

THE WONDERFUL COUNSELOR

"Pilot"

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09 02, 2020

THE WONDERFUL COUNSELOR

"Pilot"

CAST

DR. MICHAEL WILLIAMS.....ACTOR
CHLOE WILLIAMS.....ACTOR
AMANDA THOMPSON.....ACTOR

GUEST CAST

VANESSA CLARKE.....ACTOR
SARAH VAN DEN BERG.....ACTOR
DIANE VAN DEN BERG.....ACTOR
JEROME.....ACTOR
BYRON.....ACTOR

INT. WONDER COUNSELING - MICHAEL'S OFFICE - DAY

MICHAEL WONDER sits at his desk recording a video. His office is warm and approachable.

MICHAEL

Hi there. I am Dr. Michael Wonder,
lead clinical **physiologist** at Wonder
Counseling. On this first episode of
Wonderful Wonderings, I'm debunking
some myths about therapy.

Michael's hand shakes as he attempts to take a sip from his glass of water. He clears his throat instead.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Mental health challenges affect
millions of people around the world.
Unfortunately, misconceptions about
therapy often discourage many from
seeking help. I know here in the
Caribbean people often don't seek help
because we think that therapy is only
for the certified "crazies". I
personally don't like that word but
that's a video for another day.
(beat)

Our culture, tells us to pray the
daemons away. We're told to think that
we are ungrateful when we feel sad
because there are supposedly children
in Africa who have it worse than us.

(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Today I'm here to say that speaking to a licensed professional doesn't have to wait until your world is falling apart.

Michael stops to review his notes.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Oh yeah. Take premarital counseling. My wife Chloe and I completed several months of counseling before getting married. Nothing was wrong with our relationship but we wanted to sit with our pastor, a marriage expert, to confirm that everything was okay. Friends and family are great to talk to, but sometimes it's good to have an impartial third party to talk things over with. Anyway, I invite you to come see me for a free first session. We're offering new patient discounts and sliding scale payment plans.

Michael reviews his notes again.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Oh yes. Another good example that I forget. Therapy is kind of like prayer. It's good to check in with God on a regular basis, not just when things are obviously going bad.

(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Just like prayer and meditation are tools that provide clarity and insight, so therapy can be a tool to help you before and during difficult times. Again, thanks for watching. Please like, comment, and subscribe. Thanks.

INT. WONDER COUNSELING - RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Michael, his wife CHLOE WONDER, and his assistant AMANDA THOMPSON meet in the reception area.

AMANDA

So, the first one was... how do I say...

CHLOE

Painful to watch.

AMANDA

Yes... sort of... but it will get better with time.

CHLOE

It's been a week and we only have sixteen views and no new clients.

AMANDA

Marketing Made Easy says we should have an archive of content to binge before we do a hard launch.

CHLOE

This is stupid. Why can't we just run
a radio ad like other businesses.

MICHAEL

An ad would be less painful.

Michael looks to Chloe.

AMANDA

Look. When my grandfather, Dr.
Thompson, did content marketing
through the form of a blog, his
writing was horrible. But eventually
we got a rhythm and things got better.

CHLOE

Can I go open up the cafe?
(beat)

Honestly, I don't care what you do.
Just make sure we increase our client
base **our** we'll be out of business. The
cafe can't keep bankrolling the
clinic. It has it's own problems to
pay for.

MICHAEL

Yes, dear.

Michael goes to embrace Chloe but she turns and leaves.
Amanda looks awkwardly into the distance.

INT. WONDER COUNSELING - MICHAEL'S OFFICE - DAY

Michael sits in the conversation area of his office. He
checks the CLOCK. It's three fifteen. He goes to his desk and
places a call.

MICHAEL
(in phone)

Amanda?

AMANDA (V.O.)
(through phone)

I'm coming in.

Amanda enters moments later. She's holding a CAMERA and MINI TRIPOD.

MICHAEL

Oh, I just wanted to know if my three o'clock canceled.

AMANDA

No, but I assumed you'd ask me that. Instead of wasting time waiting for Mr. No Show, I came with the camera and stuff to encourage you to film a new Wonderful Wonderings.

MICHAEL

Amanda.

AMANDA

Dr. Wonder. If I may, I was the head of marketing for ten years for my grandfather, Dr. Thompson before he sold the practice to you.

MICHAEL

I know. You remind me often.

AMANDA

Yes, well. I know marketing. We have to be consistent and show up where the people are if we want to make an impact.

MICHAEL

The whole social media thing just feels silly. Why do we have to beg people to come get help?

AMANDA

First of all, it's not begging. Second of all, it's not just this island. It's intersectional. It's the black diaspora. It's bad church thinking. People are just -- people are just so misinformed and that's why our video series is so important.

Amanda sets the camera and other equipment on Michael's desk.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

It's already twenty past the hour. That's an automatic cancelation. So, use this time to film another video.
(beat)

Hey, what if you filmed a message specifically to this client. Not to them, but like, to people like them.

Michael picks up the camera and inspects it.

MICHAEL

You're right. I'll see what I think
up.

Amanda is pleased and exits the office.

INT. CHLOE'S CAFE - THAT MOMENT

BYRON and his friend JEROME sit at a table nursing drinks that used to be cold. They speak in hushed tones.

JEROME

All you have to do is go inside. I'll
go with you.

Byron stares at the building across the street. The sign reads 'Wonder Counseling'.

BYRON

I'm not crazy.

JEROME

No one said you were.

BYRON

But if I go, they're just going to
find something wrong with me. He has
to. It's his job.

JEROME

Not Dr. Wonder. He'll just listen
without judgement. Besides, the first
session is free.

Byron shakes his drink before taking another long sip.

INT. WONDER COUNSELING - MICHAEL'S OFFICE - DAY

It's another day. Byron and Jerome have finally made it to a session with Michael.

JEROME

And so I told him I would come with him to get help. I told him seeing you is not like talking to Mrs. Leonard, the social worker who tells everyone's business. You're good at keeping secrets and listening to the heavy stuff.

Michael nods his head and sets his notepad aside. Jerome is uncomfortable with the silence.

JEROME (CONT'D)

Tell him that wanting to kill himself isn't crazy, it's just scary and that he should hold on because he has people who love him.

Michael takes a sip of his drink. Byron sits fiddling with the string from his hoodie.

MICHAEL

Jerome, can you please leave Byron and I alone for a moment?

Jerome looks to Byron. Byron nods. Jerome leaves.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Attempting to end your life is a serious thing.

BYRON

I didn't.

MICHAEL

You weren't successful, no.

BYRON

No, I didn't attempt. I just wrote
'Kill Byron now' in my notebook which
I accidentally turned in to my Math
teacher and now everyone is making a
big deal about it.

MICHAEL

That is a big deal.

BYRON

It's just words.

Michael takes a moment to think.

MICHAEL

Do you wonder if on some level you
hoped for someone to find those words?

Byron looks to the clock and then reaches for his BACKPACK.

BYRON

Our time is almost up.

MICHAEL

Almost.

(beat)

How do you feel now that people in
your world know that you're hurting on
the inside?

BYRON

It sucks. It's almost worse than being
invisible. Everyone is trying to tell
me how to feel. Everyone thinks they
know the answers.

(MORE)

BYRON (CONT'D)

(beat)

I don't want to be here. I don't want more people knowing about this. I just want to go back to the way things were.

MICHAEL

But you hated the way things were. Well, you disliked it enough to want your life to end, correct?

Byron doesn't respond.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Tell me about everyone. Who are they are what exactly are they telling you?

Byron still doesn't respond.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

It's okay. I have time.

Michael waits patiently.

INT. WONDER COUNSELING - RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Michael wraps up a team meeting with Chloe and Amanda.

Today, Michael is relaxed and patient while Chloe seems more tense and in a rush.

AMANDA

And then, finally, client acquisition is still stagnant at zero.
(beat)

Oops, no. Not finally. This is finally: Can we please have a new episode of Wonderful Wonderings?

(MORE)

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Marketing Made Easy says we need to be consistent for eighteen weeks before switching gears or killing a project.

MICHAEL

I dunno, Amanda. Is anyone even watching?

AMANDA

This period of small viewership is the perfect time to perfect our videos.

MICHAEL

My on-camera presentation is not going to get better than dry cardboard.

AMANDA

Be positive. Cardboard is kinda flexible and if you bend it enough --

CHLOE
(interrupting)

-- What, he'll be crumpled cardboard?

MICHAEL

Chloe.

CHLOE

We need real solutions to keep Wonder Counseling open.

AMANDA

And video content marketing is how we do that. It's how we can acquire and retain customers.

CHLOE

I don't want to replay this conversation, Amanda. Basically, today's issue is the same issue we've been having for months.

AMANDA

Yes, but our good news is that we haven't lost any clients this week.

MICHAEL

Could this be attributed to --

CHLOE
(interrupting)

-- Yet. Today is Wednesday. We haven't lost any clients yet.

AMANDA

And we won't. I mean, we could view clients leaving as a sort of graduation. Dr. Wonder is so wonderful...

Amanda pauses to see if anyone will appreciate her pun. No one does.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Dr. Wonder is so wonder -- great that people feel like they can handle life's challenges without him.

Amanda punctuate her statement with a large smile. Michael turns to Chloe for affirmation.

CHLOE

Well, I'm late and I have to go open
the coffee shop.

MICHAEL

I have a free hour. I can help you get
things started across the street.

CHLOE

No, I've got it. Thanks. The practice
needs your attention.

Chloe grabs her purse. Michael sighs as he watches her leave.

AMANDA

You didn't kiss. Is everything okay?

MICHAEL

We didn't?

AMANDA

No. You haven't for weeks.

MICHAEL

Oh.

Michael fidgets with some papers.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

She's just been super busy. You know
the pressure of keeping the coffee
shop and practice going is intense.

Michael is about to head into his office when Amanda calls
out.

AMANDA

Since you're not going to the coffee shop, use your free hour to film a video.

MICHAEL

Maybe!

Michael enters his office and closes the door.

INT. WONDER COUNSELING - MICHAEL'S OFFICE - DAY

Later that morning, Michael has a session with Diane, a straight-talking teenager.

DIANE

Do we really have to let her sit in?

MICHAEL

No. HIPAA protection means I'm only allowed to make medical decisions with your permission. Your mom doesn't have to know what we speak about or even sit in if you don't want her to.

DIANE

All she cares about is college. But how can I focus on school when she has a parade of men passing through our home?

MICHAEL

And you haven't yet brought it up?

DIANE

No. Any time I talk to her about anything she finds a way to redirect the discussion to college. It's like she doesn't care about Dad dying and she just wants me out of her sights as fast as possible.

MICHAEL

Okay, that's new. You never mentioned a connection between her obsession with college and your father's death.

DIANE

How can I think about the future when I can drop dead at any moment? Being a lawyer is stressful. My dad died from a fu-- freaking...

MICHAEL

Thanks.

DIANE

From a freaking heart attack after losing a major case.

MICHAEL

Would you say you're struggling with finding clarity for future plans because of the chaos of current events?

(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Chaos from unresolved issues related to your father's passing and to your mother's long list of romantic partners?

DIANE

That's a lot to unpack, Doc.

Michael chuckles.

MICHAEL

Yes it is. So, do we bring your mom in or unpack that thought? Remember, you are the boss; Everything is your call.

INT. CHLOE'S COFFEE SHOP - LATER

Chloe and her friend, VANESSA CLARKE, 30s, are packing pastry orders at Chloe's coffee shop.

VANESSA

So, birthday twin, what are you and Michael doing next month?

CHLOE

We're keeping things low-key. It's silly, but I'm kinda super excited to use my Baskin Robbins' free scoop coupon and enjoy some ice cream out on the veranda.

VANESSA

Oh, that's cute.

CHLOE

Eh. It's something. What are you doing?

VANESSA

Oh my gosh, Kenneth is taking me on an Alaskan cruise!

CHLOE

Oh my! Wow. That's fantastic. Congratulations.

VANESSA

Yes, he's been working so hard at keeping it a secret from me but I found out this morning.

CHLOE

Wow. Okay. A cruise. Why didn't you just say that instead of asking me about my dinky plans?

VANESSA

I didn't want to be rude.

CHLOE

You? Rude? Never! This is wonderful. Did I say congratulations?

VANESSA

You did but I'll take a double portion. This trip has been my dream for so long.

CHLOE

I know. We used to talk about making
it a couples' trip.

Vanessa takes Chloe's hands in hers.

VANESSA

I know.
(re: Coffee shop)

Who would have thought you'd be the
owner of all of this?

CHLOE

The coffee shop is nice, but it's more
work than I signed on for.

The women begin to stack the packed pastries onto a cart.

VANESSA

I know. I'm guessing you haven't told
Michael about the sale
(lowers voice)
and other relationship stuff.

CHLOE

No. Not yet. I keep hoping for things
to turn around. I love him but he's
terrible at business.

VANESSA

And you don't want to go back to being
the business manager? I mean look at
what you've done over here.

CHLOE

Gosh, no. Michael and I were not meant to be the co-working power couple that you and Kenneth are.

Vanessa places the last box on the cart.

VANESSA

There, we did it.

CHLOE

And in record time too.

The friends high five.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

We would make a good power couple.

VANESSA

Silly, we're already a dynamic duo.

Chloe and Vanessa take in the coffee shop. They're proud.

INT. WONDER COUNSELING - MICHAEL'S OFFICE - LATER

Back at the office, Michael is wrapping up his session with Diane and SARAH, Diane's overbearing mother.

MICHAEL

And so, if I understand you correctly, Diane, you're saying that Sarah's many romantic partners make you uncomfortable. But, even without them, you still don't want to be a lawyer or doctor.

DIANE

Yes. I don't want to be like her;
always stressed, late, never having
time for me. I want her to actually
listen to me.

SARAH

All of this is highly inappropriate
and I should have you disbarred.

DIANE

He's not a lawyer, Mom.

SARAH

And from what I'm hearing, you won't
be either. I'm highly disappointed
with your services Dr. Wonder.

MICHAEL

Interesting. Why do you --

DIANE
(interrupting)

-- Yes, interesting. Let's unpack why
you're disappointed when you hired a
psychologist to do a guidance
counselor's job.

SARAH

Unpack? What? The only thing we're
packing is our bags. Come on Diane,
we're done here.

MICHAEL

Mrs. van den Berg.

Sarah stands.

SARAH

I've heard enough. Come on, Diane.

Diane gives Michael an apologetic look.

INT. WONDER COUNSELING - RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Amanada is attempting to film a video. She's very stiff on camera.

AMANDA

(to camera)

...And that, folks, is your wonder tip
of the day.

Amanda hits 'stop' on the camera. Amanda hits 'record'. She straightens her posture and smiles.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

(frustrated mocking)

And that's our Wonderful Wonderings
for today.

Amanda hits 'stop' on the camera and puts it face down on the desk.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

(sotto to self)

YouTube is scary. I think I'm going to
be sick.

Amanda gingerly lifts the camera and peeps at it with one eye open. As she hypes her self to give it one more shot, Sarah and Diane exit Dr. Wonder's office and enter the reception area. Amanda hides the camera.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Hello again. Are you ready to schedule
Diane's next session?

SARAH

Amanda, you're sweet and we love you,
but we won't be coming back.

AMANDA

Oh, I'm sorry to hear that.

SARAH

Yes, when we signed up I explicitly
told Dr. Wonder to focus on inspiring
Diane to become a doctor --

AMANDA
(sotto to self)

What? He's not a guidance counselor.

Sarah misses Amanda's comment but Diane catches it. Before
Amanda panics, Diane assure her with a wink and a silent
laugh.

SARAH

-- or a lawyer but instead they are
talking about my love life.

AMANDA

We're sad to see you go.

Sarah is not paying attention and just keeps ranting.

SARAH

This is what I get for cutting corners
by going with a doctor offering new
patients discounts.

Amanda wakes her computer.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Just send our records to Dr. Fleming --
you know, the one who posts the daily
inspirational videos on Instagram?

AMANDA

Fleming? Daily videos?

Diane shows Amanda her phone screen. Amanda gives Diane a
thumbs up.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Would you give us at least three stars
on Yelp?

INT. WONDER COUNSELING - MICHAEL'S OFFICE - DAY

Michael is sitting at his desk. He overhears Sarah's ranting
from his office.

SARAH (O.S.)
(through door)

Yelp?! Yelp?! I'm not recommending
this place to jack squat!

Michael bows his head.

Several moments pass. Chloe enters holding two plates of
food.

CHLOE

You were late for lunch. What's going
on out there?

MICHAEL

Hey, babe. We lost another client.

Chloe closes the door and takes a seat across from Michael's
desk.

CHLOE

The woman and the teenager?

MICHAEL

Yes. Diane and Sarah van den Berg.

Chloe unwraps their food. The couple picks at their plates.

CHLOE

That's the one who thinks you're a
guidance counselor?

MICHAEL

Yeah.

CHLOE

You should never have taken her on.

MICHAEL

I thought I could do some good and
heal their relationship which was
obviously hurting.

Chloe looks up from her plate.

CHLOE

That's your problem; You always want
to heal lost causes. And then it blows
back in your face.

MICHAEL

Diane and I were making real progress.
She's a bright girl. If given --

CHLOE

I want a divorce.

A moment of extended silence.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

Michael?

MICHAEL

Yes.

CHLOE

I have the paperwork ready at home.

Before Michael can respond, Amanda enters holding the camera and mini tripod. She recklessly swings the items around while she speaks.

AMANDA

I didn't knock. I'm being intentionally pushy. The world needs more Wonder Wonderings. Michael. Doctor. No. Michael, we want to relate to you. To your pain. To your humanity. We want to know that your life isn't perfect, but that you rise to every occasion with grace.

CHLOE

I'm serving you today.

Michael's ears ring. He's completely disconnected from his body.

MICHAEL

You want to do this today?

AMANDA

Yes today.

CHLOE

Amanda, can we have a moment?

Amanda is too excited and doesn't hear Chloe's request.

AMANDA

Here is everything that you need. Just
be you. Be flexible, entertaining
cardboard.

Amanda places the items on Michael's desk. Chloe leaves.
Amanda spins and leaves.

After several moments, Michael places his head on the desk.
The room is so silent that all we hear is the office clock
ticking.

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF PILOT