

Spa Tobelbad, Summer 1910.

NURSE And our patients? What do you think of our patients?

GROPIUS Oh... I'm afraid I haven't paid much attention to them yet.

NURSE Excuse me, Mister Gropius, am I disturbing you?

GROPIUS No, no, not at all, sister. Not at all!

NURSE Thank you. - May I ask how you are today? Are you feeling comfortable here? Or has anything been bothering you?

GROPIUS Oh no, sister, on the contrary! Tobelbad strikes me as a wonderful place.

NURSE Yes, Tobelbad is a nice place indeed, but I was talking about our institute. Have you had any problems with our spa you'd like to share with me?

GROPIUS That's very sweet of you, sister, but I can't think of anything. The food's very good, the place is calm and your medical staff are very professional, very caring. Very discreet ...I must say, I like it here.

NURSE Yes, yes. - What a pity.

GROPIUS Why are you asking me all these questions? Do I look disturbed or unsatisfied in any way?

NURSE Oh, no! By no means! But to be frank with you, I make a point of observing the habits of our guests. I hope you won't take it as an intrusion on your privacy...

GROPIUS Not at all! I suppose it's part of your responsibility to check up on the well being of the patients, as you've put it...

NURSE Exactly. I'm so glad that you understand my obligations. I am really very grateful to you for your understanding.

GROPIUS Oh! Nothing could be more natural. After all, it's your work.

NURSE Yes, yes, indeed it is... But in all honesty, if you don't mind, I have to say that : ever since you came to our spa, you haven't been mixing very much with the other guests. .

GROPIUS Yes, I imagine ,that's the least you could say.

NURSE Indeed... you've hardly said a word to anybody.

GROPIUS To tell you the truth, 1909 has been a very turbulent year in my career as an architect. And On top of that, I've had a bad cold that's lingered on into the spring from last winter, and the winter's been pretty hectic too.

NURSE Yes, I understand.

GROPIUS So I decided to spend the early summer in your resort. I simply felt that I needed some rest. That's why I haven't been mixing much with the others.. I decided to cut down on my socializing.

NURSE I see. In that case it's my duty to respect your decision. I will try to find another Orpheus...

GROPIUS Another »Orpheus«?

NURSE Forgive me! I was only joking. It's a kind of metaphor. You see, I'm looking for someone who could be a confidant, a kindred spirit, to support me in my work. I'm looking for someone young, brilliant and good-looking to do a certain "good deed", but since you need rest ---

GROPIUS Wait! Wait!! Sister, wait! - May I ask what it is exactly that you had in mind?

NURSE Did you ever have the chance to save a drowning person?

GROPIUS No, I didn't.

NURSE I'm speaking metaphorically, of course.

GROPIUS Of course. Who is this »drowning person«?

NURSE It's a woman. She is an extremely precious creature.

GROPIUS Is she one of your patients?

NURSE Yes. She's here for the second time. Sometimes you wonder how such an attractive, riveting and charming young thing could ever look so unhappy...

GROPIUS Who is she?

NURSE Well, I must ask you to understand that I can't tell you right now. Unfortunately, in this respect my hands are tied... I'm sure you understand. I'm sorry, but after what I said about her, I can't disclose her identity: her husband is too famous.

GROPIUS But your Orpheus! You wanted me to -

NURSE Yes, yes, but of course, your own state of health takes priority. After all, that's why you're here!

GROPIUS I know, I know, but you just said you were looking for an...

NURSE Oh no! No! Not if you need your rest so badly...!

GROPIUS Yes, I do, but...

NURSE You see, she's not the kind of woman who goes along with the crowd.. On the contrary. Her husband must have an enormous spiritual engine as opposed to his shriveled physique, to have reduced this magnificent woman to such a weakened spiritual state. But I've already taxed your patience for far too long. I've said too much.

GROPIUS Why did you say you were looking for an "Orpheus"....

NURSE Well, in my »leisure time«, so to speak, I've developed an interesting theory, a theory about feminine frustration. I call it »The Eurydice Syndrome«. You see, my friend, it often happens that young, well-equipped and sumptuously developed women, who marry famous and successful men, are plunged into the deepest melancholy shortly after they sink into the routine of married life. Their egocentric and insensitive husbands forget that these splendidly lavish creatures are made for love. They commit the unpardonable crime of letting these wellsprings of life run dry. Their enormous erotic potential becomes frustrated and degenerates into a neurotic condition. For such a woman, life becomes a dark tunnel leading straight down to Hell. And like Eurydice - who needs an Orpheus with the courage and strength to descend into the dark and lead her out to

the warm light of passion and love – these poor creatures also long for a helping hand to re-unite them with the warm light of passion.

GROPIUS You're astonishing, sister...! - Who is this woman?

NURSE My dear friend, do you really believe you have the resources and energy it would take to give new life to a Eurydice? It's a very risky undertaking. I must warn you that one more wound could be fatal for her.

GROPIUS I can imagine.

NURSE But you said you yourself had gone through such turbulent times...

GROPIUS They were turbulent in the positive sense of the word.

NURSE Turbulent in the positive sense?....

GROPIUS Yes, the last few years have been extremely fruitful for me. You see, I'm an architect. Last year I was very creative. I invented an industrial method of building houses.

NURSE An industrial method of building houses?! What's that?...

GROPIUS Special factories will produce a series of pre-fabricated elements, such as panels that can be put together to create walls of different sizes, or elements that can form ceilings, roofs or floors. All these elements can be produced in huge quantities, and can be assembled very quickly in a standardized procedure. a prefabricated house like that could be built in no time.

NURSE But who would want to live in "prefabricated houses"? Do You think rich people who can afford to build their own villas will be interested in your invention?

GROPIUS I am not thinking of the rich. I'm thinking of the working classes. Housing is going to become the crucial problem of the modern world. This invention will cut down the price of accommodation. Every working-class family should be able to afford their own apartment.

NURSE But what will those houses look like? And our towns, what will they become? Endless chains of identical prefabricated apartment houses! Your working-class people may own their homes, but they won't be able to tell one home from the other! Our beautiful towns will become an aesthetic disaster! I thought architecture was an art!

GROPIUS Of course it's an art, but it's not concerned with art for art's sake. That notion of art is dead. Art should serve the people. Our concept of beauty will change. Your beautiful villas reflect out-of-date rural aesthetics. We are moving towards an urban society, and we will develop new urban aesthetics. I'm already thinking of a transparent architecture, of screen-walls, of inter-penetrating internal spaces ----

NURSE My friend, if you could put half of your tempestuous heat and enthusiasm into our Eurydice, I'm sure that unhappy creature could be saved!

GROPIUS My God, do you think so?! Then why don't you introduce her to me?!

NURSE Look around. You can't miss her. When you see the most solitary, melancholic and gorgeous woman in the sanatorium - you will know it's her.

GROPIUS I can't wait to meet her, sister!

NURSE Come, I will introduce you .

GROPIUS Who is she, for God's sake?! Tell me her name!

NURSE *(shouts out of the window into the garden)* Madam, may we come down to see you for a moment; I'd like to introduce you to someone.

NURSE 2 Yes, sure, please come down!

NURSE Madam, may I introduce you to Mr Walter Gropius, an architect from Berlin and a guest in our sanatorium. – Mrs Alma Mahler, wife of the Director of the Vienna Court Opera House, Gustav Mahler.