

DR. SCHARR

“But why do we have to see Dr. Scharr every year before I start school? She’s so horrible, revolting... horrid!”

Barely eleven, stripped to her stark white underwear, Robin sat dejectedly on the chrome examination table. Two large tortoise-shell clips pinned up her flowing brown hair. Fanny, her mom, sat next to her in a straight-back chair as they waited for what seemed like forever.

“Last year,” said Robin, examining every finger, “she scolded me like the witch in Hansel and Gretel! So what if I bite my fingernails? It’s not like it’s a terminal disease or something.”

“Don’t be a whiner, dear. There are children all over the world who would give anything for a doctor to examine them.”

Ignoring her mother’s remark, Robin rolled her eyes. This undershirt is so embarrassing. I should be wearing a bra by now. Sitting in silence, Robin slumped forward

with her arms crossed over her chest, anchored by her thumbs in her armpit.

“Robin, you’re always complaining! It’s a bad habit and—”

Suddenly, Dr. Scharr, a wisp of a woman who looked like she was having a perpetually bad day entered the room.

“Hello to ze mama!” Dr. Scharr’s hand emerged from a gigantic white lab coat for the customary German handshake.

“Hello, Dr. Scharr. So good to see you again,” said Fanny, a bit over-enthusiastically.

Always the epitome of efficiency, Dr. Scharr pivoted on one heel and looked at Robin.

“And how’s our little Robin?”

“I’m fine, Dr. Scharr.” Robin smiled weakly. “Really.”

“Not so little, I see,” Dr. Scharr muttered, lifting the back of Robin’s undershirt, and placing her ice-cold stethoscope on Robin’s back.

Robin rolled her eyes again as she took in Dr. Scharr’s annual reprimand. *Geez, give a girl a break. I’m only eleven!*

Poking, pushing, and prodding Robin’s body down to the last toenail, the exam suddenly felt like a matter of life and death.

Suddenly, Dr. Scharr stared intently into Robin’s eyes.

*Here it comes. I wonder what she'll find to criticize me about this year?*

“Okay, little missy, you gained nine pounds over the summer. Veren’t you outzide playing at all? Vat did you do mit yourself?”

“Well, yeah, I, but...but...”

“But vat?” demanded Dr. Scharr.

Robin turned and devil-stared at her mother, expecting her to say something—anything—to get her off the hook.

“Well, Robin read all the Harry Potter books this summer and guess what?” Fanny continued, as if to avoid further conversation, “She won the summer library award for reading the most books!”

“Vell, good for her, but if she gains nine pounds every zummer, by the time she’s tventy she vill haf gained eighty-one pounds! Now, add it up—ninety pounds and eighty-one?” Dr. Scharr paused just long enough to take a breath. “Zat’s right, one hundred seventy-one pounds. At five feet, she would be eighty-one pounds overveight! No young man is going to vant to date someone that’s eighty-one pounds overveight. Just think about that, little fräulein!”

Robin wrinkled her nose as if she’d just gotten a whiff of some bad wiener schnitzel. *Young man! Who cares about boys anyway? And what difference does it make?*

Horrified and now perched on the edge of her seat, Fanny gasped, “That would be dreadful! Isn’t there

something she can do? Her sister is so skinny and can eat anything.” Robin crossed her arms over her little round tummy and sucked in her cheeks, pouting. I hardly eat anything. Besides, Mom is the one who feeds me.

Looking from mother to daughter, Dr. Scharr continued with an air of steely resolve. “Zo, here’s vat you must do. You must count every calorie zat passes through your two lips. Zat’s right, every last morsel. Here is the proper calorie counter book.” She leaned over, heaved open a drawer brimming with pocket-sized calorie counter booklets, and as if revealing the Holy Grail, handed one to Robin.

Robin quickly leafed through it and then set it aside. *This is so random. I’m not going to count every calorie and figure out...What a nut job!*

“Really, Dr. Scharr, I-I-I don’t think I’ll be needing this,” she said, giving her mother a wide-eyed, jaw-clenching, “you’d better agree or else” look.

Fanny fixed her gaze on Dr. Scharr as though she was a modern voodoo doctor who has just cast a spell and asked, “How does it work?”

“Vell, every food has a number assigned to it based on the portion size. Zo just because it zays potato equals one hundred calories, it doesn’t mean every potato is one hundred calories. It’s the average serving. Zo, take out zome potatoes and compare a few. Zen pick the average size and zhat’s the one zhat’s one hundred calories.”

Incredulous, Robin asked, “So you lay out all the potatoes on the table and pick the average looking one?”

*She’s really serious about this! Completely mental if you ask me!* Robin’s face got really pouty, and her eyes turned to teeny, tiny slits.

“Prezisely,” Dr. Scharr beamed, leaning over to pat Fanny on the shoulder. “I think she’s got it.”

She turned to Robin. “Now, I don’t vant to zee you back here next zummer mit another nine pounds,” but added in a somewhat ominous tone, “Lose no more zan two pounds a veek. Get a little notebook and write it all down or you’ll forget vat you ate and how much.”

“Any more questions?” she asked, arching her left eyebrow in a very wicked, scary way.

Fanny stood and motioned Robin to get dressed. “So, you just lay everything out side by side? Hmm...that shouldn’t be a problem.”

“Prezisely! Vell, it vas vonderful zeeing you again. Both zo charming!”

While pulling her shirt over her head, Robin sighed half-heartedly, “At least the witch in Hansel and Gretel liked ’em fat.”

Pretending not to hear, Dr. Scharr reached over and gave Robin’s ear an affectionate tug and, in almost the same instant, she vanished as if swallowed up by a puff of smoke.



*Two*