Title:

**PSYCHIATRISTS HATE HIM!** This Man Cured His Depression with One Trick and You Won’t Believe How Simple It Is – **SPOILER**: It’s Going to Chemist Warehouse Twice a Week

Preface: This recording was created by me, Ren Jiang, on unceded Wurundjeri lands. I’m navigating treatment and medication on stolen lands and it’s important to acknowledge the impact of ongoing colonial violence on mental health in First Nations communities. Please consider donating to the [Victorian Aboriginal Health Service](https://www.vahs.org.au/support-vahs/) if you have financial capacity.

In this work, I make frequent, direct mentions of mental illness, suicide, use of medication, as well as implicit reference to addiction, addictive behaviours, and dissociative behaviours. Please step out and take breaks whenever you need to. If you’re under 25 years old, you can access the [Kids Helpline](https://kidshelpline.com.au/) at 1800 55 1800, and if you’re over 25, you can access [Lifeline](https://www.lifeline.org.au/) at 13 11 14.

Also this is in no way associated with, or an endorsement of Chemist Warehouse as a corporation lol. They’re currently facing a test case for underpaying their staff. I’m also *definitely not* telling you that you could steal from Chemist Warehouse.

Scene 1

**ROBOT VOICE:** Psychiatrists hate him! This man cured his depression with one trick and you won’t believe how simple it is! Spoiler: It’s going to Chemist Warehouse at least twice a week

*Upbeat background music that sounds like the beginning of an adventure RPG.*

**REN:** You’veheard of the Counihan Gallery and its curation of local contemporary art. You’ve heard of Green Refectory and its impossibly long queues held up by a customer and staff member flirting. You’ve been to a show at Howler, Brunswick Ballroom, or the Mechanics’ Institute and maybe spent the night avoiding someone you’ve ghosted on Hinge. Forget all that. Chemist Warehouse Barkly Square is the real gem of 3056.

When I feel unwell and unsafe, I go to Chemist Warehouse.

Chemist Warehouse appears when you need it most, like the romantic lead in a teen anime on a rainy day. You follow the umbrella handle in your line of sight, up, up, until you see him—tall, handsome in a feminine way, and reminds you ever so slightly of the childhood friend that you made a pact with to get married when you grow up. Chemist Warehouse-kun smiles at you and asks: are you alright? Come in and take shelter from the rain for a bit. Pick up some effervescent vitamin C so you don’t catch a cold in this weather.

*Anime sparkle sound effects.*

Admire the walls, and gently caress them like it’s your first pet. Remember the dream house you had when you were a child. Remember your first crush. Now bundle all of those together and imbue Chemist Warehouse Barkly Square with that energy. Have you fallen in love today? .

I have a parasocial relationship with Chemist Warehouse, like the woman who married the Eiffel Tower. It’s my safe place. What I like about pharmacies is what many people like about big cities: It’s so overstimulating it’s calming. It’s impossible to feel any sort of negative emotion in a place with its own radio station.

Please stand for the Chemist Warehouse jingle. Sing it aloud in the store, in an empty aisle. Maybe the one with baby products. Or the one with first aid and foot stuff. They’re usually pretty quiet. I don’t want to make you do it in a crowded one because I don’t want to make you do things I wouldn’t do. I’m sorry I can’t provide a backing track for copyright reasons. But don’t worry, I’ll sing it with you:

*Chemist Warehouse! In the middle of our street, our house!*

Now I want you to give me a “woo! woo!”

*Chemist Warehouse! Why pay! More!*

I feel better already.

Scene 2

*Jaunty game music. Something that sounds like Cooking Mama.*

**REN:** My coworkers don’t understand why I always ask if they want something from Chemist Warehouse. I just think it’s nice to check in before I go. They say incredibly insensitive things like: “Didn’t you go to Chemist Warehouse yesterday?”. I don’t know how to tell them that yesterday’s trip felt like an unsatisfying, fast shit you do in a shopping centre while there’s a line for the cubicle with the only non-skid-marked toilet, because yesterday I spent half an hour comparing the ingredient lists of the La Roche-Posay Vitamin B5 slow-release pure retinol dropper serum and its squeezy tube-formula twin. What makes today’s trip different and fresh is that I’m going to spend my half hour comparing the branding between Voltaren and Deep Heat.

When I need to feel full, I go to Chemist Warehouse. It’s so authoritative. “Get well!” The poster on the outside shouts at me. Chemist Warehouse is Daddy. And “Stay well!”

In 2016, I memorised the entire transcript for *Jeanne Damas’ Guide to French Pharmacies & Beauty Products* from Vogue. Can you find these for me? I’m not leaving the house today because I feel like a danger to my own safety so it’s best to stay in bed. I’ll text you the list:

*Extremely sped-up speaking in French.*

**REN:** Bon, bah voilà! On a tout!

I was told I had a knack for languages. I parrot the words on the box: [redacted], [redacted], [redacted]. *nausea, dry mouth, excess sleepiness.*

“Live well!” Daddy Chemist Warehouse shouts after me. And “Look Fabulous!”

Who, me? Thanks!

Scene 3

*Lo-fi beats in the background. Something you can study to.*

**REN:** The nurses in paediatric wards wear pink because it’s gentler on the eyes than white, and so less frightening to the children. When I take my medication in the morning, I tell people it’s my gay pill. It’s pink and red. A lot of my joy comes from feeling the capsule innards shake around as the vessel slides down my throat every morning.

You might need to sit down for this. Is there a spare chair in the prescription waiting area? Sit down and chill out for a bit, but not too much. Stand up eagerly every time you hear a name called out that sounds like your own.

I take a combination of serotonin and noradrenaline reuptake inhibitors used to treat major depression and anxiety or panic disorders.

Journal entry: “I’ve been getting these huge bursts of energy that comes out of nowhere and I become so tangential but amazingly I’m so good at keeping track of all these side branch conversations that the only person who’s exhausted at the end of hanging out is the person who has to listen to me talk about 5 things at the same time.”

Withdrawal symptom: Increased pressure on my eyeballs and any kind of rapid movement, onscreen or in real life, make my eyes hurt. Typing makes my eyes hurt

Journal entry: “The things I want right now require a level of fearlessness that I didn’t realise was beyond my immediate capacity.”

Rainbow Chan [sung]: *Going off my medication / I’m confronted by my ugly self*

Withdrawal symptom: Paranoia in the evenings, hyper-sensitivity to sound, and visual hallucinations.

Withdrawal symptom: I want to hurt myself. I want to hurt myself. I pull over on the side of the road and dial a helpline, on the phone I say: I play the bass. I like to go bouldering. I have a cat I love. I like going to karaoke with my friends.

In my mouth the sand granules and capsule innards have a dance party. They pump their shoulders and grind on each other to “Beautiful Girls” by Sean Kingston. I’d like to dedicate *Beautiful Girls* by Sean Kingston to my medication. She’s just like an unbelievably pretty lesbian who will make me feel so happy and cared for and then 6 months to 2 years later, I’ll have to start decreasing my dosage.

It took me an embarrassing long time to realise that *Beautiful Girls* samples *Stand by Me*. Can you hear it in your head? My high school choir did an acapella to *Stand by Me*. I think it was for RU OK day or something.

Okay, let’s take a couple of really big breaths. You know the 4-7-8 method? Breathe in for 4, hold for 7, breath out for 8. Do as many of those as possible. Pause this track. I’ll wait.

Scene 4:

*Lo-fi music that sounds like a lullaby. You could picture a glow-in-the-dark mobile hanging over your bed.*

**REN:** Did anyone else have to do those peer-feedback things in school where you had to put one piece of constructive criticism in between two compliments? Two stars and a wish? Shit sandwich?

I want you to return to the baby product section and look at the nappies. Pick one that looks the most kind to skin. Pick one that looks most durable to contain your 2023 shit sandwich.

I used to heavily rely on remote mental health service providers, like helplines and virtual chat rooms. I feel more at ease when I know there are no stakes between me and the person I’m speaking to. But they always have to go at the end of the chat. No meaningful relationship is built here. No reciprocity of care. I always want to ask: Can I help *you* with anything? Singing teachers have singing teachers and psychologists have psychologists. Who’s the Arch-Therapist of them all?

Eda Gunaydin writes: “...I fear that to over-share is to seek out the rewards of being loved without submitting to the mortifying ideal of being known.”

Journal Entry: “How do I find the balance between staying true to my boundaries, while also staying open to giving people a chance to be trusted?”

I want you to pick a toy from the toy section, give it a name, and cradle it in your arms. Tell it a secret you’ve never told any of your friends, family, or loved ones. Share the ugliest part of yourself with this stranger.

Scene 5

*Hopeful plucked string music in the background. Something that sounds like it’s out of The Sims.*

**REN:** In 2014, a Chinese woman spent an entire week inside a KFC after her boyfriend broke up with her. I could build a home inside a Chemist Warehouse, subsist on glucose jelly beans and birthday cake-flavoured protein powder. My descendants would be so energetic from the jelly beans and so buff from the protein powder. Start a new species of protein-powder filled jelly people. You can really go wherever you want from here.

Jennifer Nguyen writes: *I fear when I find the place I want to be it might be too late*

So I hope I’ll keep seeing you here. Barkly Warehouse Chemist Square is the most comforting place on Earth.

I hope I can stick around for as long as I need.

**TELEPHONE VOICE:** Now, we do need to wrap up, but before I let you go, is there anything else I can help you with? Don’t forget that we do also offer ongoing counselling if that’s something you’re looking for. Thanks for calling!

*‘Beautiful Girls’ by Sean Kingston plays. Ren sings “Stand by Me” over the top of the song.*

**END**