Simply Will

I wish to tell you of a friend that I once had and the deepest lesson he taught me. Never did it seem so prevalent then now, when all seems lost. You see Will never seemed oft far from the world. While many of us sought the future and what our careers held, you'd find will with a book of some astronomic proportions of narrative drivel, basking in the shade of some tree. Always he seemed so happy to be simply him, and so I give him the name, Simply Will.

Will and I grow up in a larger-than-life world, where there was always some adventure around the corner, something so obvious and everyone would be doing it. Yet Will, well you see he didn't like the almost expectant adventure that oft left us less ourselves at the end. And while id find my self stumbling back from a world of delight, Will would smile and clap me on the back and say 'Ahh, if it isn't the Star in the night, be careful even stars collapse under their own gravity.'

I would shrug off his hand with a bit of disdain and joke with some tired and, in the later years, drunken sarcasm, and he would eventually walk away shaking his head. Every time, I swear, every time he would have such a smile that would evaporate any sense of frustration, and he would turn and walk backwards with a wave.

"Hey, Shiloh! Don't forget to set your alarm!" he'd call out with the most serious of scrunched up brows.

'w-what alarm!?' I'd call back, even knowing what his next words were next.

'The alarm to remind you to smell the roses and live' and with that he would spin on his feet, pull a tattered paperback from his jacket pocket, and make his way into the world beyond. And to this day I didn't understand what he meant. That was until Will walked away for the last time, to seek adventure beyond this world. Its shocking to learn that you took something so living for granted.

Will, was my best friend and I never really told him that. It always seemed misspoken and out of place, to tell him that I love him and that even in those times of frustration he always made sense,

at least to my soul. You know, now that I think about it, he did leave with parting words. Words that seem so Simply Will like.

‘You know Shiloh, people always seem to be looking to the sky, to the stars above and often compare hearts to burning stars. You ever think to look down?’ he said with the most quizzical look about him as if waiting for the world of answers to ambush him from the shadows.

‘L-look down?’ honest I wasn’t sure anymore if there was a right response to Will’s beyond-this-world questions.

‘In the earth, why not a heart of molten iron. Maybe the things our heart seeks isn’t up towards the stars like we think. Just maybe, what our hearts desire has always been here.’ He told me those words the day he learned he had months left to live, god damn it, even then he was not thinking about anything more then enjoying the world he saw in front of him.

I guess, what I’m trying to say is this; don’t trip on the step your taking cause your too busy worrying about the next, try to smile, simply like Will did, Simply Will .

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As I looked on into the crowd all sat in black, the little black folded chairs, and their looks filled with tears, hell mine left my cheeks drenched in the thought that I would know Will only in my heart. I stared beyond the first few rows to each the jeweled eyes of my wife sat with the most encouraging of smiles. Our kids looking more bored and without adventure then I had ever seen them.

“You know, idk if Will would want any of us frowning right now, let alone dressed in black. But he would understand that I think.” I looked beyond the seating to just where the gravel road met the grass and I blinked. As if almost warped in my mind a man stood with umbrella in hand his face half hidden, and a familiar smile. But just as I blinked to look closer, he was gone.

“I-I am so grateful and am better for having known Will, and I know I didn’t get to say it to him before now, but I love you Will and I think I understand what you meant all those years ago.” I turned to face the casket, my hands trembling, and my lip caught between my teeth. With strengthened steps, I stood before the last still image of my best friend.

His hands atop his chest adorned with a suit and tie, but like always his team jersey kept him warm among the white lining of the casket. His hairless face and liver spotted dilapidated skin seemingly beamed back, as like always, even in death his lips were set in a smile that spoke of truths that none of us would ever truly understand.

I was surprised to find myself smiling as with timid movements I adjusted his tie before reaching into my inner jacket pocket and pulling from It the old worn paperback novel. The selfsame novel that Will had read time after time again before gifting it to me. The front adorned with the beagle, the same book that garnered Will to nickname me, “ Shiloh ”. I carefully worked the book into Wills jacket pocket.

Time seemed to slow as my heart hammered and the words echoed in my mind, “ Just maybe, what our hearts desire has always been here.”

I felt a sob wrack my body as a hand gently touched my shoulder as I felt Milly wrap her arm around me. I hadn’t realized but people had moved to stand around to take their own final look before the casket closed. With a shuddered breath, I called out to my son, “ Will, bring me your Mama’s purse !” and in seconds the little blonde boy was at my side, handing the bag towards Milly, and standing to peek at our smiling friend.

“ You pushed me my friend to be what I wanted to be, to write… and I do so remember how much you loved to read. I think its about time you read something new. I love you, and one day we will meet again .” I grabbed Milly’s hand, and tugged on Will’s shoulder, “ Come on, lets go for a walk, get some Ice Cream ”, everyone smiled around us as Will smiled brightly and exclaimed, “ Can we get orange sherbet, dada?! ” and I could only nod as we made our way out, peeking only once to see facing up between my old friends folded hands another paperback with the title, “ Simply Will ”.

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