

TEMPEST

Molly Blackburn

Tempest

Squinting, even though I should be used to the lights, I continued to do my set knowing all the girls in the room would be swooning. I strummed my guitar in a way more meaningful than a man running fingers along strings, but more like the gentle caress of a lover's face. It was my way of expressing myself without people implying I was gay. Oh sorry, same-sex attracted. Not that there's anything wrong with it. It's just not me. Not my choice of lifestyle. Even though it's not a choice. They say they've always felt that way inclined ... Anyway, my lyrics tend to be the most effective form of communication. And that's all that matters: the communication. As I sang about my other half and how I loved her I couldn't help but yearn for someone like her. For someone like any of the women I sang about. For someone. I mean, don't get me wrong I love my life. I have complete control, I can choose when and where I work, what I do at work, I can change things when I feel the need to. The beautiful life of a musician. But, yes the ever dreaded but, I have no one. I have no had a girlfriend since high school.

I remember my last girlfriend left me in year 10, after two years, for a girl... I'm now a 23-year-old man. Seven years I've been alone for. The women I write about are always based on the strumpets who I have to tolerate after shows. I never want them there but the other men do, so that means I have to put up with them. We're different. They don't mind one-night stands; they'd rather a relationship based on lust than a girlfriend to stay with on a long-term basis. I personally look for someone I can see myself with and I'd rather find them, than them find me, backstage. To be honest, I'd rather them not know who I was or what I did until I tell them. And I'd tell them about the band only when I knew they already liked me for who I am, not what I am.

As soon as the song ended, the room rang with applause. I walked off the stage and started packing up my guitar, ready to retire for the night. Possibly go home and read.

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Or start some new material. As I was contemplating how to sneak out the back door, a girl landed on my lap. It was obvious that she had been at the bar for most of the night taking advantage of the Friday night atmosphere – free entertainment, a lot of men to buy her drinks, knowing she didn't have to work the next day. She wasn't saying anything, she was just breathing on me. Her breath was going straight into my face. Cheap wine. That's the smell that was coming from her every orifice. It was like she had absorbed through her skin rather than drank it. Like a frog. She started stroking my chest. I gently pushed her from my lap to the chair beside mine, grabbed my guitar, and ran out the door and into the night. The night. What a beautiful thing.

I looked up but saw nothing but the light pollution in the sky. That's the thing I missed the most from my childhood, stars. I grew up in a country town and out of town at that. The closest streetlight was a matter of kilometres away. And the stars, indescribable. You could see constellations so clearly and it was like every star was magnified. The moon, regardless of how full it was, was enough to light your way at night. Except of course the new moon, which was the closest thing to pitch darkness as possible. I spent most of my teenage years sitting out at night just looking up and thinking about everything. School, problems, existence. Occasionally I'd take my guitar, find a secluded field and play for hours. Not any songs in particular but I'd play and see where it got me. It was always interesting to see where the initial idea could lead. A subconscious progression. But I moved to the city at 19. I disliked the lack of opportunity that came with country living. Unfortunately my parents never understood my interest in music. The only music they listened to was country and western. It was a dreadful thing to be subjected to. If it was amongst other genres, fine. But 19 years of only hearing country music blasting through the house... I think it's safe to say that I dislike it strongly.

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As I continued the slow walk home, looking up hoping that I may see something, anything, I couldn't help but feel like I was 15 again: completely alone in every way. Sure I had a flatmate but I didn't have the night sky of my youth. I quickly snapped out of my reminiscent state when I realised I had to make a detour. The detour made the journey home longer by about five minutes. Doesn't sound like much but when you're really tired from a big gig, five minutes feels like an eternity. This detour is essential, if you don't take it, you're held up longer by the homeless man who will try to con you out of any possession or item of clothing. It's not much fun any time of day. I was dazed until I reached the door of my apartment. I unlocked it, walked inside and set down my guitar. I knew my flatmate would be home soon with a strange girl at his heel awaiting her chance to leap into bed with him, so I went to bed. That sounds like it's a chore but that couldn't be further from the truth. Sleep was the one thing I needed yet I always seemed deprived of. But not tonight. I will sleep. Or so I thought...

As I lay there feeling like my eyes were full of sand, I couldn't sleep. It hurt to close my eyes, it hurt to open them, and so they were there in a sort of limp state just hanging there, not doing what they should. So rather than the possibility of doing some sort of visual damage, I turned on the light, hoping the brightness might be too much and I'll have to close my eyes. But alas, it woke me up. I felt tired and like I could sleep for a week but I've obviously overdone it. I was overtired. So I grabbed a book. But that didn't work. Trying to focus on words just gave me a headache. So the light went back off, and I was wide-awake again. Frustrated, I got back up and decided to search the kitchen for anything that may put me to sleep. As I opened the door, I noticed my flatmate had brought home a strange girl and wasted no time in ... getting to know her a bit more. So I closed the door again and stood in the room

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thinking of how I could sleep. I hadn't had a bath in years and thought that maybe the heat would send me to sleep. So I dashed to the bathroom and began running a bath. Within 10 minutes, I was submerged in a bath of therapeutic heat. I could feel it getting to me, I could feel the need to sleep grow and inertia working its magic on me. Yes, inertia. The law of science: things like to keep doing what they're already doing. I was going to sleep and wanted to keep going to sleep. But inertia can be stopped if there's a greater resisting force. So I wanted to keep going to sleep until I was stopped by my destination. Keep going to sleep until I reached the destination. I felt my head start to droop, my body relaxing more and sleep taking over my body. I was ripped from consciousness and dragged into an unknown world of swirling darkness, a feeling of impending doom and yet an overwhelming sense of peacefulness and relaxation. Maybe a side effect of impending doom...?

It felt like I'd been asleep for five minutes but as I was thrust back to consciousness, it was evident that I had been asleep for hours. I came to this conclusion by two factors. One: the bath was ice cold. Two: there was natural light coming through the window. I dragged myself out of the bath and ran back to my bedroom where a thick blanket was screaming my name, demanding me to curl up in bed. I felt colder than I had in a long time, so I dressed in many layers and snuggled into bed. It felt more comfortable than it had the previous night. Maybe that was due to the fact that I slept sitting up in a bathtub ... So I stayed in bed even though I couldn't get back to sleep. So I dozed for a few hours and got up feeling more tired. I decided to make coffee. As I opened the door, I noticed my flatmate and the girl he came home with were still lying on the lounge and seemed like they were in a deep sleep. Did I mention it was half 12 in the afternoon? So I dressed, grabbed my wallet and headed out. As I stepped out onto the street, the wind cut through me. I pulled my jacket around me

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some more and walked quickly into the café that I go to quite often. It was pretty well hidden: down an alley, no sign and the façade looked the same as the building walls, so it blended in. How I found it, I'm not sure. The coffee was great, the people were friendly and better yet, it was usually just myself and three or four others in there at one time. At the most. I walked in and the heating was on. Instant relief. The lighting was dim as usual and a feeling of serenity overcame me.

The usual waitress took my usual order and I sat in my usual seat. The coffee house was like a second home and the best thing was none of the band knew it existed. As I sat there waiting for my usual coffee, my mind was miles away. Thinking of when I would find someone and what she'd be like. I was brought out of my daze when the usual waitress placed down the usual coffee and I received that usual pleasant smile. I returned the smile and went back to thinking. I began to play with the cup, turning it slowly. Then I saw it. The small black "W" on the white mug. The "W" that stood for me - Will. I put it there the first time I realised I had 'usuals'. And this was my usual mug. I couldn't help but smile. I reached to the sugar jar and got one out. I tore it open and slowly poured its insides into my mug. I sipped the coffee and went back into a daze. I was tired. I could've gone to sleep in the seat. But the caffeine was doing its job. I heard the tingling of the bell above the door. I had noticed on arriving that all of the regulars were in already, so I looked up. There stood a woman looking around. She was obviously lost. She turned on her heel and left as quickly as she'd come. I went back to my daze but was yet again pulled out of it. I looked up and the usual waitress had sat down across the table from me. She moved her waist-length brown hair out of her face and I noticed for the first time that she was quite attractive. How had I not seen this before? Maybe I'd been so consumed in my little world that I'd never taken any notice. Her work clothes have always intrigued me: black from head

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to toe with a long flowing skirt. It was not in a gothic sort of way, but very classy and simple. She smiled at me.

“Slow day?” I asked returning the smile

She nodded slowly.

“Although the amount of people at the moment you’d think it was rush hour.”

I laughed considering that it was myself and four others.

“Will.” I said extending my hand.

“Mina.” She replied shaking the hand.

“But I must confess, Will isn’t my real name.”

“Neither is Mina, in a way.”

“Ah, well there goes that compliment.”

“It’s actually Wilhelmina... And by the look on your face, I’m guessing you can tell why I don’t use it.”

“Oh, it’s not that bad.”

“What do you mean? Its so old fashioned.”

“So is mine. But mine’s worse.”

“I don’t believe you.”

“Oh yeah? ... Winston.”

She laughed.

“Our parents were horrible.”

I laughed but nodded agreeing.

“So what do you do, Winston?”

I cringed and she laughed.

“Only my mother calls me that... And I uh...” I was contemplating telling her, but she cut in.

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“Between gigs?”

“Exactly.”

She just didn't know how exact. Then my phone let off an awful sound, the sound of someone trying to contact me. I apologised to the waitress and answered the phone.

“Hello?”

“Will, where are you? You need to come back. I'm having technical difficulties.”

I sighed.

“Ok, I'll be home in a minute.”

I hung up and placed the phone back in my pocket.

“Your girlfriend needs you?” Wilhelmina asked moving her hair out of her face.

I laughed and shook my head.

“No, no, the guy I live with is hopeless. He mentioned something about a technical difficulty. He's probably forgotten how to use the microwave or something.”

She laughed.

“Well you might have to go rescue him.”

“Yes, I think you're right,” I sighed standing up.

“Well good day Winston.”

“Have fun working, Wilhelmina.”

She glared at me, so I laughed as I walked out. As I stepped back out onto the street, the wind was icy. So I quickened my pace home. When I got back, I saw things were everywhere. Brian, my flatmate and lead guitarist of the band, came running into the room and started throwing things around as if looking for something.

“What are you doing?”

He stood up quickly and just looked at me before going back to it.

“What technical difficulty are we having today?”

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“I lost the remote.”

I could not believe him. He got me to come home just to find the remote. I was angry to say the least.

“It’s sitting on the television where you put it yesterday.”

He walked over, and sure enough, there it was.

“You’re a genius mate.”

“No, you’re just an idiot.”

But he wasn’t listening; he had already planted himself on the lounge ready for whatever garbage came on the television. So I left again, to go back for a chat with Wilhelmina. I trotted off to the café. As I walked in, I looked around but couldn’t see her. So I went to the counter but a surly looking man walked up.

“Looking for someone?” A voice beside me asked.

I looked over and there she was with a jacket in hand.

“My shift just finished...”

I nodded not sure what to say.

“Do you want to, um ... go for a walk?” she asked quietly

“Sure,” I smiled.

We walked out and into the street. Just chatting away. But then minutes later, it happened again: the vile phone rang.

“I’m so sorry... Hello?”

“Will, where are you? We have a meeting.”

“I completely forgot.”

“Yeah, we guessed as much. I’ll come get you.”

I told him where I was and hung up.

“I’m so sorry. We have a meeting. Uh, work stuff.”

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“Oh, its ok. My fiancé is waiting for me anyway. Good luck with the meeting.”

She smiled and left. It was like a slap in the face. Fiancé? I stood rooted to the spot not knowing what to do or think. Within the minute a familiar dark blue car pulled up in front of me. I opened the door and jumped in.

“Hey mate!” half-yelled my friend, and the drummer of the band, Garth.

“Hi Garth...” I muttered unenthused

He was a loud guy. All the time. He announces everything he does and never thinks of the consequences of his loud mouth. A short car ride later, we were sitting in our manager’s office awaiting the news. Our manager, Oscar, walked into the room, sat down and tented his fingers the way he did whenever there was big news, or gigs or trouble.

“We’ve got you boys a big break. You’re going to open for Kaupassa.”

“Are you serious?” Gaspd the usually mute keyboard aficionado, Antti.

“Yes, I am quite serious. They have a completely sold out tour here. There are three nights in Sydney and Melbourne, two nights in Brisbane, Perth and Adelaide. So are you boys up for it?”

“Of course we are,” breathed Brian.

“Well the first show is in 2 weeks from tomorrow. Is that fine for everyone? ...

Good. I’ll call you with more details.”

We all left excited about opening for Kaupassa.

Two weeks and a day passed quickly. Kaupassa were played on the radio regularly and every time they were played, I’d get more excited. We were called to the venue with all of our instruments and equipment. When we arrived, we were informed that we would be travelling in vans. The five of us in one together, Kaupassa in another van, roadies in another. I disliked vans and I knew that would grow to hatred by the

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end of the tour. We were setting up and sound checking when we received word that Kaupassa had finally arrived. But alas, we didn't get to see them let alone meet them until after the show.

Once we had finished, I stood at the side of stage watching them in all of their glory. The band fired up and I was in awe. It was the first opportunity that I'd had to see them live. As the vocalist walked, although it looked like she glided, onto the stage I couldn't help but be enchanted by her beauty. It's a strange thing not noticing the frontperson of a band... but I'd been so fascinated by the keyboardist, Juki. He was the Flea of keyboards. Instead of guitar solos, Kaupassa has keyboard solos. On the rare occasion was there a guitar solo and that usually left a lot to be desired. But as I stood so close to the man I idolised, I couldn't help but stare at her. What is her name? I know it. I know I do. But what? It starts with a 'T'. And it's a different name ... Tempest, that's right. How did I miss her before? Her hair was below the hip line, straight as an ironing board and blacker than the night of my youth. Her skin was pale and the voice was enticing. The way she dressed was very dramatic and the way she sang had an operatic power. Her voice sent chills down my spine the way an opera star's can in the most spectacular of moments. But her stage presence was quite the opposite. She was skipping around the stage, dancing, smiling and laughing. I walked away to find the other guys, smiling. I found them relaxing in a backstage room.

"Will, where have you been?" asked Garth in his usual harsh manner

"Watching Kaupassa."

"Of course you have been..."

The guys were always insinuating things and it was really childish. Garth continued speaking and the more he spoke, the more he spoke things of a sexual nature. He's the

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type that gives people the wrong idea of men. We aren't all like that, but some women tend to think we are. Which is a shame really.

"Will, let's go and get some food," suggested Dante.

"Sure." I said, grabbing my jacket off the seat.

We walked out into the icy street and down the road to the 24-hour shop. We bought a lot of food and returned to the venue. As we walked into the backroom, we saw Antti and two men speaking rapidly in Finnish. It was great to see him being social for once. He was a bit cautious of everything.

Antti relocated to Australia from Finland five years ago in an attempt to escape his past. Namely, his ex-girlfriend. Apparently, she began to go a bit ... odd and he didn't cope with it for too long, so he broke up with her. She went even crazier. She began stalking him, calling him and leaving many long-winded messages, turning up at his work, appearing at his door in the middle of the night. So he changed his number, changed the locks to his apartment and eventually moved, but she kept finding him. So he decided it was time to start again. Somewhere she'd never look. Somewhere so vast and far away that even if she did manage to find out where he went, it would be nearly impossible to find him.

"Juki, Mikko, this is Will and Dante. Guys, this is Juki and Mikko."

I put down the food on the table in between the lounges.

"Hey," I said shaking their hands. "Antti, where are the other guys?"

"They went outside. Why?"

"They wanted the food, I'll just go tell them we're back," I said as I walked out the back door.

"Dante and I are back with your food, guys."

"Thank you Will." yelled Garth.

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I walked back inside wondering how someone could be so loud all the time. I sat down on a lounge next to Dante.

Dante was an interesting guy as well. He never spoke of his past; he dressed and presented himself as if he was a 'tough guy' but in reality, he was a timid man who only wanted the best for everyone. Long, dark brown hair, camouflage pants and black t-shirt was his look and he aimed at being portrayed as a 'tough guy' but really, once he was offstage, he was the most polite guy you'd ever meet. He was always offering assistance in whatever you were doing or offering to do things just so you wouldn't have to do it. Even onstage, if he accidentally bumped into someone, he'd apologise and then after the show, apologise profusely. One day he'll let slip that he's actually the perfect gentleman and ruin his image. The sooner that day comes, the better. He's always stressing out that someone's going to find out what he's really like. Which is unfortunate. I think he might be scared that the image the he has created for himself will falter and when it does, people will not like the real him. But who doesn't like a polite guy?

I sat in silence awaiting my chance to start up a conversation with anyone. But everyone was busy eating, speaking rapid Finnish or being secretive, deep and depressed in one moody package. But as I was beginning to think of ways that I could escape and just get away from everything, Juki came and sat right next to me.

"I love you man," he slurred.

It was obvious that he was intoxicated: the slurring in his voice, the swaying motion in his body and the way he accidentally touched my leg as he sat down were the giveaways. Mikko walked over, gave me an apologetic look and took him outside. I just let it go. I was taking in Dante's energy, becoming introverted and thinking about the enormity of this opportunity. This tour was going to affect my life, people would

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notice us and it would take us further than we'd realise. Not instantly, but this might just be the thing that pushes us into popularity. Kaupassa are fantastic and our music is quite similar, bar the vocals, so why wouldn't at least some of them like us?

The door swung open and she walked into the room. Tempest. It was such an elegant walk. She sat with Mikko and Antti and joined in on their rapid Finnish conversation. I just couldn't help but look at her face and wonder how someone could be made so perfect. She had amazing bone structure especially in the face. It was so symmetrical. It sounds like a silly thing to point out, but the most photogenic people have very symmetrical faces... Billy Idol is known for having a symmetrical face. But her face is much prettier than Billy Idol's. She must have noticed me staring at her, even though I was trying not to stare. She was looking over and pointing at me while still talking to the others. So of course I looked away as casually but as fast as I possibly could. But things did not become any more exciting within the hour, so I decided to go home. As I stood, there were a few glances at me but I walked out. On the way, I grabbed my guitar and walked out into the night. As I walked up the street in the general direction of home, I went into a reminiscent state of my childhood as I usually do on my nightly walks. I'd barely reached the end of the block before someone caught up with me. It was Dante. He looked awful. I asked if something was wrong, but he stayed quiet. Then, I finally found out why he never spoke of his past.

"My mother killed herself a month ago. She had depression," he said quietly as he stared at his shoes. "She was diagnosed after my father, committed suicide when I was 14. He had clinical depression. Some days he could barely get out of bed."

So much became clear. If a parent has depression, their child is twice as likely to get it. And both of his parents had it. Just thinking of the statistics of depression, I had a bit of a flashback of my childhood. My mother had a cabinet in the bathroom that I

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was never allowed in. I saw her opening it, very often, especially when she was arguing with my dad and she'd be taking pills. What the pills were exactly I never found out...

As we got to my apartment building, I asked that he come up. His mood was worrying without knowing that both of his parents were suicidal. He was a bit resistant, but I implored and he caved in. The night was spent sitting on the lounge with Dante speaking of his past and myself sitting quietly, listening and reacting appropriately.

The following day, one phone call gave us an address and we prepared. Dante and I walked the long walk to the venue with the equipment that we had taken home. Brian had not returned home the previous night but he was waiting for us when we finally arrived. The rest of the afternoon was spent waiting. Waiting for our equipment, waiting for our sound check, waiting for Kaupassa, waiting for their sound check. Then we went out for food and we were in for more waiting, as there were ten of us all ordering at once.

That night after the show, we were sitting backstage. I was in a conversation with Erik and Mikko from Kaupassa when she walked in. She looked around the room, spotted us, smiled and joined us. She sat down across from me, next to Erik and as she did, hair fell in front of her face. Smiling, she moved it away.

"The things I put up with to look this good." She laughed.

We spent a few hours that night just talking and the more we talked, the more I wanted to know. This became a nightly ritual and the ritual continued for the tour. It was the last night and Tempest and I had become a lot closer. It was not wrong to suggest that I liked her a little too much for knowing her just under a fortnight. After the last show, everyone was heading out to celebrate but I decided not to attend.

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Tempest didn't feel like it either but she had to, just for a while. So we arranged to meet back at the hotel in an hour. I was wondering whether or not she would make it, but it was I who failed to make an appearance.

I was on a high as I left the venue, just thinking of how wonderful the night would be. Being able to spend time with Tempest without the other guys hanging around us with their annoying sexual innuendoes. I decided to go for a walk, just to pick up some food for the night and just something to do while I waited. As I stepped out onto the road to cross it, I got out my phone and checked the time. 12:11am. I saw something out of the corner of my eye. Looking to my left, all I saw were two bright lights. Then nothing. But seconds later, I felt like I was falling and then I hit some hard ground. I looked around and saw I was now in a very dim room. I was in an area with a lot of people I'd never seen before.

"Where are we?" I asked generally.

"Purgatory. The Australian subdivision." Said a monotone voice from above.

We all looked and there was a man in a toga standing on a ledge.

"Now, if you wouldn't mind, all of you go through that door down there," he pointed towards a big archway about 200 metres away.

Everyone started walking towards it. I was pushed along with the crowd and before long I was nearing the door. But I wasn't going anywhere. I'd put it together and realised we were all dead and on our way over to whatever was beyond. It might've been oblivion and these were our last images of anything. It could've been some form of afterlife where the deceased remained for a pre-determined amount of time, however long that might be. It might have led to reincarnation. But this I did not find out, I wasn't going through that door. I had to get back to the hotel. I pushed my way out of the line to the disapproval of many around me. There were few others not in the

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line. They reminded me of Dante. None of them seemed to have any focus and all appeared to just be wandering aimlessly. I marched back from where I'd come, to find the man from before who seemed to be in charge. But there was no need, he found me.

"So, wanted to be different did we?" he asked.

"I'm not going through that door." I said with as much confidence as I could fake.

"Oh you're one of the bright ones who pieced it together... Well, there's really not much you can do. You can either go through that door and on to the other sections that will determine your eternity or you can stay here with these ones and end up like them after a week. Now which would you prefer?"

"I want to go back."

"Well, life should've taught you people rarely get what they want"

"But I'm going back. And I'll do what I need to to get back."

The guy sighed.

"I hate people like you. Give me one good reason why this should go any further."

"Love."

"Do you know how much I hear that?" he groaned

"I bet you do, but ... this is - "

"Different? Special? I've heard them all."

I took a deep breath and began to speak slowly, thinking about all that had to be said.

"It's new... and blossoming. In a short time, it has turned into this incredibly powerful force that's controlling my every action, my every emotion, my every thought."

He was giving me a look that showed he was not convinced. I felt I had to prove my point. And that's what I did.

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“Her face is the most perfect thing I’ve ever seen and, excuse the awful cliché but just looking at it gives me this amazing feeling, like I’m completely at peace. Like nothing bad could ever happen. Her hair falls in front of her face all the time, it makes her laugh and then, without doubt, she makes a joke about the sacrifices she makes to look good. She has all these different laughs and for every laugh, she has a different face and every one of them is more beautiful than the last. Hers is a face meant to smile. She’s a musician and her presence onstage is incredible. She’s so likeable. Onstage she’s always laughing, smiling, dancing even. It’s such a juxtaposition from the intensity of the music and the lyrics she’s singing in her operatic style. Her voice is completely captivating. She’s such a different person from whom you would expect her to be, but that’s just one of the facets that makes her beautiful.”

“Stop talking. I’ll make you an appointment and you can talk to the elders.”

“There’ll be no need,” said a booming voice from behind us.

We both spun around to see who it was. The man in the toga who was playing lord over me just a few moments before was bowing and looking worried. Within seconds, or so it seemed, I was standing in a room in front of what appeared to be a panel of judges. I didn’t know what was happening, where I was, what would be happening so it was safe to say that I was terrified. Then suddenly one of the men at the table stood up. He too was in a toga and he spoke in a deep, commanding voice.

“Winston King, we heard your plea and your reasoning. We feel that it is sufficient and we are going to allow you to return upstairs.”

“Upstairs?” I asked slightly confused.

“Back to the Land of the Living. This is the only time we will allow it. Should you return to us, you will not be eligible to return. Your only option, should you choose not to go through the door, will be stay here with the Wanderers. We’ll put you into

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the care of Aldous and he will make sure you return back to your place of death. He will explain everything. Now go and appreciate the life we've given back."

I was escorted out of the room and into a long, seemingly endless corridor.

"That was quite an impressive speech you gave, I must say," Aldous said smiling.

"Thank you. But I was just telling the truth."

"Well any person would be lucky to have someone like her. Now there's some things that I have to tell you before you go back. You'll go back to five minutes before your time of death and everything will happen again. You will only remember this encounter for 60 minutes after your return so make sure you don't get hit by that same bus. Yes, that's how you died, hit by the number 23 bus. So stay off the road until it passes. Any questions?"

"I think I've got it. I'm going back to five minutes before I died, I'll only remember it for an hour. Oh after the hour will I just ... forget?"

"It will be completely wiped from your memory. Oh, that's the thing I forgot to mention. If in the next hour you tell anyone what you've been through or what you've seen here or imply that there is something after death, you'll be brought back here to us along with every person who heard you say it. And you will not have any choice as to your eternity. Do you understand?"

I nodded my head.

"Great. Well, good luck."

He turned me to face a door and gave me a push through it. Next thing I knew, I was once again walking out of our last venue. I was so happy to have returned that I walked with a skip down the street. As I saw the number 23 bus drive past, I couldn't help but laugh and appreciate life more than ever. When I returned to the hotel, I felt like I should be doing something, anything. I cleaned the room so that when Tempest

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did come in, it would be suitable and she wouldn't be disgusted by how untidy I am. I did it so that all of my belongings were packed away and I could leave as quickly as possible the next day to get home and on with the life that I appreciate more than anyone would believe. Although, would I appreciate it? I would only remember what happened for another 30 minutes and I couldn't help but wonder, would I appreciate it or go back to taking it for granted? I decided that I should at least get out and appreciate it while I'm guaranteed to remember. So I set off to the club where the others had gone. As I approached, Oscar was standing outside about to walk in when he spotted me and we walked straight in. As we found the others, I saw that Tempest was sitting on Garth's lap and their tonsils were engaged in a heated debate. I shook my head and left. I was walking back to the hotel and just wondering what happened. I was out of the picture for an hour, what happened? I got back into the hotel room and I sat down. I felt awful. How could things get any worse? It couldn't. She doesn't love me. She never did. I did not want to live. If I didn't have her, I didn't see the point in living. I began writing what came to mind on paper I'd found in the room.

Tempest, I love you. And I call it love purely because I have been under the impression that it was reciprocated. Although your performance with Garth in the club suggests otherwise. I hope you now realise the effect you can have on people and I really hope you think twice before allowing this to happen again. If you aren't sure what I'm saying, I'll rephrase it: You should not allow someone to be under the impression that there is a love developing when this is not the case. It will only end badly, just as it has this time.

Without your love, I am nothing. There is no point in my life if you are not a part of it and I cannot continue knowing that the love I thought we had, was nothing.

Tempest

I want you to be happy. So please, let my loss of life be a lesson.

Know what you're doing and know what you want.

I love you Tempest.

- Will

I set the note down on the bedside table. I went through my bag, located some dire necessities and I got into the bed. Within minutes, I felt myself slip away and feel nothing but a sense of relief and peace. Seconds later, I felt like I was falling and then I hit some hard ground. I looked around and saw I was now in a very dim room. I had a strong sense of déjà vu as I sat up. Was this a dream I'd had? But it seems much stronger than just déjà vu.

"Winston, what are you doing back here?" yelled someone I knew from somewhere.

"Come on, remember. You're allowed to now, you've died again."

"Oh. Hello Aldous." I said as I stood slowly and everything came flooding back.

"Oh good, you've remembered. Now what were you thinking?"

"She was busy with my friend. She doesn't love me. She never has. And I thought you'd understand that without her love I am nothing..."

"I'm sorry, truly I am. But, you know what you have to do now, don't you?"

"I have to go through the door, don't I?"

"Sure do. Unless you'd rather stay here with the Wanderers..."

"I think I'd better go through the door. Goodbye Aldous."

I walked away from him and towards the door. It was daunting. It slowly got closer and as it did, I got more nervous as to what was to come. As I got to the door, I took a deep breath and walked through. There it was. Finally. The end.