



THE EFFECT

BY LUCY PREBBLE



DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.



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THE EFFECT, produced by Scott Morfee, Jean Doumanian, Tom Wirtshafter, Tim Levy for NT America, received its North American premiere at the Barrow Street Theatre on March 16, 2016. It was directed by David Cromer; the set design was by Marsha Ginsberg; the costume design was by Sarah Laux; the lighting design was by Tyler Micoeau; the sound design was by Erik T. Lawson; the projection design was by Maya Ciarrocchi; the original music was by Daniel Kluger; the fight direction was by J. David Brimmer; the properties design was by Carrie Mossman; and the production stage manager was Richard A. Hodge. The cast was as follows:

DR. LORNA JAMES Kati Brazda
DR. TOBY SEALEY Steve Key
CONNIE HALL Susannah Flood
TRISTAN FREY Carter Hudson

THE EFFECT was first performed at the National Theatre, London, directed by Rupert Goold and co-produced with Headlong, on November 13, 2012. The scenic design was by Miriam Buether; the lighting design was by Jon Clark; the sound design was by Christopher Shutt; and the projection design was by Jon Driscoll. The cast was as follows:

DR. LORNA JAMES Anastasia Hille
DR. TOBY SEALEY Tom Goodman-Hill
CONNIE HALL Billie Piper
TRISTAN FREY Jonjo O'Neill

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The parts were written with specific actors in mind and when it comes to matters of nationality, physical references, or the “tricks” the volunteers perform for each other, the performers should feel free to mould the text around themselves.

Slashes (/) indicate overlapping dialogue. A slash at the beginning of a line with no corresponding point of interruption means that the actor comes in hard at the end of the preceding line, too soon almost.

Dialogue in parentheses indicates that the audience doesn't necessarily have to hear the detail but the actor may wish to say it.

CHARACTERS

DR. LORNA JAMES — 47 years, 59.5 kg, 169 cm

DR. TOBY SEALEY — 45 years, 91 kg, 188 cm

CONNIE HALL — 26 years, 55 kg, 163 cm

TRISTAN FREY — 30 years, 80 kg, 173 cm

THE EFFECT

EXPERIMENT BEGINS

DR. JAMES. Have you ever suffered from depression?

Connie, one arm across herself, leaning back slightly.

CONNIE. No. I've felt depressed. But.

DR. JAMES. In what way?

CONNIE. What I mean is, I've been sad.

DR. JAMES. But not depressed.

CONNIE. No.

DR. JAMES. There's a difference(?)

CONNIE. Yeah. I—, it's an illness, isn't it.

DR. JAMES. Mm Hm.

CONNIE. Well, you tell me. I just mean I haven't got an abnormal amount of chemical—in the brain or anything.

DR. JAMES. And that's depression?

CONNIE. Yeah. Sorry, I—

DR. JAMES. No, I'm interested.

CONNIE. Just. I'd never say, oh I'm depressed.

Well I would, but just meaning sad. You know cos. That's. I'm not. So.

DR. JAMES. You're just sad?

CONNIE. When I am. I'm sad.

DR. JAMES. K. And there's no chance you could be pregnant?

CONNIE. No.

DR. JAMES. What contraception are you using?

CONNIE. None.

DR. JAMES. Are you in a relationship?

CONNIE. Yup.

DR. JAMES. Are you sexually active in that relationship?

CONNIE. I have had sex. Um, I hope to have sex again.

DR. JAMES. But you're not having sex right now?

CONNIE. No, not...*Right* now(!)

DR. JAMES. And what was the date of your last period?

CONNIE. I always feel like I should know that. A couple of weeks ago?

DR. JAMES. Are you asking me or telling me?

CONNIE. I am...pretending to know.

DR. JAMES. K. I need your help, Connie. We get a lot of men at these. This is why. Drug trials are safe but you consent for yourself. You can't consent for someone else. So I need to know for sure you're not pregnant.

CONNIE. Well give me something to pee on and I'll pee on it.

DR. JAMES. Right.

Do you smoke?

Tristan is sat. He leans forward, one foot dancing.

TRISTAN. No.

DR. JAMES. Have you drunk alcohol in the last twenty-four hours?

TRISTAN. No.

DR. JAMES. Have you taken drugs, medicinal or...otherwise in the last six to eight weeks?

TRISTAN. (*Thinks.*) Hmm, Pretty su—No(!)

DR. JAMES. Any poppy seeds in the last forty-eight hours?

TRISTAN. Poppy seeds?... No.

DR. JAMES. So if your test comes back positive for opiates, I'm gonna assume that was the heroin. Not a bagel.

TRISTAN. Fine by me(!)

DR. JAMES. Do you or have you ever suffered from irritable bowel syndrome?

TRISTAN. No.

DR. JAMES. Cancer of the bowel?

TRISTAN. No.

DR. JAMES. Cancer of the throat, lungs, or skin?

TRISTAN. No.

DR. JAMES. Arthritis?

TRISTAN. No.

DR. JAMES. Dementia?

TRISTAN. No.

DR. JAMES. Type 2 diabetes?

TRISTAN. No.

DR. JAMES. Type 1 diabetes?

TRISTAN. No.

DR. JAMES. Have you ever been diagnosed with a mental health problem or been hospitalized for a period of more than twenty-four hours?

TRISTAN. No.

DR. JAMES. K.

TRISTAN. Clean sweep!

DR. JAMES. I'm not sure avoiding senile dementia is something you can take full credit for.

TRISTAN. Hey my body can.

DR. JAMES. So you know and accept you must remain within the facility for the four-week period and hand over all electronic devices during that time?

He hands her a phone.

TRISTAN. One cell phone. There's no passcode, so, no looking through the photos.

DR. JAMES. So you've done this before?

TRISTAN. Couple of times.

DR. JAMES. Then you know what happens now.

TRISTAN. Think I go somewhere and... (*Gesture: "drain the snake."*)

DR. JAMES. You can do it here if you want I've seen it all before.

TRISTAN. Uh... I will if you want...

DR. JAMES. No...

TRISTAN. No(!) I'll go...empty myself out.

DR. JAMES. K.

TRISTAN. You're an attractive woman, Dr. James.

DR. JAMES. Thank you, Tristan.

*Connie and Tristan both clutch specimens of their urine.
Hers is paler.*

TRISTAN. Like me to take that for you?

CONNIE. Pardon? No. Sorry.

TRISTAN. That's okay.

CONNIE. Do you work here?

TRISTAN. I'm just going that way with—. I'm the same as you. Here.

CONNIE. Oh I don't—are you allowed to take other people's—?

TRISTAN. No, probably not. You've got to sign all that shit. I could do anything to it! I won't(!) You don't have to hide it.

CONNIE. I'm not particularly.

TRISTAN. Show me then.

CONNIE. No.

TRISTAN. It's warm, that's the thing isn't it? But we're warm. If it was cold we'd be dead.

CONNIE. You need to drink more water.

TRISTAN. I do! I will. Don't usually get girls here.

CONNIE. You do these a lot then?

TRISTAN. Some.

CONNIE. And they're okay?

TRISTAN. Oh yeah! These? Used to be better. Now everyone shows up with their laptops, headphones, it's more (*Gesture of everyone in their own space.*) ...used to be more like a...social experiment. The hard part's living in a small space with a bunch of strangers.

CONNIE. And this is a long one.

TRISTAN. It is. Don't worry.

CONNIE. I'm not.

TRISTAN. You might not even be on it. But you can tell. People say they wouldn't do this, people who'd take a pill off a stranger or do a line at a party, like they know where *that's* from. You at the university?

CONNIE. Yeah.

TRISTAN. I think they pay you more, you know.

CONNIE. / What(!)?

TRISTAN. Yeah. Trials like this they don't want the immigrants they usually get. They need English first language so you can, you know, talking isn't, you know,—no trouble how to, uh...—

CONNIE. Articulate?

TRISTAN. (*Smiles.*) There you go(!) Fuck!
Sure you don't want me to carry it for you. Like a gentleman would.

He reaches out for her specimen.

She scowls. She is holding it by the top, uncomfortable.

CONNIE. No.

TRISTAN. Can I touch it.

CONNIE. No!

TRISTAN. Don't be a princess!

CONNIE. I'm not!

TRISTAN. Why you holding it like that, it was part of you a second ago...

CONNIE. I'm just. Nothing(!)

TRISTAN. I'm teasing.

CONNIE. I know. I'm not ashamed of it(!)

Connie goes over and touches his specimen. She feels its warmth and can't help a little grimace.

She lets go.

TRISTAN. Well you're gonna have to be my friend now.

Admissions procedure. Tristan and Connie (all volunteers) are changed into clinic outfits. Their blood pressures are taken, alcohol levels checked, weight, height are monitored.

Dr. James looks to her electronic tablet, the modern equivalent

THE EFFECT

by Lucy Prebble

2M, 2W

Hearts racing. Minds reeling. Knees buckling. Connie and Tristan have palpable chemistry—or is it a side effect of a new antidepressant? They are volunteers in a clinical trial, but their sudden and illicit romance forces the supervising doctors to face off over the ethical consequences of their work. *THE EFFECT* takes on our pill-popping culture with humor and scintillating drama.

“...very clever—and ultimately more than clever...ingenious... [THE EFFECT] makes complicated and arcane material utterly accessible. ...Ms. Prebble is far too smart to find a firm resolution for the debate at the center of THE EFFECT. But in the end, she leaves room for what might be called a very loving uncertainty.”

—The New York Times

“...[a] funny and heartbreaking play... a knotty drama, dealing with scientific objectivity, guilt, the mysteries of the human heart and brain and what makes us who we are, wrapped up in a deceptively simple and constantly entertaining package.”

—The Guardian (UK)

“...smashing...plays like a thriller... The story keeps unwinding in fascinating, organic directions... What started as a clean and narrowly defined ‘situation’ play by the end leaves you feeling you have experienced a hefty chunk of human possibility and despair.”

—New York Magazine

“...searing... Prebble’s script is full of memorable moments and characters that stab at the heart of western society’s troubling relationship with prescription drugs. ...[a] brutal takedown of medicine in a capitalist context... Brimming with challenging insight, THE EFFECT is sure to cause some heated post-show discussions...”

—TheaterMania.com

Also by Lucy Prebble

ENRON

THE SUGAR SYNDROME

ISBN 978-0-8222-3624-5



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