



PETE PLANISEK

*The Violence
of Reason*



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Book by Pete Planisek

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THE VIOLENCE OF REASON

PETE PLANISEK

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For the real-life heroes of the Norwegian resistance.

CHAPTER ONE
A FATEFUL VISIT



Norill's back involuntarily straightened as the front door swung open moments after the hasty knock that preceded the action.

"*Guten morgan*, may we come in?" one of the Nazi soldiers politely inquired.

The three had already begun to file inside so there was little point in protesting. Norill wordlessly retreated to the nearest stool lest one of them try to sit next to her on the sofa. She would have offered her companion a look of wariness but to do so would have been pointless. Besides, Vinni could probably already sense her discomfort, even if she couldn't see it.

"And what can I do for you gentlemen today?" Vinni smoothly requested as she stood, betraying no fear of the armed, enemy soldiers now standing in her home.

"We heard you playing just now. *Mein freund*, here *ist* interested in lessons, like your sign says," one of the men stated as they all carefully studied the small front room.

"Piano I assume," Vinni warmly smiled, gesturing to the instrument behind her back.

Norill shifted uncomfortably and attempted to busy herself so as not to make eye contact with any of the soldiers, especially the one supposedly interested in lessons. This, unfortunately, was not her first encounter with him. Ever since the Nazis unwelcome arrival in Norway and the town's occupation, it had become very clear to Norill that he took an active interest in her activities. They had never spoken directly, but it felt like he was always somehow present, ominously watching her, just as he did now. She was both infuriated and terrified that he stood in the same room with her.

"Of course, I took lessons as a boy and I'd like to take up playing again," the soldier asserted.

"Certainly. Norill is one of my more advanced students and volunteers as my assistant sometimes when she is free," Vinni explained, aware of where the Nazi speaker's attention was currently focused.

Norill nodded to the soldiers but did not meet their eyes. A stillness filled the room for an unnatural measure.

"Yes, of course," her unwanted solicitor finally replied as he returned his full attention to Vinni.

"A most charming companion," another added, seeing Norill's uneasiness.

“Please describe your precise role here,” the eldest soldier said, his face passive but his voice leaving no doubt that the “please” was perfunctory. This was an order, not a request.

Norill shuffled some nearby papers, hoping they did not take note of the paperclip on the lapel of her coat. This symbol of Norwegian unity was common enough, but under the soldiers’ gaze she still felt abundantly aware of its presence.

“My brother is also blind, so I learned braille as a child. I translate sheet music to and from braille for Mrs. Naess and help her with lessons and housework as needed,” Norill calmly said as she succinctly met each of their eyes. “I also work at the local bookshop.”

“A blind piano teacher,” the eldest soldier remarked as his smug visage regarded Vinni Naess with incredulity.

The older woman resumed the bench, turned back to her piano, and began to play; her fingers tracing the braille sheet music. It was a short but impressive display of her extensive talent. The performance elicited a flicker of a smile from the two younger men but a look of reproach from the other.

“Chopin was French,” the eldest soldier scolded with an air of annoyance. “Surely even an undesirable like you must know of our cultural edicts.”

Vinni brushed aside the insult with a warm smile.

“Actually, he was Polish by birth, but I suppose you want something by a Germanic composer,” Vinni noted as she switched effortlessly to Bach.

“It is more fitting given Vidkun Quisling’s¹ cultural decrees for loyal Norwegians,” the eldest soldier commented by way of both warning and agreement.

For a few peaceful minutes, they all simply listened to Vinni as she played.

Norill weighed her options. Undoubtedly, Vinni had chosen this piece to allow her time to gather her thoughts. Should she claim that no lesson times were currently available? They might come back more often then. At least if she scheduled a day and time they would know exactly when the Nazi would return. Still, allowing him here was dangerous - very dangerous.

She sighed inwardly. Perhaps it was fate that brought them here for either path she chose in the moments to come presented danger to them all.

This time the soldiers all civilly clapped as Vinni finished playing. The heavier-set woman gave a curt nod of appreciation before turning to Norill, who remained stoic. Vinni was the leader here. She must be the one to decide. The older woman paused before returning her attention fully to the assembled Nazi soldiers.

Will you be paying in kronas or Reichsmarks?"

Vinni negotiated a reasonable price for her services and instructed Norill to schedule the Nazi soldier, named Gerntz, for 4:00 P.M. on Tuesdays. Their business concluded, the Nazis left and both women breathed sighs of relief into the tense quiet that followed.

"Are you crazy," Norill finally asked. "We can't have that officer coming here."

Vinni sat back heavily against the keyboard and shook her head.

"It's the Web of Wyrd². Our fate was fixed the instant they set foot inside this house. Send them away from a blind woman offering piano lessons empty-handed and the questions will begin. Questions we can't have them asking. Not unless you want them discovering what we're truly doing. At least this way we can watch them."

"And he can watch us ... watch me," Norill bitterly countered.

"Do you think this Gerntz suspects you of being resistance?" Vinni demanded.

Norill reflected on this question as she hunched forward.

"I can't be sure. Maybe. His friends certainly aren't the trusting type. No, his interest in me is more ... personal. I've seen him watching me for several weeks now. Not following me but ...," her left fingers clasped her right shoulder in consternation. She knew what this man wanted.

Norill knew other girls, some of whom were once friends, who had begun romances with these occupying soldiers. Once they were fully trusted by the Nazis, they were granted extra rations, privileges, taken to expensive parties, and loathed by their fellow Norwegians for they had forsaken all that their loyal countrymen and their Allies fought and died for. Traitors to all for their own creature comforts. She would not become that.

Norill would never be that.

Norway may be occupied, but her spirit remained indomitable and that was something the Nazis and their puppet government under Vidkun

Quisling could not stand. They wanted to insidiously reshape all of Norway into a state filled with fascist collaborators. It was seeing this attempt day in and day out that inspired Norill to channel her anger and efforts into supporting the *Milorg*, the Norwegian resistance, even though exposure with such activities would mean either imprisonment or more likely execution.

Vinni had joined the resistance not long after the government attempted to force teachers like her to embrace a pro-fascist curriculum for their students. So far, the government's efforts were failing, but no one knew what the ultimate outcome would be.

"We can use that interest of his," Vinni said, leaning towards her companion.

"What?" Norill recoiled at the idea. "He'll kill me if he finds out we're using him."

She stood and began to pace. This was unfair. Norill wanted this man, and all like him, out of her life, not closer.

Vinni remained quiet as she considered the full reality of what she was contemplating. Was she ready to put Norill into such danger?

Although the young woman was basically a daughter to her, the opportunity to gain intelligence and make a real difference in the war effort was undeniable. The risk, though difficult, acceptable.

"I don't propose this lightly, Norill. But, if he is as persistent as you think, we cannot afford for him not to think his advances aren't working. Imagine the intelligence we could gather from him. Your efforts might even save countless lives ..."

"No," Norill flatly declared, shaking a blonde curl away from her eye as she stomped her foot before nervously crossing the room to pull aside the curtain to check the street outside. Only empty windows from the closely packed buildings and a vacant cobblestone road greeted her gaze.

"Looks like we're clear," she said, inwardly berating herself for such a reckless outburst. "Hopefully, Haktor got a chance to finish transmitting," Norill added, wishing for nothing more than a change in the subject between them.

The older woman nodded, aware that to press further would gain her very little with Norill. Still she could not resist offering one final plea.

"Well, just consider what I said about Gerntz."

Vinni played a short sequence of notes—the signal to the radio operator hidden in the attic that the downstairs was safe. They heard the normal muffled sounds as Haktor extracted himself from the cramped, secret transmission room in the attic and made his way downstairs.

“Tell me what happened,” the bald man with the untamed beard demanded immediately upon his appearance on the staircase.

“We had a customer,” Vinni evenly informed him as Norill helped her up from the piano bench and to a more welcoming chair. “A Nazi with a taste for piano lessons, among other things, and a few of his friends. They’ve gone but he’ll be back Tuesday afternoon for a lesson.”

Haktor, who rented a spare room from Vinni, was a fisherman by trade, and Norill noticed whenever he received bad news, the weathered lines of his face seemed to grow more pronounced. In fact, his years spent on the water had seasoned his face so unnaturally, it was seemingly impossible to guess his exact age. Still, that did not discourage Norill and Vinni from keeping an unofficial bet as to what it might be. Haktor was completely ignorant of their little game but, perhaps, one day, they would learn whose guess was closest.

“Are we compromised?” Haktor questioned, ready to clamber upstairs to destroy the radio equipment.

“Doubtful. It seems my future student is enamored with my current protégé, and that is what brought him here,” Vinni explained.

“Then we need to get her out of here,” Haktor decided, absently stroking his uncultivated beard. “Don’t give him a reason to return. Let it be known that you fired her or that there was a falling out.”

“Suddenly. So soon after their visit?” the old woman challenged. “No. That’s far too suspicious behavior to be considered coincidence. A week or two and we may be able to send Norill away to a safe house under the pretense of visiting family without arousing questions, but I fear that’s the best we can do,” Vinni let her hands fall into her lap.

Haktor was noticeably displeased but he said no more.

“Were you able to finish securing today’s signals?” Norill inquired.

“Aye.”

Troubled, Haktor hesitated before handing the messages over so Norill could begin to encode each into sheet music, which she would then safely convey to the resistance newspaper for decoding and printing.

She reviewed the messages.

“Oh God, not again. The Germans have eradicated another resistance cell,” she told Vinni.

The old woman’s mouth drew open in horror before she closed her eyes.

“Slaughtered. That’s the fourth one in as many weeks,” Haktor reminded them. “The only way they can be having this kind of success ...”

“Is if they’ve inserted a double agent,” Vinni finished as she reopened her eyes.

“That’s what did a lot of cells in during the early days of the resistance,” Haktor bitterly shared as he turned and looked meaningfully at his young compatriot. “We thought we’d solved that problem.”

Norill turned away, lost in reverie as she wondered which of her friends could now be on the run, imprisoned, or dead.

No one spoke.

“Hopefully, someone survived this time,” Vinni finally said. “It may be the only way we’ll ever be able to discover and root out this evil.”

“If this continues, this entire section of Norway could see the resistance crumble,” Haktor darkly mused.

“A bit bold but our operations are definitely being impacted. I wonder how long the British will continue to trust us with intel if this goes unchecked?” Vinni wondered aloud.

The three shifted with tension but there was nothing left to say.

“I’ll be in the signal room encoding this if you need me,” Norill decisively announced before quietly ascending to the dark, dimly lit confines of the attic. There, poignant questions, intense thoughts, and murky fears stalked her in isolation as the realities of the war became real to her in a new way.

Would anything of her, that gave her life meaning, be left when this was all over, or were they all merely playing the parts they had been destined to play since before they’d been born?



Pete Planisek lives in Columbus, Ohio, where he teaches English and runs Enceladus Literary LLC. He has published newspaper articles, short stories, and poetry and is a member of Independent Book Publishers Association.

The Violence of Reason is his third novel. He has two published works in his Resurrection Trinity series titled Frankenstein A Life Beyond (Book 1 of 3) and Frankenstein Soul's Echo (Book 2 of 3) and won a 2016 Silver Honoree IBPA Benjamin Franklin Digital Book Award for his children's fantasy book titled Princess Bella and the Dragon's Charm.



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