

TOO BIG TO CRY

by Jo Morello

**A One-Act Play
for Young Adults (Middle School, High School) and Families**

**FINALIST, DISCOVERY '89, CHOATE ROSEMARY HALL
Wallingford, CT**

**SELECTION/READING, NORTH CAROLINA PLAYWRIGHTS' FESTIVAL, 1992
North Carolina Playwrights's Center, Catawba College
Salisbury, NC**

**WORKSHOP, ST. STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL ACADEMY, APR-MAY 1994
Directed by Preston Boyd
Bradenton, FL**

**SELECTION, "THE PLAY'S THE THING" READING SERIES, 2001
The Players Theatre, Directed by Preston Boyd
Sarasota, FL**

Synopsis

Jim, a high-school senior, is the only son of parents who have given him too much, and their pending divorce pulls their attention away from him. This sudden reversal requires him to develop self-reliance but he seems reluctant to do so, even though many of his friends have been down the same path. There are comedic elements and sex-role-reversals in this drama, which also touches on sexism and alcoholism.

© by Jo Morello, 6620 Grand Point Avenue, University Park, FL 34201-2125
Phone: 941-351-9688 ▪ Cell: 941-587-8290 ▪ Fax: 941-306-5042
www.jomorello.com ▪ jo@jomorello.com ▪ jomorello@tampabay.rr.com

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TOO BIG TO CRY

5-8 males (some doubling); 4 females; 1 male or female;
Suggestive sets; Runs about 30 minutes; Can tour.
Intercultural casting encouraged.

Cast of Characters

- JIM HARRIS.....16-18 years old. High-school wrestling star and usually good student. Popular but spoiled and somewhat irresponsible. His friends enjoy him for his usual good nature. Caught in the center of his parents' break-up and lacking the maturity to deal with it.
- FRANK HARRIS.....Jim's father. A lawyer, 30s-40s. Well-meaning, harassed, unhappy. Miserable in his marriage without knowing what went wrong. Well-meaning but still living in the past.
- DEBRA HARRIS.....Jim's mother, 30s. Overworked. Strives to be superwoman: perfect mother, perfect career woman. She's given up on being perfect wife. Works toward liberation but misses. Overprotective towards Jim.
- DAVID.....16-18. Jim's classmate and best friend. A regular-guy. He may have some depth but we can't tell.
- BOB.....16-18. Another classmate. Perceptive and bright; often the class clown.
- JANET..... 16-18. Jim's girlfriend. Everybody's ideal Junior Miss. More mature than Jim. Devoted to him for as long as she can handle it.
- SUSAN.....16-18. Bob's girlfriend. A cheerleader. Down-to-earth and funny. Not above clowning to make a point.
- ROSALIE.....16-18. An average student who spends more than an average amount of time in detention. Slightly cynical but good-natured.
- WILLIAM.....16-18. A student who bumbles through life against the background of a loving family that nevertheless makes heavy demands on him. Really tries to learn but life is a constant surprise to him.
- MS/MR MARTINEZ 25-65. (Any age to be a teacher).The high-school guidance counselor and disciplinarian. Realistic and no-nonsense; respected for fairness and wisdom.
- *REFEREE..... Seen only in silhouette.
- *HOLTON..... 17-18. Jim's wrestling opponents. Seen only in silhouette. Body types
*OPPONENT should be different from Jim's.
- *ANNOUNCER: VOICE ONLY
*may be doubled

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Design/Technical Considerations

All sets are suggested. Elaborate set design is not necessary but backlighting is requested on occasion, as described below.

- SCENE 1: The wrestling gym in a high school. Suggested wrestling ring in the center of a bare stage. Backlighting if available to show wrestlers in silhouette.
- SCENE 2: The Harris living room. Sofa and cocktail table, or the suggestion of them.
- SCENE 3: High-school hallway with lockers (may be painted exteriors) and a bench.
- SCENE 4: High-school detention room: three student desks or chairs; a teacher's desk and chair.
- SCENE 5: The walk home from school (may be played in front of the curtain).
- SCENE 6: Same as Scene 3: the school hallway with lockers.
- SCENE 7: A wrestling tournament (same as Scene 1). Backlit, silhouetted.
- SCENE 8: Same as Scene 3, plus crepe paper, balloons or other festive items.
- SCENE 9: Two playing area at opposite sides of the stage, where two characters have a phone conversation, either mimed or with props.
-A lonely highway—a bare stage, with a real or suggested highway pay phone
-Janet's home—bare stage or a table with telephone

Costumes

Teens and adults wear modern-day clothing as appropriate for day-to-day activities, including school attendance and a Sports Banquet. There are only a few special costume requirements:

- SCENE 1: Jim (and opponents seen in silhouette) wear wrestling clothes.
Susan wears a cheerleader's outfit, may carry pom-poms.
- SCENE 6: Necktie, pair of athletic socks, various scarves, skirts, etc., for playing the gender-reversal sections.
- SCENE 8: Janet, Bob and Jim wear clothes suitable for a school Sports Banquet.
- SCENE 9: Jim wears an outside jacket, too thin to provide much warmth in the winter cold.

SCENE 1

Time: The present, Friday evening, late Spring

Place: The wrestling gym of a high school

A backlit wrestling ring (suggested) occupies the center of a bare stage. Crowd noises. JIM and his OPPONENT (MALE WRESTLER), wearing wrestling clothes, are seen in silhouette. They grapple, then JIM pins his OPPONENT to the mat. A REFEREE enters, bangs the count, raises Jim's hand. The crowd cheers. The OPPONENT exits.

ANNOUNCER (VO): Ladies and gentlemen, the winner of this match, for the wrestling championship of the Central Region, ___*___ weight division... JIM HARRIS!

Cheers SWELL, then fade as announcer continues.

ANNOUNCER (VO): And now a special treat. Jim's dad--Frank Harris—is here tonight. You old-timers oughta remember him rasslin' here in this very same gym 25 years ago, on his way to the state wrestling championship... Let's hear it for the Harris men!

In silhouette, FRANK enters, hugs JIM and acknowledges the crowd. Cheers. FRANK clasps one of JIM's upraised arms and they bask in the crowd's warm response.

ANNOUNCER (VO): How about a victory cheer for our next state champion. Jim's gonna follow
in his Dad's footsteps next month!

The crowd roars, then lights come up full. STUDENTS rush out and some lift an embarrassed JIM to their shoulders as others cluster around. SUSAN wears a cheerleader's outfit. DEBRA HARRIS enters, reaches up to touch her son proudly. DEBRA and FRANK are not together but JIM doesn't notice.

JIM searches for JANET, who enters with a notebook or microphone. When she gets to JIM, he reaches down for her hand and tries to dismount. The following dialogue overlaps, over crowd noise and actor ad-libs.

JIM: C'mon, guys. Put me down.

FRANK: Enjoy it, Jim. It's once in a lifetime.

*NOTE: Insert category to suit the weight of the actor.

JIM: Aw, Dad--

DEBRA: Jim, I'm so proud of you--

BOB: Man, you had that guy on the run!

DAVID: The championship's a cinch now! The Tigers* are goin' all the way!

ROSALIE: I didn't know he could wrestle like that! (To William) Did you know? (To Janet) Did you know?

JANET: Know what?

ROSALIE: That Jim could wrestle?

WILLIAM: You gotta ask his girlfriend?

ROSALIE: William!

WILLIAM (innocently): Hey, Ro... don't you think the school reporter goes to all the matches?

SUSAN (to Janet): Ignore these two clowns, Janet.

JANET: I will if you will.

SUSAN (doing a high-five with Janet): Deal!

ROSALIE: Hey, wait a min--

JIM: GUYS! Come on! Let me down!

JANET: Yeah, put him down. I'm on deadline. (To Jim) Jim, can you answer a few questions?

The STUDENTS put JIM down and drift off, leaving JIM with JANET. FRANK and DEBRA, apart, hover nearby. JANET acts "official" as she interviews a tired, happy JIM.

JANET: Well, Jim, how's it feel to be the champ?

JIM: I feel about the same as I did this morning--just a little more tired.

JANET: But you're the champion of the Central Region! Won't this affect you at all?

JIM: Sure. I have more responsibility. The whole region's counting on me to bring home the state title next month... and I'm gonna do my best to—

[*Insert name of school team if desired.]

DEBRA: I know you can do it, Jim. (To Janet) Wait'll you see how--

FRANK (coldly): Debra, I believe the questions are directed to Jim.

DEBRA: Oh... sorry.

JIM hugs DEBRA.

JIM: Hey, Mom. It's OK.

JANET (to Jim): Midterms are coming up. Will you have time to practice?

JIM: Well, I guess--

FRANK: Sure. He's an athlete-scholar.

JIM: Scholar-athlete, Dad.

FRANK: Like me.

DEBRA glares at FRANK coldly but JIM doesn't see. JANET still wants an answer from JIM. BOB and DAVID drift back in quietly, waiting for JIM to finish. During the following dialogue, OTHERS drift back in, including SUSAN.

JANET: Jim?

JIM: Well, I think I can manage--

FRANK: Of course he'll manage. Just like his old man did it!

JANET (to Frank): When you won the championship, Mr. Harris, did it affect your life very much at the time?

FRANK: It still does!

JANET: Twenty-five years later?

FRANK: Well, if nothing else, it's forged a close bond between Jim and me. (To Jim) Isn't that right, Son?

JIM: Sure. (To Janet) Dad's been a real inspiration to me. Except for Coach Bronson, nobody else ever taught me more about wrestling. Mom's been great too.

JANET: Doesn't your own ability count for something? Your hard work?

JIM: Sure, but I didn't do it alone. Bob and David helped--and the rest of the team.

BOB: Bull, Jim. We didn't wrestle for you.

DAVID: You did that yourself.

SUSAN executes a leap and leads a short cheer.

SUSAN: HARRIS, HARRIS, HE'S OUR MAN! IF HE CAN'T DO IT--

GROUP: NO ONE CAN!

JIM: Cut it out, guys! (To Janet) Write this down. I owe my success as much to my parents, Coach Bronson* and my teammates as to my talent and work.

JANET: That's your statement?

JIM: That's it.

JANET: Got it. (Closing notebook or turning off mike) OK. Interview's over. Ready for a pizza now?

JIM: PIZZA? Man, I'd never make my weight!... I'll just watch. (To Frank and Debra) See you guys later, OK?

FRANK: Eleven o'clock!

DEBRA: Frank, it's already ten!

FRANK (to Jim): I'll see you at eleven.

FRANK and DEBRA exit. They start off together but turn in different directions. JIM doesn't notice.

JIM (to his friends): Hey, guys! We're outta here!

STUDENTS rush towards JIM and all exit at

BLACKOUT

SCENE 2

Time: The following Sunday night

Place: the Harris living room. Suggestive furniture indicates a sofa at center stage facing the audience and a cocktail table in front of it with an opened liquor bottle and two glasses. FRANK and DEBRA have obviously had a few drinks but are not yet inebriated. They drink during the scene.

[*Insert name of school wrestling coach if desired.]

FRANK (pacing angrily and looking at watch): Why isn't that kid home yet? He's got school tomorrow. I said 11 o'clock.

DEBRA: Look, you're divorcing me. Don't take it out on him.

FRANK: Don't tell me what to do. He should be here.

DEBRA: Maybe he doesn't want to come home.

FRANK: WHAT?

DEBRA: Never mind... Look, he'll be home any minute. . . . Give him a chance to grow up.

FRANK: I told him 11 o'clock. He's in trouble... and so are you if you interfere.

DEBRA: I've been in trouble ever since I married you.

FRANK: Wrong. You got yourself in trouble first. Then you married me.

DEBRA: Got myself in trouble? Since when does a woman get herself pregnant? As I recall, you were only too glad to participate. Anxious, even.

FRANK: Well, it's a mistake I'm about to correct... As for that kid, he's grounded for a week.

DEBRA: You can't! He's got the state championship coming up, and practice almost every night.

FRANK: Well, then, he's grounded except for practice.

DEBRA: I won't let you ground him. He's my son too.

FRANK: You won't be seeing him much longer.

DEBRA: Big man. Big lawyer. How do you plan to stop me?

FRANK: You have to ask? With the right judge, I can have you declared "Unfit Mother of the Year." I'll just tell him about your drinking and running around.

DEBRA: My drinking? Ever look in the mirror, you lush? As for my running around... I'd be justified if I had. But it's a lie. Perjury!

FRANK: How do I know it's a lie?

DEBRA: You pig! You don't even want him! You just don't want me to have him. (Pause, then suddenly inspired and determined.) I can just hear you in court.

A spot comes up on DEBRA, leaving FRANK in shadow. DEBRA adopts a deep masculine voice and a pretentious swagger as she sarcastically

mimics her husband. She may adopt a "dumb jock" speech pattern as she addresses an imaginary judge. She pauses occasionally for the judge's replies during her imaginary conversation.

DEBRA: Look, your honor. Take it from me. My wife's not fit to have the kid, Whatsisname.... What evidence do you need? She drinks and she runs around. Isn't that enough?

As DEBRA swaggers, she scratches her crotch like a baseball player, in apparent imitation of her husband. JIM enters unobserved, hears his parents, and stops in the hall area, unseen. At first he enjoys his mother's mugging, but his reaction changes to hurt and pain as he realizes what he is witnessing.

DEBRA: How long have we been married? Forever! . . . OK. Sorry, your honor. I gotta think. (mugging) Hate to do that. Thinking gives me a headache.

She starts to count on her fingers.

DEBRA: It was the year I finished law school, so it must have been... two take away five... (Triumphantly)... seventeen! Seventeen long, miserable years, but it feels like a hundred The kid? ... Sure I know how old he is...old enough to untie his mother's apron strings... What? I'm not stalling.... He's (long pause)... he's sixteen! Seventeen next month.... Yeah, sure he was conceived before the wedding.... His mom couldn't wait!... Accidents happen, ya know.

JIM begins to break down silently. DEBRA, by now thoroughly enjoying her portrayal of FRANK, begins to scratch wildly.

DEBRA: But you can't pin that one on me. Not my fault. She should've been taking care of herself. Once a tramp, always a tramp, I guess.... Well, no, your honor, of course I can't prove it, but everybody cheats sometimes.... Why, I'll bet you've even ... Sorry, your honor. I didn't really mean that.... So you wanna know how long she's been cheatin' on me?

FRANK charges into the spotlight and explodes.

FRANK: As long as I've known her!

DEBRA returns to her own persona and faces FRANK coolly.

DEBRA: Then how do you know he's your son?

JIM sobs convulsively but silently.

BLACKOUT

SCENE 3

Time: A Tuesday about three weeks later

Place: A high-school hallway with lockers and a bench. Five students--DAVID, BOB, SUSAN, ROSALIE and WILLIAM--have gathered at the end of the school day.

DAVID: What's buggin' Jim? He cut half his classes this week and skipped practice again last night.

BOB: Beats me. He's been actin' like it's the end of the world.

DAVID: If he doesn't shape up, we're gonna lose the tournament.

WILLIAM: Maybe he had a fight with Janet.

JANET hears this remark as she joins the group.

JANET: Hey, don't blame me! I'm as worried as you are. He's acting like a zombie.

DAVID: He's just being weird, that's all.

WILLIAM (to David): That's cause he's your best friend.

ROSALIE (to David): Well, if he hasn't told you or Janet, it's probably not much.

DAVID: Or else it's too much.

SUSAN: Don't you guys know anything? His parents are splittin'!

JANET: No way! Where'd you hear that?

SUSAN: Through the walls.

ROSALIE: You can hear them next door?

JANET: You listened?

SUSAN: I had no choice. (to Janet) They were so loud you might have heard them yourself.

DAVID: From two blocks away?

JANET: They act OK when I'm around.

SUSAN: You're never around at night after the bars close. They're really loud.

WILLIAM: Aw, that's how my house always sounds--my baby brother cries, the dog barks, the TV blasts, and my Momma yells over everything.

ROSALIE: Just your normal American family.

SUSAN: No. They're gonna split. His mom told my mom yesterday. His father is moving out.

DAVID (after a pause): You think Jim knows?

SUSAN: He will.

ROSALIE: Big surprise, huh?

BOB: Maybe. When my parents split, I was surprised.

ROSALIE: Why? They always fought. Everybody knows--

BOB: Sure they fought, but it was always that way. They told each other, "Get outta here. I don't want you.

SUSAN: Yeah, and you thought it was your fault.

BOB: How'd you know?

SUSAN: I've been there.

ROSALIE: You too? Am I the only one whose parents are still together?

JANET: Mine are.

DAVID: Mine would be, if my dad hadn't died in that accident.

ROSALIE: What about yours, William?

WILLIAM: They're together... sorta. Pop works night shift and Mom works days. They pass each other on the way to the bathroom.

SUSAN: At least they don't get time to fight.

WILLIAM: It's not like that. They really love each other.

SUSAN: You're lucky. My parents hated each other... but when they split I still thought it was my fault.

ROSALIE: How could it be?

SUSAN: Because sometimes they fought about me. My father would say (mimicking her father) "What kind of mother lets her daughter go out looking like that? Tell Miss Centerfold to put some clothes on." Then Mom would fight back. (Mimics her mother) "Whattya want

from me? She's not a baby." And he'd say, "She's gonna get a baby." Then she'd scream, "I don't dress her," and he'd say, "You call that dressed?" She'd say, "I dressed like that and it turned you on." Then he'd say, "I don't want her going out with any kid like I was."

JANET: What did you do?

SUSAN: I cried a lot. I ran. I hid. I was too ashamed to see anybody. I cut classes. Like Jim.

WILLIAM: You'd never cut a class!

JIM enters slowly, head down, books in hand, and stops a short distance from his friends. At first, the others don't notice him.

SUSAN: I did then. So on top of everything else, I got detentions and crummy grades.

WILLIAM: Wish I had an excuse. I get detention and crummy grades 'cause I'm dumb.

JIM is now on the perimeter of the group, unseen. Somewhat behind JANET, he overhears them.

ROSALIE (to William): That's not funny... even if it's true.

William reacts comically, making a face at Rosalie. Laughing, she pushes him away, turns to Susan.

ROSALIE: So what happened?

SUSAN: Ms. (Mr.) Martinez saw me in detention every day, and one day we started to talk.

ROSALIE: Sounds like Martinez. Talk, talk, talk. Maybe that's what a guidance counselor's supposed to do.

WILLIAM: Aw, she's (he's) all right.

SUSAN: Well, it worked for me.

JANET: Maybe she'd talk to Jim! How could we arrange it?

JIM suddenly realizes the STUDENTS are talking about him. He angrily throws his books on the bench for emphasis as he speaks.

JIM: You don't arrange it! You don't arrange anything! You don't talk about me behind me back, and you don't plan my life for me. Get outta my face, all of you!

The STUDENTS are shocked at JIM's arrival and his behavior. Their response is a mix of surprise, embarrassment and pity. JANET reaches out to touch his hand but JIM shakes her off.

JANET: I'm sorry, Jim. . . . But we're your friends.

WILLIAM: Yeah, Man, lighten up. We just wanna help.

JIM: You don't know what it's like.

BOB: You are do wrong! I've been there.

SUSAN: Me too. You're not alone.

JIM is angry, perhaps close to tears. He's anxious to be alone before he loses control.

JIM: Maybe I wanna be. It beats listening to this crap.

Sadly, the STUDENTS start to leave. JANET turns back. She walks over to JIM and touches his sleeve.

JANET: Jim, let me help. We need each other to lean on.

JIM (again shaking her off): That's probably what my parents thought once. Now they need each other to dump on.

JANET, obviously hurt, rushes off. JIM loses control. He punches a locker futilely, in anguish.

JIM: Why? ... Why me? . . . Why?

BLACKOUT

SCENE 4

Time: The next day, Wednesday

Place: Detention. MR/MS MARTINEZ is at a teacher's desk, facing JIM, ROSALIE, and WILLIAM, who sit in student desks. JIM's right hand is wrapped in a large bandage.

MARTINEZ (glancing at her watch): All right, Rosalie. Your detention's over. (reading a note) You're due for work at the Burger Barn. Wouldn't want you to miss that.

Rosalie gathers her belongings and stands to leave.

MARTINEZ: Remember, no more smoking at school! Or anywhere else if you're smart.

ROSALIE makes a great show of removing a packet of snuff from her purse and opening it. She pinches off a large wad, stuffing so much into her mouth that she can barely close it. She has never

used snuff before, but begins chewing energetically, to WILLIAM's delight. JIM barely notices. She heads for the door, playing up her impudence.

MARTINEZ (to Rosalie): HOLD IT!

ROSALIE freezes in mid-pose.

MARTINEZ: What are you chewing?

ROSALIE (as clearly as possible with a mouth full of snuff): Fnuuff.

WILLIAM continues giggling but ROSALIE squirms. She wants to get rid of the mess in her mouth but knows she hasn't won her point yet.

MARTINEZ: I beg your pardon?

ROSALIE: FNUUFF! SNUFF!

MARTINEZ: You're working on another detention!

ROSALIE takes a tissue from her purse and spits out the mess.

ROSALIE: You said I can't smoke. Nobody said I can't dip!

WILLIAM laughs, certain that ROSALIE's won.

MARTINEZ: Read your student handbook again, Miss. The rules don't say, "No smoking." They say, "No tobacco."

WILLIAM stops laughing.

ROSALIE: So?

MARTINEZ: What were you just chewing?

ROSALIE: Snuff!

MARTINEZ: And what is snuff?

ROSALIE: Dip!

WILLIAM: Tobacco!

ROSALIE: Gross me out! I was chewin' tobacco? YUK!

ROSALIE races for the wastebasket and spits. She wipes her chin with the back of her hand then starts off but MARTINEZ writes a detention slip and gives it to her.

MARTINEZ: Just a minute, Rosalie. I'll see you in detention again tomorrow and all the rest of this week. Same time, same place.

WILLIAM: (Quietly to Rosalie) You moron.

ROSALIE sidles over, snatches the slip from MARTINEZ, and slinks off.

MARTINEZ: William, you'll join us again tomorrow.

WILLIAM: For what?

MARTINEZ: Enjoying yourself at Rosalie's expense.

WILLIAM: What's this world comin' to? We've got wars and poverty and diseases, but I enjoy myself a little and I get busted.

MARTINEZ: Tough life, huh?

WILLIAM shrugs.

MARTINEZ: OK, you can go now, with a little advice.

WILLIAM: Yes, Ma'm?

MARTINEZ: Try to be more creative the next time your assignment isn't ready. Better yet, have it ready.

WILLIAM: Ms/Mr Martinez, the dog really did take a leak on my homework.

MARTINEZ: Come on, William. You can be more original than that. I've heard that one ever since I started teaching. It even happened to me once.

WILLIAM: Then why couldn't it happen to me?

MARTINEZ: It happened to me in the second grade.

During WILLIAM's explanation, MARTINEZ listens first with disbelief, then amusement, and finally laughter.

WILLIAM: But it's the truth! See, I was doin' my homework at the table, and I was babysittin' the baby.

MARTINEZ: "Babysitting the baby?" Who else would you be babysitting? That's redundant!

WILLIAM: What?

MARTINEZ: Don't you know what "redundant" means?

WILLIAM: Yeah. It means my sister should've been babysitting.

MARTINEZ: One of you should have been babysitting the dog.

WILLIAM: You said it! I was concentratin' so hard on my homework that I never saw my brother

Tommy trip over Benji--that's my puppy. Anyways, I'm writin' my paper and all of a sudden I hear this screamin' and howlin' from under the table. So I jump up to look, and my chair falls ca-RASH, and my homework flies to the floor. Now Tommy is really screamin', and he can't get up, and he's sittin' on top of the dog. I run around and pick up Tommy, and the dog runs away. But Benji's real scared, see, and he pees right on my homework cause I been teachin' him to pee on paper.

MARTINEZ (laughing): If your story is true, you're dedicated. If it's not, you're imaginative. . . . Well, you'd better hurry home. Your mother can't afford to lose such a good dogsitter.

WILLIAM heads for the door.

MARTINEZ: William?

WILLIAM (turning): Yes, Ma'am?

MARTINEZ: From now on, when you paper-train your puppy, remember: it's NEWSpaper, not TERMpaper.

WILLIAM: Maybe it should be TOILETpaper.

MARTINEZ: Tomorrow, William?

He exits, leaving MARTINEZ and JIM alone.

MARTINEZ: Well, Jim. In the four years I've known you, this is the first time I've seen you here.

JIM (hostilely): Yeah. Once in four years. Is that so bad?

MARTINEZ: Not by a long shot. But for you.... Well, you're the All-American boy.

JIM: Does that mean I can't be like everyone else?

MARTINEZ: Of course not. . . . Has everyone else been cutting classes and skipping practice? Is everyone else having problems with his friends?

JIM: Who said that?

MARTINEZ: Word gets around.... You must have been pretty mad to punch those lockers.

JIM holds up his hands, one heavily bandaged.

JIM: Lethal weapons.

MARTINEZ: Any particular target?

JIM looks away and doesn't respond.

MARTINEZ: You want to talk?

JIM: Nothing to say.

MARTINEZ walks to his desk and indicates his bandaged hand.

MARTINEZ: This tells me different--and right before the tournament, too.

JIM: Coach says I can still wrestle... but he'd say that even if my mother died.

MARTINEZ: Is wrestling what's important?

JIM: It's more important to him than to me.

MARTINEZ: You've always been a good student--until recently. What's going on?

JIM: Nothing.

MARTINEZ: Nothing? For nothing you cut classes, cut out of practice, cut off your friends. Then yesterday you lost a bout with the lockers. That adds up to--

JIM: I said it's nothing.

MARTINEZ: Right. Nothing. Zero. (gently) Sure you don't want to talk, Jim?

JIM: Nothing to talk about.

MARTINEZ: OK. If you change your mind, I'm here.

JIM: Yeah? Well, you can't help. Nobody can.

MARTINEZ: You don't have to go through this alone, whatever it is... What about your parents? Have you spoken with your mother? Can you talk to your father?

JIM: I'd love to--if I knew who he was!

MARTINEZ (surprised but not shocked): Oh, come on, Jim! We all know your father. He's your biggest fan... never misses your matches.

JIM: My father? You mean Frank? Frank Harris? More like Dr. Frankenstein, building his own creation. He's trying to make me a lawyer, make me a wrestler. Make me be him instead of me. Soon he'll want to make me a drunk.

MARTINEZ: Can't you two talk? He's very proud of you, Jim. He cheers your every move.

JIM: Yeah. Then he goes off and leaves me here alone.

MARTINEZ: When?

JIM: After I wrestle. He comes to the locker room, pats my back, says "Good match, Son," and he's gone. If Mom can't get there, I don't even have a ride home.

MARTINEZ: Maybe it's business--

JIM: At the bar? He runs out and tells his friends how I did.... If I'm worth bragging about, how come I'm not worth his time?

MARTINEZ: Well, he's coming to the Sports Banquet with you on Saturday, isn't he?

JIM: How should I know? I don't even know where he'll be living by Saturday.

MARTINEZ: I see. . . . So... Is it just a bad fight? A separation? A divorce? Do you know yet?

JIM: What difference does it make? He's moving out, and my Mom just sits around feeling sorry for herself. She cries, she watches TV, she drinks--and it's all my fault.

MARTINEZ: Talk about feeling sorry for yourself! . . . Not that you don't have a reason.

JIM: I have plenty of reasons! When they were fighting a couple of weeks ago, *Frank* said I might not even be his son!

MARTINEZ: He said that to you?

JIM: To my mom. He didn't know I was there.

MARTINEZ: It wasn't meant for you. When people are angry, they try to hurt each other. . . . Listen, I went to school with your parents, and your mother never even went out with anyone else. Your father knows that too.

JIM: But they fought over me--

MARTINEZ: . . .and everything else under the sun, I imagine.

JIM: No. It's my fault.

MARTINEZ: OK. It's your fault. No doubt about it... It's raining today. I guess that's your fault, too. . . . So, what are you gonna do about it?

JIM: The rain?

MARTINEZ (laughing): Yeah, the rain. Make it stop, will you? My kids are building an ark. . . .

No, Jim. What are you going to do about your parents' split?

JIM: What am I supposed to do?

MARTINEZ: About them? Nothing. There isn't a thing you can do, any more than you can do something about the rain. The point is, your parents are busy looking out for themselves right now. Who's looking out for Jim?

JIM: Nobody.

MARTINEZ: Exactly. And why aren't you? Who's better able to do it?