

LOOK AHEAD AND FOCUS

A short play
by Jeremy Sony

CASTING: 2 Men

CHARACTERS: WILL, 40s - Average guy, not too tall.
A man who outgrew his inner nerd.

TODD, 20s - Big man on campus type, tall,
strong, charming. A guy's guy.

SETTING: Todd's funeral. Bare stage.

Drama. Run-time: 5 min

Toasting an old friend is tough -- especially when he's dead. How do say all the things you never got to say to that son of a bitch? How do you look in the mirror when you can't even admit those things to yourself?

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AT RISE: WILL stands down-left. HE holds a drink in his hand. Talks to audience.

WILL

Hi, excuse me... hello, everyone. I'd just like to say a few words.

About Todd.

A toast really.

He's dead. Obviously.

That's what happens when you drive into a truck. Sorry, that came out wrong.

It's tough for all of us. But like Todd always said, when things get rough, just look ahead and focus.

That lesson has really stayed with me. Twenty-years ago in college, I never would have imagined being a senior partner at a New York firm or having a beautiful wife and family. I credit Todd for that.

And why wouldn't I? Todd was smart and handsome, good-looking, athletic, funny. The kind of person you want to be friends with. The kind of guy you look up to.

So I raise my glass to Todd.

(WILL does NOT raise his glass.)

WILL (cont'd)

My old friend, the man who taught me how to see myself. As I wanted to be seen.

(A pause. And then he continues.)

WILL (cont'd)

It's a funny story actually.

Todd could not resist a reflective surface, am I right? Some of you are nodding, you've seen it.

That's actually my first memory of him.

It was orientation weekend, just moved in. Dorm had one of them communal bathrooms.

(MORE)

WILL (cont'd)

Shower stalls, a couple toilets, but then just one sink and a mirror.

I'm there, washing my hands, look up and -- there he is, right behind me like some boogeyman.

(TODD enters and he faces the audience to the right and slightly upstage of WILL. They talk like they're in the same place, but both continue to address the audience through their conversation.)

WILL (cont'd)

He's just messing with his hair, checking that every strand found its proper place. It's just him and the man in the mirror.

Now this piece of glass is small, maybe the size of a placemat. And he's so focused on himself that he doesn't seem to even notice there's an entire human between him and the mirror. Just finding himself around me.

"You like what you see?" I ask him.

TODD

I'm Todd.

WILL

"Will." And we shake. But he's still looking at the mirror. "You got a thing for yourself, don't you?" He just kinda smiled.

TODD

If you don't focus on yourself, who else are you going to focus on? That guy you're looking at in there, that's who the world sees. No matter what's going on inside, whatever stress or fears, they only see the man in the mirror. So you make sure that he's flawless.

WILL

I don't know if I can be flawless.

TODD

Life's full of shit and fucked up moments. Only way I get to the next day is putting on this armor. Smiling. The year's going to be rough, but I'll help you through.

WILL

Turns out Todd was my R.A. He taught me more in that year than I learned in all of college. How to drink.

(MORE)

WILL (cont'd)

How to talk to girls.

End of the year, I remember I had this shit, shit week. The girl I'd been chasing told me off. I got a D on two finals. My grades were just fucked and there I was in the bathroom, looking at the man in the mirror and all I saw wasn't worth seeing.

I went to Todd.

I needed help.

He stood me in front of his mirror.

TODD

You can't see yourself like that. Otherwise, we'll see it too. Stand up straight.

WILL

He came up behind me, squared my shoulders.

TODD

Look at the man in the mirror. Poised. Confident. He can have anything he wants.

WILL

No, not me, I thought. I'm not the confident one here.

TODD

You're not standing up straight -- you're not focused.

(TODD turns to face WILL.)

WILL

Then I felt his hands, one in the small of my back and the other found itself around me as he placed it on my chest. And he pulled me back against him.

(TODD takes a step towards Will. At each of TODD's line, he should move closer until he is uncomfortably close, but never actually touch Will.)

TODD

There, see how that feels.

WILL

His grip was tight. "I need to leave now." But he didn't let go. I felt him press against me. And he started to unbutton my shirt. "Please stop."

TODD

No, you're scared Will. I can see it in your face.
You're flawed.

WILL

No, no, I'm just... I'm not.

TODD

Take a deep breath.

WILL

And I did -- his hand sliding down from my chest to my
stomach.

TODD

Take another.

WILL

And then his hand found my zipper.

I could see him in the mirror.

He wasn't looking at me.

(TODD is right there next to him.)

WILL (cont'd)

Life is full of rough moments, he breathed into my ear.

TODD

Just look straight ahead, and focus.

WILL

So I did. As he pulled down his jeans.

I watched my own reflection until I didn't recognize
myself anymore. Because if I couldn't see it, maybe no
one else would know what I let him do to me.

Well...

(WILL raises his glass.)

TODD

To Todd. May he burn in Hell.

(WILL drinks. LIGHTS FADE.)

(END OF PLAY.)