

The Experiment
or
Let them eat cake!

By

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Cast of Characters

Mitchell:

(m/f) An adult who signed up for a psychological test without reading the fine print. Loves chocolate. Can speak a little French.

The Cake:

A piece of chocolate plate, sitting deviously.

Stage is set with only a table and perhaps a chair. On the table sits a single piece of chocolate cake set on a plate. At first only the table is lit. Then lights come up on Mitchell. He walks about the stage, clearly upset, and tempted to eat the cake. The conversation varies between self-monologuing, and speaking to the cake as though the cake were a separate character.

MITCHELL

There it is. Sitting there. Staring at me. Oh, chocolate cake, you are a wily one. You are, you are, you are... Let them eat cake, she said. (*scoffs*) Oh, if I could see that Marie Antoinette now, and her supposed turn of phrase. (*beat*) "*Qu'ils mangent de la brioche!*" (*beat*) I took four years of French in college, OK? I mean, I probably couldn't go live in Paris without a refresher course or three, but I could comfortably order crêpes, or have a conversation with you about the weather. Or apparently spout quotes about cake. (*turns quickly back to the cake*) Don't think I don't know what you're doing!

I'm not nuts, OK? Last week I signed up for this psych experiment. You know, one of those ads that pop up on campus every so often. A couple hundred bucks for a sleep study, or some product trial, and I needed the money, so...I did. And...well, here I am. Yep, just me and the cake.

You know, I wondered why a whole page of the entrance survey was dedicated to food. "*Do you like dessert?*" Check. "*Do you prefer chocolate or vanilla?*" Seriously? How on Earth could this have anything to do with my psychology? Chocolate, by the way. I'm not crazy enough to actually think vanilla is a real flavor. "*Do you prefer cake, pie, or other forms of dessert?*" Ummm, all of the above. "*Brownies or cookies?*" Come on! I thought it was some kind of marketing material. Maybe, just maybe, I'd be asked to try some new food, like... some kind of supercookie! (*sighs, glancing longingly at the cake*)

And I mean, who *doesn't* like desert, right? isn't that the real answer? Cookies and cakes, chocolate and fruits, bursts of happy-making chemicals and, oh god, cheesecake! Our tastebuds do a little happy dance in it all for a reason, don't they? I mean, you say chocolate is like a drug, but it's not *like* a drug. It damn well *is* a drug, and god forgive me, it's a drug I'll eat, drink, inject if I have to til my dying day! My last words? Bring me chocolate! (*to the*

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MITCHELL (cont'd)

cake, threatening) I'll take my death one semi-sweet bite at a time. (*beat*)

But that's the thing. I signed myself up for this experiment. I signed all the forms and got all the tests, and walked into this room. I heard the door slam behind me, and it was dark. I mean, what was I supposed to do standing around in this dark room? It's not like I could really move around. Or take off my clothes and do a Snoopy dance. What if I was swinging my arms around and I crashed into something, or something dangerous was attracted by the movement? I'd be eaten alive!

And...just before I really freaked out (*beat*) the light came on. The one over the cake. And all my fears turned into an overwhelming need for that chocolatey cakiness. After the darkness and seeing myself lying bleeding on the floor after some horrific dancing accident or worse...there it was.

(*beat*) But, that's when I thought about it--I had no idea what I was actually in here for. I filled out all the forms and got poked and jabbed, and I signed the accidental dismemberment agreement. And I was so focused on getting paid, and on my stomach growling after reading about all the damn desserts...I didn't look at the instructions.

I remember reading an article about these kids who were put in a room alone with a marshmallow, and told not to eat it. But they're kids, you see, so a bunch of them ate it anyway. Because, well, that's what kids do. And then the kids who didn't touch it did better in school, and got better jobs, and were more successful in life. And there's this cake in front of me. And I thought, maybe, just maybe if I don't eat the cake, they'll come in and tell me everything was going to be OK. (*to the cake*) That I'd get promoted and be able to pay off my credit cards, and I'd go out tomorrow night and meet my soulmate unexpectedly drinking coffee at the Bean Counter.

Or maybe, it's the other way around. (*beat*) When they were sticking needles in my arm, maybe *that* was the test. Maybe, they injected something bad. Something like poison! And the cake is the only cure! Oh, happy cake, let my stomach be thy sheath; there, be delicious and let me live! (*collapses at the base of the cake*)

Or it wasn't poison, but something hallucinogenic! And right now I'm just tripping, and the cake, the cake

(MORE)

MITCHELL (cont'd)

isn't even real. Oh, god. To see you there, and not be able to take even the tiniest nibble.

(defeated) So, here I am. They took my watch, so I'm not really sure how long I've been in here. (*to the cake*) And you're still staring at me. Waiting to see what I'll do. If I've got the chutzpah to take that bite. Waiting.

Lights down.