hans stands while Krause sits.

A subtle power reversal.

KRAUSE
You weren't meant to see the
preparation draft.

HANS
I was meant to implement it.

KRAUSE
You were meant to administer it.

Hans stiffens.

HANS
Then why remove the materials?

KRAUSE
Because inquiry has progressed.

Hans leans forward.

HANS
Progressed how?

KRAUSE
Beyond containment.

Silence.

HANS
Is Morrow involved?

KRAUSE
Morrow has filed a preliminary
report.

Hans exhales.

HANS
On what basis?

KRAUSE
Arithmetic.

Hans almost smiles.

HANS
That's not evidence.

KRAUSE

No.
But it's enough to justify
movement.

Hans thinks.

HANS

Then we respond.

KRAUSE

We already have.

Hans looks up sharply.

HANS

Without consulting me?

KRAUSE

Without delay.

Hans realizes something.

HANS

You've conceded jurisdiction.

KRAUSE

We've acknowledged it.

Hans steps back.

HANS

Then oversight is no longer
shielding.

KRAUSE

It's repositioning.

HANS

By sacrificing—

KRAUSE

—by surviving.

Hans meets his eyes.

HANS

And my role?

Krause stands.

KRAUSE

You will cooperate fully.

HANS
As what?

KRAUSE
As a witness.

That lands.

HANS
Witness to what?

Krause considers him.

KRAUSE
To compliance.

Hans absorbs the word.

CUT TO:

INT. CORPORATE CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Hans walks.

This time, people do not glance away.

They watch him.

Doors close quietly as he passes.

CUT TO:

INT. HANS' OFFICE - LATER

Hans sits alone.

The folded printout lies on the desk.

He opens it.

Studies it again.

This time, not as data.

As implication.

The numbers tell a story.

He reaches for the phone.

Stops.

He places the receiver down.
 Instead, he folds the paper carefully.
 Places it in his briefcase.
 Locks it.

CUT TO:

INT. BUILDING EXIT - EVENING
 Hans steps outside.
 The city hums.
 Normal life.
 He pauses.
 For the first time, unsure which direction to go.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. LEGAL PREPARATION ROOM - AFTERNOON
 Neutral. Sparse.
 A table. Three chairs. No windows.
 Hans sits alone.
 A glass of water in front of him. Untouched.
 The door opens.
 DAVID MORROW enters, accompanied by a LEGAL OFFICER (40s),
 dry, methodical, carrying a file.
 Morrow nods politely.

MORROW
 Herr Keller.

HANS
 Mr. Morrow.

They sit.
 The legal officer places the file on the table.

LEGAL OFFICER
This is preparatory.
Not testimony.

Hans nods.

LEGAL OFFICER (CONT'D)
Everything said here is on record.

Hans absorbs this.

MORROW
We'd like to understand your role.

HANS
It's documented.

LEGAL OFFICER
We'd like to hear it.

Hans considers his words.

HANS
I oversaw compliance with
distribution regulations.

MORROW
Meaning?

HANS
Meaning I ensured materials were
supplied

in accordance with approved guidelines.

LEGAL OFFICER
Did those guidelines include
application?

HANS
No.

MORROW
Did they exclude it?

Hans pauses.

HANS
They didn't address it.

MORROW
That's not the same thing.

Hans remains still.

HANS
Silence is not implication.

MORROW
Sometimes it is.

The legal officer flips a page.

LEGAL OFFICER
Let's talk about returns.

Hans stiffens slightly.

HANS
Returns were logged correctly.

LEGAL OFFICER
Correctly doesn't mean normally.

Hans leans back.

HANS
Normal is not a legal standard.

MORROW
Neither is ignorance.

Hans looks at him.

HANS
I wasn't ignorant.

MORROW
Then what were you?

A beat.

HANS
Exact.

Morrow nods slowly.

MORROW
That's what concerns us.

The legal officer slides a document forward.

LEGAL OFFICER
This is your memo.

Hans reads.

LEGAL OFFICER (CONT'D)

You wrote:

"Application falls outside supplier oversight."

HANS

Yes.

LEGAL OFFICER

Why?

HANS

Because oversight implies responsibility.

MORROW

And responsibility implies knowledge.

Hans says nothing.

LEGAL OFFICER

At what point does frequency become knowledge?

Hans thinks.

HANS

When it's contextualized.

MORROW

Contextualized how?

HANS

By intent.

MORROW

Whose intent?

Hans hesitates.

HANS

The purchaser's.

MORROW

And if the purchaser never states intent?

Silence.

LEGAL OFFICER

Then intent is inferred.

Hans looks down.

LEGAL OFFICER (CONT'D)

By whom?

Hans looks up.

HANS

By those authorized to infer it.

MORROW

Which would be—

Hans stops himself.

MORROW (CONT'D)

You.

The word hangs.

HANS

No.

LEGAL OFFICER

Then who?

Hans exhales.

HANS

Executive Oversight.

MORROW

And when Oversight removes
interpretation?

Hans realizes the trap.

HANS

Then responsibility fragments.

MORROW

Exactly.

Morrow leans forward.

MORROW (CONT'D)

And fragments still cut.

Hans looks at the glass of water.

Still untouched.

LEGAL OFFICER

Did you ever suspect misuse?

Hans considers this carefully.

HANS
Suspicion is not procedure.

MORROW
But it's human.

Hans meets his eyes.

HANS
I don't operate as a human here.

Silence.

The legal officer closes the file.

LEGAL OFFICER
That will be all for now.

Morrow stands.

MORROW
We'll speak again.

Hans nods.

They leave.

Hans remains seated.

He reaches for the glass of water.

Takes a sip.

It tastes metallic.

He sets it down.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. EXECUTIVE OVERSIGHT OFFICE - EVENING

Dim now.

Only one lamp on Krause's desk. The building beyond the glass is dark.

Hans stands. Krause sits.

Between them: a thin folder.

KRAUSE
You performed well.

Hans doesn't respond.

KRAUSE (CONT'D)
You were precise.
Measured. Consistent.

HANS
I answered questions.

KRAUSE
You preserved language.

Hans looks at the folder.

HANS
What is this?

KRAUSE
Your cooperation agreement.

Hans opens it.

Reads.

His face tightens – just slightly.

HANS
This isn't cooperation.

KRAUSE
It's alignment.

HANS
It removes my discretion.

KRAUSE
It removes your exposure.

Hans flips a page.

HANS
You're asking me to testify to
process, not outcome.

KRAUSE
Outcome isn't your jurisdiction.

HANS
It never was.

KRAUSE
And yet here we are.

Hans closes the folder.

HANS
If I refuse?

Krause leans back.

KRAUSE
Then you become inefficient.

Hans studies him.

HANS
That's a threat.

KRAUSE
No.
It's a forecast.

Hans considers the words.

HANS
And if I comply?

KRAUSE
Then you remain useful.

A beat.

HANS
To whom?

Krause smiles faintly.

KRAUSE
To the record.

Hans absorbs that.

HANS
You're writing history.

KRAUSE
History writes itself.
We just organize it.

Hans looks at the folder again.

HANS
This document—
It limits testimony.

KRAUSE
It frames it.

HANS
It prevents interpretation.

KRAUSE
Exactly.

Silence.

Hans opens the folder again.

Reads the final page.

There is a place to sign.

He removes his pen.

Hovers.

Stops.

HANS
If arithmetic becomes narrative—

KRAUSE
—then language becomes defense.

Hans looks up.

HANS
And truth?

Krause doesn't hesitate.

KRAUSE
Truth is what survives inquiry.

Hans lowers the pen.

Signs.

Krause nods.

KRAUSE (CONT'D)
Wise.

Hans stands.

HANS
Am I done?

KRAUSE
For now.

Hans exits.

CUT TO:

INT. CORPORATE CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Hans walks.

This time, no one watches him.

They look away.

CUT TO:

INT. KELLER APARTMENT - NIGHT

Hans enters quietly.

Ellen is at the table. A cup of tea untouched.

ELLEN

They came.

Hans freezes.

HANS

Who?

ELLEN

Two men.

Polite. Persistent.

Hans sets his coat down slowly.

HANS

What did you say?

ELLEN

That I didn't know anything.

Hans nods.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

They didn't believe me.

HANS

They won't.

ELLEN

Are we safe?

Hans considers the word.

HANS
We're contained.

ELLEN
That's not the same thing.

Hans doesn't answer.
He reaches into his briefcase.
Removes the signed agreement.
Does not show it to her.
Places it in the locked drawer.
Locks it.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. LEGAL HOLDING AREA - MORNING
Plain. Institutional.
Benches along the wall. A clock with no second hand.
Hans sits alone.
The signed agreement rests in his briefcase.
The door opens.
The LEGAL OFFICER enters. No Morrow this time.

LEGAL OFFICER
Herr Keller.

HANS
I was told this was procedural.

LEGAL OFFICER
It is.

Hans stands.

HANS
Then why am I waiting here?

The legal officer consults a folder.

LEGAL OFFICER
Because your designation has
changed.

Hans absorbs that.

HANS
To what?

LEGAL OFFICER
Material witness.

Hans nods slowly.

HANS
I was already cooperating.

LEGAL OFFICER
You were.
Under corporate alignment.

HANS
And now?

The legal officer meets his eyes.

LEGAL OFFICER
Now you're cooperating under
inquiry.

A beat.

HANS
That contradicts the agreement.

LEGAL OFFICER
The agreement governs internal
exposure.

HANS
This is external.

LEGAL OFFICER
Exactly.

Hans exhales.

HANS
You said it would protect me.

LEGAL OFFICER
We said it would position you.

Hans sits back down.

HANS
Positioned where?

LEGAL OFFICER
Closest to the facts.

Hans almost laughs.

HANS
Facts were never my jurisdiction.

LEGAL OFFICER
They are now.

Silence.

LEGAL OFFICER (CONT'D)
You'll be called later today.

HANS
To testify?

LEGAL OFFICER
To clarify.

Hans closes his eyes briefly.

HANS
And if I decline?

LEGAL OFFICER
Then the record proceeds without
your precision.

Hans opens his eyes.

HANS
Which would make it inaccurate.

LEGAL OFFICER
It would make it sufficient.

The legal officer gathers his folder.

LEGAL OFFICER (CONT'D)
One more thing.

Hans looks up.

LEGAL OFFICER (CONT'D)
Your wife has been contacted.

Hans stiffens.

HANS
She's not involved.

LEGAL OFFICER
She was present.

HANS
Presence is not implication.

LEGAL OFFICER
It is when proximity exists.

Hans clenches his jaw.

LEGAL OFFICER (CONT'D)
We'll call you shortly.

The legal officer exits.

Hans remains seated.

The clock ticks.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM ANTECHAMBER - LATER

Muted sounds from beyond the door.

Murmurs. Shuffling papers.

Hans stands alone.

He removes the agreement from his briefcase.

Reads it again.

This time slower.

The language is airtight. And useless.

A COURT OFFICER appears.

COURT OFFICER
Herr Keller.

Hans folds the agreement.

Places it back into the briefcase.

Locks it.

COURT OFFICER (CONT'D)
They're ready for you.

Hans nods.

Takes one last breath.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Large. Severe.

High ceilings. Dark wood. No ornamentation.

The room is already in session.

Hans sits at a side table, behind his counsel. He is not the focus.

Across the room, the PROSECUTOR (50s), controlled, unadorned, addresses the court.

On the stand sits a LOGISTICS OFFICER (40s). Tired. Defensive.

PROSECUTOR
You oversaw delivery schedules.

LOGISTICS OFFICER
Yes.

PROSECUTOR
And return handling.

LOGISTICS OFFICER
Yes.

PROSECUTOR
Were you aware of the frequency with which empty containers were returned?

LOGISTICS OFFICER
I logged what I was given.

PROSECUTOR
That wasn't my question.

The officer shifts.

LOGISTICS OFFICER
I was aware of numbers.

PROSECUTOR
Did those numbers ever concern you?

LOGISTICS OFFICER
Concern is subjective.

The prosecutor nods.

PROSECUTOR
Who determined what concern was?

LOGISTICS OFFICER
Compliance.

The prosecutor turns slightly.

PROSECUTOR
Meaning Herr Keller?

Hans stiffens.

LOGISTICS OFFICER
Yes.

The prosecutor lets that sit.

PROSECUTOR
And when you raised questions—

LOGISTICS OFFICER
—I was told they were outside my
remit.

PROSECUTOR
By whom?

LOGISTICS OFFICER
Herr Keller.

Hans's counsel leans toward him. Hans doesn't look.

PROSECUTOR
What was the justification?

LOGISTICS OFFICER
That application was not our
responsibility.

The words echo.

PROSECUTOR
Application of what?

The officer hesitates.

LOGISTICS OFFICER
Material.

PROSECUTOR
Material used how?

The officer looks down.

LOGISTICS OFFICER
I was never told.

The prosecutor nods.

PROSECUTOR
But you understood something was
happening.

LOGISTICS OFFICER
I understood it wasn't my place.

The prosecutor steps closer.

PROSECUTOR
Whose place was it?

The officer swallows.

LOGISTICS OFFICER
Compliance.

A murmur ripples through the room.

Hans stares forward.

PROSECUTOR
No further questions.

The prosecutor returns to his seat.

Defense counsel rises.

DEFENSE COUNSEL
You never witnessed misuse.

LOGISTICS OFFICER
No.

DEFENSE COUNSEL
You never received explicit
instruction.

LOGISTICS OFFICER
No.

DEFENSE COUNSEL
So your testimony is speculation.

LOGISTICS OFFICER
It's experience.

DEFENSE COUNSEL
Experience is not evidence.

The officer looks helplessly at Hans.

LOGISTICS OFFICER
It was enough for me.

The judge raises a hand.

JUDGE
That will be sufficient.

The officer steps down.

Hans watches him pass.

Their eyes meet.

The officer looks relieved. Hans does not.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - LATER

Another witness finishes testifying.

Hans's counsel leans in.

COUNSEL
You're next.

Hans leans toward his COUNSEL.

HANS
If they press on frequency,
anchor the language to compliance.
Avoid inference.

COUNSEL
Understood.

Across the room, the PROSECUTOR rises.

PROSECUTOR
Before the next witness,
the prosecution requests a brief
clarification for the record.

The JUDGE nods.

PROSECUTOR (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
It has been suggested that
responsibility
can be limited by regulation.

Hans stiffens slightly.

PROSECUTOR (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
The prosecution intends to
demonstrate
that regulation was used to prevent
inquiry- not define its limits.

A murmur moves through the courtroom.

The prosecutor turns. Looks directly at Hans.

PROSECUTOR (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
And that such language originated
with the witness about to testify.

Hans realizes - too late - his framing has already been
absorbed.

COUNSEL
(quietly)
They anticipated it.

Hans says nothing.

Hans nods.

He stands.

As he moves toward the stand, the courtroom seems to narrow.

Language has already decided the case.

Hans places his hand on the rail.

The BAILIFF gestures.

BAILIFF
Please raise your right hand.

Hans does.

BAILIFF (CONT'D)
Do you swear-

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. COURTROOM - CONTINUOUS

Hans is seated on the stand now.

Composed. Hands folded. The oath still hangs in the air.

The PROSECUTOR rises immediately.

PROSECUTOR
Herr Keller,
you oversaw compliance.

HANS
Yes.

PROSECUTOR
Not outcomes.

HANS
Correct.

PROSECUTOR
But compliance governs
distribution.

HANS
Yes.

PROSECUTOR
And distribution governs access.

HANS
Yes.

PROSECUTOR
So compliance governs access.

Hans pauses.

HANS
Indirectly.

PROSECUTOR
Indirectly is still governance.

Hans doesn't answer.

PROSECUTOR (CONT'D)
You approved shipments.

HANS
I approved adherence to regulation.

PROSECUTOR
You approved shipments.

HANS
Yes.

PROSECUTOR
You tracked returns.

HANS
I ensured they were logged.

PROSECUTOR
You noticed frequency increases.

HANS
I noticed numbers.

PROSECUTOR
And those numbers never concerned
you?

HANS
Concern is not a function of my
role.

PROSECUTOR
You've said that before.

The prosecutor lifts a document.

PROSECUTOR (CONT'D)
Your memo.

Hans nods.

PROSECUTOR (CONT'D)
"Application falls outside supplier
oversight."

HANS
Yes.

PROSECUTOR
Who wrote that language?

HANS
I did.

PROSECUTOR
Why?

HANS
Because it was accurate.

PROSECUTOR
Accurate to whom?

HANS
To regulation.

PROSECUTOR
Not to reality.

Hans tightens slightly.

HANS
Reality is not a regulatory
category.

A ripple in the courtroom.

PROSECUTOR
Let's talk about reality anyway.

Hans waits.

PROSECUTOR (CONT'D)
Did you know what Zyklon B was used
for?

A beat.

This is the first time it's named.

HANS
I knew it was a fumigant.

PROSECUTOR
Used where?

HANS
In facilities requiring
disinfection.

PROSECUTOR
Human facilities?

Hans hesitates.

HANS
I did not differentiate.

PROSECUTOR
You didn't differentiate between
insects and people?

Defense counsel rises.

DEFENSE COUNSEL
Objection.

JUDGE
Overruled.

The prosecutor steps closer.

PROSECUTOR
Herr Keller, when empty containers
returned faster than full ones were
delivered, what did you think was
happening?

Hans breathes.

HANS
I thought—
I thought usage was occurring.

PROSECUTOR
Usage of what?

Hans doesn't answer.

PROSECUTOR (CONT'D)
Say it.

HANS
Material.

PROSECUTOR
Used on whom?

Silence.

Hans looks at the judge. Then back to the prosecutor.

HANS
I was not authorized to determine
that.

PROSECUTOR
But you were authorized to prevent
questions.

Hans swallows.

HANS
I was authorized to enforce
boundaries.

PROSECUTOR
Boundaries that protected whom?

Hans thinks.

HANS
The company.

PROSECUTOR
And who did the company protect?

Hans doesn't answer.

PROSECUTOR (CONT'D)
Herr Keller?

Hans closes his eyes briefly.

HANS
It protected itself.

The courtroom is silent.

PROSECUTOR
No further questions.

The prosecutor sits.

Hans remains still.

Defense counsel rises slowly.

DEFENSE COUNSEL
Herr Keller, you never killed
anyone.

HANS
No.

DEFENSE COUNSEL
You never operated a camp.

HANS
No.

DEFENSE COUNSEL
You never ordered harm.

HANS
No.

DEFENSE COUNSEL
You followed the law.

HANS
Yes.

DEFENSE COUNSEL
And you are now being punished
for doing your job.

Hans hesitates.

HANS
I am being questioned.

DEFENSE COUNSEL
For precision.

HANS
For exactness.

DEFENSE COUNSEL
For correctness.

HANS
Yes.

Defense counsel nods.

DEFENSE COUNSEL
Nothing further.

Hans exhales slowly.

The judge leans forward.

JUDGE
You may step down.

Hans stands.

As he steps away from the stand, he catches Ellen's eye in the gallery.

She is crying silently.

Hans looks away.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

A DIFFERENT DEFENDANT stands before the bench.

OLDER. SMALLER. LESS CENTRAL.

Hans sits behind counsel now. A spectator to judgment.

The JUDGE reads from prepared notes.

JUDGE

In consideration of the evidence
presented, this court finds the
defendant—

The words blur together.

Hans doesn't listen to the verdict. He watches the process.

The defendant nods as the sentence is delivered. Accepts it.

Murmurs ripple.

Hans glances toward the prosecution table.

Morrow listens. No satisfaction. No anger. Only completion.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM HALLWAY - LATER

Defendants pass. Guards escort. Families wait.

Hans stands alone against the wall.

The LOGISTICS OFFICER from earlier passes him. Avoids eye
contact.

Hans watches him go.

A reporter approaches.

REPORTER

Herr Keller— do you regret your
actions?

Hans considers the word.

HANS

Which actions?

REPORTER

Your approvals.

Hans thinks.

HANS

I regret misunderstanding the scope
of what was being asked.

The reporter scribbles.

REPORTER
Do you feel responsible?

Hans chooses carefully.

HANS
Responsibility was distributed.

REPORTER
That sounds like deflection.

Hans meets her eyes.

HANS
It sounds like structure.

She hesitates.

REPORTER
Would you do anything differently?

Hans pauses.

HANS
I would document more clearly.

The reporter looks unsettled.

REPORTER
Thank you.

She moves on.

Hans remains.

CUT TO:

INT. EXECUTIVE OFFICE - DAY

A new EXECUTIVE sits behind a familiar desk.

Younger. Calmer.

Hans stands across from him.

NEW EXECUTIVE
Your service record remains intact.

Hans nods.

NEW EXECUTIVE (CONT'D)
However, your position is no longer
tenable.

HANS
I understand.

NEW EXECUTIVE
You'll receive severance.

HANS
Of course.

NEW EXECUTIVE
Your testimony was...
helpful.

Hans absorbs that.

HANS
To whom?

NEW EXECUTIVE
To closure.

Hans nods.

NEW EXECUTIVE (CONT'D)
You're free to go.

Hans turns to leave.

NEW EXECUTIVE (CONT'D)
Herr Keller?

Hans stops.

NEW EXECUTIVE (CONT'D)
The company appreciates precision.

Hans looks back.

HANS
Precision is easy.
Responsibility is not.

The executive doesn't respond.

CUT TO:

INT. CORPORATE ARCHIVE ROOM - EVENING

Clerks work quietly.

New files are shelved.

A label is affixed:

CASE CLOSED
The drawer slides shut.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. INDUSTRIAL FACILITY - DAY

A different building.

Cleaner. Newer.

A production floor hums quietly.

Workers move with efficiency. No uniforms. No insignia.

A SUPERVISOR signs a form.

The form is stamped:

APPROVED FOR DISTRIBUTION

CUT TO:

INT. CORPORATE TRAINING ROOM - DAY

A small group of NEW EMPLOYEES sit at desks.

A TRAINING MANAGER speaks calmly.

TRAINING MANAGER
Our responsibility ends at
delivery.
Application falls outside supplier
oversight.

The employees write this down.

CUT TO:

INT. SHIPPING OFFICE - DAY

A YOUNG COMPLIANCE OFFICER reviews logs.

She pauses.

Looks at return frequency.

Frowns slightly.

Then flips the page.

Continues.

CUT TO:

INT. ARCHIVE FACILITY - DAY

Old files are boxed.

A clerk affixes a label:

DEGESCH / TESTA

HISTORICAL RECORDS

The box is sealed.

Placed on a shelf among hundreds of others.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Hans walks.

No briefcase now. No urgency.

He passes a storefront.

In the reflection, for a moment, he appears doubled.

Then singular again.

He stops at a crosswalk.

The light changes.

He crosses.

CUT TO:

INT. KELLER APARTMENT - EVENING

Hans sits alone at the dining table.

The locked drawer is open.

Inside: the folded printout.

He removes it.

Unfolds it.

Looks at the numbers.
 They mean something now.
 He folds the paper again.
 This time, he does not lock it away.
 He places it in the trash.
 Watches it settle.

CUT TO:

EXT. BARBED WIRE FENCE - DUSK
 The same fence from the opening.
 Still.
 Quiet.
 No guards now.
 The wire is rusted. Untended.
 A drop of water gathers.
 Falls.
 Another takes its place.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. CORPORATE TRAINING ROOM - LATER
 The same room.
 The session is ending.
 The TRAINING MANAGER closes a binder.

TRAINING MANAGER
 Questions?

Silence.
 A HAND raises.
 A young man. Early 20s. Earnest.

TRAINEE
 If something doesn't look 'right'—
 who do we tell?

The manager smiles politely.

 TRAINING MANAGER
 You document it.

 TRAINEE
 And if documentation doesn't
 resolve it?

The manager considers this.

 TRAINING MANAGER
 Then it isn't documentation's
 purpose.

The trainee nods. Writes that down.

CUT TO:

INT. SHIPPING OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The YOUNG COMPLIANCE OFFICER stamps a form.

APPROVED FOR DISTRIBUTION

She hesitates. Looks again at the numbers.

Her supervisor passes.

 SUPERVISOR
 Everything all right?

She straightens.

 COMPLIANCE OFFICER
 Yes.

She stamps the form again. Harder this time.

CUT TO:

INT. ARCHIVE FACILITY - NIGHT

Lights dim.

A lone clerk wheels a cart of files.

One folder slips. Falls open.

We glimpse a familiar memo:

"APPLICATION FALLS OUTSIDE SUPPLIER OVERSIGHT."

The clerk doesn't read it.

Puts it back. Keeps moving.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Hans exits a modest office building.

Not corporate. Not grand.

A small plaque by the door:

CONSULTING SERVICES

Hans pauses.

Looks at it.

Then walks on.

CUT TO:

INT. SMALL OFFICE - DAY

Hans sits at a desk.

A new role. Same habits.

A client across from him speaks.

CLIENT

We just want to make sure
we're protected.

Hans nods.

HANS

Protection is a matter of framing.

CLIENT

And responsibility?

Hans thinks.

HANS
Responsibility depends on
proximity.

The client nods, reassured.

CUT TO:

INT. KELLER APARTMENT - NIGHT

Hans sits alone.

The apartment is quieter now.

He opens a drawer.

Inside: the pocket watch.

He opens it.

The ticking is loud in the silence.

He closes it.

Sets it down.

CUT TO:

EXT. BARBED WIRE FENCE - NIGHT

The fence again.

Moonlight this time.

The wire hums faintly in the wind.

No guards. No signs. No warning.

Just metal.

CUT TO BLACK.

Silence.

Then—

A faint, rhythmic DRIP.

One drop.

Then another.

FADE OUT.

INT. GOVERNMENT RECORDS OFFICE - DAY

A vast, fluorescent-lit room.

Rows of desks. Stacks of folders. Clerks typing.

No urgency. No drama.

A file is placed onto a metal cart.

The label reads:

"KELLER, HANS - COMPLIANCE TESTIMONY"

A STAMP comes down:

ARCHIVED

The clerk pushes the cart forward.

CUT TO:

INT. TRANSLATION OFFICE - DAY

A woman translates documents into English.

She pauses on a sentence.

Reads it aloud quietly.

TRANSLATOR

"Application falls outside supplier oversight."

She types the translation.

Moves on.

CUT TO:

INT. LEGAL REVIEW ROOM - DAY

A panel of OFFICIALS reviews summaries.

No defendants present. Just paper.

OFFICIAL #1
The language is consistent.

OFFICIAL #2
And defensible.

OFFICIAL #3
Then it stands.

A document is initialed.

CUT TO:

INT. ARCHIVE VAULT - DAY

Heavy doors open.

The cart rolls inside.

Shelves stretch into darkness.

Boxes are stacked by year.

1946. 1947. 1948.

The clerk slides the Keller file into place.

It disappears among hundreds of others.

The vault doors CLOSE.

The sound echoes.

CUT TO:

INT. SMALL CONSULTING OFFICE - DAY

Hans sits at his desk.

Older now. Quieter.

A calendar on the wall: 1951.

Hans reviews a document.

He underlines a phrase.

"LIMITATION OF LIABILITY."

He signs.

Pushes the paper forward.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET - EVENING

Hans exits the building.

The city continues.

People pass him. No recognition.

A newspaper headline in a window:

"INDUSTRIAL EXECUTIVES RELEASED"

Hans stops.

Reads.

Moves on.

CUT TO:

INT. CORPORATE TRAINING ROOM - DAY (YEARS LATER)

A new TRAINING MANAGER speaks.

Different face. Same words.

TRAINING MANAGER
Responsibility diminishes with
distance.

Employees write it down.

CUT TO:

EXT. BARBED WIRE FENCE - DAWN

The fence again.

Older. More rusted.

A section has collapsed.

Grass grows through it.

The wire no longer restrains anything.

A DROP of water falls.

Another follows.

FADE TO BLACK.

TITLE CARD:

Zyklon B was used in Nazi extermination camps to murder millions of men, women, and children during the Holocaust.

Hold. Silence.

TITLE CARD:

The gas was manufactured, distributed, and supplied through lawful commercial and governmental channels.

Hold.

TITLE CARD:

Some individuals involved in its production and distribution were tried after the war. Others returned to private life. The system endured.

Hold longer.

FINAL TITLE CARD
(END USE):

The end use was known.

Hold.

FADE OUT.

END.