Basic Case Summary

Identifying Information. Clarissa “Miss Piggy” Porciness is a 32-year-old Porcine American woman who resides in an urban center in Chicago. Miss Piggy currently is employed as the artistic director of Le Muppetrie Center for Artistic Studies in downtown Chicago. Currently she lives alone, following a divorce 3 years ago that ended her second marriage. She was dressed appropriately for the interview in a style that typically would be described as highly socially stylish and would be perceived as somewhat dramatic and seductive. Presenting Concern. Clarissa Porciness set up an initial intake appointment at the Downtown Counseling Center at the urging of her assistant, Kermit Frogere, who reported that he was concerned about her changes in mood at work and in her interpersonal relationships and her recent expressions of suicidal thoughts following the sudden ending of a romantic relationship. At times during the interview, Clarissa appeared to be experiencing low mood, was tearful, and expressed self-doubting thoughts, primarily when describing the rejection she felt at the ending of a recent romance and during two divorces. At other times during the interview, she appeared upbeat and confident and solicited the therapist’s agreement that she was physically attractive and could likely attract “a new man any time I am ready.” Background, Family, and Relevant History. Clarissa Porciness was born the only child in a moderate income household in New Orleans, Louisiana. Clarissa’s parents, Maurice and Claire Porciness, worked as street performers and on tourist stages in the city’s French Quarter, and according to Clarissa’s memory, they were “thrilled at having a daughter whom they hoped could carry on the family tradition,” as she apparently demonstrated exceptional musical and singing talent at the age of 4. As a toddler and onward throughout childhood, Clarissa accompanied her parents to street festivals and clubs and was billed as the “Little French Marionette.” She attended magnet schools for the performing arts in the New Orleans school system. She reports that beginning in her later high school years, she began engaging in secretive romantic and, later, sexual relationships with same-age male peers at a neighboring school; secretive, brief relationships with same-age female peers at her own school; and, increasingly, short romantic relationships with college-aged men and, occasionally, women she encountered while working in tourist venues. She was married briefly at age 19 while attending a local college for the performing arts. She described the marriage as conflictual. She married again at age 26, which she described as both “exciting” and conflictual. This marriage also ended in divorce. Clarissa reported that she and each partner were “still attracted to each other” but also each having sexual affairs with others, and that she eventually realized that she “felt unloved by my ex-husband, or anyone else.” She has been successfully employed in her occupational field throughout adulthood. Problem and Counseling History. Clarissa Porciness reports that she is ambivalent about the need for counseling but is open to beginning counseling “if it will help me learn to choose and keep the right man, or maybe woman, and feel more in control.” She also agrees with her assistant, Kermit, that her mood ranges substantially from elation and extremely high self-confidence when “work and relationships are going great” on the one hand, to depression accompanied by self-demeaning thoughts and dramatic suicidal fantasies, usually in response to changes in romantic relationships, on the other hand. She also reports having some concerns about her use of alcohol in order “to feel better” and her difficulties managing angry outbursts when her creative work is underappreciated and her angry and rejected feelings when “my best friends and new boyfriends desert me.” Along with alcohol use, she reports “sometimes being a little worried” about impulsive shopping, especially for expensive high-fashion clothing and household items like new furniture and kitchen appliances, when she “isn’t feeling so good about myself.” She reports that “sometimes I am so angry and under so much pressure I feel like I’m dreaming, like I’m just watching myself go through the motions.” She denies any current such thoughts or feelings. Overall, her problem history indicates a sometimes exhausting pattern of unreliable self-worth, relationship-seeking, and defending herself against extreme highs and lows in mood and adjustment via alcohol abuse, irresponsible shopping and spending, and reckless sexual relationships. Goals for Counseling and Course of Therapy to Date. Miss Porciness is ambivalent about continued counseling and reported that she probably would rather see a medical doctor who could perhaps “give me something to calm my nerves” rather than a “head shrink who just wants to creep into my brain and dissect me like some sort of high school biology pig project.” However, she voiced enjoying “having someone to listen to me” and agreed to return for at least several more meetings