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EN 215

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Getting Out: A Play

Act 1

Scene 1

An average living / dining room with a kitchen door to the back, a corridor to the left, and the main entrance door to the right. Sam is a young man in a wheelchair who can't talk other than with grunts and moans (Sam's part should be adapted to the actor's actual disability, i.e. it should be real because the goal is not to depict disability but just have it as it is). He is in the living room watching TV ("Nature" or some other science program). His mother Lynn is getting dinner ready. The phone rings, Lynn gets it from the kitchen.

Lynn: Hello? Oh, hi John. Yes I'm cooking. Yes, you are not coming home for dinner. OK, try not to wake me up when you get home. Bye.

(she gets out of the kitchen)

Lynn: Your father isn't having dinner with us again.

Sam: *(says something the audience doesn't understand)*

Lynn: Yes, I know, second time this week. He says he has work to do. Anyway, dinner is ready, honey.

(Sam moves to the table while Lynn goes into the kitchen and comes back with a tray.

She sets a large tablecloth around him, starts feeding him)

Lynn: I suppose you're getting tired of seeing me every day.

Sam: *(makes a protest noise)*

Lynn: Well, that's nice of you, but I know it would be so much better if you had had a sister or a brother to take you around. Instead, here I am again.

Sam: *(makes a protest noise)*

Lynn: I wonder if that new machine we saw on the video, you know that talking machine, I wonder of course if you could get one, but I also wonder how it would change the way we live together. We would understand each other differently, that's for sure. You would be more independent. You could tell others than me what you want and maybe they would be more helpful than they are now. Oh, I dream aloud when I'm with you. I dream of a better world which may never exist.

Scene 2

Low lights. Lynn alone in the living room watching TV. John enters by the main door.

Lynn: You're early. She kicked you out?

John: What?

Lynn: Nothing.

John: Aaah, I'm tired.

Lynn: I bet. That's your second night at work this week.

John: Yeah, we've got this project to be done. You wouldn't believe how Bailey just thinks we can get everything done in no time.

Lynn: Sit down. Relax.

John: Nah. I'd rather take a nice hot shower and go to bed.

Lynn: OK. I'll come after the news. I want to know what the weather will be like tomorrow.

John: *(yawns)* I'm sleepy. Good night *(gives her a good night kiss)*.

Lynn: Good night *(she touches his shirt collar and looks at it as if to check for lipstick marks. He moves away)*. I wanted to tell you about Sam, he may be able to get a computer to...

John: Tomorrow. We'll talk about it tomorrow. *(he exits to the left)*

Lynn: Tomorrow, right.

Scene 3

Morning. Lynn is in the kitchen making breakfast. John comes in, goes out to get the newspaper, sits at the table, and reads the paper. Lynn comes out with his breakfast and hers.

John: I'll be damned if these Muslims don't blow out the entire planet! Did you know we have one in our office? How could we know? He doesn't wrap toilet paper on his head, no mustache, God, he's even white!

Lynn: The world around us changes all the time.

John: Yeah, that's what *you* say. You don't know what *I* see every day out there. Oh, if it was all up to me, I'd line them all up and shoot them. And I'd get the fags, the communists, the socialists, the French,...

Lynn: There wouldn't be anybody left.

John: No, just the good people. Good workers, law-abiding citizens, the trains would be on time,...

Lynn: There are no trains.

John: You know what I mean. Everyone in his place.

Lynn: I wanted to tell you about Sam, he may be able to get a computer to communicate, to talk. We saw a video about it at the Community Center, and the social worker said we should apply to get one.

John: Oh yeah? How much? These things don't come cheap.

Lynn: We can apply for a grant from the Department of Rehabilitation.

John: Socialism again... What do they want him to do with it? Play shoot 'em up games?

Lynn: It would enable him to talk, the computer has a voice and it talks for him. She said he could even do e-mail.

John: and online dating, yes. I guess he could get a job at Wal-Mart, I saw that the other day, they had some retard greeting people at the door.

Lynn: You're cruel.

John: Realist. I'm a *realist*. But he does need to get a job, get his own salary.

Lynn: Why? He has *us*.

John: You and I will die some day, or something will happen and we won't be here any more for him.

Lynn: You're already not here.

John: Let's not get there.

Lynn: No, let's not get *there*. I don't want to think about what you do *out there*.

John: What?

Lynn: John, it's no secret to anybody that you've been fooling around.

John: I don't want to talk about it. (*he gets up*)

Lynn: No, let's not talk about it. Let's continue our life as strangers. Is she nice to you?

She gives you what you want?

John: I don't want to talk about it.

Lynn: I suppose there's no risk of making children, that's something you won't ever hold against her. No risk of making a crippled child.

John: I don't want to talk about it.

Lynn: I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT EITHER! You've never told me what you wanted *from me*. Then we had Sam and you behaved like it was my fault. *My fault!* You didn't even want to use a condom, knowing very well that I couldn't use the pill. Deep down, I suppose you wished I would get an abortion.

John: I never said that. Have you been talking to your woman's lib friends or something?

Lynn: Of course, you never said that. You never said what you wanted anyway. And keep my friends out of this: this is *me* talking.

John: I've worked all my life to pay for your life and his life! What else do you want?

Lynn: Love. There is no Love in us.

John: Augh. (*he gets out to the left, comes out with his work things, goes out the front door*)

(*she sits on the couch, crying*)

Act 2

Scene 1

Same place. Sam is in the living room with his friend Roger, apparently testing out the new talking computer. It is very slow and Roger is very patient with it.

Roger: What do you want to do tonight?

Sam: Watch a video.

Roger: Oh, cool. When is your mom supposed to be back?

Sam: In a short while. She's gone shopping. Roger?

Roger: Yes?

Sam: I would like to be more independent. I want my own place.

(Lynn enters, unnoticed. She stops and listens)

Roger: Wow! You think you could do that? Live by yourself?

Sam: Yes.

Roger: I wonder if you could.

Sam: It is possible. I need my own space.

Lynn: Oh, hello Roger!

Roger: *(surprised)* Oh, hello Mrs. Crawford.

Lynn: *(moving to kiss Sam on the forehead)* Hello Sam.

(Sam moans instead of using the computer to respond)

Lynn: Wow! You guys were having a conversation!

Roger: Yes, Sam is good at it too. We were thinking about renting a video, do you mind if we step out and go get it?

Lynn: Oh, no, please go! Will you stay for dinner?

Roger: Uh, yes, sure. Thank you.

Sam: Anything for free food.

Roger: *(tapping him on the shoulder)* Shut up! Let's go. *(they exit by the front door)*

Scene 2

Same place, the day after. Sam is in the living room, watching TV (something serious, a documentary). Lynn is in the kitchen. John comes in by the front door.

John: I'm home!

Lynn: Hi!

(Sam types something. The computer says "Hi" but Sam keeps typing. John does not notice him, sits on the couch and reads the paper)

John: *(noticing the typing)* Hey, Lynn!

Lynn *(peeking out of the kitchen)* What?

John: He's typing stuff!

Lynn: *(entering the living room)* Yes, he's getting better at it.

(they both try to see what's on the computer screen, but Sam moves his wheelchair away from them)

John: I guess it's private stuff, uh?

Lynn: Well, why not?

Sam: Mom, dad, I have something to tell you.

(both are surprised)

Lynn *(hesitating):* What is it, dear?

Sam: I think you should let me go away from you.

(Lynn emits a cry)

Sam: It's been many years since I am a burden to you. You cannot live your life as you want it. Maybe you can put me in an institution or some place, let me try on my own.

Lynn: An institution?

John: I'm sorry I have been a bad father, Sam. I'll try to be better. I have more time now, I'll do better.

Lynn: Your girl dumped you?

John: What are you talking about?

Lynn: She couldn't stand the gray hair, the bad back?

John: What are you talking about? That's past, that's all gone now!

(Sam types)

Lynn: But when is it going to come back? The phone calls, the late work, the business trips?

John: I don't know what you're talking about.

Sam: please stop arguing.

Lynn: You don't know, or you don't want to talk about it? Was she nice? How old?

John: I don't want to talk about it.

Lynn: Was the sex good?

Sam: please stop arguing.

Lynn: Did you have a good time?

Sam: please stop arguing. please stop arguing.

John: OK, I had a much better time than here in this house. This house is hard to live in.

You were always with Sam, never with me. You're not even a good mother to him, he needs to get out and make his own life.

Sam: please stop arguing.

Lynn: You didn't even *try* to be with us.

Sam: please stop arguing.

(both Lynn and John turn towards Sam, destroyed and humbled by Sam's simple request)

Sam: Stop it. I want to leave. I want to live my own life.

Lynn: What? Honey, I'm sorry.

John: Yeah, sorry Sam.

Sam: I want to live my own life. I want to be independent. I want to go to college.

John: Augh.

Lynn: OK, we can help you. Right, John?

John *(feeling guilty)*: I guess we could. I was saving for us to buy a new car, but I suppose we could get a few more years from this one.

Lynn: We'll look around for alternatives.

John: I don't really want a smaller car.

Lynn: I meant different colleges.

John: Oh. *(to Sam)* What did you have in mind to go to college for?

Sam: Study science.

John *(skeptical)*: What?

Lynn: Science. Like Stephen Hawking.

John: Who the Hell are you talking about?

Lynn: This man in England, he was on the video about the talking computer. He invented black holes. He goes around in a wheelchair just like Sam's.

John: You know all that, uh? I got myself a pair of geniuses here in my house and I didn't know.

Lynn: Now you know. We're going to college, Sam.

Sam: OK. Thank you. That's great!

John: What did you mean "we are going to college?"

Lynn: I want to go too. It's time for me to do something with myself. I also want to be independent.

John: Right, whatever...

Sam: Great! Great!

Scene 3

Sam is in the living room with his friend Roger, reading aloud from a Chemistry textbook.

Roger: Here's a test question. How many significant digits in 2.03?

Sam: 3

Roger: *(looking down the answer)* Yup. How many in 1000?

Sam: 1

Roger: *(still looking down)* Ah, I don't think so. Oh, you're right! I'm confused now!

Sam: It's an assumption because we don't know whether they mean 1.000 times 10 power of 3 or just 1 times 10 power of 3.

Roger: Yeah. It still confuses me.

(enters Lynn from front door. She's trying a new key in the lock and appears satisfied.

She replaces an old key in her key chain with the new key and tosses the old one)

Roger: Hi Mrs. Crawford.

Lynn: Hi Roger.

Sam: Hi Mom.

(Lynn comes to him and gives him a kiss on the forehead)

Lynn: Hi Honey. What are you studying?

Roger: Chemistry Chapter 2. He's doing better than me.

Lynn: I'm not surprised. Thank you for helping him.

Roger: No problem, Mrs. Crawford. It helps me understand it.

Lynn: At least *someone* understands that stuff!

Roger: You go to college too, Mrs. Crawford?

Lynn: Yes. It's hard! And I'm just doing Social Sciences.

Roger: Nothing wrong with that. My mom is an interior decorator.

Lynn: Really? And you dad?

Roger: I don't have one.

Lynn: Oh, I'm sorry. Did he... die?

Roger: No. I just don't have one. I was what could be called an accident. Then when I was 10, a friend moved in with my mom and she's been like a stepmother to me.

I have two moms.

Lynn: How unusual!

Roger *(looking at Sam)*: Not to me. I could envision living with another man and having kids. Adopted, of course.

Lynn: (chuckling) Oh, I'm still not used to situations like those, although I must say that going to college has helped me discover a lot of different styles of people! It's as if I had only seen them on TV and thought they were fictitious.

Sam: I don't think it is wrong. I think it is great that people get together and love each other.

Lynn: There is a lot to be said about that. You of all people would have the right to be angry, but it's those who have everything who stir up anger in this world. Roger, would you like to have dinner with us?

Roger: Sure, thank you.

Lynn: I should warn you not to talk about those alternative lifestyles with my husband. He's *very* conservative.

(John enters by the front door)

Oh, here he is.

(She goes to the kitchen)

Hello, John.

John: Hi.

Roger: Hello, Mr. Crawford.

John: Hi.

Sam: Hello Dad. This is Roger, he is staying for dinner.

John: OK. You're a friend of Sam's?

Roger: Yes, we have Chemistry and Math classes together.

John: Oh, yeah. *(pointing at Sam)* He's like Steve Hawk.

Roger: Who?

Sam: Stephen Hawking.

John: Yeah, that guy.

Roger: Oh, I had not thought of that.

John: The guy who invented black holes.

Roger: He conceptualized them. I guess if someone invented a black hole they'd be absorbed by it instantly.

John: Right. *(he goes out to the left)*

Scene 4

At the dinner table.

John: Sorry about the simple food, Roger. You know, my wife goes to school and doesn't have time to cook.

Roger: It's quite all right. I can't complain.

John: What does your father do in life?

Roger: I don't have a father. He died before I was born.

John: Oh. I guess it gave you a lot of responsibilities.

Roger: *(holding a laugh)* Yes, I guess so.

John: My dad also died before his time. My older sister took care of my mother. That's a good thing to have many children, they can take care of their parents when they're older.

Lynn: I'm sorry, there's no dessert.

John: Aw, can you believe it? We have a guest and no dessert!

Roger: That's quite all right. Thank you, Mrs. Crawford, it was very good. I should get going now.

Lynn: You're welcome. It was good of you to come. I'd like to meet your mom one day. *(John makes a face)*

Roger: Yes, I'll let her know. I'll see you tomorrow, Sam.

Sam: Bye, Roger.

(Roger exits)

John: *(sigh)* I'll do the dishes.

(John gets up and gathers the plates to carry back to the kitchen. Sam exits left towards his room. Lynn gets a pile of books on the table and starts looking at one)

John: That kid, Roger, sounds like a good kid. *(he does not listen to Lynn's answer)*

Lynn: Yes, Sam is very fond of him. I'm almost jealous. But I have my own school friends too. I'm twice their age, and I have teachers younger than me, but they don't seem to mind. It's like a new life to me. I find myself smiling at others and they smile back at me. *(She realizes he's not listening. She turns back to her books)*

(John finishes up and goes straight to the TV. He turns it on, but it's all static, no signal)

John: What the?

(he tries buttons on the remote, but there's only static)

John: Shit!

(he goes to the TV, tries dials and buttons, gives it a few bangs with his hand, no success)

John: F...!

(he kicks it, turns it off)

John: I'm going to Molloy's. I can't miss my programs.

Lynn: *(not looking up, with irony)* Don't spend all your money on beer, you may need to save for your future.

John: *(ignoring her remark)* See ya.

(he exits. Lynn gets up, goes to the door and locks it. She returns to the table and reads from her pile of books)

Scene 5

Dimmed lights. A night light in the kitchen is on, making the scene backlit.

John is outside, tries to get in, but the door is locked. He tries keys but they don't get in.

He rings the bell. Again. He bangs on the door. Lynn comes in from the left in her robe, approaches the door, stops and reconsiders, is startled at every banging and expletives, but she does not open. She goes to the kitchen and turns off the night light.

Curtain