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*Dramatic Publishing*





A Full-Length Play

# I'm a Stranger Here Myself

By  
**EV MILLER**



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY



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(I'M A STRANGER HERE MYSELF)

*I'M A STRANGER HERE MYSELF*

A Full-Length Play

for Four Men, Six Women, Extras

*C H A R A C T E R S*

CASEY O'HARA . . . . . tall, well-built high school senior  
KARI O'HARA. . . . . Casey's pretty sister, about thirteen  
HELEN O'HARA . . . . . Casey's attractive mother, late thirties  
BRIAN O'HARA. . . . . Casey's handsome dad, about forty  
MARK LEE . . . . . Casey's best friend  
LORI SEVERSON. . . . . Casey's girlfriend  
CAROL. . . . . Lori's buxom high school friend  
MERLE KENDALL. . . . . high school wrestler  
MRS. KAYOT . . . . . high school teacher, in her thirties  
MRS. LEE . . . . . Mark's mother, about thirty-five  
STUDENTS . . . . . extras

*TIME: The Present*

*PLACE: Casey O'Hara's Hometown*

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## ACT ONE

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SCENE: The kitchen of the O'Hara home.

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: HELEN O'HARA stands at the sink, fixing breakfast. KARI O'HARA sits at the table, playing with her breakfast and obviously pouting. BRIAN O'HARA, dressed in a business suit, sits across from KARI, reading the paper. No one speaks until CASEY O'HARA enters the room. Dressed in jeans and a polo shirt, he sits at the table and reaches for a piece of toast. KARI makes a face at CASEY and turns back to her breakfast.

CASEY (after a moment of silence). Isn't anybody going to say "hello" this morning?

KARI. Ugh!

CASEY (to HELEN). What's the matter with her?

HELEN. She's mad at me. Good morning, Casey.

CASEY. Oh. I thought she looked a little more unpleasant than usual. (KARI sticks out her tongue at him.)

HELEN. Eat your breakfast, Kari.

BRIAN (after a long moment of silence, as he turns the newspaper page). I see where they're issuing football equipment at the high school this week. (CASEY and HELEN exchange

glances.)

KARI (with her mouth full of food). Casey ain't playin' football no more, Dad. He's afraid he's gonna get his nose busted and the girls won't like him no more.

HELEN. Kari! Your grammar is horrible! Can't you speak more correctly than that?

CASEY. Yeah! Don't use "ain't," you little creep!

HELEN. Casey!

BRIAN (calmly). Casey, I don't think you have to be quite so rude.

CASEY. Sorry. (Under his breath.) Creep.

KARI. Mom! Did you hear what he said?

HELEN. Why don't you just finish your breakfast?

BRIAN. I don't suppose you've given any thought to trying out for football again this fall?

CASEY (swallowing). I'm a senior this year, Dad.

BRIAN. Well, what difference does that make? Just look at you . . . you're six-two and a hundred and ninety pounds. Any coach would be crazy not to give you a good look.

CASEY. I'm really not very interested in football, Dad.

BRIAN (getting angry). What are you interested in, Casey?

CASEY (trying to avoid a fight, shrugging). Not much, I guess.

BRIAN. You kids! All you want to do is fool around! (He shoves his coffee cup back angrily. CASEY eats faster.)

HELEN. Don't wolf your food down so fast, Casey. It isn't good for you.

CASEY. I've got to get over to the station. Hap wants me in at eight this morning 'cuz he's got to take a couple hours off.

BRIAN. Is that what you're going to do the rest of your life? Pump gas in a filling station?

CASEY (shrugging). I don't know, Dad.

BRIAN. Will you stop shrugging your shoulders that way? You know how that bugs me!

CASEY. Sorry.

HELEN. I really don't think it's necessary to scream at the top of your lungs at the breakfast table, Brian. The whole neighborhood can hear you.

BRIAN (softer). Who cares about the neighborhood? (There is a long silence during which he returns to his newspaper. CASEY and KARI eat their breakfasts while HELEN stands with her back to them at the sink.)

KARI. Mom, Casey's looking at me!

BRIAN. Oh, for heaven's sake! Be quiet and eat! You are not a little child anymore. You are thirteen years old. Start acting like it!

KARI (subdued). Well, he *was* looking at me. (There is silence.)

HELEN. Casey, are you going to be able to get off work long enough to pick up your books at the school today?

CASEY. Mark picked them up for me yesterday.

HELEN (disapprovingly). Mark? Did you give him money?

CASEY. Naw. Mark's got all kinds of money. I'll pay him back when he drops them off. He should be here any minute. He said he'd stop in with them before I go to work.

HELEN. Well, I'll make out a check to him and then he'll be paid.

CASEY. Okay. Thanks, Mom.

HELEN. I hope he didn't get you all new ones. Books are so expensive.

BRIAN (sarcastically). Well, one nice thing . . . they'll still be new at the end of the school year.

HELEN. Maybe if you'd give Casey some support once in a while, instead of constant criticism, he would study more.

BRIAN. Listen, Helen, don't blame me for the fact that your son gets D's in every course he takes.

HELEN. I'm just saying that it doesn't help to be so critical all the time. (An angry pause.) Casey will find himself one of

these days, won't you, honey?

CASEY. Sure. (He shrugs.)

BRIAN. Well, I know one thing for sure. He's going to get a haircut before school starts on Monday.

CASEY. Okay, Dad. (BRIAN looks surprised.) I'll get one.

BRIAN. Well . . . okay . . . then. (He rises.) I better get down to the office.

HELEN (suspiciously). It's not even twenty to eight yet.

BRIAN. I know . . . but the cement men said they were going to start the basements for the four-plexes today and I want to be there to keep an eye on them. (He exits. KARI keeps eating. CASEY watches HELEN, who stares at the door.)

CASEY. He didn't even say goodbye.

HELEN (looking at CASEY). Casey, I do hope you'll try to do just a little better in your studies this year . . . for my sake.

CASEY. I'll try, Mom.

HELEN. I know your father is a bit impatient, but he just wants you to do well.

CASEY. I just wish he'd get off that jock kick.

HELEN. Well, he was an excellent athlete in high school and college and I guess he wanted you to be one, too.

CASEY. I played football my sophomore year the way he wanted me to and I hated it. It all seems so damn silly.

HELEN. Don't swear, Casey. You know I don't like that. (CASEY hangs his head in mock shame as she turns away. KARI snickers and CASEY aims a kick at her under the table. KARI avoids the kick. HELEN doesn't notice.) I just think you should start planning a little for the future, Casey. Your father and I agree on that. How are you ever going to get into college if your grades are so bad?

CASEY. Who said I was going to college?

HELEN (turning, shocked). Well, what will you do if you don't go to college?



CASEY (shrugging). I don't know . . . I haven't thought about it. (KARI snickers.) What did you say, creep?

KARI. I said you are an imbecile. (CASEY tries to kick her and she jumps out of the way.)

CASEY. Watch it, toilet face, or I'll twist your braces off with a pair of pliers.

HELEN. Casey! Kari! Stop it! I won't have that language in this house and I won't have all that name calling. You two are constantly at each other's throats. (She is on the verge of tears.)

CASEY. Sorry, Mom. (He and KARI glare at each other. Off-stage, tires squeal and a car door slams.)

KARI. I'm going to my room. (She storms out.)

CASEY. Why's she so uptight?

HELEN (tiredly). She came in late again last night. She's campused for a week.

CASEY. Oh, I see! (The doorbell rings.) Come on in, Mark!

(MARK LEE enters, carrying a load of books. Much smaller than CASEY, he is wiry and agile with dark brown hair. He moves and talks with a cockiness that CASEY doesn't have.)

MARK. Hey, buddy . . . how's it goin'? (He and HELEN look at each other with mutual dislike.) Mrs. O'Hara . . .

HELEN (coldly). Hello, Mark.

CASEY (taking the books). Thanks for picking them up, Mark. How much were they?

MARK. There's no hurry.

HELEN. I'll write you a check.

MARK. The bill's in the big red one. Twenty-seven something.

CASEY (getting the bill and looking at it). Twenty-seven fifty, Mom.

HELEN. I'll get my checkbook. (She exits to the bedroom.)

MARK (nervously). Your old lady doesn't like me. Musta been somethin' I said.

CASEY. Mom? Naw.

MARK. Maybe she thinks I'm a bad influence on you.

CASEY. She's just nervous today. She and Dad are having some problems, I think.

MARK. Yeah? Aren't they all? (He faintly smiles.) Well, what are ya gonna do? Say, how'd you know that was me at the door?

CASEY (smiling). I could hear your tires squealing two blocks away.

MARK (pleased). Yeah?

CASEY. When are you going to stop driving like a maniac?

MARK. Me? I'm a good driver. I'm getting the safety award this month.

CASEY. Sure . . . sure . . . with three citations in the past year, including a D.W.I.? I don't even see how you have a license.

MARK. It's my innocent look that gets 'em, buddy. (He looks around.) Say, where's your sister?

CASEY. Gone . . . and she's only thirteen, so lay off!

MARK (laughing). Sure . . . don't worry. I don't mess with 'em that young. But she's gonna be a doll someday.

(HELEN returns with the checkbook and a loose check in her hand. She hands the check to MARK.)

MARK. Thanks, Mrs. O'Hara.

CASEY. Well, I better get to work.

MARK. I'll give you a lift. See ya, Mrs. O'Hara.

HELEN (ignoring MARK). Will you get off for supper, Casey?

CASEY. I think so . . . if not, I'll call. (HELEN looks briefly

at MARK and exits to the bedroom.) I don't know if I want to ride with you, Mark. You just about got us killed on River Road last time I was with you.

MARK. It's those new slicks I put on. They got no traction.

CASEY. Did you ever think of slowing down?

MARK. What for?

CASEY. What if you get picked up again?

MARK. My old lady will pick up the tab.

CASEY. But what if you lose your license?

MARK (grinning). I won't! I'm a hardship case. Mommy needs me to drive her around. She don't drive, you know.

CASEY. Since when?

MARK (suddenly angry). Since she got so's she's drunk sixteen hours a day!

CASEY (after a long pause). Okay, Mark . . . I'll ride with you even if you are crazy behind the wheel.

MARK. It's the only thing that puts a little excitement into living, buddy. Besides, I only drive that way to show the old folks they're right about us young punks.

CASEY. You really are something. Nothing's sacred to you, is it?

MARK. Sure! Booze, broads, and fast cars . . . and not necessarily in that order. (A pause.) By the way, Casey, speaking of broads, I got us lined up with a couple for tonight.

CASEY. Tonight? I got to work tonight!

MARK. Just until nine, ain't it? (CASEY nods.) Perfecto! These two gals don't get off until nine-thirty. I'll pick 'em up and we'll meet you. That'll give you a chance to get cleaned up. Then we can go for a long, long ride out to the park.

CASEY. It's a weeknight, Mark. You know how uptight my parents get when I go out on a weeknight. Besides, I have to work tomorrow.

MARK. Casey . . . Casey . . . take my word for it. I'll have

you tucked in by midnight. We got to have some fun. Next week, we're back at that stupid school for another nine months.

CASEY (sighing). Who are the girls?

MARK. I met 'em down at Carl's Place. They're both waitresses there. One's gonna be a junior over at Jefferson and the other one goes to Central, same as us.

CASEY. Who is she? Do I know her?

MARK. Naw! I don't think so. Her name's Lori somethin' or other. The one from Jefferson is my type, if you know what I mean.

CASEY. They better be nicer than the last two you lined up.

MARK. That was a bum steer, buddy. I hadn't seen those two myself. I took the word of a friend who is no longer a friend. These two I found myself and they are choice!

CASEY. I bet.

MARK. What's the matter with you today? You look like you're ready to bump yourself off.

CASEY. I don't know. It's my parents, I guess.

MARK. Yeah? Your old man raggin' you again?

CASEY. Football.

MARK. Oh, God!

CASEY. And grades . . .

MARK. Fathers are jerks. I'm glad mine ain't around no more. What's your old lady say?

CASEY. She defends me. I don't know why.

MARK (matter-of-factly). They all do that. They feel guilty.

CASEY. Guilty? About what?

MARK. All mothers think they had to do somethin' dirty to get you, so they feel guilty.

CASEY (staring at MARK). That's stupid!

MARK. What's wrong with it?

CASEY. That is the stupidest philosophy I have ever heard!

MARK. It's true! (A long pause.) At least it's true for mine.  
CASEY. Come on, Mark.

MARK. Okay. Okay. What else?

CASEY. I don't know. There's something happening between my mom and dad. They don't talk or anything anymore.

MARK. He playin' around?

CASEY. I don't know. (A pause.) Yeah, I think so.

MARK. Well, maybe they'll split like mine did. (His face is set hard.)

CASEY. You're a lot of help.

MARK. Well, it happens. C'mon, I better get you to work. I'll pick you up here tonight about a quarter to ten.

CASEY. No, don't pick me up here. What park are you planning on going to?

MARK. Pioneer, I suppose.

CASEY. I'll meet you there.

MARK. How you gonna do that? You ain't got wheels.

CASEY. I'll clean up at the station and have Hap drop me off at the park. Come on, I better get to work.

MARK. Okay. (He and CASEY get ready to leave.) By the way, what are you doin' takin' drama this year?

CASEY. Huh?

MARK. Drama. They gave me a drama book for you.

CASEY (slapping his forehead). I forgot all about that! Mom begged me to register for it last spring and I did it to please her.

MARK. You're kiddin'!

CASEY. She was in all kinds of plays back in high school and college.

MARK (sarcastically, laying his hand on Casey's arm). You are such a decent son!

CASEY. Yeah . . . thanks.

MARK. But you better get out of there fast. That course could be work.

CASEY. I will. I'll probably have to go to class for the first week or so. They don't make any schedule changes right away.

MARK. It was a dumb thing to sign up for in the first place.

CASEY. I told you . . . I did it to please my mom. Don't you ever do anything to please yours?

MARK. The only way I could please her is to kill myself, so I don't even try.

CASEY (after a long pause). You know, Mark, I'm reading about a guy in this novel —

MARK (interrupting in sudden anger). You read too damn much! How come you bother with reading books? (CASEY stares at him.) You're a hard one to figure that way, Casey. Your grades are about as bad as mine and still you're always reading. How come?

CASEY. Well, I don't know. A guy can't go through life completely stupid.

MARK. Why not?

CASEY. Why not? I'll tell you . . .

MARK. You better watch it, Casey. You keep doin' all that readin' and you're gonna find somethin' you're gonna take serious . . . and then you know what's gonna happen?

CASEY. What?

MARK. Our friendship is gonna be over. Just remember that. Don't take nobody or nothin' serious in this rotten world, buddy. 'Cuz when you do, somethin' always comes along to foul it up. Take my word for it! (He strides off. CASEY watches him go. The lights dim to black.)

(The lights come up on CASEY at DC, waiting in the park. He checks his watch. MARK walks on, obviously unsteady.)

CASEY. It's about time! Where have you been? It's after ten!

MARK. The girls got off work late so I had to wait. (He steps close to CASEY, who recoils.)

CASEY. You've been drinking!

MARK. Me? Mark Lee? Take a drink of the spirits? Never!

CASEY. Where did you get it?

MARK. My mommy's private supply. Don't worry . . . she won't miss it. She's got plenty.

CASEY. What's the occasion, Mark?

MARK. What?

CASEY. What are you teed off about? I know you enough to know that you drink when you're teed off.

MARK. The old lady gave me some hassle when I got home.

CASEY. What happened?

MARK. Oh, she talked to my old man on the phone today.

Found out that him and his new wife are goin' on a trip . . . to Europe . . . and she's really put out about it.

CASEY. What's that got to do with you?

MARK. Got to do with me? Why, hell, man, didn't you know that I was the cause of their splittin'?

CASEY (after a long pause). How?

MARK. How, he asks. I thought everybody in town knew that!

You see, buddy, everythin' was just great between mater and pater until I came along. Then they were tied down. My old man didn't like that. The old lady had to take care of me and she couldn't go along with him on all his trips. The whole thing was a drag for him. So he started goin' alone. (He reaches into his jacket pocket, pulls out a pint of whisky, and takes a drink.) So now, even though she don't say it right out, I can read between the lines. (He mimics his mother.) "Mark, my beloved son, if it wasn't for your presence in this world, my husband and me would still be together right now." (As himself.) You know, buddy, it's easy with him . . . my old man. He hates my guts and he don't hide it. With her, it's tougher, you know

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what I mean? 'Cuz she don't know that she hates me. I'm the only one who knows that. (He turns away from CASEY, then turns back.) Casey, old pal, the worst thing that can happen to a guy in this world is to have parents.

CASEY (softly). Mark, that doesn't make sense. Everybody has parents.

MARK. Yeah. Nothin' makes sense.

CASEY. Hey, listen . . . where are the girls?

MARK. Huh?

CASEY. The girls . . . you said you were going to bring two girls.

MARK. Oh, yeah. They're still in the car. That Lori . . . she's mad. She didn't want to come.

CASEY. Why?

MARK. I don't know. Something about not riding with somebody who's been drinkin'. She don't know I can drive perfect under any conditions.

CASEY. Yeah.

MARK. I'll get 'em. (He starts off unsteadily, then calls off.) Girls . . . come on over here and meet my best buddy. Come on!

(CAROL, a large, buxom girl, and LORI, small and classic-looking, enter. They wear waitress uniforms. LORI appears angry.)

MARK. Girls, this is Casey O'Hara. Casey, this is Carol and this is Lori . . .

LORI. Severson. My name is Lori Severson.

CASEY. Hi, Lori . . . Carol. (He looks at LORI.) I know you from somewhere.

LORI. We were in World Lit together our sophomore year.

CASEY. Yeah? (He doesn't remember.) Well, it's a big school. It's hard to remember.