

Resistance

by
Liz Crow

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Roaring Girl Productions
1c Birchall Road
Bristol BS6 7TW
0117 9446882
Liz@roaring-girl.com

EXT. INSTITUTION FORECOURT - DAY

A large grey bus with smoked windows fills the frame, its engine running. It pulls away and reveals a female CLERK in a smart suit, a pile of documents in her arms. The engine's roar makes way for the soft sweep of broom over cobbles. The CLERK walks away from the bus toward the entrance.

ELISE is sweeping the forecourt. As the CLERK draws near, she freezes, standing almost to attention, her broom held protectively. The CLERK continues past without a glance. ELISE turns to follow some distance behind. The CLERK walks up the steps and past another patient, ERNA, who cleans the door and scuttles aside, smiling her deference. The patients are invisible to the CLERK. The CLERK enters through the door and ELISE slips in behind her.

In the institution's front hall, from ELISE's POV, we watch the CLERK as she knocks on a wooden door and enters. ELISE sweeps just outside, listening intently.

INT. MEDICAL DIRECTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

The CLERK enters an office, wood panelled walls and a large desk at the centre. Standing by a bookshelf is the institution's MEDICAL DIRECTOR.

CLERK

Good morning, Herr Doktor.

MEDICAL DIRECTOR

Ah, Fraulein. Come in, come in.

The MEDICAL DIRECTOR places the book on a shelf and turns to sit at the desk. The CLERK places her pile of documents before him.

CLERK

What happens next?

The MEDICAL DIRECTOR sifts through the files as he speaks.

MEDICAL DIRECTOR

(focused on the files)

Letters to the relatives in a couple of weeks. Probably put it down to pneumonia.

CLERK

Will the families want to visit?

MEDICAL DIRECTOR

Yes. A few might. But they'll be told the place is quarantined. It's easier that way. As long as there are no gaffs.

CLERK

Gaffs(?)

MEDICAL DIRECTOR

Well, there was the Schmidt woman. We had her son; a desperate young man. The letter said his appendix ruptured, but it was removed when he was two. The mother was furious; she'd worked the whole thing out. It wasn't so much he'd been selected; just she felt she should have been let in on the secret.

Outside the door, ELISE continues to eavesdrop.

INT. DAY ROOM - DAY

ELISE sweeps, sidling round the edges of the day room, eyes darting. Around her, the patients look pale and wretched, half-starved. A couple play a game, but most are lethargic, dazed. At a long table, OTTO sits, drawing frantically on scraps of paper, his arm curled protectively around his work. There is a stack of bowls on the table.

AMELIE and BERTHA reminisce about favourite foods, using the pleasure of memory to try and drive out the fatigue of hunger. They dream of a banquet, lingering as they sense each imagining.

BERTHA

We'll have fresh baked bread.

AMELIE

The finest silverware.

BERTHA

Oh, and little fingerbowls!

ELISE continues to sweep, moving around the table towards the two women.

AMELIE

A cheeseboard.

BERTHA

Bavarian blue and Viennese coffee.

AMELIE

Gingerbread men!

BERTHA

Pretzels.

AMELIE

Apple strudel. With cream.

THOMAS steps forward and crouches at the table between the two women.

THOMAS

My teacher lived with us for a while, while he was waiting to reach Sweden. He loved to cook! Regelach and pancakes and challah bread.

BERTHA

Butter cream tort. With marzipan. In layers.

ELISE stoops and searches through her sweepings, shielding them from view. She picks out breadcrumbs, eating them furtively.

THOMAS

Red fruit pudding.

AMELIE

(hollow sounding)

I used to pick redcurrants with my little girl...

Her voice trails away. THOMAS kisses her lightly on the top of her head.

They are startled as the kitchen door crashes open. The ORDERLY arrives with a large tureen, setting it heavily on the table. GERTRUD helps the orderly by carrying bread.

The patients scramble to the table. In his haste, THOMAS knocks the broom from ELISE's hands.

The ORDERLY slops thin soup into bowls, scarcely enough to keep a body alive. ELISE sits at the table, warily.

Absorbed in eating, OTTO knocks his drawings from the table. They cascade to the floor revealing an image of a syringe and a large dark bus.

ELISE drinks soup hastily from a bowl.

INT. STAFF ROOM - NIGHT

Alcohol and sweetmeats in plenty are set out on tables in a comfortable room which contrasts with the sparseness of the institutional areas. A gramophone record plays. STAFF chat and drink alcohol. A framed photograph of a young man gives way to a reflected portrait of the seated MEDICAL DIRECTOR.

The STAFF hush as the MEDICAL DIRECTOR rises and crosses the room, drink in hand and leaning on his walking stick.

He sets his glass on a table, amongst the food and drink, flowers and small swastika flags.

The MEDICAL DIRECTOR turns to look at the gathered staff. They look well-fed, satisfied-looking and very ordinary.

MEDICAL DIRECTOR

(all very reasonable)

Colleagues. I look around me tonight and I see ordinary men and women of Germany pulling together to accomplish an extraordinary task.

What we practice here - you and I - is a tidy resolution to disease. When the sick bird falls to the cat or the weak hare is caught by the fox, it is the law of natural selection. And, here, it falls to us to help that law along. Ours is a noble duty. In ending their suffering, we make a better world for us all.

The STAFF nod their agreement. Only the NURSE looks uneasy.

So, it is with some *pride* I have asked you to gather here because today, from our institution alone, we reached our 1000th dispatch.

Amidst gasps of pleasure from the STAFF and a smattering of applause, he gestures to the photograph of the young man placed amidst the clutter of flags and food: Benedikt Berg, the 1000th person.

MEDICAL DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

If we all have a glass?... A noble duty and a better world.

The STAFF stand and raise their glasses.

STAFF

The Fuhrer.

The rest of the STAFF join in, raising their glasses.

INT. DORMITORY - NIGHT

Sounds from the celebration seep into the silence of the dormitory. The beds are tightly packed. There is no other furniture. Our vision moves along from bed to bed, people lying, curled and hunched under thin sheets.

BERTHA turns towards ELISE, who lies on her back, eyes open, staring at the ceiling. Her broom leans up against the bedstead. ELISE looks over to BERTHA as she speaks.

BERTHA
 (whispered)
 Elise. Now they have taken
 Benedikt...

ELISE moves her gaze to the ceiling.

BERTHA (CONT'D)
 ...what do we do?

ELISE turns onto her side, away from BERTHA. She lets out a deep, held breath.

ELISE
 (whispered)
 We go.

INT. STAFF ROOM - NIGHT

Back at the staff party, the ORDERLY unsnaps his collar and turns it round to make a clerical collar. He picks up the photograph of Benedikt and begins to intone. The staff hush and turn towards him as he speaks a burlesque eulogy.

ORDERLY
 (In vicar-like tones.)
 We are gathered here to mark the
 demise of our dear departed
 Benedikt Berg-

He says his name mockingly, impersonating Benedikt's impairment.

The STAFF react a little cautiously (should they be mocking the clergy?). A member of STAFF fingers a gold cross around her neck, looking askance and checking the reactions of the others, before relaxing into laughter.

ORDERLY (CONT'D)
 -A mountain of a man who has fallen
 from the final precipice.

Titters...

ORDERLY (CONT'D)
 He died as he lived, smelling
 vaguely of gas.

Increasing to howls of alcohol-fuelled laughter.

ORDERLY (CONT'D)

And, although useless in life, he
was useful in death (he had a lot
of gold fillings).

The MEDICAL DIRECTOR, watching on appalled, stands and
crosses over to the ORDERLY.

MEDICAL DIRECTOR

(hissed to ORDERLY)

Enough! Does a farmer mock his
cattle when they are slaughtered?

INT. DORMITORY - DAY

The MEDICAL DIRECTOR, accompanied by the CLERK, enters the
ward. The inmates are mainly seated on their beds, their
unease palpable.

MEDICAL DIRECTOR

Right.

The NURSE is administering GERTRUD's medication. SOPHIE sits
next to her and grasps her hand as the MEDICAL DIRECTOR turns
to face the ward.

They position themselves in the centre of the ward. The CLERK
carries a clipboard. She scans down names on the list and
points at patients in turn. They speak quite freely in front
of the patients, who are assumed not to understand. It is all
very casual.

The CLERK points to GERTRUDE.

MEDICAL DIRECTOR

Yes.

The CLERK ticks names off her list. GERTRUD looks pleased
with herself. The CLERK indicates HERMANN.

The MEDICAL DIRECTOR cups the chin of HERMANN, who looks back
with a mixture of fear and defiance.

MEDICAL DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

Hold him over.

GERTRUD

(like a mean kid in the playground)
Bed wetters have to stay behind.

The MEDICAL DIRECTOR hears her comment.

MEDICAL DIRECTOR

Umm, no, keep him on the list.

The CLERK points at AMELIE, who is blind. The MEDICAL DIRECTOR turns to face her.

MEDICAL DIRECTOR

Yes.

AMELIE's face registers fearful uncertainty.

AMELIE

Me? Did he pick me?

There's no answer. She turns to her neighbour, her voice becoming more fearful.

AMELIE (CONT'D)

Thomas?

THOMAS is looking over at her, an agonised expression on his face. The MEDICAL DIRECTOR selects him, though he barely registers.

Other PATIENTS are selected.

ELISE is selected. She gives no emotion away.

OTTO's face crumples as he is selected.

ERNA looks directly at the MEDICAL DIRECTOR and attempts a seductive smile.

MEDICAL DIRECTOR

Is she useful, Nurse?

This is the NURSE's chance to try and save a patient.

NURSE

Oh, she helps with the other patients.

MEDICAL DIRECTOR

Hold her over then.

CLERK

Who shall I put instead?

The MEDICAL DIRECTOR glances round the room and indicates SOPHIE.

MEDICAL DIRECTOR

She can go.

The NURSE's attempt has failed. She turns to SOPHIE, who clings to her. The CLERK amends her list.

CLERK

That's the list.

MEDICAL DIRECTOR

Thank you. Good morning, Nurse.

The MEDICAL DIRECTOR and CLERK leave. The NURSE accompanies them to the door.

BERTHA has not been selected. Her relief is rapidly replaced by the realisation that there is no one to celebrate with her.

AMELIE slowly winds a satin ribbon around her fingers.

The NURSE turns to the patients, claps her hands for attention and tries to give them the party line with conviction.

NURSE

(with bravado)

Tomorrow those of you who have been chosen will be going on an outing.

ERNA

(under her breath)

Liar.

GERTRUD

(louder than Erna)

You're just jealous 'cos you're not going.

NURSE

Now then... Come on, we've got a lot to do. All those of you who are going, start to gather your things together...

ELISE stands with her broom, agitated.

EXT. INSTITUTION FORECOURT - DAY

ELISE opens the front door and slips surreptitiously out, glancing around her. At the bottom of the ramp, she places her broom amongst the vegetation. Her movement is swift but very deliberate. She uses handfuls of leaves to conceal the broom.

She turns back to the door. Without the broom, she's off balance, arms rigid, her walking pace untethered.

EXT. INSTITUTION FORECOURT - DAY

Parked about 30 feet from the institution doors is a grey bus, with smoked windows, its door open. Suitcases, labelled with patients' names, are piled onto the bus.

The ORDERLY hands thermoses of hot coffee and slices of bread to an SS NURSE, who looks at them scathingly; what's the point in feeding them when we know where they're going? The CLERK holds a stack of papers, most of which are handed over to an SS NURSE who adds his signature to the remaining documents.

The PATIENTS emerge in a line from the main entrance onto the forecourt to be loaded onto the bus. GERTRUD emerges confidently, but is thrown into confusion as she takes in the scene. She shrinks back, afraid.

GERTRUD
I don't want to go.

She is ushered firmly forward by the ORDERLY.

GERTRUD
I don't want to go.

The PATIENTS have been labelled, their names stuck onto the back of their coats.

GERTRUD is bundled onto the bus.

GERTRUD
(out of shot)
No. God damn you.

SOPHIE emerges, clinging to the NURSE and clutching a doll.

SOPHIE
Miss Sophie stay here. I want to stay.

NURSE
(trying to convince herself)
Nonsense dear.

SOPHIE gives a sob as she is pulled away by an SS NURSE to the bus.

SOPHIE
(Fainter)
I don't want to go.

One PATIENT sings under her breath to keep courage.

AMELIE and THOMAS look bewildered. They hold together tightly, each trying to keep the other from being pushed onto the bus.

HERMANN is herded to the bus. His letters fall in the chaos. As he tries to retrieve them, he is forced towards the bus by an SS NURSE.

AMELIE and THOMAS are wrenched apart and boarded.

ELISE emerges from the door, looking pale, her eyes darting.

OTTO breaks from the line to run lumberingly.

ELISE sidles down the ramp to retrieve her broom.

The SS NURSES catch OTTO easily. He grasps at a bush in desperation, tearing away vegetation as he is hauled away.

OTTO
(anguished)
No!

OTTO is wrestled to the ground and a nurse rushes forward to inject a sedative.

ELISE is looking all about, using the distraction to slip away. As she turns, she comes face to face with the NURSE. Both are rooted with fear. Neither speaks. The NURSE takes hold of ELISE's shoulder, tearing the label from the back of ELISE's coat. She pushes her - "go" - and turns back to the mayhem.

As OTTO is carried unconscious onto the bus, PATIENTS inside hammer desperately on the windows.

ELISE begins to sweep, desperately, urgently, moving away from the bus, away from the building and leaving a swathe behind her. She is taking flight; in this moment, ELISE is heading for freedom. No one sees her go.

As she continues to sweep further away, the commotion from the bus fades until we are left with only the sound of the broom and the sound of her breath. She sweeps for her life until she is out of sight, until all that is left is her path lingering, then gradually fading from view.

END