

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  
Arithmetick 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.