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REVIEW

A Refreshing Change

Miroslav Krobot's *Nowhere in Moravia* (*Díra u Hanušovic*, 2014)

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So far in his career Czech actor Miroslav Krobot has been famous for two roles: first as a dispatcher for a small railway station in a remote village near the Czech-Polish border (*The Man from London*), then as a railway points-man of a small station in a remote port town in the Czech Republic (*Alois Nebel*). In both *The Man from London* and *Alois Nebel*, Krobot incarnated a mysterious loner who works the night shift and sees things he shouldn't. What can we expect from him as a director after these two fascinating, underestimated roles?

We finally have an answer in the form of *Nowhere in Moravia*, an entertaining look at village life in the remote Jeseník Mountains. The film follows 30-something Maruna as well as her fellow villagers. The usual stock characters are all represented – first the village idiot who prances dangerously on the roofs he is supposed to be repairing, then the corrupt mayor, the well-built drunks, and of course the jaded whore.

The poster for the film portrays two unsmiling women standing next to the rear half of a Fleckvieh cow, one holding a large pitchfork and the other in a flowery dress. On the left is protagonist Maruna, who is a former German teacher that runs the local pub. She's a pretty woman with long hair and a sturdy manner. Maruna's character is hardly endearing, but she has her humorous moments – when she gives birth to a baby daughter, she tells her in a sing-song voice, "You'll probably be a little slut too, and then we'll be three generations of sluts". Casual sex is one of Maruna's main past-times, as good a way as any to pass the time in what seems quite literally like the middle of nowhere. Then there is Jaruna, her sister, who seizes the opportunity to escape the small town with a German man who comes to visit after a death in his extended family takes place in the village. Maruna's sister, cheerfully learning a few words of German from her sister, soon becomes the talk of the town.

Drinking and death are two major themes in this dark comedy. The local pub

and graveyard are the main settings for the film, though no explicit links are drawn between the two. The villagers drink a lot, but this is just life in a mysterious part of the world. Indeed, it is mystery that flutters on the edges of the frame when the village whore and the hefty brothers she takes turns going to bed with, Ladin and Balin, get drunk in an outlying field late at night before they chase her through a gloomy field. Here we get a hint of Krobot the actor’s mystery mixed with a refreshing touch of comedy.