

*Code Name Verity*

by Elizabeth Wein

Chapter: *Ormaie 25.XI.43 JB-S*

The catfight started over the heartbreaking French girl (I think she is the only other female prisoner here), whom they have been stubbornly and persistently questioning day and night all week, and she, just as stubborn and persistent as they are, refuses to answer their questions. Last night she was weeping noisily for hours, in between shrieks of genuine heart-stopping agony—I have actually *torn out* chunks of my hair (it is that brittle) whilst trying to endure her shrieking. At some point deep in the middle of the night I broke—she did not, but I did.

I jumped up and began to scream at the top of my lungs (*en français pour que la résistante malheureuse puisse me comprendre*):

*“LIE! Lie to them, you stupid cow! Say anything! Stop being such a damned martyr and LIE!”*

Oh—I got a result. I did not expect. Someone came and pulled open the locks so suddenly that I fell out the door, and they picked me up and held me blinking in the sudden bright lights, while I tried not to look at the wretched girl.

And there was von Linden, in civilian clothes, cool and smooth as a new frozen curling pond and sitting in a cloud of acrid smoke like Lucifer himself (no one smokes when he is around—I don’t know and don’t want to know what they were burning). He didn’t speak, merely beckoned, and they brought me over to him and threw me to my knees.

He let me cower for a few minutes.

Then:

*“You’ve advice for your fellow prisoner? I’m not sure she realizes you are addressing her. Tell her again.”*

I shook my head, not really understanding what he was he was playing at *this* time.

*“Go to her side, look in her face, speak to her. Speak clearly so we can all hear you.”*

I played along. I always play along. It is my weakness, the flaw in my armor.

I put my face alongside hers, as though we were whispering. So close it must have seemed intimate, but too close for us to actually look at each other. I swallowed, then repeated clearly, *“Save yourself. Lie to them.”*

She is the one who used to whistle “Scotland the Brave” when I first came here. She couldn’t whistle last night—it’s a wonder they thought she could even speak, after what they’d done to her mouth. But she tried to spit at me anyway.

*“She doesn’t think a great deal of your advice, said von Linden. “Tell her again.”*

*“LIE!”* I yelled at her.

After a moment she managed to answer me. Hoarse and harsh, her voice grating with pain, so that everyone could hear her. *“Lie to them?”* she croaked. *“Is that what you do?”*

I stood trapped. Perhaps it was a trap that he had laid for me on purpose. All was very quiet for a long time (probably not so long as it seemed), and finally von Linden directed with disinterest, "Answer her question."

That was when I lost my senses.

"You *fucking hypocrite*," I snarled at von Linden unwisely (he may not have known what the word meant in French, but still, it wasn't a clever thing to say). "Don't you ever lie? What the hell *do* you do? What do you tell your daughter? When she asks about your work, what *truth* does the lovely Isolde get out of *you*?"

He was white as paper. Calm, though.

"*Carbolic.*"

Everyone looked at him uncertainly.

"*She has the filthiest tongue of any woman in France. Burn her mouth clean.*"

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1. What are the characters literally doing?

Responding to an interrogation

2. What is the essential action of what the characters are doing in this scene?

Each is maintaining their own approach to survival in their given role: von Linden carries out interrogations as ordered even in "civilian clothes" and forced away from his daughter, Julie says what she needs to say, the French girl persistently refuses to cooperate at all.

3. What life value has changed for one or more of the characters in the scene?

Von Linden from assured to ashamed/in control to played to forced control

Julie (first person perspective) from apparent self-preservation to self-sacrifice

Julie from incarcerated to tortured

4. Which life value should I highlight on my Story Grid spreadsheet?

Julie from apparent self-preservation to self-sacrifice

5. What is the Inciting Incident of the scene?

French girl's interrogation

6. What is a Progressive Complication in the scene?

French girl cries out all night without giving in

Julie tries to cope, pulls her hair out

Julie breaks and screams for the girl to lie, calling attention to herself

Von Linden brings her into the interrogation room

Julie isn't sure how to play von Linden in this scenario

French girl can't be converted to her approach, now they're both at risk

von Linden wants her to answer the question

7. What is the Turning Point Progressive Complication of the scene?

von Linden wants her to answer the question—has she been lying?

8. What is the Crisis of the scene?

Irreconcilable goods: Does she preserve herself, the girl, or the game?

9. What is the Climax of the scene?

The girl's view of Julie will not change, and her own safety is never guaranteed. It's the mind game with von Linden that must be preserved, so she lets go of all pretense and hits him directly by directing the question back to him, hoping to get in his head.

10. What is the Resolution of the scene?

Von Linden turns his wrath toward her and calls for her mouth to be burned.