

For My Baby

Rudolf van den Berg*



Ext/night/joshua's
courtyard

Wat hier volgt zijn de openings-scènes uit mijn nieuwe film 'For My Baby'. Hoofdpersoon is Daniel Orgelbrand, een stand-up comedian in Wenen. Zijn act heeft veel weg van een psychoanalyse *en public*. Zijn hele stijl, zijn levenswijze is gericht op hier en nu, en op al het lekkers dat nog komen gaat. Een leven zonder verleden, een bestaan zonder geheugen. En dus ontloopt Daniel zijn vader die hem een verhaal wil vertellen dat hij niet wil horen. Wij leven nu, met *acid jazz*, met elke nacht een nieuw avontuur of anders wel een lachkick, en zijk niet aan m'n kop over dingen waar je toch niets meer aan kunt veranderen. Daniel lijkt een baldadige fin-de-siècle-held die teveel films van Tarantino heeft gezien, een decadente nihilist ware het niet dat hij zo goed voor z'n katatonische moeder zorgt. Hij doet dat met zoveel toewijding dat hij er bijna een ander persoon door lijkt te worden. Een persoon die het verleden belichaamt, een dolende ziel die bezit neemt van Daniel en hem bijna vernietigt. Het geheugen blijkt zich niet te laten temmen.

A man is standing in a strong, eerie spotlight in the middle of an empty courtyard. He squints up against the light to try and see the people who are looking down at him from the galleries of this courtyard, a typical example of 19th century central European urban architecture.

The man is in his mid-thirties: Daniel Orgelbrand. He is pleasant to look at but is someone who is not entirely at home in his body. He smiles nervously and wipes back a lock of hair from his sweating forehead. He's very uneasy. His face shows surprise and incredulity.

Daniel: *You can't be serious.*

The people whom he's addressing are arranged around the galleries. We glimpse pale faces that are cold, hard and accusing as they look at Daniel. By association we realize it is some kind of trial. One man in particular stands out as Daniel's accuser: the inquisitor. He's taller and burlier and stands alone. The higher galleries are crammed with spectators. But everything remains hazy and undefined, almost colorless, because we look at it with Daniel against the strong light. The whole situation has something unreal, dreamlike, but is still frightening.

Inquisitor: *I can assure you, Mr Orgelbrand, we are deadly serious.*

Daniel: *This is absurd. How could I have killed her, you know bloody well somebody else did.*

Inquisitor: *Oh that's easy, isn't it? You didn't try and save her, did you?*

Daniel is getting agitated and irritated. He spins around to get a better view at his accusers. Immediately another spotlight picks him out.

Daniel: *How could I save her? She died long before I was born.*

* Rudolf van den Berg (1949)
is filmer.

Inquisitor: *Ha. Very convenient. Mr Orgelbrand, why do you hate your sister so much?*

Daniel is taken aback by this question.

Daniel: *Hate her? I don't hate her. I love her.*

There is a hostile murmur from the spectators. The inquisitor pounces on this statement, and is suddenly standing inches away from Daniel, his face thrust in his. We now begin to feel more strongly the dream quality of the scene.

Inquisitor: *Aha. How can you love her? You just said she died before you were even born. Now we're getting to the crux of the matter. Once more: would you have preferred it, if your poor sister had never lived?*

Daniel tries to shrug it off. He grins nervously.

Daniel: *Well, it would have been better for her and for us too, I suppose ...*

Inquisitor: *So - it would have been better for you if she'd never existed, isn't that right Mr Daniel Orgelbrand? Ladies en gentlemen, here is the motive.*

He triumphantly turns to the spectators, pointing at Daniel. There is murmur of agitation and disapproval. Daniel loses his patience.

Daniel: *You're all crazy. You know how she died. I didn't do it.*

Inquisitor: *So she died, did she? Well, I'd like to introduce you to somebody.*

As if by magic a little girl of about seven appears. She is a calm, very composed little girl, wearing a white party dress with pink roses. She has red hair. We hear the crowd gasp in disbelief. People cross themselves. The girl looks accusingly at Daniel. Daniel's eyes pop, the sweat stands out on his forehead.

Daniel: (whispering to himself) *Hanna?*

Inquisitor: *Are you Hanna Orgelbrand? Sister of the guilty party?*

Hanna: *Yes. I am.*

Inquisitor: *Honey, do you have any idea why your brother wants you dead?*

Hanna: *I suppose I get in his way.*

The inquisitor once more looks at Daniel as if he is some kind of reptile. He shakes his head and turns back to Hanna. Daniel is in a state. He's staring at Hanna.

Inquisitor: *Could you tell us in your own words, take your time, what exactly happened that day?*

Hanna: *Well, my brother Daniel took me to the fun fair. It was a beautiful day. And all my friends were there ...*

Daniel is listening in horror. Sweat is streaming down his face. The light becomes totally blinding now ...

Ext/day/fun park

... and out of the glaring whiteness loom Hanna and Daniel walking hand-in-hand in a fun fair. The atmosphere is jolly and lively, there is too much light here too, daylight, high key almost without color. Hanna is eating a huge pink candy floss. She is wearing the same white dress, white shoes and socks. Daniel is wearing the shabby black suit from the previous scene. He looks out of place. All round there are little groups of child-

ren, being shepherded along by smiling men in white cricketing clothes. They hold clipboards and pencils. There are games and rides. Much children's laughter.

Daniel and Hanna stand still in front of a House of Horrors, A little train, filled with children, is ready for departure. A smiling man with a clipboard is standing beside it and bends down to Hanna.

Man: *Hanna Orgelbrand?*

He glances at his clipboard and makes a mark.

Daniel: *Yes.*

Hanna: *I don't want to go in it. I'm frightened.*

Daniel: *Yes, but your name is on the list. You have to go.*

Man: *All aboard!*

Hanna still clings to Daniel's hand, but finds herself inexorably drawn along with the crowd of children onto the seats of the little train.

Hanna: (almost crying) *But Daniel, you said you would never let me go.*

Daniel: *I know, don't worry, it'll be fun.*

The train is ready to go. The driver, an old balding man with an ironic smile toots a little steam horn. The children begin to sing a jolly tune.

Balding man: *Hold tight, boys and girls, we're off.*

Daniel waves at Hanna. All the other children are staring ahead of them, expectantly, but she turns around and glares at Daniel.

Hanna: *Daniel! I don't want to die.*

The train clangs away towards the flapping doors. Daniel looks on resigned and pained, he knows what's going to happen, but cannot stop it. The flapping doors open and a huge wall of flame becomes visible. It is like looking into a furnace. The train vanishes into the flames, the bell clanging, the children singing. We see Hanna's face, looking back at Daniel, accusingly. Then the entire screen is filled with flames. It is terrifying. The singing stops. We hear the crackling and whoosh of the fire.

Daniel: *Hanna!*

Noot

Rudolf van den Berg maakte eerder films over met het bovenstaande verwante thematiek:

1979 De plaats van de vreemdeling (documentaire)

1982 Sal Santen rebel (documentaire)

1984 Bastille (speelfilm)

1985 Stranger at home (documentaire)

De film For My Baby wordt medio 1997 in de bioscoop verwacht.