

WATER

by

Obiageli Odimegwu

OVER BLACK.

CHILD'S VOICE (V.O.)
Just tell me what I have to do!

SECOND CHILD'S VOICE (V.O.)
Go on, Saskia. Tell him.

We hear the sound of a SPLASH.

FADE IN:

INT. TESTING CENTER - THE ROOM - DAY

A room. A hardback chair. In front of it stands a MAN (Mid 40s) staring straight ahead.

Through a speaker in the wall, we hear:

A VOICE (O.S.)
Sit down.

The Man sits.

A VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Stand up.

The Man stands.

A VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Touch your nose with your left index finger.

The Man does.

A VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Touch your nose with your right index finger.

The Man does. As he touches his nose, we hear WHEEZING. Neither the Man nor the voice from the speaker acknowledge it

A VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Touch the left far wall.

As the Man moves towards the left far wall, the WHEEZING gets louder. It sounds like a woman.

WOMAN (O.C.)
...please...please, I can't.

A VOICE (O.S.)
Touch the right far wall.

As the Man moves towards the right far wall, we see a WOMAN (mid-40s) on all fours on the floor. She HACKS and WHEEZES, struggling to breathe. The Man ignores her as...

A VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Sit down.

...he makes his way to his seat and sits back down.

EXT. TESTING CENTER - ENTRANCE - DAY

JUDE KENT (the same Man from earlier, mid-40s, lean and rigid) stands in front of a blocky office building. He consults a piece of paper in his hand then he walks inside.

INT. TESTING CENTER - RECEPTION - DAY

Jude stands in front of a white wall.

ADMINISTRATOR (O.C.)

Lift up your ID please. Right up by your face.

Jude does. A FLASH as a picture is taken. Jude squints.

EXT. TESTING CENTER - ENTRANCE - DAY

SASKIA (The same woman from earlier, Mid-40s, clothes that looked good 25 pounds ago) looks in a small mirror. She licks smeared lipstick off of her teeth then she checks her breath. Good enough. She enters the center.

INT. TESTING CENTER - RECEPTION - DAY

ADMINISTRATOR (O.C.)

State your name, your age, and your occupation.

JUDE

Jude Kent. Forty-Three Years Old.
Teacher.

ADMINISTRATOR (O.C.)

Thank you. Please read over this.

A WRINKLED HAND comes into frame as the Administrator hands Jude a typed slip of paper. He reads over it.

INT. TESTING CENTER - RECEPTION - DAY

Saskia stands in front of the same white wall.

SASKIA

Saskia.

A beat as the Administrator waits for Saskia to give more information but Saskia just smiles and smiles and waits her out.

INT. TESTING CENTER - RECEPTION - DAY

Jude reads the paper he was handed.

JUDE

Yes. This was all covered in the Ad I responded to so--

ADMINISTRATOR (O.C.)

I'm quite aware what the Ad says, Mr. Kent. But regulation requires the center to obtain video evidence that you are aware.

Jude nods: Fine. Whatever.

JUDE

(reading off the paper)

I, Jude Kent, do consent under my own power to submit myself to this study run by the Noltria Center. I understand that since this experiment means to study the effect that water deprivation has on fine and acute motor-skills, that I will be denied water for the next three days and expected to perform a series of tasks within that time-frame.

INT. TESTING CENTER - RECEPTION - DAY

SASKIA

I hereby absolve the Noltria Center of all liability concerning my person for the duration of this study in exchange for the sum of \$1500 to be paid into my account at its conclusion.

JUDE

I hereby absolve the Noltria Center of all liability concerning my person for the duration of this study in exchange for the sum of \$1500 to be paid into my account at its conclusion.

INT. TESTING CENTER - RECEPTION - DAY

A wrinkled hand enters the frame as Administrator hands Saskia a pen.

ADMINISTRATOR (O.C.)

If you would please sign below.

Saskia does. With flourish.

ADMINISTRATOR (O.C.) (CONT'D)

Very good.

INT. TESTING CENTER - THE ROOM - DAY

The same room from the flashback. There isn't much in the way of decoration or furniture inside: Only two hardback chairs which are placed an equal distance from one another.

SUPER: DAY 1

Jude sits in of the hardback chairs as Saskia enters.

SASKIA

Fuck me, what a cunt! She wouldn't get off it. How old are you? How old are you! Asked me like fifty fucking times? I'm like, do you have my information or nah? Sick bitch just wanted to force me to cop to it.

Jude stares at her, horrified. Saskia mimics a pin-up pose.

SASKIA (CONT'D)

I refuse to cop to anything over 25.

She holds her hand out to him.

SASKIA (CONT'D)

Saskia. Just Saskia. Like Madonna.

Jude ignores her outstretched hand.

SASKIA (CONT'D)

Nice, DICK! I'm so happy I'm stuck in here with you for three fucking days!

Saskia slumps into her seat, irritated. Then she pulls a flask out from under her shirt and takes a swig. Hearing GULPING, Jude turns to her with horror.

SASKIA (CONT'D)

Hey, the study said water deprivation. Trust me, this ain't water.

Saskia wipes off her mouth with the back of her hand.

JUDE

Ridiculous.

SASKIA

HE SPEAKS! THANK YA LORD JAYSUS, HE--

JUDE

You realize that alcohol is dehydrating right? And that we're already going to be facing extreme dehydration? So basically, it's like your house caught fire and in response, you decided to douse it with kerosene which is absolutely ridic--

The loudspeaker CRACKLES. Saskia stuffs the flask down her pants.

ADMINISTRATOR (O.S.)

Stand up.

Saskia and Jude stand, Saskia slightly stumbling as she does.

ADMINISTRATOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Sit Down.

Saskia and Jude sit.

ADMINISTRATOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)

What is your name?

	SASKIA		JUDE
Saskia.		Jude Kent.	

ADMINISTRATOR (O.S.)

How old are you?

Saskia rolls her eyes and gives the loudspeaker the finger.

	SASKIA		JUDE
Twenty. Five.		Forty-Three.	

ADMINISTRATOR (O.S.)

What did you do?

	JUDE		SASKIA
Teacher.		Clerk.	

At Saskia's answer, Jude shoots her a surprised look.

ADMINISTRATOR (O.S.)

Stand up.

They both do.

ADMINISTRATOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Sit down.

They perform all the tasks: Touching their noses with their left index finger then with their right. Touching the left far wall then the right before finally sitting back down.

ADMINISTRATOR (CONT'D)

That concludes the first out of two tests for Day 1. A box of energy bars can be found under your seat.

A CRACKLE as the speaker dies out. Saskia grabs an energy bar from under her seat and eats. Jude hesitates then:

JUDE

You're a clerk?

SASKIA

What? Did you expect me to say stripper?

Jude smiles, the first genuine expression he's worn all day.

JUDE

Well...Yeah.

Jude LAUGHS. Saskia throws her energy bar wrapper at him.

SASKIA

Dick.

But she's smiling too.

INT. TESTING CENTER - THE ROOM - AFTERNOON

The speaker CRACKLES.

ADMINISTRATOR (O.S.)

Stand up.

We watch as Saskia and Jude go through the whole test. It concludes with them sitting back down and eating their respective energy bars from under their seats.

INT. TESTING CENTER - THE ROOM - NIGHT

Saskia and Jude move around the room as time passes.

First Saskia sits by the far wall and Jude sits cross-legged on the floor. Then Saskia's in her seat while Jude paces back and forth. Then both of them sit, their backs against the wall, together.

SASKIA

...Not even one sip before you turned 21? Get the fuck outta here!

JUDE
You don't believe me?

SASKIA
Man, I wouldn't believe you if you was Judas and this was the last supper!

JUDE
(snorting)
What does that even mean? Who talks like that? Where are you from?!

SASKIA
Here.
(off Jude's skepticism)
Well, I am from here. But I might have moved away for a couple years. Okay, a couple decades. Just moved back into town actually. Job offer.

JUDE
Clerk gig?

SASKIA
No, something else. It fell through then I took the clerk gig. Story of my fucking life but I guess it's better than the story where you stab Jesus in the back?

Jude looks at her like: Huh?

SASKIA (CONT'D)
I don't know! Your name is Jude.
(explaining)
Jude/Judas? I never met a Jude before.

JUDE
It's ah...actually not. I changed it.

SASKIA
Who the fuck changes their name and chooses Judas?

JUDE
It's Jude. You know, like *Hey Jude*.

Saskia looks at him, confusion clear on her face then:

SASKIA
Hey right back atcha, Jude.
(beat)
What?

Jude's eyes widen: "Has she really never heard *Hey Jude?!?*"
A beat then Saskia LAUGHS, smacking him on the arm.

SASKIA (CONT'D)

Come on! You really do think I crawled
outta some trailer park at birth but
instead of a rattle I had like a 12
packa condoms clutched in my chubby
baby hand.

(off Jude's speechlessness)

I know who *The Beatles* are. Like I had
parents. They didn't even beat me.
Much.

But Jude doesn't buy it this time.

JUDE

I knew a Saskia once.

SASKIA

Yeah?

JUDE

Yeah. It was a long time ago.
Elementary school.

(beat)

We..uh..we took a field trip to
this...trailer park and...

Saskia smacks him on the arm again. He smiles.

INT. TESTING CENTER - THE ROOM - DAY

This is the continuation of the scene from the opening:

ADMINISTRATOR (O.S.)

Touch the right far wall.

SUPER: DAY 3

As Jude moves towards the right far wall to touch it, we see
Saskia on all fours on the floor as she HACKS and WHEEZES,
struggling to breathe. Jude ignores her as...

ADMINISTRATOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Sit down.

...he makes his way to his seat and sits back down.

ADMINISTRATOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)

*That concludes the second out of two
tests for day three. A box of energy
bars can be found under your seat.*

Jude takes an energy bar out from the box under his seat as Saskia continues HACKING and WHEEZING.

JUDE

Aaany minute you get tired of being a brat, just let me know.

Saskia starts LAUGHING.

SASKIA

I'm just so bored! Jesus fucking Christ: It's like stand up, sit down, stand up...I'm losing my mind!

JUDE

Yeah. It's so boring following simple instructions for a \$1500 pay day.

SASKIA

All right, I'm being a brat.

JUDE

Thank you.

SASKIA

It is a stupid fucking amount of money though. Like dumb. I've donated enough blood to fill this room twice over and only got about \$500 total for it. It's weird.

JUDE

It's not that weird. We've been deprived of water for three days so...

SASKIA

That's kind of also the weird part. I dunno about you but I've done a fuckton of these studies and they always check like every tiny thing to make sure they have as controlled an experiment as possible and like--

Saskia whips out her flask and waves it at him.

SASKIA (CONT'D)

I didn't put this anywhere creative, you know? Just in my waistband. She didn't even check me. She check you?

Jude's starting to look worried. Oblivious, Saskia continues:

SASKIA (CONT'D)

Also, like we're not being filmed. I was thinking about that last night. There's a speaker but no video camera. And there's no one coming in to check our blood or weigh us or--

JUDE

Shut up!

SASKIA

What the fuck? Are you--

JUDE

N-no, I'm, I'm sorry! I just don't think it's productive for us to go round in circles with this. It's not like after three days without water, we're going to be the most reliable gauge for normalcy, okay?

Saskia doesn't answer.

JUDE (CONT'D)

Okay?

SASKIA

Whatever, man.

JUDE

We'll ask her in the morning. Or not. I mean the woman was a 100 years old. Could be the Rinolt or Trolrite Center should have hired someone younger to conduct their study. I don't care. So long as I get my money, right?

A beat as Saskia considers and then she concedes.

SASKIA

She was ancient. Fucking old enough to have given birth to the pair of us.

FADE OUT.

OVER BLACK.

CHILD'S VOICE (V.O.)

Just tell me what I have to do!

SECOND CHILD'S VOICE (V.O.)

Go on, Saskia. Tell him.

We hear the sound of a SPLASH.

FADE IN:

INT. TESTING CENTER - THE ROOM - NIGHT

DARKNESS. HARSH BREATHS. Someone shakes Jude awake.

A VOICE (O.S.)

Jude! Jude! Wake up! Wake up!

Jude comes to with a jolt to find Saskia crouched over him.

JUDE

Saskia, w-what the hell, w-what's--

SASKIA

Listen. What did you say the center's name was? What did you call it?

JUDE

W-wha..I-I don't remember what..I dunno, N-N-Noltria, Noltria. What the--

SASKIA

No! No! Last night, you fucked it up! You fucked it up and you said it backwards! Y-You said it back--

JUDE

So what! What the hell is wrong with you?! Are you high? So I said it backwards: Rineolt, who cares!

SASKIA

No. Listen. Ryan Olt. Ryan Olt. You knew a Saskia in Elementary School.

Saskia points to herself.

SASKIA (CONT'D)

Right? You knew a Saskia and I knew a James. That's what you changed your name from right? It used to be James. Then after Ryan drowned, you changed your name and I...I moved out of town.

(beat)

We kept saying she was so old.

Jude's...*James'* face goes white.

SASKIA (CONT'D)

She's so old. Old enough to be our...to be--

JAMES

Mrs. Olt. Ryan Olt's mother.

The speaker CRACKLES. James and Saskia whip around, afraid.

ADMINISTRATOR (O.S.)

Stand up.

They do nothing, still watching the speaker, terrified.

ADMINISTRATOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Sit Down. Stand up. Sit down. What is your name? How old are you?

Saskia and James begin SCREAMING. But we can't hear them. All we hear is the calm patient voice giving instructions as...

ADMINISTRATOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)

What did you do? Touch your nose with your left index finger. Touch your nose with your right index finger...

...We see them POUNDING on the door. SLAMMING their chairs against it. All to no avail.

INT. TESTING CENTER - THE ROOM - DAY

We see Saskia and James in various places and positions around the room.

SUPER: DAY 4

Their are lips gray, their faces ashen as through the speakers:

ADMINISTRATOR (O.S.)

Stand up. Sit down. What is your name? How old are you? What did you do?

INT. TESTING CENTER - THE ROOM - DAY 5

ADMINISTRATOR (O.S.)

Stand up. Sit down.

SUPER: DAY 5

James, in a sick reenactment of Saskia's joke, HACKS and WHEEZES, his eyes wide, his breath short.

Saskia rubs his back. There's nothing else she can do. She's helpless. She looks above at the speaker, distraught:

SASKIA
Please. Please! PLEASE!!

ADMINISTRATOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Stand up. Sit down. What is
your name? How old are you?
What did you do?

INT. TESTING CENTER - THE ROOM - DAY

ADMINISTRATOR (O.S.)
Stand up. Sit down.

James is flat on the floor, his face in a pool of vomit, his eyes empty and lifeless.

Saskia, her lips chapped, her hands trembling, sits on one of the hardback chairs.

ADMINISTRATOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Stand up.

Saskia stands.

ADMINISTRATOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Sit down.

Saskia sits.

ADMINISTRATOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)
What is your name?

SASKIA
My name is Saskia Clements.

ADMINISTRATOR (O.S.)
How old are you?

SASKIA
I am forty-three years old.

ADMINISTRATOR (O.S.)
What did you do?

Saskia starts to cry.

SASKIA
I did something horrible and I can never take it back.

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK.

CHILD'S VOICE (V.O.)
Just tell me what I have to do.

YOUNG JAMES (V.O.)

Go on, Saskia. Tell him. Ryan wants to know how he can stop his parents from getting a divorce. Tell him!

YOUNG SASKIA (V.O.)

Forget it, James. Ryan's just a little, wittle baby. He hasn't got the guts!

YOUNG RYAN (V.O.)

I do, I promise! Just tell me what I have to do.

YOUNG SASKIA (V.O.)

Okay. You wanna know what to do?

(whispers)

Deep down inside the far end of your pool lives a little orange gnome with a little orange face and little orange heart. His name is Tommy. And he will grant you any wish your heart desires. All you have to do is go into the pool and under the water and hold your breath. Keep holding it until Tommy comes.

We hear the sound of a SPLASH.

END.