

*From Long Live Love by Don Zolidis*

**From Long Live Love**

**By Don Zolidis**

*A group of actors are preparing for opening night, but the playwright has changed the text to the play.*

CLYTEMNESTRA, 30s, a professional actress

ZORA, 17, in her very first show.

MARY, 20ish, an actress in love with her co-star.

*Zora and Clytemnestra enter quickly, mid-conversation. Both of them hold blue scripts.*

ZORA

I'm so nervous.

CLYTEMNESTRA

You're doing fine.

ZORA

What if I can't say the lines? What if I freeze? What if I take one look at everyone watching and panic? I can't do it! Is it too late to run away?

CLYTEMNESTRA

Yes. Entirely too late.

ZORA

I never should've said yes to this!

CLYTEMNESTRA

I will be there with you. We are going to execute this perfectly. Everyone is going to love you.

ZORA

Are you certain of that? What if I'm not what they wanted? 'Oh, sorry, is there another girl we could bring in? This one is entirely too skittish.' You've seen what happens in the play – women are fighting with sabers and throwing water at each other. What if that's what they believe a woman should be? I'm not one for that. I enjoy reading and strolling – I don't even walk briskly. I'm much more of a person who stays in one place for a while and makes limited noises. What if they hate that?

CLYTEMNESTRA

They won't. You have to have faith.

ZORA

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I don't even like the theater. Everyone pretending to be someone else. And then other people pay money to see people pretending to be someone else. Why?

CLYTEMNESTRA

I suppose it has something to do with happy endings. The belief that no matter how dark it appears, things will always work out.

ZORA

Do they work out for you?

CLYTEMNESTRA

My parents named me Clytemnestra, and here I am.

ZORA

Not sure I follow.

CLYTEMNESTRA

I was destined for a life in the theater.

ZORA

Did things work out for Clytemnestra?

CLYTEMNESTRA

Well, her husband sacrificed her daughter to the gods so she stabbed him in a bathtub with the help of her lover before she was subsequently murdered by her son. It's all very Greek. My father wanted to name me something theatrical but neglected to do any research. But I assume before all the sacrificing, murdering, and loving, Clytemnestra had quite a nice life with many dear friends. As we will be dear friends when this is all over.

ZORA

I'm not sure if that's a comfort or not.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Trust me. Everything is going according to plan.

ZORA

That's probably something the original Clytemnestra said to herself.

*Mary enters, rushed.*

MARY

Has anyone seen Richard?

CLYTEMNESTRA

I haven't.

ZORA

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Usually about this time he's hiding somewhere in the theater.

MARY

Yes, he's a bit terrified of the city.

ZORA

Have you checked his dressing room? Perhaps he's barricaded himself in there.

MARY

The door is locked and I banged on it quite forcefully.

CLYTEMNESTRA

That might have startled him into silence. Did you by chance hear a whimper or a cry of fear?

MARY

I shall try again. I will knock as lightly as a flea. May I confide in you?

ZORA

Please do.

CLYTEMNESTRA

You are in love with him.

MARY

Is it that obvious? He's such an innocent thing. Like a little fawn who's lost its mother. It makes him so dreadfully attractive. I feel the need to rescue him.

CLYTEMNESTRA

With your lips?

MARY

If necessary. I had planned on making my feelings known at the end of the play; the stage directions call for a kiss and I intended to make it quite unprofessional.

ZORA

And you're certain he'd get the idea and not panic?

MARY

With the correct kiss, my intent would be clear. I've been perfecting it for some time now. I've practiced on a quite a few men and have had a number of enthusiastic responses.

ZORA

Oh my.

MARY

And now...

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CLYTEMNESTRA

Now there's no kiss.

MARY

In George's version I spontaneously die and in Marjorie's version I kick Bertrand in the rear and declare my intention to live in an island commune of independent ladies – in neither case do I get to plant the kiss I prepared! Which will make the note in my flower delivery quite confusing.

ZORA

You're sending him flowers?

CLYTEMNESTRA

That's quite bold.

MARY

I know that he has feelings for me, but he's so shy. Sometimes a shy man needs a shove down the right path and a few direct instructions.

ZORA

Are you certain of that, Mary?

MARY

Oh I don't know. I've tried all the usual ways of dropping hints. Brushing against him. Laughing at his jokes. Eye contact. Now I figure he simply needs to be told what to do in no uncertain terms.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Some men appreciate that. Husbands.

*Richard returns, eating his bagel, unseen by them. He hears the voices and hides to eat.*

ZORA

I don't know anything about husbands.

CLYTEMNESTRA

Neither do I, and if am lucky, it will remain that way.

MARY

In any event, my whole plan is in tatters thanks to this mess. I need to find him to prepare the way. If you see him, tell him I require him in my dressing room immediately.

*She rushes off in one direction.*

ZORA

We will let him know you are on the hunt.

*Mary exits.*

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CLYTEMNESTRA

Poor thing.

ZORA

Do you think she'll succeed?

CLYTEMNESTRA

She could pry the very doors of hell off their hinges to get what she wants. The boy has no hope.