

BLOGGING DEATH

by

Anna Battista

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INT.

The HQ of avant-garde magazine EMBRYO CONCEPTS. It's late in the evening and the desks are empty. The camera lingers on the two sofas in the reception area, the lunchroom kitchenette and a couple of storage rooms with bookshelves and filing cabinets. There is nobody around and everything is quiet, but a few voices can be heard talking off screen.

The camera moves onto a meeting room. Through its glass wall we see a group of people gathered around a table. Editor MEG THOMPSON, a woman in her late thirties is chairing the meeting. She is worried and stressed. As she talks she looks from one editor to the other.

There are 8 people sitting in the meeting room, PATRICK (menswear section editor), VALENTINA (womenswear section editor), CAROLA (arts and culture), MARK (film), PASCAL (music), MIRANDA (beauty), WILL (photographer) and MARTIN (graphic designer).

MEG

...so it's no secret that the magazine is fighting for survival. We've had bad problems for quite a few months now. As promised you will get the wages for the last three months at the end of this week, but the next issue is seriously at risk. I've run in the numbers and if we don't rope in some new advertisers, we'll be bust by the Autumn, it's as simple as that. For the first time in Embryo Concept's long and outstanding history, advertisers are indeed backing out one after the other and you probably know the reason why...

PATRICK, a man in his mid-30s in a stylish classic suit, turns towards the woman sitting next to him, VALENTINA, who is wearing a 30s black skirt suit that references Elsa Schiaparelli's style matched with a vintage velvet hat.

PATRICK

(teasing)

Could it be the fault of the "Surreal Me" feature Ms Schiap here put together for the latest issue, a 3,200 word ode to surreal art and fashion in which she accused many prominent fashion houses to be pilfering Elsa Schiaparelli?

VALENTINA

(irritated, but smiling)

I'm sure it wasn't my vindication of Schiap that scared the advertisers. They probably complained much more about the Fascist implications of your "Uomo Futuristico" piece, with all those references to fascist fashion and contemporary men's wear collections...

Beauty editor MIRANDA rolls her eyes and shakes her head as if PATRICK and VALENTINA's quarrelling were the norm.

MARK

(amused)

I've been working with you for the last seven years and I often wonder if you ever agree on anything.

PATRICK and VALENTINA look at him with contempt.

MEG

Unfortunately, I can assure you that this time it wasn't caused by any specific features included in the magazine. Investors and advertisers aren't happy anymore with the contents of the magazine in general.

MARK

Oh, come on, there must be something more specific about the contents they don't like...

MARTIN

If it's a problem with the layout or the graphics we can easily change it and make it look even more avant-garde.

MEG

I think they've had enough of "avant-garde" stuff, Martin. In fact, just like the best issues of the magazines were the product of a collective effort, this crisis derives from a "collective fault".

MARK

Which means?

MEG

I started Embryo Concepts 15 years ago, setting new standards and a new purpose, offering readers intellectual features and photo shoots. Yet people don't seem to be interested in anything intellectual nowadays. According to investors and advertisers our pieces are too long and boring and make our readers fall asleep..

Somebody can suddenly be heard snoring: it's arts and culture editor CAROLA who is sleeping with her head on the table.

PATRICK (looking at CAROLA then at MEG)

I think we found out who makes readers fall asleep: it's you!

MIRANDA who is sitting next to CAROLA shakes her, awaking her.

MEG

Carola, have you been at it again?

CAROLA

(jumping out of her sleep)

Ready in three days' time, 10,000 words English into Spanish, £60 per 1,000 words, agreed..

MIRANDA

(to MEG, shaking her head)  
Apparently yes...

CAROLA  
(realising she is at the meeting, stammering)  
I-I-I can explain...I needed some extra cash...

MEG  
Who doesn't...

CAROLA  
I-I couldn't wait anymore, I'm two months behind with the rent, and the publisher of that book about art and style cancelled it from the catalogue because of the crisis. I HAD to take that translating job.

MEG  
(in an exasperated tone)  
How many hours did you sleep last night to finish it?

CAROLA  
(closing one eye, counting with her fingers...)  
Roughly three?

MEG  
(to MIRANDA)  
Go and get her a coffee and make sure she drinks it.

MIRANDA nods, stands and goes out while MEG continues.

MEG  
Carola, we will have a chat about your translating addiction later on.

CAROLA silently nods and MEG resumes speaking.

MEG  
Now, going back to the magazine. We have a very short time to turn ourselves around and we must do it as soon as possible, because we won't have enough capital to keep ourselves afloat for the next few months. Advertisers say we make readers

sleep and they are asking for something else, something simpler (she makes a pause and looks at the editors)...basically a lot of clicks and hip, young and trendy bloggers.

PATRICK

(rolling his eyes)

I knew it was coming, please don't start again with this story.

MEG

(in a serious tone)

I'm afraid I have to. When readers leaf through a magazine, advertisers can't monitor if or for how long they stop looking at an ad and in which ways do they show any interest in that product...

MIRANDA comes back with the coffee and passes it to CAROLA.

MARTIN

...but when a blogger writes about that product, readers click on the provided link and the advertisers can check how many people visited their site or showed interest in what they sell.

MEG

(nodding)

Correct. This also shows them which bloggers are the best ones in providing such links and bringing them new customers. What's more important is that most of these bloggers don't even need huge amounts of money to advertise a product, but are happy to do it in exchange for free clothes, accessories, perfumes or small amounts of money, kindly provided by the advertisers.

MARTIN

...and advertisers are happier to save money and get more customers, so they just turn to bloggers...

MEG

Correct again. And this is damaging us. So we must do something to save ourselves and save Embryo Concepts.

CAROLA

(sipping her coffee, sleepily)

We do have a blog, a Facebook page and a Twitter account, I thought that was enough to make the advertisers happy?

MEG

(shaking her head)

No. Apparently our style is not fresh anymore, we seem to employ too many words while readers are more interested in photographs and images rather than texts.

PATRICK

What's the problem? Let's get an intern who can do all these things while we keep on producing a magazine based on quality...

MEG

Well, the slaving intern will end up being the one who does all the work then and we will have to find ourselves new jobs, because advertisers are after big pics and practically no words. They're not interested in your well-researched pieces anymore. We need a clever re-launch issue, with a new format and new ideas.

VALENTINA

(irritated)

Yes, and a more superficial, younger and hipper staff who can't spell and can't use punctuation...

MEG

I didn't say that.

VALENTINA

...because I interrupted you before you could do so.

PATRICK

Totally agree with Valentina.

MARK

That's a first, Meg, you've finally managed to make them agree about something!

MEG

(nodding)

That's already a step forward...but...we haven't sorted out our problem. I have in mind a re-launch issue that focuses on the death and rebirth of the printed magazine. Any ideas about short but hip features that we may want to include?

VALENTINA

Yes, a piece about killing bloggers.

MEG

I'm pleased to see that your past as a mercenary war correspondent is finally coming out after all these years...

They all look at VALENTINA with inquiring faces.

MARK

(surprised)

Is that true? I can see a great film behind this... How did you end up here then? Were you hiding from something?

VALENTINA

(looking at MARK, angry but also embarrassed)

None of your business. Mind you, there is no great difference between being a war correspondent and working in the fashion industry. At least when you are in a war you know who are your enemies...

PATRICK

(amused)

Suddenly, I'm almost starting to like you, in fact I think you should stop revealing the darkest secrets of your life or I may seriously fall in love with you.



VALENTINA

(in a cynical tone)

Sorry to disappoint you, but I rarely fall in love with snakes.

WILL

I think Valentina is right, though. I wouldn't mind doing a photo shoot featuring a few prominent bloggers dying horrible deaths...

PATRICK

Yes, accompanied by short interviews about fashion and death...

CAROLA

(still in a sleepy tone)

Giacomo Leopardi wrote a dialogue between fashion and death, pointing out they are sisters, born out of transience and decay and intent on transforming human beings...

MEG

It could be an idea, it goes on well with the death and rebirth theme of the issue and the "memento mori" fashion trend with all those prints of skulls and bones, yet that's already been done hundreds of times as well by many different fashion magazines. We have seen dead models in the pages of fashion magazines from the 90s on.

WILL

It will be just a matter of taking it from a fresh perspective. In fact we can actually kill the prominent bloggers for real and do the photo shoots with real corpses. We've never seen a photo shoot with real corpses have we?

MEG

(in a shocked tone)

WHAT?

MARK

(laughing)

I thought Valentina was the mercenary war reporter here, were you working side by side with her?

WILL  
(serious)

Oh no, I'm actually an anatomist...

They all look surprised at WILL, then turn to MEG with inquiring faces.

MEG  
(nodding)

Yes, didn't you know it? That was one of the main reasons why I hired him 10 years ago. He can take amazing images of models because he knows how to deal with the human body.

They all remain silent for a short while, then MIRANDA speaks. She is in her early thirties and she is wearing perfectly applied make up.

MIRANDA

I actually have a bizarre connection with human bodies as well: I became interested in beauty after working for three years as a make up artist at a funeral parlour in Glasgow.

PASCAL

(nodding, without removing his headphones)  
At the time I was a gravedigger in a nearby cemetery. That's how we met.

MEG

I'm glad to see death has shaken you out of your musical reverie, Pascal.

MIRANDA

(assorted, as if remembering)  
I admit the job had two advantages: you dealt with very silent people and didn't have to review piles of stinking designer fragrances with stupid names and bizarre packaging...

PASCAL

(to MIRANDA who smiles and nods at him)

Remember when we made those satanic masks using the restorative wax you worked with for that Halloween party? We freaked out quite a few people..

MARK

Looks like we've just found another couple of skeletons in Embryo Concepts' cupboards..

PATRICK

(nodding and laughing)

Maybe we should turn Embryo Concepts into a funeral parlour..

VALENTINA

That's a good idea, do you want to be our first client?

PATRICK

(teasing)

Oh shut it, mercenary war reporter..

MEG

I appreciate all your thoughts about death, and fashion, but we must find a way to re-launch the magazine and not a way to end up in jail.

WILL

(in a relaxed tone and shaking his head)  
But we won't end up in jail.

MEG

A magazine does an entire photo shoot using corpses of prominent bloggers who eventually disappear from the scene and nobody suspects us?

WILL

They won't disappear from the scene, they will be replaced online by more invisible and less hip entities: our editors.

MEG

You're crazy!

PATRICK

(excited)

The ultimate "ghost-writers"! I love the idea!  
Why don't we put it to the votes?

VALENTINA

(putting her right hand up)

I'm all for it! Who's in?

MEG shakes her head and rubs her temples.

MEG

I suppose we can cancel the plans in the morning,  
when you are all more sober...

PATRICK

I can assure you we're perfectly sober...

VALENTINA

So sober in fact that you could even start  
sharing with us your secrets and the story of  
your uncle Vincenzo, the mafia boss.

MEG

(visibly embarrassed and surprised, in shock)  
What...?

VALENTINA

(with a cynical smile on her face)

Oh, you may have forgotten it, but I ended up  
being deported to a war zone by the TV station I  
worked for because of my mafia investigation that  
showed how some bosses had direct connections  
with the government, and remember how one of your  
bosses was your dear little uncle?

MEG

(stammering)

I-I, can explain you...

WILL

I guess you will have all the time to explain it  
to us in the next few days. Now it's better to  
focus on the photo shoot. So who's in?

MEG nods but remains silent.

PATRICK  
Count me in!

CAROLA  
(still sleepy, raising her hand)  
Me too.

MIRANDA  
(looking at PASCAL)  
Like the old times?

PASCAL  
(smiling)  
Like the old times!

MIRANDA  
(turning to the others)  
We're in then.

MARK  
(laughing)  
This is crazy, but I want to see how and where it ends up!  
I'm in! Martin?

MARTIN shrugs and nods.

VALENTINA  
(taking a small gun out of her clutch bag and putting it on  
the table)  
Well, let's get things going then.

PATRICK  
(surprised at the gun, but smiling at the same  
time, almost in an approving tone)  
Did I ever tell you I like your style?

VALENTINA  
(feeling the lapel of his jacket with one hand,  
holding the gun to PATRICK's temple with the other)  
Did I ever tell you about that war lord I interviewed  
once who had a wardrobe stuffed with Armani suits very  
similar to this one?

PATRICK

(shaking his head, suddenly scared)

N-no I don't think you did.

VALENTINA

Well, the most interesting thing about him is that his head was blown off by the rebels shortly after I interviewed him. Such bad luck, isn't it?

CUT TO: VALENTINA's house