

Love Is A Stranger

A woman with reddish-brown hair is shown from the chest up, wearing a black Victorian-style dress with a high, ruffled collar and a large black hat with a wide brim and a black veil. She is looking down and to the right, with a single drop of red liquid, likely blood, on her lower lip. The background is dark and out of focus.

desire comes with a price

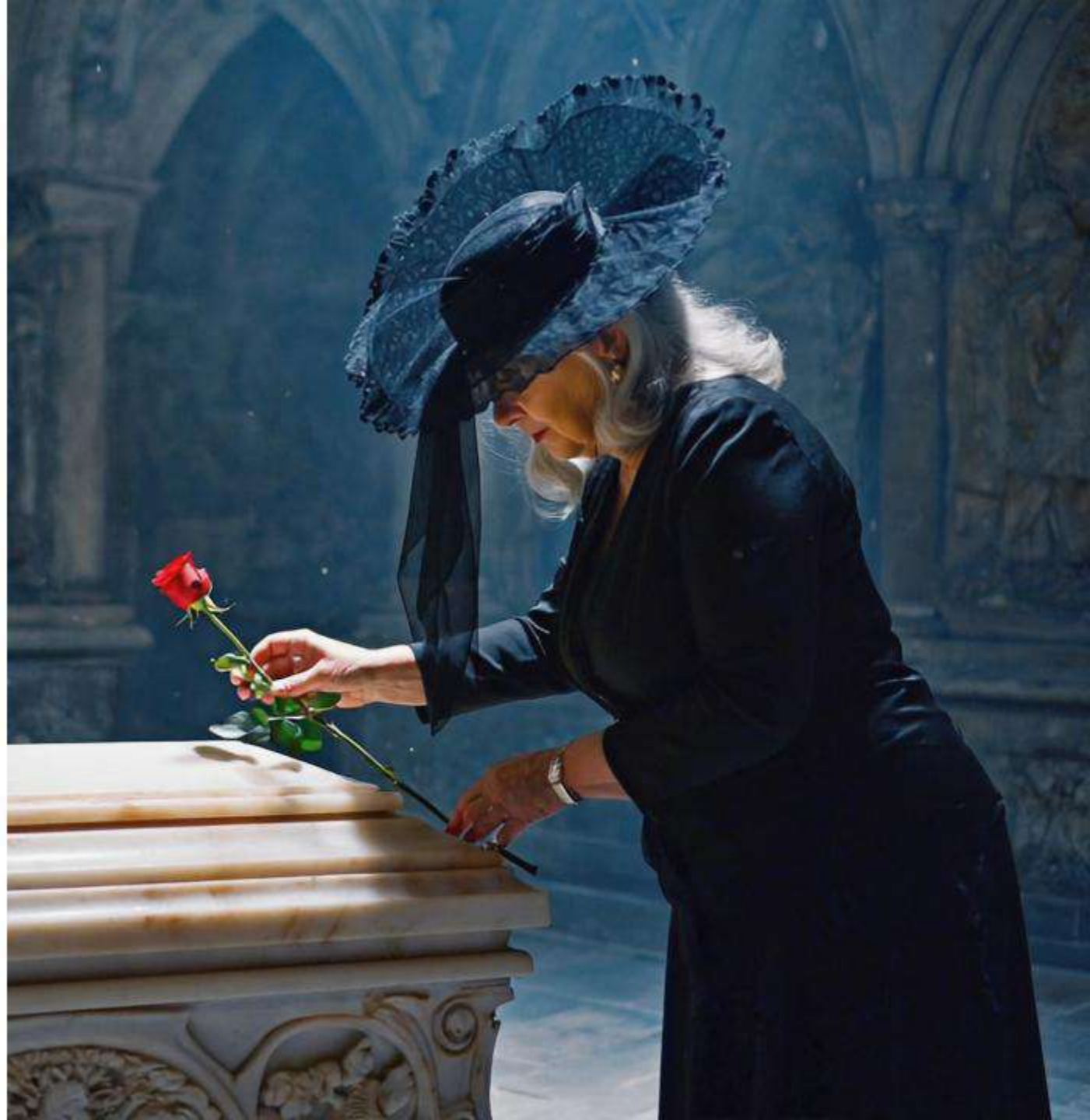
**Screenplay By
Stephen Hall**

The Story

Love Is a Stranger follows Johnny Lyle, a struggling door-to-door salesman who dreams of becoming an artist but feels trapped in a dead-end life. While canvassing apartments, he meets Aveline De Clare, a mysterious elderly woman who invites him in for tea. Unknown to Johnny, she slips a drop of her blood into the drink, giving him an intense surge of energy and creative inspiration. When he returns to see her, Aveline reveals she has lived for centuries through a supernatural blood exchange that restores her youth while granting vitality and creative brilliance to the person who shares it with her. Johnny accepts the pact, and with Aveline's wealth and connections guiding him, his artistic career begins to flourish. As their passionate relationship deepens, Johnny becomes increasingly absorbed in the glamorous world Aveline offers, drifting away from the life he once knew.

But Johnny's transformation alarms his neighbour Diane, who suspects Aveline's influence is dangerous and believes Johnny is being controlled. Determined to save him, Diane confronts Aveline with a gun, intending to kill her and break the hold she believes Aveline has over Johnny. In the struggle that follows, Aveline's cat suddenly leaps at Diane, causing her to lose control of the weapon. The gun discharges accidentally, striking Johnny instead. In a cruel twist of fate, Diane's attempt to save him becomes the cause of his death. The story ends as Aveline entombs Johnny in the De Clare mausoleum, leaving behind a haunting tragedy about ambition, love, and the devastating cost of dreams fulfilled.

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Logline

When a drifting young artist enters a blood pact with a mysterious, centuries-old woman who promises him success and recognition, his career explodes and his lover grows younger — but as his own life begins to burn out, he must confront the true cost of being seen before he disappears entirely.

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Tone, Genre and Style

Genre: Gothic supernatural romance / tragic fantasy drama

Tone: Seductive, melancholic, and intimate — blending dark romantic allure with an undercurrent of unease that gradually shifts toward tragic inevitability

Visual Style: Contemporary urban realism infused with gothic elegance — dimly lit apartments filled with antiques, candlelight and shadows, intimate interiors contrasted with modern city streets; a world where quiet domestic spaces conceal ancient secrets and the supernatural seeps subtly into everyday life

Comparable Films: *The Hunger*, *Only Lovers Left Alive*, *Let the Right One In*, *Interview with the Vampire*

Love Is a Stranger is a gothic supernatural drama that explores ambition, desire, and the seductive cost of creative brilliance. At its core is the relationship between Johnny Lyle, a struggling young artist searching for purpose, and Aveline De Clare, an enigmatic woman whose centuries-old existence is sustained through a mysterious blood exchange. What begins as a chance encounter between loneliness and ambition evolves into a deeply intimate bond where inspiration, romance, and dependency intertwine. The tone is initially warm and quietly intriguing — a story of opportunity and creative awakening — but gradually darkens as the consequences of their pact emerge and the promise of success begins to carry an unavoidable price.

Visually, the film favours atmosphere and intimacy over spectacle. Much of the story unfolds in candlelit rooms, elegant apartments filled with antiques, and quiet urban streets where the modern world brushes against something ancient and unknowable. The style contrasts Johnny's modest everyday life with the timeless refinement of Aveline's world, creating a subtle gothic aesthetic grounded in realism. As Johnny's success grows and his connection to Aveline deepens, the visual language becomes increasingly romantic and dreamlike, before resolving in stark tragedy — a story where the pursuit of dreams leads not to triumph, but to the haunting realization that some desires come with a devastating cost.

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Themes

- **Ambition and Desire** – At the heart of *Love Is a Stranger* is the longing to escape mediocrity. Johnny's dream of becoming an artist makes him vulnerable to Aveline's seductive promise, illustrating how ambition can blur the line between opportunity and exploitation.
- **Life, Death, and the Illusion of Control** – The story contrasts Aveline's centuries-long existence with the fragile unpredictability of human life. While she manipulates the boundaries between life and death to sustain herself, the tragic climax reminds us that mortality ultimately remains beyond anyone's control.
- **The Seduction of Power** – Aveline represents a world of influence, wealth, and timeless sophistication that stands in stark contrast to Johnny's modest life. Her power—both supernatural and social—shows how easily success and status can captivate those searching for recognition.
- **The Price of Dreams** – Johnny achieves everything he once desired: creative inspiration, artistic success, and passionate love. Yet the film explores whether fulfilment gained through unnatural means can ever truly be free, revealing the hidden costs behind ambition realised too easily.
- **Love, Control, and Dependency** – Johnny and Aveline's relationship blurs the boundaries between romance and manipulation. Their bond becomes increasingly dependent and unequal, suggesting how love can transform into a form of control when one partner holds the key to the other's success and vitality.
- **Time, Ageing, and Memory** – Johnny's mother's dementia quietly reflects the natural passage of time and the erosion of memory. Set against Aveline's unnatural longevity, it highlights the stark contrast between a life bound by time and one that defies it.
- **Fate and Tragic Irony** – The film ultimately resolves not through supernatural dominance but through cruel accident. In trying to save Johnny, Diane becomes the cause of his death, reinforcing the story's central irony that the forces of love, fear, and chance can shape fate as much as any supernatural power.

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The Characters

Johnny Lyle – The Dreamer – Johnny is an aspiring artist trapped in an ordinary life, working a dead-end sales job while quietly hoping for something more. Intelligent, sensitive, and creative, he represents the universal desire to escape mediocrity and be recognised for one’s talents. His vulnerability lies in that ambition; when Aveline offers him inspiration, opportunity, and access to a world he never imagined possible, Johnny willingly accepts the pact that changes his life. His journey is both a rise and a tragedy — a man who achieves his dreams but ultimately pays the ultimate price.

Aveline De Clare – The Immortal Patron – Elegant, enigmatic, and centuries old, Aveline embodies both temptation and power. Sustaining her youth through a supernatural exchange of blood, she moves through the modern world with the confidence and refinement of someone who has seen generations pass. Yet beneath the sophistication lies a profound loneliness born of immortality. In Johnny she finds both companionship and a new source of vitality. Aveline is neither purely villain nor saviour; she offers Johnny genuine opportunity and affection, but her very existence requires a relationship built on imbalance and dependency.

Diane – The Protector – Johnny’s neighbour and lifelong friend, Diane represents the ordinary world Johnny leaves behind. Grounded, practical, and fiercely loyal, she cares deeply for Johnny and sees the changes in him before anyone else does. Her growing suspicion of Aveline stems from genuine concern, but her emotions are complicated by unspoken love and jealousy. Diane’s attempt to save Johnny ultimately leads to the story’s tragic climax, illustrating how fear and desperation can transform protection into catastrophe.

Bob Lyle – The Quiet Father – Johnny’s father is a practical, gentle man who represents stability and the grounded values of ordinary life. Content with simple routines and small creative hobbies, he contrasts sharply with Johnny’s restless ambition. His concern for his son reflects the quiet anxiety of a parent watching a child pursue a path he cannot fully understand.

Marjorie Lyle – The Fading Past – Johnny’s mother, whose early dementia slowly erodes her memory, introduces a poignant reflection on time and mortality. Her condition highlights the natural human experience of ageing and decline, providing a stark counterpoint to Aveline’s unnatural longevity. Through Marjorie, the story explores the fragility of identity and memory, reinforcing the theme that time ultimately reshapes every life.

Quinten Barnaby – The Art World Gatekeeper – The flamboyant manager of the gallery where Johnny’s work is exhibited, Quinten embodies the theatricality and self-aware sophistication of the contemporary art world. Stylish, witty, and unmistakably “arty,” he has a sharp eye for talent and understands the importance of spectacle and reputation in shaping an artist’s career. Despite his confidence, it is clear he operates within Aveline’s sphere of influence and defers to her authority and connections. As a supporting figure, Quinten helps transform Johnny from an unknown artist into a gallery attraction, reflecting the glamour and performance of the art world while quietly reinforcing Aveline’s power within it.

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Mood Board



Aveline and Johnny share their blood



Johnny is provided with opportunities to succeed as an artist

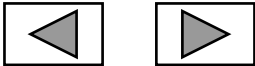


Diane confronts Aveline with her suspicions



Diane attempts to save Johnny

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Written By: Stephen Hall

Status: Complete Feature Screenplay – Seeking Representation / Development

Contact: shsc21441@gmail.com

“Love Is a Stranger delivers a seductive gothic premise, richly drawn characters, and a haunting tragic arc that explores ambition, love, and the dangerous cost of dreams fulfilled”



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The Writer

Stephen Hall is a screenwriter based in Edinburgh, Scotland. Since December 2021, he has completed nine screenplays, including eight feature films and one television project, reflecting a strong commitment to long-form, character-driven storytelling.

His work has received international recognition, with awards from the Cannes World Film Festival, the RED Movie Awards, and the Austin International Film Festival. His scripts often explore moral tension, identity, and the psychological forces that shape human behaviour.

His genre interests include historical narratives, crime stories, and period drama, with a focus on textured worlds and thematically ambitious storytelling.

Alongside screenwriting, he spent over 25 years as a web developer, a background that informs a disciplined approach to structure and long-form creative development.

www.hereandback.co.uk/screenplays

www.facebook.com/makeitdramatic



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