

MODERN FAMILY - “Appearances” Treatment

By S.P. Wright

LOGLINE:

The world changes, evolves, and ages – a natural process with unfortunate results. Knowing that Gloria is struggling with the idea of aging Manny tries desperately to prevent her from seeing a trending video featuring her winning the Drag competition on Halloween. Meanwhile, disgruntled that he has become invisible to the LGBT community Cam decides to begin a radical diet with potentially harmful side-effects. Finally, in the Dunphy house, Haley contends with her new chin hairs.

ACT 1

INT. DUNPHY HOUSE – BATHROOM – MORNING

HALEY stumbles into the room rubbing her eyes. She ignores the noises of the other house members and readies the toothbrush. The babies begin to cry in the other room and Haley tiredly turns her head just in time to see PHIL flying down the hallway to greet the kids. Shrugging, she returns her attention to the mirror and freezes. The toothbrush falls into the sink with a CLINK, and foam drips down her chin. She leans in close to the mirror, running her hand over her upper lip which is covered in very fine stubble.

EXT. PARK – LOCATION 1 – DAY

MANNY flops onto a park bench and sighs loudly. His hands drop to his side, one holding his phone (showing Gloria’s face with a giant pause symbol over it), the other twitching slightly against the wooden boards. His mouth moves silently. Kids playing frisbee nearly hit him and he does not react. Animals scurry near his feet, and insects buzz around his head while he mutters silently.

EXT. PARK – LOCATION 2 – DAY

CAM enjoys a solo lunch at the park, silently watching the crowd between bites. Many couples are at the park today. Many younger couples. No one notices him sitting on the bench beneath the great tree. No one acknowledges him.

EXT. PARK – LOCATION 1 – DAY

Manny’s phone VIBRATES and he slowly brings it closer to his face.

ZOOM IN ON PHONE

He scrolls quickly through the list of unread messages. The secret was out, and the world was on fire. Returning to YouTube he resumes the video and listens in shock. A very loud and effeminate voice calls out the unnamed, insecure, old woman who was desperate enough to enter a Drag Competition in order to make herself feel better.

Manny blinks and rises from the bench. Glancing around quickly before rushing for the park exit. Manipulating his phone as he walks he notices few of the people surrounding him.

EXT. PARK – LOCATION 2 – DAY

Dropping his garbage in the bin Cam notices Manny rushing blindly through the park. Moving to intercept he calls out to Manny as he approaches – and Manny keeps moving. Without looking up once Manny continues to push forward, and Cam is forced to step aside quickly before being hit.

EXT, PARK – DAY – CONTINUOUS

Fingers flying across the phone screen as he walks Manny sends a message to Phil, desperately asking him to stall Gloria at work and promising to explain later. Putting the phone into his pocket he exits the park and hails a cab.

While watching, puzzled as Manny races away, Cam is plowed into by a young gay couple holding hands. One sneers, while the other offhandedly comments about “fat geezers” standing in traffic. Cam glares angrily as the two resume their conversation and continue on their way. His expression darkening in frustration Cam looks around and slowly ambles away, defeated.

INT. PHARMACY – SHAVING AISLE – DAY

Haley examines the various razors on the shelf. One hand absently rubbing her chin, while the other slowly pushes the cart back and forth ever so slightly. The TWINS lie asleep within their carriers. Another woman enters the aisle and silently snags a pack of blades from the shelf. Before leaving the aisle she winks knowingly at Haley, who’s head falls in embarrassment.

INT. PHARMACY – DAY – CONTINUOUS

Cam waits impatiently in line while the man at the counter prattles on about kidney stones, and various other ailments. The children behind him are noisy and keep bumping into him, which their mother is too occupied to notice. Glancing impatiently at his watch he lets out a sigh of frustration. Finally, noticing him the mother scolds her children for bothering the “big” man. Flushing with agitation Cam glances at his watch once more, as the man at the counter switches the conversation yet again.

EXT. PROPERTY FOR SALE – DAY

Phil jokes with a client as they arrive at the property. His phone VIBRATES in his pocket and he asks GLORIA to take the clients inside and begin the tour. Pulling the phone out he notices the message from Manny. Looking to the sky briefly, he shakes his head and enters the house. He steers the client’s attention to the grain pattern of the restored wooden floors and launches into a history of the various styles of flooring.

INT. PHARMACY = SHAVING AISLE – DAY

One of the twin’s yawns and begins to stir. Another woman with a young toddler trailing behind her enters the aisle. She fishes through her purse for a moment, glances down at her kid who is attempting to scale the shelving, and snaps at Haley to get out of the way. Grabbing a handful of razors herself, the young woman giggles at Haley’s lip before leaving the aisle - without her child who is now halfway up the shelf.

Agitated, Haley groans as she blindly pulls an item from the shelf. She glances at the child for a moment – now approaching the top of the shelf – before shaking her head silently and exiting the aisle.

A few aisles down she is nearly ran over by the woman heading back for her child.

A moment later several crashing sounds emerge from the shaving aisle.

INT. PHARMACY – DAY – CONTINUOUS

Finally, the yammering old man moves away from the counter and Cam can move forward. The pharmacist greets him and inquires to his needs. Cam gestures at himself and asks about anything that might work faster than a standard diet. The pharmacist asks a few probing questions and shakes her head knowingly as he answers. Putting her hand to her chin she ponders silently.

After a beat, she looks up and explains that there is a new pill on the market – no prescription required – but that it could have adverse side-effects. She also explains that it is not highly sought after due to it’s being made from freeze dried poop*, but that it has had wild success – for some.

Further, many of the test subjects experienced no side-effects, so the risk should be minimal. The most common issue experienced was weakness of the subject due to the pace at which the weight loss will occur.

The children bump into him again and are once more reminded to leave the “plus size man” alone. The pharmacist’s eyes widen at hearing this. Cam stares at the counter, breathes deeply, and says that he’ll take the pills.

EXT. JAY AND GLORIA’S HOUSE – DAY

Manny pays the cabby and rushes into the home.

Just before entering he pauses as JAY and JOE arrive home. Catching Jay’s attention Manny nods his head towards the house, letting Jay know that something is amiss.

Jays’ brow furrows in confusion as he nods his understanding and follows Manny inside, Joe bobbing along behind.

INT. JAY AND GLORIA’S HOUSE – KITCHEN – DAY

Jay gets a glass of water and asks what’s happening. As he moves the glass to his mouth Manny explains that the world has finally figured out what happened on Halloween.

Jay chokes on his water.

ACT 2

EXT. DUNPHY HOUSE – DAY

Haley arrives home with the twins and begins to pull the days shopping from the car. As she is pulling the kids out of their seats DYLAN comes outside to greet her wearing his scrubs as he will be heading out shortly. Grabbing the second child from the vehicle he makes his way over to Haley.

Together the two carry the children and bags inside.

INT. DUNPHY HOUSE – ENTRY – CONTINUOUS

Setting the boys down Dylan hugs his wife and leans in for a quick kiss. He breaks off in surprise rubbing his lips with a questioning expression. Embarrassed yet again, Haley quietly takes the shopping to the kitchen.

INT. MITCHELL AND CAMERON’S DUPLEX – KITCHEN - EVENING

Cam strolls into the kitchen carrying some bags and the little paper sack containing his new pills. Placing the baggie on the counter he moves to the other side of the kitchen and pulls out the ingredients for dinner. Setting a pot of water to boil he begins chopping the vegetables. Beside him is a log of beef and some breadcrumbs to be made into meatballs, a jar of sauce, a small container of Pico de Gallo, and a loaf of French bread.

The baggie with the poop pills stands forgotten behind him.

INT. JAY AND GLORIA’S HOUSE – EVENING

Joe plays outside in the yard, while Jay tries to quit coughing. Finally, regaining his breath he takes a quick sip of his water, then asks Manny what has happened. Manny silently pulls out his phone and sends Jay the link. Cautiously Jay opens the video and watches in silence. His face pales, and his eyes widen. Putting the phone down he asks Manny if there is anything they can do?

Manny explains that they will need to make sure that Gloria doesn’t try to access it. He also reveals that he has already reached out to the ‘Tuber and requested that the video be removed as the event was a simple misunderstanding, but that he doesn’t know if it will happen.

Jay nods, takes another sip, and re-watches the clip.

INT. MITCHELL AND CAMERON’S DUPLEX – KITCHEN – EVENING

LILY and MITCH arrive home. Mitch comments on how wonderful the house smells and moves to greet Cam.

Lily drops her bookbag on the counter beside the bag of poop pills. Noticing the oddity, she picks it up and begins to read the package while talking about her day at school. Her voice trails off and she slowly turns to face Cam, a puzzled expression on her face, and the baggie in her hand.

INT. JAY AND GLORIA’S HOUSE – CONTINUOUS

Gloria bursts through the door. She begins complaining about Phil and the longest house showing in history as he insisted on explaining every historical detail about the house. Every. Single. Detail.

Pouring a glass of wine, she sits at the bar and pulls out her phone. Joe comes inside to greet her, and she lays the phone on the counter. On the screen is an alert linking to the video. Seeing the link on her screen Jay coyly slides her phone off the counter and into the drawer while her attention was focused on Joe.

INT. DUNPHY HOUSE – BATHROOM – EVENING

Haley leans in close to the mirror and examines the hairs and sighs. The new razor lies unopened on the counter beside a can of shaving gel. Staring at the razor, lost in thought she fails to notice as LUKE and ALEX walk down the hall.

Pausing in the hall the siblings watch for a beat as Haley stands frozen in the ever-darkening bathroom. Luke steps forward and opens his mouth, but before he can speak Alex grabs his arm and drags him back the way they came. She tells Luke not to worry about it and resumes their conversation about the progress with his new business plan.

INT. JAY AND GLORIA’S HOUSE – EVENING – CONTINUOUS

Taking a sip of her wine Gloria reaches absently for her phone and realizes that it has disappeared. Confused she asks if anyone knows where it went. Jay plays his part and says he never saw her bring it in. Manny – without thinking – offers to call it.

The drawer starts RINGING. Gloria is puzzled but says she must have accidentally put it in there when she put away the corkscrew.

Jay stage coughs to get Manny’s attention and nods at the phone in her hand.

Manny looks confused for a moment, before realizing what he has done.

INT. MITCH AND CAMERON’S DUPLEX – KITCHEN – NIGHT

Cam freezes as he notices what Lily is holding. Seeing this Mitch grabs the baggie from her and reads the label himself. Disbelief crosses his face as he opens the bag and removes the bottle within. He reads the bottle itself as though hoping it had been mispackaged.

He rolls the bottle around in his hand for a moment, before turning to face Cam. In a quiet voice Mitch demands to know why he is holding a bottle of poop pills!

INT. JAY AND GLORIA’S HOUSE – KITCHEN – CONTINUOUS

Gloria sees the video link on her phone and opens it, wondering aloud what the video might be about.

Reaching across the bar, Manny snags her phone and shuts it off. Before she can react he tells her it was uninteresting, and instead changes the subject to ask about dinner ideas.

She replies that she is in the mood for chicken but can’t decide which kind sounds best. Joe playing with his tablet, pipes up that fried chicken with biscuits sounds amazing.

During the discussion Manny powers down Gloria’s phone and lays it face down on the dining table. He sighs in relief.

Joe looks up from his tablet and asks why mom is on TV? Jay and Manny immediately try to take the tablet from Joe, while saying that he must be mistaken.

Joe pulls away and insists that he isn't mistaken. As Manny attempts to take the tablet Joe manages to stream the video to the big screen mounted on the wall.

Gloria watches in amusement as she pours a fresh glass of wine. Her eyes move to the screen as the video begins. Mouth agape, wine pouring onto the counter, she watches in silence.

ACT 3

INT. DUNPHY HOUSE – BATHROOM – NIGHT

Realizing that it is now dark, and that she is standing and staring at a mirror she can no longer see, Haley turns on the light. Too Bright! She blinks rapidly, blinded by the light.

Hand resting upon the handle of her new razor, still locked away in its shiny plastic prison. She takes in a shuttering breath and tears the package apart. Out of its casing the blade looks dull, and uninteresting. She slowly raises it up to her face and examines it closely.

Without taking the guard off the blade she puts it to her face and motions the act of shaving. She did it again, this time watching herself in the mirror. And again. And again. She couldn't stop.

Tears rose up in her eyes as she continued to shave without shaving.

INT. MITCHEL AND CAMERON'S DUPLEX – LIVING ROOM – NIGHT

Mitch paces about the room while Lily stands in the corner. Cam is collapsed in a pile on the couch. He slowly reveals that he has become increasingly more frustrated with his body.

He has always been a little larger than most which had never bothered him that much, but now he was beginning to age as well. He is used to being avoided due to his size but being ignored because of his aging frame is new. There is nothing that he can do aging. Even if he fought it, he would eventually lose. His weight however is something he could combat, and maybe it was time.

Lily snorts quietly and continues standing in the corner, a frustrated scowl spreading across her face.

Mitch stops pacing for a moment and nods. He admits that this is all true, but he still doesn't understand why the sudden need for a diet? Why wouldn't he discuss this choice before moving forward? And most importantly, Why the Poop Pills?

Cam explains that the issue began with the pool party and that since then he has become more, and more invisible to their community. He doesn't mind being ignored at times but being invisible is completely unacceptable. Stuttering a bit, he says he didn't talk to Mitch first because he knew Mitch wouldn't understand.

Setting the pills down Mitch goes over to Cam and wraps his arms around him. He admits that he might not understand completely, but that he could empathize, and ...

Lily, visibly shaking calls them both idiots.

INT. DUNPHY HOUSE – BATHROOM – NIGHT

CLAIRE knocks on the bathroom door and quietly lets herself in. She starts to ask if everything is ok as she glances around the room but stops. A razor and its torn packaging lie abandoned on the counter, beside a tube of shaving gel lying on its side. The faucet runs at full and the mirror is completely fogged over. From the corner comes a short sob, and Claire moves over to sit beside her daughter.

Haley looks up, eyes red and puffy, with shaving gel smeared across her face, shirt, and the knees of her pants.

Claire pulls a towel over and begins to slowly wipe the foam from Haley’s face, while speaking softly.

INT. JAY AND GLORIA’S HOUSE – EVENING

Jay sits on the couch with Joe attempting to explain what was happening.

Meanwhile Manny speaks quietly with Gloria. He knew that she was having trouble adjusting to her age, and he thought that her seeing this video would only make it harder. He also apologizes for not telling her that the award she won on Halloween was meant for Drag Queens.

Jay interrupts and reminds Manny that keeping the secret of the Drag Competition had been his idea. Looking to Gloria he explains that he couldn’t bear breaking her heart more that night by revealing to her that everyone thought she was a man.

INT. MITCH AND CAMERON’S DUPLEX – NIGHT

Lily explodes on her fathers, calling them both hypocrites. They have always taught her acceptance. They have preached understanding. And above all else they have always taught her that one must always be true to themselves.

Her attention turns to Cam specifically. After trying to teach her to be comfortable with herself he was going to fall victim to vanity and care what others think of him. More to the point he has lived his life, as a gay man, proudly moving forward in a world that did not always accept him, but now he was going to tuck tale and do what he needed to fit in?

She was having none of it. Grabbing the pills, she tears the lid off the bottle as she moves to the kitchen.

INT. JAY AND GLORIA’S HOUSE – NIGHT

As Manny explains that the video is now trending on all media and would be more disastrous to have taken down, Jay attempts to bring some humor through an ill-timed joke – which fails. Horribly.

Gloria rolls her eyes at the men as she cleans the spill. She tells them that she is beginning to come to terms with the fact that she is aging. That nothing she can do can halt that, and she is determined to age as gracefully as she can.

What angers her isn't that she is aging. It is not that the men lied to her and roped Phil into it without knowing what was happening. She is not upset at the fact that she is trending. She doesn't even care about the Drag thing as it simply means that everyone thought she was the best-looking man in the group.

What upsets her is that the angry little man on the video kept calling her a grandma!

Hearing this Joe tugs on Gloria's pants. She looks down at him and, with a devious twinkle in his eye, he innocently reminds her that she is a grandma. He smiles and tells her that she is the prettiest grandma in his whole school.

INT. MITCHEL AND CAMERON'S DUPLEX – KITCHEN – NIGHT

With the dads trailing behind her Lily flies into the kitchen and thrusts the pills down the drain. Turning the faucet and disposal on she glares at Cameron and moves to the refrigerator. Nearly frozen in awe Mitch manages to reach over and turn off the appliance, never taking his gaze off his daughter.

After rummaging through the fridge for a moment Lily begins speaking. A bit calmer now. She says that she can understand if Cam wants to become healthier, she can even get behind the idea of dieting. But, not if the only reasoning behind such action is to affect how other people see him.

Smirking as she slams the fridge closed she says that she would be more than happy to help either of her dads get healthier. Crossing the kitchen, she wraps her arms around both men and tells them they are perfect exactly as they are.

Pulling away, she laughs quickly with a maniacal grin spreading across her face. She quietly tells Cam there is a better way to diet and thrusts a large head of raw broccoli into his arms.

The men are left dumbfounded as Lily leaves the kitchen.

Cam blinks rapidly as he stares down at the Broccoli.

INT. JAY AND GLORIA'S HOUSE – NIGHT

Jay and Manny hold their breathe waiting to see how Gloria will react to Joe's comment.

A smile slowly spreads as she reaches down to grab her son. Giving him a hug, she confides that that word has always pained her. Physically pained her, to hear or speak the word grandma. However, for some reason, being called a grandma by Joe felt completely natural. Calming even. She asks Joe to promise that he will always be there for her as she grows old.

Joe leaps down and tells her that she can't get much older anyway, than runs off down the hall.

Rolling her eyes, Gloria moves past the men to grab her phone.

INT. JAY AND GLORIA'S HOUSE – BEDROOM – NIGHT

While her phone returns to life Gloria searches the closet and changes out of her work clothes.

In fresh clothes she sits on the bed and texts Haley, “Grandma says HI!”. Smiling she stares vacantly out of the window.

INT. DUNPHY HOUSE – BATHROOM – NIGHT

Haley can’t comprehend why this is happening to her. What has she done wrong? Why is she being punished?

Claire laughs – louder than intentional – and calms Haley with the truth. The hairs are completely natural. Millions of women have the same problem. Even she herself has a hairy lip.

Haley abruptly looks up and focuses intently on her mother’s face. Smiling she leaps up and struts towards the door. When Claire asks what’s happening Haley turns around, beaming. She says that if its natural, and that they both have the problem, then she only has to make sure that hers is always shorter and less noticeable than Claire’s. With that she practically skips from the bathroom.

Claire collapses into the corner, throws the towel in frustration, and grabs her temple. She quietly asks herself how she went wrong with that one.

TAG

EXT. JAY AND GLORIA’S HOUSE – YARD – NIGHT

Gloria lounges in the yard gazing silently at the stars when her phone VIBRATES on the ground beside her. Reaching over she awakens the device and reads the message he has just received. Her expression hardens for an instant, before relaxing. She lets out a small giggle and returns the phone to the ground. Her gaze returns to the stars just in time to see one streak across the sky.

ZOOM TO PHONE

The text on screen is from Haley. WHAT? Grandma’s Dead!