

Peterson (Rolfe,  
Parker, Haywood)

the efficiency report made at the school about Mr. Peterson. He failed to be promoted and was placed in a class of backward children.

COLONEL PARKER: Objection Your Honor. The witness's school record has nothing to do with his sterilization.

ROLFE: It was the task of the Health Court to order sterilization of the mentally incompetent.

HAYWOOD: Objection overruled.

ROLFE: Did your parents die of natural causes?

PETERSON: Yes.

ROLFE: Would you describe the illness your mother died of.

PETERSON: She died of heart disease.

ROLFE: During the last stages of her illness, did your mother show any mental peculiarities?

PETERSON: No.

ROLFE: In a decision that came from the court in Stuttgart, it is stated that your mother suffered from hereditary feeble-mindedness.

PETERSON: That's a lie!

ROLFE: *Peter* you give us some clarification as to how the Hereditary Health Court at Stuttgart arrived at that decision?

PETERSON: It was just something they said to get me on the operating table.

ROLFE: It was just something they said. Mr. Peterson. You said, the court in Stuttgart asked you two questions. The birth date of Hitler and Dr. Goebbels?

PETERSON: Yes.

ROLFE: What else did they ask you?

PETERSON: Nothing else.

ROLFE: Are you sure?

PETERSON: Yes I am sure.

ROLFE: Mr. Peterson, there was a simple test that the court used to ask in all cases of possible mental incompetence. Since you say they did not ask you then, perhaps you can answer it now. Form a sentence out of the words: hare, hunter and field.

COLONEL PARKER: Objection, Your Honors.

HAYWOOD: Mr. Peterson, was the court at Stuttgart constituted like this? Was there an audience?

PETERSON: Yes, Sir. There was an audience.

HAYWOOD: Objection overruled.

ROLFE: Hare, hunter and field, Mr. Peterson. Take your time.

PETERSON: Hare, hunter and field . . . hare hunter field. [Turns toward judges.] They all made up their minds before I entered the courtroom they all made up their minds! They took me to that hospital and kept me there just like a criminal and I couldn't say anything! I just had to lay there. [Stands up, shouting, turns to Rolfe.] My mother was a hard working, very good woman all her life! It's not fair to say things about her! [Turns to Haywood.] I have a picture. [Walks out of the witness box towards the judges' bench, pleading, crying.] I would like to show it to you. I would like you to look at it. I would like you to judge whether my mother was feeble-minded or not. I want you to tell me if she was feeble-minded. My mother! Was she feeble-minded? Was she? [Crying.]

ROLFE: It is my duty to point out to the Tribunal that the witness is not in control of his mental processes.

PETERSON: I am not! I know I am not! Since that day I am half of what I've ever been but I wasn't this way before.

ROLFE: The Tribunal does not know the way you were before. It can never know. It has only your word.

[Rolfe walks slowly from the stand back to the dock. There is no pride in his walk.]

SCENE: BAR IN THE GRAND HOTEL

*[Ives and Haywood are sitting. Ives is eating a plate of strudel. Sounds of music from an orchestra in the hotel drift in. It is an echo of the kind of music that was played during the Third Reich: waltzes, themes from threadbare operettas.]*

IVES: They have the greatest strudel I've ever tasted here.

HAYWOOD: It's good. But I'm getting a little bit tired of it. And little bit with the music, too. Don't they ever change their repertoire? I must have heard this tune a thousand times.

[Mrs. Bertholt passes.]

IVES: Just a minute. Mrs. Bertholt! Won't you come over? [To Haywood.] This is Mrs. Bertholt. Judge Haywood.

MRS. BERTHOLT: We've met. Hello.

HAYWOOD: Hello again.

~ IVES: Won't you join us for a drink?

MRS. BERTHOLT: Oh, thank you.

HAYWOOD: Please do. What would you like?

MRS. BERTHOLT: What are you having?

HAYWOOD: Well I've had my fill of beer. So I—