

### STARTING OVER

(*Starting Over* was selected for a reading at the Midwest Dramatists Center Ten-Minute Play Conference and the screenplay adaptation of *Starting Over* won 1st Place in the Bare Bones Film Festival for Best Short Screenplay Drama.)

#### CHARACTERS

BRAD: The father--slight of build.

JULIE: His wife

BILLY: Their son--in his teens

JANE: Their daughter who is on the autism spectrum

Setting: We are inside the ANDERSON family home. The interior of the house is dark with only a few candles and camp lanterns lighting the inside.

The set can either be realistic or simply consist of a table and chairs.

Time: The future

Synopsis: An unknown virus alters the future of the world, possibly for the better.

At rise:

BRAD is seated at the dinner table attempting to bring up a radio station on the portable radio.

Seated beside him around the table are JULIE, BILLY, and JANE.

BRAD pushes the radio away from him.

BRAD

It's no use.

JULIE

What do you think it means?

BILLY

It means we're screwed.

JULIE

(looking at JANE)

Billy, watch your language.

BILLY

Dad says worse.

BRAD

Be quiet, Billy.

JULIE

He didn't mean anything, Brad. Besides, he's right. You do swear a lot.

BRAD

Sometimes the occasion calls for it, Julie.

BILLY

Like now?

BRAD

Yeah, like now.

BILLY

Like I said, we're screwed.

JANE

I'm hungry.

JULIE

I know, Sweetie.

BRAD

We'll have to go outside for more supplies.

BILLY

I can go out for them.

BRAD

I don't think so.

BILLY

I can out run them.

BRAD

We're okay for now. Besides, it's getting dark and I don't want any of us out there then.

BILLY

I don't think they come out then. I think they're afraid of the dark.

There is the sound of FOOTSTEPS on the front porch.

BRAD

(tense whisper)

Quiet!

The family suddenly stops moving at all and freeze in position.

JANE

I'll get it.

JULIE

No, Jane, you stay still.

JANE

Okay.

JULIE

What do you think it was, Brad?

BRAD

Be quiet.

They all stay frozen in position.

There is the sound of FOOTSTEPS again, only this time they hear the front door as someone RATTLES it, trying to open it.

BILLY

What do we do?

BRAD

Stay quiet. If they think the place is empty, they'll go away.

The RATTLING of the door grows louder.

BRAD pulls out a gun he has held in his waistband.

JULIE  
Brad, what are you doing? Put that down, please.

BRAD places the gun on the table.

JULIE  
Maybe it's one of the neighbors.

BILLY  
Yeah, one of the infected ones. I don't want to turn into one of them, Dad.

JULIE  
It could be someone trying to find a safe place for the night.

BILLY  
This place won't stay safe if we let them in. What if it's just a matter of time before we change anyway? What if it's in the air like the media say?

BRAD  
They don't know that for sure.

BILLY  
About half of the kids at school got it, it was awful to watch.

There is the sound of someone KNOCKING on the door.

VISITOR (O.S.)  
Oh. Oh. Oh.

BRAD  
Jesus, it's one of them.

JULIE  
We need to help him.

BILLY  
No, we don't.

VISITOR (O.S.)  
Oh. Oh. Oh.

JULIE  
He sounds like a scared child.

JULIE starts to go to the door but BRAD quickly grabs her.

BRAD  
What are you doing?

JULIE  
I'm still a human being, Brad. I have to help that child.

BRAD  
And end up infecting our own children?

VISITOR (O.S.)  
  
(more urgent-crying)  
Oh. Oh. Oh.

JULIE  
He's crying, Brad. What if it were Billy out there? These people can't help what happened to them anymore than Jane--

BRAD  
I don't understand, why aren't the police doing something?

BILLY  
They're infected too.

BRAD  
And what's scary is they carry guns.

BILLY  
Maybe they'll shoot themselves and save us the trouble.

VISITOR (O.S.)  
  
(crying)  
Oh. Oh. Oh.

BRAD looks at the gun.

JULIE  
You aren't going to hurt him. I won't allow it.

BILLY  
What if he gets inside? What if he infects us? Do you want us to end up like him?

JULIE  
No, of course not, BILLY.

BILLY grabs the gun.

BILLY  
I'm going to scare him away. They frighten easy.

JULIE  
Let's just wait here until he goes away. If we stay quiet, he'll leave. The poor thing is probably searching for food.

BRAD  
Will you quit talking about him like that?

JULIE  
Then how would you describe him?

BRAD  
A monster. Those things are the end of the world. If we all turn like them everything we've accomplished will be gone.

JULIE  
Like what? Our insatiable need to own and control everything? Our need to pollute and destroy the very planet we live on? We did this to ourselves. Maybe this is the price we pay for poisoning the planet.

VISITOR (O.S.)  
Oh. Oh. Oh.

BILLY  
I can't take this anymore.

BILLY runs from the room with the gun.

JULIE  
Billy! No!

(to BRAD)  
Aren't you going to stop him?

BRAD turns away from her and stares at the floor.

There is the sound of BROKEN GLASS and GUN SHOTS. JANE SCREAMS and JULIE quickly hugs her.

The three of them sit in silence, waiting. After a few moments there is the sound of FOOTSTEPS as BILLY returns. His face is pale.

JULIE

Did you?

BILLY

I just shot in the air and scared him, that's all.

JULIE walks slowly to the dining room with JANE under her arm and the two of them sit down.

BILLY tosses the gun onto the kitchen table.

BRAD

What's wrong with you, Billy? You don't throw a loaded gun around like that.

BILLY

I'm sorry.

BRAD picks up the gun and sets it beside him and away from JANE.

JULIE

It's okay, Jane. No one is going to harm anyone. At least you don't have to worry about this virus.

BILLY

Yeah, it doesn't affect those who are autistic. I wonder why?

JULIE

Maybe it's God's way of stopping us from killing ourselves and each other. Autistic children don't try to harm each other the way many non-autistic people do.

BILLY

Yeah, a world full of Janes wouldn't hurt anyone.

JULIE

The world would be a better place with a few more Janes in it.

BILLY

Let's check the radio again and see if there's any news.