

RONIKA MERL / BYTE

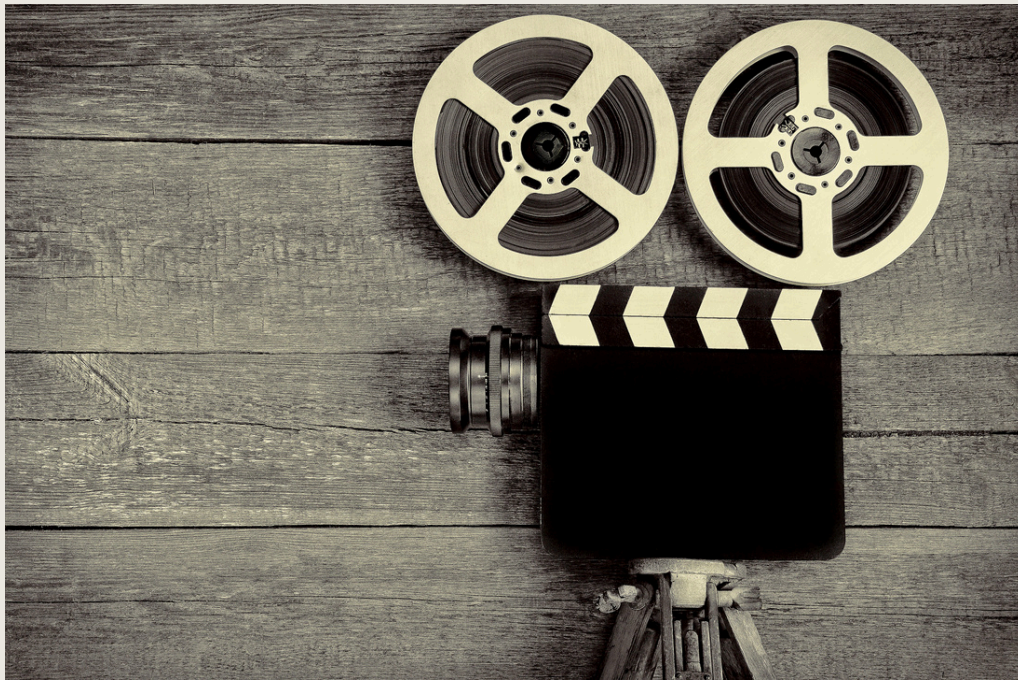
Ep. 243

Byte Sized Blessings

[MUSIC PLAYING] Kirsten: Hello, friends and fellow podcast listeners. I have another amazing guest for you. I know I say that so much, but maybe that's because there are a lot of incredible human beings out there in the world. This time, I'm introducing you to someone who is simply a force of nature. And she is crafting and creating the world around her so that it is a more beautiful place. And she's Irish, which means there's going to be a lot of laughter and a lot of joking in this episode. I met her through another podcaster who said, hey, you have to have Ronika Merl on your show. And the way we kind of had this conversation happen, after two years, mind you, is kind of funny. And we discuss that a little bit later in the episode. But Ronika is a screenwriter. She's just incredibly talented. She's a writer. She has books out. She's an advocate for social justice. And with that being said, there is a trigger warning with this episode. Ronika does discuss events that happen in her childhood that were painful, that no child should go through, and that might hurt your heart. So please take care when listening. And if it's too much for you, just fast forward through that part because there's lots of deliciousness after she discusses her childhood. I have a feeling, everyone, that you're going to love Ronika just as much as I do. And you're also going to be grateful just as much as I am that she is in the world. So without further ado, here's my interview with the glorious
Ronika Merl

[MUSIC PLAYING] Ronika: I went over to where the buses were. And I just thought, oh, I'm just going to go to Vienna. And by the time that happened, I had already spent a few weeks living on the streets in Vienna one summer because of reasons. And so I was like, I can do that again. Like, I can survive for a few days on the streets of Vienna. I really can. It's fine. So I was going over to where the buses were. And I was just kind of sitting on my little bag. And I was talking on the phone to my friend, Beth. And I told her the whole story. And I was like, well, where am I going to go? There's nowhere I can go. I'm just going to sleep at a train station in Vienna for the next few days. It's fine.

[MUSIC PLAYING] Ronika: That's an interesting question. I like that. There have been so many magical things that have happened to me. I guess one of the things that happened to me that maybe believe in humanity the most and kind of reaffirmed the fact that we are all spirits on a journey that make-- that the journey is supposed to make us kind-- I was 15. And I was at a music festival. And the guy that I had went to the festival with turned out to be very, very unpleasant, let's say. A very not pleasant young man. So I had to leave. So the festival was a three-day festival over the weekend. I came down to the festival. It was on the Hungarian border on the Friday. And by kind of Saturday evening, the guy had turned quite bad. So I obviously couldn't stay in his tent anymore, for safety reasons. So I had to leave. And I had nowhere else to go because I had a train ticket. But the train ticket was for Monday morning. I couldn't transfer it over. Obviously, I couldn't call my mother because she would have just told me to f off. And I didn't know anybody else. And I was completely alone.



And I had no money. So I was 15, lost at a music festival on the Hungarian border with nowhere to go. So I went over to where the buses were. And I just thought, oh, I'm just going to go to Vienna. By the time that happened, I had already spent a few weeks living on the streets in Vienna one summer because of reasons. And so I was like, I can do that again. Like, I can survive for a few days on the streets of Vienna. I really can. It's fine. So I was going over to where the buses were. And I was just kind of sitting on my little bag. And I was talking on the phone to my friend, Beth. And I told her the whole story. And I was like, well, where am I going to go? There's nowhere I can go. I'm just going to sleep at a train station in Vienna for the next few days. It's fine. And this amazing couple, they were in their early 20s. So they weren't that much older than me. Just overheard me. And they approached me. And they said, you're not doing that. That's not happening. Not on our watch. Girl, what? No, you're not doing that. And they took me in and they brought me to Vienna. And they brought me into their luxurious penthouse apartment with golden furniture and absolute luxury. And they were like billionaires or something. And I was like, oh, OK. That's better than a train station. And they fed me ice cream. And they looked after me. And they showed me comedy videos of Eddie Izzard for the whole night. And then the next morning, because I was Indian, the girls aunt made a curry. And she looked up a recipe on how to make curry. And she cooked a curry for me. And we went over to her aunt's place and had a curry. And then they got a driver with the Mercedes to drive us back to the festival. So after having been kicked out by this really horrible man, I was brought back to the festival in Hamburg. And then after all-- like we watched all the gigs. And then they picked us up in the Mercedes again. It was black and with tinted windows in the back. And I don't know. I don't want to know what they actually did. And I got to stay until my train on Monday morning. And I don't know their names. I don't remember their names. I never saw them again. I never heard from them again.

I don't know who they were. I don't know who they were. I know he was a photographer. So if by god, by any chance, do they hear this? Oh my goodness. He was a photographer in London. And she was an artist, both of them in their 20s. She was amazing. And they just saved me. Just randomly saved me. And I never forgot them, obviously. But I don't believe that they were human. I think they must have been-- I think the definition of an angel. And it did feel kind of magical. It did feel kind of like destiny had kind of aligned itself and said, no. We're not doing this. We're doing it this way. Which kind of, again, you don't know the impact that a small bit of kindness has to you. So yeah, I think it's those moments when I see human beings surpassing their mere humanity a little bit and become slightly magical and become slightly larger than life. It's very inspiring. And if I can live up to their example, even in the smallest ways, I've done my life right. You know? [MUSIC PLAYING]

Kirsten: Guess what, everyone? That's the end of this episode and the end of my conversation with Ronika for now. I suspect that she and I will continue to stay in touch and laugh together and try to figure out this great big world we both live in and our places in it. To discover a little bit more about Ronika, to check out her website, her books, there will be a link in the episode show notes to Ronika's website and to her books to say that she is changing worlds would be the understatement of this century. The work she's doing is nothing short of essential. And just to know that she has the fortitude and the steadfastness to continue in it, even though it is difficult, just makes my heart feel stronger itself knowing how strong she is. I want to just ask everybody, if you could take a moment to rate and review the podcast on whatever platform you listen. If you like what you hear, I'd really appreciate it if you would leave a little rating or write a little review. Those ratings and reviews warm the cockles of my heart and make me ever so grateful to each and every one of you. Thank you for listening. And here's my one request. Be like Ronika. Be a badass. I mean, honestly, this is someone who slept on the streets of Vienna younger than 15, younger than the age of 15. So I'm pretty sure that the world has her back. And because of that, she knows she can step out into the world with grace, with power, with the idea that she can shape it to what she will. A place where resilience isn't needed. A place where fear does not exist. Ronika is doing that in this world. She's shaping it and changing it so that we can all feel safe, so that we can all feel included, and that we can all feel that this world has our backs. But really, it's Ronika who has our backs. So be like her. Have everyone's back. Go out in the world and make it a better place. Help someone whatever way you can. I look forward to hearing your stories in the future of how you're changing lives, because I know already you're doing it. See you next time for the very next podcast. And in until then, I hope your week is filled with helping those who need it. Laughter at every corner and dancing like nobody, nobody is watching. [MUSIC PLAYING]