

WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD

A suspenseful one-act play by
Steven Stack

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

CHLOE, teenager, very independent

MOM, Chloe's mom and the parent Chloe is most like

DAD, Chloe's dad; worries about her growing up

ALEXIS, friend, leader of the group

EMILY, friend of Alexis

CINDY, friend of Alexis

OFFICER WILLIAMS, a cop in the neighborhood

NEIGHBORHOOD PEOPLE, the "masked" people

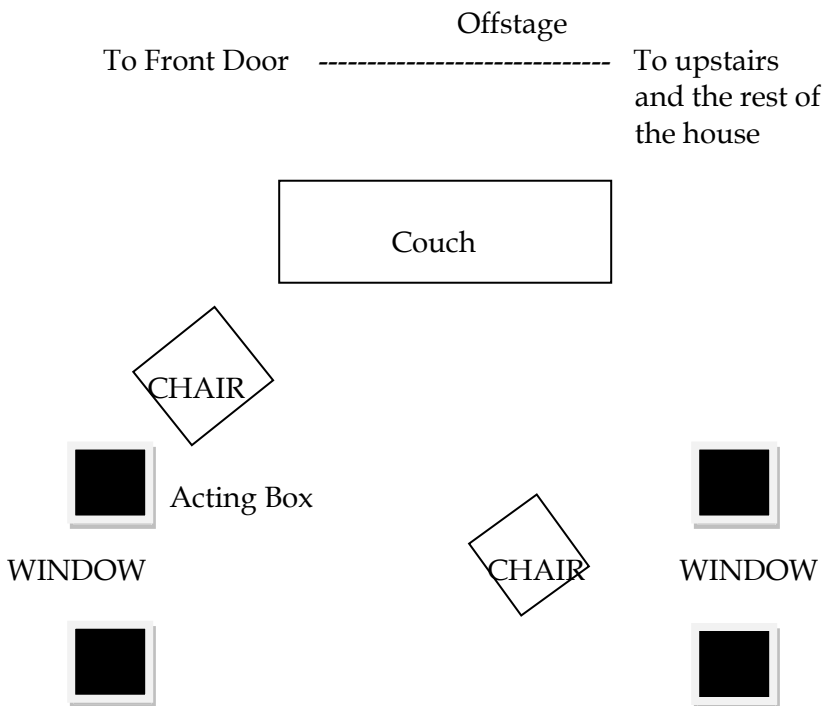
SETTING

Living Room. This is the setting for the entire play.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Set

The Living Room set can be as simple or elaborate as you wish. For a simple set, we used a couch near upstage center and two other chairs. To create the windows, we used two acting boxes on each side set apart from each other to match the width of windows. This allowed for the mask people to place their faces in the window so that the girls could see them. This is an example of what the set looked like:



Sounds

- Door Bell Ring
- Thunder
- Knocking on Door

Lights

Simple light scheme. Inside of house lighting. Some dim lighting could be used when the power goes out. When all of the mask people are in the house, different colors could be used to heighten "fear" effect.

Props

- Journal
- 5 flashlights
- Masks (for all mask people including Officer Williams and one for Chloe)

About the Mask People

You can use as many mask people as you want. They represent the people of the neighborhood. They need to be wearing the same color clothing (black works well) and all need to have the same type of mask. (We've always used the white actor's mask.) Their movement needs to be simple and the same.

SCENE 1

(We are in blackout. Gradually we hear quiet singing. The song "Ring around the Rosie" is heard but is barely audible. The singing fades and the lights come up. CHLOE is sitting on the couch writing in a notebook. DAD enters upstage left, fixing his collar. He crosses to Chloe.)

DAD: Hey Chloe, how's the story coming?

CHLOE: Okay, I guess. I'm not sure if anyone will like it, though.

DAD: *(Sits down beside her:)* Since when has that been important to you?

CHLOE: I don't know...just being new here...and school...it's different.

DAD: How?

CHLOE: Well, we've been here for three months now and I still feel like an outsider. Like people here don't get me.

DAD: That seems pretty normal. Especially at your age. And besides, it's not really a bad thing.

CHLOE: *(Struggling with what to say:)* I know, but...

DAD: Look, I think I know how I can make this easier for you.

CHLOE: How?

DAD: When you're at school Monday, find the girl that is most like everyone else and study her. Then on Tuesday, dress, act, be exactly like her. Put on the "I'm like everyone else" mask, if you will.

(Chloe looks at her Dad, dumbfounded.)

See? Problem solved.

(Chloe starts to laugh.)

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CHLOE: As always, Dad, thank you for your help.

(Dad laughs.)

DAD: That's what I'm here for. Seriously though, and trust me on this: if you stay true to the person on the inside, the one who's unique (*Holds up her journal.:*) and able to write these amazing stories...everything will work out the way it's meant to.

CHLOE: This person on the inside...it's not like some parasite, is it?

DAD: (*Messes with her hair.:*) You know what I mean, kiddo.

(Chloe laughs.)

Don't go changing for other people. (*Pause.*) Except me and your mom.

(Dad smiles and Chloe laughs some more.)

CHLOE: I'll do my best. Thanks, Dad. (*Puts notebook down.:*) So, where are you and Mom going?

DAD: I'm taking your mother to dinner at the finest restaurant Shadow Oaks has to offer.

CHLOE: Shadow Oaks only has one restaurant.

DAD: That is technically true, but they also serve food at the bowling alley, young lady. And I'm going to let your mother get an appetizer. We may even go to a movie.

CHLOE: Ooo, big spender. When are you going to be back?

DAD: It'll be late. (*Pause.*) Why? Are you planning on having some boy come over while we're gone?

(Chloe fakes surprise.)

CHLOE: How did you know?

(Dad looks shocked.)

DAD: What?

CHLOE: Well, I figured that since you and Mom would be gone for a couple hours at least, Kyle would have plenty of time to come over, stay a while, then be gone long before you guys get back.

DAD: *(Incredulous:)* Who's Kyle?

CHLOE: Just this guy. You don't know him. He's 18, lives by himself, and I think he used to be in a gang. Oh, and jail. Definitely jail.

DAD: Hold on. There is no way that you are going anywhere near this Kyle fellow. And another thing, I—

(MOM enters upstage right and crosses to beside her husband.)

MOM: Honey, I take it you heard about Kyle.

(Dad turns to her.)

DAD: Wait, you know about Kyle too?

MOM: Sure. He's a cute kid. Even with all those tattoos.

DAD: Tattoos!?

CHLOE: *(To Mom:)* I know, right. My favorite is the one that covers his face. A gun surrounded by delicate rose petals.

(Mom agrees.)

DAD: What!?

(Mom and Chloe look serious and then burst out laughing.)

Very funny, guys.

(Chloe and Mom smile at him.)

CHLOE: Sorry, Dad, but that look you get on your face is priceless.

MOM: She's right. *(To Dad:)* Your darling daughter has three of her new friends coming over.

CHLOE: Yeah, Dad, you know...like a slumber party?

DAD: Oh, that's good to hear. *(Pause.)* All of them are girls...right?

CHLOE: Yes.

DAD: So there's no Kyle-like creature involved in your life?

CHLOE: No...at least not yet.

MOM: Chloe!

CHLOE: *(Smiling:)* Sorry.

MOM: Anyway, after the girls get here, lock all the doors and no leaving the house.

CHLOE: Gotcha.

MOM: And don't forget to feed Gracie. And oh, no scary movies or ghost stories. I don't want that vivid imagination of yours keeping you up all night.

CHLOE: But Mom—

DAD: Now listen to your mother, Chloe. Except about feeding Gracie. She could stand to lose a few pounds. Getting a tad hefty.

MOM: She is not hefty! She just has a lot of fluff for a cat.

(Dad looks at Mom in mock seriousness.)

DAD: I'm sure you're right, dear. I'm sure you're right. *(Looks back to Chloe:)* Anyway, they're calling for storms tonight, so if the power goes out—

CHLOE: (*Becoming slightly annoyed:*) The flashlights are in the kitchen. Got it, Dad. You two know that I know all this, right?

DAD: Oh, we do. It's just makes us feel better to treat you like you don't.

(Mom walks over and hugs her.)

MOM: Like you're still the 3 year old who ran around the house naked yelling "Nudie Baby! Nudie Baby!"

(Parents laugh. Doorbell rings.)

CHLOE: That's them. Can we all agree that we won't tell that story? Ever again?

(Mom and Dad laugh as Chloe crosses upstage left to open the door, which is offstage. Chloe returns with the girls behind her.)

GIRLS: Hello, Mr. Thomas. Mrs. Thomas.

(Mom and Dad say "Hi". Then Dad crosses over to the girls.)

DAD: Now girls, if you're planning on going through my tape collection...I would rather you not. You're too young to handle the radness of it.

(Pause. Girls look confused and Mom looks at him, amused.)

MOM: "Radness," honey? Really?

(She looks at girls.)

DAD: What? I'm just using some hip 80's lingo. Got to educate the young 'uns.

(He smiles at Chloe.)

MOM: Don't mind him. C'mon dear, we're going to be late for our reservation. Remember what to do, Chloe.

CHLOE: (*Exasperated:*) Yes, Mom!

(Parents exit. Chloe follows offstage to "shut and lock the door.")

SCENE 2

(The girls have just entered and are unloading their things.)

ALEXIS: Well, at least your dad didn't dance this time.

CINDY: Oh my gosh, what dance did he show us last time? The "gitter bug" or something?

(Girls laugh.)

EMILY: It's the jitterbug, Cindy, and it's actually a pretty good dance.

(They look at her. She continues anyway.)

I mean if you like that...kind of... *(Changes the subject:)* Hey, who brought the magazines?

ALEXIS: I have them! *(Holds up bag with magazines. The girls all sprawl out center stage in front of the couch and begin looking at various magazines:)* Here, look. *(She sits up:)* Let's take one of these quizzes. *(Pause.)* Okay, here are our choices: Is He the One, How Well Do You Know Your Friends, or What's in the Mystery Meat?

CHLOE AND CINDY: How Well Do You Know Your Friends!

EMILY: *(Slightly later:)* Mystery Meat!

(They stare at her.)

Uh...the friends one, I mean.

CINDY: Ooh, Alexis, hand me the magazine. I want to read the first question.

(Alexis hands her the magazine.)

Okay. This is for you, Alexis, about Emily. What food would Emily say is her favorite?

ALEXIS: Oh that's easy.

(Chloe looks on a little lost.)

ALEXIS: She doesn't have one.

EMILY: Correct.

CHLOE: Wait, you don't have a favorite food? At all? I thought everybody did.

EMILY: No. I like them all the same.

CHLOE: Really?

(Emily nods.)

CINDY: I don't either.

ALEXIS: Me neither.

CHLOE: Suppose I'm the only one then.

EMILY: Yep. Now Cindy, hand me the magazine.

(Cindy does and Emily looks for a question.)

Okay, this question is for Chloe about Alexis. Ready, Chloe?

CHLOE: I guess, but I don't think –

EMILY: Here we go. What would Alexis say is the best thing that has ever happened to her?

(Chloe has no clue.)

CINDY: I know this one.

EMILY: Me too. So Chloe...what do you say?

CHLOE: I don't know. Um...meeting your favorite singer or something?

ALEXIS: Nope.

CHLOE: A birthday maybe?

ALEXIS: In a way but no.

CHLOE: Well then...I have no idea.

ALEXIS: Ladies?

CINDY AND EMILY: Moving into the neighborhood.

CHLOE: Wait. What?

ALEXIS: My favorite memory is when I moved into this neighborhood.

CHLOE: Really? Your favorite?

(Alexis nods.)

And how is that close to a birthday?

ALEXIS: It just is.

(Chloe looks confused.)

See, in my old neighborhood, I never had any friends. Guess I was too different or something. But here, after a couple weeks...I felt like I belonged. Like I was one of them.

(Cindy and Emily nod. Chloe looks confused and seems about to ask something but is cut off.)

My turn.

(Emily hands her the magazine.)

This one is another for you, Chloe, and this time you have to answer a question about...yourself.

CHLOE: Wait. Shouldn't someone else answer it?

ALEXIS: No.

(Chloe looks confused.)

Let's face it. We hardly know anything about you so you need to answer.

(Emily and Cindy nod in agreement. Alexis stares at her.)

CHLOE: Can we just...do something else?

CINDY: Why? Scared of what we'll find out?

CHLOE: No but...this game...is starting to make me feel that it's you three here and me...

(Chloe makes a movement to signify "over here.")

ALEXIS: On the outside?

CHLOE: I guess.

ALEXIS: I think we can help that, Chloe. We can make you feel like part of the group. Ready, girls?

(The girls look at her and then at Chloe.)

CHLOE: What are you talking about?

ALL 3: PILLOW FIGHT!

(A pillow fight begins and the four girls all start hitting each other. Quickly, thunder is heard and the lights go out. The girls all scream.)

CHLOE: It's okay! It's okay! You guys wait here—I'll grab the flashlights.

(Banging noises, Chloe saying "Oof!" etc. The girls continue talking while they wait.)

EMILY: Could you hurry up, Chloe? I don't like the dark.

(The other girls laugh and then Chloe enters.)

CHLOE: Sorry. Here you go.

(The other girls switch their flashlights on.)

CINDY: The flashlights actually make it creepier.

(They all agree.)

EMILY: When do you think...

(There is a loud knock at the door. The girls all scream again. Just then, the lights come back on.)

OFFICER WILLIAMS (OFF): Police! Is everyone okay in there?

CINDY: It's the police.

ALEXIS: Chloe, get the door.

CHLOE: Oh, right!

(Goes to upstage right to offstage to get door. You hear Chloe and Officer Williams greeting each other offstage. Chloe returns, followed by OFFICER WILLIAMS. All three girls are now sitting on the couch.)

OFFICER WILLIAMS: Hi, girls.

ALEXIS, CINDY, EMILY: Hi, Officer Williams.

(Officer Williams smiles.)

OFFICER WILLIAMS: I was on my way around the neighborhood when the power went out and I heard some screams. Is everything okay?

CHLOE: Yeah. The lights going out made us a little jumpy, that's all.

OFFICER WILLIAMS: Are you four here alone?

CHLOE: My...my parents aren't here right now. They went out.

OFFICER WILLIAMS: So you live here now?

(Chloe nods.)

What's your name?

CHLOE: Chloe.

OFFICER WILLIAMS: Chloe, would you mind if I took a look around? We've been getting some strange reports and I want to make sure your house is safe.

(Chloe looks back at her friends. They shrug: "Why not?")

CHLOE: Sure.

(Officer Williams begins walking around the room, looking out windows.)

ALEXIS: What's going on?

(As Officer Williams paces, she needs to be standing behind the other girls leaving Chloe standing or sitting alone.)

OFFICER WILLIAMS: I don't want to alarm you girls, but there have been reports of an intruder in the neighborhood. Someone who is not like us.

CHLOE: What do you mean, not like us?

OFFICER WILLIAMS: *(Takes a moment and looks at her:)* Well, everything looks all right here. I'll be in the neighborhood if you need anything...Chloe.

(She exits.)

CHLOE: Wait! What do you mean, not like us?

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