

Striativus V1.2

By

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1 INT. BEDROOM, DAY

KACEY (28), an inquisitive and highly trained but currently unemployed research chemist with a passion for science but with a heavy sadness about her - tosses and turns, alone in her bed in the cold stark light of the early morning. Photographs of her and another woman lay on her bedside counter, next to an empty bottle of apple sourz and a packet of antidepressants. She rolls over and looks at a picture sadly.

2 INT. BEDROOM, DAY. FLASHBACK.

Warm morning light shines through soft white curtains onto the photograph. KACEY sleeps, peaceful, happy. Reveal HANNAH (26) stirring behind her. She pulls her into a tight embrace. Kacey smiles sleepily and gets comfortable.

HANNAH

Good morning, princess.

Kacey sighs contentedly. She cranes her neck and kisses Hannah gently on the lips. They both smile.

3 INT. MEETING HALL, DAY. PRESENT DAY.

KACEY, nervous. She pulls in a deep breath and, begrudgingly, speaks.

KACEY

Hi, I'm Kacey. I'm here today because, uh... because I'm lonely. I'm very lonely.

GROUP

(in unison)

Welcome.

Tristan (32), the group leader, attractive and well dressed but somewhat overly smiley for a therapist - beams at her and opens his arms like Jesus reborn. A perfectly proportioned prophet with pearly whites.

TRISTAN

Welcome, Kacey. Tell us why you're here today.

KACEY

Ha. Yeah. Well, I guess it's because I've been alone for a few years now. I thought it would get easier, but so far it hasn't. I still miss her like crazy. I lost my job a few months back.

(beat)

And my cat, Mr Tibbles, died last week. So that too.

(CONTINUED)

The group gasps and murmurs. They all wear name badges, Kacey included. GERRY (42), a portly man, soft inside as well as out, gently pats her on the back. WINNIFRED (85) as frail and skinny as a baby bird, wipes an imaginary tear from her eye. Kacey is a little taken aback by the enthusiasm of their responses.

KACEY (cont'd)

I just need something, someone. I don't know.

GERRY

We're here for you.

4 INT. BEDROOM, NIGHT

KACEY, name badge still intact, struggles to push through her bedroom door. She drops her tote bag on the floor. It lands on a squeaky cat toy. The final straw. She bends to pick it up, takes the toy in her hand and starts to cry.

She reaches out for the bottle of anti-depressants. Knocks the photograph over in the process. Stops. Eyes it over, contemplative. Picks it up.

5 INT. MEETING HALL, DAY

Another day, another meeting. TRISTAN, GERRY and others listen intently to BRIANNA (24), a young PCSO carrying a lot of weight on her shoulders. KACEY fiddles with a pill.

BRIANNA

(fade in)

...and on those days it's like I'm crashing. I feel so heavy. Lost. I hate it. It makes me weak. I feel like I'm never going to feel whole again.

GROUP

(in unison)

We're here for you, Brianna.

TRISTAN

Thank you for that. I know it must have been difficult to vocalise, but welcome to the group. You're safe here. Kacey, you've been quiet. What's going on? We're here for you.

Kacey raises her hand and shows the group the pill.

KACEY

I've got a question for the group. How many of us here today are dependant on these?

(CONTINUED)

Looks are exchanged. A few hands raise reluctantly.

KACEY (cont'd)

Be honest. No one's going to judge you.

More raise, until almost all of the group have their hands in the air. Tristan slowly, reluctantly raises his.

KACEY (cont'd)

I know that for some of you, loneliness is a side effect of the shit that's happened in your life, and you need these. But what about the rest of us? I'm making no judgement as to whether or not you need anti-depressants, don't get me wrong. But how many of us are on them solely for the same reason that we're here, because we're so desperately lonely that we can barely function. What if there was a better way?

TRISTAN

What better way?

KACEY

To target the levels of dopamine in the ventral striatum.

(beat)

To effectively cure loneliness.

6 INT. BEDROOM, DAY

MONTAGE-PILL PRODUCTION

1. KACEY sits on her bed, surrounded by books and furiously taking notes.

2. A first attempt. She strains a liquid into a phial. It pops. She jumps.

3. She throws a tray of pills into the bin.

4. She takes her antidepressant. Has an idea.

5. Returns home with a cat!

6. Back to work. The cat watches on.

7. More research, more pills in the bin.

8. She packs damp powder into a pill form.

Montage ends. Kacey, with bated breath, pushes the dried pill out of the mold. Lifts it to the light and examines it closely. Smiles.

7 INT. MEETING HALL, DAY

The meeting is underway. KACEY is late. She strides purposefully towards her seat.

JERRY

...and you know I'm not a smart man. So when he said he needed to be naked to fix the pipes, I believed him.

KACEY

It's finished. I did it.

The group is torn between listening to Jerry and interrogating Kacey. TRISTAN stands, and gestures to Kacey to be seated.

TRISTAN

Jerry, thank you for sharing your story with us today. We'll come back to you.

(beat)

Kacey. I think we'd all like to hear why you've been away for so long.

The group murmurs and nods. Kacey stands. She slowly, reverently takes her hand out of her pocket. Holds a fist out to the group. Then, torturously slowly, unfurls her fingers to reveal...

...a fairly ordinary looking pill sat in the palm of her hand.

The group let out a collective gasp. Tristan steps forward.

TRISTAN (cont'd)

Is it... Safe?

KACEY

I've not had it tested. But I've been taking it twice daily for just over a fortnight now. I know it's no guarantee of safety but honestly, I feel... I feel whole. I feel better than I have in years.

A stunned silence. After a while, Brianna stands.

(CONTINUED)

BRIANNA

Please. Let us try for ourselves,  
we need-

TRISTAN

I have to advise against this.  
You're my responsibility when  
you're here. It could be  
dangerous.

BRIANNA

I'm past caring. I'm tired of  
being numb. I want to feel. And  
if that pill can do that then  
God, I'll take the risk.

Kacey eyes her. Waits. Nods. Brianna smiles at her and  
sits.

KACEY

He's right. It could be  
dangerous. But I'm telling you,  
they work. And you deserve  
happiness. You deserve to fill  
that void.

(beat)

But you can't talk about it  
outside of this room. I'll give  
you the cure if you give me your  
word that it'll go no further.

The group murmur and nod. Kacey picks up a carrier bag and  
offers it to Brianna. She pulls out a crudely recycled  
paracetamol bottle with 'Striativus' scrawled across the  
label.

8 INT. BEDROOM, DAY

KACEY is sat on her bed, playing with her cat. She is  
genuinely happy. A phone alarm sounds. She frowns, turns  
it off and reaches to take her Striativus pill pot from  
the bedside table. She examines a pill closely,  
contemplatively, before taking it.

9 INT. MEETING HALL, DAY

SHOT: CAMERA IN CENTRE OF CHAIRS. PAN 720° TO SHOW GROUP  
MEMBERS DISAPPEARING FROM CHAIRS OVER TIME.

BRIANNA (O.S)

I am myself again. It's  
incredible. They even noticed the  
difference at work.

WINNIFRED(O.S)

I mean, I was worried at first  
what with all this fuss and

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

WINNIFRED(O.S) (cont'd)  
bother at the moment about  
untested medications and the like  
but now...

MEMBER #2 (O.S)  
...and I won't forget any of you,  
but I don't think this is what I  
need anymore...

JERRY (O.S)  
You did good, girl, really you  
did. I'm happier than ever.

MEMBER #3 (O.S)  
I just wanted to come and say  
goodbye. Thank you for  
everything.

TRISTAN  
Thank you.

MEMBER #3 gets up and leaves with a cheerful wave, leaving  
TRISTAN and KACEY alone in the circle of chairs.

TRISTAN (cont'd)  
Go home, Kacey. We're done here.

KACEY  
But...

TRISTAN  
(defeated)  
It's over. They're not coming  
back. Why would they? It's a  
support group. They don't want or  
need my support now.  
(beat)  
Goodbye.

He heads for the door.

TRISTAN (cont'd)  
Thanks for sharing.

10 INT. BEDROOM, DAY

KACEY lounging in bed reading. The alarm sounds. She  
sighs, reaches for the pill pot. Stops. Opens the beside  
drawer instead. Pulls out the photograph of her and Hannah  
that she hid away. Strokes it. She feels.

Her pill bottle goes in the bin.

11 INT. MEETING HALL, DAY

KACEY sits.

KACEY

You see, I always thought  
loneliness was a sickness,  
something that needed to be  
remedied. Cured, even.

(beat)

The truth is... I can see now. It  
makes us better. It gives us  
empathy, sympathy. It heightens  
the love we feel for others, and  
for ourselves. Without the  
negative, the positive is dulled.

(beat)

So, yeah. The truth is, I like  
being lonely. It's what makes me  
human.

Reveal Kacey alone in room.