

From Erasures

By Don Zolidis

MONICA, African-American, the principal of a middle school
CAITLIN, White, 23, a first-year teacher.

MONICA's office.

MONICA

So... um... you wanna tell me what happened?

CAITLIN

Sixth period?

MONICA

Yeah.

CAITLIN

Okay. Um... We're um studying the end of the Odyssey – you know the part where Odysseus kills everyone – and there were like some strong opinions on that, which was cool, but I tried to tie it in to their lives, right?

MONICA

Right.

CAITLIN

So anyway we had done this urban version where Odysseus is in prison for twenty years and he comes home and –

MONICA

This is an urban version?

CAITLIN

Right.

MONICA

Where'd you find this?

CAITLIN

Online.

MONICA

So you find this urban version online where he's in prison and he comes home afterwards?

CAITLIN

Well – I figured – as a supplemental reading – just on my own – it’s fine, there’s not any bad language in it or anything, maybe a couple of words or whatever -

MONICA

Can you send me the website you found this at?

CAITLIN

Yeah. Okay. It’s fine. And the kids liked it.

MONICA

All right.

CAITLIN

So anyway, some issues had come up. About what we would do in a similar situation – and I asked them to defend Penelope going with another man, or whether she should wait for him – and then also was Odysseus justified in killing all these people.

MONICA

Okay. So when did you leave the room?

CAITLIN

I had made worksheets – and I didn’t have enough. I only needed like ten more –

MONICA

Was your printer out of paper?

CAITLIN

My printer doesn’t work with my computer, I’ve asked them to come in and look at it but no one –

MONICA

Okay.

CAITLIN

So I went to use the copier in the faculty lounge.

MONICA

Which is how far away from your room?

CAITLIN

It’s at the other end of the hall.

MONICA

At any point did you think this was a bad idea?

CAITLIN

I did.

MONICA

If you need to leave your room, you need to have an adult in there.

CAITLIN

I know.

MONICA

Well apparently you don't know because you left the room with no one in there.

CAITLIN

They were all working on their papers –

MONICA

And you didn't think they would stop working on their papers when you left?

CAITLIN

I was gone like three minutes, tops.

MONICA

What happened when you got back?

CAITLIN

I heard the noise –

MONICA

Uh huh –

CAITLIN

And I ran back and they were all shouting and Lucien had punched Michael in the face or something –

MONICA

All right.

CAITLIN

So that's when I called the office.

MONICA

Okay.

CAITLIN

I'm so sorry! I didn't think they would just attack each other as soon as I left the room.

MONICA

These are fourteen year-old boys! That's their natural state. Beating each other.

CAITLIN

I'm sorry. Lucien is normally really good.

MONICA

I don't care if they have little halos over their heads, you don't leave the room.

CAITLIN

Okay.

MONICA

Call the front office. Chester or Angelo can come down and watch your class if you need to go to the bathroom or something. You have a phone.

CAITLIN

I know.

MONICA

Don't. Leave. The. Room.

CAITLIN

Got it. I got it.

MONICA

Just imagine that you are the only thing standing between a roomful of kids and total chaos. Every single one of them has a sworn enemy in your class and is about to get revenge as soon as you turn your back. Twenty little Odysseuses and twenty hoochie Penelopes all about to slaughter each other. I love them. They're my babies. They are all insane with hormones.

CAITLIN

Okay.

MONICA

One more thing... I got a phone call from Marquis' mother today.

CAITLIN

Oh.

MONICA

Now I know this woman is... passionate about her son.

CAITLIN

Yes.

MONICA

And she does not care for you.

CAITLIN

I have gotten that impression.

MONICA

But she told me that you told Marquis to `fuck off.'

(CAITLIN looks down.)

Yes? No? She's lying? You didn't say that?

CAITLIN

I didn't say exactly that.

MONICA

Maybe you could tell me what you did say.

CAITLIN

I believe I said fuck you, not fuck off.

MONICA

Uh huh.

(MONICA drums her fingers on the table.)

So...

CAITLIN

It was... a mistake – he was... he was trying to get to me.

MONICA

Sounds like he succeeded.

CAITLIN

Yeah.

MONICA

You know when Officer Bailey hears the kids saying that word he writes them a ticket. I think they gotta pay ninety dollars.

CAITLIN

That's a lot.

MONICA

Yeah. So it puts me in kind of a bad position if I've got kids being written tickets for swearing when one of my teachers is dropping the f bomb in class.

CAITLIN

It was in our tutoring session, not class.

MONICA

That's not what you're supposed to be tutoring him in.

CAITLIN

I know.

MONICA

When you swear at the kids, they win. You might think it makes you sound tough or something, but believe me, to them, it's like they're sticking a firecracker up a cow's ass, if you'll pardon the expression. They just love watching you jump up thinking you're a kangaroo and not a cow.

CAITLIN

I'm not sure I follow.

MONICA

They're kangaroos. Swearing is like jumping. You're a cow who's pretending to be a kangaroo.

CAITLIN

Oh.

MONICA

So guard your ass.

CAITLIN

Guard my ass. No firecrackers. Okay.

MONICA

Your kids gonna pass the Staar?

CAITLIN

I hope so.

MONICA

Me too.

CAITLIN

We're doing everything we can.

MONICA

Stay in the room.

Yes. CAITLIN

Guard your ass. MONICA

Okay. Thank you. CAITLIN

When you're proctoring the test – MONICA

I know. CAITLIN

Because we have to make sure everything is on the up-and-up. MONICA

Yes. CAITLIN

All right then. I gotta get going. First night I'm leaving before seven this week, but my husband is getting out of rehab, so I gotta go pick him up. MONICA

Oh. CAITLIN

Yeah. MONICA

I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. I hope he recovers. CAITLIN

A couple of weeks he'll be fine. MONICA

My uncle actually was addicted to prescription drugs, so I kind of – CAITLIN

He broke his leg. My husband broke his leg. MONICA

Oh. CAITLIN

Physical therapy rehab. MONICA

Right. Of course. CAITLIN

So he can't drive because of his cast. MONICA

I'm so sorry I didn't I'm sorry – just forget it sometimes I say/ stupid things and CAITLIN

It's okay – MONICA

I didn't mean to imply you know that black/ people are – CAITLIN

Don't. Just. Stay in your room. MONICA

Okay. Yes. Of course. CAITLIN

To read the rest of this play, email me at donzolidis@gmail.com