

ANTI-DEPRESSANTS

TEN-MINUTE PLAY

By Jeff Weisman

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(ONE MAN, ONE WOMAN)

JAMES..... Male. Age early 20s. Depressed student.

MONICA Female. Age mid 20s. Clothing store clerk.

Production History:

Anti-depressants premiered at the University of Iowa's 8 x 10 Festival,
February 2008.

DO NOT COPY

SETTING:

Waiting room at a therapist's office. A barebones waiting room. A few chairs, an old table, a small window. There are no decorations or anything with much life or color. The entrance door is offstage at stage right, and the patient room is offstage at stage left.

AT RISE:

JAMES sits in one of the chairs. He is reading, but is distraught by the weather as he periodically glances out the window. He has a grey bike helmet on the seat next to him, and holds a coffee cup. MONICA enters through the door at stage right wearing headphones. She wears brighter colored clothes, carries a coffee cup and seems generally carefree.

MONICA: Hello. (*JAMES glances up at her, and then immediately retreats back to his book. After some loud rustling, she settles into a chair opposite JAMES. She pulls out a camera, and starts looking through pictures. She makes a broad range of exaggerated and slightly obnoxious reactions to each photo. JAMES looks up from his book at her.*) Oh . . . sorry. (*No response. Pause.*) My friend Susie had this wild party . . . anyways . . . I'm sorry.

JAMES sips his coffee.

MONICA: Oh . . . a Starbucks fan too, I see. I probably just pulled in as you pulled out.

JAMES: I doubt it. I rode my bicycle . . . except, now it's raining.

MONICA: Don't you just love the rain?

JAMES: What's to love?

MONICA: It's just pretty . . . a beautiful imperfection.

JAMES: I mean, it's cold and wet. I'd rather it were eighty degrees and sunny.

MONICA: That's no fun. That's like . . . being hopped up on a bunch of anti-depressants.

JAMES: I guess . . . but what's wrong with that?

MONICA: Oh, right. Therapist's office. *(Laughs.)* Is that why you're here?

JAMES: Excuse me?

MONICA: Are you actually depressed, or do you . . . you know . . .

JAMES: What?

MONICA: Just like to party. Wink, wink.

JAMES: I'm not sure I follow.

MONICA: Here, let me show you. *(She puts an exaggerated frown on her face, slouches in the chair, and says in a dead-pan voice.)* I don't know where my life is going, doctor. I need something more than just anti-depressants . . . well, I guess maybe they will make me feel better.

JAMES: You mean you're here for the drugs?

MONICA: Duh . . . why else?

JAMES: Actual uncertainty, depression, loneliness, the pressure to succeed, confusion, lack of interests or hobbies . . . the feeling that you have no place in the wor -

MONICA: Hey, you're a pro at this. They'll probably just hand you the keys to the pharmacy.

JAMES: Except, I don't want all those pills for recreational use.

MONICA: Can't knock it till you try it. *(Beat.)* So which one of those is the reason you're here?

JAMES: I don't know . . . all of them.

MONICA: *(Pause.)* Would you mind if I came and sat next to you?

JAMES: You may want to keep your distance, my parents say it's contagious when I act "this way."

MONICA: *(While rising to sit next to him.)* Honey, please. Who doesn't get grief from their 'rents? What are you drinking there anyways?

JAMES: Coffee. Black coffee.

MONICA: How boring. Here, try this.

JAMES: That's OK -

MONICA: It's a quadruple iced caramel machiatto with an extra pump of syrup.

JAMES: I don't deserve anything sweet.

MONICA: What is your deal, buzz-kill? Everybody deserves something sweet.

JAMES: It's quite alright. Why is your drink in that cup anyway? Don't they usually put the iced drinks in the clear cups?

MONICA: *(Laughs.)* It's a really funny story. Want to hear it?

JAMES: Why not?

MONICA: OK, so I was in this women rape and self-defense seminar for work.

JAMES: OK . . .

MONICA: And one of the sections was about improvising with what you have as weapons. Well, coffee was one of the things. Are you following?

JAMES: Yeah, I'm with you so far.

MONICA: OK, well about a week after the seminar, I am walking down the street, drinking my machiatto and I feel somebody grab my shoulder.

JAMES: Oh jeez . . .

MONICA: So without thinking, I turn and throw my coffee in his face!

JAMES: Jesus.

MONICA: I know.

JAMES: So you burned him pretty badly then?

MONICA: No, I only drink iced coffee. See, I thought it was the acidity in the coffee that would eat away at his flesh.

JAMES: *(Pause.)* Hmmm, so what happened?

MONICA: He got wet and then stole my wallet. So now, I keep my iced coffee in a hot cup. I play the part to perfection. Here, watch. *(She picks up the cup, fumbles it between her hands like it is scalding. She hesitates before taking a baby sip, as if it is too hot.)* See?

JAMES: That is . . . actually . . .

JAMES lets out a slight laugh.

MONICA: (*Announcing.*) He does laugh, ladies and gentlemen! (*She laughs with him. Pause.*) So are you in school still?

JAMES: My last year, yeah.

MONICA: What's your major? It's not psychology, I hope.

JAMES: English, actually.

MONICA: Oh mine, too. Well, it was, graduated in '03.

JAMES: What do you do now?

MONICA: I work at J. Crew. The one in the mall.

JAMES: Oh. Well. That's . . . you kn -

MONICA: Relax, I like it. Stress-free environment, discounts on clothing, new people everyday, and it gives me time to party.

JAMES: Do you find it fulfilling?

MONICA: Hmm . . . that fulfilling word is a tricky one. Be more specific.

JAMES: Does it, I don't know . . . make your life worth living?

MONICA: I think so, yeah. It's not a grind day in and day out like most jobs . . . life should be fun.

JAMES: What about leaving your mark, or changing the world, or anything like that?

MONICA: Doesn't interest me.

JAMES: Isn't that a bit selfish?

MONICA: Eh, I'm fine with that. The world was screwed up when I got here, so I'll just leave it that way. I was raised not to tamper with things that weren't mine.

JAMES: I was raised to be financially wealthy . . .

MONICA: Shouldn't you be studying business or pre-med?

JAMES: I was pre-med, actually.

MONICA: Oh. What happened?

JAMES: I wasn't happy, so I changed it.

MONICA: Yet, here you are. (*Laughs by herself. Pause.*) Sorry.

JAMES: It's OK. The English classes don't feel . . . ay . . . how do I . . . right. They don't feel right.

MONICA: You don't enjoy them?

JAMES: No, it's not that. In fact, I like them.

MONICA: Well, that's good then.

JAMES: No, it's not. I should be working hard, disciplining myself, feeling stressed, and thinking about my future.

MONICA: That sounds miserable.

JAMES: Exactly. And the problem is . . . I'm not getting that.

MONICA: Why would you want to be miserable?

JAMES: To get a good job, why else?

MONICA: Let me get this straight . . . you are miserable . . . because you don't feel miserable?

JAMES: *(Pause.)* I guess I . . . never . . .

MONICA: *(Laughs.)* Well, at least you can re-distribute the therapist fund into something a little more exotic!

JAMES: God, what is wrong with me? Am I stupid . . . I really need to get my life togeth -

MONICA: Stop it! You are doing it again. Just . . . find something every single day that makes you stop and think "ahhh, life is good."

JAMES: Yeah. But . . .

MONICA: Hey, look at me. I'm a retail clothing store cashier, but check out this smile. *(She exaggerates her smile, and points at it. He involuntarily smiles back. Offstage voice.)* Monica, we're ready for you!

MONICA: Well, I have to go get my drugs, but listen, I want you to come out with some of my friends and I.

JAMES: Why? Not to be rude or anything, but why would you want me . . .

MONICA: You're easy to talk to. Plus, you could really use it.

JAMES: Nah . . . I don't know if . . .

MONICA: I won't take no for an answer. Here *(She takes the sleeve of her coffee cup off and writes her number on it.)* I'm Monica.

JAMES: Hi. James.

MONICA: Call me this weekend, James . . . seriously.

JAMES: OK.

MONICA: Alright, time to get the game face on. *(She frowns, hunches over, and gives out a whimper as she heads toward stage left. She stops.)* Oh, hold this. It'll take away from my character. *(He takes the coffee from her. She exits in her "depressed" character.)*

JAMES places her drink down, puts his bike helmet on. He reaches for his black coffee. Right before it reaches his lips, he stops, puts it down, and picks up the machiatto instead. He slowly raises it to his lips, and sips it. He closes his eyes and takes a euphoric/deep breath. The lights fade.

THE END