

Effective Tomorrow

A one-act play

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The scene opens on an empty room. A number of chairs are set up in a semi-circle. A small table sits nearby, with a carafe of coffee and a stack of styrofoam cups. Beside it is a wastepaper basket. Music plays.

Gerry enters, looks around the room, and takes a seat. Sits for a bit, fidgeting. Then stands and gets a cup of coffee. Checks watch. Sits again, different chair. As this occurs, the music slowly fades.

Sam enters, goes straight to the coffee. Pours one, then looks around for cream, sugar. The music dies.

SAM

Is there anything to put in this coffee? Or are we supposed to drink it black?

GERRY

I dunno. I don't see anything any where.

SAM

Huh. Ok.

(Sits)

I'm Sam.

GERRY

Gerry.

SAM

(drinks)

Terrible coffee.

GERRY

I like it.

SAM

Oh.

GERRY

Is this it? Is it just the two of us?

SAM

Maybe. That's kind of depressing.

GERRY

Well, not really. It kind of means that there aren't a lot of depressed people. Just you and I.

SAM

Not necessarily. It might just mean that we're the only depressed people who dragged themselves out of bed to get to group therapy.

GERRY

Now that's depressing.

SAM

So... what do we do?

GERRY

(gives Sam a playful punch in the shoulder, spilling the coffee)

Cheer up buddy! Oops. Sorry.

SAM

(Sitting still, staring at the spilled coffee)

Well, at least it wasn't hot.

They sit in awkward silence a moment, then Sam stands and goes to the table, which has nothing to help clean the mess. But in the wastepaper basket is a used napkin. Sam uses it to clean up. As this is happening, Taylor enters.

TAYLOR

Sorry I'm late!

SAM

You missed the exciting slightly spilled coffee incident.

GERRY

Are you the therapist?

TAYLOR

Well, no, I'm the facilitator. There's no therapist.

GERRY

Ah. But you're clearly the happiest person in the room, so you're in charge.

TAYLOR

Well, I don't know about that. I'm suffering from depression, just like you. But I've been around these sessions for a while, so I've been made facilitator.

SAM

(sitting again)

I'm Sam.

TAYLOR

I'm Taylor.

GERRY

I'm Gerry.

TAYLOR

Is... this all? No one else?

GERRY

So far.

SAM

I was late.

TAYLOR

What?

SAM

I was late. So I doubt anyone else is going to show up.

GERRY

Taylor was later than you. We're depressives. There's probably a ton of people who had trouble dragging themselves out the door.

SAM

Good point. We'll wait. You want a coffee, Taylor?

TAYLOR

No thanks. Where did that come from?

GERRY

It was here when we arrived.

TAYLOR

It must be from yesterday's groups. No one's been in here since yesterday.

SAM

(taking a swig)

That would explain why it's cold and gross.

GERRY

(shrugging and drinking)

I like it.

TAYLOR

So... while we wait, maybe we should get to know each other.

GERRY

Ok

SAM

Ok

TAYLOR

So.... ? Sam, why don't you start?

SAM

Me? Why don't you start?

TAYLOR

Oh. Yes, I suppose I could start. Okay. My name is Taylor. I'm a graphic designer.

SAM AND GERRY

Hi Taylor.

TAYLOR

Ok, no, don't do that. That just makes it seem like AA. This isn't AA.

SAM

Then you should tell us your last name.

TAYLOR

Ok, I'll start again. My name is Taylor Fladgate. I'm a graphic designer.

GERRY

Like the port?

TAYLOR

What?

GERRY

There's a port called Taylor Fladgate. I'm pretty sure.

SAM

Where is it?

GERRY

Um, at the liquor store.

SAM

What? Now I'm confused.

TAYLOR

Me too.

GERRY

Me too.

SAM

Yeah, you clearly are. Why would there be a port at the liquor store?

GERRY

There's usually port at the liquor store.

TAYLOR

Oh! Oh, you mean the fortified wine! Not the place where ships land.

GERRY

Yes! Oh, Okay, I see the point of confusion now. Sorry. Yes. Port as in the beverage, not like a dock or wharf.

SAM

Ah.

Beat.

GERRY

Sorry, where were we?

TAYLOR

Oh, right, introductions. My name is Taylor Fladgate- like the port- and I'm a graphic designer. Well, sort of. I am now. It's sort of a new career for me. Actually, I first started struggling with depression when I changed careers. It's not uncommon.

GERRY

Yeah, I'm the same.

TAYLOR

Oh?

GERRY

I changed careers too, about six months ago. It's been... interesting.

SAM

It's depressed you.

GERRY

Yes, very much so.

TAYLOR

I'm sorry to hear that, and I completely understand.

GERRY

Thank you. That's nice to hear. I appreciate the support.

TAYLOR

Sorry, I didn't catch your name.

GERRY

Gerry McGwire.

SAM

Huh.

GERRY

I know, I know, but it's spelled differently than the film character.

TAYLOR

So what do you do now, Gerry?

GERRY

I'm a mechanic. Cars, light trucks. I can do appliances and stuff too but its all vehicles at work.

TAYLOR

Do you enjoy your work?

GERRY

I guess.

TAYLOR

Married, kids?

GERRY

No. No, I'm afraid not.

SAM

Are you on meds?

GERRY

Meds?

SAM

For the depression?

GERRY

Oh. No, not at the moment. You?

SAM

No. Didn't like how it made me feel. Then again, I don't like how depression makes me feel either, so here I am.

(gets up, pours another cup of coffee,
drinks)

Holy crap this is bad.

TAYLOR

And how about you? What's your story?

SAM

Name's Sam Smith, sorry it doesn't sound like anything or anyone else.

GERRY

Ha ha.

SAM

Two out of three isn't bad.

TAYLOR

And...?

SAM

(Shrugs)

I'm in sales.

TAYLOR

What kind of sales, Sam?

SAM

Ah, the usual. Crappy consumer products in a retail environment. I wear business casual and try to be helpful to the customers. Doesn't really matter what I sell. I try not to think about it too hard.

GERRY

So you're feeling a high level of job satisfaction.

SAM

Yup. Living the dream.

GERRY

So does your depression stem from your job?

SAM

No, it stems from the fact that my partner and children recently died.

TAYLOR

Oh my God! I'm so sorry!

GERRY

Wow, that's really awful.

SAM

Yup. My job doesn't help, either.

TAYLOR

Okay, so... how long ago did this happen?

SAM

Couple years ago.

TAYLOR

I see. I guess that's still a recent trauma.

SAM

Gerry, how about you. What does your depression stem from?

GERRY

Um, its complicated.

SAM

Of course it is.

TAYLOR

Well, depression is a complicated entity. What lays one person low may only feel like a minor blip in life to someone else, and we still don't know a lot about brain chemistry and heredity and all the other factors that lead to having either episodic or chronic depression.

SAM

You sounded like a doctor there. Nice one.

TAYLOR

Like I said, I've done a lot of these groups.

GERRY

Are there usually more people than this?

TAYLOR

Um, actually, yes.

SAM

Must be a slow month for self-reflection and improvement.

TAYLOR

Maybe it's just one of those things. You know...

GERRY

Bad therapy month?

TAYLOR

Something like that.

Beat.

GERRY

Well. Introductions are done. We might as well get on with it.

TAYLOR

We have. Gotten on with it, I mean. This is it. We talk about ourselves, what brought us here.

SAM

A bike.

TAYLOR

Pardon?

SAM

A bike brought me here.

GERRY

A bus brought me.

TAYLOR

That's not what I meant.

GERRY

It's a start.

TAYLOR

Sam, why don't we start with you. How did your family die?

SAM

Wow. Straight to the heart of things.

TAYLOR

Well, it was obviously a very traumatic event for you.

SAM

Obviously.

TAYLOR

And if you don't talk about it you won't be able to work through your depression.

SAM

I see.

Beat.

TAYLOR

So...?

SAM

They all died, together, in a terrible accident.

TAYLOR

And...?

SAM

It made me sad.

GERRY

Obviously.

SAM

And I have been wracked with feelings of guilt and sadness ever since.

TAYLOR

You said this happened a couple of years ago?

SAM

Yes.

TAYLOR

What have you been doing to cope in the meantime?

SAM

Drugs, mostly.

GERRY

That makes sense.

SAM

Didn't work.

TAYLOR

No, drugs can help but ultimately they don't fix the problem.

SAM

And definitely not the ones I was taking.

TAYLOR

You said you have been feeling guilt?

SAM

Yes.

TAYLOR

But it was an accident, and not your fault. So first of all we need to work on those feelings of guilt.

SAM

I think I need more coffee.

(Goes to the table and pours)

TAYLOR

So lets go through this. Was there any way, realistically, that you could have prevented their deaths?

A long pause. Sam drains coffee, pours more.

SAM

Yes.