

Sit-Dram asks: Can one-night stand lead to love between strangers?

Written by Kam Williams

It's understandable that Joanne (Tracey Heggins) and Micah (Wyatt Cenac) are a little awkward when they wake up together in the same bed the morning after an alcohol-fueled one-night stand. First of all, the strangers got so hot and bothered that they spent a night in a room right at the party where they had just met. Furthermore, they never even got around to exchanging names before exchanging bodily fluids.

Upon waking, Joanne decides to lie and introduce herself as "Angela" since she already has a boyfriend who happens to be out of town. But then she leaves her wallet behind on the floor of the cab they share before going their separate ways. Consequently, Micah not only learns her real name from her driver's license, but he's able to track her down again.

Smitten, he shows up unannounced at her doorstep, determined to pursue a relationship. However, besides being African American, the twenty-somethings start to find they have more differences than similarities. For instance, he's a down-to-earth, blue-collar-type who wears a stingy-brimmed bike hat everywhere he goes, while she's definitely a little bourgie with more refined tastes.

In conversation, he irritates Joanne by complaining that Blacks seem to be disappearing from rapidly-gentrifying San Francisco, leading her to wonder aloud whether he "has a big issue with race." Despite the passionate, then rocky start, the two decide to hang out, visiting a museum and riding on a merry-go-round as they get to know each other post intimacy.

Can an impulsive indulgence of lust lead to love? That is the burning question at the center of *Medicine for Melancholy*

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, an alternatively breezy and sophisticated sit-dram which marks the auspicious directorial and scriptwriting debut of Barry Jenkins.

Considerable credit for making whirlwind romance riveting must go to the compelling performances delivered by Tracey Heggins and Wyatt Cenac, the talented pair of young thespians playing the protagonists. Their contentious relationship comes to a head when he defines himself “Black” and she reveals that the boyfriend she’s cheating on is white.

Micah asks why she’s involved with “some white dude.” Joanne, insulted by the presumptuous tone of the remark, responds with: “That’s your problem. You limit yourself,” frostily punctuating her retort with the reminder that “I don’t even know you.”

A candid commentary on the state of the battle-of-the-sexes in a post-racial age of strangers with benefits.

Excellent (4 stars)

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Running time: 88 minutes

Studio: IFC Films

To see a trailer for Medicine for Melancholy, visit:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ID51kpZ9iK4>