



Strangers

By 7th Grader Shannon Cavanagh

© 2016 Shannon Cavanagh and Philadelphia Young Playwrights. For educational use only. Not for sale, production, or performance. If you are interested in producing this play at your school or institution, please contact Info@PhillyYoungPlaywrights.Org to seek permission from the playwright.



CHARACTERS

Lily Patterson: An average girl usually seen writing, drawing, or flat out daydreaming. She used to speak her mind whenever she felt like it, but ever since her father died, she's been different. Quieter, more withdrawn. She used to be close with her mother, but something happened between them, and now they hardly ever talk. She has a wide circle of acquaintances, but she only really opens up to her best friend Bridgette Samuels.

Theresa Patterson: A forty something year old woman who has become wracked with guilt and sadness. After her husband's death, she closed herself off, losing many relationships in the process. She justified it by saying that she needed time to mourn, but really, it was because she didn't want anyone to see just how distraught she really was. After it happened, she could barely leave the house, and unknowingly cut off communication with her daughter. When she began to pick herself up again, she began working overtime at her job, and spending more hours in the office than at home. Years later, her main priority is still working, and she hardly ever talks to her daughter.

Bridgette Samuels: Bridgette is a perky, constantly happy girl. She hasn't seen many hardships in her life, but has a talent for reading people. She can tell how someone's day is going in just a glance, and when Lily's father died, she felt sad along with her. She is the only one Lily turns to when she needs to talk, but she's perfectly content with that.

Past Lily: A young girl, shown during a flashback.

Past Theresa: A past version of Theresa, shown during a flashback.



Act One, Scene 1: The House

A small house just outside of the town sits perched on a small hill. Trees surround the house, and inside, Lily sits with a small notebook and a cup of tea. The set is eerily silent. The front of stage is barren, except for a couch and a coffee table. Behind that, a kitchen table sits with many chairs pulled out from it. One of those chairs has a backpack on it. On the side of the stage, there is a small section where the lights stay completely dark. In that section is a counter where a woman stands still, and a table where a young girl sits. The lights are dim, but then brighten on the main section as Lily begins to speak.

LILY:

(Lily is still, talking in a quiet, almost ghostly voice. She occasionally flips pages in her notebook as she speaks.)

It wasn't always like this. My mother, she wasn't always gone. She used to come home, and I would run up to greet her. My father would come home a bit later, and the first thing he would do was take off his tie. Then he would kiss my mom on the cheek, and ask me how school was. I was only in fourth grade, but I can still remember his clear, blue eyes. Maybe it's because I inherited them, or maybe because every time my mother looks at me, all she sees is what used to be. One day, I was at home with the babysitter, just waiting for my mom to come home. I had painted a picture in school, and I was quite proud of it. It was a painting of our house, and my parents and I were standing under the big oak tree. Headlights bled through the bay window and painted themselves across the wall. I sprung up, and stood by the door until it opened. My mother walked in, green eyes bright, white blonde hair tied neatly in a bun. She threw her purse to the ground, then sat down on the couch. I ran over and threw myself onto the couch next to her, then pulled my paper out. She took it from my small hands, and her eyes glided across the paper. She smiled, then pulled me into a hug, saying how much my father would like it. Then she picked me up, and walked to the kitchen. I set to work on my homework-- basic division, the culprit of childhood happiness. Soon enough, the smell of pasta wafted into the living room, and instead of being excited about eating, I was confused. My father was always home to eat dinner. Where was he?

(Lily trails off, but then snaps back into reality, a sad look on her face.)

I was called to the kitchen, and I pushed my father's absence to the back of my head. I ate dinner, then put my dishes in the sink. Same as every other night.



(As she begins to say this, the darkened corner of the stage is revealed. Dim lights rise as a young girl is seen at a table. A woman stands at the counter, scrubbing a dish. As

Lily describes what happens, you can see her past self calling out the song, even though it is still silent.)

My mother was at the sink, washing the dishes, humming a tune. I quickly called out the name of the song, and she turned around and smiled. It was a game we played without even realizing. My mother had a beautiful voice. Even when she was talking, it was so soft and melodic that it put you at peace.

(The side section goes back to darkness.)

My father still wasn't home. I was always an over-thinker, a perpetually nervous child. So even the smallest of things would plummet me into a state of unease. I brought this up to my mom, but she repeated over and over again that he must be stuck in traffic. I quieted my thoughts, but there was still the feeling in my stomach that something was off. A bit later, I was ushered into my room. I continued to pester my mother with questions about my father, but she brushed me off, saying that she knew just as much as I did. I noticed the tension in her voice, and realized that I should let it go. I climbed into bed, then eventually fell into a restless, fitful sleep. I don't know what caused it, but in the middle of the night, I woke up. I remember having a nauseating feeling that tied my stomach in knots. I pushed myself out of bed, and stumbled to my mother's room. Once I pushed the door open, I began complaining of feeling sick. She didn't respond. I walked to the bed. My father was still gone, but what surprised me even more than that, was that my mother was also gone. I walked into the hallway and called her name, but no one responded. I ran to the living room, already in hysterics. My mother was nowhere to be seen. Her purse was still where she had left it when she got home from work. I rushed outside, frantically calling her name. Suddenly, I saw a car pull up in the driveway.

(Lily almost looks angry, but her tone is quiet.)

My mom stumbled out, hair askew, mascara running down her cheeks. Once she saw me, she stopped. I called out to her, but it just echoed around her, rebounded off of her. Tears were pooling under my eyes, and I ran up and tugged on her hand. But she just *stood* there, eyes vacantly focused on something on the porch. I looked at the area that she was gazing at. A wooden seat, one my dad used to sit at when the house was too hot to stay inside. I was so young, but I remember everything just *falling into place*.

(Tears spring into Lily's eyes, and she is overtaken by sadness.)



I looked at my mom, and she began sobbing. She collapsed onto the ground, and pulled me into her arms. I don't really remember what happened after that, everything was blurry and out of focus. I know that I was pulled out of school for a bit, and that there

was an influx of people in our house. They all offered condolences, some even cried with us. But none of them explained to me what exactly happened. I heard fragments of conversation, bits and pieces. A car crash, they said. He was on his phone, they said.

(Lily's voice raises in both volume and emotion.)

Trying to call home, they said. I don't remember his funeral, but I *do* remember that I locked myself in my room for days on end. I only came out to go to the bathroom, and aside from that, nothing else. I wouldn't eat, and if I saw my mother, we wouldn't speak. I felt completely disconnected, like a stranger in *my own home*.

(Lily's expression clears, and she goes back to looking almost placid. *Almost*.)

That was years ago, but I can't seem to forget it. The silence in my home still reminds me of the way my dad used to laugh at even the littlest things. My eyes still remind me of the way his identical ones used to light up when he saw my mother. The long hours home alone remind me of the way my mother has stopped humming, and how her lips have settled in a permanent frown.

(Lily looks down, then walks to the table in center stage. She digs through her backpack for a few seconds, then comes out with a report card.)

LILY:
(Muttering.)

She was supposed to sign this a week ago.

(A phone rings in the background. Lily stares at it for a few seconds before picking it up.)

LILY:
Hello?
(Begins nodding.)
Yeah, I'll meet you at the park later... Okay, bye.

(Lily hangs up, then looks around the house. She sighs as she looks at an old photo of her father.)

LILY:



(Quiet, soft.)

She's lost herself. She doesn't even do anything anymore besides work and sleep. This house is falling apart, and someday, we're going to be buried underneath its rubble.

(Headlights appear on the walls as a car pulls in. Lily pushes open the door and exits. Lights go down.)



Act One, Scene Two:

A faded white house sits on the right side of the stage, and a gravelly walkway leads up to a large mahogany door. Trees line the background. A window on the house is riddled with cracks, and the door screeches when a girl walks through it. Her hair is slightly messy, and she's looking at her shoes. Another person is walking towards the house, her hair pristine, but everything else looks disheveled. The scene is brightly lit. The only noise is the quiet sound of birds chirping in the background.

LILY:

(Lily looks at her mother, then begins walking over to her. Her voice is blank.)
My report card is on the table. I told you to sign it last Monday. Could you please sign it?

(Theresa doesn't respond. She is too busy looking at a beat up chair sitting on the porch.)

LILY:

(Questioning, slightly sad.)

Mom?

(Theresa is motionless. She remains quiet. Lily sighs as she turns and begins to walk off.)

THERESA:

(Dazed.)

Lily?

LILY:

(She looks a bit annoyed, but her voice is calm. She almost looks hopeful.)
What?

THERESA:

(It takes her eyes a second to reach Lily. Her voice is still completely empty.)
I wasn't really paying attention. What did you say?

LILY:

(Once her mom says this, she looks dejected. A sad look takes over her face.)
Nothing. I should leave.

(Lily goes to leave, but Theresa's arm suddenly latches on to her arm.)



THERESA:

(A hint of remorse in her voice.)

No, tell me.

LILY:

(Lily looks like she is fighting off a pang of annoyance.)

I asked you to sign my report card. But you were too busy looking at dad's old chair.

THERESA:

(Theresa stays silent for a few moments. Lily turns to leave.)

Wait.

(Lily huffs in slight annoyance.)

THERESA:

Do you think you could cook your own dinner tonight? I think I'm just going to go to sleep.

LILY:

(Lily suddenly looks distraught. Her voice is quiet and trembling. Her voice raises a bit at the end.)

Tonight? I cook dinner *every night*. You never do anything!

(She immediately looks extremely regretful.)

THERESA:

(She looks slightly confused, but mostly preoccupied.)

What?

LILY:

(Pleading.)

Mom, don't you realize how much you've been missing? Ever since everything came crashing down, you've been lost. I can't continue to let your ignorance towards the rest of the world affect me. My report card needs to be signed, and if you don't listen to me, I am going to be the one suffering from the consequences. I hate that you don't even realize anything that's going on anymore. Mom, I made honor roll. I started softball, and I'm doing really good. But you wouldn't know that because you're too busy working. And then when you come home, you sit in your room, waiting for someone to come home. But no one's coming home, because we're alone.

(Her voice rises, and becomes somewhat higher pitched. She looks regretful and saddened all at the same time.)



That's it. We're so desperately alone, and you can't seem to grasp that.

THERESA:

(Emotionless; dazed and out of focus.)

I'm sorry.

LILY:

(Agitated and tense.)

No. You're not.

THERESA:

(Looks into the distance, a sad look on her face.)

Ever since it happened, things haven't been the same.

LILY:

(She raises her voice in an attempt to get her point across.)

Stop ignoring it. He's dead! Mom, he's gone. Stop pretending like nothing's happened!

THERESA:

(Commanding)

Stop.

LILY:

You can't keep hiding from the truth. Things aren't getting done. They haven't been for years. You're too hung up in your misery. Haven't you realized that you're missing so much? I'm sick of your problems affecting me! I'm missing out on my life because you can't seem to pick up the pieces of yours.

(After saying this, LILY looks upset with herself. She opens her mouth as if to say *I'm sorry* but nothing comes out.)

THERESA:

You don't know how hard it's been. Lily, you were so young. You didn't even understand what had happened.

LILY:

I understood enough. Just because I was young doesn't mean I couldn't feel. I'm human, and when bad things happen, I feel sad. I was just a little girl, and you were to blind to realize that your daughter was suffocating in sadness. A little girl grew up too fast. I should have gone out with friends, but I couldn't, because I was too busy withering under the pressure that you put on my shoulders.



THERESA:

(She smiles, but it doesn't meet her eyes. Her voice is crackly.)
You were strong. You are strong.

LILY:

(Pleading.)

Do you even understand what I've been saying? I shouldn't have *had* to be strong. I shouldn't have had to set the dinner table every night, just to put your meal away. I shouldn't have had to hope that I would be able to fall asleep before I fell apart. I shouldn't have had to walk with that burden on my shoulders, no child should have to live like that. You weren't there, and you don't seem to realize how hard that was for me.

THERESA:

(Lily's words begin to sink in, but she still doesn't seem to be able to grasp the entire situation.)

Lily, I'm so sorry.

LILY:

I can't— I can't do this. Just please sign the report card. I'm going to the park.

THERESA:

Lily, wait.

(Lily continues walking, and disappears off stage. Theresa turns to the house, and collapses into a sitting position.)

THERESA:

(Crying.)

What have I done?



Act One, Scene Three:

The lighting is dim. Trees line the background, and an old swingset is occupied by a girl with long brown hair. The swings are creaky, and the wind is blowing, creating a soft howling noise. A discarded basketball lays in the background. Bushes lay scattered across the ground. Another girl walks onto the scene, hood up, eyes cast down.

BRIDGETTE:
(Sarcastically.)

You're late.

(Lily gives her a dirty look before falling into the swing next to her. Her tone is still somewhat joking.)

What?

LILY:

My mom.

(Bridgette stops grinning, and looks at her fingers. She suddenly looks exhausted, like she's tired of dealing with these sort of things. She lets out a heavy sigh, and looks over at Lily.)

BRIDGETTE:
(Apologetically.)

Oh... sorry.

LILY:
(Nodding. Her voice is blank.)

It's fine.

BRIDGETTE:
(Concerned.)

What is it this time?

LILY:
(Sad. Her voice cracks a bit.)
I asked her to sign my report card. She was too busy staring at my dad's old chair.

(Bridgette looks sad, then smiles at her lap.)

LILY:
(Annoyed.)

What's so funny?



BRIDGETTE:
(Nostalgic.)

Remember when we were younger and we used to come here all the time? The slides were too big and scary to go on, and your mom would always pick you up and try to push you down.

LILY:
(Laughs.)

Yeah. And then there was that one day where she actually got me to go down.

BRIDGETTE:
(Giggling.)

Oh my gosh! And when you were going down you hit a bump. You fell off and started crying, and I got scared because of the blood on the scratch on your knee. So I ran off. Your mom was tending to you, and then I was running around like a maniac.

(The two girls erupt in laughter.)

LILY:
(Suddenly quiet.)

Thanks.

BRIDGETTE:
(Still amused.)

For what? Not knowing how to handle a bit of blood?

LILY:
(Smiling. Her voice is light, but she is still a bit sad.)
No, you idiot. For always cheering me up. You're like the family I don't have.

BRIDGETTE:
(Soft and quiet.)

You're not completely alone. I've tried to put myself in your place, but I couldn't imagine it. I wish I could tell you I understand, but I don't. And I wish I could tell you that things are going to get better, but I don't know if they will. But I can tell you that I'm here for you. You might not have much of a family in way of blood. But believe me, you've got enough to drown in from me.

LILY:
(Smiling.)

Thanks.



BRIDGETTE:

No problem.

LILY:

(Blank face, but sad eyes.)

What do I do?

BRIDGETTE:

(Gentle.)

You still have a mom. I would say to make amends. You don't know how much would change.

LILY:

I don't know if I'm ready for that.

BRIDGETTE:

Don't let this be it. Lily, you need to do this. Trust me, things will be alright. Life has a strange way of working itself out.

LILY:

I'm not-

(She trails off when she sees headlights.)

THERESA:

(Theresa's voice emerges, albeit a bit muffled. She sounds sad and slightly worried.)
Lily?

LILY:

(Whispering.)

I can't do this. I'm sorry Bridgette.

BRIDGETTE:

(Hushed yelling.)

No! Lily, come on. I know you. I know you need this just as much as I need to fix my phobia of blood.

LILY:

(Smiling.)

You weirdo.



(Theresa's calls come closer, and she appears at the side of the stage. Lily tries to run away, but Bridgette pushes her forward.)

THERESA:

Lily?

LILY:

Yeah.

THERESA:

(Theresa's voice is hushed, and the look on her face is almost awestruck. She looks like she didn't expect to find her.)

Oh my...

(Theresa hugs Lily. Lily stands there awkwardly.)

BRIDGETTE:

Hug her back.

(Lily picks up her hands and pats her mother's back in an uncomfortable fashion. Bridgette laughs, then quietly shuffles off the stage.)

THERESA:
(Sobbing.)

How long?

LILY:

What?

THERESA:

How long was I gone?

LILY:

(She opens her mouth, but nothing comes out. She coughs, then replies.)
That doesn't matter.

THERESA:

I didn't even know. I was too caught up in my own little world. Days turned into years, and I fell into a routine of leaving early, working late, then locking myself away. I forgot to carve out time for you... It's my fault. It's all my fault.



LILY:

(She looks as if she doesn't even believe her own words.)

It's fine.

THERESA:

(Her voice is quiet, and she sounds like she might burst into tears in a second.)
Don't say that.

LILY:

What?

THERESA:

(Looks guilty. Her voice is quiet, but her eyes are sad. Her voice rises at the end.)
It's not fine. I'm still a wreck, and I don't know how to fix myself. You are still harboring feelings of hatred for me. Our relationship is in tatters. Everything is a mess. You're not fine, I'm not fine. Nothing is fine!

LILY:

(Blank of emotion.)

Yeah, but... that's okay.

THERESA:

(A bit upset. She obviously doesn't believe her daughter.)

No, it's not.

LILY:

(Smiling.)

Yes, it is. We're not strangers anymore. We're going to be okay.

(The lights go down.)

THE END