Claudia Kosylak

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Fear and Misery: The Homosexual

*Berlin 1938. An office breakroom. A group of workers sit around a table talking and eat plain rolls for lunch. They laugh and converse with an optimistic energy despite their exhaustion, except one man who seems desperately tired and introverted. The table is brightly illuminated, but the man sits just a little out of the light in the shadows.*

WORKER 1: They’ve really been making changes lately. It’s about time we fix this country and get rid of all the Jews and freaks.

WORKER 2: Did you hear about what happened at the Bull’s Restaurant around the corner from my street?

*The tired man stops eating his food. He begins to stare at it as he slumps down in his seat and a dim red light begins to shine on him.*

WORKER 3: I saw that the lights were off the past couple of days and the windows were boarded up! Didn’t Hans Burger own that place? I didn’t think he was a Jew…

WORKER 2: He wasn’t! Came from good Aryan parents. Turns out he opened his doors for some queers, gave them a place to secretly gather in the basement.

WORKER 4: Dear Lord, I’ve stopped by there once or twice to get a beer! He had a beautiful large portrait of the Fuehrer in there and seemed like a good man. What trickery! Thank God the Fuehrer has gathered the forces to protect us from filth like that.

WORKER 2: It’s absolute filth. To top it off, one of my neighbors was caught at the scene when they raided the place. Bert Heinz, would you believe it??

WORKER 3: Bert! I always thought he had more of a woman’s way than appropriate. Lukas, weren’t you and Bert friends a few years back? Did you notice anything strange about him then?

*The quiet man pauses for a few seconds, as if unable to answer. The dim red light becomes brighter. He straightens up and begins speaking in a quiet voice.*

THE QUIET MAN: We had worked together briefly before coming to Berlin. I never spoke to him much.

WORKER 2: I used to see you two smoking cigarettes down the street. You must have noticed he was a bit queer!

THE QUIET MAN: Yes…. He seemed a bit odd to me.

*Pause.*

WORKER 1: Just imagine. One day you’re working with someone and think they’re a good man, the next you find out he’s a queer. The Fuehrer has no place for men like that. They can’t fight for Germany and they can’t continue the German line like a woman. They’re useless and they threaten our beautiful country.

WORKER 2: Good riddance.

WORKER 3: I should have known, he kept to himself. Besides, the fellow was nearing 40 and had never been married.

WORKER 1: Very true; queer as he may have been, he was not a monster. Some woman would have taken him at some point had he been a real man.

WORKER 2: Lukas, did Bert ever talk about going to Bull’s Restaurant when you still held his acquaintance?

*The light on the quiet man seems to get even brighter. He hasn’t touched his food in several minutes. He is stiff with fear.*

THE QUIET MAN: No, no, we never talked of such things. Just work.

WORKER 3: It’s odd that you both came to Berlin at the same time.

*Pause. The other workers have finished their lunch. They stiffen up a little and all look at the quiet man.*

THE QUIET MAN: Our factory closed down. Many people came to Berlin.

WORKER 2: What did your wife have to say about him? She must have sensed something queer about the man, too.

THE QUIET MAN: I’m not married…

*Everyone in the room is completely still and silent. Everyone is looking at the quiet man. The quiet man keeps staring at his unfinished roll.*

WORKER 2: My mistake, I’m sorry.

*A bell rings loudly, and all but the quiet man quickly jump out of their seat.*

WORKER 1: Well, back to work!

*The workers quickly walk off stage to the left, not saying a word. The quiet man lingers, still staring at his roll. The bright light on the table goes away and the entire stage is illuminated in a red aura. He stands up slowly and stows his unfinished roll away. He stares at the exit to the right in contemplation and pauses.*

THE QUIET MAN: They’re surely suspicious. They know. But what am I to do? Surely they can’t prove anything… but what if someone at the Bull’s Restaurant turns me in? No! I can’t think that. It’s an unspoken rule, they wouldn’t possibly….. Surely the fact that I haven’t married isn’t proof enough anyway. As for my acquaintance with Bert… of course, I’m not the only one who has ever worked with him before. No. I have nowhere to go. I can’t find another job now, it’s difficult enough. Surely they can’t prove anything…

*He eventually turns toward the left exit and follows after the rest of the workers, defeated. The red light slowly dims away to darkness.*

References:

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