

At 1492 Hawksbury Lane, little Will Green was enjoying life. The two-year-old was presently playing on a mat in the living room, a space sprinkled with toys that were as simple as they were entertaining to the boy. The morning was shining and he was playing and everything was alright with the world. Life was good.

That was when an alien crashed into his brain at something beyond the speed of light.

Before Will could even process the matter, he was standing before a welcoming party of aliens in an environment he could scarcely imagine.

His previous body had hardly skipped a beat, however. The new occupant had seized control of it almost immediately, and had gotten up from the ground. Will's parents would not even notice that he had collapsed onto the floor suddenly.

Of course, that was all rather irrelevant to Will at the time.

“Do not be alarmed, Jeremiah Atkins. We mean you no harm. Welcome to Yith, home of the Great Race.”

One of the aliens had spoken, and Will understood the words.

To his credit, he was actually able to formulate a response.

“That's not my name, I'm Will!”

Something in the room fell.

The small conglomeration of vaguely conic entities peered at one another oddly. Will noticed a faint clicking, one that seemed to shade into...something else. But for the most part, he remained paralyzed.

“I will check the machine.” one of the aliens spoke. They were right next to a large shining rectangular structure, consisting of some green-tinged metal.

“Perhaps the mind was shocked by the transfer?” a being right next to the inspecting alien suggested.

“I am merely confirming.” they responded. The other alien looked back toward the one at the head of the group, the one who had greeted Will, but there was no sign of recognition.

After a few seconds, the speech – the *clicking* – returned.

“The calibration is in error.”

All of the room went silent. And then, just as suddenly, all of the eyes were on Will.

It was too much. Will's remarkable fortitude was finally broken down. He began to cry. Or at least, tried to.

“Their muscles are spasming. Is this a normal response?” the alien by the technician asked.

“This is hardly a normal situation. I cannot say I know much of it.” the being kept to his work, lit by the emerald glow of the machine.

“What is the exact nature of the error?” the alien who had greeted asked.

“Vesne did not hit the right target. I cannot say whose body they have occupied, but Jeremiah is not with us now.” the technician responded succinctly.

“It should only take around a month for Vesne to gather the materials for a projection device, correct? At the very least, it would seem like this only inconveniences them.” the alien by the technician suggested.

“Hold.” the alien at the front stated. Within a few seconds, all of the entities had ceased their activities, and were now looking at the form of the hapless transportee before them. There was an odd, familiarity to the rhythms of the spasms and clicking.

“Does that cadence not match the patterns seen amongst our young? The ones who have not yet developed skill in emotional regulation?” the alien at the front asked.

“Are you suggesting that we transported a child?” the alien by the technician said.

“I would say that that is a reasonable hypothesis. And if that is the case, then Vesne may not possess the means to procure the components of a mind-projector for quite some time. While we would not be inconvenienced in such a scenario, he may be effectively trapped for years.” the alien at the front spoke.

“What is the maturation rate and lifespan of man, in any case?” the technician asked.

“I do not know, I only received the briefing that you yourselves have also received. In any case, I can't imagine that it is any shorter than our own.” the one at the front mused.

A few more guttural “cries” emanated from Vesne's body. The aliens looked among themselves more firmly this time.

“I will handle the transportee. I will attempt to discern if this hypothesis is true or not.” the alien at the front spoke. The others nodded, and backed away ever so slightly. Gingerly, the alien approached the one who now occupied the body of their colleague.

“Do not be alarmed. I am not here to hurt you.” they spoke as softly as they could. Their approach was slow.

At first, there was no response. The head of the transportee was pointed down, and attention was inward. Their cylindrical, claw-tipped arms were compressed close to their body. Mostly, they tried to not look at anything.

“Hello, friend. Can you speak with me?” the alien asked.

There was a minor attempt at movement as the alien came close, but the transportee was clearly unaccustomed to the mode of movement that the Great Race employed. Their whole body tensed, and

they attempted to sway away from the approaching entity, but they could not escape, or meaningfully move at all, really.

“There, there. I am not here to harm you. Now, would it be alright if I used your name, Will?” the alien spoke.

For just a moment, the transportee stilled. One of their eyes came unshuttered, and they turned their head ever so slightly towards the alien.

It was after a few seconds that a nod came.

“I'm Will.” he said.

“It is good to meet you, Will.” the alien remarked in a certain tone that was largely foreign to them.

“If I could, may I ask how old you are, Will?”

Will went silent for a few moments, before he responded.

“...Two.”

When he responded, he lifted up two of his arms almost instinctually.

Then it was the aliens' turn to go silent.

“That corresponds to...?” the alien by the technician trailed off, looking towards others in the crowd.

“A baby, approximately.” one of the aliens in the group noted.

The alien in front of Will took what was a deep breath for his race. Most of the aliens did, really.

“We'll need to project an operative to Vesne's spatio-temporal locality. I will make the arrangements for that. We should all likely get to work on this situation.” the technician spoke. They turned their head towards the alien at the front. “Senior Manager, I believe that according to Article 345, Section 766, the transportee is under your jurisdiction?”

“You would be correct, Senior Technician.” the alien at the front lightly inclined what amounted to their head. The manager looked back toward the transportee. The transportee stared at him, quizzically.

“Very well. I am summoning a psychologist specialized in man; they should be able to assist you with the transportee.” the technician noted, returning to work on their machine.

“In accordance with protocol.” the manager nodded once more.

Several of the aliens began to filter out of the room, embarking upon strange, alien duties. Will shrank back as they left, but another one quickly approached him.

“Hello, child.” the strange, somewhat conical alien said. “Would you come with me?”

Will found himself surprised. Not because of the words, but because of his reaction to them. He had been completely frightened for most of the initial encounter, but somehow, these words did not frighten. Perhaps it had something to do with the tone, or the way in which he looked down at him, but Will nevertheless found himself slowly, reluctantly nodding.

“Very good. Come along, now.” the alien spoke.

If Will had been frightened within the mental transference chamber, then now he was mostly just confused. All around him were strange grey-green metallic walls, with curious devices littered all around. The halls seemed wide, spacious, and though he did not have much of a reference point to base the supposition off of, it seemed like he was really tall. Will followed along behind the strange alien in a mode of movement he was gradually becoming accustomed to. It was almost like how snails moved, maybe? Or slugs...

“Ah, Senior Manager?” a voice came from down the hall. Will's gaze quickly turned toward it.

“Mmm, I take it you are the psychologist?” the escorting alien asked.

“Indeed, sir. Jano, xenopsychologist, at your service.”

“That is good to hear. I am Senu, Senior Manager, as you noted. It is a pleasure to meet you.” Will's warden spoke.

For a moment, the two aliens joined their claw-hands. Will thought they would shake their hands, but instead they just kept them there for a few seconds. Will tilted his head curiously.

“Ah, and here is our transportee of the hour. Extend greetings to Will.” Senu spoke.

“It is good to meet you, Will.” Jano spoke with enthusiasm. Their semi-conical head bobbed up and down. Mostly down towards Will, really...

“So, he is a child, is he not?” Jano turned back up toward Senu. “They elaborated on the basics of the situation.”

“Indeed he is. Around two years old, for what that information is worth.” Senu engaged in what may have been a shrug for the Great Race.

“Ah...well that is a real treat, is it not...” Jano mused to himself. After a few seconds of Senu's staring, he quickly recomposed himself.

“Apologies, sir. I am a specialist in the psychology of both men and juveniles. We rarely get transportees as young as this; I think he may serve as an invaluable source of information.” Jano spoke.

“Well perhaps you can fit in your research on the side, provided that we fulfill our task whilst we wait for another transfer to be effected. Can you provide me with any particular information that would be of use?” Senu spoke.

“Plenty.” Jano nodded, breaking into a certain practiced composure and tone. “Will is a man, as you are already aware. By the developmental scale of their species, Will here is a baby. Of course, he *is* on the

older side of the spectrum, being a toddler-”

“Is there anything we should be aware of?” Senu gently edged some words in.

“Surprisingly little. Due to the nature of the mind-transfer, we need not worry about the physiology of that species's babies, which can get...complicated.” Jano looked oddly sheepish for a second. “Instead, we must take the mind into consideration. I am afraid that Will's decision-making capabilities and reasoning processes are likely less than ideal at their age. We may need to help them with what may seem like simple tasks.” Jano noted.

“Indeed.” Senu said, looking back towards Will.

“I have already brought the band noting the transportee's characteristics.” Jano said, extending form an arm with a shimmering, plastic-like green band. “It has their species, age and... do you know the gender of Will?” Jano asked Senu.

“I, admit I do not.” Senu looked off a little sheepishly. “I must be frank in that I was not aware that man had sexes at all...”

“It is fine; that is exactly why I am here, am I not?” Jano looked toward Senu in what may have been a grin. The alien soon turned their head toward Will.

“Will? Could I ask if you are a boy or a girl?” Jano asked.

“Boy!” Will shouted excitedly.

“Thank you, Will.” Jano bowed their head, ocular orbs briefly becoming hidden by membranes. The alien took a strange, cylindrical, silvery tool from a satchel and began to bring it toward the band. After a few seconds of work, more information was added to the piece of apparel.

“This should allow others to understand the situation that Will is in if he somehow gets separated from us. It is designed such that it cannot be taken off by the wearer, so we do not have to worry about Will removing it.” Jano spoke, slowly approaching Will. He circled the band around Will's left arm, before adhering both sides together through some strange means. The alien gave it a firm tug. The band remained totally secure.

“It seems that we are set, then. Thank you for your help, Jano.” Senu nodded towards their fellow alien. The xenopsychologist nodded back.

“Before we head off, though, could I ask you a question?” Senu asked.

“Of course.” Jano replied.

“Thank you. In any case, I was curious as to what, 'boy,' meant.” Senu spoke.

Jano briefly looked as though they were shaking their head.

“It is the term that species uses to refer to a male child. I can probably fill you in on many things along the way...”

“Right...” Senu looked off a bit oddly, and then the group was on the move.

In the jungles of a primordial Earth rested a great city of impossible contours and dizzying heights. By the standards of the Great Race, Kalin was really nothing special, but to Will, the place was as enigmatic as any otherworld. While Senu and Jano spent time talking, Will mostly just took in his peculiar new environment. They had walked out of a great building whose entranceways stretched high into the sky, and yet that building was really rather low compared to the structures that surrounded it. All sorts of outstanding feats of masonry lay all around him, coupled with the strange technology of this race. It was really quite a peculiar mixture, for while some of these things appeared wondrous, like the towers high in the sky that crackled with electricity, other appeared really mundane, like the roads that were designed for walking, not vehicles. The atmosphere was thick and heavy, and at times it appeared as though a great green fog shrouded the world beyond a hundred feet from view. It was difficult for Will to make out anything beyond the city's skyline, but when he was able to do so, Will saw impenetrable forests. They kind of reminded Will of some dinosaur books his dad had showed him.

Dad...

“So they only live for around a century? Mayflies...” Senu shook his head. The three had approached a great fountain of water in the center of some small plaza.

“To be fair, I have seen species that live even shorter.” Jano noted.

“I understand, it is just difficult to truly process that.” Senu said.

“In any case, what should our first course of action be? We do not really have many directives beyond keeping him safe. Though I imagine keeping him occupied will be our greater task.” Senu spoke.

“That is a fair question, perhaps-” Jano's musing was interrupted by a certain scene that was developing.

In front of the water fountain in the plaza, what appeared to be a grown Yithian was now contorting in a manner befitting of a child. For a moment, the curious eyes of other gathered Yithians looked upon the sight in confusion, but they quickly turned away once they saw the green band around the transportee's arm. The Great Race was accustomed to things far stranger.

“Hmm. We should probably reassure him.” Senu noted.

“Indeed.” Jano nodded.

“I will inquire as to his mental state, and see if relief can be found through conversation. In the meantime, Jano, could you look for a park? Some entertainment could prove of assistance.” Senu spoke.

“I can.” Jano nodded, pulling out a crisp piece of printed cellulose from their satchel.

Jano started to move once more. Senu drew more closely towards Will, and looked down at him. Only slightly, though, as Will's present body was still that of an adult. Vesne was actually quite short, now

that Senu thought about it...

“Is something troubling you, Will?” Senu asked.

For the first few seconds, Will didn't really respond. Instead, he just kept performing what was as close to crying as he could manage. Eventually, though, his voice came through.

“I want Daddy...” he sniffled as much as a Yithian could.

“I see...” Senu spoke, the words slowly filtering out like molasses. They were really surprised by the response. It had more gravity to it than they had anticipated...

“Soon enough, you will be able to see him once more. We just need to get you back in your body.” Senu said.

“In...my body?” Will asked, forcing down some of his strange movements.

“Well, of course! I trust that you recognize that you are not in your normal one.” Senu said.

“Uhuh...” Will said numbly. “You are gonna take me back?” he asked, his voice straining a bit.

“Yes indeed, Will. It should not take too long.” Senu responded.

Will remained quiet for a while. When his speech returned, it was no longer accompanied by his previous movements.

“Alright...thank you...” Will said shyly.

Senu simply looked at Will with what Yithians knew as a smile. Somehow, Will recognized it too.

Senu led Will by the hand as the three made their way through the byzantine paths of the city. Jano had identified a small park for juvenile Yithians nearby, and the group was rapidly approaching the location. It would admittedly look a bit odd, but perhaps it could also prove to be an educational opportunity for the young, Senu thought...

“It is good to see that you handled the situation well. What was the problem?” Jano asked.

“He sought the presence of his parents. His father, in particular.” Senu spoke.

“Of course, of course...kinship bonds at their age are even more important for their species than our own...” Jano nodded to himself.

Senu nodded along as well, though they noticed that their thoughts seemed less academic than usual.

When the park first appeared within view, Will did not really notice it as such. There were peculiar little domes with green windows, and strange play structures constructed of thin segments of black metal. What Will did instinctively recognize, though, was that the Yithians next to the structures were smaller than the ones he had previously seen. Significantly smaller. Will's pace increased.

“Hold on a bit, Will, we're almost there...” Senu struggled to keep up with the child.

“Park! Park! Park!” Will shouted in delight.

A few of the Yithian children among the park's structures looked at the visitor curiously. They were small in number, but composed, almost to an uncanny degree. One curious young Yithian approached. One or two nearby guardians also looked on at the oddity, but they figured out the situation far quicker.

Will stopped at the outer boundary of the play structures, where the inquisitive Yithian child awaited. The alien spoke first.

“Are you alright?” they asked.

“Mmm...kinda! I want to play.” Will responded.

The Yithian child peered at him oddly for a few moments. Many of the other children in the background also stared on at him strangely. Will felt a bit perturbed.

“Are you not an adult?” the kid asked.

“...Wha?” Will just looked on confused.

“Apologies, it just appears as though you are fully grown. Typically these parks are reserved for juveniles, although I am not entirely sure as to what degree those regulations are enforced...” the child spoke and quickly lost Will.

“I want to play...” Will mumbled. His body began to tense up again, the movements from before returning. The child in front looked on in confusion, and many in the back were even more affected. They did not have much information with which to process this situation.

“Apologies, child...” Senu spoke, even as they gasped for air. The alien had run a great distance, and now stood on the edge of the play structures, close to Will. Jano arrived soon after.

“Hello children. We are from the Department of Transference.” Senu spoke professionally. Jano stood up a bit prouder.

Excited murmuring starting to come up from among the children in the back, breaking through their composed exteriors. A few started to come down off of the play structures, curiously approaching the trio.

“Transferpeople?” one child asked.

“Are you psychic?” another kid inquired.

“Why are you here?” yet another child asked.

Senu quieted down the excited mumbling with a raised hand.

“We are here on a special duty, today. We are chaperoning a transportee from a few million years in



the future, a man, to be precise...” Senu explained.

“A man?” one child asked.

“What alien is that?” another child asked.

“Why did you bring them to a park?” one kid inquired.

“That can be explained in due time, children.” Senu responded. “Will here is a child of his species, though he currently occupies the body of an adult. The situation is a bit too complicated to explain in detail, but one of our operatives accidentally made the transfer with the wrong person. We are currently guarding Will until he can be delivered back to his own time.”

“The alien is really a kid?” one young Yithian asked.

“His?” another one inquired.

“Can the alien play?” another Yithian child inquired.

“Well, little Will here *can* play, though I would advise you to be gentle with him. By the standards of his own species, he is even younger than you.” Senu spoke. There was a hint of anxiety that they felt about the situation, something that surprised them.

“Indeed so. Will is a baby, and he is not entirely used to his body, so you should exercise caution, both for his safety as well as yours.” Jano spoke up.

“A baby!” one child squealed.

“What is, um, 'his' race like?” a Yithian child asked.

“I think this park is for 70 to 140 year olds, sir...” another child quietly mumbled.

After the introduction, play began rather quickly. Many of the children were at least curious about Will, and a few were absolutely enraptured by the idea of having an alien baby among them. They showed Will the interior of the domes on the playground, and guided him up the steps of some of the play structures. They also, of course, asked him many questions, few of which he was able to respond to. Many of the young Yithians, of course, quickly picked up on this, and turned to ask the people from the Department of Transference all the questions. They were soundly satisfied by the answers provided, as were those who stuck around to play with Will.

In due time, though, the visit came to an end. Jaro got a message on their communicator, and quickly notified Senu. The Senior Manager deftly made his way past a small crowd of Yithian children in order to retrieve Will. He was rather disturbed that his playtime had been interrupted, but the fact that it had been interrupted by Senu helped.

“Senu?” Will asked. “What is happening?”

“We got a call. Come along now, Will.”

Will followed the two out of the park, and back onto the path they had trod previously. They soon reached the plaza, and the Transference building after that. Will did recognize a few things, and turned to ask Senu something.

“Senu? What are we doing back here?” the man-alien inquired with shimmering eyes.

“You will soon see, Will.” Senu responded. At first, he just kept looking straight ahead, but after a few seconds, he turned toward Will and nodded.

Will felt a little better after that.

Jaro guided the two towards another chamber in the Transference complex. This one was composed of a shiny, silvery metal, and was even more chock-full of machinery than the previous Transference chamber had been. Will looked along the walls, which were filled with diagrams and schematics and screens with text on them. In some strange instinct, Will studied them for a while.

“Well, Will. It has been a pleasure to meet you, I must assure you...” Jaro was the first to speak. For a second, Senu shot him a glare.

“Wait...what?” Will tilted his head.

“We are ready to make the transfer once more. Our friend Vesne has been assisted by some operatives, and now stands ready to return. It is rather complicated, but you do not exactly need to worry about the specifics of the situation, Will.” Jaro spoke.

“I am going back?” Will asked. Will felt strange.

“...Yes you are, Will.” Senu finally spoke. “We will initiate the transfer process ourselves, since you do not have much skill in the operation of our technology.”

“I...umm...” Will looked off for a second, lost in a confusing mass of thought.

“Can, when can I see you again?” Will asked. He looked on shinningly at Senu, but there was some faltering to his expression.

Both Senu and Jaro looked at each other. They were very well composed, but a few things escaped their facade-faces.

“Will...” Senu drifted off. They were gazing down at Will, lost in thought. A moment later, their voice returned, now firm.

“We are from very far in the past, Will. Back in your time, we will be...physically gone. You will understand in time.” Senu spoke quietly.

“B-But...” Will's voice faltered. “You brought me here once, maybe you can do it again?”

“You are...not projected to be one of our transportees, Will.” Senu spoke.

Will was quiet for a fair time. Jaro looked a bit worried, and gazed toward the exits, but Will did not

run. Instead, when he came back to, he asked Senu a simple question.

“Could you take this off, Senu?” he looked up at Senu, strangely serene. He was pointing at the green band around one of his arms.

“Indeed I can, Will.” Senu said.

Senu took the band off of Will, but before he could stow it away, Will grasped at it. Senu let him take it.

Will looked thoughtfully at the band for a few seconds, before he aimed a claw at it. Crudely, the child etched some additional symbols into the empty space of the green band.

When Senu would later research man in order to understand the symbols, he would discover that one was a smiley face, and the other a heart. But at that moment they received the band from Will, they did not know what they meant.

Other Yithians were beginning to enter the chamber. It was time.

Senu guided Will up towards the Transference device. He was not very resistant. The freshly-arrived Yithians took their places around the room. Jaro held back, trying not to look at Will too closely.

The device that effected mind-transfer itself was a rather simple thing, all things considered. They were metal parts and machinery, of course, but the thing looked far more primitive than many other things in the room. This was of course intentional. Since the mind-transfer device was so simple to construct, an operative would find it easy to construct one, no matter what body they now inhabited, and no matter what technology level the civilization around them possessed. Senu slowly sat Will down by the mind-transfer device. Light was filtering through crystals, concentrating on Will's face. As the lights converged closer and closer and the transfer process neared completion, Senu could not face it. They looked away.

When they looked back, they just knew it was Vesne.

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Senu walked down the halls of the Transference complex, much as they would do on any other day. As time marched on, more projects reared their head, and the situation in the Department shifted. It manifested much work for Senior Managers like themselves, but they did not mind it. Senu continued down the hall, off to handle some more paperwork.

Senu largely just thought to themselves these days. It could have just been due to age, of course, but Senu could not help but imagine that something more provoked it. Of course, he was hardly eager to explore those thoughts in any capacity, but they were still there. So Senu just kept holding thinking of them to themselves, before they heard someone in front of them cough.

“Apologies, I did not...Vesne?” Senu asked.

Senu was confused. Vesne was not scheduled for any operations today, and it had been decades since they last worked together. But to Senu's surprise, Vesne just stared. And smiled, as much as the Great

Race could.

“Hello, Senu. It's been quite a long time.” the individual said.

“Well, I suppose you could say that, though I must wonder what aliens you have been dealing with recently to consider a few fecades a 'long time.' Bah, it is no matter, though. It is good to see you, Vesne.” Senu extended a claw in greeting.

The individual took some time to respond, and Senu was rather confused, for they looked as though they were being offered some great honor. But eventually, they offered their own claw in return, and the greeting was made. When the two retrieved exited out of the greeting, Senu had been ready to start walking down the hall again, before the individual opened up the claw he had previously extended.

There was the green band.

Just then, everything clicked into place.

“...Will?” Senu asked quietly.

“Took you long enough.” Will gave a clicking that constituted the laugh of the Great Race. “I thought you were supposed to be the masters of knowledge throughout all space and all time?”

“I...hmpf...well you should know by now that adults do not have it all figured out. Usually.” Senu mumbled.

“Indeed. In that case, I suppose we are both clueless, relatively.” Will managed a smirk as much as one could in the body of the Great Race.

Senu just shook his head, lost in thought and happy.

“You're grown now. I suppose we can interact as-” Senu stared off at nowhere in particular.

“Equals?” Will asked, but he did not really.

Senu just nodded their head, smiling as much as the Great Race could.

“Indeed. I apologize, this is still all just difficult to come to terms with. I am quite shocked that a man could construct a functioning mind-transfer device, all based upon information fleetingly acquired at the age of two years.” Senu said.

“Well we all have our skills.” Will noted.

“Indeed. Speaking of which, I am supposing larceny ranks among some of yours? Because I kept that band in a box at home...” Senu shook their head.

“I had time to prepare.” Will grinned as much as he could in a Yithian body.

“Still, it is just amazing.” Senu looked on at Will. They were lost somewhere else.

“In your time, I am long dead, and in my time, you have yet to be born.” Senu spoke solemnly.

“Perfect time to meet, would you not say?” Will spoke.

Senu did not say anything for a time, but he began to walk when Will did. The two had much to discuss.

On Earth, an alien was groggily waking up in a room on the top floor of a two-story home. It took their eyes a little while to focus, but once they did, they noticed the patchwork mind-transfer device to their right, and pastel colors and strange objects all around. It took them another second for them to realize that the surroundings were faintly familiar.

Their eyes widened.

They realized they were wearing a thick, crinkly undergarment that they *really* did not want to think about right now, but more importantly, they saw a now-empty syringe on the ground, one that had been previously filled with a muscle relaxant. On the door of the makeshift playroom, they saw a note attached.

“Just like old times!”

Vesne sighed.

This was going to be a long day.