

JERK

Or The Stimulation of Self

The Second Tape Play
By Andrew Terrance Kaberline

JERK



JERK

was originally staged in Brooklyn, New York, by Critical Point Theatre

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

directed by Dylan James Amick |

produced by Julia Katz & Dylan James Amick |

Production stage managed by Chelsea Rugg |

Designed by Chelsea Rugg, Lauren Miller,

and Dylan James Amick

August 24-September 2 | The Hive, Brooklyn NY

ORIGINAL CAST

Rene Ramirez III as James

Hank Morris as Elizabeth

Becky Granger as Women

Tyler Weaver as Men

Cast of Characters:

JAMES

Late twenties sex
addict

ELIZABETH

Late twenties therapist

The following roles are to be played by two actors:

SUBWAY GIRL

Mid twenties city girl

SUE

Married to James

SIX PACK GIRL

Teenage six pack shop
clerk

WILLIAM

Married to Elizabeth

ALEX

Spiritual young woman

ISABEL

Mid twenties co-worker to
James

RICHARD

Patient with Pica

MOTHER

Elizabeth's Mother

PART ONE



PART ONE

SCENE ONE

A dream office. The important stuff is there. The stuff you would recall from a memory that returns to your mind after a long absence-

Illumination from a prominent lamp.

A nervous man, JAMES, sits in a chair, a wastebasket in front of him. A confident woman, ELIZABETH, sits behind a desk with a tape recorder.

-Click-

Say something.

ELIZABETH

Something.

JAMES

Louder.

ELIZABETH

SOMETHING.

JAMES

Whenever you're ready.

ELIZABETH

And you?

JAMES

Don't wait for me.

ELIZABETH

No, I meant- You're looking?

JAMES

ELIZABETH turns around in her seat.

JAMES

Where should I start?

ELIZABETH

The earliest memory that you masturbate to.

JAMES

It was my first time. Well, technically it wasn't. It's complicated. I'll just-

Jennifer and I would fool around in the basement, but my parents had soft steps, so there was no telling when we might get a visit. We covered up everything, except for what mattered. I would keep my eyes on the door, but I could feel things happening elsewhere.

We were getting serious, as serious as teenagers get, and I finally asked Jennifer one day, "Hey, when are we going to go all the way?"

She laughed. I told her I didn't think the question was funny. She was confused. No, puzzled. Jennifer hesitantly told me "James, we've been having sex for, like, weeks now."

ELIZABETH tries to conceal a giggle.

ELIZABETH

No more explaining. Just stay in the memory.

JAMES

We're in the basement. I'm nervous. Apparently I've done this before but I don't feel the wisdom of experience. Jennifer goes to the corner and gets a condom out of the machine. My parents have an old French condom dispenser in the basement, as some kind of odd antique to show off. I can't believe it actually has condoms in it. I can't believe we're about to trust a condom that's older than I am.

Jennifer takes off her pants, all the way down, and I'm looking at the door in case my parents pop in, but she takes my face and turns it back to her. I'm right here. I want you to see. This time, I don't want there to be any confusion.

I'm just staring. I don't know what else to do. I fall out. Jennifer picks me up and puts me back in, and we're going again...at a slow pace. Jennifer tries to speed it up. I fall out.

I can't get hard. I see what we're doing, and I can't do it.

Jennifer ties her hair back and kneels down. I don't understand. I try to kneel too, and Jennifer pushes me back up. She puts me in her mouth.

Jennifer has a great mouth. It's like a lock, and... I don't know if it's the way I fit in her, or if every guy from here on out will slip into her the way I do...

JAMES moves his hand around carefully.

JAMES

I can get it right sometimes... where I move around my hand this way and that way, and sometimes I hit it, and it's like I'm back inside of her. I keep calibrating. I'll lose it soon. Most days I can't, but sometimes...I get it... I get it just right, and-

ELIZABETH

The memory.

JAMES

Right, right.

Her mouth fits around me, and I'm rock hard. I focus to keep it going, and Jennifer leaps up like she's running hurdles, and I catch her in my arms. She's a tiny thing, and she's in the air, and she's loving it. Jennifer closes her eyes and I'm using all my strength to keep her up, but I can still see the door, and Dad throws it wide open.

I'm looking at him, and he's looking at me, and Jennifer can't be bothered to see what's going on outside of her vagina.

Dad doesn't move or say anything or break eye contact, and I'm too afraid to look away, and this goes on for another minute, and I come. Dad turns around and closes the door quietly. Jennifer opens her eyes again and laughs. She laughs for a while.

I don't think she ever knew she was being watched.

-Click-

ELIZABETH exits. The lamp begins to display different colors rapidly, accompanied by a hum. JAMES puts his head in his lap.

SCENE TWO

Silence. The office. JAMES still sits in the chair with his head in his lap.

After a moment, JAMES sits up and we see that he is holding a tissue to his bloody disfigured nose.

JAMES throws the tissue in the wastebasket, and grabs a new one off the desk.

JAMES walks over to the door, and looks out both ways. No one.

JAMES sits down at the desk and begins to look through the drawer. He takes out a pill bottle and looks at it. He puts it back and closes the drawer.

ELIZABETH, enters the office. They freeze.

ELIZABETH

You're in my chair.

JAMES

Yes, well, I have to keep my head back to stop the bleeding, you know, and that chair is so stiff I was practically on the floor, but your chair leans, so- Did you hear my nose was broken?

ELIZABETH

I heard you were struck.

JAMES

By some maniac, no less! And you can understand my surprise that there are maniacs here because Clifton stressed to me that this center was top notch, so... so you're letting in maniacs now?

ELIZABETH

Return to your chair.

Pause.

JAMES

Yeah, of course. It's not bleeding as much anymore.

JAMES returns to his chair. ELIZABETH takes her seat, whips out her phone and begins to dial.

JAMES

They didn't give me an ice pack or anything, so I was hoping that you-

JAMES notices the phone.

JAMES

Who are you calling?

ELIZABETH

Mr. Clifton. I'm going to let you tell him why you're being expelled from the program.

ELIZABETH offers the phone.

JAMES snatches it, quickly ends the call, then puts the phone back on the desk.

JAMES returns to his chair. The moment he is seated, ELIZABETH begins to dial again.

JAMES is up and snatches the phone.

JAMES

What the fuck is your problem?

ELIZABETH

Language, James.

JAMES

I'm allowed to curse in group.

ELIZABETH

No you're not. And you're not in group, you're in my office.

JAMES reluctantly hands back the phone.

JAMES

You're not being very supportive, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH

Doctor.

JAMES

Dr. Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH

Dr. Reed.

JAMES

We're contemporaries, can't we just talk like normal people? The formalities make me uncomfortable. How am I supposed to open up if I'm uncomfortable?

ELIZABETH

I'm not obligated to make you comfortable because you are no longer my patient.

JAMES

Come on, there's gotta be a better solution than that!

ELIZABETH

Yes, I agree. But it's out of my control. When you engaged in a physical altercation it broke our policy and made you a threat to the other patients.

JAMES

Then keep me away from the other patients. I'll just do one-on-ones. No more group sessions.

ELIZABETH

Group sessions are a large part of your recovery plan.

JAMES

The recovery plan isn't working.

ELIZABETH

I don't think it's the plan.

JAMES

You think I'm the problem?

ELIZABETH

This center has been open for twenty years and there was never a fight until this morning.

JAMES

It wasn't a fight! It was a mauling! Both parties must be invested for it to be considered a fight.

ELIZABETH

You weren't invested?

JAMES

I didn't raise a finger.

ELIZABETH

How about your voice?

JAMES

My voice is fine. It's my nose that he broke.

ELIZABETH

Did you raise your voice?

JAMES

No!... I'm a loud speaker naturally. My tone can come off, and and that doesn't mean- you know my voice is loud, but you don't hit me every time I become excited, right! I'm telling you, that guy, total maniac.

ELIZABETH

Richard?

JAMES

Yes, Richard! Don't act like you don't see it too! If that's the type of guy you want to put in my group, then- It's simple really, group sessions won't work. For me. Maybe for those losers it's fine, but I need a special sort of treatment.

ELIZABETH

What makes you special, James?

JAMES

My thing!

ELIZABETH

We are certified to treat all forms of addiction, including yours.

JAMES

Yes, but to try to treat all the things the same way, now, that's not very smart.

ELIZABETH

I agree. That's why everyone's recovery plan is unique to their own circumstances.

JAMES

Oh good. I was worried that every John in the building came to your office to jerk off, but I'm happy to know it's just me.

ELIZABETH

Is that the only reason you come to my office?

JAMES

Well...no-

ELIZABETH

You don't ever ask about me.

JAMES

Do you want me to ask about you?

ELIZABETH

No, that'd be unprofessional. But it's a common tactic of deflection with my patients here.

JAMES

I'm not deflecting.

ELIZABETH

Not saying you are, but you don't open up much. I don't have a lot to go on.

JAMES

Not much to go on? I tell you loads of stuff. I told you about my Dad walking in on me for Christ's sake!

ELIZABETH

Sure. But that's the only time that you ever want to talk, while you...

JAMES

Jerk off-

ELIZABETH

Masturbate.

JAMES

What's wrong with that?

ELIZABETH

Did you start this fight to get more time in my office?

JAMES

Oh, don't flatter yourself!

ELIZABETH

Your life isn't going to be a series of one-on-ones with a doctor.

JAMES

It's not a series of sitting in a circle with a gaggle of addicts either.

ELIZABETH

Most people are addicted to something.

JAMES

Even you?

ELIZABETH

We're not here to discuss me.

JAMES

Of course not. Who'd want to discuss you anyhow Dr. Reed?

ELIZABETH

My friends. My Mother. My husband.

JAMES

You're married?

ELIZABETH

Yes.

JAMES

I've been here for like a month and you don't think to tell me that you're married?

ELIZABETH

You don't need to know about it.

JAMES

You brought it up!

ELIZABETH

You're right, I did. I regret it already. Let's move on-

JAMES

I can't believe you're married.

ELIZABETH

Why?

JAMES

Nothing, I just guess that means there's hope for everyone!

A moment. ELIZABETH heads for the door.

JAMES
Oh, come on. Take a joke.

ELIZABETH locks the door to the office and takes out the tape recorder.

ELIZABETH
We're going to try it your way. Say something.

JAMES
SOMETHING!

JAMES begins to take off his pants.

ELIZABETH
James, keep your pants on.

JAMES
Are we not?

ELIZABETH
We're going to have a one-on-one session, sans masturbation therapy.

JAMES sits, not particularly interested.

ELIZABETH
This is what you asked for.

JAMES
No it's not.

ELIZABETH
You've become too comfortable with that exercise. It's time to remove it from your plan.

JAMES
You brought out the tape recorder, you know what that means!

ELIZABETH
You ever heard of Pavlov?

JAMES
I'm sorry. Every time I'm in here, every time since I told you about how I, you know?

ELIZABETH
Masturbate.

JAMES

Yes, how I jerk it, and-

ELIZABETH

Mold your self-sexual process to replicate the woman you lust after at any given moment.

JAMES

Yeah. Every time I come in here you tell me to do that. And now out of no where, you don't think it helps?

ELIZABETH

You're very shameful after.

JAMES

Well yeah, because it feels gross to me.

ELIZABETH

Masturbating feels gross?

JAMES

No, doing it in front of you, that feels gross.

ELIZABETH

I'm your doctor

JAMES

Yeah, that's worse.

ELIZABETH

You willingly engage in an sexual experience even though you know that it will bring you discomfort upon completion. This is troubling James.

JAMES

I'm not coming to your office just to get off.

ELIZABETH

Tell that to the custodian who empties my wastebasket. Sorry... a little joke.

JAMES

It's not like I'm into you or anything.

ELIZABETH

I've never suggested that-

JAMES

What I'm saying is I don't find you attractive.

ELIZABETH

You've made that clear, thank you.

JAMES

No offense. I'm a sex addict with standards.

ELIZABETH

That's not your diagnosis.

JAMES

This again?

ELIZABETH

It's important for you to stick to the truth-

JAMES

The truth is I can't stop banging people.

ELIZABETH

Then you have hyper sexuality disorder.

JAMES

No! I'm a sex addict!

ELIZABETH pulls out a file from one of the desk drawers.

ELIZABETH

Let's look at your initial survey. Do you feel preoccupied with sexual thoughts? You responded, yes.

JAMES

Because I'm an addict-

ELIZABETH

Do you feel your sexual behavior is abnormal? You responded, yes. Do you ever feel poorly about your sexual behaviors? You responded, yes.

JAMES

Stop-

ELIZABETH

Are you often lost in sexual fantasy? Would you classify your sexual relationship with your partners as dysfunctional? Do your attempts at changing your sexual practices fall short no matter your effort? All, a resounding yes.

JAMES

What's your point?

ELIZABETH

Those are the symptoms of hyper sexuality disorder.

JAMES

Ok,

ELIZABETH

You know, we shouldn't be treating anyone who can't admit that they have a problem.

JAMES

And yet, I'm sitting here before you now, receiving treatment.

ELIZABETH

You have Mr. Clifton to thank for that.

JAMES

It's like you don't think I'm a sex addict.

ELIZABETH

I didn't say that.

JAMES

Because you're not allowed to say it?

ELIZABETH

I'm absolutely allowed to say it! There's no such fucking thing as sex addiction, and frankly, your being a little bitch about it pisses me the fuck off!

JAMES is stunned.

ELIZABETH

No, that's not-

ELIZABETH takes out the tape recorder.

-Click-

ELIZABETH takes a deep breath and collects herself.

-Rewind-Click-

JAMES

It's like you don't think I'm a sex addict.

ELIZABETH

I didn't say that.

JAMES

Because you're not allowed to say it?

ELIZABETH

You display an obsessive need for sexual completion. Can we live with that for now?

JAMES

I can work with that.

Pause.

ELIZABETH

You know you gotta tell me what you did to Richard?

JAMES

What *I* did!? I don't know if you've noticed, but I'm the one who's face is leaking.

ELIZABETH

What do you think moved Richard to hit you?

JAMES

I don't know! Ask him.

ELIZABETH

I will, but now I'm asking you if you did anything at all to provoke him?

JAMES

No.

ELIZABETH

I don't mean this insultingly, but you're a thirty year old man-

JAMES

Twenty-eight.

ELIZABETH

- Sorry. Twenty-eight year old man, but sometimes I feel like I have to pry your thoughts out of you. You're paying me to help-

JAMES

I'm not paying. The party, Mr. Clifton-

ELIZABETH

SOMEONE is paying me to help you. I'm good at it. You might as well let me try once and a while.

JAMES

FINE. He was talking about today's breakfast, right? And he was complaining about how the coffee here- Drinking coffee with breakfast has always been his sanctuary but it will never taste right in this place, so he can't drink it anymore, and he feels utterly alone. And I called him out on his bullshit.

ELIZABETH

What did you say, exactly?

JAMES

I said, "I'm calling you out on your bullshit!" I told him that he was wasting everyone's time with his non-issue.

ELIZABETH

You called his disorder a non-issue?

JAMES

He eats dirt. Other people are forced to be here because they're sick, and this guy eats dirt.

ELIZABETH

It's called Pica. It's serious.

JAMES

It's dirt. I used to eat it in little league when I got bored, and look at me. I turned out great.

ELIZABETH

It could kill him.

JAMES

Really? Then why aren't we letting Darwinism work its magic?

ELIZABETH

You want Richard dead?

JAMES

I don't want to be here! I need you to help me stop fucking everything that moves so that I can go back to my nice dream job and my nice dream wife. And! And I don't like having to spend my mornings listening to that retard go on and on about the goddamn coffee.

ELIZABETH

I can relate to the rage that comes with feeling someone is wasting everyone's time with a problem that isn't real.

JAMES

It's infuriating!

ELIZABETH

I know!

JAMES

Thank you! Jesus!

Pause.

JAMES

Wait, were talking about me?

ELIZABETH

Just now, you said you have a dream job.

JAMES

I do... It is.

ELIZABETH

Interesting.

Pause.

JAMES

Oh, so this is what we're doing now?

ELIZABETH

I just want to know more about it-

JAMES

No, let's do this. I travel. I watch sports. I interview athletes, and if I ever get bored I write "best of" lists that are one hundred percent self-serving. And for doing this, I get paid more money than you do.

ELIZABETH

How much do you think I get paid?

JAMES

I imagine I make more than you.

ELIZABETH

Does your work feel important? Do you feel like you make a difference?

JAMES

I wrote a fantasy baseball draft guide. Helped a bunch of people win their leagues. Made a real difference to them!

ELIZABETH

What about Susan's work?

JAMES

Yeah, Sue helps people, but you do know a lot of it isn't out of the kindness of her heart, right? She's gotta worry about who the party wants her to be.

ELIZABETH

Would you ever consider going into politics?

JAMES

I just show up to the parties and make small talk. I have no desire to do more than that.

ELIZABETH

You have a perfect job...perfect wife...

JAMES

No. I said I have a dream wife. Not perfect. Sue's not perfect.

ELIZABETH

Tell me about her imperfections.

JAMES

Come on, just look at her.

ELIZABETH

It's a large part of her appeal. It helps to illuminate her tenacity.

JAMES

To voters, sure. But I'm with her all the time. I'm the one who has to deal with it.

ELIZABETH
Hmm...

JAMES
Oh what the fuck does that-

ELIZABETH
Language.

JAMES
-Pardon, what the heck does that mean? Hmm???

ELIZABETH
It's strange to hear you mention having to "deal with it."

JAMES
You've got a husband, right?

ELIZABETH
We're here to talk about you.

JAMES
Indulge me. I'm making a point.

ELIZABETH
Yes, I'm married.

JAMES
And your husband is healthy?

ELIZABETH
Reasonably.

JAMES
All of his parts are in working order?

ELIZABETH
Yes.

JAMES
And you got kids?

ELIZABETH
No.

JAMES

Ok, well I want you to fast forward to when you and your husband have some kids right?

ELIZABETH

I don't think that will happen. It's dangerous for me to have children-

JAMES

Do you want me to speak or not? You wouldn't know what it's like to have a spouse who needs that kind of care, ok? It's hard enough to try to care for a human being when you've got no clue how to handle yourself, and that's why we have two parents. To help carry the weight. But in my particular situation, I've got no help and two girls who can't wipe their own asses, so I'd like it if you stopped judging me for feeling like it's my burden too.

ELIZABETH

I'm sorry. You're right. Something like that has to be hard on all three of you.

JAMES

Thank you.

ELIZABETH

Please, talk through the feelings you get when dealing with Susan's injury. How has it been having that happen so soon after becoming a parent?

JAMES

Well... work travel has been cut back. I didn't mean to make it sound so awful. We have help, of course. The party has been good. They provide sitters-

ELIZABETH

Did you want to be a parent?

ELIZABETH turns to a notepad.

JAMES

Please don't judge me.

ELIZABETH

You want me to put the pad away?

JAMES

No-

ELIZABETH

-Because I will. If that's what you want?

JAMES

I said no.

ELIZABETH

How much caretaking would you say you do compared to Mr. Clifton?

JAMES

He doesn't go home with her. He doesn't sleep with her.

ELIZABETH

Not that you know of...

JAMES

Pardon?

ELIZABETH

Again, a joke.

JAMES

It's not funny.

ELIZABETH

I apologize. I can stop. I thought you would like that...

JAMES

What's funny is the idea of someone else wanting to sleep with Sue!

ELIZABETH

Come on James-

JAMES

What? I thought we were making jokes now!

ELIZABETH

That's- Where did that come from?

JAMES

Sue's gotta be Super Woman out there, but there's no one telling her that at home, so when I get her, it's like suddenly she can't do anything. And the physical therapist tells me that I can't help her cheat, but then when I tell her "no, you've got to pick that up yourself," she treats me like I'm Hitler. Like I'm enjoying watching her fail. And I don't. That hurts. It really - It's like watching your dog get sick and forget who you are, and you can't do anything to make it happy. It's exhausting. The world gets Super Woman. I wish I did too. She sounds nice.

ELIZABETH

So, Susan's not perfect.

JAMES

No woman can be perfect.

ELIZABETH backs up in her chair.

ELIZABETH

Are you implying that a man can?

JAMES

Yes.

ELIZABETH

James...

JAMES

What? Women will tell their friends all the time that they've "found the perfect man." You never hear a guy say that. Guys, even if we've got an undisputed ten on our hands, we don't settle, we keep looking for an eleven.

ELIZABETH

I don't get how you have found any woman to sleep with you.

JAMES

Of course you don't get it. I bet no one ever looks at you.

A change in ELIZABETH.

JAMES

Ball don't lie.

ELIZABETH puts her head on her desk, and fades away.

JAMES

Hey. HEY!

JAMES walks over and forcefully lifts ELIZABETH'S head off the desk. ELIZABETH springs up.

ELIZABETH
DON'T EVER TOUCH ME!

JAMES
I was just trying to get your attention-

ELIZABETH
Shut. Your. Mouth.

JAMES
Ok, ok.

ELIZABETH
If you put your hands on me again, I will not only have you taken out of this program but I will make certain that you lose everything. Are we clear?

JAMES
Yeah...

JAMES stands unsure of what to do next.

ELIZABETH
Sit down!.

JAMES promptly sits down in his chair.

*ELIZABETH takes a moment to calm herself.
She reaches into a drawer to find a first aid kit.
She pulls out an ice pack, and throws it to
JAMES.*

JAMES
You had that the whole fuckin' time?

ELIZABETH
You will not disrespect your wife or your daughter again in this room.

JAMES
What, you're all sisters of the traveling pants now or some shit?

ELIZABETH
No disrespecting them. Do you hear me?

Pause. ELIZABETH regains her composure.

JAMES

You know it might be tricky for me to not disrespect Sue, like- You know I'm here because I've committed mass adultery right?

ELIZABETH

And we will talk about that, but you cannot go on about her the way you have been, or I will not be able to help you.

JAMES

I'm just gonna try to be honest and if it's not what you want to hear, let me know before I reach the point of no return, ok?

ELIZABETH

Let's talk about the night Sue found out-

JAMES

Not right now, please.

ELIZABETH

How many women would you say you've slept with this year?

JAMES

All of them.

ELIZABETH

Yes, what's the total?

JAMES

No, I've slept with all of them.

ELIZABETH

You're saying you've slept with every women you know?

JAMES

And some I don't know. Some are just people I see on the street.

ELIZABETH

That's not possible.

JAMES

Have you seen how much porn there is on the internet? Let's say I meet a woman in passing who I'm attracted to. I want to fuck her-

ELIZABETH

Language.

JAMES

I want to pork her, but she's already walked out of my life. If I go online, I'm bound to find porn with someone who looks similar. It's not like when my Dad was a kid and had that ONE Playboy hidden under his sheets. If I'm really diligent, I can find someone with similar eyes, hair, shape... I can reconstruct this women like a pornographic Frankenstein. I can make her stop instead of walking on by.

ELIZABETH

So then, the woman in the hotel was the first time you physically cheated on Susan?

JAMES

No. Sometimes they don't keep walking down the street.

ELIZABETH

You pick and choose?

JAMES

I wish. If I want her I have to have her. I take in what the world gives me, then I act upon it. There's no choice to be had. And if she says no...

ELIZABETH

What if she says no?

JAMES

You know on/off pics?

ELIZABETH

No?

JAMES

It's like, when a girl posts a photo of herself fully clothed, and then she posts another photo of her in the exact same pose, exact same light, but without the clothes.

ELIZABETH

Where does this happen?

JAMES

Internet. It's a whole thing. But my brain is kinda like that. Got my own little on/off switch.

ELIZABETH

Does that concern you?

JAMES

I dunno. It's better than *really* acting on my impulse right?

Pause.

ELIZABETH

Richard is only in your group on Tuesdays?

JAMES

That's why I hate Tuesdays.

ELIZABETH

From now on, you spend Tuesday mornings with me. But first, I want you to write an apology to Richard and have him sign it.

JAMES

And he will do the same for me?

ELIZABETH

I'm letting you off easy. Go, before you say something to mess it up.

JAMES

Sure thing, Dr. Reed. Thanks for the ice pack.

JAMES collects his ice pack and exits.

ELIZABETH takes out the phone and dials.

ELIZABETH

Hi, it's me. I'm leaving work early, so, if you want me to pick something up on the way home, I could... The medication has been making me drowsy, so I feel like I can't stay up late, even though I want to. I want to wait up for you... I'm worried. My mother said she put a hex on you so, you know... She's mad that you left, but I'm not mad. I'm just worried. I don't like doing this here. Just call me back, ok?

ELIZABETH hangs up. She tries to switch off the lamp, but it stays on. She tries it a few times. No change.

ELIZABETH gives up, and leaves with the lamp still on.