

Hello Goodbye

A 10 minute play by Ero Rodriguez

CHARACTERS

WILLOW: she/her. College student. Constantly trying to live up to expectations.

ZARA: she/her. Mother of two. Tired yet still trying to be kind to herself.

NOTES

- Content warnings: death mention, substance mention
- Play around with what an object could mean to someone, either to yourself or to someone else.
- Boxes form the walls or outline of the stage as a representation of the house. They could be easily knocked down yet easily put back together.
- / means when the next line begins

“No, I don't want to know you now
I wish I didn't know you as you were
We got a little older now
I wish I didn't know that you got worse.”
-Idontwannaknowyou! By MICO

WILLOW is eating on a collapsible table. There's chaos scattered around her, from picture frames to small boxes to piles of paper still waiting to be sorted.

ZARA

Are you almost done studying?

WILLOW

Yeah, just got some more stuff to do.

ZARA

How much more do you have?

WILLOW

A lot. We got another assignment due Wednesday.

ZARA

Again?

WILLOW

Yeah. Professor's alright, he just has high expectations of us but it's just tiring.

ZARA

Have you finished sorting your stuff?

WILLOW

Not yet. Still working on homework.

ZARA

Do you want me to just put it in a box?

WILLOW

Storage or should I take it?

ZARA

Up to you.

WILLOW

Um... I'll take it. I still have room in my car.

ZARA

Do you want this?

ZARA holds up a vintage dish.

ZARA (cont.)

Your grandmother told me in a dream to give it to you.

WILLOW

She did?

ZARA

Yeah, it wouldn't take up too much space in your apartment right?

WILLOW

I, don't know if I should keep it, I wouldn't use it anyways.

ZARA

She wanted you to have it.

WILLOW

I know. I just. Don't know where to put it.

ZARA wraps the dish in cloth.

ZARA

Do you want me to sort your stuff?

WILLOW

No, it's okay, um... I'll just do it, there could be important stuff in there.

ZARA

Okay. Are you sure you'll have time?

WILLOW

Yeah. I'll just need another coffee.

WILLOW finishes her food and washes her plate.

ZARA

Do you want to take that as well?

WILLOW

No it's okay.

When are you and dad leaving again?

ZARA

25th. They're already flying the furniture there now so it'll be there when we arrive.

WILLOW

Alright.

ZARA takes out a box of old clothes. She pulls out some baby clothes.

ZARA

Look!

WILLOW stops washing and goes over.

WILLOW

Were these mine?

ZARA

No, they were Nick's.

WILLOW

Damn, he was a big baby.

ZARA

(smiling)

Yeah he was. 9 pounds.

WILLOW

Holy shit.

ZARA

Do you think they'll fit Logan?

WILLOW
Probably.

WILLOW gently picks up another baby clothing item.

WILLOW
Mom?

ZARA
Yes Willow?

WILLOW
Do you think I'll be able to find a house in this economy?

ZARA
I told you before, you could have taken the house.

WILLOW
Mom, believe me, I do, I'm just not ready.

ZARA
We still haven't found any renters yet.

WILLOW
You said aunt Jenna was going to take it.

ZARA
She changed her mind.

WILLOW
She did? Why- wait, what's- what's going to happen to the house then?

ZARA
I'll find a way. Okay?

WILLOW
Mom, what's going/ to-

ZARA

If, we don't find someone, I'll have to sell it.

WILLOW

Hire a broker then! We can't...

ZARA

(*"end of story"*)

It'll be too expensive for them just to find renters.

Pause.

ZARA

Awww! Look at this!

WILLOW gets the plushie from ZARA.

WILLOW

Strawbear-bear?

Wait, this is where it was the whole time?

ZARA

Yes, I figured you were too old to still want it.

WILLOW

I was wondering what happened to it.

ZARA

Do you want to keep him?

WILLOW stares at it for a long moment.

WILLOW

....No. It's... Actually, can you give it to Nick?

Hopefully Logan likes it.

ZARA

Okay, I'll give it to him next time he picks up his stuff.

WILLOW

Actually, I should, clean him first.
Probably change out the stuffing too.

WILLOW hugs her old plushie.

WILLOW
Okay, um, back to studying.

ZARA
Right, right. Go on ahead.

WILLOW exits. ZARA looks at the packaged plate again.

ZARA
My mom was a waiter.
It was a diner on Froideur street.
She was having a bad day, she got into an argument with her brother earlier about him leaving for the military.
And... this one guy sitting at a booth by the window, he asked her who made her cry.
He always ordered bacon and scrambled eggs with dark roast coffee. No cream or sugar.
Ever.
It got to the point that he ordered something different the day she had the plate and coffee ready for him.
She wrote a note on the bottom of his receipt asking him out on a date.
11 years.
She worked there for 11 years.
When she was about to quit, she asked if she could keep it and they let her.
That man was not my father.
He never was.

*WILLOW is now in her room. She does anything but do anything; going on her phone, watching a video, anything to take her mind off.
She eventually goes up and starts rummaging through her room, making judgements at a glance.
She pauses, and then becomes more frantic, finally finding a letter.*

WILLOW
Alright...

She does her best to open it carefully. She accidentally rips the entire envelope but not the letter. The lights dim, too much in her own head.

WILLOW

I wrote this to myself when I was in 8th grade.

“Dear Willow,

Hi! It’s you! I hope you got into Harvard, Ms. June says that you’re smart enough to be there.

Maybe you could be a lawyer and make a toooooon of money!”

Fuck, I’m poor.

“Right now, Nick is bullying me.”

Okay, since when does he never bully you?

“I hope you get a baby sister in high school”-

WILLOW starts laughing.

“Do you still talk to Or Julia? Or Alexis? I hope you do. Right now, they’re your bestest friends in the whole world. Today, Alexis got me a sandwich when Marcus was making fun of you. They make you very happy right now.”

“I hope mom’s better. She keeps asking me to memorize her medication and going to the pharmacy with her. If not, please still do that with her. It makes her happier than you think, or forgot.”

Heavy pause.

“I wonder what high school you do get into. Think about how many friends you get to make! Maybe you’ll get to fall in love there. Or not, which is scary. Actually, maybe that won’t be as scary as I think it’ll be. Just get your first kiss there at least!”

“Whatever you do, please take care of mom, dad, and Nick, no matter where you go. They’ll always need you, and they’re everything to you. I don’t know what I would do if I lost either of them. Also keep studying! Maybe one day you could be valedictorian.

Love,
Willow”

WILLOW stares at the letter.

WILLOW

Harvard, huh?

...

I'm sorry Ms. June.

WILLOW looks out at the audience, whoever will hear her.

WILLOW

I went to community college instead.

Mom and I still go to that Walgreens around the corner.

I had a fight with Julia and Alexis that... I don't even remember what it was about, but I don't talk with them anymore.

...

(looking at the letter) You were doing so much and didn't even know it.

You didn't let anyone know that.

All that pressure that you didn't even know was pressure, you thought it was encouragement.

Ways to get stronger, ways to keep going.

Thinking your suffering was strength.

I hate that I still think like that sometimes.

*Lights on ZARA, now in her own room.
She stares at a manila envelope. Her will.*

ZARA

Shit.

She places it in a moving box.

ZARA

(mournfully)

Shit...

WILLOW knocks and enters.

WILLOW

Mom?

ZARA

Yes, sweetie?

WILLOW

...

Can I have grandma's plate?

I'll just make sure it's safe.

ZARA

How come you changed your mind?

WILLOW

I think she'll be mad at me in my dreams if I don't take it.

ZARA

You don't have to take it if you don't want to. I'm not forcing you too.

WILLOW

But it was her's. I... I don't want to upset her.

ZARA

...It meant a lot to her, but that shouldn't be yours to carry if you truly don't want to.

WILLOW

I... don't know mom.

We didn't visit her a lot.

I didn't know her as well as I could have.

ZARA

You still like that diner, right?

WILLOW

Yeah.

ZARA

Go there when you miss her.

WILLOW

And when it closes?

ZARA

Well you can always cook their food, right?
Bacon and eggs aren't the hardest thing to cook.

WILLOW

...Okay.

...

Mom, are you going to be okay?

ZARA

...I'll be okay. For you.

Both of them start to clean the set, either putting the items in boxes or in trash bags. Maybe they even hand the audience members some stuff to hold for a moment.

ZARA (cont.)

...I know what it's like to die alive.

For some, it's holding each item and remembering where you were when you first held it.

You look at each photo of those you grew apart from, for one reason or another.

It's that pain of mourning memories that always gets to you.

A story of 'what if's' and 'where are they now'. Maybe you know the answer, maybe you don't.

It's always the 'maybes' that give some kind of hope.

That split second hope that miraculously, they'll think of you in that same second where you're apart.

The empty regret of past arguments, the emptiness of knowing that all you've collected over the years is either with you or going to add to a landfill.

Or if it's salvageable, someone will make new memories with what you don't want or need.

...we can only remember so much of what we have lost.

Yet we only can hold so much space in our hearts for those we can still cling onto.

*Once done, they stand in the center, looking around.
ZARA hugs WILLOW and leaves.
WILLOW lays down on the floor. What she once called her home.*

END OF PLAY.