

In the lab behind the scenes, by Dani Orejon

**Summary:** *An absurdist conversation between two manmade surfaces takes place in an Edinburgh University Lab after dark.*

**Characters:**

**Narrator (-):** -

**CHASS the Surface (-):** *Posh*

**VOCSY the surface (-):** *Scottish*

**WATER DROPLETS (-):** *Childish*

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**NARRATOR:** On a gloomy winter evening at the Micro- and Nano-scale Heat and Mass Transport Lab at the University of Edinburgh... after the last Scientist has hung up his lab coat... and the last fluorescent light has flickered off...

*(Sound of a door closing?)*

**NARRATOR (cont'd):** here... in that empty silence...

**CHASS THE SURFACE:** Here I aaaaaaaammmmm!

A superhydrophobic, self-cleaning, anti-fogging, anti-virus, anti-everything  
suuuuurfaaaaaceeeeeeeee. Ah ah ahahhh!

Choose your material, your geometry and your size milli-, micro-, nano

Aaaaaaaand apply a manmade hydrophobic coating: fluoro-/perfluoro, silanes, polymers, oxysilanes, octo-, tetra-, methyl-, Fluoro, Parylene, TEFLON...

**VOCSY THE SURFACE:** Wow wow wow... silanes? Fluros-, tetra-, octo-?...You lost me here...really....!!! What are those...?

**CHASS:** Oh, you don't know...? these are typical manmade coats that we surfaces wear when we want to stay away from those guys over there...

**VOCSY:** The water drops?

**DROPLETS:** Hi! Hi, hi, hi!, H<sub>2</sub>O, water, water

**CHASS:** Yes the water drops you newbie!!!

If you aren't wearing a coat like mine, you are likely to get very very wet

**VOCSY:** I see...

**CHASS:** .....and even if I have to interact with them and I let them grow on me, with my coating I can minimise my interactions and let them roll and roll off.... even jump off my back when they hug each other, which is excellent for my performance.

**VOCSY:** Ohhh... I get you now, so you need one of those coatings to perform well, otherwise those guys would get attached to you?

**CHASS:** That is right my dear!

**VOCSY:** Interesting.

**CHASS:** There is so much you need to learn... but do not worry, we experienced surfaces are here to teach you.

**VOCSY:** Sure... thanks...Who are you anyway?

**CHASS:** I am CHASS - Coated Hydrophobic Advanced Superhydrophobic Surface, the scientists' favourite!

**VOCSY:** Nice meeting you CHASS...

My name is VOCSy by the way. You know... although I lack one of those fluoro-, poly- coatings..., the water droplets love bouncing and jumping and rolling off my back too

**CHASS:** what...? ...that is not possible...

...without a coat like mine it is impossibly impossible ...

You are clearly mistaken... you will never be able to compete with us...

**VOCSY:** Hey hear me out!! I remember vividly, right? I got super wet, soaked, and a water droplet did spread all over my little structures...

**CHASS:** Totally obvious...

**VOCSY:** ...it got stuck for a long long time...

**CHASS:** ...told ya...

that is what happens without a coating like mine, no way José would you stay bone dry... no coat no fame hahaha!

**VOCSY:** Hey, hey, hey, let me continue....

**CHASS (yawning):** Not finished yet...?

**VOCSY:** No, not yet!

So the first day I did get very wet, but as I stayed longer outdoors, my interactions with the water droplets started to change....

**CHASS:** What...?

**VOCSY:** Day after day droplets were less attracted to me and they were wetting me less and less...

**CHASS:** How can that be...? I have never heard anything like it...

**VOCSY:** I am telling you... this is what happened...

**CHASS:** I am the only superhydrophobic surface here, by standards, by status, by design... with a long history of success, there is nothing that you can change...  
End of discussion!

**VOCSY:** End of discussion...?

**CHASS:** Yeah...

**VOCSY:** You know what...? why don't we have some fun before our scientist comes back tomorrow?

**CHASS:** Have some fun...? With you? Why would I do that...? (*Thinks a moment*)  
what are you proposing...?

**VOCSY:** Since you do not believe me.... Why don't we try it now?  
let us call those water droplets over there....

**CHASS:** sure... I have nothing better to do...plus it will probably be the last time I even see or hear from you...

**VOCSY (to the water droplets):** Hey guys do you want to jump and splash all over us...YEAH?

**DROPLETS:** Me me me... jump, splash, jump, splash.... .... H<sub>2</sub>O, water, H<sub>2</sub>O...

***At this point water droplets start jumping and rolling all over CHASS and VOCSy***

***Sound of an amusement park and joy of the water droplets can be felt***

**CHASS:** Alright.... Enough enough... roll off guys...  
I can't believe this, you're... dry! ... you must be wearing one of these coats like mine...

**VOCSY:** No manmade coatings! Just my unique features and exposure to the surrounding ambient...YOU KNOW...

**CHASS:** What are you talking about?

**VOCSY:** Let me illuminate you... . VOCSy stands for 'volatile organic compounds surfaces.' You know what volatile organic compounds are?

**CHASS:** I've heard of them...

**VOCSY:** They're produced by urban emissions, combustion, plant life... even when cows fart!

**CHASS:** Yes yes yes,...but they do not bother me because my coat protects me from those... HA!

**VOCSY:** Sure, but because of your coat, you will never be able to actually experience how these compounds are absorbed and attach to your skin eventually changing its properties.

**CHASS:** This is ridiculous.....

**VOCSY:** These compounds actually have hydrophobic properties like the coat you wear. I'm literally coated in volatile organic compounds !!! /

**CHASS:** /But.../

**VOCSY:** /So the more I am exposed to the ambient the more superhydrophobic I am. Even if I get injured or my coat falls off, I just need to expose myself again and tadahhh... brand new!!!! Unlike you

**CHASS:** Please do not expose yourself!

**VOCSY:** You may find me odd, you may find me weird, you may not like me, but at the end of the day, I perform as well as you do!

**CHASS:** Well... what can I say... you may have demonstrated this to me and maybe even our scientists will believe you tomorrow... but just try changing the mind of the scientific community.

**VOCSY:** I will! I have to! (*confidence faltering*) I... I'm a major finding!

**CHASS:** We will see, we will see...

**END**