

## Allison's Book Corner July 2021

***Live Your Life: My Story of Loving and Losing Nick Cordero***, by  
Amanda Kloots with Anna Kloots  
(Harper 2021)

Do you remember when you were a kid and there was a favorite movie that you always watched - but you did not really like the ending? So every time you watched the movie you sort of hoped it would turn out differently. You might even shout at the television or movie screen and try to warn a favorite character this time so all would be well in the end (stop laughing, I did that). This is exactly how you feel when you read this Covid memoir of life and death. With the turn of every page, the reader so badly wants a different ending. Your whole body aches with it, even though you know we lose Nick Cordero to the awful pandemic. I purposely say "we" because, as a Tony-nominated Broadway actor and entertainer, he belonged to all of us even before this book was written -- and it is beautifully written. There are shades of *The Year of Magical Thinking* by Joan Didion. For those not familiar, in it Didion wrote about the deaths of her husband and only daughter. While the subject matter is tough, the writing takes the reader on a passionate, emotional journey that we can all relate to in some way. If you have read my review this far, please stick with me.

live your life  
*my story of loving and losing Nick Cordero*



Amanda Kloots  
with Anna Kloots

You are probably thinking that this is a very sad memoir. The irony here is that the reader actually finishes this book feeling hopeful about humanity. To the thousands of people who follow Amanda Kloots online, this is no surprise. I confess I am one of her 66,000 Instagram followers. I started following her the day after I cried through Broadway's online memorial tribute to Nick Cordero. I was actually a late follower. Most people began following her when Nick was in the hospital because she went online and asked for support to wake up Nick from his coma. The support was to sing his song "Live Your Life" every day at 3PM via social media. This created a worldwide community of people singing and dancing with Amanda online. I remember hearing about this, but something always kept me from joining. And then when I finally joined, I heard he had awakened and the rest is the sad history that led to this book.

Amanda Kloots is one of those people who always tries to see the glass as half full. Her entire personality and energy is positivity that radiates from her through a kilowatt smile. She took all of that energy and brought it online so the whole world could cheer on her husband and that he would see how many people loved and cared about him while he was in his Covid sleep.

The inspiration in this book comes from how Amanda and her family handle Nick's bout with Covid from the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) to his unfortunate death. Just one year prior, Amanda had been in the maternity ward having her first child, with Nick by her side. She takes us into the ICU and how hard it is to handle being the loved one of a patient in ICU care. The care consists of the daily ups and downs of the patient's progress. The ICU is difficult at any time, but Covid made the experience more intense and isolating for the family. After battling the hospital administration at Cedars Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles to let her see her husband, Amanda went in with a plan. Amanda and her sister Anna would go in and sing songs and play music to wake Nick up. They were going to be positive and joyful, ICU be damned! Here is where I have to remind the reader that Nick and Amanda are "show people." Yes, right out of the song that Ethel Merman sang at the top of her lungs. This couple are born entertainers. It is in their blood. Amanda is a former New York City Rockette. Therefore, it was not at all unusual for Amanda to be singing and dancing in the ICU in full hospital Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). And guess what? Not only did it inspire the hospital staff, who had never seen anything like it, but it inspired the world.

This is a very special memoir and my review cannot do it justice. Amanda Kloots has four siblings, and her entire family came to her rescue during Covid. She had a one year-old baby to raise, plus a husband in the hospital; it was all hands on deck. Many of us would not have had the same degree of support. The Kloots family is a family of great Christian faith. They leaned on prayer, on each other, and on the prayers of other people during their time of trauma. Yes, there were silver linings in the midst of this great tragedy. You have to read about them for yourself. It reinforced what Amanda and I both believe: most human beings are inherently good and want to help others.

When I was a little girl, the popular television shows were "Little House on the Prairie" and "The Waltons." Reading about the Kloots family will remind you of both of those shows. I do not know about you, but I always wanted to transport myself into the television and be a part of the Ingalls family or live on Waltons Mountain. And upon finishing this book, the reader really does feel like an honorary Kloots. Amanda's ability to draw you into her world is unique. You feel her honesty and her heartbreak on every page.

Amanda Kloots as a brand has her Instagram page, a fitness business as a personal trainer, her own app, and she is also a talk show host. Amanda and her sister Anna (the co-author) created the apparel company *HOORAY FOR* during quarantine. Their company celebrates the little joys in life and gives the proceeds back to various non-profit organizations worldwide. To all the critics out there: Amanda is a single parent doing everything she can to secure her son's future. Through all of these ventures and daily activities, her life partner and soul mate is missing.

It occurred to me while writing about this life-changing book that *The Year of Magical Thinking* was made into a Broadway play starring Vanessa Redgrave. She was nominated for the 2007 Tony Award for Best Actress for her performance and won the 2007 Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Solo Performance. Wouldn't it be a full-circle moment for Nick and Amanda if this book also became a Broadway play? I am just putting it out into the universe. You never know what may happen in life.

A good way to end this review is with some lyrics from Nick's original rock song, "Live Your Life." One of his dreams was to be a rock star and to share his music with the world. Amanda made that happen for him:

*...Live your life*

*Like you've got one night*

*Live your life*

*They'll give you hell but don't you let them kill your light*

*Not without a fight*

*Live your life...*