

Days of Wine and Roses

(Kirsten is Sober. She stares at the door of her and Joe's apartment. She is nervous, uncertain. She smokes a cigarette, drops it, steps on it, takes a step toward the door, then stops again. Finally, she knocks. At the sound of the knock, the lights snap on in the apartment. Joe, alone, crosses to the door. In the brighter light of the apartment she looks gaunt and tired. NOTE: Kirsten and Joe do not physically touch in this scene)

JOE:

Kirs...

(She smiles wanly, he motions her in. She enters, unable to disguise the slight sag of her shoulders and the hint of shuffle in her walk)

KIRSTEN:

(Looking about her furtively)

Debbie asleep?

JOE:

(Nodding)

It's after eleven.

KIRSTEN:

I didn't want her to see me.

JOE:

You don't look –

(He stops himself)

KIRSTEN:

So bad? Not as bad as you imagined I would. Thanks for trying. But I know how I look. This is the way I look when I'm sober. That's enough to make a person drink, wouldn't you say?*(Joe answers her little joke with a smile)*

Joe – I haven't had a drink in two days.

JOE:

Well, that's terrific – that's terrific

KIRSTEN:

It wasn't easy. But – I wanted to talk to you, so I thought I would try to make myself deserve it, at least a little. Sort of a penance, you might say.

JOE:

You'd be surprised how much fun you can have sober, once you get the hang of it.

KIRSTEN:

And you've got the hang of it.

JOE:

I think so. And believe me, it's the greatest.
(She turns away, barely able to keep herself in check)

KIRSTEN:

I want to come home.

JOE:

(Finally)

It's been a long road, a lot of detours. I can forgive you, I can try to help you, but I don't know if I can take you back. I don't know if I can forget enough. I thought I could, but now I don't know.

KIRSTEN:

You're talking about them. Yes, there were plenty of them. But they were nothing. I never looked at them. They had no identity. I never gave anything out of myself to them. I thought they would keep me from being so lonely, but I was just as lonely, because love is the only thing that can keep you from being lonely, and I didn't have that.

JOE:

I'm listening, Kirs. There's a little kid in there asleep who sure would like to wake up and find you here, so all you have to do is say the right words.

KIRSTEN:

I don't know if I have the right words. That's why it took me so long to get here. You see – the world looks dirty to me when I'm not drinking – like the water in the Hudson when you look too close. I don't think I can ever stop drinking, Joe – not completely, like you. I couldn't.

JOE:

You could –

KIRSTEN:

-if I wanted to, really wanted to. But I don't. I know that now. I want things to look prettier than they are. But I could control it if I had you to help me. I know I could. I know I could be all right if we were back together again and things were like they used to be and I wasn't so nervous. But I need to be loved. I get so lonely from not being loved, I can't stand it.

JOE:

I want to love you, Kirs, but I'm afraid of you. I'm an alcoholic. I can't take a drink. But I'm afraid of what we do to each other. If you'd only say you'd try-

KIRSTEN:

I know this sounds crazy but – I can't face the idea of never having another drink.

JOE:

One day at a time. One day at a time.

KIRSTEN:

(Overlapping)

I can't. I can't.

JOE:

Doesn't it impress you at all that I've been sober for almost a year, that I'm delighted to be this way, that I'm working steady and feeling great, that Debbie and I are moving out of this dump into a decent place? And all because I'm sober.

KIRSTEN:

You're strong, Joe. That's why I know you can help me now. If we only had it back like it was –

JOE:

(Too loud)

Back like it- !

(He stops himself, remembering Debbie. Then he continues in a low voice)

Do you remember how it really was, Kirs? It was you and me and booze. A threesome. A threesome! Remember? Oh, it was great while it lasted, don't get me wrong –

KIRSTEN:

(Pathetically eager) And we can have it back that way! I know we can! If –

JOE:

You can't control yourself! You're an alcoholic, same as I am!

KIRSTEN:

No!

JOE:

You and I were a couple of drunks on a sea of booze in a leaky boat! And it sank! But I've got a hold of something to keep me from going under, and I'm not going to let go, not for you, not for anybody. If you want to grab on, grab on, but there's only room for you and me. No threesome.

(She turns away abruptly with a kind of desperate anguish, crosses to the door and opens it. Then she stops, as though staring out at the world, struggling with herself.)

KIRSTEN:

(Finally)

I can't get over how dirty everything looks.

JOE:

Try it one more day.

KIRSTEN:

(Turns to face him, hopeless, dead-voiced)
Why?

JOE:

For her

KIRSTEN:

I'm afraid I'm not that unselfish. You'd better give up on me, Joe.

JOE:

Not quite yet.

KIRSTEN:

(After a moment)
Thanks. Good night.

JOE:

Kirs- *(she stops)*

Take care of yourself *(She nods, goes quickly)*

God – grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change.