

THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS

By Gerald Williams

Thoughts and Prayers

Death is an intimate and personal moment, but echoes of a person's life remain. Do the stories we tell about the dead help us to remember them, to keep them alive in our minds. Thoughts and Prayers is a brief look at an intimate moment in a high school library that, we hope, helps us to remember.

Bio
150 words

Gerald has spent most of his adult life in Osaka, Japan. He writes plays and short stories that often focus on the lies we tell to others and the lies we tell to ourselves. His friends are often surprised how sad his work can be, and those who only know him through his work are often surprised how much he smiles. After retiring from teaching he divides his time between Vancouver, BC and Osaka, so he can feel slightly out of place in two cultures. He has been married to the same man for thirty years.

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Characters

Jae-eun - Female. Under 20

Voice - Any age, Any gender

Noah - Male. High School Age

JAE-EUN CAN SEE NOAH. HE CAN NOT SEE HER.

JAE-EUN

Do you think people hear the stories we tell about them after they die?

VOICE

Would it make any difference?

JAE-EUN

I don't know. It makes me feel better.

VOICE

Stories are never the truth no matter how much we know.

JAE-EUN

I think about kids in hospitals who are going to die and how they can be brave and comfort parents. Does knowing death is coming make you brave?

VOICE

Maybe sharing with someone helps them find happiness.

JAE-EUN

Maybe. Dying of an illness is different than dying in a classroom.

VOICE

A classroom?

JAE-EUN

School. Being in a classroom, in a school when someone's got a gun. Someone hunting. There's too much fear to find any peace.

VOICE

Is there fear in schools?

NOAH

I was in the library and the librarian was screaming at us which was kind of scary but also kind of funny because she's this mom you know, not like a coach or someone who can scare you, she looks like a mom, but her yelling gets everybody moving which is good, so we're all moving, but not fast, because, she's a mom and she's yelling and mom's yell and I do it, but not like I'm in a hurry, it wasn't serious. I looked around and I didn't know exactly what I was going to do, then I watched her close the doors of the library and I got a feeling, and then she locked them. The doors, you know, she locked the doors. That kind of freaked me out. I don't know why, but watching her lock the door, that really freaked me out. I'd never been in the library when it was locked before. And now I am, and I know it, I know. It's serious. You could tell she didn't know what to do. You could tell she was thinking of going into her office and hiding, but she looked at us and she stopped. I wanted to tell her to go into her office, that guys who do this usually shoot kids, not librarians. "Run" I wanted to say. I never said it and she never heard it and she went and sat with this kid with special needs. She sat down beside him and held his hand. She's cool you know. I never thought about it before, but she is. I was going to tell her "hey good job" or something stupid like that. You know I'm only a kid and I'd feel kind of stupid telling an adult something like that, and that's when the kid under the table pulls on my shorts. I thought for a second he was trying to pants me, you know, pull a guys pants down and make him embarrassed so he's just in his underwear, but that's not what he was doing. He pulled on my shorts to get me to look down. To see him. To get under the table.

JAE-EUN

I heard that when someone's drowning their mind shuts down and there is no pain just the dream of flying. And when freezing to death you people feel warm.

VOICE

Does it make you feel better?

JAE-EUN

Yes. But what about before? Being lost in the snow, or sitting on a boat that's sinking? Knowing everything is going to get dark, get cold, and hoping you're going to get rescued. You're awake then. You have hope. Hope is dangerous.

VOICE

Doesn't hope keep you safe?

JAE-EUN

Hope is a shield to protect us from what we know.

VOICE

Shields protect us.

NOAH

This other guy, this kid I didn't know, he pushed the chairs around and sort of made it look like no one was under there, which was smart, so I went under with him, and because of all the legs of the table and the chairs there wasn't a lot of room and we were close you know, and it felt kind of stupid because like I said I didn't know him but we had a couple of classes together, but I couldn't remember his name, and to be honest I don't think I ever knew it, but there we were under this stupid table sitting too close and trying not to listen to the sounds that are coming down the hall. Trying not to think. And what was weird, was I was suddenly staring at him. Well, not staring, looking at him. Looking at each other. Right into his eyes. Here's a kid I don't know and I'm looking into his eyes and he's looking into mine and it's like we'd been the best friends in the whole world, and there was nothing else but him and me, and we were friends, and could do anything as long as we stayed together, as long as we kept looking at each other everything was going to be ok, and this is something we'd tell our kids about, and it's something that would make us friends forever, like a secret you share with only one person in the whole world.

(MORE)

NOAH (CONT'D)

I figured he felt it too, because tears start coming down his face. Not like he's crying, because he's not moving and he's quiet, no sound, just tears. And he's not shy about it, not looking away, looking me straight in the eye it's just him and me and I know I started to smile at him. I don't know where that smile came from, but it felt so good looking at him, looking at his eyes and having him look at me, just him and me, and the whole world is quiet, no sound, like what it sounds like when you're asleep in the dark, and that's when I died, looking into this kid's eyes and feeling like everything was alright and I was safe and somebody loved me, and I loved somebody.

JAE-EUN

Maybe fear is having hope that someone can rescue you and but knowing they never will

VOICE

Maybe that's why we tell stories after someone dies.

JAE-EUN

Stories make us feel better so we can live without hope because no one will rescue us.

VOICE

I hope you're wrong.

NOAH

Me too.