

Stranger In The Room

by

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Cast of Characters

ANDREA:

Teens

PATTY:

38

Place

Suburban home

Time

5PM

Setting: The play takes place inside a newly constructed suburban home. It's open, bright and most modern. Upon closer inspection the home almost seems too perfect...

At Rise: The play opens up on the entrance of Patty entering the living room of her home, followed by her daughter Andrea, already in conversation.

ANDREA: I don't understand why we had to leave our home.

PATTY: Because we now have a new home.

ANDREA: But I hate it here. You never asked me if I wanted to move.

PATTY: Honey, I did ask you, you're forgetting.

ANDREA: I said maybe, I never really agreed to it.

PATTY: It's too late now, we're here.

ANDREA: I miss my friends.

PATTY: You will make new friends.

ANDREA: No, I won't.

PATTY: Why won't you?

ANDREA: Because everyone is different here.

PATTY: How so?

ANDREA: No one is friendly. Everyone keeps to themselves. It's like I'm not accepted or something, or even acknowledged. When the teacher introduced me to the class today, not one person looked in my direction, it was like I didn't even exist. It was really weird, Mom. I can't even explain it, it was as if they didn't acknowledge I was there, as if it was deliberately coordinated, almost like it was choreographed. As the teacher was telling them where I was from and everything, all the students just kept looking straight ahead...I've never felt anything like it, it was eerie and there was a moment of silence loud enough that you could hear a bird pecking at the window...And I've just kept on thinking about it since. I'm not sure I want to go back, I don't like it at all. I want to go back home, we were happy there.

PATTY: Andrea, your father got a big job promotion and this is his chance to shine and give us the life we always dreamed of.

ANDREA: Mom, I'm telling you, something isn't right at this school.

PATTY: I spoke with all your teachers, the principle, I really don't see the problem, they are some of the most friendly people I've met.

ANDREA: They are lying.

PATTY: Andrea, it's a private school, things are more hands on, more disciplined but certainly better for your education. The people who graduate from your school go on to have incredible careers in many different fields.

ANDREA: Who cares about my stupid career? I'm in ninth grade!

PATTY: You have to think about the future.

ANDREA: I don't want to think about the future. I want to think about right now and right now everything sucks. I hate it here and I want to go back!

PATTY: What you are experiencing is normal.

ANDREA: It's not normal! Why won't you listen to me?!

PATTY: Andrea, please, lower your voice and speak calmly.

ANDREA: But it's like you don't care about what I'm saying.

PATTY: Of course I care, you are my daughter. How can I not care?

ANDREA: So take me seriously, Mom.

PATTY: (sighs) Let's start again. Listen...the reality is that you aren't happy because you miss the world you are used to, I get that, I identify with that, I received my education on different military bases, I know first hand what it's like to not fit in. You have to try. Make an effort.

ANDREA: I do.

PATTY: I know how shy you are Andrea...come on, you have to make an effort because if you don't, the other students will label you as someone who doesn't want to be bothered. Is that what you want?

ANDREA: Maybe I do. They're all freaking weirdos.

PATTY: The kids out here grew up here so they are used to doing things a certain way. You are new to their culture. It's a difference of culture, honey. Nothing more, nothing less. Extend your hand.

ANDREA: But Mom, during recess, it was just as odd as being in the classroom. I'm used to everyone talking, laughing, causing trouble, whatever, at this school it's dead silent. How can that be normal? I, I tried talking to one of the girls who was in my English class and she shrugged her shoulders. That was all. I tried talking to another girl from gym class and she did the same exact thing, shrugged her shoulders. When we played volleyball during gym, there was no communication, I mean, not the kind of communication I've ever seen okay, it was like being programmed.

PATTY (laughs): Programmed?

ANDREA: Mom, please, I'm trying to explain this to you...YES, programmed. Like, alive but lifeless, routine without enjoyment.

PATTY: Andrea, enough! This is a special school, where the level of concentration and commitment are on another level. Families fight tooth and nail to get their children into this place and you were accepted because of the company your father works at. It's a blessing we should all be thankful for, it wasn't easy to accomplish and the very least you can do, is appreciate the opportunity given to you!

ANDREA: Mundane. No one socializes, everyone has a flat personality.

PATTY: That's enough.

ANDREA: What am I supposed to do?

PATTY: I already told you what to do.

ANDREA: But I get ignored.

PATTY: Go do your homework. I have to start on dinner.

ANDREA: It's not enough Mom.

PATTY: What's not enough?

ANDREA: What you're telling me to do.

PATTY: What am I tell---

ANDREA: You think it's me and it's not me. It's them!

PATTY: Surely, a few hundred kids can't be all that bad.

ANDREA: Who knows if they're bad.

PATTY (laughing): Are you listening to yourself? You call being ignored BAD? That's how sensitive you are. That's your real problem.

ANDREA: I am not sensitive! Why won't you believe me?

PATTY: I do believe you. I do. But what will you have me do? We traveled to the other side of the country for a start at a better life and here we are, you are enrolled and all I ask of you is to give it a chance. This is your first week and all I hear is negativity. Do you think this is easy for me? Do you think so? I have to fit in, too. There's loads of work I must do with this house. So much to organize and get ready. Your father is already working overtime and we are trying, we really are...the least you can do is show some appreciation. It's not easy for any one of us but we must come together as a family and make the effort because if we don't, we have nowhere to go, we can't go back. Do you follow?

That door is closed. We have no choice but to make this work Andrea, one way or the other. So stop making me upset over being ignored like it's the most important thing in the world because it's not. Grow up, face the music and TRY HARDER!

PATTY'S nose bleeds.

ANDREA: Mom...are you alright?

PATTY: What??

ANDREA: Your nose...it's bleeding.

PATTY: Don't you worry about my nose.

ANDREA: But it's bleeding. Oh my God, MOM!

PATTY collapses.

MOM! MOM!! MOM!!!

ANDREA rushes to get a bottle of water.

She fumbles the water bottle but picks it back up from the floor.

Andrea grabs a box of tissues.

Andrea turns back to her mother who is standing, laughing.

...(quietly) Mommm...

PATTY: I haven't had a nose bleed like this in years, honey. No need to worry.

ANDREA hands her mother the box of tissues.

PATTY grabs a few tissues and puts them to her nose.

ANDREA: Mom, I'm sorry.

PATTY: (burst out laughing-almost a bit hysterical)

ANDREA: Want to sit down...I have water.

PATTY: I have to make dinner.

ANDREA: I didn't mean to make you---

PATTY: Fine. Fine. Everything's fine, honey. No need to cause a fit.

ANDREA: Do you feel okay, Mom?

PATTY: Go upstairs and do your homework.

ANDREA: But are you okay?

PATTY begins taking food out from the refrigerator, placing items on the kitchen counter.

PATTY: Andrea, you will learn in life that in order to be successful you have to ride the wave, no matter how far you have to go to catch it, sometimes we drown in life but that's the way things go because one must enjoy the journey, it's the journey that one must enjoy.

PATTY starts chopping vegetables.

ANDREA: Do you need any help with dinner?

PATTY: Not at all dear.

ANDREA: ...Mom...

PATTY: Yes?

ANDREA: Blood dripped on the cutting board.

PATTY: Did it now?

ANDREA: Yes.

PATTY: I see it.

ANDREA: Maybe you should take a minute and sit before cooking.

PATTY: Your father will be home shortly and I want to make a fantastic dinner.

ANDREA: Yeah?

PATTY ignores ANDREA and continues chopping the vegetables.

PATTY suddenly stops, as if programmed. Her eyes flicker wildly for five seconds.

PATTY turns and stares directly into ANDREA.

ANDREA slowly back-peddles in fear and confusion.

I'll go...upstairs and do my homework Mom...okay?

PATTY continues staring at ANDREA.

ANDREA runs upstairs.

PATTY continues staring as if frozen. Her eyes flicker wildly for a few more seconds and she turns her attention to chopping the vegetables.

END OF PLAY