

Children of the Flames: Dr. Josef Mengele and the Untold Story of the Twins of Auschwitz Study Guide

Children of the Flames: Dr. Josef Mengele and the Untold Story of the Twins of Auschwitz by Lucette Matalon Lagnado

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Plot Summary

Children of the Flames is the story of the twins tortured by Dr. Josef Mengele at Auschwitz and its aftermath written by Lucette Matalon Lagnado and widow of Mengele victim Alex Dekel, Sheila Cohn Dekel. In this book, the writers tell the story of Josef Mengele, beginning with his ordinary childhood in a small town near the Danube and taking readers through his education and career at Auschwitz, followed by his escape and relatively uneventful life after the war. Interspersed through Mengele's story is the story of the twins he tortured at Auschwitz who were lucky enough to survive only to face ongoing prejudice in their home countries and the psychological damage left by Mengele's actions. Children of the Flames shares a story that is often overlooked in view of the massive number of stories that came out of the Holocaust. This story will leave the reader filled rage, but also inspired by the strength these survivors found in themselves to overcome their experiences.

Mengele was born in Gunzburg, a small town near the Danube where his father owned a farming equipment factory. Mengele was loved in his small town because of his charm. When Mengele was a teenager, he decided to become a doctor so that he might make a name for himself beyond his father's factory. Mengele would come to study under Otmar von Verschuer, a well known and highly respect eugenics professor. Hitler had risen in power by this point and was promoting his idea of racial supremacy. This caused academics like Verschuer to quickly gain in popularity and respect. In fact, Verschuer would become instrumental in forming the guidelines for Hitler's Final Solution. It was under Verschuer's guidance that Mengele first became fascinated with twins and the possibility that they held the secrets to genetics.

When World War II broke out, Mengele quickly joined the Wehrmacht, but quickly decided he would rather join the SS. As an SS officer, Mengele was injured in Russia and deemed unfit for combat. Shortly after this, with Verschuer's help, Mengele was given a position as camp doctor at Auschwitz. Mengele was placed in charge of deciding who would live and who would die. Mengele also was given grants to conduct experiments. Mengele would watch for twins, giants, midgets, and other unusual specimens to use as test subjects. Mengele would subject these specimens to multiple experiments, including operating on them without use of anesthesia, injecting chemicals into their eyes to change the color, twin to twin transfusions, and dissection.

As the war drew to a close, Mengele sent all his notes to his mentor, Verschuer, out of fear that the Russians would get hold of them. Mengele then left Auschwitz and took refuge in two other camps before he was finally captured. Mengele spent several weeks in a prison camp before he was released. Mengele faked his identification and his captors had no idea who he was. For three years after his release, Mengele lived and worked on a farm while many of his surviving victims made their way home and found the prejudice against Jews had only intensified in their post-war world. As his victims began to immigrate to Israel, Mengele managed to make his way to Argentina.



Mengele made a good life for himself in Argentina, even marrying the widow of his brother Karl. However, when it became known to Mengele that the German government was searching for him, Mengele liquidated his assets and moved first to Paraguay and later to Brazil. In Brazil, Mengele would hide in the home of a family paid to protect him. This would last only a decade before the family would finally send Mengele to live on his own. In 1979, Mengele would have a stroke while swimming and drown.

In 1985, through the organization CANDLES many of the surviving twins of Auschwitz would return to the concentration camp, walk the path of the Death Walk, and hold a mock trial for Mengele. The twins would finally be allowed to tell their story. In the end, however, news of Mengele's death would leave many skeptical as scientist struggled to prove he was truly dead.



Prologue, The Jazz Bar, and Chapter 1, Mengele and his Children

Prologue, The Jazz Bar, and Chapter 1, Mengele and his Children Summary and Analysis

Lucette Matalon Lagnado learned about the twins of Auschwitz when she was assigned to find and interview the survivors for an article. This assignment made her determined to tell the twins' story in more detail. Sheila Cohn Dekel was married to Alex Dekel, a young Jewish boy who was targeted at Auschwitz not because he was a twin, but because he had the blue eyes and blond hair of an Aryan youth.

Prologue, The Jazz Bar. Zvi the Sailor, a surviving twin of Auschwitz, told the writers that he has sailed all over the world, constantly moving in the hopes of forgetting about Mengele. However, Zvi told the writers that Mengele was always with him until one afternoon when he found himself in a jazz bar in New York City. For one hour, Zvi listened to Louis Armstrong and others play their music. When Zvi left the club, he realized he had not thought of Mengele once during his entire visit to the bar.

Mengele and his Children. Josef Mengele was born in Gunzburg to Karl and Walburga Mengele. Josef was the eldest of three sons. Karl Mengele invented some kind of farming equipment that led to him opening a factory in Gunzburg. As a child, Josef was a take charge kind of person who often charmed people with his wit. Josef was also something of a dandy, taking great care in his appearance, something he learned from his father. Josef was very close to his mother, an unpleasant woman who was feared and loathed by the factory workers.

As Josef grew older, he decided to become a doctor to come out from under his father's shadow. Josef studied at the University of Munich. Josef earned a Ph.D. in anthropology at the university before going on to the University of Frankfurt where he studied under Otmar von Verschuer, a renowned eugenics professor. It was with Verschuer that Mengele learned genetics and became involved in the growing movement in Germany to purify society by purging it of weaker races and producing more of the preferred Aryan blue eyed and blond men and women. It was also through Verschuer that Mengele became fascinated with twins, both in terms of the genetic secrets they might hold and the possibility of creating an Aryan population quicker with twin births.

After finishing his dissertation in genetics on the differences of the jaw among various races, Mengele became engaged to his first wife, Irene Schoenbein. At the same time, the war began and Mengele was summoned to serve three months with the Wehrmacht. This experience soured Mengele on the Wehrmacht, therefore he joined the SS. Two years later, Mengele would be injured on the Russian front and declared unfit for duty. Shortly thereafter, with Verschuer's help, Mengele secured a position as camp doctor at Auschwitz as well as several grants to conduct experiments at the camp.



As Mengele grew up and studied medicine, many of his future victims at Auschwitz were also growing up, several in wealthy households. However, as the war broke out, most of these children were forced to leave their homes. Several groups of these children were forced into the ghettos of Cluj while others attempted to hide from the SS before being captured and sent either to the ghettos or a succession of concentration camps that would eventually bring them to Auschwitz.

In the prologue, the reader learns of the lingering psychological effects of Mengele's actions on one of his twin survivors, Zvi the Sailor. Zvi became a sailor so that he would not have to stay in one place for very long. Zvi hoped to outrun his memories, but eventually found he could not do this. This sets the reader up to understand just how dark and dangerous Mengele was before opening the story of Mengele's life.

Mengele had a fairly normal childhood, growing up the bright and preferred child in his hometown. Mengele became something of a dandy as he began paying a great deal of attention to his clothing and overall appearance. This was a habit that would stay with Mengele all his life. Mengele, a mediocre student, decided to become a doctor to bring him out of his father's shadow and make a name for himself. This led Mengele to Dr. Verschuer, a professor who was a proponent of eugenics, the sterilization of unwanted races and the promotion of preferred races. This science flourished in Europe under Hitler and even had some support in places as far away as the United States. It was here that Mengele became obsessed with learning how to manipulate genes and promote the production of the Aryan race. It was also here that Mengele began to focus on twins as a means to make his theories and hopes come true.

As Mengele was growing up and learning medicine, his future victims were also growing up. Many of these twins lived carefree lives until the war, lives that were as normal and simple as the Germans they would soon call their enemies. There was little difference between Mengele and his victims until the war began and one nation decided to eradicate an entire race of people.



Chapter 2, Auschwitz Movie

Chapter 2, Auschwitz Movie Summary and Analysis

In Auschwitz Movie, when Magda Spiegel arrived at Auschwitz she thought it was like watching a movie. Vera Blau thought it looked very crowded. Zvi the Sailor did not have time to form an opinion of the camp before he was dragged from the line to join Mengele's twins.

Mengele would stand outside the trains and often engage the new arrivals in conversation even as he picked and chose who would live and who would die. As Mengele guided the Jews in two separate directions he watched for unusual specimens such as twins, giants, midgets, and other odd children. Mengele picked Alex Dekel simply because he had the blue eyes and blond hair of the preferred Aryan race. Mengele would then take his chosen children to the twin barracks at Birkenau where the boys' barracks was within view of the crematoriums where many of their parents were gassed and cremated. Occasionally Mengele would allow a mother to remain with her children if they were too young to care for themselves, but normally Mengele would send the parents of his specimens to the crematoriums. Mengele also chose a grown twin, Zvi Speigel, to oversee the boys while he had his twin sister, Magda Speigel, work as his housekeeper. It was not until a few days after her arrival that Magda learned her seven year old son was sent to the crematorium by Mengele.

As each child was chosen, he or she was expected to fill out a questionnaire about their health and family. Mengele would then meet with each child personally to ask more questions. The children would then be transported to several different labs where they would undergo various different types of medical tests, often tests performed by Jewish doctors saved from the crematorium because of their professional knowledge. Mengele would sometimes take so much blood from his subjects that they would bleed to death. At other time Mengele would have chemicals injected into his subjects' eyes to find ways to change eye color. Mengele would conduct twin to twin transfusions, remove limbs and organs without the use of anesthesia, or would simply kill more interesting specimen in order to immediately dissect their bodies. Always when Mengele was done with a subject he would dissect their bodies, often sending organs or other samples to Verschuer.

Mengele was often kind to his twins. Mengele would often visit the barracks and give the children candy. At times Mengele would pick out a particular child he especially liked and allow them to follow him around the barracks. One child even called himself Mengele because of his close association with the doctor. In fact, several of Mengele's surviving twins still remember him as a kind man. At the same time, Mengele kept his experiments under a tight lid, keeping world of his experiments from reaching the barracks so that the children would not show fear when they arrived for their chosen tests.



In this chapter of the book, the reader learns more about the horrors Mengele committed at Auschwitz. Interspersed with comments from the surviving twins, the reader begins to learn what a double personality Mengele showed to his twins and the others around him, almost as though he had twin personalities himself. Mengele was careful to keep word of the experiments spreading throughout the camp so that his children would not learn about what lay ahead of them. On top of this, Mengele would often visit the barracks and bring the children candy, winning them over with the same charm that made Mengele such a favorite in his hometown.

Mengele conducted experiments on these children that were so dark and painful that many of the grown twins have blocked all memory of the experiments, leaving them with only impressions, convincing some that Mengele could not have been the terrible man everyone says he is. Many of these grown survivors are confused about what happened to them in Auschwitz, knowing only that they were kept from their families and subjected to tests that sometimes prevented others from ever returning to the barracks. The differences between Mengele and the children he had such a lack of compassion for are made exceedingly clear in this chapter, leaving the reader shocked and angry, fearful despite the rationalization that these ones, these lucky few, survived.



Chapter 3, The Angel of Death

Chapter 3, The Angel of Death Summary and Analysis

In *The Angel of Death*, by the summer of 1944, almost all the captives at Auschwitz had been cremated, including the members of the Gypsy camp in the center of Birkenau. Only Mengele's twins survived. The twins would often see the planes flying overhead that belonged to the United States or Russia and pray that the planes would drop bombs and put them out of their misery.

Mengele continued to monitor the new arrivals, sending those he did not want to the gas chambers while picking out his twins or other anomalies. From time to time Mengele would find himself attracted to a new inmate. Once he was so attracted to a new Jewish girl that he had her sent to participate in the genealogical experiments going on in another section of the camp. Within weeks the girl was so badly abused she no longer appealed to anyone. Mengele was also fascinated with the pregnant women who came to the camp, often asking inappropriate questions of the poor women and insisting on being present at the birth, after which he would often send both mother and child to the gas chamber. Mengele's Jewish assistant took to performing abortions to protect this innocent women.

Mengele had his wife come visit him once. They spent their time picking flowers and picnicking within sight of the Jewish prisoners. Mengele's wife remembered it as a good time. About this same time a new doctor came to see the boys in their barracks and ordered them all sent to the gas chamber. Alex Dekel escaped through a window and hid in the toilets. Twins' Father, went to Mengele to tell him of this situation. Mengele ordered the twins spared so that he could continue to use them for his experiments. A short time later the twins were moved to the abandoned Gypsy camp.

In this chapter, Mengele continued his torture and experiments on the twins with no clear purpose. The twins continued to be oblivious of their situation, even when they witnessed the mass murder of everyone in the gypsy camp. However, some twins had lost their siblings and others were starving to death, therefore they knew their situation was not a good one. The children began to despair or attempt escape, like Alex Dekel.

Mengele appeared to be a cruel man in his experiments, but he continued to forge close relationships with the children. In fact, Mengele forged a close relationship with a small Gypsy boy, but then killed him along with the others, turning a deaf ear to his pleas. At the same time, Mengele brought his young wife to the camp and showed her a good time, a period of time that Irene continued to believe had been quite pleasant despite the death all around her. This shows not only Mengele's dual personality to the reader, but also shows the lack of empathy and compassion on the part of most Germans in regards to the Jews.



Chapter 4, The Angel Vanishes

Chapter 4, The Angel Vanishes Summary and Analysis

In *The Angel Vanishes*, on New Year's Eve of 1944, the inmates of Auschwitz suddenly found themselves without guards to watch over them. The Russians were coming and most of the Germans had destroyed what evidence they could, including destroying most of the crematoriums, and disappeared. Mengele stayed until the last possible moment, continuing his experiments even as the Germans were destroying the camp. However, even Mengele finally realized it was time to go. Mengele sent most of his notes to his old mentor and moved first to Gross Rosen, then to Mauthausen. At Mauthausen Mengele donned a Wehrmacht uniform and was captured.

Before the Russians arrived, some of the guards took it upon themselves to march many of the surviving prisoners to Mauthausen. Some of the twins were among these. Others were left behind and able to simply walk out of the gates. When the Russians arrived, they filmed the rescue, making the twins walk out of the gate several times until it looked authentic enough. These children were then taken to a monastery in a town called Katowice. Twins' Father had promised many of his boys that he would see them home one day. The children held Twins' Father to this promise. Twins' Father walked the boys many hundreds of miles until he was able to place them on a train headed to their hometowns.

Many of the twins arrived home to discover that their parents died. Many had no one to care for them, but others sought out aunts or uncles when they got home. One set of twins learned their father was still alive only after he saw their pictures in the newspaper after the liberation of Auschwitz. The father had to travel hundreds of miles to reach his children from the Russian labor camp where he had been imprisoned. Others found their loved ones and struggled to start their lives over again.

Those who were marched to Mauthausen in the Death March were soon freed as well. Mengele, who had sought refuge at Mauthausen, was taken as a POW. Mengele was able to fake his identity and secure his freedom from the camp. Mengele went home to his family for a brief time, but quickly went into hiding to prevent being arrested for war crimes. As the Nuremberg trials came into infancy, Mengele fled to the countryside where he got a job on a small farm.

In this chapter, the long awaited liberation of Auschwitz finally comes. Most of the children are freed, many having their first large meal in years while others were learning the fate of their siblings and parents. Many of the twins came out of Auschwitz only to learn they were the only survivors of their biological families. Not only had Mengele robbed these children of their innocence and their sense of safety, but he had also taken their mothers, their fathers, and their siblings. Germany herself had taken everything else away, as the survivors quickly discovered when they returned to their hometowns to find their homes taken over by other families and their businesses



destroyed. The reader finds themselves wondering what is left to these poor, innocent children.

Mengele ran for it when the Russians began to approach, caring only for his notes before fleeing Auschwitz, leaving his twins behind. This again shows the kind of person Mengele truly was down deep in his soul. The charming man with the candy was only a façade to lure these children into feeling safe. In reality, Mengele cared less for these children than for the work he used as an excuse to torture them. Mengele would be arrested and made a POW, but because of his vanity, Mengele would escape the one sure fire way the Allies knew for identifying the SS officers. Mengele would escape because no one knew yet the depth of his cruelty, but the reader can only hope someone would soon scream it out on the mountain tops and help Mengele meet a just end.



Chapter 5, The Trial that Never was

Chapter 5, The Trial that Never was Summary and Analysis

In *The Trial that Never was*, allied officials began putting together cases against the war criminals of Germany, focusing first on those who ordered the formation of the concentration camps before focusing on those who ran the camps. In the first two years of the Nuremberg Trials, twenty-two men would be tried with only three receiving an acquittal. Mengele's name would come up frequently in these trials, but although his name would be placed on a list of wanted criminals, no one would begin actively looking for him at that point. However, other doctors who also conducted experiments in the concentration camps would be arrested and tried.

Verschuer began attempting to get his job back at the Kaiser-Willhelm Institute at the University of Frankfurt soon after the war ended. To secure his position, Verschuer destroyed many of the notes Mengele sent him during and after the war pertaining to his experiments. Verschuer very nearly got his job back, but an article written by two former co-workers that accused him of working closely with Mengele during the war ended his professional aspirations. In fact, Verschuer was then placed under investigation. The investigator for the United States found ample evidence to have both Verschuer and Mengele tried immediately for war crimes, but that report vanished shortly after it was turned in.

Mengele continued to hide out on a farm during this time period. Mengele's wife, who had been pretending to be a war widow since the end of the war, visited him occasionally. On one such visit, Irene asked her husband for a divorce, claiming she could no longer handle living like a widow when her husband was alive and well. Around this same time, the Nuremberg Trials begin to come under fire by the press and the prosecutors began to lose steam. Many began to forget about the atrocities of the war and express a desire to move on with their lives. However, Gesilla Perl, a Jewish doctor forced to work with Mengele in Auschwitz, had settled in America and wrote a book about Mengele's experiments. Unfortunately, this book, though graphic, did little to support a manhunt for the missing doctor. In fact, the American government told Dr. Perl that their records showed Mengele had died shortly after the war ended.

As Mengele hid out on a farm and mourned his inability to continue his work, his twins found themselves in a world that was becoming altogether too familiar. Communism quickly spread into the areas where many of the twins lived, such as Romania. With communism came a renewal of the same bigotry against Jews that led to the concentration camps. Many of the twins joined fundamentalist groups to find protection against this bigotry, but within time they found their schools shut down and their rights trampled on. Many of the twins began to think about leaving their hometowns, with many focusing on the promised land of Palestine.



In this chapter, the aftermath of the war led to a great many war criminals being prosecuted in the infamous trials of Nuremberg. However, the trials initially focused on the high leaders, the men who ordered the camps to be opened in the first place, rather than the people who ran the camps and practiced the daily acts of hatred that ended in many deaths. This caused the focus to remain away from Mengele and men like him long enough for Mengele to feel safe from prosecution to a certain extent. Mengele felt his life was hard, living on a farm rather than practicing medicine, and having to be separated from his wife and child. However, Mengele's life was neither then nor would ever be as hard as the lives of his twins. Many of the twins returned home to find everything gone, only to then face prejudice and oppression. The war was not over for many of these twins despite the liberation of the concentration camps where they once were captives.

There were many missed opportunities after the war to capture and prosecute Mengele. Much of this was based on bureaucratic mistakes that could have been avoided and simple lack of interest. This shows the reader how little justice these poor children received immediately after the war. The reader can only hope that life improved for these poor children who did not ask for any of the atrocities they were subjected to before, during, and after the war.



Chapter 6, The Story of Andreas

Chapter 6, The Story of Andreas Summary and Analysis

In *The Story of Andreas*, Mengele wrote a fictional novel many years after the war that told the story of a war fugitive and his escape from Germany. It has been established that this fictional novel is a thinly veiled autobiographical tale of Mengele's life after the war. Mengele's character was called Andreas.

Three years after the war, Irene began to push Mengele to give her a divorce. Mengele refused, insisting that they could make it work in time. Mengele insisted that Irene come with him when he decided to leave Germany. Again Irene refused, determined instead to return to her own hometown.

Mengele traveled without harassment from Germany to Switzerland where he planned to take a boat to South America. Mengele was assisted by a family friend who provided Mengele with money and assistance on behalf of Mengele's father.

When Mengele reached the port in Switzerland, he was able to use a Red Cross ID to get the passport he needed from the Switzerland officials he would need to get a travel visa. However, when Mengele went to get his travel visa, the official he planned to get it from had gone on vacation. Instead, the other official placed Mengele in jail where he sat for several days until the original official returned from holiday and freed Mengele, apologizing to him for his inconvenience. Mengele sailed to Argentina soon afterward.

At the same time Mengele was escaping Germany, many of his twins began leaving their respective countries for Israel. Many had trouble receiving exit visas from their respective governments, but eventually found their way to Israel either legally or through illegal means. One set of twins, however, found themselves taken by a rabbi to a school first in Ireland and later in London where they built fond memories they would often look back on.

In this chapter, Mengele was once again jailed and once again freed. It appears to the reader that this man had a guardian angel on his shoulder or something that helped him escape the justice he should have faced after what he did at Auschwitz. There is great irony in Mengele's second capture and imprisonment, especially when the reader learns of his great discomfort that he writes about in his fictional novel. It seems only right to the reader that he should have felt discomfort and unhappiness in his miserable life. Mengele's crimes were so great that they even affect his kind father, a man who would leave meat on the doorsteps of his poor neighbors to help feed their families. The reader must wonder how such a heinous criminal could come from such a kind man.

At the same time, the twins are escaping their home countries, finally aware of the hatred around them and hoping to avoid it. The twins, almost all of them, escape to

Israel, the Palestine that is a promised land within their religion. The reader can only hope that these children found happiness there.



Chapter 7, The Fugitive's Idyll

Chapter 7, The Fugitive's Idyll Summary and Analysis

In Fugitive's Idyll, Mengele discovered in Buenos Aires an Eastern European atmosphere that made him feel right at home. Peron, the dictator of Argentina at the time, claimed to be a friend to Jews and Nazis alike, opening his borders to both. Mengele found a society of Germans living in his new hometown and he quickly ingratiated himself with them. Mengele took a job as a carpenter and found a room where he could live relatively cheaply. In time, Mengele would begin his own carpentry business and would, with the help of money from his father, invest in a drug company that would help him earn a good income. In time, Mengele would regain much of the wealth and group of friends he lost in Germany.

At the same time, many of Mengele's twins were relocating to places all around the world, most commonly Israel. Many of the twins were also seeking out careers to help support their families. Several of the women became nurses while others became secretaries. Some of the men found it difficult to find steady work, therefore they would take odd jobs as they came across them. The twins, too, began looking toward romantic relationships, many of them seeking mates to settle down with. However, a few found this difficult because of a lack of trust or because of a special sense of loyalty they had to their birth families.

In Germany, Verschuer found a job at the University of Munster, careful to remove all reference to racial science from his lectures and publications. Despite this, Verschuer continued to promote eugenics by working behind the scenes by continuing to mentor other scientists still active in the science.

In Argentina, Mengele began corresponding with his young son, Rolf, on a regular basis despite the divorce Irene insisted upon and finally received. However, Mengele signed the letters Uncle Fritz so that his son would not know his father was still alive and well. In 1955, Peron was ousted as dictator and many Germans feared for their safety and fled Argentina. Mengele, however, felt there was no need to be concerned and continued to live there. In fact, Mengele applied for and received a passport under his own name in Argentina in 1956. Also that year, Mengele flew to a ski resort in the Swiss Alps to see his son. Also included in that trip was Martha, the widow of Mengele's brother, Karl, and their son, Karl Heinz. Rolf would always remember the trip as one of his most enjoyable memories of his father.

In this chapter, Mengele finds himself a happy home in Argentina, regaining much of what he lost when he was made a war criminal. Although Mengele cannot practice medicine, he has made a good career for himself and quickly replaced what he lost of his wealth when he went on the run. In contrast, the reader sees how the twins who survived Mengele struggled to put their lives back together. Many of the twins were forced to leave their home countries, relocating to Israel or other foreign countries. The

twins also found themselves often unable to pursue the career choices they might have had if the Holocaust had not occurred. This contrast forces the reader to see how difficult things truly were for the Holocaust survivors, not just the twins of Auschwitz, and to wonder at the fate that kept Mengele from facing trial.



Chapter 8, The Angel Retreats

Chapter 8, The Angel Retreats Summary and Analysis

In *The Angel Retreats*, after the ski trip to the Swiss Alps, Mengele found himself drawn to Martha, his brother Karl's widow. In a short period of time, Mengele and Martha were married. Martha and Karl Heinz came to live with Mengele in his large villa in Buenos Aires. Almost immediately after their marriage, Mengele was arrested for suspicion of practicing medicine without a license. However, no charges were ever leveled against him. About this same time, new interest in Mengele began to build due to a Holocaust survivor, Hermann Langbein, who spearheaded a campaign to locate and punish the remaining war criminals from the concentration camps. A warrant was issued for Mengele's arrest in June of 1959, causing Mengele to decide he could no longer safely remain in Argentina.

For the next two years, Mengele moved often making it difficult for investigators to pin down his exact location. However, it is thought that Mengele obtained a Paraguayan citizenship while making frequent trips to Argentina to liquidate his assets. Some attempts were made on behalf of the American and German governments to locate Mengele, but the Paraguayan and Argentinean governments both dragged their feet until Mengele was able to disappear once again.

In May of 1960, another war criminal, Adolf Eichmann was captured by the Israeli government and placed on trial. Eichmann received the death penalty and was executed. This event caused a great amount of fear for Mengele, fear that was warranted. The Mossad, buoyed by their success with Eichmann, set their sights on finding Mengele. At this point, Martha had decided she had enough of being on the run with her husband and returned to Germany. Rolf, too, learned about this time that Uncle Fritz was really his father and became cold toward his adoring father. Mengele felt alone as he retreated to Brazil. Unfortunately, before the Mossad could locate Mengele, they were forced to look closer to home for their enemies as it became clear that Egypt had developed rockets that their leader paraded in the streets.

At the same time, the twins learned of the arrest and execution of Eichmann and suddenly they felt as though they had come out into the light. Where friends and family had refused to hear their horror stories of the war, now they wanted to know all about it. Many of the twins, who had been unable to speak even when they wanted to, now found it difficult to deal with this new desire to know. At the same time, many of the twins were married and beginning to have children of their own. Some found that the simple act of procreation brought on fears and memories that they found impossible to deal with. Several of the twins had nervous breakdowns at the birth of their children and had to be hospitalized for months until they could deal with their fears.

In this chapter, the world suddenly becomes interested in Mengele once again. First the interest is brought about by the work of one man, one survivor of Auschwitz who



remembers the acts Mengele performed on him. Later, the interested is propelled by the capture and execution of Adolf Eichmann, the designer of the Final Solution. While this set of circumstances forces Mengele on the run once more, it liberates some of the twins as they find the world suddenly interested in their story.

The contrast between the twins and Mengele once again cause a glaring light to be shone not only on the failings of multiple governments in punishing Mengele, but to show the differences in the lives of Mengele and his victims. As Mengele's life begins to go downhill, the twins finally find some release in the pain they have hidden for far too long.

Chapter 9, Brazilian Hideaway

Chapter 9, Brazilian Hideaway Summary and Analysis

In *Brazilian Hideaway*, almost twenty years after the war, Germany held the Frankfurt trials to bring to justice some of their war criminals. Mengele read about these trials in Brazil and found them hypocritical. At about this time, Mengele's family had arranged to buy a home for a couple named Stammer and have them keep Mengele as a house guest, watching over the aging, lonely man. During this time, Mengele wrote his memoirs, which would eventually turn into a fictional account of his own life. Mengele also wrote long letters to his friends and family, often including a code that only Mengele himself could understand. Many of the recipients of these letters complained that they could not understand what Mengele was attempting to say and asked him to send postcards instead. Eventually most of Mengele's correspondence would be ignored, along with his birthdays.

Mengele would be placed on trial in absentia in Germany and some of those he injured, such as the father of twins who witnesses his children's execution because they were not identical, were given the chance to testify. This added to the urgency to find Mengele and Germany attempted in earnest to locate him. About this same time, the government urged both the University of Munich and the University of Frankfurt to revoke Mengele's degrees. The Mengele family fought this move, but in the end both universities complied.

While in exile, Mengele began having trouble with his brother, Alois, who felt Mengele had been a drain on the family. When Alois became ill with cancer in the early seventies, Mengele attempted to make amends, expressing his gratitude for all Alois had done of the years to help keep Mengele safe.

As Mengele began to fear for his own safety in Brazil, the twins struggled to overcome their past and to keep the past from coloring their future. One twin, Moshe Offer, found himself unable to stop missing his twin brother, while another twin, Miriam Mozes, found herself inflicting her fear of dogs on her daughter. Other twins found themselves unable to share the past with their spouses, while others would often act out their fears and grief against those who loved them most.

In this chapter, interest in Mengele once again begins to grow. At the Frankfurt trials, some victims of Mengele find they are finally able to express some of the anger and hurt they suffered at the hands of Mengele. This is an important time for these victims, a time when they are finally able to stop hiding their pain and share it with the world. It is cathartic for some victims. At the same time, Mengele begins to settle into a lonely, painful world where he is not allowed to be with the ones he loves and where he becomes a burden even on the people who promise to hide and protect him. Mengele had become a miserable old man by the 1960s and into the 1970s. Perhaps, in some

small way, Mengele was beginning to pay for his crimes against humanity even as his victims were slowly learning to get on with their lives.



Chapter 10, The Scholar and the Preacher

Chapter 10, The Scholar and the Preacher Summary and Analysis

In *The Scholar and the Preacher*, in 1975, Mengele was moved out the Stammer's home and given a home of his own that was little more than a shack. The Stammers, who had tired of Mengele and his poor attitude, finally could no longer be persuaded to care for the aging doctor. Mengele took to staying in his home day and night, working constantly on his memoirs. At the same time, Mengele began attempting to control his son's life through letters by arguing with him over career choices and offering advice on what type of woman Rolf should marry. When Mengele learned that Rolf was to marry a blond haired, blue eyed Aryan from North Germany, Mengele could not be happier. Mengele's new daughter-in-law was the perfect representation of the perfect Aryan woman. Mengele expressed a desire to see his son before his wedding. Rolf reluctantly flew to Brazil to visit his father in May of 1977. The two spent a delightful two weeks together, sightseeing throughout Brazil.

In the late seventies, Mengele fell in love with and began courting a housekeeper called Elsa. Mengele was clearly devoted to Elsa, but refused to marry her. It is unclear if Mengele did this because he was still legally married to Martha or because he could not marry a woman who was not of the preferred race. Whatever the reason, Elsa eventually ended their courtship and married another man, but remained good friends with the ailing doctor.

In early 1979, Mengele went to visit his friends, the Bosserts at their cottage at Bertioga Beach. One afternoon, while swimming, Mengele had a stroke. Before the Bosserts could rescue him from the water, Mengele had drowned. The Bosserts managed to hide his identity even at the end, using identification given to Mengele by his friend, Wolfgang Gerhard.

As Mengele was living out his final years, the twins continued to live their own lives, finding in themselves more and more of the physical and mental manifestations of their experiences at Auschwitz. Some of the twins found it more and more impossible to face the day without memories of the loved ones they lost, while others found themselves overcoming their fears to reach out to loved ones overseas. Still, the past had the power to overwhelm, as Miriam Mozes admits when she says that she often sees an older woman in a crowd and wonders if that could be her mother, miraculously saved from the death camps.

In this chapter, Mengele became a lonely old man who ironically found solace in the love of a young, Brazilian woman. Mengele, who once attempted to eradicate all races from the earth other than the Aryans, found comfort in the love of a woman he might

have heartlessly sent to the gas chamber thirty years prior. It was clear by Mengele's correspondence with his son at the time of his engagement that Mengele still held his beliefs that an Aryan race far outshines any other. This only adds to the irony of his relationship with Elsa.

In the end, Mengele died on a beach, alone, in a death that some might see fitting while others might argue was far less painful than his crimes might dictate. Either way, Mengele was dead.



Chapter 11, The Burial of the Dead, and Afterward, Roll Call

Chapter 11, The Burial of the Dead, and Afterward, Roll Call Summary and Analysis

In *The Burial of the Dead*, despite Mengele's death in 1979, Nazi hunters continued to search for him. In fact, the search for Mengele intensified under the guidance of Simon Wiesenthal and surviving twin, Eva Mozes. A letter to the press written by Eva Mozes was given to writer Lucette Lagnado that would lead to Miriam Mozes placing an ad in a newspaper that would result in the first ever reunion of Mengele twins. Then, in 1985, the organization begun by Eva Mozes, CANDLES, would organize a trip to Auschwitz for the surviving twins. This trip would prove to be the ultimate catalyst for many of the twins, finally allowing them to stop grieving for a lost parent or sibling and to allow them to finally put the past in the past. After the visit to Auschwitz, the twins would then walk the path of the Death March, singing traditional Hebrew songs as again the weight of their experiences were lifted from their shoulders.

Multiple governments joined together in the search for Mengele after the CANDLES trip to Auschwitz ended in a mock trial against Mengele. More than thirty of the twins testified to the horrors they endured and watched perpetrated against their siblings. Outraged, the Israeli, German, and American governments teamed up to find Mengele. In the end, the investigation took them to the Bosserts, and the discovery of Mengele's death. The body buried under the name Wolfgang Gerhard was exhumed and tested by several scientists. Although the body showed no signs of osteomyelitis, a bone disease Mengele suffered at the age of fifteen, the scientists claimed it was the body of Josef Mengele. However, many people, including the majority of the twins, believed that the body was not Josef Mengele and that he had once again escaped persecution.

In the *Afterword*, fifty years after Auschwitz was liberated by the Russians, many of the surviving twins continue to struggle with their experiences. Of three thousand twins, dwarfs, Gypsies, and other unusual children taken by Mengele to be experimented upon, less than two hundred survived. Many of those survivors continued to this day to be haunted by their past. Despite this, many have gone on to be mothers, fathers, grandparents, and great-grandparents. These children have survived.

In these sections of the book, the reader learns of the aftermath of Mengele's life and death. Many of the twins do not trust that Mengele, who was sought and found long after his death, is truly dead. Many of these twins do not trust anyone or anything thanks to Mengele's actions, therefore their doubt is understandable. The public will never know for sure if the remains found in Wolfgang Gerhard's grave are truly Mengele's.

The impact of one man on the lives of thousands is clearly felt in this book. Mengele was a cruel man who deserved to be punished for his deeds. Despite the failure of

multiple governments to punish Mengele, the victims of his cruelty have found peace not only in their continued ability to survive, but also by visiting the past and finally being allowed to grieve and put it to rest. This book is a part of that journey and finally the world knows the dirty little secret these children.



Characters

Josef Mengele

Josef Mengele was a doctor who received a Ph.D. in anthropology at the University of Munich and a Ph.D. in genetics at the University of Frankfurt. Mentored by renowned eugenics professor, Otmar von Verschuer, Mengele became an avid student of racial sciences. Like many scientists at the time of Hitler's rise in Germany, Mengele believed that the strong, blond-haired, blue-eyed Aryans of Northern Germany were the superior race and that all other races were polluting the genetic pool. Despite being of a lesser German genetic pool himself, Mengele began to study ways in which the Aryan race could be promoted, studying twins to find a way to repopulate the world quickly with these preferred Aryan children.

After serving in both the regular army and the SS, Mengele got a job in Auschwitz through his mentor Verschuer as the camp doctor. Mengele's job included signing death certificates, choosing which Jews should work and which should die. Mengele also received multiple grants to perform experiments on the Jewish prisoners. Mengele chose to work with twins, dwarfs, giants, and other odd children. Mengele would stand where the trains off loaded prisoners and pick and choose his victims. Of three thousand children chosen by Mengele, less than two hundred survived until the end of the war.

After the war, Mengele managed to escape arrests on multiple occasions, eventually relocating to South America where he would live out a lonely sad life until his apparent death in 1979 of drowning. Mengele's body would later be exhumed and tested to make a positive identification, but no one would ever agree on the definite truth of the identity of those remains.

Otmar von Verschuer

Otmar von Verschuer was a professor of genetics at the University of Frankfurt and would be the head of the Kaiser-Wilhelm Institute before the war. Verschuer also provided the government with important information that helped to design the Final Solution, the plan to eradicate the world of Jews. Verschuer was a mentor to Mengele and even helped him get his position at Auschwitz where Mengele would often send Verschuer his notes and specimens from his experiments for evaluation.

After the war, Verschuer would destroy many of Mengele's notes, keeping the world from ever knowing the depth of Mengele's cruelty. Verschuer would then distance himself from both Mengele and the Nazis in an attempt to regain his academic position. Eventually Verschuer would get a job at the University of Munster where he would continue to distance himself from Mengele while still encouraging the work of other racial scientists.



Twins' Father, Zvi Spiegel

Zvi Spiegel was in his twenties when he arrived at Auschwitz. When Mengele learned he was a twin, Mengele made Zvi Spiegel a guardian to the twins in the boys' barracks. Spiegel would go out of his way to protect the children, often delaying or outright lying about the fates of the children's parents and other siblings. Whenever a new boy was brought to Spiegel, he would promise that one day he would make sure they got home. Spiegel even saved all the boys in the boys barracks when a new doctor ordered their executions. Spiegel went to Mengele himself and convinced the doctor to stop the execution.

After the war, Spiegel recalled his promise to get all the boys home. Spiegel took a group of the surviving male twins and walked them across the country toward his own hometown. Eventually Spiegel sent many of the boys to their own homes via a train. For weeks afterward, Spiegel would get letters from the boys telling of their fates. When Spiegel returned to his own home, he found new people living in his house. Spiegel left town and started over, eventually getting married and working as an accountant. Many years later, Spiegel would be reunited with many of the young boys he cared for.

Moshe Offer

Moshe Offer was born in Hungary during the war at the age of twelve. Moshe had a twin brother called Tibi. Tibi was a favorite guinea pig of Mengele's and suffered many operations until he finally died after a horrific castration. Moshe would grow up and marry only to lose his first wife to a heart disease. Moshe spent months in a hospital opened especially to help Holocaust victims with the aftermath of the war. Moshe would marry again and have many children, four girls and a boy. Moshe would also become a film technician, working for a television station. However, Moshe would never forget his dead brother and all that he lost in Auschwitz.

Miriam Mozes

Miriam Mozes was sent to Auschwitz with her twin sister, Eva. After the war, Miriam became a nurse and eventually the head nurse in an Israeli hospital. Eva and Miriam would be the ones to initiate the first reunion of the Mengele twins in 1985 and sponsor a return trip to Auschwitz through their organization CANDLES. Miriam suffered terrible health problems as a result of Mengele's experiments and would suffer cancer, requiring her to receive one of her twin sister's kidneys.

Menashe Lorenzci

Menashe and his twin sister, Lea, arrived at Auschwitz shortly after their tenth birthday. Menashe worked as a messenger boy for Mengele during the war. After the war, Menashe was one of the few twins interviewed by the press during the liberation.



Menashe then became very sick and had to remain in a Russian hospital for months after the war. Eventually, Menashe and his sister made their way home where they were soon reunited with their father who had been in a Russian labor camp and saw them in the newspaper. Menashe would go on to get married and have three children.

Eva Kupas

Eva Kupas was sent to Auschwitz in 1944 with her twin brother. Eva remembers very little about the war, only a trip she took with the other girls in the camp to pick wildflowers. After the war, Eva relocated to Israel where she lives a private life as a housewife.

Irene Mengele

Irene Mengele was Josef Mengele's first wife. Irene was a woman who enjoyed the culture of her life in Germany. Irene adored her husband and even visited him on one occasion while he held a position at Auschwitz. Irene remembered this visit as a pleasant one. After the war, however, Irene quickly became disillusioned by the need to pretend her husband was dead and to visit him in secret. Irene soon asked for a divorce. When Mengele moved to Argentina three years after the war, Irene refused to go with him. Irene met another man during Mengele's exile in Argentina and again requested a divorce. This time Mengele obliged. Irene would marry her lover, but eventually divorced him as well. At the time the book was written, Irene had been in a car accident that left her unable to get around as easily. Irene lives a quiet life in her hometown in Germany.

Alex Dekel

Alex Dekel was not a twin, but he was selected by Mengele because of his Aryan features. Alex could recall watching as Mengele performed surgeries on twins without the benefit of anesthesia. After the war, Alex became obsessed with finding Mengele and often spent days and weeks searching out clues to Mengele's whereabouts. Upon learning that Mengele was believed to be dead, Alex had a heart attack and died.

Judith Yagudah

Judith Yagudah was sent to the twins' barracks with her twin sister, Ruthie, and her mother. Judith recalled how her sister lost several toes to frostbite that were a consequence of an experiment by Mengele that made her worry about her chances of ever dancing again. Ruthie was frail toward the end of the war and died as the camp was liberated. Judith and her mother returned home and eventually relocated to Israel. Judith's mother was consumed with grief for her daughter and became overprotective of Judith. Judith found it difficult to leave her mother, eventually marrying the only man she had ever dated. Judith's mother lived with her daughter and new husband, eventually

moving into an apartment in the same building where Judith lived with her husband. When Judith's mother died, she grieved deeply for the sad and injured woman that she had become.



Objects/Places

Mengele's Notes

Mengele wrote copious notes on his experiments at Auschwitz. Frightened the Russians would take the notes and benefit from them, Mengele sent them to his mentor, Verschuer, to guarantee their safety. However, Verschuer destroyed the notes to secure his position at the University of Frankfurt and to distance himself from the Nazi party.

Letters to Rolf

During his exile in Argentina, Mengele wrote many letters to his son Rolf, signing them all Uncle Fritz.

Mengele's Novel

Mengele wrote a fictional novel later in life that was a thinly disguised retelling of his life after the war.

Argentine Passport

Mengele obtained an Argentine passport in his real name several years after living in exile. The photo from this passport is the only known photograph of Mengele the authorities are later able to use to track him down.

North King

North King was the name of the ship Mengele traveled on to Argentina. In his novel, Mengele called the ship North Queen.

University of Munich

Mengele received his undergraduate and Ph.D. in anthropology at the University of Munich. This degree is revoked in the seventies under pressure from Holocaust survivors and various governments.

University of Frankfurt

Mengele studied genetics under Otmar von Verschuer. It was here that Mengele became fascinated with twins and where he began his interest in Hitler's Final Solution. It was also Verschuer who helped Mengele secure his position at Auschwitz-Birkenau.



Ghetto of Cluj

Many of the twins who were experimented on at Auschwitz-Birkenau were from Cluj or kept in the ghetto at Cluj before they were brought to the concentration camp.

Auschwitz-Birkenau

Auschwitz-Birkenau was two concentration camps in Poland that were closely situated. Mengele was the camp doctor. Part of Mengele's duties was to choose who would live and who would die as the new prisoners got off the trains. Mengele also conducted medical experiments at the camps, using mostly twins, but also other Jews with odd physical appearances, and a few twins from the Gypsy camp inside the walls of Birkenau.

Gunzberg

Gunzberg is a small town on the Danube where Mengele was born and raised.

Argentina

Mengele fled to Argentina three years after the war in part because the dictator, Juan Peron, was sympathetic to the Nazis and there was a large German population there.

Israel

Many of the twins and their families suffered bigotry and oppression when they returned to their home countries. Most of the twins and their families relocated with many of them going to Israel.



Themes

Holocaust

The Holocaust was the systemic execution of Jews by Germans during World War II. Many concentration camps were built and run during this time where Jewish families were taken to either work or be killed. Auschwitz-Birkenau was only one of many concentration camps created and run during this time period.

Often Jews would be sent to the concentration camps in cattle cars, often stuffed so tightly into the cars that the people would have to stand for days at a time. Many of the Jews would die during this trip from suffocation or suicide. Mothers would kill their babies to save them from the horrors of starvation. When the Jews would arrive at the camps, someone would decide who would live and who would die. Many who lived would be put to work for no money and often very little food. Those who were to die were sent to a place where they were told they were to shower. However, the showerheads would emit a lethal gas rather than water. The bodies would then be burned in crematoriums that ran night and day.

Birkenau had several crematoriums that would emit smoke and red fire day and night. The children of Mengele were taken to barracks that sat right beside these crematoriums, forcing them to smell and breath the scent of their parents, siblings, and grandparents burning. Due to the fact that Auschwitz plays an important role in this book, the Holocaust is a major them of the book.

Medical Experimentation

Mengele was a doctor trained in both anthropology and genetics. Mengele was one of many scientists at the time who believed in eugenics, the science of manipulating reproduction for the benefit of society. Mengele believed, like many under Hitler's regime, that only those of the preferred Aryan race should populate the world. Mengele believed that other, lesser races were spoiling the gene pool for everyone. The Jews were the main focus of this belief, causing doctors like Mengele to target the Jews for mass extermination. This was a part of Mengele's job at Auschwitz.

In order to promote the Aryan race, doctors wanted to find a way to ensure that all babies would be born with the appropriate features and that the world could be quickly repopulated. Mengele turned to twins not only to investigate theories of genetics, but also to find a way to ensure twin births to quickly increase the number of Aryan babies. To this end, Mengele experimented with twins and other odd children at Auschwitz. Mengele would inject chemicals into the children's eyes to investigate the possibility of changing eye color, would experiment with their hair for the same reason. Mengele would also take blood to be analyzed, perform twin to twin transfusions, operate with

anesthesia, castrate the children, perform sex change operations, and many other experiments.

Mengele kept careful notes of his experiments and eventually sent them to his mentor for safe keeping. However, these notes were destroyed, therefore no one will ever know the true extent of Mengele's experiments. However, the fact that they happened and that few of his victims survived are the main focus of this book making medical experiments a theme of the book.

Justice

After the war, American, British, and other governments attempted to punish those responsible for the Holocaust. During the Nuremberg trials, more than twenty war criminals were tried and found guilty. However, the initial focus of the trials were on those men who ordered the concentration camps built, not on those who worked in the camps. By the time the trials got to the lower criminals, popular opinion began to shift and people wanted to put the war behind them. This led to the end of the Nuremberg trials.

As the years passed, several groups, including several famous Nazi hunters, began hunting down the men, like Mengele, who had escaped punishment. In the sixties, the Israelis caught and executed Adolf Eichmann, the man responsible for designing the Final Solution. Other criminals were also eventually caught, but Mengele continued to escape prosecution.

In 1985, the Mengele twins finally broke their silence. The twins gathered together and visited Auschwitz, the camp where Mengele did so much damage to them and other children brought into his care. The twins also held a mock trial in which they were finally all able to speak aloud of the crimes Mengele committed against them. A short time later, it was learned that Mengele was thought to have died six years prior. However, the twins finally found some measure of justice in their ability to band together and speak out about the horrors inflicted on them by Mengele.



Style

Perspective

The novel is written subjectively, although it tries to remain objective. The authors of this book have become very close to the victims of Josef Mengele through research and, on the part of Sheila Cohn Dekel, marriage. The book gives a well researched biography of Josef Mengele, beginning with his childhood and continuing through most of his adult life. The book also offers many stories of the surviving children who were tortured and experimented on by Mengele. These stories, while told as honestly as possible, color the story and change it, reminding the reader constantly of the terrible things Mengele did and how it affected the survivors of his actions.

The novel's perspective comes through the eyes of two journalists who have lost their objectivity. Despite this lack of distance, the authors tell a powerful story that touches on many truths, both in the life of Josef Mengele and the lives of the children he experimented on. It would be difficult to tell the story of Mengele without looking at the children he hurt, as it would be difficult to tell a serial killer's story without talking about his victims. For this reason, an objective point of view would not only be impossible, but might possibly get in the way of telling a complete story. Therefore, the subjective perspective of this book works well with the subject matter.

Tone

The book's tone begins in a matter of fact tone, laying out the bare bones of Mengele's life. However, the tone quickly changes as the writers insert snippets of conversation with the surviving twins of Auschwitz. The tone becomes a deeper one, a tone that is lighthearted to begin with, but become tragic. Eventually hope is injected into the story, changing the tone once again from the dark, depressing tone to a tone filled with hope and an acceptance of the future.

The tone of this book could have been dry, one that repeated facts and nothing more. However, the interjection of the surviving twins' stories changes the tone and gives the book a more authentic feel. The book becomes more than just a retelling of history, but a story of hope and expectation. The book shows the reader that despite all the evil that happened to these twins, there is always a light at the end of the tunnel. The tone gives power to this theme, to this idea, and gives the story a stronger impact on the reader than would have been accomplished with a dry and matter of fact tone.

Structure

The novel is divided into eleven chapters. Each chapter is fairly long and contains full sections of Mengele's life. The book begins with a preface that describes the reasons each author had for writing the book. There is then a listing of each surviving twin or



child that includes their birth information, their time in Auschwitz, and a description of their memories of Mengele. At the end of the book there is another list of the twins, giving readers updates on their lives since Auschwitz, as well as notes, acknowledgments, and a bibliography.

The story of Mengele's life is told in a linear fashion, mostly laid out in facts and information without dialogue. Interspersed in these chapters are comments made by the surviving twins in interviews that tell their own side of events and describe what their own lives were like before and after the war. The authors present many facts about Mengele in their own words, but the stories of the twin survivors are told in their own words, italicized so that the reader knows who is speaking from the page. This structure offers an interesting insight into both Mengele's life and that of his victims.



Quotes

"All my life, I have tried to run away from Auschwitz" (Prologue, The Jazz Bar, pg. 25.)

"At last, the chance to do the kind of research Mengele had dreamed of. At Auschwitz, there would be nothing to stand in his way" (Chapter 1, Mengele and his Children, pg. 52.)

"That was the last time I ever saw her" (Chapter 2, Auschwitz Movie, pg. 56.)

"And even though we were children, we understood" (Chapter 3, The Angel of Death, pg. 73.)

"She took sweaters-coats-blankets-from among the beautiful items the Jews had brought. The Nazis had kept them in excellent condition" (Chapter 4, The Angel Vanishes, pg. 90.)

"For the Mengeles, protecting Josef became both a game and an obsession" (Chapter 5, The Trial that Never was, pg. 110.)

"By the late 1940s, most of the surviving Jews of Eastern Europe—not just the twins—had realized they had no future there, and were trying desperately to get out. We all felt home was in Palestine" (Chapter 6, The Story of Andreas, pg. 133.)

"Finally, I suffered a nervous breakdown" (Chapter 7, Fugitive's Idyll, pg. 166.)

"But he loved me very much. He was determined to marry me whether I could have children or not" (Chapter 8, The Angel Retreats, pg. 177.)

"The nights were especially bad. We would feel so frightened—as if we were being persecuted" (Chapter 9, Brazilian Hideaway, pg. 200.)

"But looking for the past is always very sad, isn't it? Because we look and we find nothing—only memories and shadows" (Chapter 10, The Scholar and the Preacher, pg. 218.)

"At Auschwitz, I felt at last I was at their gravesite" (Chapter 11, The Burial of the Dead, pg. 240.)



Topics for Discussion

What is Auschwitz? Why was it built? What was its intention? What are the crematoriums that the twins often mention they saw their parents sent to or away from? Why were twins separated from the other prisoners at Auschwitz? Why were some mothers allowed to go with their twins? What other types of people were separated and sent with the twins? What happened to the twins?

Who is Josef Mengele? Where was he born? How did he grow up? What was his childhood like? What did he study in college? For what reason? What did Verschuer teach him? For what reason? Why did Mengele want to go to college? Did he achieve his goal? Why did Mengele join the SS? Why was he found unfit to serve? How did Mengele end up at Auschwitz?

Who is Twins' Father? Why did he care for the children? Who gave him this job? Was he a bad guy? What did Twins' Father do to try to protect the children from their situation? How did Twins' Father save the boys barracks from being sent to the gas chamber? What did Twins' Father do with his charges after the war and for what reason? What happened to Twins' Father after the war?

Why does the book begin with an anecdote from Zvi the Sailor? What does this anecdote mean? How does the anecdote set the tone of the book? Who was Zvi the Sailor? What connection did he have with Mengele? How did Zvi come to be called the Sailor? What impact did Mengele have on Zvi's life, on the life of his twin, and his family?

What was taken from Magda, Twins' Father's sister? Why was she spared the gas chamber? What did Mengele do to her during her time in Auschwitz? Why did Magda have trouble having more children after the war? What was unusual about Mengele's fascination with Magda and her brother? Why was Magda not made house mother over the twins? How would her knowledge of Mengele affect Magda's life after the war?

What does Mengele's relationship with his son late in life show about Mengele's continued beliefs? Why is Mengele pleased with the woman Rolf chose to marry? What was their final visit with one another like? Why does Rolf defend his father's name in the aftermath of his death? Do you think Rolf really considers his father innocent? Why do none of the Mengele's admit to Josef's crimes? Should they? Who is ultimately responsible for Josef's crimes?

Why do the twins and other survivors of the Holocaust not believe Mengele is dead? Is Mengele dead? Why would someone attempt to fake Mengele's death? What would be the purpose of such a fake death? If Mengele did not die in 1979, where might he be? Could the Mengele family still be hiding him and for what purpose? Do you believe the twins will ever find justice?