

# WATER DOWN

By Debbie Lamedman

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**SYNOPSIS:** Midnight on a cold, March night and five teens find themselves on the same bridge under a full moon. What brings them all together on this night? Is it love, romance, or something more sinister?

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

*(3 females, 2 males)*

MAX (m) ..... Cerebral, slightly off-beat. *(139 lines)*  
 TESS (f) ..... Max's best friend. Witty, sarcastic, seemingly sensible. *(97 lines)*  
 KATIE (f)..... Pensive, a wanderer, slightly mysterious. *(73 lines)*  
 NEAL (m)..... Handsome, seemingly sure of himself, but lost. *(41 lines)*  
 JULIA (f) ..... Neal's girlfriend, deeper than she appears. *(44 lines)*

**NOTE:** *all characters are teenagers*

**DURATION:** 30 minutes

**SCENE:** A bridge overlooking water. It is a full moon.

**TIME:** The present. Very late night/early morning.

## COSTUMES

Everyday attire for all characters, but the cast should all be wearing jackets or hoodies since it is a cold night.

## PROPS

- Flashlight
- Notebook
- Pen

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

In this script, we use the “//” (double slash) marking to indicate overlapping dialogue. When the double slash appears, it alerts the actor whose line is next to start speaking their next line. This causes the first actor's lines and the second actor's lines to overlap at a specific point in the dialogue.

## PRODUCTION HISTORY

*Water Down* was originally commissioned and produced by Wilson High School Theatre and Playwrights West in Portland, OR. The original production was directed by Matthew B. Zrebski with the following cast:

MAX.....Jacob Orr  
 TESS.....Lindsay Spear  
 KATIE..... Andrea Thoennes  
 NEAL .....Nicholas Diaz-Hui  
 JULIA.....Francesca Fontana

## DEDICATION

**To my husband, Minke. You are my favorite human.**

**SETTING:** *A bridge overlooking water. It is late night/early morning. There is a full moon.*

**AT RISE:** *MAX is sitting, leaning against a concrete post. He has a flashlight and is writing in a notebook. TESS is bent over the railing with hands sprawled out as if flying.*

**TESS:** Can we go now?

**MAX:** No. We just got here.

**TESS:** *(Singing. She leans completely over the rail.)* It's a long... way... down...

**MAX:** *(Writing.)* Shhh...

**TESS:** *(Singing.)* ...a long ...way ...down...

*MAX looks up and sees TESS dangling her body over the rail.*

**MAX:** TESS!

*TESS steps back slowly and faces MAX.*

**TESS:** What?

**MAX:** Don't do that.

**TESS:** I'm bored. This isn't fun. I have to pee.

**MAX:** So? Pee.

*MAX focuses back on his notebook.*

**TESS:** Where? They don't exactly have Honey Buckets up here.

**MAX:** Just cop a squat. I don't know. Figure it out.

*TESS moves away from the rail. She paces, looking for a place to pee.*

**TESS:** It's not like I can just point and shoot. Like a guy. *(Beat.)* Like you.

**MAX:** *(Writing.)* Uh-huh.

**TESS:** You suck.

**MAX:** Uh-huh. (*Reading from his notebook.*) "It is unlawful for any minor to be in or upon any public property or public right of way between the hours specified in this Section, unless such minor is accompanied by a parent, guardian or other person 21 years of age or over, blah, blah, blah... For minors under the age of 14 years, blah, blah, blah... For minors 14 years of age or older who have begun high school, curfew is between 10:15 p.m. and 6 a.m. of the following morning."

**TESS:** What's that?

**MAX:** City Ordinance for curfew.

**TESS:** Uh-oh. We gonna get arrested?

**MAX:** (*Holds flashlight under his chin.*) We could. Apparently we're being bad boys and girls out here in the wee hours. Keep a lookout for cops.

**TESS:** I have to do everything.

**MAX:** Just watch out. I haven't been caught yet.

**TESS:** Yet? How often do you do this?

**MAX:** Once a month.

**TESS:** Seriously? Why?

**MAX:** Watch for Katie too.

**TESS:** Katie?

**MAX:** Abrams. She'll be coming any minute.

**TESS:** You asked her to come too?

**MAX:** No. I'm stalking her.

**TESS:** Max!

**MAX:** What? I am. No big deal.

**TESS:** It's kind of a big deal.

**MAX:** She fascinates me.

*Beat.*

**TESS:** She puts conditioner on her pubes.

**MAX:** See? That's fascinating.

**TESS:** I saw her do it. In the shower after gym. I tried it. It's pretty cool.

**MAX:** You can tell her when you see her.

*Beat.*

**TESS:** You've been coming here every night then? Stalking her?

**MAX:** Not every night. I told you, once a month. Every full moon.

**TESS:** Well that's creepy.

**MAX:** No. It's a ritual. Our ritual.

**TESS:** "Our" meaning you and me, or you and her?

**MAX:** Me and her.

**TESS:** And I'm here because...

**MAX:** Moral support.

**TESS:** For stalking Katie? You gotta be kidding me.

**MAX:** No. Not that. Katie coming tonight is sort of... I don't know... incidental.

**TESS:** You're stalking her! That's not incidental. You're making a choice to do it.

**MAX:** Yeah, but I would have come out here anyway. Whether or not she was gonna be here.

**TESS:** Why?

**MAX:** Because a full moon is only really 100% full for about a minute. It only looks full to the naked eye for three days or whatever, but it's really only full for a minute. A minute!

**TESS:** So?

**MAX:** So if I'm gonna be in this life, that's the kind of life I want to be in. To experience true full moons, if only for a minute. (*Beat.*) Katie too. I mean, I think she feels that way. The first time I came, she was here. We're on the same wavelength.

**TESS:** OK. But why bring me? Moral support for what? It's a gorgeous moon and all, but I could have stayed home and looked at it from the roof of my house. Like a normal person.

**MAX:** You're not normal, Tess. How many times I gotta tell you?

**TESS:** I couldn't possibly be. I hang out with you. I say yes to things like this. Nighttime adventures in the cold, on a bridge, waiting for—

**MAX:** You talk too much. Go pee will you?

**TESS:** If you didn't want me to talk, you shouldn't have asked me to sneak out.

**MAX:** Will your parents even care?

**TESS:** They'll never know, darling, I'm that good.

**MAX:** Yeah. Me too.

*Beat.*

**TESS:** So. You come here every full moon?

**MAX:** Uh-huh.

**TESS:** How many times?

**MAX:** Six.

**TESS:** You've been coming here for six months? Geez... why didn't you ever bring me before?

**MAX:** I was afraid of what you might do.

*Beat.*

**TESS:** What's that supposed to mean? (*MAX says nothing. Only looks at her.*) OK. OK. And you're not afraid tonight?

**MAX:** You're strong again. I know you are. I'm sure of it.

**TESS:** Don't be too sure of anything, Maxwell. You'll be disappointed every time.

**MAX:** I wanted you here. That's all I know, Tess-ticle.

**TESS:** I told you never to call me that again.

**MAX:** Sure. Tess-ticle.

**TESS:** Say it one more time and I'll jump.

**MAX:** That's not even the slightest bit funny.

*KATIE enters slowly. She is startled to see TESS.*

**KATIE:** Shit! What are you doing here?

**TESS:** Moral support, apparently. You?

**KATIE:** Just... I'm taking a walk.

**TESS:** Really? Just takin' a walk. You do this every full moon, I suppose? You a werewolf or somethin'?

**KATIE:** How did you know?

**TESS:** You *are* a werewolf?

*MAX stands up and approaches KATIE.*

**MAX:** I told her.

**KATIE:** Max. What the hell...?

**MAX:** Tess is cool.

**KATIE:** I don't care if she is or not. You said you weren't gonna come here anymore.

**TESS:** It's a free country, geez...

**MAX:** Shut up, Tess! Go pee.

**TESS:** Wow. So harsh.

**MAX:** Sorry. I just... I need to talk to Katie for a sec.

**TESS:** Then why did you ask me to come if you two wanted to be alone?

**KATIE:** You asked her to come?

**TESS:** I'm going home.

**KATIE:** No! I don't want to be alone with him.

**TESS:** You shoulda thought of that before you walked all the way over here.

**MAX:** Tess, don't leave. Just go pee and come back.

**TESS:** Fine. Don't get arrested or anything while I'm gone. *(To KATIE.)* Don't worry... he's harmless. I think. And for the record, he's told me nothing.

**KATIE:** Nothing?

**TESS:** I'm clueless. Seriously. Be right back.

*TESS exits*

**KATIE:** Don't get arrested? Did you call the cops?

**MAX:** No. She's just pissed because I never told her I come here. I never told her about you until tonight. Just a couple of minutes before you showed up.

**KATIE:** Why is she here?

**MAX:** We've known each other since diapers.

**KATIE:** So?

**MAX:** She gets me.

**KATIE:** That has nothing to do with anything.

**MAX:** She's like my sister. She'll hold me accountable for my actions.

**KATIE:** What actions? What are you planning to do?

*MAX doesn't respond.*

**KATIE:** You said you'd stop coming here. Now you're back. Again. And with a friend this time...



**MAX:** I don't want you to do this.

**KATIE:** I don't know what you're talking about.

**MAX:** I see how you are at school. I know what's going on.

**KATIE:** Don't flatter yourself. You're smart, but you're not that smart.

You have no idea what's going on with me.

**MAX:** You told me once. Tell me again.

**KATIE:** That was different. That was unexpected. And it was a long time ago.

**MAX:** You saved me Katie. That night. Six moons ago. You saved me. Let me save you.

**KATIE:** God! You're so dramatic.

**MAX:** Not dramatic enough, I'm afraid.

**KATIE:** You're so incredibly...

**MAX:** Deep?

**KATIE:** Odd.

**MAX:** Oh.

**KATIE:** Max... this is like... what? The fourth time you've followed me here? And nothing ever happens, right? I'm just taking a walk. Why can't you leave me alone?

**MAX:** Six, actually. Well in reality five, because the first time I was here first. And I never follow you. I always know you'll be here. And you knew I knew.

**KATIE:** So?

**MAX:** So that's why you came. Because you knew I would be here.

It's why you come every time.

**KATIE:** That is not why I come.

**MAX:** You don't have to lie to me.

**KATIE:** Max! You need to stop. It's getting... it's too much—

**MAX:** What if I told you I can't stop?

*Pause.*

**MAX:** What if I told you I'm compelled...?

*KATIE turns away. Beat.*

**MAX:** It was the poem you read in class. You know the one I'm talking about?

**KATIE:** Yeah. So what? That was ages ago.

**MAX:** It was intense.

**KATIE:** Yup.

**MAX:** And beautiful.

**KATIE:** Thanks.

**MAX:** And ever since I heard it... I just... I can't stop thinking about it.  
Don't you get it?

**KATIE:** No. I don't get it.

**MAX:** Like a song that gets stuck in your head and you want to play it  
over and over. You're in my head. Like all the time.

**KATIE:** Not my problem.

**MAX:** It sort of is. It is now.

**KATIE:** No. It's not. You made it your problem. I told you, I don't  
want the responsibility.

**MAX:** It doesn't matter if you want it or not. Things happened...  
between us... can't be changed. We have similar issues. It bonds  
us.

**KATIE:** I don't want to be bonded to you.

**MAX:** Doesn't matter. You are. Inextricably. *(Beat.)* God, I love that  
word.

**KATIE:** So... What? You wanna be the Ted Hughes to my Sylvia  
Plath?

**MAX:** Who?

**KATIE:** Oh my God, you're so ignorant. *(Sighs.)* I am the poet, like  
Sylvia. Hughes was her husband. Attempting to protect her. Like  
you. Now. Get it?

*Pause.*

**MAX:** Oh... No! I don't want that. *(Mutters under his breath.)* Wouldn't  
mind being your boyfriend, but—

**KATIE:** Just stop it! Stop paying so much attention to me. I didn't ask  
for it.

**MAX:** *(With his flashlight, he reads from his notebook.)* “October, November, December, January, February. Now March. It’s March. She shows up each month when the moon is full. I know what she plans to do. But she won’t go through with it. Not as long as I’m here. She was there for me. So I must always be here. I vow to be here. I give my word.”

**KATIE:** That’s really bad writing.

**MAX:** I’m not trying to be poetic. Those are my thoughts. I want to be there for you.

**KATIE:** I don’t want you to be there for me.

**MAX:** Nothing’s changed. You still feel the same.

**KATIE:** Same as what?

**MAX:** As the girl in your poem.

**KATIE:** You really need to stop obsessing over that poem. It was a poem! A homework assignment. What if I told you I wrote it 10 minutes before class?

**MAX:** I’d say you were lying. Stop lying to me. You don’t need to.

**KATIE:** You’re so sure of yourself, aren’t you?

**MAX:** What’s wrong with that?

**KATIE:** Nothing. But don’t act like you’re so superior to me.

**MAX:** I don’t think I’m superior. I think we’re the same. And I know what you’re thinking.

**KATIE:** Once upon a time you knew. For like, a minute. But you don’t know anymore. People change.

**MAX:** You still come here every month. Like clockwork. You haven’t changed at all. You still want what I want.

*TESS enters wiping her hands on her pants. She is followed by NEAL and JULIA who are holding hands.*

**TESS:** I swear to God, if I squatted on poison ivy, I’m going to kill you.  
*(Beat.)* You two have a lover’s quarrel or something?

**MAX:** *(To TESS.)* What’s going on? *(Gestures to NEAL and JULIA.)*

**TESS:** Oh. Look who I found lurking below. They saw me pee. So I guess we’re now bonded for life.

**MAX:** What are you doing here?

**NEAL:** Could ask you the same thing.

**MAX:** We’re fishing off the bridge. What does it look like we’re doing?

**NEAL:** Doesn't look like you're fishin'.

**MAX:** A genius in our midst.

**JULIA:** (*To TESS.*) You said there was some kind of full moon ritual dance going on up here.

**TESS:** Well, there is. See? (*Gestures to MAX and KATIE.*) Why aren't you guys dancing?!

**KATIE:** This is ridiculous. I'm leaving.

**TESS:** Getting crowded up here, isn't it?

**MAX:** (*To KATIE.*) Are you going home?

**KATIE:** What do you care?

**TESS:** Of course he cares. He's your stalker.

**JULIA:** Oh my God! You're stalking her?

**TESS:** Stalkers have an unusual capacity for caring.

**JULIA:** Neal, come on. Let's go. I don't wanna... this is too—

**NEAL:** No. I'm not leaving. I've been planning to take you up here for a while.

**MAX:** Why tonight?

**NEAL:** It's not really your//business

**JULIA:** It's our anniversary. Three months tonight.

**MAX:** Oh... and bonus... it's a full moon to boot! (*Beat.*) Did you bring a picnic?

*NEAL glares at MAX.*

**MAX:** What'cha planning on doing up here?

**TESS:** Make out probably. That's what they were doing down below. So romantic...

**MAX:** So, you came here to be alone with your girlfriend, right?

**NEAL:** Something like that.

**KATIE:** That's sweet.

**MAX:** Isn't it? Romeo and Juliet taking a moonlight stroll on a bridge over troubled water.

**TESS:** (*To MAX.*) What is with you tonight?

**MAX:** (*To JULIA.*) Is that what he told you? That he wanted to be alone with you?

**JULIA:** He said he wanted to show me something.

**MAX:** The bridge? The moon? What did he want to show you?

**TESS:** His dick, probably.

**JULIA:** Shut up! You don't know what you're talking about.

**TESS:** Your boyfriend asks you to go for a walk in the middle of the night. On your three-month anniversary. What did you think he wanted?

**NEAL:** You don't know anything about us. Not all guys want sex.

**KATIE:** Oh really? That's a new one.

**NEAL:** (To MAX.) Do you think about it all the time?

**MAX:** Yeah, man. I pretty much do.

**TESS:** This conversation is delightful.

**JULIA:** (To NEAL.) Is that why we're really here?

**NEAL:** No! No. Don't listen to them.

**JULIA:** (To MAX.) And that's why you're stalking her? So you can jump her bones?

**MAX:** Not even close. Though I haven't ruled it out.

**KATIE:** You haven't ruled it out? You're a stalker *and* a rapist?

**TESS:** Max? When did you turn into such a creeper?

**KATIE:** I need to leave.

**MAX:** No! Don't go. Nobody go.

**NEAL:** Maybe the question is what are you doing up here?

**MAX:** I know why I'm here. I would just like everyone else to admit the real reason they're here tonight.

**TESS:** I came with you. You should tell me.

**KATIE:** Why does it matter so much? Just let everyone // do their own thing.

**MAX:** Bunch of hypocrites.

**NEAL:** You don't know anything about me!

**JULIA:** I want to go home. It's freezing.

**MAX:** It'll be much warmer once you hit the water.

*Silence.*

**TESS:** Whoa... Max... you're sounding a little psycho there, buddy.

*Beat.*

**MAX:** Your name is Neal?

**NEAL:** Yeah. So?

**MAX:** And you came here tonight to...

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