

Love Is A Stranger - Overall assessment

The principal characters in *Love Is a Stranger* have recognisable individual voices.

The strongest are:

- Aveline de Clare;
- Johnny Lyle;
- Diane;
- Marjorie;
- Bob;
- Harry.

Overall dialogue differentiation is approximately **8/10**. The central triangle works particularly well because each character's language reflects a different relationship with ambition:

- **Johnny wants transformation.**
- **Aveline promises transformation.**
- **Diane questions its cost.**

Johnny Lyle

Johnny has a believable contemporary, working-class voice.

He is:

- informal;
- self-deprecating;
- slightly passive;
- aspirational;
- easily impressed;
- prone to avoiding difficult conversations;
- increasingly grandiose as Aveline changes his life.

Early Johnny speaks in short, casual phrases:

"How goes?"

"The pay's shit."

"My cooking skills are minimal."

"Cool."

He does not naturally speak in elaborate declarations. He talks about stairs, poor commission, college, drawing and getting through the evening. His language reflects someone intelligent and creative but not yet confident enough to claim an identity as an artist.

His voice also reveals his tendency to rationalise what he wants to believe. When Diane warns him, he responds:

"I have nothing of value."

"Come on."

"When did age come into it?"

He dismisses suspicion because acknowledging it would threaten the opportunity Aveline represents.

As his success develops, his speech becomes more assured:

“Quietly confident.”

“Quite possibly turned my life around.”

“I guess.”

Later, when he understands the cost, his language becomes less casual and more reflective:

“Success is fine, but it’s the people you care about that matters.”

“Be careful what you wish for.”

“But I have no one to leave it to.”

This evolution is appropriate. He does not sound like exactly the same man at the end because he is no longer the same man. The underlying voice remains recognisable through his directness and emotional avoidance.

Voice distinction: 8.5/10

Aveline de Clare

Aveline has the screenplay’s strongest and most identifiable voice.

She speaks with:

- old-world elegance;
- emotional restraint;
- seductive reassurance;
- fatalism;
- polished authority;
- an occasional flash of modern playfulness.

Her language often contains aphoristic ideas about life, desire and time:

“Life is a wondrous miracle.”

“There are some things older than time, that defy logic.”

“Life is not lost by dying. Doing nothing extinguishes hope.”

“Life is for living, darling.”

She rarely pressures Johnny overtly. Instead, she frames dangerous choices as invitations:

“If your dreams could come true, would you reach out?”

“I could give you that opportunity.”

“One that only you can make.”

This creates a distinctive form of manipulation. She does not command Johnny to drink her blood; she makes refusal sound like a rejection of life itself.

Her vocabulary also reflects wealth and longevity:

“They’re just trinkets collected over the years.”

“Romanée-Conti. Forty-five.”

“No expense spared.”

“Perception is everything.”

Aveline speaks as someone who has lived through different social worlds and understands how money, appearance and access operate.

She also has a playful, earthy side:

“Flattery will get you everywhere.”

“No beer.”

“Shopping makes me horny!”

Those lines help prevent her from sounding continually gothic or ceremonial.

Her later remorse remains consistent with her fatalism:

“Nothing is forever.”

“I was selfish. Love does that.”

“I wish it could be different.”

She speaks as someone who has experienced this pattern before and knows that desire will eventually lead to loss.

Voice distinction: 9/10

Johnny and Aveline together

Their voices are strongly contrasted.

Johnny	Aveline
Casual	Elegant
Contemporary	Timeless
Sceptical of magic	Speaks through magic
Wants practical success	Offers destiny
Reacts	Orchestrates
Uses slang	Uses aphorisms
Thinks short-term	Has lived for centuries

The recurring contrast between beer and wine is a simple but effective example:

Johnny: “No beer?”

Aveline: “No beer.”

Aveline gradually remodels not only Johnny’s circumstances but his language, clothing, tastes and conception of himself.

Diane

Diane has a grounded, candid and emotionally perceptive voice.

She is:

- warm;
- practical;
- sarcastic;

- concerned;
- quietly romantic;
- more observant than Johnny;
- unwilling to hide behind politeness once alarmed.

Her early dialogue is domestic and generous:

“There’s some chocolate in there.”

“You really need to put some weight on.”

“Come over some time and I’ll drum something up.”

She expresses affection through practical care rather than declarations. She buys food, arranges dinner and obtains concert tickets.

As Aveline enters Johnny’s life, Diane’s language becomes more probing:

“I just hope she’s not using you.”

“You can be so naive.”

“Who’s using who?”

“Maybe she’s got you bewitched.”

Her suspicions initially sound like jealousy, but they gradually become evidence-based concern.

Later, her voice becomes even more direct:

“You’ve changed.”

“No, you’re not.”

“Something isn’t right.”

“It should be you who’s worrying.”

Johnny responds with minimisation, while Diane names what she sees.

Her scenes with Cammy also show dry humour:

“Christ, Cammy, they’re not listed in the phonebook.”

She can discuss supernatural danger without losing her ordinary contemporary voice.

Voice distinction: 8.5/10

Diane and Aveline

They are effective rivals because their voices represent opposing forms of love.

- Diane speaks through food, friendship, concern and shared history.
- Aveline speaks through opportunity, beauty, seduction and destiny.

Diane remembers Johnny copying her maths homework. Aveline tells him fate placed them together.

Diane says:

“You deserve it.”

Aveline says:

“Get whatever you need.”

Diane wants Johnny to become himself. Aveline wants to construct the version of him she desires.

Their polite first meeting also contains good subtext. Aveline asks about their history while Diane tells stories that establish a claim based on genuine knowledge and shared experience.

Harry

Harry has a distinct entrepreneurial and irreverent voice.

He is:

- blunt;
- commercially minded;
- flippant;
- teasing;
- emotionally uncomplicated;
- inclined to reduce serious matters to jokes.

His early philosophy is:

“Glass half full, Johnny.”

“No one’s forcing you. That’s business.”

He consistently regards life in practical, transactional terms.

With Diane, his lines are sharper and more provocative:

“You jealous?”

“Yeah, sure and I’m Harry Houdini.”

“If it goes tits up, then that’s life.”

“You could end up meeting some sugar daddy.”

His humour is often crude:

“I’d fuck her.”

“You’d screw anything.”

Harry serves an important function because he voices the ordinary explanation for what is happening. Where Diane sees danger, Harry sees jealousy, luck or a strange relationship.

His syntax is not highly elaborate, but his tone is recognisable.

Voice distinction: 7.5–8/10

Marjorie

Marjorie has a very distinctive parental voice, initially shaped by:

- disappointment;
- comparison;
- criticism;
- grief;
- passive aggression;
- concern expressed as judgement.

Examples include:

“Have you got a proper job yet?”

“At this rate you’ll be forty.”

“Peter was at college by the time he was nineteen.”

“There are times when I think the wrong son died.”

Her language constantly compares Johnny with his dead brother. This immediately explains some of Johnny’s vulnerability to Aveline’s praise.

Aveline tells him he is talented and exceptional; Marjorie tells him he is late, unsuccessful and inferior.

As Marjorie develops dementia, her voice changes in a painful but recognisable way. Her old fixations remain, but memory confuses the sons:

“My son, Peter, is doing art at college.”

“Who are you again?”

The dialogue does not merely make her forget facts. It shows how grief and long-held comparisons survive even as her cognition deteriorates.

Voice distinction: 8.5/10

Bob

Bob’s voice is gentle, practical and conflict-avoidant.

He is:

- affectionate;
- understated;
- quietly humorous;
- protective of Marjorie;
- reluctant to confront difficult realities;
- proud of Johnny without being demonstrative.

His humour is domestic:

“In July.”

“I once told her I liked it, so now it’s a staple whenever she’s bored.”

Unlike Marjorie, he does not attack Johnny’s choices. He asks questions and offers companionship:

“You staying for tea?”

“At least join me in some soup.”

When discussing Marjorie’s decline, he minimises:

“It’s not that serious.”

“What difference will that make?”

This is not indifference. It reflects fear, loyalty and reluctance to admit that he can no longer manage alone.

His response to Johnny’s success is also warm and unpretentious:

“My God, it’s all go with you!”

He sounds like an ordinary father trying to remain supportive within an emotionally difficult household.

Voice distinction: 8/10

Marjorie and Bob

The parents are particularly well differentiated.

Marjorie	Bob
Critical	Encouraging
Compares	Accepts
Confrontational	Avoidant
Speaks through disappointment	Speaks through humour
Pushes Johnny toward convention	Lets him find his path
Wounds directly	Protects quietly

They do not sound like interchangeable older parents. Their contrasting voices also explain why Johnny is simultaneously insecure and still capable of warmth.

Cammy

Cammy has a recognisable drug-dealer, countercultural voice:

“Diane, babe!”

“Business or pleasure?”

“You indulging too much on that shit?”

“On your head be it, girl.”

His language is casual, sceptical and self-protective. He is willing to entertain almost anything but does not want responsibility for the consequences.

He is distinctive within his limited scenes, although he is partly an archetypal figure.

Voice distinction: 7/10

Father Bryce

Father Bryce has only limited dialogue, but his formal religious register establishes a clear tonal contrast with the contemporary characters:

“Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord...”

Aveline’s Latin farewell then extends the religious and historical atmosphere while giving her language a more personal, ancient quality.

He is functional rather than deeply individual.

Voice distinction: 6.5/10

Supporting gallery and professional characters

The less distinctive voices belong to:

- gallery managers;
- collectors;

- police officers;
- sales staff;
- restaurant employees;
- minor neighbours.

They generally speak according to function:

“Glad you could make it.”

“They absolutely love it.”

“Would you care for drinks?”

“I’m sorry to inform you...”

This is entirely workable because most appear briefly. However, some gallery characters could be exchanged without noticeably changing the scene.

The recurring professional figures could be sharpened through:

- differing attitudes toward art;
- class-specific vocabulary;
- greater enthusiasm or cynicism;
- more individual reactions to Aveline;
- distinctive sentence rhythm.

Voice scorecard

Character	Voice distinction
Aveline de Clare	9/10
Johnny Lyle	8.5/10
Diane	8.5/10
Marjorie	8.5/10
Bob	8/10
Harry	7.5–8/10
Cammy	7/10
Father Bryce	6.5/10

Gallery/professional characters 6–6.5/10

Verdict

The central characters in *Love Is a Stranger* do have their own voices.

The strongest distinctions are:

- Aveline’s elegant fatalism versus Johnny’s casual contemporary speech;
- Diane’s grounded concern versus Aveline’s seductive promises;
- Marjorie’s corrosive criticism versus Bob’s gentle acceptance;

- Harry's flippant commercial realism versus Diane's emotional perception;
- early Johnny's uncertainty versus later Johnny's disillusioned maturity.

The dialogue also supports the character arcs. Johnny's voice changes as he gains confidence, success and eventual understanding, while Aveline's polished certainty gradually reveals regret and loneliness.

The main area for further differentiation is the gallery and professional supporting cast. The central emotional ensemble is already **distinctive, consistent and dramatically effective**.