

RESIST

by
ALISON HUMPHREY

All right! Fun one.

Probably my favorite dialogue of all the entrants. Just a delightful read.

This is complex, alien (in a way that all 3W3M stuff should feel), has a great rhythm, and has some really clever call backs to add to the narrative build as it progresses.

But there are a couple of concerns I had reading it.

More on that at the end.

Note: The entire scene takes place on the second-story roof of the Institute's Sumtuar LIFE SCIENCE CLINIC.

The rooftop podium stage is visible to the crowds in the TOWN SQUARE below, and the vantage allows dignitaries like HEIR CLIENTS #1 and #2 (whose commissioned finery was finished just in time) an unsurpassed view of the Runway.

PAGE 16 - (6 PANELS)

Panel 1 - As GUARD #1 pulls BRIDJO away to resume arresting DENAS, we see that her embrace has printed his Protect symbol in reverse on her robe, creating an Unprotect curse.

Note when there's no dialogue or SFX in a panel.

NO DIALOGUE

Panel 2 - DENAS, appalled, lunges out of GUARD #2's grip towards Bridjo.

DENAS

No! Take it off! The semka--turn it inside out!

HEIR CLIENT #1

He's got a knife!

Panel 3 - GUARD #1 moves to protect BRIDJO, swinging his halberd to knock DENAS's arm away. As he does, the blade slashes DENAS across the chest.

NO DIALOGUE

Panel 4 - DENAS looks down to see the blood already blooming through the bisected Protect symbol on his tunic. His hands are empty. There was no knife.

NO DIALOGUE

Panel 5 - LEYWI instinctively swings into action, dropping the act of Institute delegate for her true calling as director of the clinic. As DENAS lies bleeding and LEYWI and BRIDJO apply pressure to the wound, she shouts at her GUARDS:

LEYWI

Get a stretcher! We're going down to surgery.

(as the guard hesitates)

Now!

RADICAL PRENTICE

(off panel)

No.

Panel 6 - An incredulous LEYWI looks up at the RADICAL PRENTICE, looming over her beside HEIR CLIENT #1.

RADICAL PRENTICE

Our people go in your clinic. They don't come out.

LEYWI

Well, by the time they're willing-- Oh, for Vadis's sake! There's no time for this. The semka isn't going to save him!

HEIR CLIENT #1

(grimly, to the Prentice)

Maybe that was her plan all along...

Okay, it's very clear on the first page how dense this is going to be.

An experienced artist is going to read this page and make it 7 panels instead of 6 because of what you're asking them to do in terms of 'action beats.'

But not a problem yet.

PAGE 17 - (6 PANELS)

Panel 1 - On HEIR CLIENT #1 and the RADICAL PRENTICE, watching as other PRENTICES from the Runway surge up the ramp and onto the CLINIC ROOF, overpowering the Institute GUARDS through sheer force of numbers.

HEIR CLIENT #1
 First they cut you down.
 Then they cut you up.

RADICAL PRENTICE
 (to the crowd below)
 They cut him down!

BRIDJO
 Let her help him!

RADICAL PRENTICE
 (still to the crowd)
 No interference! No Institute!

Panel 2 - HEIR CLIENT #1 turns to LEYWI and BRIDJO, still trying to keep DENAS from bleeding out.

HEIR CLIENT #1
 Why don't you just stitch him up
 here where they can keep an eye on
 you?

LEYWI
 This isn't--

BRIDJO
 He'll die!

Panel 3 - On LEYWI, dawning.

LEYWI
 That was her plan all along.

Panel 4 - The RADICAL PRENTICE organizes the other PRENTICES.

RADICAL PRENTICE
 Smash the comms array. The
 Institute won't listen to Sumtuar?
 Well, now it can't.

HEIR CLIENT #1
 Bright boy. No more offworld
 orders. No more Ordo lies.

Panel 5 - BRIDJO appeals to the RADICAL PRENTICE.

BRIDJO
 He's dying! Let her take him
 downstairs and I'll stay here with
 you. I'll be your hostage.

DENAS
 (weakly)
 Don't be... idiot.

RADICAL PRENTICE
 You actually trust them?

DENAS
 Wasn't talking... to you.

Panel 6 - Newly-armed PRENTICES escort HEIR CLIENT #2 and a CLINIC EMPLOYEE as they carry DENAS's stretcher through the door to the clinic below. LEYWI pauses by HEIR CLIENT #1 for a low exchange.

LEYWI
 I see you now.

 The Sisterhood's Khor might buy you immunity, but I swear on my daughter's life--

HEIR CLIENT #1 / SISTER BENEFICENT
 (slight smile)
 I won't be needing immunity, Doctor. I'm here for communion.

PAGE 18 - (6 PANELS)

Panel 1 - With LEYWI and DENAS gone, BRIDJO takes off her robe and hands it to the MAJSTRO, while the RADICAL PRENTICE stands on the parapet, fist raised to the crowd below.

RADICAL PRENTICE
 Hold Denas in your prayers!

MAJSTRO
 (quietly, over the robe)
Malprotekto reiru al protekto.

RADICAL PRENTICE
 And if we don't get him back soon, remember his last words...

"Turn it inside out!"

Panel 2 - BRIDJO, back in her reversed robe, grabs the RADICAL PRENTICE's arm. (Unnoticed in the background, HEIR CLIENT #1 is writing something on the inside parapet.)

BRIDJO

Would you stop?! If they invade the clinic and kill my mother, he's lock-sure dead!

Panel 3 - The RADICAL PRENTICE fixes cold, deliberate eyes on BRIDJO as he feeds a chant to the crowd below. (In the background, a group of PRENTICES have joined in writing on the parapet.)

RADICAL PRENTICE

No! More! Offworld orders!
No! More! Ordo lies!

CROWD

(off panel)

No! More! Offworld orders! No!
More! Ordo lies!

Panel 4 - HEIR CLIENT #2 bursts through the roof door.

HEIR CLIENT #2

They got a wave off before the comms went down! A helicARRIER from the Institute hill station is ten minutes out.

Panel 5 - BRIDJO appeals to the MAJSTRO.

BRIDJO

You can stop this! The prentices will listen to you! All the Majstroj will listen to you!

Panel 6 - On HEIR CLIENT #1, the disguised SISTER BENEFICENT, as she gestures toward the parapet where she and the PRENTICES have been writing. BRIDJO hears the echo of her grandfather's words to her mother before his death.

SISTER BENEFICENT

Or, you could make your mark... and
Trust in the Sacrifice.

PAGE 19 - (9 PANELS)

Panel 1 - An inscription in blood on the inside of the parapet reads, "TO THE GLORY OF THE GODS AND IN PERPETUAL REMEMBRANCE OF THOSE WHO SACRIFICED FOR SUMTUAR."

Yet another PRENTICE is printing her name-sign while two more dip their hands in the blood where Denas lay.

NO DIALOGUE

Panel 2 - On BRIDJO's quiet shock as she reads.

BRIDJO

(to the Majstro)

In that convent school on Akva,
every boring field trip we got
dragged to was a monument for some
battle or atrocity.

Every single one used the exact
same words.

Panel 3 - The SISTER BENEFICENT stands beside her, admiring the inscription.

SISTER BENEFICENT

Battles are expensive. Today I will
prove--by the grace of Vadis
through whom all stories are told--
with that you can buy a whole war
nothing but words.

As a novice in ministry, I was
taught the best bait was a lie.

But now, at the end of a long life
as a fisher of souls, I know the
hook that holds a piece of truth
is...

Panel 4 - The SISTER BENEFICENT wraps her arm around BRIDJO's waist.

SISTER BENEFICENT

...irresistible.

Panel 5 - As the SISTER BENEFICENT pulls BRIDJO over the edge with her, HEIR CLIENT #2 lunges forward.

NO DIALOGUE

Panel 6 - Anchored by the MAJSTRO to the parapet, HEIR CLIENT #2 holds BRIDJO's wrist as she strains against the weight of the SISTER BENEFICENT's death grip on her robe below.

NO DIALOGUE

Panel 7 - On the MAJSTRO's dismay as HEIR CLIENT #2 pulls out a knife with his free hand.

HEIR CLIENT #2

If Cursed Voda and Cruel Vatra
desire this sacrifice...

Panel 8 - On BRIDJO's terror as the knife descends.

HEIR CLIENT #2
*...it is Ardar's mercy to deny it
 them.*

Panel 9 - On the SISTER BENEFICENT's surprise as she realizes HEIR CLIENT #2 is in fact a SANKTA SOLDATO... and that the slashed robe she holds is no longer attached to BRIDJO.

NO DIALOGUE

This page (19) is where you really run into trouble. You have a massive real estate problem here.

I tried sketching it out, and unless you do that thing where you start re-writing the script by combining panels and separating others out, I'm not sure how you execute this page.

Saying that. It's a really fun page.

PAGE 20 - (7 PANELS)

Panel 1 - From below, as BRIDJO, the MAJSTRO, and the SANKTA SOLDATO look over the parapet with expressions ranging from horrified to impassive.

SANKTA SOLDATO
 The tactical troops will be here in minutes. You and the other Majstroj need to clear the square and hide your prentices.

MAJSTRO
 You have not been listening.
 The Institute has always been deaf to our words. Whatever her ends, that... woman... at least heard us.

Panel 2 - On BRIDJO, shaken, but following.

BRIDJO
 "Trust in the Sacrifice."

MAJSTRO (SURPRISED)
 So. You have heard us too.

If we must stand to open their ears, we will stand. If we must fall--

BRIDJO

Please, Majstro. Will you let me
tell you something else I've heard?

Panel 3 - Bird's-eye view on the CLINIC ROOFTOP, as the troop carrier descends toward a helipad surrounded with the scattered bodies of PRENTICES in pools of blood. From the air, these resemble the carmine dye of Kaoso's ofero rampas, the insects whose sacrifice, Sumtuar's artisans insist, is the source of any "magic" their painted symbols may hold.

CAPTION

"When I apprenticed in the
clothyards of Sumtuar, I learned,
Your lifeblood makes your mark."

Panel 4 - Wide on the puzzled TACTICAL TROOPS looking out over the TOWN SQUARE, packed with still, silent people standing in the negative space that forms a huge Protection symbol. BRIDJO, stripped to Ordo undergarments to look as un-Sumtuar as possible, is speaking, hands raised, to the COMMANDER.

CAPTION

"In the convent schools of Akva, I
learned, *A lie in blood drowns out
a truth in breath.*"

Panel 5 - BRIDJO opens the door from the roof to the clinic, and LEYWI emerges, still in scrubs. From her relieved expression we can tell the operation went well--DENAS lives.

CAPTION

"But what if blood itself can be a
lie..."

Panel 6 - BRIDJO, having prepared the COMMANDER and TROOPS for the reveal, cues the dye-bombed PRENTICES to raise their hands and rise from the "dead".

CAPTION

"...to buy some breathing room for
truth and life?"

Panel 7 - Close on an ofero rampas crawling along the parapet.

CAPTION

"Because if the Sankta Soldato
taught me anything, it's that..."

*...There's more than one way to gut
a fish.*"

Okay, so...

This is great. I genuinely loved reading it. But the problem is that I don't think it's a comic script. It's really more of a screenplay/short/pilot/whatever.

For example: The multiple points of action inside a panel, the parentheticals that contain a beat, the multiple conversations inside a panel to people outside the panel combined with off-panel dialogue, etc.

All of that makes it more the 'other thing' instead of a comic.

Now, there are fixes for all of that. Plenty of people (including this guy) write comic scripts in a screenplay format, but it still has to be executable for an artist. So that's something you have to work on.

But as a story -- as a piece of writing -- this is good. Very good.

-JH