

28 Days

By
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INT. GIRLS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

TWO LITTLE GIRLS, sound asleep. It's 1974. A poster of the Banana Splits on the wall. A BALLERINA MUSIC BOX is TINKLING "Lullaby and Good Night" while the ballerina twirls before the mirror. All's right with the world.

CUT TO:

A FRESCA BOTTLE being dug out from a trash can by FEMALE HANDS. Wiped off with a wide, 70's-style cuff.

CUT TO:

INT. GIRLS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

The ballerina's tinkling. One girl rolls over, clutching a Snoopy. This is GWEN, 5. Her face is angelic.

CUT TO:

A VODKA BOTTLE is dug from behind a row of books. Vodka is poured into the Fresca bottle. It goes all over the table. Whoever's pouring has already had quite a few.

CUT TO:

INT. GIRLS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

The ballerina finishes her song. Just as she's resuming, the door opens and MOM enters, FRESCA BOTTLE in hand.

MOM

Girls! Get up! It's magic outside!

She flicks on the light. Mom's a party girl without the party. A fading beauty trying to wring some fun out of her increasingly dull life. Drinking is a start.

Gwen and her sister LILY, 7 squint against the light.

GWEN

I'm tired.

Mom goes to rustle them out of bed.

MOM

Nonsense. Come on, lazyheads. Get up and go get your sleds. Right away.

LILY

We don't have sleds.

MOM

You don't?
(they shake their heads)
Well then we'll just have to improvise.

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CONTINUED:

She pulls out a drawer and DUMPS the clothes out, onto the girls. They LAUGH as the clothes rain down on them.

EXT. MOM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A cheep New Jersey row house on top of a hill. Nothing special about it. Although everything looks a little special when it's SNOWING like this. Snow covers the road. Puffs of it float down under the streetlights.

Mom, Gwen, and Lily are each sitting in a DRESSER DRAWER in the middle of the street. The girls are in parkas, boots and nightgowns, with excited looks on their faces. Gwen has Snoopy with her. Mom hasn't put on a coat.

MOM

Ready, set -- GO!

They PUSH OFF and start down the hill. WHEEE! The drawers skid over bumps, carom against snowbanks. The girls and Mom LAUGH and SCREAM as they gain speed.

At the bottom of the hill, they SLAM into a snowbank and spill into the snow. They all LAUGH hysterically.

MOM

Hey, do we know how to have fun, or do we know how to have fun?

LILY

We know how to have fun.

As they dig their drawers out of the snowbank:

MOM

And that's what matters, right? Cause if you're not having fun, peanuts --

LILY/GWEN

(a familiar refrain)
-- what's the frigging point?

MOM

Exactly. What's the frigging point?

They all put their drawers on top of their heads and head back up the hill.

INT. MOM'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

Mom is asleep on the floor in last night's sledding clothes. Gwen and Lily are squatting next to her in school uniforms. Gwen blows on her face. No reaction. Lily pinches her cheek. Nothing. Gwen pinches harder. Nada. Lily hauls off and SLAPS Mom HARD. Mom GRUNTS and rolls over. Satisfied she's alive, Lily and Gwen leave.

INT. GWEN'S CLASSROOM - DAY

It's SPRING outside. Gwen is one of TWENTY GIRLS doing multiplication tables aloud. The SCHOOL NURSE comes in, whispers to the TEACHER. They both turn to look at Gwen.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

The Nurse leads Gwen and Lily down the hallway, holding their hands. Their heels CLIP CLIP on the shiny floor.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Gwen and Lily are sitting, facing the PRINCIPAL and their AUNT HELEN. Everything about Aunt Helen is tight: her cinched belt, her pursed lips.

PRINCIPAL

I'm afraid your Aunt has some bad news.

AUNT HELEN

It's your mother. She's passed.

Her voice is cold. A woman with little love for either children or drunks.

Lily understands immediately. Her face goes blank. But Gwen's younger. She doesn't get it.

GWEN

It's okay, she does that all the time. Just slap her real hard and she'll wake up.

AUNT HELEN

Not passed out. Passed away. Passed on. Gone.

GWEN

Gone where?

Helen looks to the Principal for help.

PRINCIPAL

Sometimes, girls, God looks down at all his children, and sees one that He'd like to have with Him in Heaven. So that's what He does. He ... moves them.

(beat)

That's what He did with your mother. He moved her to Heaven.

Gwen thinks about this long and hard. Finally:

GWEN

He better have Fresca there.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

ORGAN MUSIC. About FORTY MOURNERS are in the pews. Aunt Helen enters, holding Gwen and Lily's hands. They sit in a pew and take off their coats. Aunt Helen PRAYS.

Gwen sits there for a beat, CLACKING her heels together. She CLACKS her feet against Lily's. But Lily yanks her feet out of range and looks the other way.

Gwen sits there a beat more. Then she notices the CASKET on the altar. She stares at it. Then, with Aunt Helen still bent in prayer, she gets up walks toward it.

Gwen marches up to the casket, gets up on her tippy-toes, and looks in. There's Mom, laid out all peaceful. Gwen stares for a moment. Then:

GWEN

HEY!

Aunt Helen looks up. Sees Gwen peering in the casket.

GWEN (cont'd)

She's not in Heaven! She's RIGHT HERE!

AUNT HELEN

Sweet Jesus --

Aunt Helen jumps up out of the pew, mortified.

GWEN

You said she was in Heaven! You said she MOVED!

As Aunt Helen picks Gwen up and carries her out of the church, Gwen calls out to the other mourners:

GWEN (cont'd)

Look for yourself! She's right there!

INT. AUNT HELEN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A weird, unfamiliar house. Gwen watches AUNT HELEN, whose irritation is palpable, making up a sofa bed. Lily sits in a corner, staring into space.

GWEN

I didn't mean to ruin it.

Aunt Helen doesn't respond. Just tightens her hospital corner. When she's done with the bed:

AUNT HELEN

I cleared out that chest there. You can use it for your clothes.

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AUNT HELEN (cont'd)
This is just for now. Till we figure
out something more permanent.

She gives them each AN AWKWARD PAT on the head and
LEAVES.

Lily opens her suitcase and starts unpacking. Gwen
watches, then pulls out a drawer and looks at it for a
moment. She pulls it all the way out and looks at the
METAL RUNNER along the bottom. She looks up at Lily.

GWEN
Hey. This one's probably really fast.

Lily looks at her. Suddenly, a cold, angry little girl.

LILY
It's not a sled. It's a drawer. Put
it back.

Gwen looks at Lily, neatly filing her clothes away, and
thinks about this. Finally, she puts the drawer back and
starts unpacking. Then, under her breath:

GWEN
It's a sled. I'm just using it as a
drawer for now.

CUT TO:

MAIN TITLES.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEW YORK, UPPER WEST SIDE - DAY

Loud. Dirty. And from the look of the graffiti and
billboards, PRESENT DAY. A JACKHAMMER starts.

INT. NEW YORK APARTMENT - PRESENT - DAY

TWO BODIES are crashed on a mattress on the floor. The
apartment, s a tiny, cruddy studio.

On A SMALL, DISORGANIZED DESK, a LAPTOP COMPUTER is open
and on. Next to it is a copy of the "Manhattan Weekly"
newspaper, open to a column called "Cummings and Goings".
The byline says, "by Gwen Cummings". The photo is of
Courtney Love giving the camera the finger.

BEER CANS and VODKA BOTTLES spill out of a trash that
desperately needs dumping. Dirty dishes fill the sink.
The TV is on, with the sound turned off. Cartoon animals
chase each other across the screen.

The only tidy things in the place are a SUIT and a GREEN
VELVET DRESS hanging in plastic on the back of the door.

The JACKHAMMER noise rattles the building. One of the
heads stirs. We hear a PAINED FEMALE GROAN.

(CONTINUED)

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6.

Another JACKHAMMER joins in. A TRUCK backs up. BEEP BEEP. The other body moves; its voice is deep and groggy.

JASPER
(equally weak)
Jackhammers. Saturday. Bad.

The statement hangs in the air. Then the woman's head pops up, alarmed. It's GWEN, all grown up -- more or less -- again. She's 30, naked, and very hung over.

GWEN
Fuck. Saturday.

INT. NEW YORK APARTMENT, BATHROOM - DAY

Gwen is half-in the green dress, rinsing her armpits at the sink. Her hands are shaking.

GWEN
What'd we do last night?

JASPER (O.S.)
Little of everything, looks like.

Jasper comes in, drinking a beer, pulling on suit pants without underwear. He's the kind of guy who manages to twinkle no matter how bad the hangover.

GWEN
Did we have fun, at least?

JASPER
I'm choosing to believe yes.

Gwen grabs about five aspirin from the medicine cabinet.

GWEN
Never again, Jasper.

JASPER
Never again.

She pops the aspirin, grabs the beer, takes a big pull.

EXT. NEW YORK, UPPER WEST SIDE - DAY

Gwen and Jasper tumble out of the building, semi-dressed. They hail a CAB and climb inside.

GWEN
Grand Central. Fast.

EXT. NEW YORK - DAY

The taxi speeds downtown, slams into a cavernous pothole.

INT. TAXI - DAY

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CONTINUED:

Jasper and Gwen, still getting dressed, go flying.
Gwen's head smacks the roof of the cab.

 GWEN
Ow! Jesus --
 (to the Cabbie)
Hey, alive. Fast and alive. The
alive part is very --
 (then:)
Damn it!

In the bump, Gwen has poked a finger through her stockings, ripping a big hole, ruining them.

 GWEN
 (to Cabbie)
Excellent, thank you. That's perfect.

As she throws the stockings out the window, she notices Jasper's shirt. It's a ratty, old I-Love-NY T-shirt.

 GWEN
That's what you're wearing?

 JASPER
I couldn't find my good one.
 (off her unamused look)
Hey, at least it has a heart on it.

The taxi lurches, sending them both into the ceiling.

EXT. GRAND CENTRAL - DAY

The taxi pulls up in front of the station.

INT. GRAND CENTRAL - DAY

Gwen and Jasper run across the lobby.

INT. GRAND CENTRAL, TRAIN PLATFORM - DAY

Gwen and Jasper get on the train just as the doors close.

INT. TRAIN - DAY

Gwen and Jasper, very QUIVERY, are looking for seats.
Ahead, the CONDUCTOR is taking a PASSENGER's ticket.

 PASSENGER
Where's the bar car?

 CONDUCTOR
Three cars that way.

He points over Gwen and Jasper's shoulders. They do an immediate about-face and head that way.

EXT. BEDFORD, NEW YORK TRAIN STATION - DAY

The train arrives. Gwen and Jasper spill out of it in

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HYSTERICIS, VERY WELL-OILED.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

A small, white church. Wildflower arrangements by the door. Lots of CARS in the parking lot. A SOLE BRIDESMAID, also in green velvet, is waiting out front.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

More wildflowers inside. 70-odd GUESTS are all seated, waiting for a wedding.

ANDREW, the handsome, lawyer groom, is at the altar with his BEST MAN and the MINISTER. He checks his watch, then catches eyes with his PARENTS -- stuffy GOP'ers -- who are by the door. They shoot him a questioning look -- what's going on? He shrugs -- beats me.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

A TAXI pulls up. Gwen and Jasper spill out of it, still LAUGHING, and land right in front of the Bridesmaid.

BRIDESMAID

You're late.

GWEN

Jasper, this is ... what's her name.

BRIDESMAID

Really late, Gwen. Like, 45 minutes late.

GWEN

She has absolutely no sense of humor but she's really good at telling time.

The Bridesmaid drags Gwen inside.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

As the Bridesmaid drags Gwen off to the Bride's room, Jasper saunters in, kisses Andrew's Mother's hand.

JASPER

How do you do. Pleasure.
(to Andrew's Father)
Sir. An honor.

He kisses Andrew's Father's hand too. They both seem a little disconcerted.

ANDREW'S MOTHER

And you are ...?

JASPER

(whispers)
The bride's lover. Ssh.

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CONTINUED:

He winks at them, snaps a flower off an arrangement, and sticks it in his lapel as he find himself a seat.

INT. BRIDE'S ROOM - DAY

LILY, 32, is the impatient bride. She's standing with a SECOND BRIDESMAID when Gwen enters.

GWEN

Sorry. There was a water main break, and then the train got stopped in Rye, some electrical something, and --

Lily turns to her, livid.

LILY

You know what I can't figure out? Which pisses me off more: your being late, or your coming at all.

GWEN

What do you mean? This is your big day -- of course I'm gonna be here --

LILY

Right, to watch me marry -- how was it you put it last night? -- "a guy with as much personality as a tube sock."

On Gwen, horrified, as the memory hits her:

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Late last night. Gwen, Jasper and TEN FRIENDS are at a table, SLOPPY-DRUNK. While everyone talks at once, Gwen YELLS into her CEL PHONE.

GWEN

I'm not saying he's the most boring person on Earth, Lil, but --

(to her noisy bar-mates)

Do you MIND? This is IMPORTANT!

(back to the phone)

-- but as your only living relative, I think it's my duty to tell you ...

(whispers)

... he's the most boring person on Earth.

INT. MAIN HOUSE, FRONT ROOM - DUSK

Gwen simultaneously mortified by, and trying to cover up, the memory.

GWEN

Oh -- you thought I was -- cause that was a joke, I was -- I was joking.

Lily levels her unforgiving gaze at Gwen.

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CONTINUED:

LILY

Gwen? When you're old and alone and you have nothing to do on holidays because you've alienated everyone you've ever met, I want you to remember these words: You make it impossible to love you.

She hands Gwen a bouquet and swooshes out, followed by her two other Bridesmaids. Gwen stands there a moment.

GWEN

Fuck.

INT. CHURCH ANTEROOM - DAY

Procession time. Gwen is waiting her turn. After a moment, she discreetly pulls a BOTTLE OF PILLS out of her pocket, pops a couple, washes them down with Holy Water, then heads up the aisle.

INT. CHURCH, ALTAR - DAY

Gwen is standing with Lily, Andrew, the Minister, and the Best Man. Lily and Andrew KISS. Gwen's head bobs around like one of those bouncy-neck dolls in the back of a car.

INT. INN - DAY

Reception. A SMALL BAND is playing Lester Lanin-like wedding music. Some tame wedding dancing going on. Lily and Andrew are greeting people in a receiving line.

Gwen and Jasper snake through the crowd holding big, fat drinks, still loopy. Their speech is loose and jangly.

GWEN

Did you see me? No mistakes. No criseses. I did everything right.

JASPER

You say that like it's a good thing.

A WAITER passes with some puffy hors d'oeuvres. Instead of taking one, Gwen takes the whole tray from him.

GWEN

It isn't?

As Jasper talks, Gwen eyes the hors d'oeuvres hungrily. But she has a drink in one hand and the tray in another. The only way to eat them is to pick them up off the tray with her tongue. So that's what she does.

JASPER

No. Nobody wants to come away from a wedding with memories of perfection and beauty. They want to bring home a story ...

(CONTINUED)

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11.

NEARBY, some GUESTS spot Gwen drunkenly licking cheese puffs off the tray. Whispers, pointing. "The sister."

JASPER (cont'd)

... Something juicy. Like the one about the groom who ran off with the maid of honor. Or the bride whose tits fell out of her dress during the ceremony.

He leans forward and licks an hors d'oeuvre off too.

ACROSS THE ROOM, Lily sees them eating off the tray like a couple of dogs. Then she spots Andrew's Father among the people staring, and is mortified.

JASPER

(mouth full)
That's all anyone wants out of life, Gwennie. A good story.

GWEN

(mouth full)
You think?

JASPER

Not if it can be avoided. Come on, this is a party. Let's have some fun, for Christ's sake.

He takes the tray and puts it on a chair, not seeing Andrew's Mother is about to sit down on the very same chair. SQUOOSH, SPLAT. As Andrew's Mother reacts, Jasper and Gwen hit the dance floor without noticing they've horrified yet another entire group of guests.

ON THE DANCE FLOOR, couples are dancing tastefully. But Gwen and Jasper change all that. They land on the dance floor with all the decorum of a neutron bomb. Normally, Jasper's a good dancer, but as drunk as he is, he's just a safety hazard. Every time he SPINS Gwen, she THWACKS into another Dancer. Bam! Bam! Bam! Backs whacked, toes stepped on, hats knocked off. Not that Jasper and Gwen even notice. They're having fun, for God's sakes. He throws her over his head. Her shoe flies off and hits a woman. He slides her under his legs. Her dress flies up -- who cares?

ALL AROUND THE RECEPTION, people stare at them. From her place on the receiving line, Lily sees the display, sees everyone talking and pointing. She starts over to the dance floor, to put an end to it.

Just then, Jasper spins Gwen, but instead of holding on to her, he accidentally lets her hand slip out of his. She goes flying across the dance floor ...

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... RIGHT INTO THE WEDDING CAKE, being wheeled past by some CATERERS. SPLAT! CRASH! Gwen tumbles to the floor in a pile of velvet and butter cream.

Everyone freezes. Gwen turns and sees everyone staring at her. Sees Lily starting to cry. She scrambles to her feet.

GWEN

I'll ... replace that.

She staggers away, dripping butter cream in her wake.

EXT. INN - DAY

A CHAUFFEUR is wandering around the driveway, smoking.

Gwen stumbles out, swatting at her dress, trying to get the frosting off. Finally, she just unzips the dress, drops it on the ground, and climbs into the nearest car: the Limo. She starts it up.

CHAUFFEUR

Hey!

He runs up to the car, just in time to catch a glimpse of GWEN IN HER UNDERWEAR putting it in drive and taking off.

EXT. BEDFORD RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY

The Limousine ZOOMS and WEAVES down the road.

INT. LIMOUSINE - DAY

Gwen zooms down the road, looking around.

GWEN

Cake store, cake store, cake store.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY

The Limo swerves around a bend and slams a Stop sign.

INT. LIMOUSINE - DAY

Gwen turns around to see what she hit ...

GWEN

Sorry!

EXT. BEDFORD RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY

The Limo takes out the picket fence in front of a CHURCH.

EXT. BEDFORD HOUSE - DAY

At the end of the block sits a little white RANCH HOUSE, complete with LAWN JOCKEY. AT THE OTHER END, the Limousine careens around the corner and barrels down the

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Blue Ridge Rehabilitation Center.

A STATION WAGON with a HOME-MADE TAXI SIGN pulls off the interstate and slowly heads up the long dirt drive.

INT. TAXI - DAY

The DRIVER checks his rear view mirror and sees:

Gwen, staring out the window, watching the center come closer and closer. She has a bruised forehead and some stitches near her hair. A suitcase is beside her.

EXT. BLUE RIDGE REHAB CENTER, PARKING AREA - DAY

The taxi pulls out, leaving Gwen in the cloud of dirt. She has on jeans and a coat that's missing its buttons.

Gwen pulls the coat tight around her and looks around -- at the buildings, the ducks on the pond, the winter sun playing off the hills in the distance. Through the doors to the Main Building, she sees an ADMISSIONS sign.

The door to a dorm opens, and a rag-tag group of FIFTEEN PEOPLE, all ages, races, genders, emerges. They gather in a circle and MUMBLE for a bit, then SCREAM:

CHANTERS
TOGETHER! WE'RE BETTER! WE'RE
BETTER! TOGETHER! NOOOOOOOO DRUGS!

Gwen stares, horrified, as they break up and head toward the Main Building. She digs her cel phone out and dials.

JASPER (O.S.)
 (very sleepy)
 Yeah.

GWEN
 Huge mistake, Jasper. Massive.

JASPER (O.S.)
 Hey. Good morning.

GWEN
 Ha. Easy for you to say. I should have picked that place in the city.

JASPER (O.S.)
 What about all that "I don't wanna run into anyone I know" bullshit?

GWEN
 I was wrong. This place is horrible. It's miles away from anything, the people chant, and, oh, guess what, there's no booze or drugs.

JASPER (O.S.)
 The people what?

(CONTINUED)

GWEN
Chant.

JASPER (O.S.)
Why?

GWEN
I don't know. Because they're weird.
Because this place is a fucking
nightmare.

JASPER (O.S.)
Could be worse. Could be prison.

GWEN
Is that worse?

JASPER (O.S.)
You never hear of anyone being raped
with a plunger in rehab.

GWEN
Maybe it's covered up. Maybe rehab is
the plunger-rape capital -- HEY!

Her cel phone is snatched from her hand. She turns to
see BETTY MARQUETTE towering over her. Betty's a big
woman -- about 6'1", mid-40's, with zero sense of humor.

GWEN
Excuse me, I was talking!

BETTY
No cel phones.

Betty turns and heads into the main building.

BETTY
Get your own bag there. This isn't
the Sheraton.

Gwen picks up her bag and follows.

INT. MAIN BUILDING, OFFICE - DAY

Betty tosses Gwen's cel phone into a box, then rifles
through Gwen's suitcase, which is OPEN on a desk.

BETTY
Are you insurance or self-pay?

GWEN
Well -- seeing as I don't happen to
have ten thousand dollars sitting
around just now, yeah, insurance will
be helping out.

Betty hands Gwen a stack of INSURANCE FORMS then goes
back to the suitcase. As Gwen looks the forms over,

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CONTINUED:

Betty sets Gwen's LAPTOP in the box with the cel phone.

GWEN
Hey, whoa, I need that.

BETTY
No you don't.

GWEN
Oh, yes I do. I have a column to write. It's very important.

BETTY
Those aren't the kinds of things we want you worrying about here.

GWEN
Oh, okay, yeah, I'll just choose what to worry about. That always works.

Betty pulls out a BUDWEISER T-SHIRT, adds it to the box.

GWEN
I sleep in that.

BETTY
Not here, you don't.

Betty roots around some more, sniffing Gwen's toiletries.

GWEN
Tell you what, Betty, was it?, while you're going through my things, what say I go through yours?

Gwen tries the drawer. It's locked. Betty shakes a shoe. TWO PRESCRIPTION BOTTLES fall out.

GWEN
That's ... for back pain.

Betty dumps them in the box with all the other things.

BETTY
These will all be returned to you when you check out. Except the Vicodin, which will be flushed. Smile.

FLASH! She takes Gwen's Polaroid, then hands her a HOSPITAL GOWN.

BETTY
Open to the back.

INT. MAIN BUILDING, EXAM ROOM - DAY

A medical exam room. Gwen is in the gown, on an exam table. While DR. STAVROS, an older woman, draws her blood, Gwen HUMS "Zip-a-dee doo dah" lightly to herself.

INT. MAIN BUILDING, X-RAY ROOM - DAY

Gwen is lying on the table, lead curtain draped over her lower body, getting a chest x-ray. Still HUMMING.

INT. MAIN BUILDING, OFFICE - DAY

Gwen is at a desk, filling out the INSURANCE FORMS.

GWEN
(singing quietly)
Plenty of sunshine, comin' my way ...

EXT. BLUE RIDGE CAMPUS - DAY

Betty is leading Gwen toward a DORM. There's a hospital ID bracelet on Gwen's wrist.

BETTY
No drugs or alcohol, obviously. No isolating -- that's sitting around in your room, feeling sorry for yourself. No phone calls, except on visiting days, and then only for ten minutes. No fraternization -- that's romance and/or sex between patients.

Betty opens the door to the dorm for Gwen. As she enters:

GWEN
Zip-a-dee doo dah, zip-a-dee ay.

INT. PARKER HOUSE, GWEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Like a Holiday Inn room. A SKINNY TEENAGE GIRL is lying on a bed, reading the Big Book. This is ANDREA. She has dark roots showing under her bleached hair and a silver hoop through an eyebrow.

BETTY
Your room. You're responsible for keeping it clean.
(to Andrea)
Andrea, this is Gwen. Settle her in.

Betty leaves. Andrea looks up from her book.

ANDREA
Do you watch "Santa Cruz"?

GWEN
Do I watch what?

ANDREA
"Santa Cruz." My soap. I haven't seen it in three weeks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GWEN

You shouldn't watch crap like that.
It rots the mind.

ANDREA

Oh, yeah, like the stuff you were
taking to get you in here was real
brain food.

She turns her nose back into her book. Gwen looks at her a moment, then heads into the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - DUSK

Gwen is on the floor, leaning against the edge of the tub, her head in her hands. A VOICE comes over a PA:

VOICE (O.S.)

Dinnertime. Circle up.

EXT. PARKER HOUSE - DUSK

Gwen comes out to find about TWENTY PATIENTS in a circle, finishing the Serenity Prayer. Then they CHANT:

PATIENTS

HEY, HEY, WHADDAYA KNOW, PILLS AND
BOOZE HAVE GOT TO GO! HEY, HEY,
WHADDAYA SAY, SOBER IS THE ONLY WAY!

Gwen watches as they head off toward the cafeteria.

GWEN

Jesus Christ.

INT. CAFETERIA - NIGHT

CLOSE ON SLOPPY GOO being slapped onto a plate. WIDEN to see the plate being handed to Gwen, who's in a long line of ABOUT EIGHTY PATIENTS getting their food.

INT. CAFETERIA, TABLE - NIGHT

Andrea leads Gwen up to a table with a PARKER HOUSE sign on it. Seated at it are some Parker House residents:

- * BOBBIE JEAN: 60, Southern, pudgy, sweet as molasses;
- * DANIEL, 45, well-dressed; kind of handsome in an angry, beat-up kind of way, with a SCAR on his neck;
- * ROSHONDA, 35, black, all braids, bosoms, and maternal instinct.
- * OLIVER, 30, Park Avenue party boy, born with a silver spoon up his nose.
- * GERHARDT: 26, German accent and poofy hair; in a tight T-shirt that says "Denial Is Not Just A River In Egypt."

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ANDREA
Everyone, Gwen. Gwen, everyone.

"Hi"'s all around. Gwen gives them all a wan smile and sits next to Bobbie Jean. Oliver turns to Gerhardt.

OLIVER
Booze.

GERHARDT
Cocaine.

ROSHONDA
Painkillers.

They all turn to look at Gwen. Expectantly.

BOBBIE JEAN
This is not a nice game.

OLIVER
Well?

GWEN
Well, what?

ANDREA
What's your drug of choice? Alcohol?
Cocaine? Percodan? Heroin? Glue?

GWEN
I have to pick just one?

ROSHONDA
Your gateway drug, what you go for
first.

GWEN
Oh. I guess I drink.

OLIVER
Yes! Come to Papa.

As Gerhardt and Roshonda hand Oliver their desserts, Oliver smiles and WINKS at Gwen. She looks away, toward Daniel. The minute her eyes hit him, he barks at her:

DANIEL
What's the matter, you never seen a
trach scar before?

Gwen notices his scar for the first time.

GWEN
Excuse me?

DANIEL

It's a tracheotomy, okay? Not a growth, not a deformity. A scar. So you can stop staring.

GERHARDT

I don't think she was staring, Daniel.

DANIEL

How would you know, faggot? You're about as perceptive as Helen Keller.

OLIVER

Actually, when you think about it, Helen Keller was probably --

DANIEL

Shut the fuck up.

BOBBIE JEAN

We're all friends, here, Daniel. Can't we be courteous?

DANIEL

Talk to her. She's the one staring.

ROSHONDA

It's his problem, but if I was you, I'd apologize.

Gwen looks around, sees everyone staring at her.

GWEN

Sorry. My mistake.

DANIEL

Yeah, no shit.

Bobbie Jean turns to Gwen in her sweetest Southern lawn-party way, with a great big smile.

BOBBIE JEAN

Are ya drunk now?

GWEN

Excuse me?

BOBBIE JEAN

I was pickled as a dill cucumber when I checked in. Can't even remember my first meal, which I guess is a blessing, because they tell me I passed out in my creamed corn.

Holy mo. Gwen looks around at her new dormmates:

GWEN (O.S.)

"Dear Jasper. A word about the people here. Think Snow White.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

GWEN (cont'd)
 Think Dwarfs. Only tall. Think ...
 (looks at Bobbie Jean)
 Perky ...
 (Andrea)
 Loopy ...
 (Roshonda)
 Bossy ...
 (Oliver)
 Preppy ...
 (Gerhardt)
 Foofy ...
 (Daniel)
 And Fucking Scary..."

INT. GWEN'S BATHROOM, NIGHT

Gwen's brushing her teeth, having a stare-down with her own reflection. From the bedroom:

ANDREA (O.S.)
 Don't worry about Daniel. He's just all self-conscious about the neck thing cause he did it to himself.

Andrea leans in. ~~She's in a tank top and underwear.~~

ANDREA
 He had this thing where he'd pump his own stomach at night so he wouldn't get a hangover. I guess he knew how cause he's a doctor. Or was. He lost his license after he killed that patient. Anyway, something about a plastic tube scraping down to his stomach night after night --

As she rattles on, Gwen looks back to the mirror.

GWEN (O.S.)
 "If memory serves, I think Snow White befriended her new housemates ..."

INT. GWEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Gwen hasn't unpacked. Clothes spill out of her suitcase. Her towel's on the floor. She's lying in bed, writing.

GWEN (O.S.)
 "Me, I'll take my cue from a different Fairy Tale heroine. The one who fell asleep and didn't wake up until her boyfriend came to get her."

Gwen notices Andrea kneeling at the foot of her bed, doing the Serenity Prayer.

GWEN (O.S.)
 "Toward that end, see if you can dig up some more Vicodin before you come."

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GWEN (cont'd)
 The Gestapo found the first batch, and
 the whole here-but-not-here illusion
 will be easier to sustain with a
 little chemical help. Love, Gwennie"

And she turns out her light and rolls over to go to sleep. Andrea gets into her bed ...

ANDREA
 Night.

... and turns off her light.

ON GWEN, lying in the dark. She takes a deep, shaky breath. Then closes her eyes and tries to go to sleep.

After a beat, she hears a CRINKLING. Opens her eyes. Listens. More CRINKLING. Like cellophane.

She turns on the light. Andrea has a bunch of hard candy on the sheet in front of her and a few in her mouth.

ANDREA
 (mouth full)
 Heroin addict. Sugar craving.

GWEN
 How old are you?

ANDREA
 Sixteen.

Gwen stares at her a moment, then turns the light back off. More CRINKLING. This is going to be a long night.

INT. GWEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Andrea's asleep. The sound of VOMITING.

INT. GWEN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Gwen looks in the mirror. Not a pretty sight. Her quivery, bleary-eyed, ashen reflection looks back at her. As Gwen stares at herself, her Reflection starts LAUGHING at her. Gwen steps away from the mirror, unnerved.

INT. GWEN'S BATHROOM - DAY

Gwen is asleep on the tile floor. There's a KNOCK on the bedroom door. Bobbie Jean pokes her head in the room.

BOBBIE JEAN
 (chipper, sing song)
 Wakey, wakey, rise and shine, the
 sun's burning your eyes out!

Gwen lifts her head up off the tile, miserable.

EXT. PARKER HOUSE - DAY

While the Patients circle up, Gwen emerges, feeling like shit, and makes a desperate bee-line for the Cafeteria.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

PATIENTS are lined up, getting their breakfast. Gwen goes to the front of the line and barks at the COOK.

GWEN

Hey. Where's the coffee?

PATIENT

They don't serve it. Caffeine's mood-altering.

GWEN

Yes, I know. That's the point.

INT. CAMPUS SHOP - DAY

Books, cards, clothes, all recovery-related. Each t-shirt has a slogan on it: "Easy Does It," "One Day at a Time," "Let Go and Let God." Gwen is with the CHIPPER SALESLADY who's looking in an EMPTY CIGARETTE DISPLAY.

SALESLADY

Sorry, we're fresh out.

GWEN

Fresh out? That's impossible. Cigarettes are the addict's number one basic food group.

SALESLADY

That explains it, then. Gum?

EXT. BLUE RIDGE, MAIN BUILDING - DAY

Gwen emerges with a bag of candy. She shoves Starbursts in her mouth as she heads back to Parker house.

INT. PARKER HOUSE, BETTY'S BOOTH - DAY

CLOSE ON A CHORES LIST. Next to the name "Gwen C." it says "Downstairs Toilets."

Gwen enters, keeping to herself. She walks past the list without looking at it, past all her dorm mates hard at work on their chores, and heads upstairs. Roshonda steps in front of her, holding a glass jar full of money.

ROSHONDA

Unmade bed, clothes all over. I'm giving you an F for daily inspection and fining you a dollar. Pay up.

(CONTINUED)

GWEN

You want my money?

ROSHONDA

You know I do. I'm house nanny. It's my job to fine anyone who isn't pulling their own weight. Those are the rules. If you don't like them, maybe you better find yourself another treatment center.

Gwen glares at her, then angrily digs out her wallet.

GWEN

Tell you what. Take a five. I don't plan on cleaning all week.

She shoves a five at her and heads back outside. On her way out, she STEALS a pack of CIGARETTES from a table.

EXT. BLUE RIDGE - DAY

Gwen sits under a tree, smoking, chewing her candy, hating the world. After few chews, she sees, nearby:

A TAUT BLACK MAN doing Martial Arts. He looks focused and dangerous. Gwen watches, then goes over to him.

GWEN

Hey.

He turns to her, a little irked at the interruption. This is CORNELL WILLIAMS -- ageless, focused as a laser.

GWEN (cont'd)

Have you been here a long time?

CORNELL

Yes.

GWEN

So is it really tight? Or is there, like, a black market thing going on?

CORNELL

What are you looking for?

GWEN

Anything. I'm having a lousy day.

CORNELL

Drugs.

GWEN

Or, you know, booze. Whatever.

CORNELL

Your counselor will kick you out if he finds you using.

(CONTINUED)

GWEN
So I won't discuss it with him.

CORNELL
Too late.

INT. CORNELL'S OFFICE - DAY

CLOSE ON GWEN'S POLAROID, on her FILE. WIDEN to see Cornell's office. It's monastic in its lack of ornament.

CORNELL
So, ask the black man how to cop, huh?
Cornell is at his bookshelf, gathering a stack of books. Gwen is in the office with him, chomping on her candy.

GWEN
I didn't ask you because you're black. I asked you because you were alone and looked relatively cool.

CORNELL
You think drugs are cool?

GWEN
No. I think they're very naughty. This is a horrible office, you know that?

CORNELL
I meant what I said before. You use, you're out.

GWEN
Fair enough.

CORNELL
And I'll know if you're using. I promise I'll know.

GWEN
Superhuman powers. Congratulations.
He hands her the STACK OF READING MATERIAL.

GWEN
What's all this?

CORNELL
Literature about your disease. The AA Big Book. Worksheets. And a journal I want you to write in daily.

GWEN
Is this mandatory?

CORNELL
What else you gonna do with your time?

(CONTINUED)

GWEN
I don't know, birdwatch? I think I saw a yellow-bellied smack-shooter this morning.

He locks her in his glare, unamused.

CORNELL
Gwen. God never gives us a heavier load than we are able to bear. Giving you this disease is His way of telling you how strong you can be. You owe it to Him to meet His expectations.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE MAIN BUILDING - DAY

Gwen heads back toward Parker house with the reading material and her bag of candy.

GWEN
Cornell, my friend, I don't owe God a fucking thing.

She throws everything but the journal into a TRASH CAN.

INT. GROUP THERAPY ROOM - DAY

Gwen, chomping on candy, is seated in a circle with Andrea, Oliver, Bobbie Jean, Roshonda, Daniel, Gerhardt and EVELYN, the bosomy, overly attentive group leader.

ON BOBBIE JEAN, smiling politely, though tense.

BOBBIE JEAN
It wasn't a problem till Emmett took up with the girl. That's when it turned. Those nights when he was out with her and I was home with the TV.

ON ANDREA, anxiously biting her nails down to the quick.

ANDREA
This guy I was seeing in, like, sixth grade? Pettie? He turned me on.

ON ROSHONDA, cough as nails.

ROSHONDA
Everybody else in the neighborhood was tweaking, but not me. I had plans. I was gonna be a doctor.

ON GERHARDT, fighting tears, unable to talk.

ON BOBBIE JEAN again, smiling despite her pain.

BOBBIE JEAN

... I figured we'd ride it out. So when he said he was moving her in with us and I could stay or leave, well -- I see now I shoulda left ...

ON OLIVER, leaning back in his chair, casual and blase.

OLIVER

... any party worth being at there'd be a bowl of Peruvian flake on the coffee table. Usually right by the nuts.

ON GERHARDT, on the verge of tears, struggling to talk.

ON ROSHONDA, continuing.

ROSHONDA

One day I'm kicking it with my girls and this dude Tyler comes by slangin', and I say no, like I always do, and my friend says, girl, who you kidding? You ever seen anyone from here end up a doctor? Ain't no fucking way. And she was right. Wasn't no way.

ON BOBBIE JEAN again, finding it harder to smile.

BOBBIE JEAN

... You try staying sober when you're doing your husband's girlfriend's wash. That girl had panties I couldn't fit my big toe into.

ON DANIEL, staring at Evelyn, hostile.

DANIEL

Do I look like I feel like sharing?

ON BOBBIE JEAN, wiping a tear with an lace handkerchief.

BOBBIE JEAN

Now they're gone. And so are my boys. It's just me in that big old house, starting over all by myself.

(beat)

You know I've never even had my own bank account?

ON GERHARDT, now SOBBING so hard his body is HEAVING. A fountain of tears and snot. A massive release. As he gives into the grief, he leans over onto Gwen's shoulder and sobs on it. Gwen looks around the room, horrified.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE GROUP THERAPY ROOM - DAY

The door opens. Gwen beats it away as fast as she can, wiping Gerhardt's snot off her shoulder as she goes.

INT. GWEN'S ROOM - DAY

Gwen is on her bed, looking over TEN PARTY INVITATIONS. Behind her, Andrea is pulling on leggings.

ANDREA
Do you need to borrow some sweats?

GWEN
No.

ANDREA
You're gonna work out in jeans?

GWEN
I'm not working out.

ANDREA
You should. It's good here. They've got all this cool equipment and classes and stuff. Most places, they just make you walk around some dumb track for an hour a day.

GWEN
You know this from experience?

ANDREA
Yeah. This is my fourth rehab center.

GWEN
There's a glowing endorsement of the process.

ANDREA
It's different this time. All those other times my Mom put me in. This is the first time I did it myself. That's the only way it works, if you're doing it for yourself.

Over the PA:

BETTY (O.S.)
Two o'clock. Exercise.

ANDREA
They check the rooms.

INT. GYM - DAY

While Rod Stewart's "Do Ya Think I'm Sexy" BLARES, about THIRTY PATIENTS do aerobics. Among them: Andrea works out hard; Bobbie Jean, new to exercise, is following as best she can; Gerhardt is pouring his pelvis into every move; and Oliver is in back, watching the women's asses.

EXT. GYM - DAY

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

While the MUSIC thumps through the wall, Gwen sits in the bushes, fighting the JITTERS with CANDY and CIGARETTES. She has the INVITATIONS spread out in front of her.

She looks at one. It's to the Details Holiday Party in the Puck Building. Gwen takes another pull off her cigarette, then starts to write in the JOURNAL.

GWEN (V.O.)

The Puck Building was the spot to trot to Thursday night, for Details Holiday do. Mixing with the hoi polloi were the famous and fabulous, including ...

She thinks, then cocks her head toward the music.

GWEN (V.O.) (cont'd)

... Rod Stewart -- how does he get his hair to do that? -- and his lovely gal Rachel Hunter, who was wearing ...

As she ponders, two WOMEN power-walk by. One is wearing leopard-print leggings.

GWEN (V.O.) (cont'd)

... leopard print leggings. Thank God for Supermodels.

She grabs a handful of candy, and continues.

EXT. GYM - NIGHT

The candy bag is empty. Gwen's sitting there, her coat pulled tight around her. About TWELVE BUTTS are stubbed out in the ground around her. She stubs out the one she's smoking, then reaches into the pack. Empty.

INT. PARKER HOUSE, HALLWAY - NIGHT

As Gwen heads back, Oliver's door opens and a FEMALE PATIENT from aerobics emerges, looking satisfied. Gwen catches eyes with Oliver, who's in his doorway in a monogrammed bathrobe that's flapping open, revealing all.

OLIVER

(with a smile)

Just lending her my Big Book.

Oh, please. Gwen walks by without even pausing.

EXT. BLUE RIDGE, PARKING LOT - DAY

Visiting day. There are lots of CARS in the lot.

EXT. PARKER HOUSE - DAY

Groups of PATIENTS with VISITORS are all over the campus.

A series of images from the Parker House porch:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

- * Bobbie Jean gets a big hug from two MEN IN THEIR EARLY 30's -- her sons.
- * Gerhardt greets ANOTHER MAN who looks exactly like him.
- * Oliver walks by the building with his arm around his obviously-wealthy, beautiful GIRLFRIEND.
- * Daniel smokes a cigarette alone.

INT. PARKER HOUSE, MAIN ROOM - DAY

More VISITORS inside. A lone patient sits in the corner, in his bathrobe, playing a depressing riff on a guitar.

IN THE KITCHEN AREA, Gwen is eating from a box of crackers, looking for something else to munch on.

The FRONT DOOR OPENS and Jasper enters.

JASPER

Who the hell do you have to know to get a drink around here?

Everyone turns to look, in horror.

GWEN

Jasper!

She runs to him and throws her arms around him. They playfully tumble all over each other, into the wall, then fall over a chair and crumple to the ground, LAUGHING.

Lying on the floor, he plants a huge kiss on her, and slips A BOTTLE OF PILLS into her pocket. She feels them.

GWEN

God, I love you.

EXT. BLUE RIDGE - DAY

Gwen and Jasper are walking along the edge of the pond.

JASPER

Where are all the celebrities?

GWEN

Can you believe it? There are none.

JASPER

Oh, come on. Don't they know the only thing anyone wants from rehab is a good coked-out star story? Elizabeth Taylor, weeping in group about how she never felt beautiful. Never, not one single day.

Gwen laughs.

(CONTINUED)

GWEN

God, it's good to laugh. Nobody here laughs.

JASPER

That's because there's nothing funny about addiction. Unless you're wasted, in which case everything's a fucking gas.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Full of patients and visitors. It's very social. A Biker-Guy Patient is introducing Cornell to his Mother. Evelyn is sitting with a Family.

Gwen and Jasper are off in a corner by themselves. She's flipping through mail he's brought. He's looking at the column she wrote.

GWEN

Just type it up and fax it in from my place. The Weekly's number is programmed in.

JASPER

So -- about the fact that none of this is -- how to do I put this -- true?

GWEN

Hey, what choice do I have? I can't risk losing my job. My insurance only covers 80% of this. The other two thousand bucks I have to cough up myself. Somehow. Jesus. Like I don't have enough problems.

While she looks it over, he pokes at the food.

JASPER

Is the food always this bad?

GWEN

Yes. Did you check my machine?

JASPER

Oh, yeah. Here.

Jasper hands her a piece of paper. She scans it.

GWEN

Huh. Nothing from Lily.

JASPER

Hunh-uh. You know at Betty Ford, they make you omelets to order.

(CONTINUED)

GWEN
(unamused)
Thanks, I'll keep that in mind for my next DUI. You're sure this is all of them?

JASPER
Yeah.

GWEN
Damn.

Her mood darkens. Jasper keeps poking at his plate.

JASPER
You should call the ACLU. This definitely qualifies as cruel and unusual punishment.

GWEN
Jasper. I know the food sucks. This whole place sucks. I'm stuck on the Island of Misfit Toys here, and it doesn't help to have you constantly reminding me how miserable it is.

JASPER
I thought I was being funny.

GWEN
Well, I don't want funny right now. I want home. I want lattes and my own shower and that fucking neighbor who steals my paper and I want -- I want --

She's tied herself into a knot. Jasper stands.

JASPER
I know what you want.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Jasper pulls her toward his rented convertible.

GWEN
I'm not supposed to leave.

JASPER
You're not supposed to have pills in your pocket, either.

He gets into the car. Gwen looks to see if anyone is watching. The coast is clear.

GWEN
Okay, but no drinking.

JASPER
Abso-posi-lutely no drinking.

INT. PARKER HOUSE, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

The RESIDENTS are gathered around, discussing visiting day. Bobbie Jean is in tears.

BOBBIE JEAN

... a mother should be the one telling her kids she's proud of them, not the other way around. Having my boys say that to me just made me see what a rotten person I am.

ROSHONDA

Bobbie Jean, baby, if you were a rotten person, you wouldn't be here right now. The rotten people are the ones who aren't even trying.

The FRONT DOOR OPENS, and Gwen enters, VERY DRUNK. Everyone looks. She sees immediately tries her best to act sober. And fails miserably.

GWEN

Hi.

INT. PARKER HOUSE, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Everyone is doing chores. Oliver looks at Gerhardt.

OLIVER

Think they'll kick her out?

GERHARDT

They better. A rule's a rule.

OLIVER

Maybe she had a good reason.

ROSHONDA

A good reason? Boy, are you learning anything here?

INT. CORNELL'S OFFICE - DAY

Gwen is talking to Cornell. He's very calm. She's struggling with a vicious hangover.

CORNELL

Ordinarily, you'd be gone by now. But with a court referral, the judge needs a day to arrange your transfer.

GWEN

So what do I do in the meantime?

CORNELL

Whatever you need to do to get yourself ready for prison life.

(CONTINUED)

GWEN

I'm sorry -- did you say prison?

CORNELL

Yes, I did.

GWEN

Oh, no. No way. My sentence was 28 days of rehab. If you want to kick me out, fine, but send me to another treatment place.

CORNELL

I was very clear. You use, you lose.

GWEN

But I didn't use. I just ... drank. A little. And I hadn't eaten, because the food here, let's face it, sucks -- not my fault -- so the little I did drink went straight to my head.

CORNELL

Be packed by tomorrow morning.

He gets back to work. End of conversation.

GWEN

Come on, Cornell. Can't we can this out? What do they pay you here? It can't be much. Maybe a little extra to help with the holidays ...

He turns around slowly, glares at her.

CORNELL

Get out of my office.

GWEN

No, look -- I don't belong in jail. I don't even belong here. Yes, I drink a lot; I'm a writer; that's what we do. But I'm not like everyone else here. I can control myself. When it comes to all this. If I wanted to, I could. I would. I will. If I want to. I can.

(he just stares)

I can.

(more staring)

Oh, fuck you, you Kung Fu Zen Master freak. What do you know about me? Nothing. Not one God damn thing.

She gets up and leave the room.

EXT. BLUE RIDGE REHAB CENTER - DAY

GROUPS OF PATIENTS are in circles in front of their dorms, all saying the Serenity Prayer. As Gwen huffs out of the main building and heads to Parker House, the huddles break and each dorm YELLS its DORM CHANT:

LEWIS HOUSE PATIENTS
I USED TO DRINK, I USED TO USE! BUT
NOW I'VE SAID GOODBYE TO BOOZE!

MARSHALL HOUSE PATIENTS
TOGETHER! WE'RE BETTER! WE'RE BETTER!
TOGETHER! NOOOOOO DRUGS!

HALL HOUSE PATIENTS
YOU CAN KEEP YOUR DRUGS AND YOUR
WHISKEY SOURS! WE GOT US A HIGHER
POWER! YAAAAAY GOD!

She reaches Parker House just as they start to chant:

PARKER HOUSE PATIENTS
HEY, HEY, WHADDAYA KNOW, PILLS AND
BOOZE HAVE GOT TO GO! HEY, HEY,
WHADDAYA SAY, SOBER IS THE ONLY WAY!

She shoves open the door and goes inside.

INT. GWEN'S ROOM - DAY

Gwen enters and goes straight to the jacket she was wearing the day before. She finds the BOTTLE OF VICODIN. She shakes a few pills into her hand, but pauses before taking them. She stares at them. Then instead of taking them, she throws THE PILLS AND THE BOTTLE out the window.

EXT. PARKER HOUSE, BENEATH GWEN'S WINDOW - DAY

The bottle hits a rock. Pills scatter through the grass.

INT. GWEN'S ROOM - DAY

Gwen shuts the window. There. Piece of cake. She sits there a bit, not sure what to do with herself.

INT. GWEN'S BATHROOM - DAY

Gwen's in the shower. She looks down at her hands. They're SHAKING. She sticks them in her armpits.

INT. GWEN'S ROOM - DAY

She's on her bed, in a t-shirt and underwear. Her hair is wet. She still has no idea what to do with herself.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

36.

She digs up a pack of gum. She sticks a piece in her mouth. Chews. Then, desperate for something to do, she starts folding and tearing the gum wrapper.

INT. GWEN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Andrea is getting dressed after a shower. She hangs her swimsuit on a hook and heads out into:

INT. GWEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Andrea gets a notebook from her desk, then looks over at Gwen, who's still on her bed, working the gum wrappers into a GUM CHAIN, which is now three feet long.

EXT. PARKER HOUSE - NIGHT

It's RAINING. Patients converge on the Main Building.

CORNELL (O.S.)
I'm Cornell. I'm an addict and an alcoholic.

PATIENTS (O.S.)
HI CORNELL!

INT. LECTURE HALL - NIGHT

CORNELL is at a podium, in front of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. The audience is full of PATIENTS.

CORNELL
I've been clean and sober eight years,
four months, seventeen days and ...
(checks his watch)
... twenty hours. Give or take.

LAUGHTER and APPLAUSE.

INT. GWEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Gwen, still on her bed, has run out of wrappers. She lies there, chewing her nails, agitated as all get-out.

As she lies there, she starts thinking about:

INT. MOTEL ROOM (VISITING DAY) - NIGHT

Cheesy as Hell. The door opens. Jasper and Gwen stumble in, LAUGHING, eating corn dogs. They fall on the bed.

JASPER
Christ, look at this place. I feel like I'm in a Dolly Parton song.

GWEN
The sheets smell like chicken.

(CONTINUED)

JASPER

Fantastic.

He rolls over and starts KISSING her. One hand pushes up her shirt; the other reaches around to her ass. It's nothing they haven't done before, but it's suddenly all awkward. Their hands feel huge. The room goes quiet.

Gwen's hands twitch uncomfortably on Jasper's back. No placement feels right. When he yanks her shirt off, she covers her chest with her arms, oddly shy. Everything's weird. After an awkward beat, Jasper sits up.

JASPER

Hey. Check it out.

He pulls out a bottle of WILD TURKEY out of his bag.

JASPER (cont'd)

I know, verboten, but you can't have tawdry sex in a cheesy Southern motel without at least one sip of Southern moonshine. It's actually against the law down here.

He takes a big sip. Gwen pauses for a moment. Then:

GWEN

Well. Can't go ending up on the wrong side of the law.

She reaches for the bottle and takes a HUGE SLUG.

CUT TO:

INT. GWEN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Gwen turns on the hot water, full blast. For the noise.

INT. LECTURE HALL - NIGHT

Cornell is still talking to the room.

CORNELL

... I'd tell myself I wouldn't get fucked up. But then something would happen -- or nothing would happen -- and I'd get the feeling ...

INT. GWEN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

The faucet and shower are on. Gwen leans on the door.

CORNELL (O.S.) (cont'd)

You all know the feeling, don't you? Your skin's screaming; your brain's on fire; your hands are shaking ...

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CONTINUED:

38

Gwen slides down the door and sits on the floor.

INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

Cornell is still talking.

CORNELL (cont'd)

... and you know that if anyone had a clue how wrong it felt to be sober, they wouldn't even think of asking you to stay that way ...

INT. GWEN'S ROOM - DAY

WATER'S STILL RUNNING. Gwen paces, scratching her arms.

CORNELL (O.S.) (cont'd)

... They'd say, shit man, do it -- drink, use, shoot up, pop, sniff -- do whatever you need to do to feel like a normal human being again.

She looks out the window. It's RAINING, but she can see the Vicodin on the ground. She heads out of the room.

INT. PARKER HOUSE, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Gwen comes in, sees Betty at her desk, blocking the exit.

GWEN

Damn it.

Gwen retreats back into the shadows.

INT. GWEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Gwen comes in and peers outside, spots a nearby tree.

CORNELL (O.S.)

So I did. Day after day and night after night after night ...

Gwen opens the window and climbs out.

INT. LECTURE HALL - NIGHT

Cornell is still at the podium.

CORNELL (cont'd)

... I didn't care about the consequences. I knew whatever they were, they couldn't be worse than not using ...

EXT. PARKER HOUSE - NIGHT

Gwen is on the slippery sill. The branch is just out of reach.

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CONTINUED:

39.

She looks down, takes a deep breath, then jumps ... and catches the branch! She hangs there, in the rain, suspended over the Vicodin, for a relieved moment.

CORNELL (O.S.) (cont'd)
But then something happened ...

THE BRANCH BREAKS. Gwen tumbles downward in SLOW MOTION.
INT. LECTURE HALL - NIGHT

Cornell is talking.

CORNELL (cont'd)
One night, I woke up on a sidewalk.
No idea where I was or how I got there. And when I tried to get up, I couldn't move. I looked down and I saw my leg bent backwards at the knee. And my shirt was covered in blood ...

EXT. PARKER HOUSE - NIGHT

Gwen is falling from the tree IN SLOW MOTION, splintering branches on her way down.

CORNELL (O.S.) (cont'd)
... and as I'm lying there, wondering what comes next, I heard a voice ...

A CRACK OF LIGHTNING lights up the night. Gwen's eyes are wide open and terrified.

CORNELL (O.S.) (cont'd)
... It said, brother, this is not a way to live ...

OUTSIDE PARKER HOUSE,

Gwen lands with a dreadful THUD. ALL NOISE STOPS. She lies there, motionless, staring up at the RAIN POURING DOWN ON HER with big, terrified eyes.

CORNELL (O.S.) (cont'd)
... This is a way to die.

And then, out of nowhere, two BIG STRONG ARMS reach down and pick her up. Very slowly, she floats upward.

INT. MAIN BUILDING - NIGHT

THE ATTENDANT looks up to see "STEADY" EDDIE FOY entering, with Gwen in his arms. He's late 20's, tall and muscular in that corn-fed, God-bless-American way, wearing a Phillies jacket, carrying a Phillies duffel.

DESK ATTENDANT
Can I help you?

(CONTINUED)

EDDIE

I'm Eddie Foy. I'm checking in.

DESK ATTENDANT

You can't bring a girl into treatment with you, Eddie.

INT. MAIN BUILDING, EXAM ROOM - NIGHT

Gwen is on the exam table. Dr. Stavros is wrapping her ankle. ALL SHE CAN HEAR IS HER OWN BREATHING. She sees her reflection in a glass door: she's in a dirty t-shirt, with dirt in her hair and grass stains on her face. It's like looking at a different person.

DR. STAVROS

It's just a sprain. Keep it wrapped and stay off it for a few days.

INT. GWEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Andrea's asleep. Gwen hobbles over to her bed on crutches. The WINDOW IS CLOSED. She sits across from it and stares at her own HOLLOW AND CHANGED REFLECTION.

EXT. BLUE RIDGE - DAY

The sun is rising. A new day.

INT. GWEN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Gwen is still in the same position. She hasn't budged.

INT. MAIN BUILDING, HALLWAY - DAY

Morning. Cornell comes down the hall. He sees Gwen on the floor outside his door, stops. She forces a smile.

GWEN

Question. What kind of person jumps out of a building to get drugs?

No answer. Gwen makes a BUZZING game-show noise.

GWEN (cont'd)

(very forced)

I'm sorry, out of time. The answer is, ding, ding, ding, the addict kind.

No reaction. Her forced smile disappears. She closes her eyes and fights a fear that's overwhelming her.

GWEN (cont'd)

I don't want to leave. And it's not because I don't want to go to prison. Although -- I don't want to go to prison. It's because I could have killed myself last night because I can't sit alone in a room without ...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GWEN (cont'd)

(beat)

A human being should be able to do that. Sit alone. Be still. A human being should be able to breathe.

She tries to take a breath. It comes out all erratic.

GWEN (cont'd)

I can't breathe.

(beat)

I know this is going to sound like a eleventh-hour ploy, but -- I think if I go to prison, I'll die. And the only thing I know for sure is that I don't want to die. So I'm begging you. I think I'm begging for my life. Please let me stay.

ON CORNELL, thinking.

INT. GROUP THERAPY ROOM - DAY

ON EVELYN.

EVELYN

Wow. Okay. So. Lots of feelings in the room today. Who wants to start?

WIDEN to see Gerhardt, Daniel, Oliver, Bobbie Jean, Andrea and Roshonda all staring at:

GWEN, sitting among them. She's still very shaky.

DANIEL

I do. I'm pissed.

EVELYN

Okay, pissed. Good. Why?

DANIEL

Because no fucking way should she be here.

EVELYN

Okay, but tell her.

DANIEL

No fucking way should you be here.

GERHARDT

That's right. There's a rule. No using. You broke it.

Gwen's not really in fighting shape.

GWEN

I'm ... sorry ...

ROSHONDA

Sorry my ass. All you've done since you got here is sit around while the rest of us work our butts off.

GWEN

I know. I -- I -- I realize ...

ROSHONDA

And now you expect us to be glad that they let you stay?

Tears start to form in Gwen's eyes. She struggles.

GWEN

I don't expect, no --

GERHARDT

I don't think you're giving. I don't think you're a giving person.

Gwen wipes a tear, tries not to wither under the attack.

GWEN

I'm -- I'm trying --

ROSHONDA

I'm not even sure you have niceness. I don't feel niceness from you.

GWEN

Maybe I should --

(to Evelyn)

Should I find a different group?

DANIEL

That's a great idea. Spread your negativity even farther. Maybe, if you try, you can ruin the experience for the entire patient popu--

Gwen loses the battle and breaks down.

GWEN

HEY! I am HAVING a BAD DAY! I'm having the WORST GOD DAMN DAY of my whole GOD DAMN LIFE. So if it's not too much to ask, would you all please just BACK THE FUCK OFF!

SILENCE. Then the room bursts into APPLAUSE.

INT. PARKER HOUSE, HALLWAY - DAY

Group's over. Gwen's struggling on her crutches. As the other Patients leave the room, they all offer an encouraging word -- "great release", "excellent honesty".

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Gwen watches them all down the hall. This is going to take some getting used to.

INT. PARKER HOUSE, HALLWAY - DAY

As Gwen comes down the hall on her crutches, she sees Eddie going into his room, in sweats.

GWEN
Oh. Hey.
(he stops)
Listen, I, um -- I should thank you.
I mean -- this may sound -- I don't know -- but the truth is, last night?
It, um -- it ... changed my life.

Eddie looks at her a moment, then shuts his eyes in frustration and bangs his head against the wall.

EDDIE
Aw, Hell.

GWEN
Excuse me?

EDDIE
Please tell me we were safe.

GWEN
What do you mean?

EDDIE
(taking that as a no)
Oh, great. Fan-tastic. Stupid --
(looks at her)
You're not, like, a paternity-suit kind of gal, are you? Cause I really -
- I mean, man, that would just --

GWEN
(confused)
What are you talking about?

The thought occurs to Eddie he may have read this wrong.

EDDIE
Why? What're you talking about?

GWEN
I'm talking about last night. I'm --
You don't remember last night, do you?

EDDIE
I got a little fucked up on the plane.

GWEN
Of course you did.
(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GWEN (cont'd)
Well, relax. It wasn't -- nothing happened.

EDDIE
You sure?

GWEN
I tend to remember things like that.
Eddie breathes a sigh of relief.

EDDIE
Phew, Thank God.
(off her offended look)
Nothing personal. I just made this promise to myself. No more winding up naked with some girl, I don't even know what her name is.

GWEN
Noble goal. Best of luck with it.
She turns and heads down the hall, away from him.

EDDIE
What were you thanking me for then?

GWEN
Nothing. Never mind.
She hops away on her crutches, shaking her head.

INT. GWEN'S ROOM - DAY

Gwen is sitting on her bed. She grabs her journal, opens it up, and starts writing.

GWEN (O.S.)
Day 1. My stomach hurts. My fingers ache. My scalp is crawling off my head.
(beat)
If God exists, He's got some explaining to do.

She puts down her journal, then looks around the room. Her side is a mess. She hooks a shirt with her crutch and starts folding.

INT. GWEN'S ROOM - LATER

Her room is clean. She's back on her bed, wondering what to do now. After a moment, she opens her journal up to a fresh page, stares at it, then starts writing.

ON THE PAGE: "Dear Lily ..."

HOUSE, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

(ne) is full Patients, chatting, laughing. It looks
(ik) like a cocktail party, only instead of drinks, everyone
is holding a BAG OF CANDY like a highball.

A bathrobe-wearing Guitar Guy is in the corner again,
plucking out that same depressing riff. Eddie is seated
at a table, trying to read his orientation materials, but
Daniel is getting in his face.

DANIEL

It was the WORLD SERIES! You don't
get fucked up for the WORLD SERIES!

OLIVER

(to Roshonda)

But before open-heart surgery, well,
that's a different thing entirely.

Gwen enters with a letter in her hand, talks to no one.

EDDIE

Hey, I said I was sorry, man, what do
you want from me?

DANIEL

The two thousand dollars I had riding
on that game wouldn't hurt.

Gwen goes to the outgoing mail bin. Over the bin is a
sign that reads: "YOUR ADDRESS HERE: BLUE RIDGE
REHABILITATION CENTER, P.O. BOX 6032 ..."

ROSHONDA

Hey, Daniel, I got an idea. Let's see
for once in your life if you can shut
the fuck up.

Gwen writes the return address on the letter, then puts
it in the mail bin. It's addressed to "Lily Peterson".

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

The AUDIENCE is full of PATIENTS. A LECTURER is showing
a DIAGRAM OF THE BRAIN. Gwen is seated, taking notes.

INT. GROUP THERAPY - DAY

Gwen is seated between Gerhardt and Roshonda, who are
ARGUING across her. A no-holds-barred screaming match.
Gwen sits stock-still, trying to stay out of harm's way.

EXT. PARKER HOUSE - NIGHT

Chanting time. Gwen stands in a circle with all the
other Parker House residents, self-consciously CHANTING
along, feeling like an idiot.

EXT. BLUE RIDGE, BY THE GYM - DAY

Oliver is practicing golf. Whoosh. A nice drive into the lake. Beside him, Daniel lines up a drive and SWINGS. Shank. The ball careens off to the side.

DANIEL
COCKFUCKINGSUCKERSHIT!

He HURLS the club into a tree.

NEARBY, about TWENTY PATIENTS, including some from Parker House, are playing volleyball. Gwen is on the side of the court, icing her ankle, writing in her journal.

GWEN (V.O.)
Day 3. For the first time in years,
my feet weren't numb when I woke up.
They hurt instead. Is that better?

Gwen glances up, sees Bobbie Jean make a spastic play for the ball. Some players laugh. Gwen doesn't react.

GWEN (V.O.) (cont'd)
... I don't feel like me. I'm not
having fun. None of this is fun.

Gwen goes back to her journal. Her V.O. continues over:

INT. GWEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Andrea is asleep. The sound of RUNNING WATER again.

GWEN (V.O.)
If you're not having fun ...

INT. GWEN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

The SINK IS RUNNING loudly. Gwen is sitting on the floor, looking like hell, rocking back and forth.

GWEN (V.O.) (cont'd)
... what's the frigging point?

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Daniel, Bobbie Jean, Oliver and Gerhardt are eating.

BOBBIE JEAN
How many shows a week do you do?

GERHARDT
Fourteen. Two a night. It's why I
started with the speedy gonzales. To
keep my energy up.

AT THE SALAD BAR, Gwen is on one side, struggling with her tray and crutches. Eddie is on the other.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She reaches for the dressing, a crutch clatters to the floor. As she bends to pick it up, her tray almost falls.

EDDIE
Need a hand?

GWEN
(furious)
No. I'm fine.

AT THE TABLE,

conversation continues.

BOBBIE JEAN
Well, just cause drugs were involved
doesn't mean you shouldn't be proud of
the work.

DANIEL
Proud? For waving his U-Boat around
in public FOURTEEN TIMES A WEEK?

BOBBIE JEAN
His what?

DANIEL
His DICK. Jesus.

OLIVER
Gerhardt's a stripper, Bobbie Jean.

BOBBIE JEAN
(embarrassed)
Oh. I guess I did not realize that.

GERHARDT
I'm a dancer. It's an art form.

BOBBIE JEAN
I'm sure it is. I'm just not very
artistically sophisticated is all.

There's a HUGE CRASH. They turn to see GWEN, having
dropped her tray. She stares at the mess she made, then
bolts from the cafeteria.

EXT. CAFETERIA - NIGHT

Gwen is heading away from the building when Bobbie Jean
comes out after her. She catches up.

BOBBIE JEAN
Gwen? Come on back, darlin'. I'll
get you another tray.

GWEN
I'm not hungry.

(CONTINUED)

BOBBIE JEAN

Listen, I know how it feels to be all banged up with no one but yourself to blame. Once, I got so drunk, I mistook our barn for the house. I wandered into the bull's stall and took off all my clothes. Startled him so bad he kicked my teeth out.

She takes out her four front teeth. Gwen stares at her gap-toothed smile a second, then heads back to the dorm.

INT. CORNELL'S OFFICE - DAY

Gwen is pacing around Cornell's office on ONE CRUTCH. He's sitting at his desk, following her with his eyes.

GWEN

Rehabilitation my ass. This --

She tugs at her HOSPITAL ID BRACELET.

GWEN (cont'd)

This is a joke. There's no treatment here. I'm doing everything I'm supposed to, and guess what? I'm no better. I still can't sleep. My chest feels like I've been run over by a semi. I have no idea what to do with my hands, they're always in the way, I wanna fucking cut them off. And I know I'd feel better if I could just have a drink, but I can't, because you won't let me, but you also won't make it so I don't feel this way, which sucks.

CORNELL

Just take it one day at a time, and --

GWEN

Yeah, okay, what exactly is that supposed to mean anyway? Like there's an alternative. Like living two or three days at a time is an option. The way you people talk --

CORNELL

The language will start to make sense to you, I promise.

GWEN

Yeah? Well, that terrifies me. I'd rather be a drunk than someone who can say "Let Go and Let God" without cringing.

Cornell leans back in his chair, takes a look at her.

(CONTINUED)

CORNELL

How are you getting along with your peers?

GWEN

Great. Yeah, I'm building some nice relationships, especially with the homicidal psychopath surgeon. That is one special guy.

CORNELL

I want you to pick one of them to talk to about how you're feeling.

GWEN

I don't need a new friend, Cornell. I need something real -- a shot or a pill or a lobotomy --

CORNELL

You can't do this alone.

GWEN

Well, I can't do it with anyone over at Parker House, either, believe me. Bunch of fucking lunatics.

CORNELL

The person who saved my life was an 82-year-old nun. We had nothing in common, but she was strong, and I could lean on her.

(beat)

Find someone to lean on.

INT. GWEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Gwen's wide awake in bed, in a night panic, trying to calm herself down. She sits up, grabs one of the candies lying on Andrea's pillow. She pops it in her mouth, sucks on it, then reacts - yech - and spits it out.

INT. PARKER HOUSE, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Gwen enters. She opens a cupboard and grabs a box of Ginger Snaps. Then sees a GLOW coming from the TV area.

INT. PARKER HOUSE, TV AREA - NIGHT

Eddie's on the couch, squeezing the rubber ball, staring at the TV. Gwen pops her head in. He pauses the tape.

GWEN (cont'd)

(agitated)

I'm sorry. I didn't know anyone was -- I mean, I did; I saw the light from the TV, but -- what're you watching?

(CONTINUED)

EDDIE
Just game tapes. The club sends 'em.

GWEN
Oh. Huh.

He takes the tape out of the machine. Gwen stands there watching him. Feeling awkward.

GWEN (cont'd)
So, um -- you're a baseball pitcher?

EDDIE
Yup.

GWEN
That's -- I don't think I've ever met a baseball pitcher before. I met Spike Lee once. He goes to a lot of Knicks games.
(I'm an idiot)
But I guess that's ... different ...
(new tack)
Are you good?

EDDIE
Yeah. When I'm not jacked up.

GWEN
What do you do?

EDDIE
I'm a pitcher.

GWEN
No, I mean, drugs-wise.

EDDIE
Oh. Cocaine mostly.

GWEN
I'm booze. Primarily. But I'm not picky. I'll do anything in a pinch. Equal-opportunity abuser. Ginger Snap?

EDDIE
No, thanks.

He points to a wad of tobacco in his lip, then heads back to the couch and gathers up his videos.

GWEN (cont'd)
So -- what made you check in?

EDDIE
It got bad.

GWEN
Yeah? How bad?

EDDIE
Bad.

GWEN
Gimme an example.

EDDIE
How come?

GWEN
I don't know. Cause it's three in the morning and I have insomnia and it's the subject we're on.

He looks at her. Takes a beat.

EDDIE
I blew game six of the World Series. Then I wrecked my car. Then on Thanksgiving, my 8-year old nephew caught me doing a line off the bed of his Tonka truck.

GWEN
Okay, yeah. That's bad. But -- holidays -- everyone's bad then. A few Christmases ago, I peed in a box of kitty litter.

EDDIE
You what?

GWEN
At a party at my sister's house. Someone was in the bathroom. Seemed like a logical solution at the time.

Eddie just looks at her. She's immediately embarrassed.

GWEN
That's -- a funny story. Most people laugh when they hear it.

He nods, then picks up his videotapes, as if to leave.

GWEN
I mean, I was drunk. It's not like I do it all the time -- it was just ... are you going to bed?

EDDIE (cont'd)
Yeah, I'm pretty tired. Night.

GWEN
Good night.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

She watches him go. After a beat, she follows him.

INT. PARKER HOUSE, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Gwen comes out just as Eddie's climbing the stairs.

 GWEN
You carried me.

He stops, turns back to her.

 EDDIE
I what?

 GWEN
What I was thanking you for. You
picked me up off the ground. In your
arms. You carried me inside.
 (beat)
It was nice. It was maybe the nicest
thing anyone's ever done for me.
 (beat)
So ... thank you.

 EDDIE
Yeah. No sweat.

He looks at her a beat, then heads on upstairs, leaving
Gwen all alone.

EXT. PARKER HOUSE - DAY

Cold winter rain. Everyone's indoors.

INT. PARKER HOUSE, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Betty clicks on her PA. Speaks into the microphone:

 BETTY
Mail's here.

Patients THUNDER in from all directions and descend like
on a TABLE covered with LETTERS and PACKAGES.

-- DANIEL gets about TWENTY CARTONS OF CIGARETTES.

-- BOBBIE JEAN gets cookies, which she shares.

-- OLIVER gets a PACKAGE from Zabar's: smoked salmon,
capers, caviar, pumpernickel.

-- EDDIE gets more videotapes.

-- ANDREA gets A GREETING CARD IN A RED ENVELOPE.

Nothing for Gwen. She wanders over to Betty's office.

 GWEN
The outgoing mail does go out, right?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BETTY

No. We just call it outgoing to mess with you.

GWEN

Because I sent something, and --

Betty closes the door on her.

GWEN (cont'd)

-- yeah, thanks for your help.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - NIGHT

Gwen and Andrea are doing laundry. Andrea is looking at a FAMILY CHRISTMAS CARD PHOTO: Andrea is the oldest of four kids sitting with their Mother. Gwen peeks at it.

GWEN

Your family?

ANDREA

Yeah. It's our Christmas card.

GWEN

Your mom's pretty.

ANDREA

She used to be prettier. Now she's always tired. She's a nurse, so she works, like, crazy hard and pretty much always smells like the hospital.
(beat)

What's your mom do?

GWEN

Not much. She died when I was five.

ANDREA

So you were raised by your Dad?

GWEN

No, he split before my first birthday. My sister and I kind of shuttled around between cousins.

ANDREA

Jeez, no wonder you're so hostile

Andrea picks up her laundry basket and exits.

INT. GROUP THERAPY ROOM - DAY

Evelyn is arranging six chairs in the middle of the room.

EVELYN

Your cruise ship has sunk; this is the only lifeboat left. It holds six ...

(CONTINUED)

She looks at her group: Bobbie Jean, Andrea, Gerhardt, Daniel, Oliver, Eddie, Roshonda and Gwen.

EVELYN (cont'd)
... and there are eight of you.
Decide who gets the seats. Go.

Evelyn sits. An awkward beat. Then Andrea speaks up.

ANDREA
Okay, so -- remember in the Titanic?
Everyone kept running around yelling
women and children first.
(looking around smiling)
Oh, gee, look, there's only one person
here who's both those things.

DANIEL
You don't get saved just because
you're young and female. That's
retrogressive bullshit.

ANDREA
If we get stranded on an island, who
else is gonna propagate the species?
I'm young, I have all my fertility
left; face it, I'm your future.

OLIVER
That's more than a little scary.

Nobody raises any more objections. Andrea takes a seat.

DANIEL
Well, obviously, I get a seat too.

ROSHONDA
Why obviously?

DANIEL
Who else here has revived a clinically
dead patient with heart massage?
(no answer)
All right then.

Daniel takes a seat.

ANDREA
If Daniel's in the boat, Roshonda has
to be. She's the only one who can
talk sense to him.

ROSHONDA
Oh, no. I don't want my seat to be
because of him. I wanna be there on
my own merits.

EVELYN
Excellent, Roshonda.

DANIEL
Which are ...

ROSHONDA
Leadership abilities. I'm good at
motivating people. That's just as
important as heart massage.

DANIEL
Ha.

BOBBIE JEAN
She's right. Six addicts on a boat
are definitely gonna need supervision.

Everyone agrees that Roshonda deserves a seat. She sits.

OLIVER
Well, look, I can't do a damn thing.
But my family's worth 300 mil, and I'm
the only heir. They'd keep looking
for me forever.

DANIEL
Finally a compelling argument. Sit.

Oliver sits. There are two seats left. Gerhardt, Bobbie
Jean, Eddie and Gwen look at each other.

BOBBIE JEAN
I think it'd be best if I went down
with the cruise ship.

EVELYN
The point is to get in touch with your
strengths, Bobbie Jean. What makes
you valuable as a person.

BOBBIE JEAN
I realize that, and one of my best
assets is levelheadedness. There is
no way a 67-year old diabetic with
arthritis should be on that boat.

She sits with Evelyn, leaving Gerhardt, Eddie and Gwen.

EDDIE
I got a 99-mile-an-hour fastball.

Everyone looks at him blankly. Eddie thinks some more.

EDDIE (cont'd)
Plus I wrestled a bear in a bar once.

DANIEL
Who won?

Me. EDDIE

ROSHONDA
Sit right here. Any shark comes by,
you just punch him in the mouth.

Eddie sits. Gwen and Gerhardt look at the last seat.

DANIEL
Great. That leaves us with Linda the
Lush or the Solid Gold Dancer.

GERHARDT
Dancing is a very important art form.

DANIEL
NOT ON A BOAT, shit for brains.

GERHARDT
You might wash ashore, shit for brains
yourself. You'll need to keep fit
somehow.

DANIEL
Okay, that's it. No way. You are
definitely too stupid to be saved.

ROSHONDA
One more personal attack, Daniel, and
I'm throwing you overboard.

ANDREA
See? She's already kicking his ass.

ROSHONDA
(to Gwen)
How about you, girl? What can you do?

They all look at Gwen. She squirms under their gaze,
trying to come up with something. Everyone waits.

GWEN
I -- this isn't -- my kind of thing.

EVELYN
Just answer their question. What are
you good at?

There's a long silence.

ROSHONDA
Come on, girl, you can think of
something.

Gwen thinks, almost says something, but finally:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

GWEN
Nothing. Sorry.
(beat)
Bon voyage.

She goes and sits next to Bobbie Jean.

INT. PARKER HOUSE, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Patients are chatting, reading, doing workbooks. Guitar Guy's in his corner, doing his thing.

On one side of the room, Gerhardt is showing Bobbie Jean how to dance like he does in the club.

EXT. PARKER HOUSE, PORCH - SAME

Gwen is sitting alone, trying to write her column. But she can't focus. Finally, she gets up and goes to:

INT. CAMPUS STORE - NIGHT

Gwen makes her way over to the SELF-HELP BOOKS and looks them over. She locks in on one: "HOW TO BE YOUR OWN BEST FRIEND." She takes it off the shelf. From behind her:

EDDIE
Hey.

Gwen jumps and tries to put the book back, but just ends up knocking them all over. Eddie comes over to her.

EDDIE (cont'd)
Even I coulda come up with at least
three things that are good about you,
and I only just met you.

He picks up the book, hands it to her, then heads out.

EXT. BLUE RIDGE, PARKING LOT - DAY

CARS are filling up the lot. Another visiting day.

INT. GWEN'S ROOM - DAY

"How to Be Your Own Best Friend" is on Gwen's nightstand. Gwen is making her bed extremely neatly.

Andrea emerges from the bathroom. She's cut off her bleached hair, combed the dark roots into a bob, and taken out the eyebrow ring. She looks adorable.

GWEN
Wow.

ANDREA
(self-conscious)
Yeah.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

58.

ANDREA (cont'd)
Listen, could I borrow some clothes or something? My mom's coming today, and she's all freaky about how I dress.

Gwen turns to her, thinks.

GWEN
Will you let me wear those jeans of yours? The baggy ones?

ANDREA
Sure. Those would look good on you.

EXT. PARKER HOUSE, PORCH - DAY

Gwen, in Andrea's jeans, is pacing around the porch. She looks around the visitor-heavy campus and sees:

* Oliver with HIS FATHER, a stern, 60-ish statue of a man who's writing Oliver a check without looking at him.

* Eddie walking by with a very slick MAN IN AN ITALIAN SUIT and SUNGLASSES, carrying a briefcase.

* Roshonda's THREE KIDS running toward her. They jump all over her. Her ex-husband watches from a distance.

Gwen hears a match strike. She turns to see Daniel alone in a corner of the porch, lighting a cigarette.

GWEN
Hey, wanna give me one of those?

DANIEL
Get your own.

GWEN
You're just a walking advertisement of how not to be, you know that?

DANIEL
You're no personality primer yourself, babe.

Just then, Jasper BOUNDS up the stairs, carrying a Balducci's bag.

JASPER
There she is! There's my girl!

He throws his arms around her, just like the last time. They tumble to the ground, but this time, Gwen winces.

GWEN
Ow -- Jasper --

He plants a huge KISS on her lips, then smiles at her.

JASPER
So so so so so sorry.

EXT. BLUE RIDGE GROUNDS - DAY

Gwen and Jasper are walking down toward the lake. He has a carefree, jaunty air about him.

JASPER
... so I'm crossing the lobby, and I
pass Mrs. Lefkowitz from downstairs --

GWEN
The non-talker.

JASPER
Yeah, five years, not a peep. And she
stops in her tracks, looks at me, and
says, in this thick Yiddish accent
"Thanks God you got rid of the girl.
She's nothing but bad news."

He laughs. Gwen stop walking.

GWEN
That's not funny.

JASPER
Sure, it is.

GWEN
No. Jasper. Anonymous strangers
thinking I'm bad news is not funny.

JASPER
It is, believe me. Everyone I've told
has laughed really hard.

He takes her hand and keeps walking toward the lake.

EXT. ON THE LAKE - DAY

Gwen and Jasper are out on a rowboat. She's reading her
column in the WEEKLY. He's unpacking the bag of food.

JASPER
Reads like you were there, doesn't it?

GWEN
Yeah. Doesn't make my job feel very
important.

JASPER
It isn't important. Have some cheese.

Gwen takes a cracker. Jasper hands her a roll.

JASPER (cont'd)
No, have it on a roll.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GWEN
No. No bread. I'm getting fat.

JASPER
It's better with bread.

GWEN
Not if I don't want bread, it isn't.

JASPER
Come on, just have the bread.

He tries taking her cracker, but she won't let go.

GWEN
Jasper, I don't want the bread; I want this cracker.

JASPER
Fine. I'll have the bread. Break it open for me, will you?

GWEN
No. What's your problem?

JASPER
Just break open the bread.

She takes the roll from him. Opens it up. Stares at it. A DIAMOND RING has been baked into it.

GWEN
What is this?
(beat)
Jasper, this is a ring.

JASPER
Yup.

Gwen stares at the ring in the bread.

GWEN
A diamond -- are you ... proposing?

JASPER
Yeah. I am.

GWEN
I'm sorry -- you're proposing to me?
In rehab?

JASPER
I'm proposing to you now. You happen to be here.

GWEN
Yeah, but -- "How'd he ask?" "Well, he came down to visit me in rehab ..."

(CONTINUED)

JASPER

Okay, it's not a moonlight and Maui --

GWEN

Where were you thinking we'd get married? McSorley's Pub?

JASPER

I thought it would make a great story.

GWEN

I have enough stories, Jasper! I don't want any more stories! I want a life.

Beat. He's stung.

JASPER

Huh. I guess that's what I thought I was offering.

They bob in silence for a bit. He reaches for his Thermos and starts unscrewing the top.

GWEN

What's that?

JASPER

Champagne. I brought it to go with the proposal, thinking -- wrongly -- that this might be a romantic moment.

GWEN

I'm not drinking.

JASPER

That doesn't mean I'm not going to.

GWEN

It's not allowed.

JASPER

I'm not an inmate here, Gwen.

GWEN

Patient. This is a medical facility. We're patients.

JASPER

Fine. Patient. Whatever.

He takes off the Thermos top and starts to pour, but Gwen grabs it from him and throws it overboard. SPLASH. He watches it GLUB down to the bottom of the lake.

JASPER

This is so not how I saw this whole thing playing out.

He's hurt. Gwen takes a deep breath, frustrated.

(CONTINUED)

GWEN

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm ...
confused.

JASPER

What about?

GWEN

About ... me. About why I am how I
am. Why my rent is always late and
why I've had credit cards canceled and
my driver's license revoked and why I
lose everything and why Mrs. Lefkowitz
thinks I'm bad news and why I'm here.

JASPER

You're in a rut. Happens to everyone.

GWEN

No, it doesn't. There's a world of
people out there who do things right.
Live right. They don't do drugs, and
they don't drink, and they're happy.

JASPER

That's a crock of shit. No adult
human being is happy. People are
born, they have a limited time during
which they go around thinking life is
dandy, but then inevitably, at some
point, tragedy strikes, their heart
gets broken for the first time, and
they realize life equals loss, and the
point of the game is to minimize the
pain caused by that equation. Some
people do it by having kids, or making
money, or taking up coin collecting
and telling themselves they're really
jazzed because they snagged a rare
15th century French sou. And some do
it by getting wasted and letting
reality recede into deep focus every
now and again. It's all the same.

GWEN

Nobody gets hurt if you collect coins.

JASPER

Tell that to the lady whose husband
spent last month's rent on that French
sou. Everybody hurts everybody. It's
the human condition.

(beat)

Don't let them tell you there's
something wrong with you when there
isn't, Gwennie. You're fine.

GWEN

I don't feel fine.

(CONTINUED)

JASPER

Of course you don't. Look around you. You're in "Deliverance" country with extras from a Fellini film. It's hybrid cinematic hell.

(Gwen smiles)

And you're not with me. I don't feel fine these days, either. And I think that means we belong together. You're mine. I'm yours. We're each other's. His and hers towels. Share and share alike. All for one and one for all. United we stand. I love you.

(Gwen smiles more)

Damned if I'll take a brand new Thermos out on a boat with you again, but I do love you.

EXT. BLUE RIDGE, PARKING LOT - NIGHT

They're by Jasper's rental car. Gwen is flipping through another bogus column she's written.

GWEN

It might not be long enough. If it's short, will you pad it?

JASPER

On one condition.

GWEN

What's that?

JASPER

That you give it some thought.

He holds out the roll with the ring in it. She takes it.

GWEN

Why do you want me, Jasper?

JASPER

What do you mean?

GWEN

What is it about me that you want to spend the rest of your life with? What do I do that earns me the oxygen I breathe? What's good about me?

He shakes his head with a small laugh and KISSES her.

JASPER

You're a trip, you know that?

Then he gets in the car and drives off.

EXT. PARKER HOUSE, PORCH - NIGHT

Eddie is sitting with a MANILA ENVELOPE in his lap. Gwen comes up the stairs.

GWEN
Visitors?

EDDIE
My agent.

GWEN
(pointing to the envelope)
Presents?

EDDIE
Just -- business stuff. Endorsement offers.

GWEN
Good ones?

EDDIE
I don't know. It's hard to tell, from here. What's a good deal and what's just gonna mess you up more.

GWEN
Yeah. I know.

She starts to go inside, then pauses at the door.

GWEN (cont'd)
Hey, can I ask you something? What were those three things? About me. In the store --

EDDIE
I know what you mean.
(beat)
One is, you're real smart.
(more thinking)
Two is, you got a damn good sense of humor.

He looks at her in the lamplight, mist in her hair.

EDDIE (cont'd)
Three is ...

He trails off, still looking at her.

GWEN
Three's what?

He thinks. Almost says something once ...

GWEN (cont'd)
What's three?

(CONTINUED)

... but instead of answering, he gets up, opens the door, then takes another look at her.

EDDIE
I'll catch you later.

And he goes inside. Gwen watches the outer door slam behind him. Then after a beat, heads inside herself.

INT. GWEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Gwen enters and flops down on her bed. As she lies there, she hears WHIMPERING coming from the bathroom.

GWEN
Andrea?

Gwen goes to the door. Listens. More WHIMPERING.

GWEN (cont'd)
Andrea? Are you okay?

More SOFT CRYING. Gwen slowly OPENS the door.

GWEN (cont'd)
Andrea? Hey, are you --

But she stops short when she sees:

ANDREA on the floor, CRYING, with streaks of BLOOD coming from cuts on her thighs. There's a razor in her hand.

GWEN (cont'd)
Oh my God -- what are you --

Andrea looks up at her.

ANDREA
She didn't come.

GWEN
Who?

ANDREA
I waited all day. I cut my hair for her.

GWEN
Oh, your -- oh, look, she probably had to work, or --

ANDREA
She hates me. I make her embarrassed.

GWEN
Your mother doesn't hate you. She loves you. She sent you that great Christmas card.

(CONTINUED)

ANDREA
My sister sent that.

Andrea starts HEAVING SOBS. Gwen takes the razor.

GWEN
Okay, look -- I'm gonna go get
someone, okay? I'll be right back.

Gwen starts to leave, but Andrea grabs her leg.

ANDREA
No. Don't tell anyone.

GWEN
Andrea, come on. This is serious.

ANDREA
No. They'll kick me out. Please. I
can't get kicked out again.

Gwen thinks, then reaches out and TURNS ON THE BATH.

INT. GWEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Gwen leads Andrea out of the bathroom. There are thin red lines from the cuts on her thighs. Gwen helps Andrea into bed, then pulls the covers up over her.

Andrea sees the GUM CHAIN ON Gwen's desk.

ANDREA
Hey, how'd you make that?

GWEN
The gum chain?
(Andrea nods)
Oh, every girl needs to know how to
make a gum chain.

She finds some GUM WRAPPERS and goes over to Andrea's bed. She hands her a wrapper.

GWEN (cont'd)
Fold it and tear it, like this ...

Andrea follows with her own gum wrapper.

GWEN (cont'd)
Then again. Then take one of the
pieces, right, and fold it again ...

She makes the paper strip into the requisite V-shape. Andrea does the same with hers.

GWEN (cont'd)
Then just slip it in.

CONTINUED:

Gwen adds her piece to the chain, then hands it to Andrea. Gwen watches as Andrea tries to figure it out.

GWEN (cont'd)

You looked really pretty today, you know that?

EXT. BLUE RIDGE - DAY

Early morning dew. The sun just peeks over the horizon..

INT. GWEN'S ROOM - DAY

The GUM CHAIN is now about FIFTEEN FEET LONG. Gwen's still on Andrea's bed. Andrea's looking at the RING.

ANDREA

Is he a drunk?

GWEN

I don't know. Maybe.

ANDREA

Then you have to say no. It's just like Darian and Falcon. He was addicted to gambling, and even though she completely, completely loved him, she had to walk away.

GWEN

Am I supposed to know these people?

ANDREA

From "Santa Cruz." It was more complicated for them, cause it turned out they were half-brother and sister, but Darian didn't know that when she learned about the gambling.

GWEN

I can't believe this is the advice I'm getting.

ANDREA

Hey, a show doesn't stay on the air for eighteen years by being stupid.

There's a KNOCK. Bobbie Jean pokes her head in.

BOBBIE JEAN (O.S.)

Wakey, wakey, rise and shine! ...

They've heard it enough to finish it along with her.

BOBBIE JEAN, GWEN AND ANDREA

~~The sun's burning our eyes out.~~

Andrea gets up and heads into the bathroom. Gwen watches her go, then a seriousness comes over her.

(CONTINUED)

GWEN

Hey. If You exist -- go easier on her. She's just a kid.

INT. PARKER HOUSE, HALLWAY - DAY

Gwen and Andrea come down the hall in HIKING CLOTHES. Oliver's door opens and A WOMAN comes out, tousled, bids him good-bye, then scurries down the hall.

GWEN

He was just lending her his Big Book.

ANDREA

Is that what they call it on Park Avenue?

EXT. BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS, HILLSIDE - DAY

The glorious expanse of the Blue Ridge range at morning. Pale blue sky, thick blue-ish pine trees. God's country.

OLIVER (O.S.)

Hello! I'm getting blisters!

EXT. HIKING PATH - DAY

The RESIDENTS OF PARKER HOUSE are on a hike. Betty is in front, setting a brisk pace. Gwen and Andrea are in back. Right in front of them is Eddie. With his athlete's ass. Gwen finds it hard not to look.

OLIVER

Did you hear me? I'm definitely getting blisters!

BETTY

Nobody ever died of blisters, Oliver. Just quit whining and pay attention to the glorious world around you.

Gwen glances at Eddie's ass again. Everyone else trudges along, heads down. Bobbie Jean is right behind Betty.

BOBBIE JEAN

You don't have kids, do you, Betty?

BETTY

No. Why?

BOBBIE JEAN

Emmett and I took our boys to the hill country every year. We learned the only way to get them to enjoy nature was to distract them away from it.

BETTY

Be my guest.

(CONTINUED)

Bobbie Jean CLEARS HER THROAT and starts SINGING:

BOBBIE JEAN

I know a man, his name is Gerhardt/
Hey lydie, lydie, lo/ He's got hair as
pretty as a pear tart/ Hey lydie,
lydie, lo/ Hey lydie, lydie, lydie/
Hey lydie, lydie, lo/ Hey lydie,
lydie, lydie/ Hey lydie, lydie lo. I
know a girl, her name's Roshonda,

It's a simple song. Easy to pick up. Roshonda joins in.

BOBBIE JEAN AND ROSHONDA

Hey lydie, lydie lo ...

BOBBIE JEAN

She's got a figure like Jane Fonda.

ROSHONDA

Oh, I like that.

BOBBIE JEAN AND ROSHONDA

Hey lydie, lydie lo.

A few MORE HIKERS join in the chorus this time.

CHORUS SINGERS

Hey lydie, lydie, lydie/ Hey lydie,
lydie, lo/ Hey lydie, lydie, lydie/
Hey lydie, lydie lo.

BOBBIE JEAN

I know a guy, his name is Daniel ...

EVERYONE

Hey lydie, lydie, lo ...

ANDREA

He barks louder than a spaniel!

Gwen pats her on the shoulder.

GWEN

Nice rhyme!

EVERYONE

Hey, lydie, lydie lo ...

EXT. BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS, PANORAMIC - DAY

Later. The haze is gone. The only sound for miles is:

EVERYONE

Hey lydie, lydie, lydie/ Hey lydie,
lydie, lo ...

EXT. BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS, ON THE PATH - DAY

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

70.

It's worked. The group is moving along at a good pace, enjoying themselves, SINGING.

EVERYONE

Hey lydie, lydie lydie/ Hey lydie,
lydie --

They fall SILENT as they round a bend. The mountain drops away, and they're suddenly gazing at a MAGNIFICENT VISTA with receding hills fading into the horizon. They all stand there, staring at the view in silent awe.

ANDREA

Man. I had no idea the world could even look like this. I mean, except for in commercials.

An EAGLE swoops down about fifty feet in front of them.

EXT. FILLING STATION - DAY

A small rural station. A TRUCK with a CHRISTMAS TREE is at the pump. A MAN IN HIS 30's is pumping gas into it.

The BLUE RIDGE REHABILITATION CENTER van pulls into the station and stops. The doors open. Patients spill out.

INT. FILLING STATION - DAY

TWO BOYS, 9 and 11, are at the candy display. The Younger Boy has an Atlanta Braves hat on.

Eddie comes in, goes over to the ANCIENT ATTENDANT.

EDDIE

You got a key for the bathroom?

As the ATTENDANT goes to get it, the Younger boy spots Eddie and does a double-take. He nudges his brother.

OLDER BOY

What?

The Younger Boy mouths the words, "Eddie Foy".

OLDER BOY

Speak up, dipshit, I can't hear you.

The Attendant comes back with the key. As Eddie takes it and exits, the Older Boy sees him too.

OLDER BOY

Holy moley. That was Eddie Foy!

INT. SERVICE STATION, BATHROOM - DAY

Eddie is peeing in the urinal, whistling "hey, lydie", when he hears the door OPEN and CLOSE. Then nothing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

71.

No other sounds. Odd. Still peeing, he glances around to see the two boys, at the door, with huge smiles on.

OLDER BOY
We're real big fans of yours, Mr. Foy.

INT. FILLING STATION - DAY

Oliver is buying a MOUNTAIN of candy and chips. Gwen and Andrea are stocking up on gum. Andrea's singing the "Lydie" song. She has a cool, clear soprano.

GWEN
Hey, you've got a great voice.

ANDREA
Yeah. I was a soloist and everything in the school choir. I was supposed to sing "Oh Holy Night" at the Christmas concert.

GWEN
No kidding. Andrea, that's amazing.

ANDREA
No, it's not. It would only be amazing if I was doing it.

Gwen sees the two boys, so excited, dragging Eddie him over to their father, the man by the truck.

EXT. FILLING STATION - DAY

Eddie's signing autographs for them.

YOUNGER BOY
You got a 2.23 ERA, you won 22 games last year, and you pitched a no-hitter against the Braves on August 4th.

EDDIE
Is that right?

YOUNGER BOY
Yup. I know, cause I was there.

He hands them the autographs.

OLDER BOY
Hey, Eddie, where's your car? I bet it's the bomb.

The kids look around the station. The only other car is the Blue Ridge Rehabilitation Center van. The Father looks at Eddie, realizing. Eddie deflates.

EDDIE
It's, uh ... my car's ...

The Father shuttles his kids toward the car.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

72.

FATHER

Know what, guys -- we gotta get this tree home. Say good-bye now.

Both boys reach out their hands, to shake.

OLDER BOY

Nice to meet you, Eddie.

YOUNGER BOY

Yeah, nice to meet you.

Eddie shakes their hands.

EDDIE

Right. You too.

The kids get into the truck. The Father climbs into the driver's seat and pulls out onto the road.

INT. FILLING STATION STORE - DAY

Gwen watches Eddie watch the car drive away. Once it's finally out of sight, he heads dejectedly toward the filling station store to return the key.

When he sees Gwen watching him, he looks away. He returns the key without meeting Gwen's eyes.

INT. PARKER HOUSE, MAIN ROOM - DAY

The MAIL TABLE is full. Stacks of PACKAGES, LETTERS, CHRISTMAS CARDS. A BIG BOX from the PHILLIES for Eddie.

The Patients come in from the hike. Gwen watches them all take stacks of mail back to their rooms. Finally, she's looking at an empty table. Nothing for her.

INT. GWEN'S ROOM - DAY

Gwen enters to find Andrea reading a letter. She LAUGHS at something in the letter.

INT. GWEN'S BATHROOM - DAY

Gwen stands in the stream of the piping hot shower.

INT. PARKER HOUSE, HALLWAY - NIGHT

Gwen goes up to the pay phone in her bathrobe. She makes sure no one's around, then takes a phone card from her pocket, takes a deep breath and DIALS: RING RING.

LILY (O.S)

Hi, you've reached the home of Lily and Andrew. Please leave a --

Just as Gwen is about to hang up again, someone picks up.

(CONTINUED)

LILY (O.S.)
 (sunny and ringing)
 Hello? Hello? Sorry -- Let me just --
 turn this machine -- there. Okay.
 Sorry. Hello?

GWEN
 Hi.

There's silence. No reaction.

GWEN (cont'd)
 It's me. Gwen.

LILY (O.S.)
 I know who me is.

A darker tone. Suddenly Lily's not so sunny and happy.

LILY (O.S.) (cont'd)
 Why are you calling? Do you need
 money or something?

GWEN
 No --

LILY (O.S.)
 Cause I'm not giving you any more
 money. Ever.

GWEN
 I don't need money, Lil, I'm not --
 I'm just -- calling. That's all.
 (Lily doesn't respond)
 I wrote you. Did you get my letter?

LILY (O.S.)
 Yes.

GWEN
 Did you read it?

LILY (O.S.)
 Yes, I read it. Yes, I got it. Yes.

Beat. Then, cautiously:

GWEN
 I guess I was kind of hoping you'd
 write back.

LILY (O.S.)
 Yeah? And what were you kind of
 hoping I'd say? Congratulations on
 pulling yourself together? I'm here
 if you need me? I have faith in you?
 I love you? That kind of thing? --

GWEN
I don't ... know --

LILY (O.S.)
-- because if that's the letter you want, I'm sure you can dig it up somewhere. I've written it five or six times. I'm not gonna write it again.

Gwen leans against the wall, weaker by the second.

GWEN
It's different this time.

LILY (O.S.)
Great. Glad to hear it.

GWEN
You don't believe me.

LILY (O.S.)
What difference does it make what I believe? You're gonna do what you're gonna do. Right? I mean, if there's one thing I've learned ...
(she stops herself)
You know what? I'm not gonna do this. I have people coming over, I'm cooking --

GWEN
I'm sorry, I didn't mean --

LILY (O.S.)
You never do. You never mean anything.
(beat)
I've got to go; this soup is boiling.
(beat)
There's a limit, you know? There is.

The line goes dead. Gwen stands there, devastated.

INT. PARKER HOUSE, TV AREA - NIGHT

Eddie's slumped down on the couch, staring at the TV. Gwen wanders in. He PAUSES the TV. Looks up at her.

GWEN
They're out of ginger snaps.

Eddie picks the ginger snaps box up off the floor. Gwen takes it from him and sits next to him. She digs out a handful and sits there, CRUNCHING away.

Then, very slowly, Gwen closes her eyes and leans her head over toward Eddie -- ultimately resting it on his shoulder. His eyebrows pop up, a little surprised.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

75.

They sit there, her with her head on his shoulder, eyes closed; him sitting there, eyes wide open. Gradually, her body softens. She starts to relax. Eddie glances over at her. Then he lifts his hand -- so slowly and carefully, like a 13-year old guy at the movies -- and places it gently on her head.

Her breathing becomes deeper and more peaceful. It's like he's lain a warm blanket over her. They sit there.

Until the PAUSE on the VCR releases. From the TV:

LANDON (O.S.)

Darian, wait. Listen to me.

Gwen's eyes pop open.

GWEN

What the Hell are you watching?

EDDIE

Nothing --

Gwen grabs the remote and holds it out of his reach.

DARIAN (O.S.)

I never want to see you again, do you hear me? Never! Never! Never!

SOAP OPERA CHORDS. "Santa Cruz" comes up on the screen.

GWEN

(delighted)

Eddie Foy, these are not game tapes.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Andrea is sitting alone at a table, eating. NEARBY, Gwen is pushing a very reluctant Eddie toward her table.

EDDIE

This is like blackmail or something.

GWEN

That's exactly what it is. Do it or I tell everyone.

He plops a tape in front of Andrea. It's labeled "Santa Cruz, 12/16/99" Andrea looks at it. Then SCREAMS.

ANDREA

OH MY GOD! WHERE DID YOU GET THAT?

EDDIE

Sssh.

GWEN

His mother sends them to him.

(CONTINUED)

ANDREA
 YOU WATCH? YOU WATCH MY SOAP OPERA???

Everyone in the cafeteria turns to look at them. Eddie feels their glares. Gets defensive.

EDDIE
 (to the room)
 I get paid three million a year to work every fifth day! What the hell else am I supposed to do with my time?

INT. PARKER HOUSE, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

IN THE TV AREA: The lights are off. Andrea is between Eddie and Gwen. Gwen is SEWING BUTTONS ON HER COAT. They're watching "Santa Cruz", sharing a bowl of popcorn.

Gwen looks over at Andrea, who has a look of pure bliss on her face, helping herself to popcorn.

GWEN (V.O.)
 Day 13: One full day without pain. A first. Maybe that's what happiness is. The absence of pain. This clean feeling.
 (beat)
 If God exists, He's doing all right. I give him a solid B.

Eddie and Gwen catch eyes. They smile at each other.

GWEN (cont'd)
 B-plus.

EXT. BLUE RIDGE REHABILITATION CENTER - NIGHT

The same TAXI pulls up the long winding drive.

EXT. PARKER HOUSE, PORCH - NIGHT

CLOSE ON SOME SUITCASES.

EVELYN (O.S)
 I wish I felt good about this, Daniel.

WIDEN to see Evelyn, Gwen, Eddie, and the rest of the Parker House gathered around Daniel.

EVELYN (cont'd)
 Holidays are so stressful. I'd really like you to consider a halfway house with an anger maintenance program.

DANIEL
 I'll be fine. I know what I'm doing. Don't drink, go to meetings, find a sponsor, ask for help.

CONTINUED:

77.

Daniel picks up his bags and walks off the porch.

DANIEL (cont'd)
Don't drink, go to meetings, find a sponsor, ask for help. Don't drink, go to meetings, find a sponsor, ask for help ...

... and disappears around the building.

BOBBIE JEAN
Oh, boy, I hope he makes it.

OLIVER
Only 3 out of ten of us will. So, when you think about it, the odds of you and me making it are better if he goes back to using.

A ghoulish thought.

BOBBIE JEAN
I still hope he makes it.

EXT. PARKER HOUSE - NIGHT

Lights come from within.

INT. PARKER HOUSE, TV ROOM - NIGHT

Gwen, Eddie, Andrea and Bobbie Jean are all watching "Santa Cruz". Oliver comes in and squeezes in next to Gwen. He uses the close quarters as an excuse to slip his arm around her shoulders. She gives him a look -- never in a million years.

OLIVER
Have I mentioned -- very, very rich.
He's kidding. Gwen laughs.

EXT. BLUE RIDGE - DAY

A gorgeous winter day. Sun streaming through the trees.

BETTY (O.S.)
Ballots are in, votes are counted, here are the results ...

INT. PARKER HOUSE, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

All TWENTY PATIENTS are gathered in the Main Room for a house meeting. Betty is reading from a clipboard.

BETTY
New Announcement Maker: William.

APPLAUSE all around. WILLIAM, a large black man, groans.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

78.

WILLIAM
Why me?

No mystery there. He has a gorgeous, deep baritone.

BETTY
New Chores Assigner: Oliver.

MORE APPLAUSE. Oliver stands, makes little bows.

OLIVER
Thank you, thank you. So proud.

BETTY
New Human Alarm Clock: Louisa.

On another couch, LOUISA, a chain-smoking old broad, waves at the room through a SMOKER'S COUGHING FIT.

BETTY (cont'd)
And new House Nanny: Gwen

APPLAUSE. On her couch, Gwen was only half listening. It takes a moment for it to sink in. When it does:

GWEN
Okay, proof positive. You all are out of your fucking gourds.

INT. PARKER HOUSE, BOBBIE JEAN'S ROOM - DAY

Gwen is inspecting. Bobbie Jean and her roommate are there. The room's immaculate.

INT. PARKER HOUSE, OLIVER'S ROOM - DAY

Gwen is inspecting. Oliver's side of the room is a pig sty. Oliver shoves a twenty into Gwen's fine jar.

INT. PARKER HOUSE, ROSHONDA'S ROOM - DAY

While Gwen inspects, Roshonda eyes Gwen's unkempt hair. Finally she drags Gwen into her bathroom.

INT. PARKER HOUSE, HALLWAY - DAY

Gwen is continuing her rounds with a new hairdo. Stiff curls aplenty. It's one of those hairdos confident black women can pull off, but white girls have trouble with.

Gwen self-consciously tries to tuck a coil of hair behind her ear, but it pops out. She knocks on a door. Eddie opens it. He stares at her, then BUSTS OUT LAUGHING.

GWEN
Shut up.

(CONTINUED)

EDDIE
No, it's ... it's ...
(barely able to speak)
... really nice.

Gwen can't help laughing along with him.

GWEN
I look like fusilli.

They both stand there LAUGHING THEIR ASSES OFF.

INT. PARKER HOUSE, EDDIE'S ROOM - DAY

Gwen and Eddie sit on the floor, spent from laughing so hard.

GWEN
I was starting to think I was never gonna laugh again.

EDDIE
Me too.

GWEN
I used to laugh constantly. Great big belly laughs. Everything was funny.
(beat)
God, I'm gonna miss that.

EDDIE
Know what I'm gonna miss? A cold beer after practice.

GWEN
Red wine.

EDDIE
The first line.

GWEN
Being hysterically funny.

EDDIE
Being super-human strong.

GWEN
Blaming other people.

EDDIE
Parties.

GWEN
Happy Hour.

EDDIE
Dancing on blow.

(CONTINUED)

GWEN

Sex on speed. God. Sex on speed.

They both sit there, suddenly very depressed.

GWEN (cont'd)

Maybe this whole thing is a mistake.
Maybe you and I should take off with
this money, buy up a mess of drugs and
have belly laughs and fuck on speed
and feel superhuman and ... just ...

She peters out. They just sit there, missing things.

EDDIE

Okay, how about what we won't miss:

GWEN

Hangovers.

EDDIE

Hangovers.

GWEN

The shakes.

EDDIE

Paranoia.

GWEN

Vomiting.

EDDIE

Nosebleeds.

GWEN

Angry phone messages.

EDDIE

Fucking up in a game.

GWEN

Fucking up on the job.

EDDIE

Fucking up in bed.

Another beat.

GWEN

Disappointing my sister.

EDDIE

Making my Mom cry.

They sit there a bit.

GWEN

I guess I can't remember the last
Happy Hour when I was actually happy.

CONTINUED: (2)

21

They take deep breaths. Then Gwen looks around the room.

GWEN (cont'd)
Clean up your room. It's a mess.

INT. PARKER HOUSE, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Gwen and Eddie comes to find a Oliver, Roshonda, Gerhardt, and TWO DEPRESSED PATIENTS in bathrobes scurrying around. Bobbie Jean comes by in her pajamas.

BOBBIE JEAN
Oliver got another care package. This one was from that FAO Schwarz store.

ROSHONDA
Gwen. Eddie. Get your asses over here or I'm gonna report you both for isolation.

INT. PARKER HOUSE, MAIN ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

ELAP! A TWISTER mat gets laid out on the floor.

EDDIE
Aw, man, I hate this game.

Oliver is at the controls. Gwen, Eddie, Andrea, Bobbie Jean, Roshonda, Gerhardt and the Two Depressed Patients are standing in their socks. Oliver spins.

OLIVER
Left foot ... Seconol.

All the left feet reach for RED DOTS. OLIVER spins again.

OLIVER (cont'd)
Left hand Valium.

GERHARDT
Five milligrams or ten?

OLIVER
Five.

Everyone reaches for the YELLOW DOTS.

BOBBIE JEAN
No fair. All I did was drink. I don't know any of these fancy drugs.

Oliver spins again.

OLIVER
Right foot ... cabernet.

Bobbie Jean slaps her right foot on a RED DOT.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

82.

BOBBIE JEAN

Ooh, that one I know!

INT. PARKER HOUSE, MAIN ROOM - LATER

The Twister Players are tangled and in bouts of giggles.

Gwen is stretched out, pressed against Eddie. Their eyes meet. Something about the physical proximity ...

OLIVER

Right hand ... Xanax.

Everyone reaches for BLUE DOTS. Gwen's hand lands right on top of Eddie's. Her fingers slip through his.

GWEN

Sorry --

EDDIE

No problem.

They stay there, pushed up against each other, waiting for the next spin. Waiting ... waiting ... Finally:

OLIVER

Left foot Seconol.

Bobbie Jean and Roshonda topple over, knocking everyone else down. Eddie lands right on top of Gwen. Their faces are inches away from each other. As everyone untangles, Eddie and Gwen lie there, him on top of her, a little breathless. Finally:

EDDIE

Like I said. I hate this game.

He lifts himself up off of her, takes a deep breath, and heads off to his bedroom. Gwen just lies there.

INT. GWEN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

The sink is running. Gwen is staring at herself in the mirror through the steam. Her REFLECTION takes a deep breath and looks back at Gwen.

GWEN'S REFLECTION

Lordy.

Gwen shakes it off and heads out into the bedroom.

EXT. BLUE RIDGE, FIELD - DAY

The Parker House Patients are playing football. Eddie and Gwen are on opposite teams. And though they're not playing together, they keep catching eyes. Then looking away. Like they're connected by an invisible string.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Cornell is on stage; the audience is full of Patients.

CORNELL

Lot of folks in recovery ask when's a good time to start dating.

Gwen and Eddie are sitting next to each other. Not looking at each other.

CORNELL (cont'd)

Here's my rule of thumb. When you get home, buy yourself a plant. After a year, get yourself a pet. If, in two years, the plant and the pet are still alive, then you can think about a relationship.

INT. PARKER HOUSE, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

The front door opens and Betty comes in, followed by a NEW FEMALE PATIENT, VANESSA. She's around 30, very hip.

BETTY

Chores are posted inside.

VANESSA

I paid you a shitload of money. No fucking way am I doing chores.

Betty leads Vanessa past the TV ROOM, where about FIFTEEN PATIENTS (Gwen, Eddie, Oliver, Andrea, Roshonda, Bobbie Jean, Gerhardt and Guitar Guy; plus a few others) are watching "Santa Cruz." They all turn to scope out Vanessa as she passes.

ROSHONDA

Pills.

ANDREA

Booze.

GWEN

Coke and sex.

BOBBIE JEAN

I mean it, that is not a nice game.

INT. GROUP THERAPY ROOM - DAY

Group therapy. Evelyn is listening to Vanessa.

VANESSA

How do I feel? How the fuck do you think I feel? I feel like shit.

EVELYN

Do you want to talk more about that?

(CONTINUED)

No. VANESSA

Evelyn nods, then turns to Bobbie Jean.

EVELYN
Bobbie Jean, you said "worried". What are you worried about?

BOBBIE JEAN
Well, I feel a great deal of concern over the ring-in-a-roll guy.

EVELYN
Who?

BOBBIE JEAN
Gwen's fellow.

GWEN
Sorry -- my fellow? Me, Gwen?

BOBBIE JEAN
Yeah. And the proposal in the bread.

Gwen turns to Andrea.

GWEN
You told?

ANDREA
You never said not to.

EVELYN
Someone proposed to you, Gwen?

BOBBIE JEAN
Her boyfriend.

ON EDDIE, surprised. This is news to him.

ROSHONDA
Last visiting day. Out on the lake.

GWEN
What did you do, put out a memo?

ANDREA
This is group. Since when do we have secrets in group?

GERHARDT
Was it sunset? Sunset on a lake is very romantic.

OLIVER
It was lunchtime. He brought a picnic. With wine.

(CONTINUED)

EVELYN
What?

BOBBIE JEAN
I thought it was Champagne.

ANDREA
No, wine.

GWEN
If you're gonna tell a story, tell it right. It was Champagne. And we didn't drink it. I threw it overboard.

That does nothing to decrease Evelyn's alarm.

EVELYN
He brought wine. To someone in rehab.

GWEN
He just -- he doesn't really realize, you know, what I'm doing here.

GERHARDT
If you were serious about getting sober, your love partner would know.

OLIVER
You must not be committed to your recovery.

GWEN
Don't you talk to me about lack of commitment, Mr. Lending Library.

EVELYN
We're talking about you now, Gwen. Stay focused.

BOBBIE JEAN
Gwen, you came in so nasty and unpleasant. And look at you now. Okay, well, not right now, cause you're a little unpleasant this very second, but in general, you've become such a nice girl. I'd hate to see you go back to how you were.

GWEN
I was fine.

GRUMBLES OF DISAGREEMENT around the room.

EVELYN
Your peers don't seem to agree.

GWEN
Yes, I hear that, Evelyn. Thank you.

(CONTINUED)

ROSHONDA

Don't get nasty with Evelyn. She's just trying to help.

GERHARDT

We're all just trying to help.

GWEN

Did I ask for help on this? I don't think I remember asking for help --

OLIVER

I say she dumps him. Heave-ho.

ANDREA

That's what I said.

ROSHONDA

I think you have to give him a chance to change. Everybody deserves that.

VANESSA

Not my ex.

EVELYN

We're talking about Gwen, Vanessa.

GWEN

No, we're not. This is not a group decision. It's my business. My life.

ROSHONDA

Hey, we put a lot of energy into that life in the last couple weeks. We got a say in how it turns out.

GWEN

The only people who have a say in my life are the ones who are in it. And none of you will be. When we leave here, we're never gonna see each other again. Or if we do -- say I run into Oliver on the subway -- I guarantee we'll pretend we've never met. So, fine, tell me to give up drinking or whatever, but don't you dare tell me to give up the one friend I have. Because, I know he's not perfect, but that's what Jasper is. The one person I know will show up on my birthday and say, I'm glad you were born.

Gwen storms from the room. In the silence that follows, we see Eddie, sitting quietly, pissed off. Then:

ROSHONDA

Did she say Jasper?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

OLIVER

That's what it sounded like.

ROSHONDA

Then I'm changing my vote. Lose him.
No way is she marrying no Jasper.

EXT. BLUE RIDGE, ON THE DOCK - NIGHT

Full moon. The lake is still and bright. Eddie marches down the dock carrying the BOX FROM THE ORIOLES, all pent-up and mad. He rips open the box. It's full of NEW BASEBALLS. He HURLS one into the lake. SPLASH!

He hurls another. SPLASH! Hurl. SPLASH! Hurl. SPLASH! There's a violence to it -- like he's throwing punches. The balls detonate on the surface like little bombs.

EXT. BLUE RIDGE, ON THE DOCK - NIGHT

Eddie's looking out at the hundred or so balls bobbing in the moonlight on the surface of the lake.

INT. PARKER HOUSE, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Betty's arranging the mail table again. It's full of stacks. As the patients mill about, looking for their mail, Gwen comes up behind Betty.

GWEN

You don't have to do it like that, you know. You could put the mail in our rooms. Or, if you don't actually want to move your ass, put it in one big heap and let us sort it out ourselves. There are plenty of alternatives to these piles, lined up on the table like a bar graph showing the relative fullness of everyone's lives. I know my life is empty, I don't need your God damn stacks to remind me.

BETTY

This is for you.

Betty hands Gwen a letter.

EXT. PARKER HOUSE - DAY

Gwen comes out of the house with the letter. It has the letter "J" scrawled on in the corner. She opens it.

A YELLOW POST-IT is on a letter written on "WEEKLY" letterhead. It says, "This seemed important. - J" She reads the letter. It starts: "Dear Gwen, Having tried unsuccessfully to reach you by phone ..."

As she reads the letter, her face falls.

INT. PARKER HOUSE, MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

A FAKE CHRISTMAS TREE has been set up. Gerhardt, Roshonda, Bobbie Jean and Oliver are all looking at it.

ROSHONDA
Custody of my kids.

BOBBIE JEAN
To lose ten pounds.

GERHARDT
Sobriety.

ROSHONDA
We all want that, Gerhardt, baby.
Think of something else.

GERHARDT
Then I guess, the ABBA box set.

BOBBIE JEAN
Oliver?

ROSHONDA
Yeah. What's the man who has
everything want for Christmas?

Oliver takes a long beat.

OLIVER
Less money.

Everyone's stunned. It's the first sincere thing Oliver's said.

OVER THE PA:

WILLIAM (O.S.)
Circle up for Christmas dinner.
Circle up.

EXT. PARKER HOUSE - NIGHT

The Patients are in a circle saying the SERENITY PRAYER. Just as the chant starts, Vanessa slips into the circle beside Eddie. Puts her arm around him.

PARKER HOUSE PATIENTS
HEY, HEY, WHADDAYA KNOW, PILLS AND
BOOZE HAVE GOT TO GO! HEY, HEY,
WHADDAYA SAY, SOBER IS THE ONLY WAY!

As they disperse and head toward the cafeteria, Vanessa LETS HER ARM LINGER INVITINGLY on Eddie's back before walking away. Eddie watches Vanessa go, then heads toward the main building alone. As he goes, he looks down toward the lake and sees Gwen sitting on the dock.

EXT. BY THE LAKE - DAY

Gwen is on the end of the dock by herself. She's folded the letter into a paper airplane. She hears footsteps behind her, turns, and sees Eddie walking toward her.

EDDIE
Skipping the big Christmas Eve dinner?

GWEN
Can't take it. I've already hit my depression quota for today.

She sends the letter to him. He unfolds it and reads.

EDDIE
"Dear Gwen, Having unsuccessfully tried to reach you at home, I am writing you to inform you of our decision to terminate your" Whoa. Fired.

GWEN
Axed. Dumped. Ousted. Redlined.

EDDIE
How come?

GWEN
Because I wrote in my column that Drew Barrymore was at a party she wasn't at, which would have been fine, except I said she was drinking, and, as it turns out, she, like everyone else on Earth, is in recovery. So she's suing them, and they're firing me.

EDDIE
Hey. Fuck 'em. Who needs 'em?

GWEN
I do. I have rent, credit cards, bills -- none of which I can pay.

EDDIE
I could lend you some money.

GWEN
I don't want your money. I want my money. I want to feel like a grown up. I want things to stop getting worse and start getting better.

EDDIE
They will. You're gonna get another job, easy.

(CONTINUED)

GWEN

Right. I'll just send out business cards that say "alcoholic, libelous party reporter" and wait for the offers to pour in.

EDDIE

That's not what you are.

GWEN

Actually, it's exactly what I am.

EDDIE

No, look, you're smart and funny and real good-looking and --

GWEN

You don't know me, Eddie.

EDDIE

Yeah, I do.

GWEN

No. You don't. I know I seem like I'm all of those things, but I'm not. I'm a terrible person. I've done terrible things.

EDDIE

I know. You peed in kitty litter.

GWEN

That's the least of it.

EDDIE

What's the most of it?

Gwen doesn't answer. He sits down next to her.

EDDIE (cont'd)

Come on. What's the worst thing you ever did?

(beat)

Tell me. Maybe it won't sound so bad if you say it out loud.

GWEN

It will.

EDDIE

How do you know?

GWEN

(snapping)

Because I do, okay? Because I'm smart. So back off.

He sits there a moment, then gets up and heads away from her. But he stops before the end.

(CONTINUED)

EDDIE

You know, there's a real stuck-up-ness to thinking you're the worst person on the whole damn planet. You think no one else has done the things you did? I threw up on the buffet at the Cy Young awards. I stole cash from my little sister to score some blow cause it was quicker than going to the bank. I fucked the sixteen year old daughter of one of my teammates. So don't sit there feeling sorry for yourself cause you've done some bad things. We've all done bad things.

GWEN

I've done worse.

EDDIE

Course you have. You're the best God damn addict there ever was.

And he walks away, leaving her alone.

INT. PARKER HOUSE, HALLWAY - DAY

Gwen walks up to her door and finds it decorated with a lame, HANDMADE WREATH, decorated with GUM CHAINS.

INT. GWEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Gwen enters to find Andrea kneeling over her bed, fussing with something. CRINKLING.

ANDREA

Don't look!

Gwen pauses. More CRINKLING.

GWEN

What are you doing?

ANDREA

Nothing. Just -- look the other way.

Gwen sees Andrea wrapping NEWSPAPER around a PRESENT. She finishes it and stuffs it under her bed.

ANDREA (cont'd)

No peeking.

Andrea gets up and goes into the bathroom. Gwen peeks. It's a present. For her.

GWEN

Shit.

INT. GWEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Andrea's asleep. Gwen is going through her drawers, looking for a present for Andrea. She pulls out a shirt. Thinks. Then shoves the shirt back in the drawer.

She looks at Andrea, mimes strangling her in frustration. Then she spots her JOURNAL on her bedside table and gets an idea. She grabs it and starts writing.

INT. GWEN'S ROOM - LATER

Gwen's still writing away ...

INT. GWEN'S ROOM - LATER

... and crossing out. And writing more.

INT. GWEN'S ROOM - DAY

Andrea wakes up to see some SOME NOTEBOOK PAGES with a GUM CHAIN wrapped around them like a ribbon, on her pillow. A card on them reads, "Merry Christmas, Andrea. With Love from Gwen". Gwen is asleep in her bed.

ANDREA
Hey. What is this?

GWEN
(sleepy)
Merry Christmas.

Andrea flips through the pages.

ANDREA
It looks like lyrics.

GWEN
It is lyrics.

ANDREA
You wrote me a song?

GWEN
An illustrious singing career has to start somewhere.

Andrea jumps over to Gwen's bed and gives her a big hug.

GWEN
Ow.

ANDREA
You're the best friend I've ever had, you know that?

GWEN
Yeah. Get off my hair.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANDREA
Here. Open mine.

She digs out Gwen's present. Gwen opens it. It's a PICTURE FRAME MADE OF GUM CHAIN. Inside it is a CARICATURE OF GWEN AND ANDREA.

ANDREA (cont'd)
To remember me by.

GWEN
Who drew this?

ANDREA
Me.

GWEN
You drew this? Andrea this is great.

Andrea smiles wide.

GWEN (cont'd)
You're an amazing kid, you know that?
And you're gonna be an amazing woman
someday, too.

ANDREA
You think so?
GWEN
I absolutely do.

INT. PARKER HOUSE, BETTY'S OFFICE - DAY

A sign over the Xerox reads "FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY."
Gwen is at the machine, Xeroxing, when Betty enters.

BETTY
Hey. Read the sign.

Betty goes to her file cabinet, starts pulling a file.

GWEN
It's Christmas, Betty. Lighten --

She stops when she sees DANIEL standing behind Betty,
suitcase in hand, a cut under his eye.

GWEN (cont'd)
Daniel -- what happened?

He kind of shrugs to himself, ashamed, mystified.

DANIEL
It sucks out there.

Gwen looks at him a beat, then gives him a big hug.
Betty SLAMS the file cabinet shut.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

94.

BETTY

I gave your room away a long time ago,
so don't even think of asking for it.

They both laugh a little. Share a look.

GWEN

Welcome back.

INT. PARKER HOUSE, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Gwen is handing a Xerox copy to Roshonda.

GWEN (cont'd)

Your part's highlighted ...

EXT. PARKER HOUSE, PORCH - DAY

Gwen is handing a Xerox copy to Gerhardt.

GWEN

... memorize it by lunch.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Breakfast. Gwen gives Bobbie Jean a copy.

GWEN

Your part's highlighted.

INT. PARKER HOUSE, HALLWAY - DAY

Gwen is at Oliver's door. She's handing a copy to
Vanessa, as Oliver, behind her, pulls on his robe.

GWEN

Tell him to memorize it by lunch.

INT. PARKER HOUSE, MAIN ROOM - DAY

Gwen is sitting in the corner with Guitar Guy, trying to
teach him a new song, when she hears, over the PA:

BETTY (O.S.)

Andrea. Visitor in the Main Room.

Gwen turns to see LUCY DELANEY, Andrea's Mother, waiting
outside Betty's office. She's around 40 -- blue collar,
overworked, underpaid, exhausted. Gwen goes over to her.

GWEN

Excuse me, are you Andrea's mother?

LUCY

Yeah.

GWEN

I'm Gwen. Her roommate.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCY

Oh. Yeah. She mentioned you.

GWEN

You've got a great daughter. Really.

LUCY

Yeah? So she's doing okay?

GWEN

She's great. She's working really hard, everyone loves her, she's --

LUCY

Really? She's really -- you think she's all better?

GWEN

Well -- I don't know about all --

FROM ACROSS THE ROOM:

ANDREA

OH MY GOD! MOM!

Andrea runs across the room and throws her arms around her mother. Gwen watches them embrace, then heads away.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Lunchtime. The Cafeteria is PACKED with PATIENTS AND THEIR VISITORS. Daniel is sitting with Oliver, Vanessa and a few other patients. Andrea is with her mother, talking animatedly.

Gwen stands on a chair and addresses the room.

GWEN

Excuse me, everyone. Merry Christmas.
My name is Gwen.

(then, it occurs to her:)

My name is Gwen. I'm an alcoholic and an addict.

EVERYONE

HI, GWEN!

She laughs.

GWEN

First time I've done that. What do you know. Oh-kay. Some of the residents of Parker House have a little Christmas present for you.

Andrea, Gerhardt, Bobbie Jean, Roshonda, Oliver, and Guitar Guy all converge on the salad bar area.

(CONTINUED)

GWEN (cont'd)

Yes, it's true. Just when you thought we couldn't cause you any more pain -- Rehab Dinner Theater. If you'll all just direct your attention over to the salad bar.

The group lines up nervously, giggling -- this is very unrehearsed. Gwen joins them and nods at the Guitar guy, who gives them a beat. When he nods, they start SINGING.

CHORUS SINGERS

OOGA SHAKA, OOGA OOGA
OOGA SHAKA, OOGA OOGA
OOGA SHAKA, OOGA OOGA
OOGA SHAKA, OOGA OOGA

As they continue, Andrea steps forward and starts singing, to the tune of "Hooked on a Feeling."

ANDREA

I GOT ME A HABIT
METHAMPHETAMINES
LIFE WAS LARGELY POPPING PILLS
AND MAKING SCENES

She sounds great. Guitar Guy joins in, giving it a little more musicality.

ANDREA

BUT IN REHAB
WHERE THERE IS NO SPEED
I LEARNED THAT THERE'S
MORE TO LIFE INDEED

The others all step up next to Andrea and BELT:

ALL

I-I-I-I-I'M HOOKED ON A FEELING
I'M HIGH ON BELIEVING
IN MY SOBRIETY

The audience is digging it. The performers loosen up, start dancing, clapping. It's incredibly queer. And fun. And -- who cares what anyone else thinks anyway?

Andrea kicks into the next verse with a new exuberance, really selling it now.

ANDREA

MUSHROOMS, COCAINE, GANJA
DUST, HEROIN, BOOZE
THERE WAS NOT A SUBSTANCE
I DID NOT ABUSE
LOST A LOT OF CAR KEYS
LOST A LOT OF WEIGHT
LOST A LOT OF PEOPLE
WHO WERE REALLY GREAT
BUT IN REHAB

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

WHERE YOU CAN'T GET DRUNK
YOU LEARN TO LOVE
LIVING LIKE A MONK

Lucy Delaney looks around the cafeteria, sees everyone digging Andrea's performance. She's kind of confused by it, like they're seeing an Andrea she doesn't even know.

ALL
I-I-I-I-I'M HOOKED ON A FEELING
I'M HIGH ON BELIEVING
IN MY SOBRIETY

Musical Bridge. Guitar guy goes into a solo. Oliver grabs some utensils from the bar and adds percussion. Gerhardt and Bobbie Jean spontaneously step up and perform the dance steps he's been teaching her.

ANDREA
BUT IN REHAB
EVERYBODY HUGS
YOU LEARN THAT LIFE'S
BETTER WITHOUT DRUGS

ALL
I-I-I-I-I'M HOOKED ON A FEELING
I'M HIGH ON BELIEVING
IN MY SOBRIETY.

ANDREA
YEAH, I'M HOOKED ON A FEELING
AND I'M HIGH ON BELIEVING
IN MY SOBRIETY.
HOOKED ON A FEELING
HIGH ON BELIEVING
IN MY SOBRIETY.

HUGE REACTION from the audience. Lots of HEARTY APPLAUSE and WHISTLES. Everyone's delighted.

EXT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Show's over. Everyone spills out of the cafeteria. Gwen comes out with Andrea and Lucy. Andrea's got the performer's buzz going.

ANDREA
You really liked it?

LUCY
It was great, An. I'm so proud of you.

ANDREA
Really?

LUCY
Absolutely. Hey, what would you think about coming home a little early?

(CONTINUED)

Andrea's buzz fizzles a little.

ANDREA

Early?

LUCY

Yeah. You're doing so good now, maybe you don't have to miss the start of the semester after all.

And a little more.

ANDREA

Oh.

Lucy puts her arm around Andrea. As they pull away from Gwen:

LUCY

I talked to the principal. He said if you start on time and double up on science and make at least C's in everything, you can graduate on time. Doesn't that sound like a good plan?

Gwen watches them head off together. Then she scans the campus, looking for someone.

INT. GYM - DAY

Eddie is doing curls. He's all sweaty, as if he's been working out forever. Gwen enters.

GWEN

Hey. You missed the big song and dance show.

EDDIE

Wasn't hungry.

GWEN

You would've liked it. It was good, clean All-American fun.

He puts down the dumbbells, grabs his towel, to leave.

GWEN

Oh, come on, you can't still be mad at me. It's not allowed.

EDDIE

If I wanna be mad at you, I'm gonna be mad at you, and there isn't a damn thing you can do about it.

He heads out of the gym. She stands there a moment, hurt, then follows him.

EXT. GYM - DAY

As Eddie heads away, Gwen comes out after him.

GWEN

Fine! You wanna know the worst thing I ever did? The worst thing I ever did was take my sister's wedding -- what should have been the best day of her life -- and turn it to complete shit.

He stops, looks back at her.

GWEN (cont'd)

She was finally getting what she wants, you know -- what she deserves: family she doesn't have to be ashamed of. People to belong to that make her proud. All she wanted was for them to be proud to belong to her, too. Well ... fat fucking chance with me around.

She sags under the weight of the memory.

GWEN (cont'd)

Fuck.

(beat)

So ... now she doesn't want anything to do with me. And how can I blame her? What have I ever done to deserve -- I mean, if you had this great new family -- this life, finally -- would you want to hang onto the disaster case -- the fucking embarrassment you've been lugging around your whole life? No. You'd dump her. First chance you got.

He sees an overwhelming shame coming over her.

GWEN (cont'd)

I mean, God -- why would anyone want to be associated with an ugly person like me, if they didn't have to be?

He steps over to her.

EDDIE

Gwen. You are not an ugly person.

GWEN

Yeah, what the fuck do you know?

EDDIE

I know you're not an ugly person.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She looks at him, sees how wholly he means it. It softens her. A rim of tears collects on her lower lids. Eddie wipes one away, then leaves his hand on her cheek.

They stand there looking at each other. So engrossed they don't notice someone watching them. Until that someone CLEARS HIS THROAT. Gwen and Eddie turn to see JASPER standing nearby. Gwen steps away from Eddie.

GWEN

Jasper. Wow, what are you -- I didn't -- what are you doing here?

Jasper looks from Gwen to Eddie, and back again.

JASPER

Looking for you. Betty the Bulldyke said she thought she'd seen you head this way.

GWEN

No, I mean -- I thought you were -- what about visiting your parents?

JASPER

Oh, that. Well, I realized, what with them both being completely senile, I could just call in a week, thank them for the great time, and they'll think I made the trip.

(beat, pointed:)

See -- I thought you might be lonely.

GWEN

(flustered)

Oh, no, I -- this is just ... Eddie. Eddie's here. I mean, he's a patient here. He grew up in Oklahoma.

JASPER

Well. How do you do, Eddie from Oklahoma. I'm Jasper.

He holds out his hand. Eddie shakes it but doesn't say anything. Doesn't like this threesome.

EDDIE

I should go.

JASPER

Oh, now I don't know about that. Let's think this through.

(to Gwen)

See, the way I see it, Gwennie, we have two options here.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JASPER (cont'd)

Scenario number one: we let Eddie from Oklahoma head off to the showers to wash off all that very manly sweat, and you and I have a nice little Christmas visit, maybe hum a carol or two -- basically bullshit our way through the afternoon. Or, scenario number two: we all acknowledge the awkward situation we find ourselves in here.

(beat)

Preferences?

GWEN

I don't know what you're talking about.

JASPER

A clear vote for scenario number one. How about you, Eddie from Oklahoma? Care to weigh in?

Eddie just looks at him.

JASPER

Abstaining. Interesting. I guess that leaves only me in favor of calling a spade a spade, laying it all out in the open, if you will, and saying, pardon me, sir, but if it's all the same to you, I'd prefer it if you wouldn't fuck my fiancée.

Eddie holds his gaze. Getting pissed off.

EDDIE

You're way off base, pal.

JASPER

Don't call me pal. I'm not your pal. And don't treat me like a idiot -- do me that one courtesy, please -- because I'm not that either. I've got more brain cells than your entire red neck family all put together, so --

EDDIE

Okay, shut the fuck up.

GWEN

Jasper, don't be an asshole --

JASPER

(sharp)

Gwennie, don't be a slut.

And on that, Eddie COLD-COCKS Jasper. PUNCHES him right in the face.

(CONTINUED)

GWEN

Eddie!

Jasper goes reeling and lands at the base of a tree. Gwen rushes over to him immediately. It was a good, solid hit. His nose is bloodied.

JASPER

Fucking lunatic.

Eddie stands there, holding his sore, reddening hand, watching Gwen help Jasper, who's bleeding all over his shirt. Gwen goes up to Eddie, furious, and snatches his towel away. Then she goes back to Jasper, pressing the towel against his nose. Eddie stands there, watching, as Gwen helps Jasper up. She shoots a livid look back at him, then leads Jasper over to the Main Building.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE DR. STAVROS'S OFFICE - DAY

Jasper is in a chair, holding a WATERY ICE PACK on his nose. Gwen is sitting across from him. He takes the ice pack off his nose, looks at Gwen for a moment. They lock eyes. Neither says anything. Then he puts the ice pack back on his nose and looks away.

EXT. BLUE RIDGE, PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Jasper's tail lights disappear down the drive.

EXT. PARKER HOUSE - NIGHT

Gwen sits alone on the steps of the porch, looking out at the lake. Then she stands and heads inside.

INT. GWEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

The room's empty. Gwen enters, takes off her coat, then heads for the bathroom, kicking off her shoes.

INT. GWEN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Gwen reaches behind the shower curtain and TURNS ON THE TAP, then slips off her pants. While the water heats up, she ties her hair up in a ponytail.

But when she pulls aside the shower curtain, she finds:

ANDREA DEAD IN THE TUB. It's only then that Gwen sees the needle and the rubber strap on the floor.

GWEN

Oh -- oh --

She grabs Andrea out of the tub, slaps her face.

GWEN (cont'd)

Wake up. Wake up. Oh, God --

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GWEN (cont'd)
(screaming)
HELP! SOMEBODY!

EXT. PARKER HOUSE, HALLWAY - NIGHT

A few Patients are coming out of their rooms as Betty runs down the hall, into Gwen's room.

INT. GWEN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Betty finds Gwen cradling Andrea in her arms. The shower's still spraying all over both of them.

GWEN
Do something.

INT. GWEN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Gwen watches as BETTY urgently tries to revive Andrea. A few other Patients are there as well. As Betty plugs away on Andrea's skinny little body, Gwen backs away from the room, drenched.

INT. PARKER HOUSE, HALLWAY - NIGHT

As Patients come into the hall out of their rooms to see what the commotion is, Gwen backs away from the room.

As she rounds a corner, she sees Vanessa coming out of her bedroom, tying her robe closed. And right behind her comes Eddie, pulling on his sweatpants.

Eddie sees Gwen seeing him. She turns and walks away.

EXT. PARKER HOUSE - NIGHT

A BODY BAG is wheeled out of the dorm. The SQUEAKY WHEELS carry it past Gwen, who's sitting on the porch, with a completely BLANK EXPRESSION.

INT. PARKER HOUSE - NIGHT

House meeting. Lots of tears and confusion. Gwen sits by herself, isolated. Not listening or participating.

INT. GWEN'S ROOM - DAY

Gwen watches Betty packing up Andrea's belongings.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Dr. Stavros is leading a meeting. Gwen is sitting in the audience, staring into space, not listening.

EXT. PARKER HOUSE, PORCH - DAY

Gwen sits on the porch, watching, as a devastated LUCY DELANEY leaves the Main Building with Andrea's stuff.

INT. CORNELL'S OFFICE - DAY

Gwen is sitting on Cornell's couch. He's sitting on the edge of his desk, staring at her hard.

CORNELL

If you don't deal with it, you'll drink. And you don't want to drink.

(beat)

Talk to me.

But she doesn't budge.

CUT TO:

INT. PARKER HOUSE, TV AREA - NIGHT

The TV is on. Infomercials. Gwen is on the couch, staring into space.

Eddie appears in the doorway. Gwen doesn't look up. He goes over to the couch and sits down next to her.

She gets up and leaves the room.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKER HOUSE - DAY

The Parker House Patients are on the porch, saying good-bye to Roshonda. As Roshonda picks up her bags and heads for the taxi, we see Gwen sitting on the lawn, under the same tree she sat under her first day.

EXT. PARKER HOUSE LAWN - DUSK

The sun's setting. Gwen's still sitting there. ACROSS THE LAWN, she sees someone coming toward the dorm.

It's Lily. Gwen stands up. Lily sees her, pauses, then heads toward her. When she gets there:

LILY

Hi.

An awkward beat. Lily holds out a small shopping bag.

LILY (cont'd)

I brought you ... fruitcake.

Gwen doesn't take it. Lily suddenly feels so stupid.

LILY (cont'd)

Fruitcake, God, what a --

(beat)

I'm sorry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GWEN
No, don't apologize.

LILY
No, I shouldn't have been like that.
So mean. So cold.

Gwen shakes her head, not wanting this. Scared of it.

GWEN
It's fine.

LILY
It's not fine. It's wrong. But
anything else just seemed -- It's so
much easier to be mad.

GWEN
(fighting hard)
No, you should be mad. You should.
I'm --

LILY
You're messed up. You're way off
track. But you're my sister. And I
should take care of you. I never took
care of you.

Gwen looks away, trying to keep the tidal wave of emotion
at bay.

LILY (cont'd)
I should have helped you with your
homework, you know? I should have let
you play with me. I should walked
home with you after school.

Gwen STARTS TO CRY.

LILY (cont'd)
Sometimes I'd be walking with my
friends and I'd see you, half a block
ahead, all alone. You were so little.
You must have been so scared.

As Gwen almost imperceptibly nods, her cry turns into a
BIG CRY. Lily puts her arms around her.

GWEN
I'm so sorry, Lily.

LILY
Me too, Gwennie. I'm sorry too.

The big cry becomes a COLOSSAL CRY. They stand there,
ROCKING gently, as Gwen SOBS and SOBS and SOBS.

EXT. BLUE RIDGE - SUNSET

Gwen and Lily are sitting against the tree.

GWEN

I just want to be there, in the bathroom, when she's tying that thing around her arm, so I can say, stop. I love you. Don't kill yourself.

LILY

I've spent maybe fifteen years living with that feeling. It's a bad feeling.

Gwen looks at Lily. Sees how hard it's been.

GWEN

I'm sorry I've made it so impossible to love me.

LILY

Yeah. Well. The thing I never told you is, it's equally impossible not to love you.

Gwen rests her head on Lily's shoulder.

CUT TO:

INT. MAIN BUILDING, OFFICE - DAY

A closet is opened. It's full of storage boxes. HANDS pull down the one marked: "Gwen Cummings".

INT. GWEN'S ROOM - DAY

ANOTHER SET OF HANDS is packing a suitcase. In goes the cel phone. In goes the computer. The hands start to put in the Budweiser T-shirt. Then reconsider and throw it in the trash.

EXT. BLUE RIDGE CAMPUS - DAY

The same TAXI slowly makes its way up the driveway.

INT. GWEN'S BATHROOM - DAY

Gwen looks in the mirror. Her reflection just looks back.

EXT. PARKER HOUSE, PORCH - DAY

Gwen's bags are packed and on the porch, ready to go.

INT. PARKER HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Oliver, Gerhardt, Bobbie Jean, Vanessa, Daniel, Evelyn and Cornell are all gathered around, saying good-bye. No Eddie. Gwen is hugging Bobbie Jean.

There's a HONK.

CORNELL

Don't want to miss your plane.

GWEN

Yeah. Okay.

She buttons her coat around her and heads for the door. Everyone follows her out onto the porch.

GWEN (O.S.)

Day 28. ... This must be how astronauts feel. Floating around in an alternate atmosphere. Breathing different air. Having your inner organs shift and shrink. ..

EXT. PARKER HOUSE, PORCH - DAY

Gwen picks up her bags.

CORNELL

90 meetings in 90 days. And ask for help. It's always there.

Gwen nods, then heads out to the parking lot.

GWEN

... It feels nice, not having that giant tug of gravity pulling at you. Nice. But not necessarily real.

(beat)

If God exists, He'll show me the frigging point.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Gwen rounds the corner of the building and sees Eddie, standing by the cab. She walks over to him.

EDDIE

I fucked up. I got mad and fucked up. And I'm real sorry I did. If I had it to do over, I never woulda ended up where I did. And if doing that makes me someone you can't stand, well -- there isn't a whole lot I can do about it. But I think you should know -- that Jasper guy? I don't know him from Adam. But I do know one thing. He isn't what you think he is.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EDDIE (cont'd)
He isn't the only person who's glad
you were born.

Then he takes her face in his hands and KISSES her,
strongly, like it's the last kiss he'll ever have.
Straight from the heart.

EDDIE (cont'd)
Bye.

He walks away, leaving her standing there, holding her
bags at her sides.

INT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

Gwen is in her seat, heading home: A FLIGHT ATTENDANT is
standing next to her with the BEVERAGE CART.

GWEN
Just -- some water. Please.

As the FLIGHT ATTENDANT pours her water, Gwen looks into
the cart, at all those little bottles staring out at her.

EXT. NEW YORK - NIGHT

Festive. Christmas decorations still up. Seas of cabs.

INT. NEW YORK TAXI - NIGHT

Gwen's riding across town, looking out at New York.
Every bar has a neon beer sign, shining out at her.

They come to a stop outside a bar. Gwen sees a PRETTY
YOUNG BLONDE sitting in the window, drunk. As Gwen
watches, the Woman slips off her barstool. The light
changes. The cab pulls Gwen away.

INT. GWEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

It's dark. The door opens and Gwen drags in, with her
bags. When she turns on the light, she sees ...

The apartment is clean. Things put away, tidied up.
Gwen sees a note stuck on the fridge and goes to read it.

LILY (V.O.)
*There's lasagna in the freezer and
clean sheets on the bed. I also went
ahead and threw away all your liquor
and drugs. Figured you wouldn't mind.
Call when you get in. Love, Lily.*

Gwen looks in her fridge. It's full of food.

She stands there in the kitchen, not knowing what to do.
Her eyes drift toward a cupboard. She opens it. It's
empty. Just round dust rings where bottles used to be.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She goes out into her main room and opens up a cupboard out there. Looks in. The same dust rings.

INT. GWEN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

She wanders in, opens her medicine cabinet. No drugs. She shuts it, then stares at her toilet. She goes over to it and lifts the heavy ceramic lid off the back.

There, bobbing in the tank, is a bottle of Scotch. Gwen stares at it long and hard before moving. Then she lifts it out of the tank and shakes the water off of it.

Outside, a SIREN wails by her window, filling the room momentarily with SWIRLING RED AND BLUE LIGHTS. She sits on the edge of the tub and slowly unscrews the top of the bottle. She takes a long look down the neck ...

... and POURS THE SCOTCH INTO THE TOILET. She FLUSHES as she pours, so it disappears as quickly as possible.

EXT. GWEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

A brisk winter morning. It's early -- trash trucks are BEEPING up the street. Gwen emerges from her building and looks around. The first day of the rest of her life. She bundles her coat around her and heads down the street.

EXT. BROADWAY - DAY

Gwen comes around a corner, keenly aware of everything and everyone around her. The TRAFFIC NOISE, the SUBWAY RUMBLING, the STEAM hissing out of the sidewalk. It's all familiar and unfamiliar at the same time. As she's about to cross the street ...

VOICE

Watch it!

... a BICYCLE GROUP ZOOMS PAST HER, making her jump back onto the sidewalk.

She stands there, her heart thumping, as they ZIP past. When they're all gone, she waits for the light, then crosses Broadway and heads toward a NEWSSTAND. When the CRUSTY OLD VENDOR sees her coming, he grabs two papers for her -- her usual.

VENDOR

Hey, lookit who's up before lunchtime.

GWEN

Yeah. New routine. Early to bed, early to rise.

VENDOR

New Year's resolution?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GWEN
Something like that.

As he takes her money and makes her change:

VENDOR
Tell me something, willya? Every year, we all make those God damn promises to ourselves. And every year, we all break 'em inside of a week. Why do we even bother?

GWEN
(discomfited)
I don't know. Hope?

VENDOR
Hope shmope. It's cause we're all fucking idiots. You have a good day.

He gives her her change.

GWEN
Yeah. You too.

She heads off, slightly deflated.

EXT. GWEN'S STREET - DAY

Gwen is walking back to her apartment, juggling a coffee, a bagel, and the papers in her arms. She's trying to eat her breakfast, read the paper, and walk at the same time.

As she nears her apartment, she sees FEET and FLOWERS sticking out from behind the newel post of the stoop. Someone sitting there. She slows. As she gets closer, she sees who it is. Jasper. She stops. He sees her.

JASPER
Welcome home.

He stands, holds out the flowers.

JASPER (cont'd)
Roses. Completely not my style. Meant to represent my ability to change.
(beat)
Symbolic. Get it?

Gwen just looks at him. Says nothing. He stands.

JASPER (cont'd)
All right, so -- you're wondering how to handle this. If I can make a suggestion: again, I see two options. One: you pretend you don't see me, walk on by, and start your life anew all by yourself.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JASPER (cont'd)
 Or two: you allow yourself to imagine a different life with me. One in which sparkling cider figures prominently. In which "hi" is a salutation, not a state of mind. In which we eat leafy greens and get eight hours sleep and buy running shoes and finally find out what all that endorphin hoo-ha is about. We'll arrive at parties sober, not break a thing while we're there, and leave well before things get ugly. We'll tell the truth and pay bills and do laundry and be on time and return library books and floss and replace toilet paper rolls and deduct ATM fees from our checking accounts. We'll be like normal people.

GWEN
 You hate normal people.

JASPER
 No. What I hate is being without you. What I hate is not hearing your laugh.
 (beat)
 You don't really want to do this alone, do you?
 (beat)
 Put me in, coach. I'm ready to play.

She can't help smiling. She takes the flowers from him.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - NIGHT

A busy night scene. Shoppers, commuters, cabs. Restaurants.

JASPER (O.S.)
 Here we go. Horse Trainer.

INT. DAMIANO'S - NIGHT

A smoky, clubby Italian place. Gwen and Jasper are at the table in the window. He's reading the classifieds.

GWEN
 Me?

JASPER
 Yeah, can't you see it? You, with the high boots, and the whip thingy, and maybe a German accent?

GWEN
 (with a laugh)
 Fuck you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JASPER
(German accent)
Ze pay, she iss wery goot.

GWEN
Stop it, look under the R's. Reporter.
Or journalist.

JASPER
Journalist. J.

As he flips ahead in the classifieds, a WAITER comes over to their table, brings them menus.

WAITER
Signore, signorina, something from the bar?

GWEN
Pellegrino for me, please.

JASPER
Yeah, two of those.

The Waiter heads off.

JASPER (cont'd)
Ah-hah!

GWEN
Journalist?

JASPER
Jousting specialist!

GWEN
Jasper --

JASPER
It'd be great. You could work the Renaissance Fair circuit. Have your own little madrigal outfit.

Laughing, she grabs the paper away from him and hits him with it.

GWEN
Asshole.

EXT. DAMIANO'S - NIGHT

Gwen and Jasper are winding up their dinner. They're still having a good time. It's animated and relaxed. A thirtysomething couple, MARTY and ELAINE, spot them from outside the restaurant. They KNOCK on the glass.

Gwen and Jasper see them. Jasper waves them in.

INT. DAMIANO'S - NIGHT

Marty and Elaine enter and join Gwen and Jasper. Hugs all around. A chorus of "How are you?"'s.

JASPER
Grab a chair, God, it's been --

ELAINE
Forever, I know. Marty's been out of town and I've been finishing my --

She stops short, stares at Gwen.

ELAINE
Did you get a face-lift?

JASPER
She quit drinking.

Marty and Elaine LAUGH, not believing it for a minute. Marty waves at the waiter.

MARTY
Signore -- house red --

Gwen smiles tensely.

FOUR WINE GLASSES CLINK DOWN ON THE TABLE.

While Jasper, Marty and Elaine all talk at once -- the animated loud chatter of old friends -- Marty fills all the glasses up. Jasper looks at her for permission.

JASPER
One glass is cool, right?

On the spot, she shrugs a little. What the hell. Jasper lifts his glass. She doesn't touch hers.

ANOTHER BOTTLE LANDING ON THE TABLE.

Refills. So much for just one glass. Jasper keeps drinking. Gwen watches him. It's like he's floating away from her.

Someone delivers a punch line. Marty, Elaine and Jasper all CRACK UP. Still not drinking, Gwen tries to laugh along, but it doesn't seem that funny to her. They seem like they're having a much better time than she is.

ANOTHER BOTTLE ARRIVES.

As Jasper pours, he KNOCKS Gwen's glass of wine onto the table. It's HYSTERICAL. Jasper, Elaine, and Marty all LAUGH. No one notices that half the glass has spilled into Gwen's lap. She looks around at them while she pats her skirt dry. Suddenly they look awful. Leaden, messy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Like a bunch of sloppy, pathetic drunks. She feels their chaos closing in around her and starts hyperventilating.

Jasper puts his arm around her as he launches into a story. Gwen feels the weight of his arm, his boozy breath in her hair. She suffers it a moment, then stands.

GWEN

Be right back.

She grabs her bag and coat and gets up from the table.

After a moment, Jasper looks up from his wine and sees Gwen walking by the window of the restaurant. He gets up and follows her.

EXT. DAMIANO'S - NIGHT

Gwen is a few paces down the block when Jasper comes out of the restaurant in his shirtsleeves.

JASPER

Hey! Hey --

Gwen stops, turns.

JASPER (cont'd)

What's -- where are you going?

GWEN

I gotta go.

JASPER

Hang on, come here --

GWEN

No, I gotta go.

JASPER

Why, cause I had two glasses of wine instead of one? All right. Lesson learned, it'll never happen again. Now let me just go in, pay the bill, grab my coat, and we'll --

GWEN

No. No, you go back. You were having fun. I'll just ...

JASPER

What? What're you gonna do?

GWEN

I don't know. Something else.

JASPER

Something without me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GWEN
 You have all the right intentions,
 Jasper. In a perfect world, that
 would be enough. But --

She trails off, shakes her head, and turns and starts
 away from him.

JASPER
 Gwennie --

But she just bundles her coat tighter around her and
 hurries down the sidewalk.

When she rounds the corner, she slows, suddenly caught by
 an overwhelming loneliness. She sits next to a HOMELESS
 WOMAN at a bus stop and starts to CRY.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEW YORK, MIDTOWN - DAY

Summer now. Heavy air, hot pavements. Lots of traffic
 and noise.

EXT. MIDTOWN BUILDING - DAY

An office building.

GWEN (O.S.)
 And how old was your father when he
 passed, ma'am?

INT. NEWSPAPER OFFICE - DAY

A rinky-dink office. For a cruddy paper. As we MOVE
 down a row of crappy desks, we hear:

GWEN (O.S.)
 Would you like me to indicate the
 cause of death? ... Well, we could
 just say something like "natural
 causes" or "after a long illness" ...

We FIND Gwen, slumped at a desk, her head leaning heavily
 in her hand, taking notes while she talks on the phone.

GWEN (cont'd)
 Long illness, great ... No, I'm sorry,
 I didn't mean great about the long
 illness, I meant -- You're absolutely
 right, I should be more -- Exactly.
 My mistake.

She leans way back in her chair and closes her eyes. On
 her desk, beside the phone, is her KEYCHAIN. There's a
 FIVE MONTH CHIP attached to it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GWEN (cont'd)
How about survivors?

EXT. NEW YORK SIDEWALK - DAY

End of the workday. Gwen is one of HUNDREDS of BLANK-FACED COMMUTERS pouring into the subway station. She puts on a pair of EARPHONES. They're playing MUSIC.

INT. SUBWAY TUNNEL - DAY

The subway RATTLES its way uptown.

INT. SUBWAY - DAY

It's RATTLING in here too. Gwen is hanging onto the strap, listening to her MUSIC. Elsewhere in the car, a YOUNG GUY is blaring RAP from a BOOMBOX; two GIRLS are chattering loudly; and a GRUMPY OLD GUY is listening to the BALL GAME on a TRANSISTOR RADIO. Through all the other noise, we barely hear:

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
... that ends the inning, Philadelphia
leading three-oh, as we go into the
top of the sixth.

The subway starts coming to a stop. On top of all the other noise, now there's SCREECHING.

INT. SUBWAY STOP - DAY

The train comes to a stop in the station.

INT. SUBWAY - DAY

A big JOSTLE to get out. As Gwen pushes her way to the door, she walks right by the Old Man.

FROM THE TRANSISTOR RADIO:

COLOR GUY (O.S.)
That's Foy's tenth strike-out tonight.
He's having himself a game.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
And he's still throwing awfully hard.
That last one was clocked at 98 miles
an hour.

She pushes by, not hearing, because of her Walkman. As she's about to get out the door, a TEENAGER pushing onto the train bumps into her, knocking her earphones off.

GWEN
Hey!

Like he cares. As she picks up her earphones,

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FROM THE TRANSISTOR RADIO:

COLOR GUY (O.S.)
They don't call him Steady Eddie for
nothing.

She stops, looks at the Old Man. As other passengers
push on and off the train, she goes over to him.

GWEN
Excuse me -- is that -- you're
listening to --

OLD MAN
Mets. They're losing. I don't wanna
talk about it.

Gwen nods, heads out. Then she stops in the door and
turns back again.

GWEN
Are they -- is it -- a home game?

OLD MAN
Yeah. Can't even win at Shea. Putzes.

Gwen smiles, "what do you know", and gets off the train.

INT. SUBWAY PLATFORM - DAY

Gwen steps off takes one step toward the stairs. Then
she stops. Thinks. She turns back to the train, looks
at the open doors. Then they start closing. She dives
and shoves her bag in them. They bounce open again.

She steps back on the train, feeling oddly self-
conscious. She goes back over to the Old Man.

GWEN
Sorry to bother you again, but -- this
train does go to the stadium. Right?

EXT. SHEA STADIUM STOP - DAY

Train pulls in. The doors open. Gwen gets off, looks at
the Stadium looming ahead of her, then heads toward it.

EXT. SHEA STADIUM, ENTRANCE - DAY

FANS are leaving as Gwen walks up to the entrance. She
finds an usher.

GWEN
One, please.

USHER
Game's over, lady.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GWEN
That's okay. I don't mind.

He heads away from her. She tries to keep up with him.

GWEN (cont'd)
I just -- I'd like to see one of the
players. He's a friend --

USHER
Yeah, Steinbrenner's my uncle.

He disappears into the stadium. As she's wondering what
to do now, a KID, 11, taps her.

KID
The player parking lot's around back.

EXT. YANKEE STADIUM, PLAYER PARKING LOT - DAY

A CROWD -- mostly SCREAMING YOUNG BOYS -- is pressed up
against a CHAIN LINK FENCE, watching the players trickle
out. The Kid carves out a piece of fence for him and
Gwen. He pulls a baseball and a pen out of his pocket.

Gwen keeps her eye on the door, watching the freshly-
showered players come out and head for their fancy cars.
As each comes out, the kids at the FENCE all scream his
name, trying to get him over to sign autographs.

Finally, Eddie comes out. Amid a chorus of "EDDIE!"'s,
he goes over to the fence and works his way slowly down
the line, trying to sign everything. Gwen waits as he
moves his way toward her.

But he stops before he reaches her and heads to his car.

GWEN
No. Wait. Eddie.
(louder)
Eddie --

Not loud enough. He keeps walking away.

GWEN (cont'd)
Eddie!

No luck. Then, from next to her:

KID
(deafeningly loud)
FOY!

Eddie stops, turns around.

KID (cont'd)
You gotta be loud or they won't hear
you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Eddie looks at the fence. It's a sea of SCREAMING FACES. And then, in the middle of them all, he sees hers. She waves. He comes up to her.

GWEN

Hi.

EDDIE

Hi.

They gawk at each other a moment.

EDDIE (cont'd)

You were at the game?

GWEN

No. I just -- heard you were in town.

EDDIE

You came all the way out here and didn't even see the game?

GWEN

Well, it was -- kind of -- not at all -
- on my way.

He smiles.

INT. INSIDE SHEA STADIUM - NIGHT

The LIGHTS ARE STILL ON. The GROUNDS CREW is cleaning up. Gwen and Eddie are sitting on the pitcher's mound, facing Home Plate.

EDDIE

See, I told you you'd get a good job.

GWEN

Reality check, Eddie. Making millions of dollars playing professional baseball is a good job. Writing obits for a crappy rag is not.

EDDIE

You'll find a better one soon. You got too much going for you not to get exactly what you want.

GWEN

This from the guy who couldn't even come up with a third good thing about me.

He takes a beat, looks at her.

EDDIE

It wasn't that I couldn't come up with it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She knows what he means. They share a look. It's almost a moment. But they both back off. Gwen looks away, scans the vast stadium.

GWEN
I can't imagine being able to do anything in front of all those people.

EDDIE
You just keep your mind on what's important. Ball over the plate.

GWEN
Keep it simple.

EDDIE
Pretty much. Yeah.

They smile knowingly at each other.

EDDIE
So -- how's it working? You happy at happy hour now?

GWEN
I don't know. Happy's a different thing, isn't it?

EDDIE
Yeah.

GWEN
How about you? Are you okay?

EDDIE
Yeah, I'm not bad.

GWEN
But?

EDDIE
I don't know. I'm having a real good season. I haven't slipped. Everything's good.
(beat)
But you still miss what you miss.

GWEN
The first cold beer after practice?

EDDIE
Yeah. And other things.

GWEN
Like what?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

EDDIE
Like ... relaxing. Not having to keep
such a close eye on myself. Like
cutting loose.

He thinks long and hard about going on. Then finally:

EDDIE
Like you. I miss you.

Gwen smiles. Pleased, but not completely comfortable.

GWEN
This is right about where I'd order a
Vodka straight up.

EDDIE
I think I just broke a sweat.

GWEN
We're pathetic.

He smiles.

GWEN
You ever wonder what would've happened
if we had met somewhere else? Under
different circumstances?

EDDIE
You mean, before rehab, or after?

GWEN
Either. Both.

EDDIE
Well. Before, we'da probably gotten
naked real quick, I'da been a big
disappointment in the sack, you woulda
puked on my sheets before morning, and
we never woulda gotten each other's
names.

GWEN
That sounds about right.

EDDIE
After -- I don't know. I'm not up to
asking girls out yet. I probably
woulda wanted to call you, but instead
some guy I know who has his shit
together would beat me to it, and I'd
have to watch you fall all in love
with him.

They look at each other.

GWEN
So this is best.

(CONTINUED)

EDDIE

I think so.

He takes her hand.

GWEN

Yeah. Okay. This is best.

They sit there in the big, dark, empty stadium, holding hands. Then slowly, she leans her head on his shoulder.

FADE OUT.

THE END