

Just a Kiss

Synopsis:

Annie and Zee are two actresses on the brink of fame... well, sort of. Zee has a bit part on one of television's "forensic" crime shows and Annie keeps getting cast as Meryl Streep's daughter's *friend* in film after film. Now they've gone back to their theatre roots and are costarring in an off-Broadway show written by a new, hot playwright and directed by the famous Robert Hoffman. It's a great opportunity. There's just one hitch: Annie and Zee play lovers and they have a *scene*. A *love scene*. It's no big deal, really. It's *just* a kiss. But when this kiss becomes the talk of New York's theatre season, things change. People "talk", friends and lovers speculate, and even Annie and Zee begin to wonder where the acting leaves off and reality begins...

Setting: New York City, the present

Set: three living rooms, unit set

Cast size: 5 (two men, three women)

Cast: (*in order of appearance*)

Zee Scott – an actress in her late thirties, pretty-bordering-on beautiful. Zee's penchant for hot dogs and long walks in the park is matched only by her disdain for "method" actors and the Circle Line Cruise. An arrogant "Leo", she knows what she likes and doesn't like and right now she's not too crazy about her uptight, regimented costar, Annie Howard...

Annie Howard – an actress in her early thirties, beautiful with flaming red hair. Annie is tired of being cast as "the best friend" in films and is looking forward to sharing the lead in a new play with Zee Scott. Until the first rehearsal ends with an argument involving imaginary ice cream cones and the summer solstice, leaving Annie to wonder if she wouldn't rather kiss a light pole...

Brian Clark – Annie's live-in boyfriend, a stockbroker in his early thirties, handsome, ex-jock type. Brian is thrilled that Annie is playing the part of a lesbian and can't wait to see the famous "love scene" for himself. After all, what guy doesn't fantasize about two women together? Right? And they *are* only acting... right?

Janet Turner – Zee's best friend from college, late thirties, pretty and – oh, yeah – a lesbian. Janet loves cheap wine and foot rubs and, like Brian, is looking forward to the girls' big "make out" scene. She just wishes Zee would practice with *her*...

Robert Hoffman – theatre director, late thirties/early forties, handsome, charming, and happily gay. Robert has no doubts that this play could be the one to put his career over the top – if he could just get these two women to really *kiss* each other...

ACT IScene 1

SETTING: *A living room that will be used to represent three very different spaces. A couch resides center flanked by two chairs. The chair stage right is very trendy; the chair stage left is a little more “used” and quite comfy. The couch itself would fit well in either room. Stage right is Annie’s living space, stage left is Zee’s and the center is the set for the play in which these two women are performing. Lighting should also be used to differentiate the areas. Each living space should also have a front door and a door leading off to a bedroom as well as a small kitchenette area. There should also be a “front” door upstage center for the “set”.*

AT RISE: *Lights up on ANNIE and ZEE sitting in their respective chairs facing the audience.*

ZEE

It was just supposed to be some little off-Broadway play. That’s all. My agent gave me the script, told me to look it over...

ANNIE

I had just finished working on a film...

ZEE

...said he thought it was something I might be interested in...

ANNIE

The new one with Meryl Streep. I played her daughter’s best friend...

ZEE

No big deal.

ANNIE

I *auditioned* for the part of the daughter. Of Meryl Streep’s daughter. Instead, they cast me as the best friend...

ZEE

I had just finished a television series...

ANNIE

They *always* cast me as the “best friend”. My agent told me it’s because of my red hair. And this bump in my nose...

(She turns sideways to show the audience her profile and points to a spot on her nose.)

... right here.

ZEE

Y’know, one of those crime shows where they solve the murder using forensics? They’re pretty much all the rage these days...

ANNIE

He wanted me to have plastic surgery...

ZEE

I played a lab technician. I spent most of my time looking through a microscope...

ANNIE

To get a whole new nose, basically...

ZEE

I made decent money but it wasn’t exactly a high visibility part, if you know what I mean...

ANNIE

Instead I got a whole new agent. One who *liked* my nose...

ZEE

So I was ready for a change...

ANNIE

And my hair...

ZEE

I *love* the stage...

ANNIE

So my *new* agent gave me this script...

ZEE

It's *so* different from television or film...

ANNIE

A new play by this up-and-coming playwright...

ZEE

There's no sitting around in theatre, no waiting for the camera to be moved...

ANNIE

And it was going to be directed by Robert Hoffman, one of the hottest directors on the theatre scene...

ZEE

You actually get to *rehearse*...

ANNIE

By "hot" I don't mean he's necessarily handsome or a hunk or anything...

ZEE

You get to act in *sequence*...

ANNIE

In fact, I think he's gay...

(ZEE *looks at ANNIE in disbelief. ANNIE reconsiders.*)

He's gay.

ZEE

There were two great parts for women...

ANNIE

I heard Zee Scott was auditioning for...

ANNIE/ZEE

"Claire"...

ZEE

...was the part I read for. My agent told me Annie Howard was up for...

ZEE/ANNIE

"Rachel"...

ANNIE

...was the other role. A great part. She even had red hair...

ZEE/ANNIE

We worked together before...

ZEE

A long time ago...

ANNIE

It was my first *paid* acting gig...

ZEE

It was a movie, I think...

ANNIE

It was one of those “after-school specials” for...

ZEE

(At the same time)

Or maybe it was...

ZEE/ANNIE

...television.

ANNIE

Anyway, it was a long time ago...

ZEE

I barely remember it. Or her.

ANNIE

We only worked together a couple of days ...

ZEE

I just hope...

ZEE/ANNIE

She’s nice...

ANNIE

... from what I remember...

Since we'll be working together. ZEE

It's a good play... ANNIE

I like the script a lot... ZEE

Funny, smart... ANNIE

The dialogue *crackles*... ZEE

It's just... ANNIE

The only problem is... ZEE

Well... ANNIE

Well, it's not really a *problem*... ZEE

It's just... ANNIE

It's more like a *situation*, really. See... ZEE

...there's this *scene*. ANNIE/ZEE

It's really not a big deal... ZEE

A *love scene*... ANNIE

We play lovers... ZEE

I mean, it's no big deal... ANNIE

And we have this... *scene*. ZEE

We're all adults here... ANNIE

This... this *love scene*... ZEE

We have to kiss, is all... ANNIE

It's no big deal, really... ZEE

It's just a kiss... ANNIE/ZEE

(*Beat.*)

God knows, as an actor, you have to kiss all types of people... ZEE

I've never kissed a woman before... ANNIE

Although, for my part, it's always been a *man*... ZEE

I've kissed *plenty* of men... ANNIE

Of course there was that alien... *thing*... I had to make out with in that *Star Trek* movie... ZEE

Old men, young men... ANNIE

I don't *think* that was a woman... ZEE

ANNIE

Fat, disgusting men with sweaty palms...

ZEE

Yes, indeed, all types...

ANNIE

Gay men...

ZEE

Lots and *lots* of gay men...

(They both shake their head sadly.)

ANNIE

Some men are so *bad* at it...

ZEE

A lot of guys have no idea how to kiss a woman...

ANNIE

I mean, I realize we're just acting, but *still*...

ZEE

They think the goal is to stick their tongue as far down your throat as possible...

ANNIE

Brush your teeth. Chew a mint. *Something!*

ZEE

One guy, I swear, was trying to perform a tonsillectomy on me...

ANNIE

Smokers are the *worst*...

ZEE

I was like, "Hey, Buddy! I'd like to keep those if you don't mind..."

ANNIE

It's like being licked by an ashtray...

ZEE

That'll teach me to do summer stock in Syracuse...

(ANNIE suddenly turns to ZEE.)

ANNIE
You don't smoke, do you?

ZEE
No.

ANNIE
Good.

(ANNIE and ZEE turn to the audience and shrug.)

ANNIE/ZEE
It's just a kiss...

(Lights up on Annie's apartment stage right. ANNIE is sitting in the chair reading her script. BRIAN CLARK enters through the front door. He is dressed like a young Wall Street executive and carrying a briefcase.)

BRIAN
Hey, honey...

(ANNIE jumps out of the chair and crosses to him.)

How was your...

(Before he can finish, ANNIE lays a big kiss on him. After a moment, BRIAN pulls back, drops his briefcase then pulls her in for another long kiss. ANNIE finally pulls away, giggling.)

Wow. To what do I owe the honor...?

(She shows him the script, smiling.)

You got it?

ANNIE
I got it.

BRIAN
All right!

(He swings her around then draws her over to the couch. They sit.)

BRIAN (cont.)

C'mon. Tell me all about it. What's the plot?

ANNIE

Brian! I can't tell you that. Then you won't be surprised.

BRIAN

Sure I will. You know how bad my memory is. I'll forget five minutes after you tell me. I promise.

ANNIE

Then what's the point?

BRIAN

The point is I'm proud of you. So tell me. What's the play about?

ANNIE

Well, I play an artist named Rachel who lives in the East Village...

BRIAN

I know *that*. You told me that before you auditioned.

ANNIE

And you *remember*? I'm amazed.

(He starts to tickle her.)

Okay, okay, *stop*...

BRIAN

So...?

ANNIE

Well, it's kind of hard to explain. It's... it's basically a *relationship* play. It's about this artist and her lover and they have this... this...

BRIAN

Relationship?

(She punches him playfully on the arm.)

Ow! I'm trying to be helpful...

ANNIE

Yeah. Right.

BRIAN

I am! So this artist and her lover have a relationship and what? They end up getting married and living happily ever after?

ANNIE

No, of course they don't get married. Why should they be any different than *us*?

(She stands up and walks away. Beat.)

BRIAN

So... is her lover a big asshole with a fear of commitment like me? Is that the problem?

ANNIE

No.

(She turns back to him.)

No, the reason they don't get married is because "he" is a "she".

BRIAN

Huh?

ANNIE

My lover – I mean, *Rachel's* lover – is a woman.

BRIAN

You're kidding.

ANNIE

Nope.

BRIAN

You're playing a lesbian?

ANNIE

Yep.

BRIAN

Do you... I mean, will you... the *two* of you... will you have to do anything? On stage?