

Meirav Oz

One Wrong Move

Contento de Semrik

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To My Family

1

Concept, design, deadline, reference, sketch, presentation, strategy, campaign, props, jpeg, PDF, traffic, flame, grid, Avid, CMYK, RGB, DPI, audition, execution, resolution, location, brand extension, high definition, post-production, brief, reach, frequency, story board, scamp, production value, show reel, key visual, Photoshop, Pack-shot, layout, convert, freehand, offline, online, renders, insight, input, breakdown, USP, GRP, TRP, RTB, SOV, CPT, digital, segmental, conceptual, advertorial, engagement, OTC, FCMG, casting, styling, briefing, brainstorming, PPM, pantone, shooting, rating, repositioning, branding-shmanding. Shut the hell up already. Fuck, what do they want from me? How did I even find myself here?

Hello, I'm Karnie. I'm twenty-eight and living in Tel Aviv. I love the summer; hate it when the shampoo runs out mid shower; to this day I am still traumatized by that time I had my hair cut off when I was of twelve; and I love my coffee strong, really strong. Maybe 'cause that's what keeps me awake and brave enough to cope with this life. What do I do? I work at an ad agency as an account executive.

An account executive is the one who runs things around here. The truth is, I always dreamed of working in advertising. I never knew exactly why. I guess it seemed like a good starting

point for life, and a great line for my high school reunion. “So, what do you do?” They’ll ask. “Account executive,” I’ll say, and it’ll sound awesome.

I arrived here (here, as in, Schulman-Scher-Melinsky SOS, one of Israel’s largest ad agencies) about a year ago, and ever since then have been conducting my life in a frantic dance, trying to make my way through this big crazy world. It looks something like this:

Hallway.

Senior Blonde speaking: “Write the brief, give it to the traffic manager and tell her to send it over for work in the studio. Make sure to tell her that its urgent/critical/hysteric. Check with the media and find out what’s going on with the prices for the double in the *Seven Days* weekly magazine, and ask the planner about the research guide. Oh, and get this, they closed the ad without convert again. That is so not ok. What do you mean you haven’t had lunch yet? But it’s only 5. OK, eat and then call that pest and ask him if the key visual has been approved yet. Tell Natalie that the visual is really bad; we have to look for something else. This is totally not up to par with what we’ve been looking for. And smile sweetie. Why are you so sad?”

Client Meeting.

“That’s not it. I don’t know. I suppose I was thinking of something different; and the model, does she say fresh to you? She looks like she should be selling anti-wrinkle cream and not a refreshing health drink. And what’s with these fonts anyway? Who can even read that? I want a new idea, I’ve already asked for at least two new concepts yesterday.” Mr. Alpha is the Marketing Director of *Berrylicious*, a natural strawberry drink. Mr. Alpha

is the tough, serious type; the type that must've served in the secret service or something. Well, I don't know about the secret service but definitely the IDF Special Forces unit, where he probably had all his spontaneity beaten out of him. I bet he's firing in all directions even at home: his kid shows him a drawing he did in kindergarten, and he starts explaining to him why this really doesn't fit the concept.

"Moving on to another issue," he continued. "I wish to talk to you about something. Yesterday we received the monthly report. It's bad, really bad. The board wants to cut back on the budget. I need you to be more creative. Don't come to me with any huge campaigns; think small, smart, and cost-effective. Don't bring me some gigantic script where only the catering girl's salary could fund an entire movie production."

A massage on the beach in Koh Samui. That's what the man needs right now. I would take down a double spread ad from the media plan right now and send him there on a direct flight if I could.

In Front of My Computer.

A price proposal for a campaign. How do I even begin calculating this? I thought to myself. Take off 10 percent, add 5 and then add commission. According to the daily dollar rate, or in his special media prices...??

"Ohhh Myyy Go-od! I'm gonna kill you, I swear!" He's done it to me again. It's Ben-Ben, a copywriter at the office (his real name is Benny, but he's such a Ben-Ben). He's turning 27 next month, which doesn't prevent him hiding behind the door, yelling, "Baaaa," and making me scream with terror every single time.

Other times – as appropriate for a man of his age – he would place an innocent looking box on my desk which pops every

time I touch it, or make all sorts of noises come from various unexpected directions, sending me on a search for my sanity. I don't know what's more annoying, the fact that I fall for it every time, or the fact that he never tires of trying out every prank on me and dying of laughter every time he sees me all shaken up.

When he's dealing with a client however, he can be the most serious person in the world. He'll present the creative ever so coolly; and explain to the client how much the creative concept suits the language of the brand in a way that would speak to the consumer at eye level and that would eventually make them love the brand. And I am the only one sitting there thinking to myself, "come on already Ben-Ben, stop showing off."

Monday.

I felt shitty today. I mean, seriously shitty. I've been on this crappy carbs and protein diet for about a week now. I saw my dietitian yesterday and no results, nothing. And to think I've been so good; I watched what I ate, I elegantly ignored all the brownies that were piled up in a tempting pyramid at the Berrylicious meeting, and every evening as I came home I struggled with my hunger, which was screaming, "help me;" and stood there chopping up a salad like a good girl.

On top of everything else, the new account executive they put next to me in my office – the one who only a month ago made the startling confession of never really having a serious boyfriend and never being approached by anyone, it was one of those types of conversations that make you feel like you're not alone and that maybe your condition isn't as bad as it seems – suddenly met someone two weeks ago, and they've been inseparable ever since.

Today she received a huge bouquet of flowers, the kind that

costs at least a hundred and fifty shekels¹, and at least three charming text messages. Now, I'm not saying I'm not rooting for her, 'cause I am. What can I do? Not be happy for her? But deep in my gut I felt a pinch; the kind that says: why is it so easy for everyone else and so hard for me?

And then, when Ben-Ben saw my bummed out face in the hallway and asked me what was wrong and I told him, he gives me a look that says: "Stop it honey, there are far worse things in life." I felt like protesting. I want to fight for my right to get bummed out by the little things in life. I'm allowed to wake up in the morning and feel like the ugliest thing in the world!

From: Rona Grossman – Management Secretariat

To: Account Executives Department

Subject: weekly meeting

The meeting will take place at the large boardroom at 11 AM. Throughout the meeting, studio manager, Daniela, will present the new studio work regulations.

No late arrivals

No dismissals

No excuses

No bullshit

Kapish?

Rona

Strategy Meeting.

The "Inherent Guy" began to speak. I gave him that name the day I finally realized that he simply didn't get enough love as a child. Inherent is a planner at our agency, and he's actually a smart

¹ About forty dollars.

guy. But he has this unyielding need to make an impression on everyone around him, and it has gotten so bad that he no longer speaks like a regular person. Now every word that comes out of his mouth is: *inherent, coherent, consensual, and eminent*: “It is imperative that we venture into yet uncharted territories. We’ve concurred that the conceptual map is relatively crowded, but have recently discovered a new tactic that may potentially bare the fruit of a new and intriguing conceptual vision.” Hello? Does anybody here have a Webster’s Dictionary?

Meeting with the Creative Team.

The Art Director opened the meeting. She has a lot of confidence for someone who had just started last week. Well, that there is a lot of creativity in the creative department: Standing there in her indefinable green Adidas top, a pink skirt and red striped knee socks.

“The look and feel of the ad is going to be very clean,” she began; “very mellow, serene, and flowing. The key visuals are not going to be of some preppy-faced models, but of regular everyday people, like us.”

Regular? Like us ah? Thanks darling, I love you too.

There was something about this girl’s diction that made her sound so intelligent in every situation. I bet she could speak about dried tomatoes and make it sound super interesting.

In the Office Smoking Corner with Dolce & Gabbana.

Dolce and Gabbana are the agency’s Haute couture duo. Dolce has ridiculously long legs and a one of a kind sense of high-fashion. I will never forget my first day here when I saw her wearing a knee length silk skirt and little pointy shoes – the ones with the tiny French heel – which I was certain even the

Prêt-à-Portea shows in Paris hadn't exhibited yet. Ok, so *Forever 21* is not her thing.

It took me a while to realize that Dolce and Gabbana, my comrades in the ever combative accounts department, are a rarity in our local scenery. For despite the glamorous image of the advertising industry, not everyone dresses according to the latest trend. And judging by the array of H&M jeans parading in front of me in the halls every day, I can proudly say that I'm in a good place somewhere in the middle. Much like Dolce, Gabbana too is completely into high-fashion, and let's just say I could take out a mortgage on her outfit alone.

But despite all that facade, they actually turned out to be really sweet. Apparently, beneath all that Prada has a kindness and warmth that I haven't felt from any of the other people here. I guess it's because they are so beautiful, no one really dares to get close to them, which probably makes familiarity a rare necessity for them. I naturally had no problem clicking with them, due to a long and committing process of chain-smoking to death of course.

Another thing I learned about Dolce and Gabbana was their expertise in discovering crucial informative details. Yesterday for example, I met them again in the office smoking corner, and as I sat down right between the two of them, I made sure to turn my head from one to the other like I was watching a tennis match.

"What's up Karnie, do you have anything to tell us?" asked Dolce in a teasing tone.

"No, why?"

"We heard that you're going to get another account soon. A big one. Very big one," added Gabbana.

"Are you serious? Who told you?"

"What difference does it make?" Gabbana shrugged her shoulders. "If you want us to keep supplying you with important

information, you better quit trying to guess our sources.”

“OK. Can you at least tell me which account? You have to give me at least that.”

“Stop right there, honey. From this point, it’s up to you to find out the rest,” the two of them answered in an almost perfect unison.

By Big Boss’s Secretary’s Desk.

I hovered restlessly over Rona Grossman’s desk. My little chat with Dolce and Gabbana had me completely wired. What is going on here? I was so sick of this insufferable feeling of never knowing what is really happening in there behind closed doors; what they truly think of you; or even where you stand with them... if at all, that is. I felt I had to know.

“Hi Rona,” I began snooping, “What’s up? You got your hair colored didn’t you? Say, when would be a good time to speak to him?”

She shot one irreverent glance at me and said: “Forget it. He’s in a board meeting. At 2, he’s meeting with a new client, then he’s going in to see Schulman, and then he has a business conference all through the afternoon. Let’s see... you could try in... two weeks on the 24th.”

“That long? Wait, did you just say ‘new client’? What new client?”

“Nice try Karnie. I’ll say it again, forget it.” And with that she immediately picked up the phone, a swift and almost automatic motion for Miss Grossman, which says: “get out of my face.”

Evening.

Senior Blonde had another one of her triumphant moments:

“OK. Honey, I’m going out for post-pro, so be a dear and finish

with the invoices, the briefs, and the summary of today's meeting OK? What did he say? He's leaving? Excuse me!?! That is *so* rude. Tell him it's absolutely out of the question. He has to finish the ad by tomorrow and I don't care how. So what if his sister is getting married tonight? Alright, you can manage can't you? I really, really have to get going."

Night Time. Pillow.

Mommy. Help.

2

Monday Morning. Before My Morning Coffee.

Senior Blonde was in a particularly bad mood today. She had that look on her face again, the one with the knit eyebrows, the pressed lips, and the flushed cheeks.

“Karnie!” she called me, “Mr. Alpha called me last night, right when I was in the middle of something *very* important, to say that he hadn’t received the sketch for the print ad. Naturally, I couldn’t get a hold of you so there was nothing I could say to him.”

“But...” I tried to squeeze in an explanation.

“No *Buts*, you know how delicate the situation is. This is the fourth design he’s asked for in the past week. We just can’t seem to get whatever it is he wants. He’s already asked to meet with Schulman, which probably means we’re in trouble. I’ve asked you several times to send me the sketch as soon as it’s ready. I just don’t understand what language I have to use for you to understand,” and she turned her back to me as soon as she was done.

“But I *did* send it! I spoke to his secretary, and she told me he did receive the ad,” I shouted at her back in the shrill voice, like a chicken led to the slaughter, while keeping my eyes on her perfectly blown-out golden bob hairdo.

Yes, Senior Blonde is severely stuck somewhere in the mid-eighties, with her round bob meticulously curled inwards and every hair in its exact place. I would give anything to pour a glass of water over her just once, and see what the results of my experiment would be; just like in Chemistry class.

"I don't know anything about received or not received," she said impatiently. "What I do know is that he's angry with me, and I really don't need that right now. Send it to him again and call to apologize." Bam! Another door was slammed.

Ever since we moved into our new offices, the doors have been slamming much harder. Someone needs to issue a new law: "All doors in ad agencies must be made of plastic! PLASTIC! Not wood, not metal, not glass. Plastic!"

From: Aharon – Planning

To: Schulman-Scher-Melinsky – All

Subject: Short questionnaire

We're conducting a little spontaneous survey for a new client, so please help by answering the following questions:

1. If you have bad breath (or you think you do), what are you going to do to get over your concern?
2. What does "clean smell" mean to you?

Please direct all of your answers to me.

Thanks for your help,

Aharon

Phone Call from Mom.

"Hello?"

"Sarah! How is it going dear?"

"What do you mean Sarah?"

"Oh, Karnie sweetheart."

"Hi Mom. So, you're mistaking me for Sarah again?"

"No sweetheart, I actually meant to call you too."

"Yea, right."

"What's going on?"

"Everything's fine Mom. Listen, it's crazy here, I'll speak to you later."

"Wait! Wait a minute."

"What Mom? I'm dealing with a mess here, I'll speak to you later."

"Karnie, let me just get a word in."

"Well?"

"It's your father. He started with his nonsense again."

"What is it this time?"

"Do you remember what happened on Friday?"

"Yes."

"So he went and told the whole thing to Uncle Nachum."

Uncle Nachum. I'm 28 years old, and she still calls him Uncle Nachum whenever she speaks to me, as if I won't know who she's talking about if she just says "Nachum."

"And, what happened?"

"Oh, it was a whole big mess. Uncle Nachum called us and was so angry, asking how we could do that to him and... Oh, don't ask."

"Well? And?"

"What's with you Karnie? 'Well? Well? Well?' I'm telling you something and all you have to say is: Well? Well? Well?"

"What do you want from me? I told you it is crazy here right now, and you're talking my ear off with all of our family drama. Mom! I don't have time for this now."

"But you never have time. You can't even bother to listen to a single full sentence anymore."

"Mom, I'll talk to you later tonight. People are waiting for me."

"OK. Bye." she said under her breath and hang up.

From: Robbie - Account Executives Department

To: Schulman-Scher-Melinsky - All

Subject: Ford Fiesta in top condition

For sale - '99 Ford Fiesta, fifth hand, top condition, test valid for a year.

For further details, see me, fifth floor.

Robbie

Recording Studios.

We've arrived at the sound studios to record the Berrylicious radio ad, with the oh-so-sexy famous actor Mr. Alon Aboutboul.

My God, I'm dying. He's the ugliest most beautiful guy in the world, with that rugged Mediterranean look of his.

He takes his seat in the studio and puts the headphone on. I take my seat with Ben-Ben on the other side of the glass.

Ben-Ben began directing him, being all professional, saying, "do this like that" and "do that like this." And him? He is being absolutely charming; following directions without giving us any celebrity attitude for even a moment. He even agreed with Ben-Ben, saying: "Yes, you're right. This take really wasn't so good. Let's do it again."

I sat there, watching from the side, mesmerized by the stubble on his face, his nonchalant attitude, and that tone. I bet his all toned...

Once we were done recording, he suddenly turned to me and asked:

"Say, are you going to central Tel Aviv?"

"Not at all. But for you baby, I'll drive to the Lebanese border," I said to myself.

"Yes, sure. Where do you need to go?"

"Nordau Street."

He gets into my car with all of his magnetizing presence. I felt as though we've known each other for years. After all, I've spent so many Saturdays and holidays² with him.

Then I started thinking that all of those little gestures that actors make on screen are actually a part of their natural everyday body language. Sure, three years at the Beit Zvi acting school must've taught him how to get into a character, walk in its shoes, and penetrate its very soul. But that pout he does with his lips – that's all his. He must've been doing it since he was five years old.

He glanced at me from the corner of his eye. I kept driving, pretending to be focused on the road.

God, please get us into a traffic jam because I can't stand the suspense. I can't turn my head to look at him. One more minute and I'll cause an accident. And what if he says to me right now: "Say, do you feel like going for a drink?" I was daydreaming. My heart would probably roll down from my chest and land somewhere by the brakes.

We got stuck in traffic. Thank God. If this wouldn't have happened, I would probably turn to him right now and say: "See, I have a weak heart and you are so handsome. I know how this goes. We will go to the nearest bar, you will order me a glass of wine; I'll ask you questions about all the movies and TV shows you were in; and you'll return my questions by asking me some questions about me. I'll answer, and then we'll kiss by the bar, while you sneak a few glances left and right to make sure that there are no Paparazzi around, but I won't care. And then, you'll ask for the check and we'll go to your place. But we won't be able to control ourselves, and start making out against the elevator mirror, before staggering into your apartment. Yes, just like

2 "Saturdays and Holidays" was a famous Israeli TV drama starring Alon About-boul.

in those movies you starred in, in that scene where the couple begins undressing each other right in the hallway and falls down while still passionately going at it on the floor.

Finally, we'll get into your bed. Your apartment will be a mess, and so will your bed. But who cares, after all you're the talent, and I am in your bed. Respect. And then we'll fuck. We'll fuck like crazy, A, because I love it, and B, because I'm insanely attracted to you. I don't know if it's the wine or your persona, but you're definitely not letting me down. You're just like in my fantasies; sensitive and thoughtful, strong and passionate. But then it will all be over. And even if you really are awesome and this goes on for several unforgettable hours, I will eventually get out of your bed, put my clothes on, and won't even expect you to ask for my number. I'll simply leave through the front door, and everything will go back to being as it was. I told you, my heart is weak, and you are so handsome."

"Say, do you have anything to drink?" he asked me, jerking me out of my internal dialogue.

"What?"

"Like a bottle of water or something? I have a terrible headache and I have to take a pill."

"Ahh, yeah. Sure, sure," I answered and pulled out a bottle of mineral water.

He got out of the car on the corner of Nordau and Ben Yehuda Street.

"Thank you for the ride and the water," he said, flashing his "Aboutboul smile."

"You're welcome," I answered. He turned to leave and I watched him walking away.

What's happening to me? This man is married with probably around 800 children, and an actor on top of everything else.

I'm living in la-la land. If something doesn't happen in my life very soon, I'll go crazy.

Monday. Morning.

At the Studio. The hurricane hit.

“You have to do this right now. It’s urgent/critical/hysteric! *Seven Days* magazine called and said that if the print ad isn’t coming in right now, they’re pushing us next to the obituary section, and that will also be where you’ll find my career!”

“OK. Karnie, calm down. We’ll handle it and call you when it’s ready,” said the studio manager.

“No. I AM NOT LEAVING before it’s done.”

“Do whatever you want. Your phone’s ringing.”

I answered my mobile. It was a client: “Listen Karnie, we’ve decided that the phrasing in the strip isn’t good enough. We have to come up with a better headline that will motivate people for action.”

A motive for the action? Now? Where the hell is the copywriter? Oh, she’s out on recordings. I called her, and in utter nonchalance she came up on the spot with the following poem: “*Don’t miss this chance, don’t stay away. Fantastic sale for just one day.*”

So much bullshit in one sentence. OK, now I get who I’m dealing with.

“Write this down,” I said to the junior designer in the tone of a pissed-off drill sergeant: “*See you at one of our points of sale, for a free product sample!*”

In My Office. Sitting in Front of My Computer.

A new Facebook message from Shelly. Her smiling face is perpetually beaming at me from her profile photo.

My beautiful Karnie.

I was so happy to get a sign of life from you this morning. Finally! I feel like we’re not talking enough lately, and I miss our phone chats so much. I