Celebrating Love, Life and Loss with Annalisa Menin

Sara Krevoy (November 16, 2017)



On Nov. 14, Venetian-born blogger Annalisa Menin honored the launch and book-signing of her first novel, My Last Year in New York, at Valentino Fifth Ave. i-Italy was there and had the chance to ask the author what inspired her to write the book.

The mood was warm and affectionate at the Valentino store on Fifth Avenue Tuesday evening (Nov. 14), as guests filtered in for a special event at the luxury designer showroom. Annalisa Menin [2], woman of the hour, greeted her guests individually with a tender embrace, and the classic double-kiss on the cheek.

The occasion was the launch of Menin's book My Last Year in New York [3] (Il Mio Ultimo Anno a New York), co-written with Milanese author and ghostwriter Susanna de Ciechi [4]. Inspired profoundly by Menin's venture to the United States from Italy, the novel takes readers on a journey through the devastations and successes accompanying her pursuit of a modern-day "American Dream."

For Menin, this date, Nov. 14, holds a double-significance. It is her birthday, but that is not why she chose to inaugurate the book this day.

On Menin's 30th birthday, her beloved husband Marco organized a surprise party for his wife, even though he had fallen very ill by that time. Blowing out the candles on her cake, Menin recalls she wished for Marco to get well, a sentiment she now has tattooed on her right forearm. Her wish never came true, as Marco passed away the next day.

Now, four years later, Menin describes her desire to share her and Marco's story as more of a compelling feeling than a decision:

"For me, the reason why I did all of this is, even when I'm 50 or 60 years old, I want to be able to go back and open my book and read it and say 'This is me. This happened to me.' I think that not everyone is lucky to have one big love in life. I was lucky to find him when I was 26, and I feel very blessed with it. I have this necessity to put in writing. This way, I know that it's there, I know that it happened. This is my story."

Getting to Know the Story:

Zarifa Maria Garofalo, Menin's U.S. publicist, introduced a presentation of the book to a crowd gathered around a table where Menin, De Ciechi and journalist Francesca di Matteo were seated. Dozens of copies of the novel were displayed on the shelves behind them.

"I have to say, after reading this book my first impression of Annalisa was confirmed," she said, "I saw her as a powerful woman, strong and full of energy," she continued, "I will never forget that moment she was there in that white dress, with a beautiful smile and this powerful story."

The event gathered the blogger (who navigates between the worlds of fashion, finance and real estate) and her guests in the precise place where her New York narrative began.

Eleven years ago, Annalisa Menin left her hometown of Venice, Italy for an opportunity to take an internship with the fashion company Valentino in New York City, one that would change the course of her life. It was there that, the day after she landed, she met the love of her life, Marco, an Italian immigrant from Fano who had been working at Valentino for a while.

"My Last Year in New York is a story about immigration, about generational contrast, it's a story about loss and rebirth, and most of all, it's a story of love," Menin revealed as she began addressing the crowd.

As the author continued presenting her book by introducing the character of Marco, a youthful, male voice could be heard from the back of the room as a man emerges from the audience asking, "Listen Anina, how about trying having a baby?"

He is actor Dennis Puglisi, and as he is joined downstage by fellow actress Claudia de Candia, the two reenacted a scene from the novel as young Marco and Annalisa. Throughout the presentation, they wove in and out of the storyline, with Menin filling in the blanks as a narrator in between.

The final scene they performed almost brought Menin to tears. But she courageously held together for the following Q&A session with her co-author Ciechi, moderated by Di Matteo.

Concluding the evening's formalities, Menin thanked the audience and a list of contributors to her project. De Ciechi also offered her own inventory of thank yous. This opened up the rest of the night for book-signing. Guests formed a long line holding copies of My Last Year in New York, of which prints in both languages were available for purchase.

The event also signaled the release of My Last Year in New York on Amazon [5]. All proceeds from sales of the book will be donated to the charity initiative Remembering Marco [6], created by Menin in memory of her late husband. It is a program that annually grants a scholarship to a talented student from the Università Politecnica delle Marche [7] in Italy to provide them with a 6-month

internship at Valentino’s corporate office in New York City.

“Let’s definitely celebrate my birthday, but I think tonight is all about Marco,” Menin said lovingly.

What's Next?

The novel draws its title from a question she has been grappling with for some time since her husband’s death: should she stay in New York, or should she go? Though she has now spent two "last years" in New York, it is an affirmation that Menin believes allows her to live each year in the city as her best.

"The person who narrates this story and puts herself so much out there," said Ciechi as she recounted why, in the end, she decided to take on ghostwriting the novel with Menin, "begins again with a fresh start when she arrives at the last page of the book. I then asked myself: What could happen next?"

No matter where Menin ends up, she says, she has among some of Marco’s belongings a single pair of shoes. That way, she feels, “[they] can keep walking together even though he is not here anymore.”

Source URL: http://newsite.iitaly.org/magazine/focus/life-people/article/celebrating-love-life-and-loss-annalisa-menin

Links
[1] http://newsite.iitaly.org/files/annalisameninjpg-0
[2] https://annalisamenin.com
[3] https://ilmioultimoannoanewyork.com/
[4] https://iltuoghostwriter.it
[5] https://www.amazon.com/My-Last-Year-New-York/dp/0692974164/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1510077179&sr=8-2&keywords=my+last+year+in+new+york
[6] http://https://marcoomiccioli.com/
[7] http://www.univpm.it/Entra/