Gone West
03/28/2024

Gone West

_Gone West_ is about a mother picking up her 16-year-old son from wilderness rehab. The play is built on an awkward air of excitement and hesitation. The inspiration for the play was loosely pulled from family members and life experiences. The style of this play is realistic. Jeremy, the son, is the protagonist and the mom is the antagonist.

Picking up Jeremy from rehab, Mom is excited to see her son. She feels some guilt for having sent him away and very unsure about how this interaction is about to unfold. More than anything, mom is full of grief. Throughout the play she imposes her anxiety on her son, Jeremy.

The pace of the play is a push-pull between the two players. Mom rushes Jeremy at her pace and on her timeline. Jeremy is simply there, as he has been “there” for three months. Jeremy is simultaneously full of anger and happy to see his mom. He has grief for his broken family and a lot of unanswered questions. The conflict between Mom and Jeremy is felt through a dysfunctional family dynamic, questions, and emotions. Finally, this play would preferably be performed on a proscenium.

Mom is well polished, imagine a corporate woman in the wilderness.

Jeremy is really razzled with very dirty clothes, an oversized red beany, sun kissed skin, and wild hair sticking out from under the hat.
Mom: Hi you!

Jeremy: Hi mom.

Mom: You stink!

Jeremy: Geez, great to see you too.

Mom: Can you be excited to see me? For once?

Jeremy: Yeah, I guess.

Mom: I just never thought I’d be so happy to see someone who smells this bad of smoke. You haven’t showered in, what?? 90 days?

Jeremy shrugs and smirks awkwardly

Mom: Did you make any friends while you were out there?

Jeremy: Yeah.

Mom: Puh-lease, don’t kill me with all of the details.

Jeremy: Well Josh is like my brother now. It was about two weeks in, and we already had our 24-hour solo. 24 - whole - hours of being alone. In the woods!

Mom: (Gasp) Were you scared?

Jeremy plays it cool.
Jeremy: Not really… All of us were nearby so if we probably like screamed... Like, loud. Or if if we needed help… We could get help.

Mom: I’m so glad you were ok; I can’t believe they just left you!

*Jeremy is slightly shocked but ignoring what his mom just said.*

Jeremy: I knew Josh and I were close to each other during our solos… I kept finding pictures he drew in the dirt or rock statues he’d built.

Mom: Would you prefer that I communicate with you in the form of rock statues or dirt drawings from now on?

Jeremy: Mahhm. *(Eye roll)*

Mom: How did you sleep? Wasn’t it freezing?

Jeremy: Pushups.

*Long pause. Mom staring at Jeremy, waiting for more of an explanation.*

Jeremy: *(Explaining reluctantly)* We’d do them in our sleeping bag. On cold nights you could run a few laps around the tarp, then hop in your sleeping bag and do the pushups.

Mom: Wow! You are such a strong boy.

*Awkward tension.*

Jeremy: Yeah. *(Looking around)* Can we get out of here?
Mom: I checked you out of the program as of a few hours ago, so yes. We are free to go home.

Mom and Jeremy begin walking. Mom checks her cell phone.

Mom: I don’t know if we can leave quite yet. There’s no cell service!

Son: (Sarcastically) You didn’t print your mapquest on the way out here?

Mom: Ha.. Ha. No.. I haven’t had to do that in 20 years…

Jeremy: We’ll be fine. I know how to survive in the woods now!

Mom: File that under “Things I never thought I’d hear you say."

Jeremy: Yeah, 90 days straight of cooking over a fire. You’d be surprised.

Mom: Hopefully you won’t have to make ANY fires for the two of us. Not out here.

Jeremy: It’s really easy! Wanna see?

Mom hesitating. Glancing at Jeremy, glancing at her phone, and back to Jeremy.

Mom: Sure?

Jeremy’s already looking around. He takes a few steps, reaching for some sticks and a rock.

Jeremy: Squatting. Picks up two sticks, holding one in each hand.
Jeremy: (Enthusiastically.) It’s called a bow drill. (He’s holding the sticks out, feeling proud and seeming engaged.) You need two sticks. They’ll go together. (Starts to make a cross out of the two sticks) Like this. (Sticks clap together.)

Mom: Jeremy, I am so proud of you! But we need to get moving before we’re stuck out here!

Jeremy brushes off what mom said.

Jeremy: It won’t take me very long mom. … Mom, look! You take it and...

Mom: Jeremy! C’mon! Let’s go.

Jeremy puts the sticks down and stands up, disheartened.

Mom throws her arms around her son’s neck in a big embrace.

Mom: Oh! I am so happy to see you. I’m so relieved.

Jeremy, grumbling.

Jeremy: It’s good to see you too mom.

Mom: Your father would be so proud right now.

Jeremy: Why did you send me away then? Made it pretty clear you didn’t want me around.

Mom: Well, when your father left, I fell apart. I broke into so many pieces. I thought I would never be able to find them, let alone come back together again. You know?
**Jeremy**: Oh, I know! I just spent the last three months in therapy over it.

**Mom**: I wouldn’t say I “sent you away” … Although I understand it might feel like that…

**Jeremy**: Three months of sleeping on the cold, hard ground. Hiking 10 miles a day? Never really knowing when the day would end!

**Mom**: Do you remember where you were at before I sent you away???

*Short pause.*

**Mom**: I felt so helpless… Given how out of control you were… I sent you to Wilderness because I Love you. I wanted you to be sober.

**Jeremy**: You sent me away… Because you love me!? Do you hear how fucked up, ridiculous you sound?!!

**Mom**: I wanted you to have your life back…. I felt like there were no other choices; your dad left, and you were just…just…so out of control…. You’re an addict… I just wanted you to have a chance.

*Tears streaming down her face.*

**Jeremy mumbling something about being an addict.**

**Mom**: I was so alone. I wanted you to have your life back. (Pushing through sobbing tears…) I am so so sorry.

**Jeremy**: Me too.
Mom: What was that?

Jeremy: I’m sorry too.

Long pause.

Jeremy: All I could think of in the first few days was, “Where is my next high going to come from?” Gosh, colder than the ground I was sleeping on … I realized, no one was coming to save me. Not even a pipe.

Mom: …and now?

Jeremy: Well it wasn’t “one day at a time” the whole time; you know how they say that in AA?

(Mom’s trying to look like she knows, and be supportive, even though she doesn’t know.)

Mom nodding slightly.

Jeremy: That’s a saying, “I’m sober for today.” Or, “Take things one day at a time.” Yeah. Out here? Days were taken 5 minutes at a time. Most days.

Mom: It sounds like you were forced to slow down while you were out here.

Jeremy: Yeah well I don’t look forward to seeing myself in the mirror when we get home. I have so many people to apologize to.

Mom trying to keep Jeremy positive.

Mom: (Inquisitively.) What are you proud of?? What has changed in these last three months?
Jeremy: Let me think…

Pause

Mom: Let’s try and get going and you, you think about what’s changed in the past three months…

Jeremy: (Pensively) I don’t drag ass to get out of bed every day… I can say I’m proud of that!
Oh! ...And my dreams came back.

Mom: Ummm what about that you are sober? That is huge… I know I am so proud of you.

Jeremy: Ha-ha, yeah. That’s a good point…

I don’t want to be dead anymore.

Mom: (Bursts into tears.) I…I am …So relieved…I was so scared for you…. The thought of losing you…. I was just so scared…. I felt so alone… Cause, you know. You know how dad was just never there…? Like, “Is he here?” “Is he HERE?” No, he is not here. He never was “here” even when he was here.

Jeremy interrupts as he feels the weight of his mother’s pain and emotions.

Jeremy: MOM! Stop! …I can’t… I don’t want to hear about dad. I don’t want to hear you. It’s too much.

Mom: (In a clipped tone) Ok! Ok…Ok I was just….

Jeremy: Mom!
Mom: Ok!

Jeremy: Stop!

Mom: I’m stopped! I stopped!!

Long pause. Awkward tension.

Jeremy: I think there’s a gas station a few miles down the road.

Mom: We can get our favorite.

A smile begins to appear on Jeremy’s face.

Jeremy: I can’t remember a single road trip without peanut m&m’s...