

Resist

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Resist

by [Allaine](#)

Summary

Walking away from the Camerata was the easiest thing Sybil Reisz had ever done. And the most dangerous. (And not just for her either.)

Notes

I should probably stipulate that each story in the "Recursions" series is a self-contained work with no connection to the others. These are all me testing different variations of the original game that don't necessarily end with everyone's death, and where a future for Sybil and Red isn't out of the question.

Unlike "Persist", this is an AU with major differences from canon from the very first page. However, these changes are made within the basic framework of Transistor. You'll see.

Chapter 1

Chapter One

“So it’s settled,” Grant said. “The singer known as Red will be the next person to be integrated into the Process. Sybil, you’ve spent a lot of time getting close to her. When is the best time to catch her alone?”

Sybil didn’t respond at first as she sat at the other end of the conference table, while the rest of the Camerata looked at her expectantly. She drummed her fingers idly for a few seconds before she finally looked up and said, “No.”

Grant blinked. “No? What do you mean, no?”

“I mean no, Red will NOT be the next person integrated into the Process,” Sybil clarified, marveling at how calm she sounded, considering she didn’t feel calm in the slightest. “Red will not EVER be the next person integrated. You can just take her off the list right now.”

The three men stared at her, dumbfounded. Sybil could understand that. To the best of her memory – and admittedly, memories were rather unreliable in Cloudbank – the Camerata had never failed to come to a consensus about new targets.

“And why not?” Asher asked, finally finding his voice.

She looked at him. “Because I wish it,” she told him icily. Then Sybil glanced at the others. “Or has the Camerata suddenly rediscovered its faith in the will of the majority?”

“This is absurd,” Royce muttered. “I knew you were a fan of her singing, but surely you must realize that – “

“It’s not about her *singing*,” Sybil retorted. “Well, all right, yes, it’s partially about her singing, she has the voice of an *angel*. But it’s also about who Red is as a person.”

Her gaze swept the three. “In case I gave you all the mistaken impression, then I apologize,” she continued. “I freely admit that I have used my considerable charms as an event organizer, as a hostess, and as a socialite to obtain greater access to those people we had selected as potential additions to the Process. But I NEVER saw Red as a target. I focused my ‘eyes and ears’ upon her because I wanted to know her better. It’s not my fault that you thought differently.”

“Sybil, look,” Grant said soothingly. “You’re right, I apologize. I had no idea that you only saw her as a friend, not as an acquisition. But you know that when we formed the Camerata, we agreed that personal feelings couldn’t interfere. These are all talented individuals, many of whom we personally admired. But we have to ignore that, and focus on the good of Cloudbank and its citizens. You can’t have forgotten that.”

“Of course not,” Sybil replied. “I’m sure that if Royce and I were to nominate Asher for integration next, you wouldn’t let YOUR personal feelings get in the way of that either.”

If Grant had seemed dumbfounded earlier, now he looked utterly thunderstruck. Asher’s eyes were almost as round as dinner plates. Royce just stared back at her, like she was a slide on a microscope.

“What, Grant?” she asked. “I’m paying you and Asher a compliment. Asher is an extremely talented author and journalist, he’d make an excellent addition. We all would, for that matter. And Grant, you’re truly a role model to us all, since of course you wouldn’t let your feelings for your husband interfere.”

“That’s – that’s – “ Grant seemed to struggle to find words.

“What’s your game, Sybil?” Royce demanded. “Of course we wouldn’t integrate Asher into the Process. He’s one of us, for fuck’s sake. And you can’t possibly suggest that what you feel for this Red could even approach the depth of feeling that Grant and Asher have for each other!”

Sybil just held his gaze and said nothing.

“Oh, shit,” Asher said softly.

“What?” Royce asked.

“I think that’s *exactly* what she’s saying, Royce.”

Clearly Asher didn’t become a journalist by accident.

“Sybil,” Grant said, having finally recovered from his great shock, “I don’t believe that you’ve thought this through all the way. Even if you love this Red as much as I believe you’re implying, you must have known from the beginning that this relationship could not possibly last!”

“Why not?” Sybil demanded. “And for the record, I imply nothing. Red has become the center of my world. I love her tremendously, and I will never allow any harm to befall her.”

“And does she know about us?” Grant asked. “About the Camerata? About the things we all have done in the name of the greater good?”

“ . . . No, she doesn’t,” Sybil said softly.

“When were you planning to tell her?” he went on. “That you’ve had a hand in the deaths of multiple innocent people? How do you expect she’ll take the news?”

Sybil looked away from the others for the first time in a while. “I don’t suggest that – “

“Or perhaps you wanted to nominate Red for admission to the Camerata, not integration!” Grant pressed her. “We always said that we wanted to be able to count our numbers with just the fingers on one hand, which means there’s still room for one more. If you think she’d be a willing convert to our cause, I’m sure we would all be willing to hear you out.”

“That won’t be necessary,” Sybil said heavily. “She wouldn’t join us. I know Red. She’d find what we’re doing to be – repugnant.”

Grant sighed. “Then what are you really hoping to accomplish here?”

Sybil’s eyes shot up to meet his once more. “I’m hoping to *save Red’s life*. What the future holds for our relationship is secondary, Grant. I can even live with her despising me, so long as she’s alive to do it.”

The three men exchanged glances. Finally Royce turned back to her. “Look, if it was simply a matter of whom to integrate next, there are other candidates. It’s no skin off my nose if Red lives to sing another day. The problem is you’re setting a very dangerous precedent here, Sybil. We can’t have a single member of the Camerata dictating terms to the other three, especially over something like her own personal, selfish feelings for another.”

Sybil stood up from her chair. “I quite agree, Royce. This could threaten everything the Camerata has tried to accomplish.”

He blinked. “You agree?”

“Of course I do. For the good of Cloudbank, the Camerata must be allowed to survive. That’s why I am tendering my resignation from the Camerata, effective immediately.”

The others all leapt from their chairs as one.

“Whoa, wait – “

“You can’t just – “

“This is completely – “

She waited for their completely irrelevant objections to die down. “So am I to be held in the Camerata against my will now?”

Royce took a step towards her. “That would be senseless. But you did say yourself that we would all be excellent candidates for integration into the Process. Why shouldn’t we just turn the Transistor on *you*, then on your little girlfriend?”

Sybil could see that, for all their intellect, Grant and Asher hadn’t fully thought everything through. Royce’s suggestion that one of their own be integrated against her will clearly shocked them. But Sybil had known it was coming, even if they hadn’t. It was the only logical answer, from their perspective, and Grant and Asher would realize that momentarily as well.

Because she’d known it was coming, though, Sybil was ready for it. “Silly Royce,” she said brightly. “Do you really think I wouldn’t take precautions?”

“Precautions?”

She nodded. “I’ve written a detailed chronological account of everything the Camerata has done since its creation. Every crime we’ve committed, every life we’ve integrated. All of it written down, on hard copies no less, and given to five people I can trust. And not a one of them is on that list of ours. I work with plenty of perfectly ordinary people in my field. Finding five was easy.”

Sybil didn’t dare now to look at the other two. She kept all her focus on Royce’s face, which had gone deathly still. Royce, who had done the most to make the Transistor into what it was today out of all of them.

“Obviously Red and I wouldn’t be good candidates for integration if we weren’t prominent, influential members of society,” she continued. “People like us, others will notice if we disappear. Others, like my five friends. If anything bad were to happen to either of us, or if either of us were to disappear without warning for three days, I’ve told my five friends to turn those documents over to anybody who will take them. The police, the OVC, anybody. So,” she added, “unless you plan to forcibly Process everyone who’s ever met me, I’d *back the fuck off*.”

Royce bared his teeth in a most unbecoming snarl. “No one would believe the rantings of an insane woman who won’t even be alive to defend them.”

Sybil smiled coldly. “Perhaps. But until now, nobody has noticed just how many people have ‘disappeared’ without explanation. When the public hears about my little insurance policies, they’ll start noticing. Someone like Lillian Platt, for example. She’d notice, wouldn’t she? Seeing as how she’s been searching for poor, integrated Darzi for months? And everyone will *definitely* notice the next time you try it. Then all your oh-so-perfect plans will go for naught.”

“So what do you propose?” Asher asked.

“I thought I made it clear. You leave Red – and myself – alone. Find someone else to integrate. And I won’t say a word to anyone.”

“And that’s it?” Asher said. “You won’t expose our little cabal?”

Sybil sighed. “I’ve been one hundred percent honest. I want the Camerata’s plan to succeed. I accept that I’ll have blood on my hands, if the people are better off. I accept that Red will one day find out, and that – “ She couldn’t go on speaking at first, and had to swallow a huge lump in her throat. “And that she’ll hate me when she does, if she’ll go on living.” Her gaze hardened. “I just want her to live a LOT more than I want the Camerata to succeed.”

Grant and Asher looked at each other, and then nodded. “We have a deal then,” Grant said.

“You’d better keep your end of the bargain,” Royce snapped hatefully, “or we won’t hesitate to act accordingly.”

“I’m sure you will, you and whomever you’ll replace me with shortly,” Sybil said, picking up her parasol. She turned to leave, then looked back at them. “Oh, and one more thing. I may have only been ninety-nine percent honest before. I didn’t give copies of those documents to five others. It might have been four, or perhaps six, or more. Can’t say for sure, though. And neither can you. Ta-ta!”

And just like that, she walked away from the mission and the allies she’d sacrificed so much for. Now she’d sacrificed them, all for the safety of one woman she loved with every fiber of her being.

Sybil thought the trade had been infinitely worth it.

“I mean, look at them all,” Sybil was saying in a raised voice four months later, gesturing to the large and enthusiastic crowd. “They love her. They’ve never loved any musician like they love Red. This is why she’ll be the biggest star Cloudbank has ever seen. It’s not about the production values or the pyrotechnics. It’s because she’s the kind of person who just inspired passion and loyalty in others.”

“Red certainly seems to have done that to YOU,” Amelia Garber replied. “Let’s talk about you for a moment, shall we?”

Sybil waved a hand dismissively. “Your readers don’t care about me,” she said. “You could poll them all right now, who do they want to hear about right now, Red or Sybil Reisz? I promise you, it won’t be the poll that ends Red’s winning streak.”

“You’d be surprised,” the OVC journalist said. “Granted, Sybil, being both manager AND promoter for the hottest singer in Cloudbank must be a full-time job. Still, there was a time when you were the foremost event organizer in the city. You did it all – fashion shows, outdoor symphonies, fireworks displays, museum exhibitions. Even your competitors agree that you were the best in the business. And then not even four months ago, you took an

indefinite sabbatical from that line of work to manage a single musician's career. Even if that musician is a major star like Red, some might say that you've taken a step down. Can you explain your decision?"

Of course Sybil could explain her decision. She could explain that every show she'd successfully arranged and hosted had been intended to accomplish two aims – one, to elevate the profile of talented individuals, and two, to earn their gratitude. By discovering and promoting new talent, Sybil had a hand in creating the very people who would one day be integrated into the Process. And by earning their gratitude, it ensured that one day she'd have no trouble arranging said integrations.

Or, to put it another way, she'd have no trouble "luring them to their deaths".

As a member of the Camerata, holding herself above the masses, it had been easy to talk about the murder of innocent people in such bloodless terminology as "arranging integrations". As if she were a general moving troops around a war zone. Now, however, Sybil saw the world more and more through Red's eyes. Now her justifications and rationalizations for the human cost of the Camerata's plan sounded weak and shallow in her own ears, as they would have sounded in Red's.

Like she'd told the others, if Red learned what Sybil had done as a founding member of the Camerata, she would find it – and her – repugnant. Instead of the loving glances Sybil cherished so much, Red would only be able to look at her with horror and loathing. The knowledge of this undeniable truth was a dark cloud that followed her everywhere, and there was nothing she could do about it.

All she could do was try to alleviate in some small way the weight of those dead men and women on her conscience. While she couldn't expose the Camerata's crimes, for fear of endangering Red, she also couldn't stay silent and do nothing while they continued to integrate others. So she'd re-dedicated herself to promoting the career of Red, and only Red. It didn't matter how famous SHE became, because the Camerata didn't dare touch Red. It only mattered that she no longer played a role in helping others achieve stardom, thereby hastening their deaths.

She could have explained all of that to Amelia. But twenty-four hours later, Sybil would be dead, and Red would be trapped within the Process forever.

Instead she pointed at the red-haired woman on the Empty Net stage, who had the audience utterly mesmerized with the sound of her voice alone. “Amelia, my response would be, I cannot imagine a higher calling in life than devoting my time and energies to that woman. She’ll be remembered one day as a talent for the ages.”

Amelia nodded. “And what about the rumors of a more – personal relationship between you and Red?”

Sybil cocked her head quizzically. “It’s common knowledge that Red and I were friends even before I was her manager, Amelia.”

“Friends who live together?”

“Being Red’s manager means working twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. It’s much more convenient if we’re roommates too,” Sybil said easily, even as internally she scowled. How had Amelia learned about them moving in together? Sybil had been VERY discreet.

Not that Red or Sybil was ashamed of their relationship. They’d just been trying to enjoy life together privately while they could, before they were finally outed and the media attention became too oppressive, even for two women with lives like theirs.

Amelia opened her mouth to ask another question, but her phone suddenly rang. She looked down at the display, and Sybil could tell by her expression that something she’d seen had startled her. “Excuse me, Sybil, I’d better take this,” she said, putting a finger in one ear as she raised her phone to the other. “Hello, Lillian? It’s Amelia.”

Sybil’s eyebrows shot up. Lillian Platt? She’d been unwittingly investigating the Camerata for almost a whole year now, ever since she’d decided there was something fishy about the way Maximilian Darzi had vanished. If she was calling the OVC now . . . Sybil couldn’t help but follow Amelia from a distance as the journalist went looking for a quieter place to talk on the phone.

After a few moments Sybil found herself on the Promenade, casually leaning against the wall like she wasn't eavesdropping on the woman around the corner.

"So what's the . . . Lillian . . . Lillian, slow down, you're not making any sense . . . Lil . . . what? . . . what?? . . . you must be mistaken . . . Lillian, no offense, but you can't seriously be saying that a man is dead because *Administrator Kendrell* and three others just attempted to assassinate you with a giant sword!"

Sybil slammed both hands over her mouth to hold the gasp in.

"Just tell me where you are, Lillian," Amelia could be heard saying. ". . . what? . . . you're sending me a picture? All right, hold on that's the sword? It doesn't look like any sword I've seen before. So you have it?"

Lillian Platt had the Transistor?? If the Camerata failing to integrate someone wasn't proof enough that "the plan" had gone horribly awry, the Camerata losing the only key to the Process certainly was.

What might this mean for her and Red?

And perhaps more importantly, what might this mean for Cloudbank, if the Camerata had temporarily lost the ability to issue commands to the Process?

Sybil closed her eyes and placed her hands on her temples. She needed to think . . . no she didn't. As always, Red remained her top priority. She had to get Red to safety.

Whatever else happened that night, THAT was non-negotiable.

To be continued . . .

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