

The Last Days of William

By
Aurin Squire

Paradigm Talent Agency

Agent: Jonathan Mills

212-897-640

jmills@paradigmagency.com

SETTING

New York City, 2018.

CHARACTERS

1. SCRIBE - 30-40s, writer
2. ACTOR/WILLIAM/DUDE/FRIEND - 30-40s, performer

STORY

I went out on my first date with William Dale on Valentine's Day, February 14, 2018. We had a few encounters and a few text/phone conversations. And then he was dead. He slipped or fell or jumped. It was late night, probably 3 or 4am on March 16th, 2018. I was in his phone so I was contacted by his friends. They assumed Will and were close. I felt haunted by such a brief exchange at the end of someone's life. I felt disturbed by William's presence, his enthusiasm and zest, but also his flakiness, past issues with drug abuse, wild party nature, and then his disappearance. I am trying to make sense of this. How do you mourn for someone who you were just starting to know?

PROLOGUE

Lights rise on a SCRIBE talking to an ACTOR who is taking stuff out of his bag, getting settled, flipping pages in the script. Actor is reading over the script.

SCRIBE

Thank you for taking part in this workshop.
I'm working my way through some new material and
I thought it would be best to work with another actor.

ACTOR

Well I'm so excited. And I feel like we may have met
before.

SCRIBE

Well it's a small community.
You ready?

ACTOR

Ready.

SCRIBE

Oh, and a little backstory: I went out on my first date with William Dale on Valentine's Day, February 14, 2018. We had three in-person encounters and a few text/phone conversations. And then he was dead. He slipped or fell or jumped. It was late night, 4am on March 16th, 2018. I was in his phone so I was contacted by his friends. They assumed Will and were close, but we were not. Yet I felt haunted by such a brief exchange at the end of someone's life. I felt disturbed by Will's presence, his enthusiasm and zest, but also his flakiness, past issues with drug abuse, wild party nature, and then his disappearance. I am trying to make sense of this. How do you mourn for someone who you were just starting to know? Ok that's it. Let's begin with-

ACTOR

-wait, wait...what?
I just need a moment to processing...
Everything you just said.

SCRIBE

Okay.

ACTOR
I just need...
So this really happened?

SCRIBE
Yes. Did you read the script?

ACTOR
Yeah, and I loved it.

SCRIBE
Did you read the second first page where it talks about the history?

BEAT

ACTOR
I'm so sorry.

SCRIBE
You don't have to be.

ACTOR
Is this is your mourning process?

SCRIBE
No.
It's a play.

ACTOR
That you wrote to get over the pain?

SCRIBE
No.

ACTOR
Then why did you write it?

SCRIBE
It was for an assignment.

ACTOR
An assignment about pain and loss?

SCRIBE
It's my process.
Me and Will related to art.

SCRIBE (cont'd)

We are...we were sapiosexuals.

That was how we talked about everything

So...

I thought I could create a piece of art to...
resolve things.

When you're ready...

SCENE ONE

Blackout. Sounds of the sea roaring. In the darkness, Actor transforms into William. SCRIBE and WILL stand facing each other with scripts in hand. They breathe in and out. And then they open their eyes.

SCRIBE

I only knew him for a month and then he was gone. Yes, about 30 days. It all started before Valentine's Day 2018. He had ghosted me online for a few months. Said he was a sapiosexual. That means someone who gets turned on by intelligence. But then he ghosted me.

WILLIAM

I only knew him for one month and then I was gone. Gone, gone, gone. I liked his okcupid profile. He was or is a SCRIBE. I was a musician coming back from Japan. I am into intellectuals. A sapiosexual. Someone who can turn me on from the inside.

Light rise up. They start circling.

WILLIAM

Hello.
Sorry for not getting back to you...

BEAT

WILLIAM

I got busy

SCRIBE

Whatever. It's fine.

WILLIAM

So I am reaching out to you. That proves I am interested. After months I reach out to you through the electronic webs. You free tomorrow?

SCRIBE

It's Valentine's Day.

WILLIAM

I know. What are you doing?

SCRIBE

Being very very busy.

I'm going to a Butoh performance in Williamsburg-

WILLIAM

-Great, can I come?

SCRIBE

(to audience) Only losers have nothing to do on Valentine's Day. Did he think I was a loser? Why was he so...

(to William) sure. You can come along.

Japanese dance of death...on Valentine's Day.

WILLIAM

Texting. So are we calling this a date?

SCRIBE

No. It's a colloquy. A convening of mind.

WILLIAM

Really looking forward to convening.

SCRIBE

All right. It's at 7.

WILLIAM

Can you buy me a ticket?

SCRIBE

Um...no. Buy your own damn ticket.

WILLIAM

So romantic.

SCRIBE

What can I say: I'm a charmer of brutal honesty.

WILLIAM

Brutal honesty? I like that.

SCRIBE

It's my specialty.

WILLIAM

What's on the agenda for our colloquy?

SCRIBE

Butoh: a Japanese dance of mortality and fear.
And a colloquy.

BELL SOUND. Lights shift.
SCRIBE gets ready. William is
running around the time-space
continuum of the SCRIBE's
memory.

SCRIBE

The first unusual thing about William Joseph Dale.

WILLIAM

The first unusual thing about me.

SCRIBE

On our first official...colloquy,
William put a tracking device on himself.
He sent me a text with an attachment that said..

WILLIAM

Open me.

SCRIBE

I opened it and it was a GPS system hooked up to his phone.
(to William) Um, I don't get it.

WILLIAM

Now you can see how far away I am from you. I'm just
getting off of work right now.

SCRIBE

You don't have to do that, just-

WILLIAM

-Ok, I am getting into the subway-

SCRIBE

-Fascinating. That's just-

WILLIAM

Oops, subway is waiting in the station. You can see that on
the GPS, so you know I'm not lying.

SCRIBE

Will, it's all right to be a few minutes fashionably late.

WILLIAM

Train is moving again.

Hey, listen to this new club song.

Tell me what you think.

SCRIBE gets club song in
phone. He listens to it.

WILLIAM

Isn't it fun? Where are you?

SCRIBE

He has the attention span of a gnat.

(to William) I'm at the bar.

Waiting.

WILLIAM

Shit, shit, shit.

I'm sorry.

I'm already late. I'm so stupid.

SCRIBE

The second thing I noticed about Will.

WILLIAM

Could you call me William?

It's a particular thing.

I don't like Will or Bill or Billy.

It's just William. Full name.

SCRIBE

Okay. Well the third thing..

WILLIAM

Should I be taking notes.

SCRIBE

Is that the moment he arrived..

everyone wanted to be friends with him. I got kind of
jealous. I was sitting there the whole time and the
bartender didn't say more than three words to me. But Will
comes in, bags akimbo, scarf fluttering, a Shiva of fabric
and frazzled ends and everyone is all buddy buddy with him.

WILLIAM

You're too well put together.

SCRIBE

What?

WILLIAM

That's the first time I noticed about you:
your whole thing is too, too...

SCRIBE

I'm wearing jeans and the same shirt from work.

WILLIAM

It doesn't matter.

SCRIBE

So the bartender doesn't want to talk to me because I'm too
impeccable?

WILLIAM

Not impeccable.

Impenetrable.

You're like a seal letter. A notarized document.

Sealed and dated.

SCRIBE

Ouch.

WILLIAM

And you're very handsome.

(switches back to Actor) Wait, did he actually say that?

SCRIBE

(offended)

Yes. He actually did. (under breath) Asshole.

WILLIAM

That's so sweet. (back as William) Okay.

SCRIBE

I'm a handsome notarized letter?

WILLIAM

Debonair.

SCRIBE

People like debonair.

WILLIAM

Yeah, in the movies. But not in person.
Debonair in person is aloof. You gotta show some loose threads.

SCRIBE

Are we done?

WILLIAM

Sure. So what are you about?

SCRIBE

I write. You?

WILLIAM

I play the cello.

SCRIBE

For an orchestra?

WILLIAM

Well for a few touring companies. But for my day job I write grants. So we both write for money.

SCRIBE

To writers from two writers!

They toast and drink.

WILLIAM

Why were you alone on Valentine's Day?

SCRIBE

I waited too long to finalize plans.

WILLIAM

So you have...

SCRIBE

Too many options. Like most people in New York.

WILLIAM

Really?

How many men are you dating?

SCRIBE

We don't have to get into this now, do we-

WILLIAM

-Brutal honesty.

SCRIBE

...Five.

WILLIAM

Slut.

SCRIBE

Thank you. And you?

WILLIAM

Four.

SCRIBE

Whore. And I'm assuming you're a serial dater.

WILLIAM

Isn't everyone? Too many options.

SCRIBE

And yet here we are.

WILLIAM

All my dates are with their husbands or boyfriends or partners, or their #1s.

SCRIBE

I think took it for granted that I would be special when I became an adult.

Eventually.

Someone would select me.

I would be someone's #1.

And then one day I woke up in my 30s and I was a bunch of guy's #3 choice. I mean I'm on the dating team, but I mostly ride the bench. I only get called if someone gets injured or goes missing. So I am a free man with many many shitty options, and I guess that's consumerism.

And gay dating.

And capitalism.

And living in the city.

We are oppressed by our mediocre options.

BEAT

WILLIAM

Wow. You are not a writer. You are a scribe.

SCRIBE

Yeah. I talk too much.

I over think every scenario, which is exacerbated by having so many bad choices.

It's one of my many flaws.

WILLIAM

But you forget, I am a sapiosexual.

Overthinking turns me on.

SCRIBE

So my neurosis and anxiety is turning you on?

WILLIAM

In a way.

SCRIBE

Shall we head out?

WILLIAM

Lead the way.

Lights shift. They walk.

SCRIBE

So here is the mystery...

how could a good looking, lively, friendly,

life of the party have nowhere to go on Valentine's Day?

And what's with the tracking device?

WILLIAM

You can download the app if you want.

SCRIBE

I don't need to download an app to tell people where I am.

WILLIAM

And why not?

SCRIBE

Simple. I show up on time.

WILLIAM

So you're never late to a colloquy?

SCRIBE

I am rarely late.

Why did you contact me the day before Valentine's Day?

WILLIAM

Like you said, I am a bunch of guy's #3 choice.

SCRIBE

No, that's my answer.

WILLIAM

Quiet.

Butoh time.

SCRIBE and William begin
doing a slow Butoh slithering
dance.

WILLIAM

I'm having a really good time.

SCRIBE

Good for you.

WILLIAM

Ouch. What's with the chip?

SCRIBE

It's Valentine's Day and I'm sitting here watching Butoh-

WILLIAM

-and performing.

SCRIBE

I'm sitting here watching and performing Butoh in the
middle of a rain storm.

WILLIAM

On a date-

SCRIBE

-Colloquy.

SCRIBE (cont'd)

With a guy who ghosted me and reconnected the day before Valentine's Day because your other plans fell through.

This isn't a date.

You were lonely and didn't want to spend Valentine's Day alone.

And so was I.

WILLIAM

I took you to my favorite bar and French restaurant.

SCRIBE

This is true.

WILLIAM

We talked for hours about classical music and literature.

I paid for the drinks and dinner.

You loosened up.

SCRIBE

I'm a cheap date.

WILLIAM

There. You said the word.

SCRIBE

We walked through McCarren Park at night.

In the rain.

WILLIAM

We were under your umbrella.

William and SCRIBE put a hand over their head to represent an umbrella.

WILLIAM

Perfect weather.

SCRIBE

Wet, soggy, and cold.

WILLIAM

Quiet, mysterious, and romantic.

SCRIBE

Where are you from again?

WILLIAM
Jupiter.

SCRIBE
Funny.

WILLIAM
No, I'm being serious.
I'm from Jupiter, Florida.

SCRIBE
Ahh, Jupiter, Florida: concrete mansions and strip malls.

WILLIAM
How do you know about Jupiter?

SCRIBE
I'm further down the peninsula.
From a small town in South Florida you never heard of.

WILLIAM
Two small-town Florida boys in the big city.
What are the odds?
You miss the Sunshine State?

SCRIBE
Nobody misses Florida.

WILLIAM
True.

SCRIBE
But I'm thinking of moving to California.

WILLIAM
Why?

SCRIBE
Work.
And in New York City, I'm a bunch of guy's #3s.
In LA I can be somebody's #1. Or a few guy's #1.

WILLIAM
What makes you so sure California is the answer?

SCRIBE

Gay guys over there are easily impressed.
In LA if you've read a book you're an intellectual.
But in NYC the Starbucks barista has a PHD in philosophy
and a queer chat book of poetry with an indie publisher.
Everyone in New York City is brilliant and closed off.

WILLIAM

Now is the point when the kiss usually happens.

SCRIBE

You never answered my initial question.

WILLIAM

Which was?

SCRIBE

How come you had nobody to go to on Valentine's Day?

WILLIAM

Way to kill the mood, asshole.

SCRIBE

I'm just playing.

WILLIAM

Well maybe you can play with yourself tonight.

SCRIBE

Oh, is that a double entendre?

WILLIAM

No, it's a single one.

SCRIBE

(aside)

We kissed.

I dropped the umbrella.

WILLIAM

We got wet.

We continued kissing and walking in the rain...
on Valentine's Day. This really did happen.

SCRIBE

Okay: so made something romantic out of a rainy depressing
evening of slow death marching and loneliness.

WILLIAM

Isn't that romance?
Why are you so resistant?

SCRIBE

I'm not resistant.
(to audience) What I wanted to say was that people like you
come and go as you please. You make a situation into a
party or a dance or a date to suit your whimsy or
curiosity. And then you move on.

WILLIAM

You're still made about my initial ghosting?

SCRIBE

No. Well it was really nice meeting you.

WILLIAM

And kissing you and walking with you in the rain.

SCRIBE

That too.
Yes, it was really nice, William.
And...Happy Valentine's Day.
It has been years since...well, it was nice meeting you.

WILLIAM

You want to see a movie together?

SCRIBE

Aren't you supposed to wait 72 hours before-

WILLIAM

I want to see a movie with you. Before you fly off to LA to
become an intellectual. A second...colloquy.

SCENE TWO

Scribe is at work in an office.

SCRIBE

The next day at work my co-workers are all talking about their Valentine's Day. I become aware of the fact that everyone is married...except for me. Even the gay people are married with kids, mortgages, and retirement funds. And here I stand: the lonely arts fag.

WILLIAM

Lonely arts fag...sapiosexual.
It's the burden of our species.

Lights shift. They talk to the audience.

SCRIBE

What is a sapiosexual?

WILLIAM

We have already established that a sapiosexual is someone obsessed with arts and culture.

SCRIBE

Someone who lives and dies for music and language.
Someone who loves a good book or a rave party.
An Introvert.

WILLIAM

A quiet soul.
Gay or straight.
Bisexual or transgender...
A sapiosexual is gentle...

SCRIBE

Someone who puts artistic truth and philosophy
Above flesh and food.

WILLIAM

Someone who does not have a lot of friends
Who does not congregate in large mosh pits
Or run in herds.

SCRIBE

The awkward guy holding up the wall at a party.
Single, with a roommate.
No kids. Maybe not even a pet.

WILLIAM

Some house plants. Nothing too distracting.

SCRIBE

Cactus. And rocks.

WILLIAM

Sapiosexual couples tend to yield little to no children.

SCRIBE

They tend to be smarter than the settling kind.
So they live alone and die alone.

WILLIAM

Spending their free time painting the cave walls to say

SCRIBE

'I was here.'
Because there will be nobody else there to testify to their
existence.
Flesh is weak. Memory is fickle.
So a sapiosexual pours themselves into the immortal.
The arts
Philosophy
Science
Soemthing that will last past this flesh.

WILLIAM

The parchment
The painter's pigment

SCRIBE

The scroll

WILLIAM

The music.

William sits down and mimes
playing a cello. Beautiful
orotund cello sounds begin
flowing from his bow hand.

SCRIBE

They pity me.

Alone with my inanimate objects and words.

But I pity them, because have a secret weapon: my memory of last night. It replays in my mind. All the in between details of the...colloquy. I remember...

WILLIAM

I play the cello.

SCRIBE

I remember.

WILLIAM

Don't you play the violin?

SCRIBE

I remember.

WILLIAM

Of course, the cello is the superior instrument.

SCRIBE

(laughing)

Oh, is that right?

WILLIAM

It is. The cello is the instrument that best...

SCRIBE

Replicates the human voice.

WILLIAM

How do you know that?

SCRIBE

You cello players are all alike. What, do they make you remember that 'human voice' bit in cello school.

WILLIAM

They do in case we encounter snotty snooping violinist.

SCRIBE

And I remember.

WILLIAM

We should play together some time.

SCRIBE

I thought you told me to play with myself.

WILLIAM

I was just kidding.

SCRIBE

My violin is back home in Florida. It's been years since I've played. The wood has probably warped from the air conditioning and then one time the AC broke in the middle of the summer so it was sweltering for weeks. So I'm pretty sure my old violin is just firewood by now.

WILLIAM

Play with me.

SCRIBE

What are we playing?

WILLIAM

The song of our kind. The Ballad of the Sapiosexual.

William continues playing.
SCRIBE lifts up an invisible violin. He draws his bow across the air and a wonderful violin melody starts playing. SCRIBE circles around William while they both play.

WILLIAM

(out of character)

I'm sorry can I ask a question?

The lights shift. William is back to actor. We're back in the rehearsal process.

SCRIBE

Certainly.

ACTOR

Did that happen?

SCRIBE

Did we play 'air orchestra' while talking?
No, of course not.

ACTOR

Oh.

SCRIBE

Is that a problem?

ACTOR

No, it just gives me more freedom.
So I can take my artistic liberties?

SCRIBE

You can take artistic liberties with whatever you
want...within your scope as an actor.

ACTOR

I know, but if it was something that actually happened I
would want to know more about the details. That's all.

SCRIBE

Ok. Well it didn't happen.
It was a flight of fancy.
You are free to...go with where the spirit moves you.

ACTOR

I don't want to disrespect your lover's legacy.

SCRIBE

He wasn't my lover.
He was just...a love.
A brief, fanciful thing. So play with me.

ACTOR

Okay. Let's play.

SCRIBE is about to go back
into it when...

ACTOR

And I'd love to talk with you some time.

SCRIBE

About what?

ACTOR

Just to pick your brain. I'm new in the city and just trying to get to know people.

SCRIBE

Sure, sounds good.

ACTOR

Okay, I'm ready to go back in. Shall we?

SCRIBE

We shall.