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SF PERUSALS

Fixing Gwen

A Drama

Sam Bobrick

A Samuel French Acting Edition

SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830

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FIXING GWEN was first presented as a staged reading at Theatre West on January 20, 2013 in Los Angeles, CA. The performance was directed by Susan Morgenstern. The cast was as follows:

DANNY MORTON . . . . . Joey Jennings
MARK MORTON . . . . . John Cygan
YOUNG GWEN . . . . . Heidi Brucker
OLDER GWEN . . . . . Jeanine Anderson

CHARACTERS

DANNY MORTON – MARK's 16 going on 17 year old son

MARK MORTON – A man in his early 50's

YOUNG GWEN – MARK's wife when he first married her, early 20's

OLDER GWEN – MARK's wife as she is now, late 40's

TIME

The Present

PLACE

A motel room in Palm Springs.

ACT I

Scene One

(TIME: The Present. A Spring Evening.)

(PLACE: The entire play takes place in a moderately priced, comfortably decorated, ground floor motel room in Palm Springs, California. The entrance is downstage right. On the wall next to it is a light switch for the overhead lighting. A bathroom door is at upstage right. Along the stage right wall is a closet with a sliding door or a free standing wardrobe. At upstage center are two twin beds separated by a bedside table with a phone and lamp on it. Two small matching dressers are on the other sides of the beds. Upstage left is an easy chair. Downstage left is a sliding glass door that opens to a patio with two plastic bushes. On the bed at stage right is a medium sized structured suitcase. On the floor at the foot of the other bed at stage left is a nylon duffel bag. Leaning against that bed is a guitar case.)

(AT RISE: **DANNY MORTON** *a sixteen, going on seventeen, year old boy in jeans and a current rock band t-shirt, lies on the bed with his hands behind his head staring into space. His sneakers are still on. We hear the toilet flush, the sink being turned on, then off. The bathroom door opens and* **MARK MORTON**, *a man in his early fifties, wearing slacks and a sweater enters the room, wiping his hands on a small hand towel. He stares at his son* **DANNY** *for a moment and then proceeds to the bed and his suitcase.)*

MARK. This isn't so bad. Pleasantly decorated. Somewhat clean rugs. Only moderately stained bedspreads. Not bad for a hundred and eighty bucks a night. Unfortunately we're paying two hundred and eighty bucks a night so I guess it is a little bit of a screw job. But it's the nearest place to the hospital so we won't be spending time in traffic.

*(***DANNY** *doesn't respond.* **MARK** *tosses his hand towel on the edge of his bed and begins to unpack still trying to make conversation.)*

I hope you don't mind my taking the bed closest to the bathroom. At my age it's a necessity. No, this place isn't bad at all for what it is. By the way, since there's no room service they do give you a free breakfast, most likely juice, coffee and rolls which is usually all I have anyway, but if you feel like pancakes or something more substantial, I saw a couple of nice restaurants down the street so food shouldn't be a problem. I suppose they'll have lunch for us at the hospital, which if it's like all the other hospital food I've eaten, will put you in the hospital.

(Waiting for a response from his joke. There is none. He sighs)

Do you want to unpack?

DANNY. *(Annoyed but not angry)* I don't know how the fuck I let you talk me into coming down here.

MARK. How? Because you're a sixteen year old teenager and I let you drive my new Lexus here, that's why. By the way, I was very impressed with your driving. In the hundred and twenty miles you were behind the wheel we only had three near fatal collisions. Not bad for a first year driver. When Brian and Wendy began driving they were nightmares. Look, it's not going to be that bad here. Six days, that's all it is. They think it's just as important for families to learn how to deal with the situation as it is for the person with the problem. Next Sunday morning we'll be on our way home. Besides,

this could actually be a good bonding experience for us. You know we never really get to spend that much time together. My being out of town as much as I have to be and you being caught up with your life, school, friends and whatever else keeps you away from the house, so I hardly ever see you. Anyway, I really appreciate you coming down here with me. I'm just sorry your brother and sister didn't come.

DANNY. Why would they? They hate her guts.

MARK. No. That's not it. Brian has two big trials that he needs to prepare for and Wendy's boss wouldn't give her the time off.

DANNY. Dad, let's get real. They both could have gotten away if they wanted to. They didn't because they want nothing to do with her anymore and as you know I'm not that fond of mommie dearest myself.

MARK. Yeah. I know. You told me. Many times. But after she gets all fixed up I'm sure you'll all change your minds.

DANNY. Fixed up to what?

MARK. To what she was when I first married her. Before she got caught up with the wine and the pills. She was really very different. She was actually wonderful.

DANNY. Yeah, so you keep telling us.

MARK. Well, she was. That's why I fell in love with her. Beautiful, bright, sweet… You ought to look at some of the early pictures of her when we first got married. She was really something special.

DANNY. I only know her as she is now. A mean, miserable drunk who's been that way since I can remember. And that's the way Brian and Wendy know her too. They couldn't wait until they were old enough to get out of the house and neither can I. It seems you're the only one with any good memories of this very fucked up human being.

MARK. I know. But take my word for it. She was once totally different and once they get her situation under control, I know we're gonna get that person back.

*(***DANNY** *rises, throws his bag on the bed and begins unpacking.)*

DANNY. Jesus Christ, dad. Sometimes you are so clueless. You may be a hot shot in the business world but when it comes to facing the truth about that woman, you are on another planet. Nothing's going to change her because nothing has, nothing can and nothing will. Not therapy, not your screaming, not your begging, nothing. Why? Because she doesn't want to change. She's very happy with her miserable boozed up life just the way it is. Brian can see it. Wendy can see it. I can see it. Only you can't see it.

MARK. I think you're wrong about that. She agreed to go into rehab. That was something.

DANNY. She agreed because she drove her car into a fucking convenience store with a blood alcohol level high enough to kill an elephant. It was either go to rehab or go to jail.

MARK. That's not quite true. My lawyer could have gotten her off and can still get her off but we thought this was the best thing for her. Look, she's your mother, she's my wife. Let's at least stay hopeful. I've seen her the last three weekends since she's been down here and you're going to be amazed how much better she looks. Not so puffy and I think a lot less angry. I could actually sense that sweetness she once had coming back. I think you're going to be in for a pleasant surprise.

DANNY. When it comes to my mother, the word "pleasant" has no business ever being used. As far as surprises go, I'll be surprised when you finally realize she's never going to be what you want her to be or even what you thought she was.

MARK. *(Finally angered)* I know what she was, okay? I know damn well, what she was. I'm not backing down from that. So lay off that. Damn it!

(Calming down)

I'm sorry. Sometimes the negativity in this family drives me up a wall.

DANNY. I'm not negative. I'm just saying there's not a chance in hell anything good is going to come from her being here.

MARK. Okay, you made your point.

*(***DANNY***'s cell phone rings. He takes it out of his pocket, checks to see who's calling. He perks up a bit.)*

DANNY. Sorry, dad. Gotta take this one. It's Jenny. We're sort of going together.

MARK. Oh? I didn't know you were going with anyone. When do I get to meet her?

*(***MARK** *continues to unpack.* **DANNY** *lays back on his bed.)*

DANNY. Hopefully not for a while. I'm trying to keep her away from the house as long as I can.

(On cell)

Hi, Jen. How's it going? Yeah, I miss you too. No, it wasn't bad at all. I drove all the way so it didn't seem so long. Yeah, his Lexus drove very nicely. I wouldn't want one, but I guess it makes sense for someone over fifty.

*(***MARK** *reacts.)*

What? Sure.

(To **MARK***)*

Jenny says "hi".

MARK. That's nice. Tell her "hi" back.

DANNY. He says "hi" back. Yeah, I miss you too. I thought I just told you that. How much? Jesus, I've only been gone five hours. How much can a guy miss a girl in five hours? At least give me till morning. So what's going on?… It still hasn't, huh. Well, you know, your period has always been strange.

*(***MARK** *looks up shocked. This has really caught his attention.)*

Come on, don't worry. We had this scare before and it always works out. Look, can I call you back later. I think my dad is about to have a stroke. Yeah, I miss you too. I'm sure I'll be able to tell you how much in the next call. Bye.

(He sends her a kiss and puts the phone away)

Nice girl but possessive as hell.

MARK. *(Incredulous)* She missed her period?

DANNY. *(No big deal)* Yeah, it's a week late. It's nothing to sweat about, trust me. It's happened a couple times before.

MARK. You… You're having sex?

DANNY. Yeah. So?

MARK. You're not even seventeen.

DANNY. I will be in a couple of weeks.

MARK. How old is she?

DANNY. About the same. Besides, what does age have to do with sex? It's strictly a biological thing. You're ready for it when you're ready for it. Jenny and I were ready for it about eight months ago. Besides, these are supposed to be a guy's best sexual years. Why waste them?

MARK. Why? Why? I don't know why, but I'm sure given time I'll come up with something. I had no idea you were…were having… I'm really thrown.

DANNY. Oh, come on, dad. Like I suppose you didn't have sex when you were my age.

MARK. Yeah, well, no. I was at least a year older. I'm almost sure of it. And a year's a big difference in a teenager's development. One year is like…like two or three years in an adult.

DANNY. You mean sort of like dog years.

MARK. Exactly.

(Shaking his head in disbelief)

She missed her period?

DANNY. I told you. It's nothing to sweat about. She's on the pill.

MARK. At sixteen?

DANNY. It helps with her acne.

MARK. Are you two very serious about each other?

DANNY. Well, yes and no.

MARK. Maybe you can be a little more specific.

DANNY. Well, we're serious for now, while we're in high school but we're both smart enough to know we may not be that serious for what comes after high school. Right now we're just a couple of young, immature, horny kids and it's kind of unrealistic at our age to commit to one person this soon, don't you think?

MARK. I think this conversation may be a little too grown-up for me. Do your brother and sister know you're having sex?

DANNY. Why should I tell them?

MARK. Because they're your sibs. They may have some good advice for you.

DANNY. Good advice? You mean like different positions?

MARK. No. I mean like maybe it's too early for you and… and this Jenny to be…so involved in something like this. I'd really feel better if you talked to them.

DANNY. I don't know what you think they're going to tell me. I don't know about Wendy, but Brian was having sex when he was even younger than me.

MARK. Oh, God!

DANNY. For crying out loud, dad. It's only sex. It's not that big a deal.

MARK. I happen to think it is.

DANNY. Well, I guess that's a generational thing. But my generation has no problem with it.

MARK. What about your mother? Does she know?

DANNY. Why would she care what I do? Half the time she doesn't even know when I'm in the same room with her.

MARK. *(He nods, puzzled)* You know what? I have no idea what I'm supposed to say right now.

DANNY. Why do you think you have to say anything? I think it all makes perfect sense.

MARK. To you, yes. To me, no. Damn it, it's my duty as a parent to see that my children are walking the right path. It's seems I haven't been as diligent about that as I should have been.

DANNY. How could you be? Between your working and your traveling and your trying to deal with a maniac at home, you've had your hands full. Besides, it's a little late to get concerned. I'm the only one left at home and unfortunately I'm pretty set in my ways now.

MARK. Yeah, well, that's too bad because once this problem with your mother gets taken care of there's going to be some un-setting of your ways.

DANNY. No, I don't think there will and I'll tell you why. Mom's going to go right back to drinking, you'll go right back to trying to fix her and I'll go right back to counting the days I have left living in our supremely fucked up house.

MARK. Look, do you have to use the "F" word so much? It's really starting to annoy me.

DANNY. Come on, Dad, that's how teenagers talk. It's a very normal part of conversation. Besides, it's a great word. It seems to describe everything perfectly.

(Teasing)

The fucking Dodgers, the fucking Lakers, I'm fucked, you're fucked, holy fuck and best of all, let's fuck. It fits anywhere. I don't know what I'd do without it. You ought to try using it. Make it your fucking friend. You'll fucking love it. You'll see. It makes life a lot fucking easier.

MARK. *(Nods. A beat)* I may have made a big mistake not getting separate rooms for us. Look, right now my head is on overload. Let's go grab something to eat or go to a movie or drive my car off a bridge, but let's

get the hell out of here before I become anymore enlightened about what the hell else is going on in your life. We can finish unpacking later.

DANNY. Yeah, fine. By the way, this little talk we're having, is this what you mean by bonding?

MARK. I'm not sure. But if it is, it's highly over rated.

(Opens door)

Come on. If we do go to a movie, please, let's pick one without any teenagers in it. She missed her period. Holy fuck!

*(***DANNY** *and* **MARK** *exit.* **MARK** *closes the door behind them.)*

(Blackout)

Scene Two

(TIME: The middle of the night. The room is dimly lit from the moonlight.)

*(***DANNY** *is asleep in his bed.* **MARK**, *in pajama bottoms and an undershirt is sitting at the end of his bed staring blankly ahead. A beautiful woman, in a white nightgown is sitting in the easy chair. This is* **YOUNG GWEN**, **MARK***'s wife in her early twenties. Both stare ahead, neither speaking directly to the other. This is a dream and they are both lit appropriately.)*

YOUNG GWEN. You still love me don't you?

MARK. Of course I do. Why do you even ask?

YOUNG GWEN. I need to know. You were so much in love, weren't you?

MARK. Very much in love.

YOUNG GWEN. Is it the same kind of love now.

MARK. Of course it is.

YOUNG GWEN. I've changed you know. I'm not the same person.

MARK. But you will be again. I promise you. You will be again.

YOUNG GWEN. And I'll be happy this time won't I?

MARK. Very happy.

YOUNG GWEN. And the children?

MARK. They'll be happy too.

YOUNG GWEN. I really wanted our lives to be happy. I really did. You do believe that, don't you?

MARK. Of course I do.

YOUNG GWEN. I'm sorry, Mark. I'm truly sorry.

MARK. I know.

YOUNG GWEN. Tell the children, please tell the children. I did not want it to turn out this way.

MARK. I'll tell them.

YOUNG GWEN. Am I still beautiful, Mark?

MARK. Yes. Yes you are.

YOUNG GWEN. And sweet.

MARK. Yes. Very sweet.

YOUNG GWEN. Just the way I was when you fell in love with me.

MARK. Exactly the way.

YOUNG GWEN. I will be that person again, Mark. I promise. I'll be that person again. You'll see.

MARK. I know you will. And it will be wonderful again, Gwen. It will be so wonderful again.

YOUNG GWEN. Yes. All so wonderful again.

MARK. Yes. Just the way it was. Exactly the way it was.

(The lights fade to black)

Scene Three

(TIME: Same day. Early evening.)

*(**DANNY**, wearing jeans and a Budweiser beer t-shirt, is on his cell phone and walking around the room.)*

DANNY. Hey, Jen. Sorry I couldn't take your call. They made us shut off our phones. How was it? Well, it didn't start off so good. We spent most of the day learning how to deal with the alcoholic in the family and I guess I was pissing the staff off because instead of using the word "alcoholic", I kept using the word "drunk". They finally told me that out of respect I need to use the word "alcoholic" instead of "drunk" which I really tried doing but wasn't always successful. Then I guess I pissed them off a little more by falling asleep a lot and then at the end of the day I think I pissed them off a little more when they asked us what we thought about the program so far and I raised my hand and told them that as far as my mother was concerned they were wasting their fucking time. Yeah, I did say "fucking" but I didn't mean to. "I also said "fucking drunks" a couple of times too, but I think by then they had given up on me.

Anyway, it seems what pissed them off the most was what I wore. See, most of the staff is made up of recovering drunks… I mean alcoholics and I didn't realize it would be an issue, but I wore a t-shirt with a picture of a can of Budweiser on the front. Yeah, I know it's one of your favs, But it apparently wasn't one of theirs. Anyway they asked me not to wear it again and I said "sure" and then I realized that all I brought along with me was my Miller Lite t-shirt, my Jack Daniels t-shirt and three others praising the benefits of marijuana. Yeah, they're really a bunch of tight asses. Anyway, my dad is out buying me some new ones. My mother? Yeah, I saw her but basically all I got to say was hello.

My dad had lunch with her but I had to eat alone. Except for the spouses who have been coming up every weekend, they keep the rest of the family away from them for a day or two until we've been properly indoctrinated. You get the feeling you're visiting a jailed convict, which is the only good feeling I've had since I've been up here.

Yeah, I could have eaten with some of the other dudes there but to tell you the truth, they looked more fucked up than the drunk they were visiting. Ooops, alcoholic. Anyway my dad and I are having lunch with her tomorrow. I've never seen her eat a meal without a glass of wine in front of her. It should be very interesting.

*(***MARK***, wearing slacks, shirt and light jacket enters with a bag of T-shirts.)*

(To **MARK***)* I'm talking to Jen.

MARK. Oh. Did her friend come to visit?

DANNY. Her what?

MARK. Her friend. That's the term we used in my day when a girl got her P-E-R-I-O-D.

(Obviously Jen heard him over the phone.)

DANNY. She said N-O. She didn't G-E-T it yet.

MARK. She didn't. Tell her S-H-I-T.

DANNY. *(On phone)* You heard. Yeah, sometimes he is cute. Look, I'll call you later tonight. Yeah, I miss you too. Bye.

(Puts cell phone away)

MARK. *(Takes off jacket)* I got you six t-shirts. There wasn't much of a choice. Some of them were pretty vulgar. They actually had one that said "Go Fuck Yourself".

DANNY. Cool. I hope you bought it.

MARK. No. I got Super heroes. That shouldn't offend anyone.

(Takes them out of the bag)

I got two Superman, two Batman and two Wonder Woman.

DANNY. Wonder Woman?

MARK. I told you, there wasn't much of a choice.

DANNY. I can't wear Wonder Woman.

MARK. Sure you can. I think it makes a very important and admirable statement for a guy in today's world.

DANNY. Yeah. That he's a pussy. I really don't like any of them.

(He puts the T-shirts aside)

MARK. Well, you can't wear the t-shirts you brought. Please, for me, tomorrow wear one of these shirts.

DANNY. I'll think about it. That's the best I can do right now.

MARK. I'm asking for a favor Danny.

DANNY. Okay, okay. I'll wear one.

MARK. Thanks. Now for dinner we can do one of two things. We can go to some joint around here or we can send out for a pizza or something. I found a bunch of restaurant menus in my drawer.

DANNY. Pizza's great.

MARK. Good. Because I'm bushed.

(pulls out a menu)

Here. Wong's Pizzeria. That should be interesting. I never had a Chinese pizza before.

(Takes out his cell and dials)

How does pepperoni sound to you?

DANNY. Perfect.

MARK. *(On Phone)* Hello, is this Wong? Oh, really?

(To **DANNY***)*

There is no Wong.

(On phone)

So why do you call it Wongs?

(To **DANNY***)*

It used to be a laundry and they wanted to keep the neon sign. It makes sense.

(On phone)

Well, look, I'm at the Colonial Inn, Room 127. I want a large pepperoni pizza and two large Cokes.

DANNY. Listen, Dad, since I've been a good sport about coming up here can I have a beer?

MARK. *(On phone)* Hold it, Wong or whatever your name is.

(To **DANNY***)*

A beer? You drink beer? Since when do you drink beer?

DANNY. Since I started having sex. They go well together.

MARK. Oh, shit.

DANNY. That was a joke. Come on, be a sport. It was a rough day and I think a beer would do us both good.

MARK. I'm not sure it's the right thing to do. Especially while we're going through this rehab stuff. I had no idea you drank.

DANNY. I don't drink. I'm like you. Once in a while I like to have a beer. That's not drinking. Trust me. A lot of kids my age are into a lot worse things.

MARK. And you're not?

DANNY. No. I've learned all too well from my beloved mother's condition how disgusting you look walking around bombed out of your gourd. Besides, I like pot a lot better. That just makes you mellow

MARK. Oh great!

DANNY. Kidding Dad. I swear I'm just kidding. Jesus, what happened to your sense of humor dad?

MARK. I lost it somewhere between your girlfriend missing her period and the t-shirt that said "Go Fuck Yourself". Man, if I leave here without a heart attack it will be a miracle. Okay. One beer, just this once.

DANNY. What a guy.

MARK. *(Gets back on the phone)* Hello Wong. Thanks for holding. Scratch the Cokes and make it two beers. You don't? Well, for a ten buck tip can you stop and pick up a couple of Buds or something. Good. See you soon.

(Hangs up)

DANNY. Thanks Dad. Every now and then you're the coolest.

MARK. Thank you. I just hope I'm not the dumbest.

(Sits on bed and kicks off his shoes)

So what did you think of the day?

DANNY. For you, I guess it was good. For me, truthfully, I could have lived without it

MARK. Really? Too bad. I think this week here is going to be the best thing that ever happened to this family.

DANNY. What family? There's just you and me.

MARK. Maybe if you stayed awake during the orientation you would have heard that her recovery is going to affect everyone whether they're here or not. For the first time I feel hopeful. These people seem to know what they're doing and the success rate is impressive. I just wish Brian and Wendy had come along. They definitely could have benefited from this.

DANNY. You think so?

MARK. Sure they would. They would have learned that your mother's condition is not a choice. I'm not sure they're aware of that. I wasn't. There's some flaw in her genetic structure that doesn't allow her to stop drinking once she starts.

DANNY. You may see it as a flaw. I think she sees it as winning the lottery.

MARK. Look, lose the sarcasm. Maybe if you tried staying awake tomorrow you'll see things a little more clearly and with a little more compassion.

DANNY. I see things clearly enough and I'm not going through this week with blinders on and the false hope

that you have. Do you know what you're going to get from this week?

MARK. I can hardly wait to hear.

DANNY. Disappointment. Wake up, Dad, that woman knows damn well what she's doing. Think about it. There hasn't been a morning that I can remember that she hasn't staggered out of your bedroom looking like the bride of Frankenstein. And always promising us that this time she learned her lesson and she's had her last drink. Three hours later she's got a wine glass in her hand and back to being a drunken lunatic.

MARK. But that's just it. She couldn't do it by herself. Now she's getting the tools to help her stay sober.

DANNY. The only tool she's going to work with when she gets home is a corkscrew. For Christ's sake, dad, she's been the way she is ever since any of us kids can remember and why you've put up with it as long as you have is something none of us understand.

MARK. Because I was sure that one day I'd be able to get her to beat this thing. I feel very positive about this program working for her and so does she. We're going to get this family of ours back on track, you'll see.

DANNY. Family, family! Please stop using that word. There is no family. There hasn't been a family in our house for years. Thanks to her, no one shows up for Thanksgiving, no one shows up for Christmas, no one shows up for anything anymore. Think! When was the last time Brian and his wife and kids came over the house? Months go by without seeing them and they live twenty minutes away. Wendy only comes by when she needs to hit you up for money.

MARK. Things are going to be different this time, Danny. You'll see.

DANNY. No. I won't see. I won't ever see and you're just going to keep pissing the rest of your life away trying to change someone that can't be changed and I don't know why.

MARK. Maybe it's called loyalty.

DANNY. Loyalty? What the hell is there to be loyal about? She was never a mother and I don't think she was much of a wife either. Brian, Wendy and me, we were all raised by housekeepers that kept coming and going because they couldn't stand her either. Until I was five, I spoke better Spanish than English. Until I was five I didn't know who the hell my mother was. I can't tell you how disappointed I was when I found out it was her.

MARK. I know at times it was very tough for you kids.

DANNY. Not at times, Dad. It's been tough every single day we lived with that woman. Do you really have any idea what our growing up was like with her? We couldn't make noise, We couldn't put on lights cause it hurt her eyes. We couldn't have friends over to the house. She'd call us names, tell us we were imbeciles, monsters, ungrateful, spoiled rotten brats that she should have aborted. Our happiest times with her was when she'd be passed out. Before we had housekeepers, Brian told me how she'd lock him and Wendy in their rooms for hours and you know why? Not because they did anything wrong, but because she'd be able to drink and not have to deal with them.

MARK. *(Disbelief)* They never said anything to me about that.

DANNY. Because they were little kids. They thought it was normal. Besides, anytime any of us tried to tell you what was happening, you'd make up some lame excuse for her. Then she'd be pissed at us for ratting her out.

MARK. I was just trying to calm things down. I work long hours, I'm out of town a lot.

DANNY. That woman would be mean just to be mean. I'm going to tell you something and I hope you don't take it the wrong way. Things got so bad, that when you two would take an airplane trip together, we actually hoped the plane would go down.

MARK. That's pretty harsh.

DANNY. I know. We knew we'd miss you, but we despised her so much we thought it was worth the trade off. She was our enemy, dad, not our mother, our enemy.

MARK. You're really picking a bad time to unload.

DANNY. Maybe it's because I finally have the chance to do it. Goddamn it, dad, our lives have been total crap and yours is going to remain crap as long as you keep waiting for a stupid miracle that is never going to come.

MARK. My life may seem difficult, but it's not been total crap.

DANNY. Oh, come on, Dad. She's screaming at you all the time.

MARK. It's not that bad. I'm able to handle it.

DANNY. Really? Well then I guess what they say is true. When you're up to your neck in shit every day, you get used to the smell.

MARK. Terrific. And where did that bit of twisted wisdom come from?

DANNY. One of my t-shirts that I'm sorry I didn't bring with me.

MARK. Next week when I come back here to take her home, I honestly believe I'll be taking home a very changed woman.

DANNY. If that happens, you probably have the wrong woman in your car. So help me, at this point I'd be more than satisfied if she came home at least a happy drunk. I mean it. I've got a couple of friends whose parents are alcoholics too. But they're happy alcoholics. They load up and until they pass out, they're laughing and smiling and except for falling down stairs now and then, are actually quite pleasant. I could live with that. For Mother's Day I'd even be willing to spring for a keg of beer.

MARK. Danny, this is an important effort your mother is making.

DANNY. Dad, you're a good guy and I know you mean well. I'll be out of school in a year and then I'm gone. But if this doesn't turn out the way you want it to, maybe it's time to give up the dream and take care of yourself. It's what Brian would like for you, it's what Wendy would like for you, it's what I would like for you. Would you at least promise me that?

MARK. Look, can we put this discussion on hold until after she's back home when we can see more clearly how things are going. I don't know how many times I have to say this, but I know it's going to be different.

DANNY. *(Frustrated)* I've been talking to a rock, haven't I? Nothing I've said got through to you, did it? Nothing. Sometimes I wonder who's crazier, you or her.

You have made up your mind to keep going down the drain with her and that's that. Well, screw it and fuck it all. Tomorrow I'm wearing my Miller Lite t-shirt to the hospital and if they don't like it, they can all kiss my ass.

(Throws himself down on his bed)

Where the fuck is the pizza?

*(***MARK** *sits down on his bed, takes a deep breath and a long pause.)*

MARK. So what else impressed you about today?

(Lights fade to black)

Scene Four

(TIME: The middle of the night. The room is dimly lit from the moonlight.)

*(***MARK** *is asleep in his bed.* **DANNY**, *in boxer shorts, sits at the edge of his bed starring blankly ahead. His area is lit a little brighter.* **OLDER GWEN**, *a woman in her late forties, in a white nightgown, stands near him, looking at him. It's obvious that although she was beautiful at a younger age, and that some of that beauty still seeps through, alcohol has not been kind to her. She holds a bottle of wine in one hand and a wine glass in the other and pours a drink. She has a bit of a buzz on.)*

OLDER GWEN. You don't think I can do it, do you?

DANNY. No, I don't.

OLDER GWEN. Well, I can.

DANNY. I don't think so. You are what you are. A raving, psychotic drunk.

OLDER GWEN. I'm your mother.

DANNY. A raving, psychotic drunk who happens to be my mother.

OLDER GWEN. You're so cruel to me. Why are you so cruel to me? You know I love you. I love you the most. Certainly more than the others.

DANNY. No, you don't. You don't love anyone. Not me, not Brian, not Wendy, not Dad. I doubt you even love yourself. Your love is the bottle of wine you're drinking and the handful of pills you're taking.

OLDER GWEN. I'm in pain, Danny. Can't you see, I'm in pain?

DANNY. And I suppose you think we're not? But it's always about you, isn't it? What the world has done to you. You and only you. You, the constant victim. Well, you aren't the goddamn victim. We are. Three kids who had to live in a fucking nightmare with you.

OLDER GWEN. You heard your father. I'm going to change, Danny. I'm going to be a good mother, a good wife. Everything everyone wants me to be. I told your father I will and I will.

DANNY. I don't care if you do or you don't. Not anymore. My father is a fool and one fool in the family is enough.

OLDER GWEN. Why can't you be kind to me? No one is kind to me.

DANNY. Me, me, me! There it is again. Do you ever think about anyone besides yourself? You're pathetic. You know, at first I felt sorry for you. Then I felt shame. Now I just don't give a damn. For all I care, you can drink yourself straight to hell. Maybe you've done that already.

OLDER GWEN. If I wasn't so unhappy it would have been different. If only I wasn't so unhappy.

DANNY. Unhappy about what? Goddamn it, about what? You have a nice home, you have security, a husband who for some sick reason keeps hangin' in…

OLDER GWEN. You're not my friends. None of you care about me. None of you. I'm so unhappy.

(pouring another drink)

I'm so very unhappy.

(During the following, **OLDER GWEN** *turns and slowly drifts towards downstage left.)*

DANNY. *(Mocking)* Unhappy, unhappy, unhappy.

(Suddenly he rises, goes to her and turns her around to face him.)

You're always "so unhappy". About what? About what?

OLDER GWEN. So unhappy.

(She turns and walking away slowly disappears into the black exiting through the downstage left sidelines. **DANNY** *is left standing there.)*

DANNY. *(Raising his voice)* Unhappy about what? About what? Goddamn it, unhappy about what?

*(***DANNY***'s ranting wakes* **MARK**. *He turns on his bedside lamp, gets out of bed and begins shaking* **DANNY**.*)*

About what? About what? Unhappy about what?

MARK. Danny! Danny!

DANNY. About what? About what? Goddamn it, about what? About what?

MARK. Danny!

*(***DANNY** *awakens.)*

DANNY. Huh? What?

MARK. You were dreaming.

DANNY. I was. Yeah.

MARK. Are you alright?

DANNY. Yeah, yeah. I… I'm fine.

MARK. Do you want to talk about it?

DANNY. No.

MARK. Are you sure?

DANNY. Yes.

MARK. *(Looks at him for a moment)* Okay. Try to get some sleep. We have an early day.

DANNY. Yeah, sure.

*(***MARK** *leads* **DANNY** *back to his bed.* **DANNY** *gets under the covers.)*

(A beat) Dad?

MARK. Yes?

DANNY. What made her so unhappy? Do you know?

MARK. *(Sighs)* Try to get some sleep.

*(***DANNY** *lies down and falls right to sleep.* **MARK** *looks at his son for several beats then returns to his bed. He turns off the bedside lamp and sits on his bed. The moonlight now illuminates his area. A light comes up revealing* **YOUNG GWEN** *standing behind* **MARK**.*)*

(She begins rubbing his shoulders, slowly, tenderly. He doesn't turn to face her.)

YOUNG GWEN. You know why I'm so unhappy, don't you Mark?

MARK. *(Hesitant)* Yes.

YOUNG GWEN. Then why don't you tell him.

MARK. I'm not sure he'd understand.

YOUNG GWEN. I think he would.

MARK. It wouldn't change things.

YOUNG GWEN. Maybe not. But at least he'd understand.

MARK. Damn it. Aren't things screwed up enough?

YOUNG GWEN. *(Sits next to him)* Do you regret any of it, Mark?

MARK. *(Looks at her for a beat then strokes her hair)* No. Not for a moment.

YOUNG GWEN. Our lives would have been so different.

MARK. Maybe.

YOUNG GWEN. Of course they would have been. We both know they would have been. Maybe this would never have happened to me, to any of us.

MARK. Our lives are going to be fine, Gwen. They were once and they will be again. I promise you, they will be again.

YOUNG GWEN. It's comforting to believe that, isn't it?

MARK. I have to believe that Gwen. I have to.

(Lights slowly fade to black)

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