

LOVE IS A STRANGER

Written by

Stephen Hall

shsc21441@gmail.com

EXT. DE CLARE MAUSOLEUM - DAY

As the rain falls, AVELINE DE CLARE [72], veiled and dressed in black, holding an umbrella in one hand and a rose in the other, stands next to the priest FATHER BRYCE [53] as four gravediggers, covered in mud, carry a coffin into the large, pillared mausoleum which has the name 'DE CLARE' chiselled into the stone above the doorway.

They follow the men into the structure.

INT. DE CLARE MAUSOLEUM/UNDERGROUND CHAMBER - MOMENTS LATER

Carved tombs of past family members line the walls as the men descend stone steps into an underground chamber.

With the coffin in a stone sarcophagus, the men lower the lid, using a pulley to seal the coffin inside, then leave.

FATHER BRYCE

Eternal rest grant unto him, O
Lord, and let perpetual light shine
upon him. May he rest in peace.
Amen.

AVELINE DE CLARE

Amen.

The priest leaves the chamber then Aveline places the rose on the sarcophagus and touches the cold stone.

AVELINE DE CLARE (CONT'D)

Goodbye, my sweetheart. In morte,
non oblivisceris (in death, you
will not be forgotten).

EXT. STREET - EVENING

JOHNNY LYLE [26] is casually pacing towards a cafe listening to "Love is A Stranger" by Eurythmics on his Walkman headphones.

INT. CAFE - MOMENTS LATER

He enters the cafe to see HARRY [26] sitting at a table checking toiletries in a sports bag as his salesman SANDY MULLINS [22] leaves.

JOHNNY LYLE

How goes?

HARRY

You timed that nicely.

He pushes the bag across to Johnny.

HARRY (CONT'D)
Everything's accounted for.

JOHNNY LYLE
Where to?

HARRY
Around Templar Street.

JOHNNY LYLE
It's all tenements over there. All these bloody stairs to climb.

HARRY
Yeah, but it makes for more sales which means more commission for you. Glass half full, Johnny. Remember that.

JOHNNY LYLE
That's kinda hard considering the return I get.

HARRY
No one's forcing you. That's business.

Johnny glances at his watch. It is 6:15 PM

JOHNNY LYLE
I'll head over at seven. Most folk will be home from work by then.

HARRY
No prob. I'll see you back here at ten?

JOHNNY LYLE
Yeah.

HARRY
Hopefully that bag'll be empty when you get back.

INT. SUPERMARKET - LATER

Johnny enters a local supermarket where DIANE [21] is arranging products on the shelf as he approaches.

JOHNNY LYLE
Diane.

DIANE
Hey, neighbour.

He grabs a carton of milk and a loaf of bread before approaching and laying them on the counter.

She runs up the till.

DIANE (CONT'D)
Two-ten

JOHNNY LYLE
Can I pick them up from your place later?

DIANE
Sure. You working tonight?

JOHNNY LYLE
Yeah.

He turns to leave.

JOHNNY LYLE (CONT'D)
I'll try not to be too late.

DIANE
Don't worry. Happy to wait up.

EXT. AVELINE'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Johnny arrives at the main door of a tenement block. The night is getting darker as he enters.

INT. AVELINE'S APARTMENT STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

He knocks on the first door but there is no response. He crosses to the opposite door and rings the bell.

THOMAS DIXON [47], a stout, hairy man wearing a vest answers the door and stares at Johnny.

JOHNNY LYLE
Sorry to bother you.

THOMAS DIXON
Not interested!

He slams the door shut.

Johnny picks up the bag and trudges to the foot of the staircase. He cranes up to see the moon shining through the skylight.

He begins to climb the stairs.

INT. AVELINE'S APARTMENT STAIRWELL - LATER

Johnny is at the top floor. He knocks on the door.

Its nameplate indicates the name De Clare.

He waits. With no response, he turns to leave.

The door slowly opens to reveal Aveline.

JOHNNY LYLE

Hi. Sorry to bother you. My name is
Johnny Lyle.

He shows her his identification which she takes and studies.

JOHNNY LYLE (CONT'D)

I wondered if you might be
interested in some nice toiletries.
They're all produced in France.

She smiles and hands the ID back to him.

JOHNNY LYLE (CONT'D)

Excellent quality. And they're not
tested on animals. Don't believe in
that sort of thing.

He bends down to open his bag.

AVELINE DE CLARE

Would you like to come in?

JOHNNY LYLE

Are you sure?

AVELINE DE CLARE

Of course. I don't get many
visitors at my age.

INT. AVELINE'S APARTMENT/HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The elderly lady leads him along a dark hallway and into a
modest living room/kitchen.

AVELINE DE CLARE

I'll put the kettle on.

JOHNNY LYLE

You don't have to.

AVELINE DE CLARE
It's no trouble. I was about to
make one for myself. Take a seat.

 JOHNNY LYLE
It's nice to rest my legs. These
stairs get tiring.

 AVELINE DE CLARE
Must be hard work.

 JOHNNY LYLE
Yeah, especially the reaction I get
from some folk.

 AVELINE DE CLARE
Unfriendly?

 JOHNNY LYLE
Downright nasty.

Beat.

 JOHNNY LYLE (CONT'D)
I mean, I'm only doing my job. The
pay's shit. Excuse my language.

 AVELINE DE CLARE
Milk?

 JOHNNY LYLE
Just black. One sugar.

She places the cups on the coffee table.

 AVELINE DE CLARE
I'll get some biscuits.

 JOHNNY LYLE
This is really nice of you.

She returns with a biscuit tin that is set down between the
cups.

 JOHNNY LYLE (CONT'D)
Yeah, the pay is nothing to write
home about to put up with dog's
abuse.

Aveline sits in the armchair.

 AVELINE DE CLARE
You must meet all sorts.

JOHNNY LYLE

There are some weird people out there.

AVELINE DE CLARE

I'm sure there is. Mind you, I don't get out much these days so what would I know?

JOHNNY LYLE

Well, hopefully it won't be for too long. If I get into college I might be able to give it up.

AVELINE DE CLARE

What subject?

JOHNNY LYLE

Art...illustrative.

AVELINE DE CLARE

That sounds interesting.

He glances around.

JOHNNY LYLE

You just on your own?

AVELINE DE CLARE

Since Charles passed away.

They both look over at a photo on the mantelpiece of a young man.

JOHNNY LYLE

I'm sorry to hear that.

AVELINE DE CLARE

It wasn't unexpected.

She offers him the biscuit tin.

AVELINE DE CLARE (CONT'D)

Don't be shy. They need to be used.

Johnny takes one and bites in. She studies him and smiles.

AVELINE DE CLARE (CONT'D)

I was thinking of selling this place.

Johnny curiously scans the room.

JOHNNY LYLE
Oh, really?

AVELINE DE CLARE
It's maybe too big for just me now.

Johnny drinks his tea.

AVELINE DE CLARE (CONT'D)
Would you like to look around?

JOHNNY LYLE
Sure.

He follows her out of the room and into the dark hallway.

INT. AVELINE'S APARTMENT/DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

They enter a large dining room filled with antiques.

JOHNNY LYLE
Wow!

AVELINE DE CLARE
I should probably sell most of
this. All this clutter is just more
work to keep clean.

JOHNNY LYLE
You know, you should be careful who
you invite in. Anyone more
unscrupulous would be thinking of
stealing this.

AVELINE DE CLARE
Yes, but I can see you have a
trusting face.

Johnny laughs then wanders around the room.

JOHNNY LYLE
Some of this stuff could be worth a
fortune.

AVELINE DE CLARE
Oh, they're just trinkets collected
over the years.

JOHNNY LYLE
Honestly, some of these pieces are
seriously old.

AVELINE DE CLARE
This way.

She leaves the room followed by Johnny.

INT. AVELINE'S APARTMENT/BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The next room is a large bedroom with a four-poster bed surrounded by more valuables in plain view.

JOHNNY LYLE
I didn't get your name.

AVELINE DE CLARE
Aveline De Clare. Pleased to meet you.

JOHNNY LYLE
Aveline. I don't think you'd have any problem selling this place.

AVELINE DE CLARE
It was built in 1845.

JOHNNY LYLE
People love that sort of thing.

AVELINE DE CLARE
There's more.

INT. AVELINE'S APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM AND KITCHEN - LATER

They are back in the living room/kitchen.

JOHNNY LYLE
I should be going. This needs to be sold.

AVELINE DE CLARE
I'll buy it all. Save you the trouble.

JOHNNY LYLE
Really?

AVELINE DE CLARE
Of course. How much?

JOHNNY LYLE
A hundred and twenty. Are you really sure?

AVELINE DE CLARE
Honestly, you don't know how refreshing it is to have some company.

JOHNNY LYLE

If you say so.

He begins to empty the contents onto the table.

AVELINE DE CLARE

Would you like another tea?

JOHNNY LYLE

Why not?

Johnny has his back to her.

The nail of her index finger extends and she cuts the tip of her finger. Droplets of blood fall into one of the cups.

She places the cup on the table.

JOHNNY LYLE (CONT'D)

You've cut yourself.

AVELINE DE CLARE

It's just a scratch.

He doesn't notice her finger quickly heals as he drinks. A sense of exhilaration tingles through his body. He straightens, alert, almost lighter.

JOHNNY LYLE

You make a good cuppa.

He glances around the room.

JOHNNY LYLE (CONT'D)

Don't you get lonely here?

AVELINE DE CLARE

I've got used to it.

She picks up a photo album.

AVELINE DE CLARE (CONT'D)

I was just reminiscing with old photos. When I was younger.

She hands the album to him.

JOHNNY LYLE

You're stunning!

AVELINE DE CLARE

Flattery will get you everywhere.

He closes the album and returns it to her, then finishes his tea.

JOHNNY LYLE
I should probably be going.

AVELINE DE CLARE
Of course. Maybe you could visit again sometime?

JOHNNY LYLE
Yeah. Maybe have another cup of that tea.

AVELINE DE CLARE
I didn't get your name?

JOHNNY LYLE
Johnny Lyle.

AVELINE DE CLARE
Well, Johnny. Thank you for visiting.

JOHNNY LYLE
Thank you for inviting me in. Just don't make a habit of it. You can't trust everyone.

AVELINE DE CLARE
I'll take that advice.

JOHNNY LYLE
Right. I really should be going.

He rises from the sofa.

AVELINE DE CLARE
I'll see you to the door.

INT. AVELINE'S APARTMENT/HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Aveline opens the door that leads into the stairway.

Johnny smiles at her then pecks her on the cheek.

JOHNNY LYLE
It's been nice meeting you.

AVELINE DE CLARE
And you.