

A Matter of Perspective

J.E. Clarke

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FADE IN ON:

INT. OUTDOOR SHOPPING MALL - DAY

Three college students walk down a busy street: KAREN, TOM, and VANESSA.

Camera gear weighs down Tom's thin shoulders. A mega microphone fills Vanessa's hands. Karen leads the pack - a peeved expression on her face.

KAREN

We gotta come up with something quick.
The assignment's due yesterday!

TOM

Geez, Karen. Try to chill. Kleiner never looks at submissions on weekends, you know that. Too busy with his bourbon benders. Get your ovaries out of a bunch.

Karen SLAPS Tom's face. Vanessa GIGGLES happily. Tom shies away from Karen's scowl, scans the crowd.

TOM

Documentary's are a snap. We find someone dumb to interview, wrap it in a socially relevant theme. Bingo. Instant A.

He points the camera at Vanessa. She hefts the microphone, ad libs:

VANESSA

We're here in downtown Madison. Tons of shoppers. Happy times. But are things really as they seem? Some say there's an invisible plague spreading across our country side. Insidious. Silent. Deadly.
(dramatic pause)
A horrifying lack of sex...

She jams the mike in Karen's face.

VANESSA

Enlighten our audience, Karen. When's the last time your boyfriend got it up?

Karen shoves the mike away. But behind her... an altercation's starting.

A MAN and WOMAN argue (MOS.) PEDESTRIANS stop to watch - bored curiosity on their faces.

Vanessa's back is turned. She doesn't see.

VANESSA

Come on, Karen. The public has a right to know!

The woman digs in her purse. The man shoves her roughly. Metal GLINTS in the woman's hand.

She lunges. Stabs.

The man grabs his side and crumples to the ground. The crowd GASPS as the woman races away.

Karen SCREAMS, points. Vanessa and Tom swing around; the three race towards the scene. Tom's camera already filming.

TOM

Told you we'd find something!

The man TWITCHES on the ground. A pool of blood growing beneath him. He's bleeding out. Quickly.

Karen drops to his side.

She glances up. A spectator circle's formed around the victim. Vanessa. Tom. And a multitude of passers-by.

TOM

Holy shit. We've hit a documentary goldmine!

He starts filming. Everything. The man on the ground. Horrified faces in the crowd.

KAREN

Anyone here a doctor? I don't know what to do!

No-one replies. Karen sheds her jacket, and applies pressure to the wound.

KAREN

Vanessa, you took a first aid course. Am I doing this correctly?

She glances up. A KID in the crowd SNAPS a picture with his smart phone. Karen squints through the flash.

KAREN

Tom? 'Nessa?

Her friends are gone. Karen scans the crowd: spots Tom and Vanessa with two TEEN GIRLS. One of whom is crying.

TOM

You look real upset. You okay?

CRYING GIRL

It's just so traumatic! My cousin got hurt two years ago in a car accident. Rudy almost died. This brings back so many bad memories!

VANESSA

Wow. You mean, you have PTSD?

CRYING GIRL

Yeah. Just like soldiers! From Iran. Or something.

The girl's companion GIGGLES, and points at mascara running down her friend's face.

CRYING GIRL'S FRIEND

You know, they're filming you like that.

CRYING GIRL

Oh my God. My life is ruined!

The bleeding victim MOANS. Karen brushes sweaty hair from his face.

KAREN

Hold in there. You'll be okay.

She looks for Tom and Vanessa. They've moved again. This time, it's a YOUNG COUPLE in front of the lens. Lots of PDA between these two - it's almost difficult to tell them apart.

BOYFRIEND

I saw the whole damned thing. That bitch stabbed him. Over nothing!

GIRLFRIEND

You crazy? He pushed her first. You ask me, he had it coming.

Vanessa nods sympathetically.

VANESSA

If my boyfriend did that, I'd stab him too.

The girlfriend elbows her man.

GIRLFRIEND

Hear that? Better watch out. Us girls can be dangerous.

BOYFRIEND

(grins)

I *like* that about you, Susie. You're so hot.

He pulls her close. Tom zooms in on a very sloppy kiss.

Karen fumbles with the victim's wrist, tries to take his pulse. But the blood's too slippery.

VICTIM

(moans)

If I don't make it, tell my family...

KAREN

Shhhh. An ambulance is coming. Tell them yourself.

She stares up at the MURMURING crowd.

KAREN

Someone called 911. Right?

A few people shrug. A MIDDLE AGED WOMAN waves at Karen.

KAREN

(excited)

You called?

MIDDLE AGED WOMAN

No, but can you move to the right? You're blocking my picture!

She snaps multiple photos of the victim. Karen shields his face. And her eyes.

Meanwhile, Vanessa and Tom have scored a third interview. A BURLY GUY in hospital scrubs.

BURLY GUY

Yeah, I see stuff like this alla time. Real sad. Major loss of life.

VANESSA

Uh huh. Tell me more.

BURLY GUY

Well, I work in a hospital. People come in with gunshots. Stab wounds. Usually over stupid things.

Karen's ears perk up.

KAREN

You work in a hospital? Please - this man is dying!

BURLY GUY

(shrugs)

Hey, I ain't no doc. Just security. But you want me ta mop up blood, I'm your man.

The victim SCREAMS in pain. Karen explodes. She stares at a sea of apathetic faces. People chatting on cell phones.

CELLPHONE TALKER

Mom... you won't believe what just happened! Yeah, I'm looking at it right now! No, I don't have a picture. I'm using my phone to call you! Duh!

KAREN

Doesn't *anyone* care what's happening?!?

Tom pushes through the crowd, camera raised.

TOM

We care. Don't we, Vanessa?

Vanessa shoves the mike into Karen's face.

VANESSA

Karen, you're in the middle of the action. Tell us - how do YOU feel?

A siren WAILS. Karen breathes a SIGH of relief. TWO PARAMEDICS push through the crowd.

One runs to the fallen man's side and rips off his shirt; examines the wound. The second medic slaps monitor pads on the victim's chest.

PARAMEDIC ONE

Sorry we were late. We got the call ten minutes ago. Couldn't get through fucking traffic.

Vanessa focuses in on him instantly.

VANESSA

Interesting. Is that a systemic problem in your profession?

The paramedic's face lights up.

PARAMEDIC ONE

Now that you mention it, yeah. And lemme tell you one more thing...

The second paramedic turns to Vanessa. Ignores the bleeding man at his side.

PARAMEDIC TWO

People just don't realize - this is a really stressful field to be in. We don't get half the credit we deserve.

VANESSA

Wow. That's majorly sad. By the way, anyone ever tell you you're really photogenic?

Karen SCREAMS in frustration, and starts working on the victim herself. A flood of camera flashes blind her view.

MIDDLE AGED WOMAN

Does that girl have a medical license?

BOYFRIEND

I don't think so.

BURLY GUY

I give you ten to one, she'll get sued.

FADE OUT:

BLACKSCREEN

A monitor BEEPS. FLAT LINES...

KAREN (O.S.)

Oh God. No!

VANESSA (O.S.)

Karen, what the fuck's with you today? You really got to get laid.

TOM (O.S.)

Seriously, Karen. Take a chill-pill. We got all the footage we need. Like I promised, easy A!

Karen SOBS in frustration. The sound drowned out by a dozen cameras CLICKING.

FINAL FADE OUT: