

Love Is A Stranger

desire comes with a price

Screenplay By
Stephen Hall

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.

Love Is A Stranger



Genre and Tone

Genre:

Gothic Drama / Supernatural Romance

Tone:

- Intimate
- Melancholic
- Seductive
- Unsentimental

This is **not horror** and not a thriller.

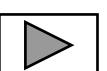
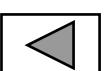
The supernatural is quiet, domestic, and emotional.

Think:

- Slow-burn rather than spectacle
- Behaviour over exposition
- Atmosphere over action



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The Story

LOVE IS A STRANGER is a contemporary Gothic fable about ambition, mortality, and the hidden cost of being seen. Johnny Lyle, a drifting twenty-six-year-old illustrator, scrapes by selling toiletries door-to-door while dreaming of an art career that never seems to begin. When he knocks on the door of Aveline De Clare, a wealthy seventy-two-year-old widow, he is drawn into her world of quiet elegance, grief, and unnerving generosity. Aveline offers Johnny a supernatural pact: her blood will grant him vitality, talent, and access to a life he has only imagined — but it comes at a price. Johnny knowingly accepts, choosing acceleration over obscurity, and his career explodes as Aveline transforms alongside him, revealing herself to be centuries old and sustained by those she elevates.

As Johnny's success grows, his personal life fractures. His childhood friend Diane, who harbours unspoken love for him, becomes suspicious of Aveline and uncovers her impossible history. Johnny's parents, still broken by the death of their other son and his mother's creeping dementia, remind him of the ordinary, finite life he has abandoned. While Aveline flourishes, Johnny begins to age rapidly, realising too late that his "legacy" will outlive him but never belong to him. In the end, violence and loss claim Diane and Johnny, while Aveline survives to continue her endless cycle, carrying his art — and his memory — forward. *Love Is a Stranger* is a slow-burn meditation on success, desire, and the seduction of being chosen, asking whether a life that burns brightly is worth the darkness it leaves behind.

It asks:

- What is success worth?
- Who benefits from our legacy?
- Is being seen the same as being loved?

At its core, the film is about **choosing acceleration over continuity**, and the cost of being chosen.

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The World

The story is set in a contemporary city that feels:

- Familiar
- Slightly timeless
- Quietly decaying

Key spaces:

- A faded tenement apartment filled with centuries of history
- A modest working-class stairwell
- The elite art world: galleries, studios, private dinners

The supernatural exists **inside ordinary spaces**, never announced, never explained.



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The Characters

Johnny Lyle

An underachieving illustrator selling toiletries door-to-door.

- Talented but invisible
- Polite, passive, afraid of stagnation
- Haunted by the idea of becoming “nobody”

Johnny's flaw is not greed — it is **impatience**.

He doesn't want to wait for life to begin.

His tragedy is not that he is tricked —
it's that he chooses acceleration, knowing the cost.



The Characters

Aveline De Clare (appears 40s / is 800+ years old)

- Wealthy, cultured, emotionally restrained
- A survivor of centuries, not a villain
- Sustained through a blood pact with the gifted

Aveline does not lie.

She does not force.

She offers choice.

She is the archetypal witch —
granting wishes while concealing nothing except **how easily people minimise
the price.**



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The Characters

Diane (21)

Johnny's neighbour and closest friend since childhood.

- Grounded, observant, quietly in love with Johnny
- Works in a supermarket
- Represents continuity, patience, and ordinary time

Diane is not a rival — she is **the life Johnny might have lived.**

Her suspicion of Aveline drives the story toward its tragic conclusion.



Love Is A Stranger



Act 1 – The Bargain

Johnny meets Aveline while selling toiletries door-to-door.

She invites him in for tea, secretly laced with her blood.

Johnny feels energised, inspired, alive.

When he returns, Aveline reveals her truth:
she is sustained through a pact of shared blood.

She offers Johnny a choice:

- Remain obscure and safe
- Or live fully, visibly, and briefly

Johnny accepts.



Act 2 – The Ascent

Johnny's life accelerates unnaturally.

- A private studio
- Art world connections
- Exhibitions and acclaim
- A sexual and emotional bond with Aveline

As Johnny thrives, Aveline grows younger.

Meanwhile:

- Diane grows suspicious
- Johnny's parents decline
- Johnny begins to age rapidly

Success rises.

The body fails.



Act 3 – The Cost

Diane uncovers evidence that Aveline has lived in the same apartment for centuries.

Johnny finally confronts the truth:
his legacy will outlive him — but belong to someone else.

In a final act of agency, Johnny paints over his own eyes in a portrait of himself and Aveline, rejecting the illusion of eternal visibility.

Diane shoots Johnny accidentally.

Diane dies during the shooting.

Aveline survives — carrying Johnny's art, and his memory, forward.



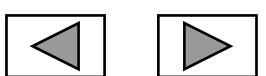
Themes

- Mortality vs visibility
- Legacy vs lineage
- Success as consumption
- Love without equality
- Time as predator

The film asks:

Is a life that burns brightly worth the darkness it leaves behind?

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Visual Language

- Naturalistic lighting
- Muted colour palette that brightens as Johnny declines
- Intimate framing
- Repeating visual motifs:
 - Eyes
 - Blood
 - Mirrors
 - Art as preservation

The supernatural is conveyed through **small, physical changes**, not effects.



Audience and Positioning

Target audience:

- Festival and arthouse audiences
- Viewers drawn to character-driven, adult storytelling

Positioning:

- Elevated genre
- Relationship-led supernatural drama
- Low-to-mid budget, performance-driven



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Why This Story Now

We live in a culture obsessed with:

- Visibility
- Acceleration
- Legacy without continuity

Love Is a Stranger speaks to a generation terrified of:

- Being unseen
- Being left behind
- Waiting for life to start

It asks whether success gained too quickly leaves anything human behind.



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The Film In One Sentence

A love story where one partner grows younger, the other disappears, and both get exactly what they asked for.

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The Writer

Since December 2021 I have been working on a range of tv and feature screenplays for potential productions of varying budgets from the dark to the comedic and action to psychological.

To validate that the work I have created was of a standard to be taken seriously, I have been entering my work into competitions in both Europe and the USA which has resulted in wins at The Cannes World Film Festival, The Austin International Film Festival and the RED Movie Awards in Reims.

My objective is always to:

1. provide a captivating and interesting storyline
2. create strong, believable characters the audience can relate to
3. build an authentic environment that transports the audience into another world
4. draw the audience towards an enthralling, wow-factor climax

I deliberately set out to create very different genres to show my talent is not restricted to one type of storytelling, though my personal preference is historical crime.

Stephen Hall

www.hereandback.co.uk/screenplays
www.facebook.com/makeitdramatic

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