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**Rebecca Gilman's**

**The  
Sweetest  
Swing  
in  
Baseball**

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# The Sweetest Swing in Baseball

**"Rebecca Gilman's *The Sweetest Swing in Baseball*  
Gets a Home Run."** -[www.talkinbroadway.com](http://www.talkinbroadway.com)

**"Rebecca is one of the most important playwrights  
to emerge from America."** -*Ian Rickson, Royal Court Theatre*

**"You might be tempted to leave the theater chanting  
'Gil-man! Gil-man!'"** -*Boston Globe*

**Drama/Comedy. By Rebecca Gilman.**

Cast: 2m., 3w. (with doubling). "In *The Sweetest Swing in Baseball*, an artist named Dana Fielding is suffering from a slump in both her career and her personal life. After a disastrous gallery showing, her paranoia and depression send her boyfriend packing. When Fielding attempts suicide, she lands in a mental ward and finds she enjoys the structure of the days. But when she learns her health insurance will pay for only a 10-day stay, she cooks up a scheme with two fellow patients to fool the doctors into believing she's psychotic. Without knowing much about him, she takes on the personality of troubled baseball star Darryl Strawberry. Known for having the 'sweetest swing in baseball,' Strawberry also struggled with ... the darker side of fame, including rejection by fans and the effort to make a comeback ... When Dana chats with fellow patients Michael, an alcoholic, and Gary, a stalker, the dialogue here is hilarious as Dana instructs a would-be killer on drawing negative space, and the two men coach her on Strawberry's stats." (*The Boston Herald*) Commissioned by The Royal Court Theatre. Approximate running time: 1 hour, 45 minutes. Multiple locations, minimally staged.

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Printed on Recycled Paper

The Sweetest Swing in Baseball

Rebecca Gilman

Dramatic Publishing



# **The Sweetest Swing in Baseball**

By  
REBECCA GILMAN



**Dramatic Publishing**

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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*“The Sweetest Swing in Baseball was first presented by  
the Royal Court Theatre, London.”*

*The Sweetest Swing in Baseball* was originally produced by The Royal Court Theatre, London, in March 2004.

CAST:

Dana	Gillian Anderson
Roy/Gary	John Sharian
Erica/Dr. Stanton	Kate Harper
Brian/Michael	Demetri Goritsas
Rhonda/Dr. Gilbert	Nancy Crane

Director:	Ian Rickson
Designer:	Hildegard Bechtler
Lighting Designer:	Howard Harrison
Sound Designer:	Ian Dickinson
Composer:	Peter Salem
Assistant Director:	Maria Aberg
Stage Manager:	Tariq Rifaat
Deputy Stage Manager:	Leila Jones
Assistant Stage Manager:	Hannah Ashwell Dickinson

# THE SWEETEST SWING IN BASEBALL

A Play in Two Acts  
For 2m., 3w., with doubling

## CHARACTERS:

DANA.....	38
ROY / GARY .....	40
RHONDA / DR. GILBERT .....	40
BRIAN / MICHAEL .....	28
ERICA / DR. STANTON.....	45

PLACE: A gallery and a mental hospital in and near a large city.

TIME: The present.

NOTES: When Dana is being Darryl, she doesn't imitate him or try to talk like an African-American. Her language and physicality may be a little bit looser, but she is essentially herself.

The character of Gary should not be played as a psycho à la Hannibal Lector or any other "psycho" types. He is more of a hard-boiled crank.



Sets and costumes should be very minimal. Dana can wear the same costume for the entire play (black slacks and a white T-shirt, for example) and it can be dressed up or down with accessories. She can make her changes on stage as the scenery changes around her.

# THE SWEETEST SWING IN BASEBALL

## SCENE ONE

*In a back room of a gallery. DANA stands. She wears a nice shirt over a T-shirt, a pair of black pants and a pair of sandals. The sounds of an opening—people talking, laughing—from the room behind her. She is drinking white wine from a plastic cup.*

*ROY enters, carrying two more cups of wine. He is wearing a tailored leather coat and a black porkpie hat. He has been looking for her.*

DANA. More wine?

ROY. You want it?

DANA. Yeah. *(Takes the wine.)*

ROY. Do you want to go out front?

DANA. I just want to stay back here for a while, okay?

ROY. Okay. *(She downs the rest of her cup, puts the full cup in the empty one.)* It's going great.

DANA. Uh-huh.

ROY. I think they've all dried. There's a lot of hot air in the room. *(She doesn't respond.)* Scott's here. And Maria. And Peter and Phoebe.

DANA. Is that Stacey woman here?

ROY. Yeah. They want to go get a beer.

DANA. So go.

ROY. With you.

DANA. I can't leave my own show.

ROY. Then, do you want to go out front?

DANA. Have I sold anything?

ROY. I don't know.

*(ERICA, an assistant at the gallery, enters.)*

ERICA. Here you are. How long have you been back here?

DANA. An hour. Roy says nothing's sold.

ERICA. People are more cautious. With the economy.

DANA. Right.

ERICA. The paintings are great. They remind me of when I was a kid? In Utah? At night the color of the desert was that sort of purple black. But you had to look to really see it. To see that it wasn't just black. They're beautiful.

DANA. Can you tell they're still wet?

ROY. They're not all wet.

DANA. I kept seeing things that needed fixing. But maybe I should have left them alone.

ERICA. The shading's so subtle.

DANA. Maybe they're better than I think.

*(RHONDA, the gallery owner, joins them.)*

DANA. How's it going?

RHONDA. Good good.

ERICA. It's going great.

ROY. Rhonda.

RHONDA. Roy.

ROY (*to DANA*). You want some more wine?

DANA (*looks at her full cup*). Yes.

ROY. I'll get it. (*He exits.*)

RHONDA. Listen Dana, whatever happens, I want you to know I'm really proud we're showing your work. We all feel that way.

ERICA. We do.

RHONDA. Whether the critics like it or not or whether anything sells, isn't important. What's important is that the gallery is proud of the work we show. (*Small beat.*)

DANA. It's totally bombing, isn't it?

RHONDA. No.

DANA. The show sucks. Everybody hates it.

ERICA. I love them.

DANA. You have to love them, you're my dealer.

ERICA (*nervous laugh*). Rhonda's your dealer.

RHONDA. When Erica has her own gallery, she can be your dealer.

DANA. I wasn't saying...

ERICA (*laughs*). It's not a plan or anything. (*Beat.*)

RHONDA. Dana, it's complicated work.

ERICA. People will have to wait for the critics to explain it. Then they'll love it.

DANA. Who's here?

RHONDA. Carl Jaffe.

DANA. God.

ERICA. Now, your last show, you thought you got such a bad review from him and then I had fifteen people congratulate me on that review.

DANA. He did not say a single positive thing about my work.

ERICA. He was very respectful.

DANA. He called me opportunistic and evacuated. (*Small beat.*)

RHONDA. Rachel Taylor is here.

ERICA. Oh, she's been very supportive.

DANA. Of other people.

RHONDA. You know, if you do work that's less accessible, you're not going to get the sort of unqualified response you've had in the past. Which is a choice you've made, isn't it?

DANA. I guess.

RHONDA. You're making everybody nervous though, standing back here. You should talk to people. (*She exits.*)

DANA. Why would I choose to be inaccessible?

ERICA. Shit just flows from her mouth.

DANA. She wants you to steal me away so she won't have to deal with me.

ERICA. That's not true.

DANA. I don't think she wants to include me in the biennial.

ERICA (*worried*). Why do you say that?

DANA. She already said something about not having the space to have as many artists...

ERICA. She did?

DANA. She'd want something new. They always want something new.

ERICA. So do something new.

DANA. I don't have any ideas. I pulled these out of my ass.

ERICA. You did not.

DANA. I don't even know if they're ready to show. (*Small beat. Hard for her.*) I don't know if I'm proud of them. (*ERICA doesn't answer. Beat.*)

ERICA. Roy looks good.

DANA. He's going to leave me.

ERICA. What?

DANA. I think he's cheating on me. Can you see—he keeps talking to that Stacey Edwards woman.

ERICA. Who's Stacey Edwards.

DANA. She's this woman who was in a Smiths video in like, 1985. Nobody can get over it.

ERICA. Roy's not cheating on you.

DANA. He wants to.

ERICA (*deep breath*). How are things going with your new therapist?

DANA. I stopped seeing her.

ERICA. Why?

DANA. She didn't believe anything I told her. Just factual things, like how my dad died. I said he died of pneumonia and she said, "Pneumonia?" I was like, "Yeah, people die of pneumonia. I can get you the death certificate if you don't believe me."

ERICA. Do you think you could find somebody else?

DANA. I had somebody else. I had Dr. Russell but she died.

ERICA. I know.

DANA. I loved her. She didn't just tell me how special I was. She tried to help me figure out ways to fix things. These other people are clueless. I'm on my fifth one already.

ERICA. Maybe you're too picky.

DANA. Dr. Rosenberg fell asleep while I was talking to her.

ERICA. Well, we have to find someone because I'm worried about you. (*Hates to say it.*) I do think your work is suffering.

DANA (*stifling the yell*). Oh my God, you don't think I know that?!

(*ERICA reaches out to take her hand when BRIAN enters. He is very hip.*)

BRIAN. Hey. Congratulations.

DANA (*quickly composing herself*). Hi, Brian. Thanks for coming.

ERICA (*to DANA*). I'll get you some more wine. (*ERICA exits.*)

BRIAN (*indicates the front room and the paintings*). They're really intriguing.

DANA. Thanks.

BRIAN. I thought I read in some interview, though, that you were going to show that series on iconic portraiture.

DANA. I don't think I called it "iconic portraiture." It was more just...portraits.

BRIAN. Did you change your mind?

DANA. I didn't finish them. And I was committed to these dates so I did these instead.

BRIAN. Well these are really intriguing.

DANA. Thanks. (*Beat. Trying to be nice.*) So what's going on with you?

BRIAN. Well. I just got this intermedia arts grant for an installation I'm doing at CAM in March.

DANA. Congratulations.

BRIAN. And then I've got a show at Riley Kuhn. In December.

DANA. No way! That's great.

BRIAN. I'm really pleased.

DANA. You should be. That's a huge deal.

BRIAN. Yeah. I really wanted it. (*Small beat.*) I guess I should thank you for recommending me. Bill Riley said you sent him over to Presence, to see my stuff in that loan show.

DANA. Oh, it was my pleasure. I thought it was really good work.

BRIAN. Yeah, he totally dug it.

DANA. Good. (*Beat.*) So you're welcome.

BRIAN. Right, thanks. (*They drink their wine.*) So what's next for you?

DANA. I don't have anything lined up right now.

BRIAN. You'll be in the biennial though.

DANA. Should be, yeah.

BRIAN. Well I can't wait to see those portraits. Let me know when they're finished.

DANA. I will.

BRIAN. And come see my show.

DANA. I will.

*(He exits. DANA stands alone for a moment. ROY enters with another cup of wine.)*

ROY. What did the Boy Wonder want?

DANA. You're going to leave me, aren't you?

ROY (*regards her*). You're really in a bad place tonight.

DANA. What is good? Tell me what's good.

ROY. Why don't we go?



DANA. You promised you'd stay through the show.

ROY. I have.

DANA. And then what? You're going to run off with Stacey Edwards?

ROY. No.

DANA. Then what are you going to do?

ROY. Nothing.

DANA. You're going to run off with Stacey Edwards.

ROY. No I'm not.

DANA. You follow her around like a lost puppy.

ROY. No, Dana, I follow you around like a lost puppy. Is what I do. I fetch your wine. I carry your coat. When people talk to you, I blend into the wainscoting. Okay? *(Pause. DANA regards him.)*

DANA. You haven't worked on your boxes in so long.

ROY. Yeah. Well. Who wants Roy Crenshaw's mixed media when they can have a Dana Fielding instead? *(Beat.)*

DANA. So when are you leaving?

ROY. Sweetie.

DANA. When?

ROY *(in spite of himself)*. Soon. *(Beat.)* You asked me to stay through the summer. And I did. And last spring. I stayed through that too. And the show. But it's October. And I'm just a boyfriend, you know? I'm not a—mental health professional or whatever. And I can joke around and watch you paint, but I can't seem to talk you out of whatever it is you're in. Obviously. I wish I could, but I can't. *(Beat.)*

DANA. Then I think the sooner you go the better.

ROY. Dana—

DANA. It's okay.

ROY. I never would have picked tonight to do this.

DANA. It's okay. I picked it.

*(RHONDA enters.)*

RHONDA. You're still back here?

ROY. Rhonda. *(To DANA.)* I'll see you at home? *(She nods. He exits.)*

RHONDA. You're lucky to have him.

DANA. So everyone says.

RHONDA. You know the people who get it really do get it.

DANA. Oh yeah?

RHONDA. Only...I don't know. Take this for what it's worth, okay? But I was just talking to Rachel Taylor and she said an interesting thing, which is you're much more technically proficient than you used to be. I mean craft-wise, you're among some of the best out there. But, it's almost funny, it's like what people liked about your earlier work was its messiness, you know? I told her, when I saw some of these paintings in their early stages in your studio, there was a rawness to them, and I think I suggested at the time, that they needed to be explained—

DANA. You did.

RHONDA. And the technical changes were really smart, really smart. But now I'm wondering if maybe I was wrong. Because now I'm missing that visceral quality they had. I wonder if you could go back and capture that.

DANA. Is that a question?

RHONDA. More an observation I guess.

DANA. Because it's too late now.

RHONDA. For the future then.

*(ERICA enters with another glass of wine.)*

RHONDA *(to ERICA)*. You should come meet Tamara Young.

ERICA. Go ahead. I'll catch up. *(RHONDA exits. ERICA hands the wine to DANA.)* What do you want to do? *(DANA shrugs. She might cry.)* Do you want to take some time off?

DANA. I don't know.

ERICA. What if you just took some time off and you spent some time by yourself, and you stopped listening to these assholes? *(Beat.)* Dana?

## BLACKOUT

## SCENE TWO

*The occupational therapy room at a psychiatric hospital. At a table sit DANA, GARY and MICHAEL. GARY is a regular-looking man, 40, wearing hospital scrubs and a pocket T-shirt and slippers. MICHAEL is thin, 28, looks terrible. His hair is a mess and his hands shake. DANA is wearing the white T-shirt, black pants and flip flops. She looks ruffled, her hair pulled back. Each of her wrists is wrapped in clean white bandages, five inches wide. GARY is drawing with a charcoal pencil. MICHAEL stares into space, an untouched pencil and paper in front of him. DANA sits in the middle with a pile of modeling clay which she is simply mashing between her fingers.*