

The Simple Test

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First Prize:

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Final Transcript

Test Batch ID: M3040WF2030S666

Audio File No: 12940248.222

Subject 1: Male, age range 30-40

Subject 2: Female, age range 20-30

Audio Recording Start: 04:23:33

Automated : Thank you for your patience qualifiers. Your final announcement contribution is a short discussion time. At the end, *one* of you may leave. Your time begins now.

Female : Do you think they're listening?

Male : Of course.

Female : Hello? [Pause] Hello?

Male : They won't answer you. It's part of the test.

Female : They've had us in here for two days. Haven't they finished with us?

Male : We've only been through four or five rounds.

Female : How many do you think there are?

Male : I'm not sure.

Female : I heard the longest a survivor was in here was four days.

Male : Well, we should get started then.

Female : Started with what? There's nothing in here.

Male : The instructions said to talk.

Female : [Mumbled] This is fucking ridiculous.

Male : A bit too far in to be thinking that now.

Female : Whatever. What're we supposed to talk about then?

Male : May as well get to know each other. Why don't we ask some questions?

Female : Fine.

Male : What's your name?

Female : Does it matter?

Male : Doesn't it?

Female : No. Only one of us can leave, and I don't want to know your name.

Male : Ok. [Pause] Are you here by yourself?

Female : [Huff] How about *you* start us off.

Male : I can do that. My name is—

Female : For fuck's sake! Not your name. Anything else.

Male : Ok. I'm 45. Retired firefighter, widowed, and father to two daughters.

Female : What're their names?

Male : You want to know?

Female : Sure. At least if I'm the one who gets out of here, I can tell them their dad was boring right up to the end.

Male : Ouch. [Chuckles] Ok then. Mary and Anne.

Female : Very biblical. Anyone out there look after them?

Male : Not really. I mean—

Female : Come on old man, I'm asking about life and death. Do they need you to survive?

Male : They have a grandmother. But she's elderly.

Female : And how old is grandma?

Male : 70.

Female : She's got a few years left right?

Male : Depends on how much she smokes and drinks.

Female : Can't blame a woman for enjoying a drink and durr every once in a while. Not while living in this fucking world anyway.

Male : I suppose not. So, who are you?

Female : 25. Primary teacher. Just moved out from working in the bush right before everything kicked off.

Male : A teacher? I wouldn't have picked that from—

Female : From the potty mouth? [Scoffs] It's a bit different where I'm from.

Male : Ok. Educated, young, new to the area. Who will miss you if you don't come back?

Female : The missus. We're getting married next year.

Male : Do you believe she's the one?

Female : Doesn't matter. We're in love now.

Male : Family?

Female : Not so open to the whole gay thing. Not many people from out there are. [Pause] I have a cool aunt who lives around here, though. Her kid is going to be my best man. Got a mini tux and everything.

Male : That sounds lovely. I do enjoy a wedding.

Female : I'll be sure to shoot you an invite if we get out of here.
[Silence] If she's one of those healthy grans, she'd probably make it until they're old enough.

Male : But then they'll have to care for her, watch her die like their mother. Pay for her funeral.

Female : Might get a good inheritance? Plus, your life insurance?

Male : You've got a point.

Female : [Mumbles] Money always is. [Silence] Do you reckon it really is random?

Male : Who gets chosen?

Female : Yeah. Do you think the big fellas get *their* kids snatched off the street?

Male : I'm sure anyone can be. But we shouldn't be discussing this.

Female : What're they going to do? Disappear us? One of us, heck, maybe both isn't ever seeing outside this room again. And whoever's left will have to live telling themselves they deserved it more.

Male : Perhaps you do deserve it.

Female : You don't know me.

Male : I don't. But you haven't tried to kill me yet.

Female : Is that an option?

Male : I don't see why not. Only one can leave. Nothing is stopping you.

Female : There's still time.

Male : Would you kill me if it meant you could go home to your partner?

Female : [Silence] I don't think so.

Male : So perhaps you do deserve it?

Female : [Silence] Do you think you'd tell your kids about me? Let them know what happened? Could you... could they, live with it?

Male : There are plenty of people who do. And it's not our choice. We have to. For the good of humanity.

Female : Fuck humanity. It's our own fault we're here.

Male : You seem angry.

Female : That I was snatched off the street for some unknown government to decide if I'm worth living? Judges that don't even know me. Nah. Why would I be angry?

Male : There have always been ruling factions since the beginning of human civilisation. The only difference with this one is they are impartial. Man, animal, earth. We are all worth the same now.

Female : I think you've had one too many swigs of the Kool-Aid, old man.

Male : You don't think this was going to happen at some point? The end of humanity?

Female : Well, sure. They've been predicting it since we could comprehend death. But a stupid game where you either disappear or step out not knowing what happened? No. Can't say it was high on my list of possibilities.

Male : But you believed there was going to be an end?

Female : Yes... I just hoped it wasn't going to be in my lifetime.

Male : Had to happen in someone's. [Silence] You're not worried they'll choose you because of the way you talk, the way you question everything?

Female : Fuck no. If I get through this, it's by being me. I want them to hear *my* voice.

Male : I think they're hearing it loud and clear.

Female : So, you can.

Male : Can what?

Female : Live with this.

Male : I hope so.

Female : Then should you win?

Male : Is winning what you'd call it?

Female : You wouldn't call walking out of here alive winning?

Male : [Silence] I think you've got a good chance; you know.

Female : [Scoffs] Yeah? How'd you figure that?

Male : You have some good qualities.

Female : Aren't you supposed to be rooting for your own team?

Male : Sure. But I believe in this system. I find hope in it.

Female : How could you find hope in... this?

Male : Yes.

Female : So, you're one of them.

Male : Them?

Female : For the whole 'new world' shit?

Male : Doesn't wanting to live make you for the 'whole new world
shit'?

Female : Nice try. Not much wiggle room when you're locked up with
only one way out.

Male : I guess not.

Female : Besides. They've only done a couple hundred tests. What
makes you think it'll work out so great?

Male : It's a simple plan.

Female : Sounds like you've got it all sorted.

Male : Half the population, half the damage. To the planet, animals,
each other. We've been killing ourselves for too long.

Female : So, you really are a believer?

Male : I wasn't when this all started, but the results are hard to deny.

Female : Why not just let us all burn out together?

Male : I'm responsible for my daughters, and their futures.

Female : And what if they end up in here? Heard a pair of twins were picked in America somewhere. Neither made it through the physical.

Male : I have to hope.

Female : Ah. There's that hope again. How can I compete with hope?

Male : You tell me.

Female : You know it doesn't count if people are only being better for leverage.

Male : Why not? They're being better people, aren't they?

Female : Is it a religious thing? Karma or God or some shit?

Male : It might have started out that way. But I stopped believing a long time ago that God was the higher power we need to fear. Consequence.

Female : So, being good, because you're a truly good person, doesn't matter? But being afraid of the outcome does?

Male : Are we not fundamentally good if we choose to do good?

Female : Even for a shitty reason?

Male : Sure.

Female : [Silence] I deserve my experience.

Male : Your experience?

Female : I haven't had my time yet. How are they going to know what kind of person I am, I haven't lived enough to figure it out for myself?

Male : You think at 45 I've had my time?

Female : Almost double mine. I've never even been to the beach.

Male : You've never been to the beach?

Female : Nope. Couldn't afford it after they announced the tests, never thought of it before. Everyone wanted to get their glimpse before the apocalypse apparently and the airlines jacked their prices. Money will rule whichever world we live in, but as long as we're being 'good', I guess it's all fair. I bet you've seen plenty of beaches.

Male : Travel never bothered me much after the girls. Had it all right there.

Female : And what would you hope for your daughters if they were picked?

Male : I would hope I raised them to be good enough people to stand a chance against anyone they were paired with. Even each other.

Female : You're a strange man.

Male : Do you think I'm a good man?

Female : Even if you are, doesn't mean you deserve to live more than me.

Male : [Chuckles] Fair enough.

Female : I don't see how they could choose one of us over the other.

Male : You have got age and health on your side. And being a teacher would be a favourable position. Even new worlds need teachers.

Female : You think?

Male : Possibly. I'm a retired, 'old man', as you call me. Dime a dozen.

Female : Is this you volunteering to let me pass?

Male : Unfortunately, I can't do that.

Female : Right. Daughters, and all. So, who has higher ground according to your wonderful new system? A teacher with a life ahead of them, or an old man with a family?

Male : I'm not sure.

Female : You seem pretty chill for a bloke who might be hitting the chopping block.

Male : Why does everyone believe you die if you're chosen?

Female : You come in and you never come back out. All those bodies have to go somewhere.

Male : Maybe you end up somewhere better?

Female : Where is better than being in our homes? Free? In your so called 'new world'.

Male : Maybe the 'new world' isn't out there.

Female : Sounds like you want to test that theory, old man. What if you're wrong and you end up as a pile of waste in the bottom of an incinerator?

Male : I've beaten cancer twice. The unknown doesn't scare me anymore.

Female : Oof. The big C. How many bits they have to snip out of you to get rid of that?

Male : 2 surgeries, plus some.

Female : Well, at least if it's you, there won't be much to shove down the chute.

Male : Very funny. You're sharp.

Female : I suppose it doesn't really matter, if we're heading for damnation anyway.

Male : Hm.

Female : What?

Male : Damnation.

Female : What of it?

Male : That's an interesting word to use.

Female : And why is that?

Male : Because that means you believe in something after death.

Female : I'm undecided. I guess it's better than thinking you're just going to be a speck in space, right?

Male : And if it's not death, what do you think they'd do after you leave this room?

Female : What do you mean?

Male : What do you think could happen if *you're* wrong about what this is?

Female : I... I don't know.

Male : Does it scare you?

Female : Of course. If we don't die in here, then what? Huh? [Pause] Why don't you seem scared?

Male : Don't I?

Female : No, actually. You seem pretty interested in testing this place.

Male : I'm just trying to make this all feel a little better. Less terrifying for you. [Pause] Why are you looking at me like that?

Female : I just realised you have glasses.

Male : Yes?

Female : They kind of... blend... into your face. I thought they would've taken them too.

Male : Why? I need them to see.

Female : I don't think I've seen someone leave who wore glasses before. Some people think they don't just weed out the bad eggs, but anyone with a long-term medical condition.

Male : The human mind has a funny way of reasoning. Besides, having a medical condition doesn't make you a bad person.

Female : I know. But they say the physical is just to remove anyone with severe long-term conditions, but it's the 'new world', right? Why not go one step further? Cull the weaker of us?

Male : That's a very morose idea.

Female : Can you see without them?

Male : Only outlines. Maybe some blurs.

Female : What did you say you did for work again?

Male : [Pause] I'm retired.

Female : But you were a fire fighter. Thought the job description requires pretty good vision. Seeing through the smoke and all that?

Male : It was a very long time ago. I had better vision then.

Female : And your skin is so smooth. Barely any wrinkles. And still so much hair.

Male : Thank you.

Female : Wasn't a compliment.

Male : What was it then?

Female : An observation.

Male : I don't think we have much time left to be discussing-

Female : You know, my uncle was a police officer. He never went into a burning building, but at 30, he looked 50. Didn't have a strand on the dome by 35. Stress of the job, he said. I imagine a burning building would be a pretty stressful work environment?

Male : I suppose.

Female : You suppose?

Male : Would you prefer a different answer?

Female : You're lying.

Male : I'm not.

Female : This isn't right.

Male : What isn't right?

Female : *This*. It isn't right.

Male : What do you mean?

Female : You.

Male : What about me?

Female : You're not in this. Are you?

Male : I'm not sure what you're talking about.

Female : You've been figuring me out ever since we got in here.

Male : I don't--

Female : Did they just recruit you? Pretty shitty back story if you ask me. Was it all made up? The wife, the daughters?

Male : If you would just calm--

Female : No, no, no, I will *not* calm down. What's going on in here?

Male : I need you to listen-

Female : Listen?! Why would I listen to you? What is this? [Clattering]
What am I doing here?

Male : Please sit -

Female : Am I even close to getting out of here!? [Silence] Well come on! No more fucking questions? What's the verdict? Huh?
Who the fuck are you? Tell me what's going on!

Male : You know what's going on.

Female : No. Please no. Please.

Male : We're the chosen.

Female : Chosen? Chosen for what? What do you mean chosen...
[Whisper] please, please don't do this.

Male : Congratulations. You're going to be a part of the new world.

Female : Please... No. Please don't do this. I have to leave. Please.

Audio Recording End: 04:41:28