

I'll Tell You at Sunrise

A One Act Play

by

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Information

Characters

Man – Well-to-do. Any race or age.

Vagabond – Homeless. Any race, age, or gender.

Scene: A subway platform. At center, a bench.

Time: Present.

Directional Notes: Parentheses indicate where the dialogue overlaps or is interrupted. A **Beat** is a change in the pacing of the conversation. A **Pause** is one second long. A **Silence** is between two and three seconds long.

Sound Cues

1. A train arriving.
2. A train departing.
3. Train doors opening and closing.
4. P.A announcing the train's arrival and departure (optional)

Playwright's Note: *The play's ending is left ambiguous purposefully. There is no “One Size Fits All” solution to suicide prevention when you're trying to talk someone out of it. If at all possible, seek professional help for yourself or your loved one going through any suicidal ideation or thoughts.*

Dedicated to _____.

Who tried to end things one Christmas Eve and lived to see his son born that same day a few years later.

I'll Tell You at Sunrise

At opening the sound of a train passing. After the train passes, the *Man* and the *Vagabond* enter. They take a seat on the bench. The *Man* speaks in a weariness that has become emotionless while the *Vagabond* has a calculating way of talking, as though choosing their words carefully.

Man

Do you understand?

Vagabond

I get it.

Man

You've got no problems?

Vagabond

I've dug ditches before. Filling one shouldn't be hard.

Man

I mean, you have no objections?

Vagabond

No. I don't—just...

Man

What?

Vagabond

Well...I've always been taught that when you want to help someone. You gotta do it right. It's better that way. Makes it easier.

Man

Look—

Vagabond

Come on, man. This ain't easy for me. You know it ain't.

Man

If you want to be sentimental about it, just bury me using your hands instead of a shovel.

The Vagabond laughs.

Vagabond

You're funny.

Man

You don't need to think about (*what you're doing, just do it*)—

Vagabond

You come up to me and you ask for help. I say yes. But if I could help you some other way (*like convincing you this isn't a good idea*)—

Man

You can help by doing what I asked you to do.

Vagabond

But that ain't really helping you, brother. Who you helping when you bury the dead? Isn't it more helpful to save a life?

Man

So, you do have objections.

Vagabond

You asked for help. I said yes. I'm trying to help you.

Man

I want you to do as I asked. If you can't do it, why did you say yes?

Vagabond

You offer someone a few thousand dollars for an hour of work, you'd be a fool not to do it. But I'm gonna try to find a better way if I can.

Man

But you'll do what I ask?

Vagabond

I will. But I have a condition.

Man

What?

Vagabond

Talk with me. Until my train comes.

Man

Is that all?

Vagabond

That's all I ask.

Silence.

Man

You want to know why.

Vagabond

I do. Yes.

Man

I'm sorry.

Vagabond

It's okay. You don't have to answer. But, I mean...what does it matter if you're buried or not? Once you're dead, you're dead.

Man

I have my reasons.

Vagabond

No doubt. It's just...I don't understand.

Man

You're not getting paid to understand.

Vagabond

No. I guess not.

Silence.

Vagabond

Whatever is going on Whatever it is, you can get past it.

Man

I know that.

Vagabond

But you won't get past it ignoring your problem and dying.

Man

I'm aware.

Vagabond

You don't know me, so you don't gotta say jack to me. But, you got a family don't you? You got friends? Anyone that you can talk about this with? You can't get past it until you can talk about it.

Man

Then maybe I don't want to get past it.

Vagabond

Then you wouldn't have asked for help.

Man

I asked you to—

Vagabond

I know what you asked me for, but—but every problem has a solution

Man

I already found (*my solution*)—

Vagabond

Suicide isn't a solution.

Man

It's *always* a solution.

Vagabond

You don't mean that.

Man

I do.

Vagabond

What could possibly be happening that this is the solution?

Pause.

Vagabond

If this were a solution to the problems of life, we'd all be dead.

Man

How long until your train gets here?

Vagabond

You're stuck with me for a few more minutes. Sorry.

Man

I didn't mean (*to imply that you were annoying me*)—

Vagabond

I know what you meant.

Man

Either do the job, or don't, but I don't want any more questions.

Silence.

Vagabond

No more questions. Gotcha.

Man

Thank you.

Vagabond

But I'm gonna keep talking. Till my train comes.

Man

Why?

Vagabond

Because I care about you.

Man

You don't know me.

Vagabond

But I relate.

Man

Yeah? Really?

Vagabond

Yes.

Silence.

Vagabond

I—I was going to once...awhile back.

Man

Once what?

Vagabond

End it.

Silence. This monologue should be delivered with hesitation and (an attempted) restraint of emotion.

Vagabond

It was...buncha stupid stuff. Happening all at once. Whole thing felt hopeless. And I don't know why. I don't really remember it, but I stayed up something like two days straight when I decided that I was gonna do it. I was done. And I um...I...you see I had this thing about falling leaves, right? I thought that it'd be kinda romantic...you know...to fall like a leaf to the ground. And the...the door up to my apartment's roof, right? The lock was broken. I thought it'd be really...nice. Just floating down. I don't know what I was thinking back then. But...but I remember that when I finally decided I was going to kill myself, everything became so easy. It felt so...life felt so effortless. It was gonna be okay. You feel that, right? Like there's...peace at last...

The Man cannot take his eyes off the Vagabond.

And it sounds so stupid, but I decided that I was going to wander the city. Like a leaf floating and spinning around in the wind. And when I had nothing left in me, I'd jump from my apartment building.

The last gust of wind for the leaf that couldn't fly anymore. So, it was...two days...yeah...two days of wandering. Living my last days.

Pause.

I said that already, didn't I? Shit. I'm sorry. Alright. Let me....let me get this straight in my head.

Pause.

So, it was...I spent all my money and walked till my legs felt like they were gonna give up. I walked back to my apartment building, right? And...um...next to my apartment building was this little sub place. Little Italy Sub Shop. And I kid you not, just when I was walking past this sub place, right? This guy comes out and sees me. He goes to me and says, "Hey, you look hungry. Eat." And he hands me this sub and walks off. Never see him again. And I'm not even thinking, right? I just keep going.

And I get to the top floor. One last flight of steps and I'm on the roof, right? I looked around. This was it. This was the last thing I'd ever see. Being honest with you, everything up there looked beautiful. There is nothing like looking at the skyline the moment before you die. It's breathtaking.

And I start walking to the edge of the roof and I realized, I'm carrying this 12 inch sub. So, I'm thinking, what the hell, right? I sit down, my back up against the AC Unit and I watched the city. The lights like little stars.

Pause.

I don't know how long I sat there, but when I stood up again, the sun was coming out. And I don't know what it was, maybe it was the sub or the skyline or maybe at the end of the day we just need to wander around for two days and spend all our money and realize that this whole thing...is beautiful. Life is beautiful and eventually it all works out. A sub and a skyline did that for me. Most times that's all it takes.

Silence.

Man

Did it?

Vagabond

What?

Man

Did everything work out?

Vagabond

Well...I mean...I'm homeless now.

Beat. They laugh.

Man

You're pretty funny, too.

Vagabond
Thank you

Man
So life doesn't get better, eh?

Vagabond
It's hard to answer that question. I don't know what makes a better life.

Man
You have no home. You have nothing that you can call yours.

Vagabond
But possessions can't be what life is all about, can it? I mean we leave them behind when we die, right? What about walking around with the sun on your face? What about a kid laughing when they see a magic trick? What about skylines at dawn, or eating the best damn sub in the world? What about that first kiss with someone you love? What about looking into the eyes of a newborn? Or listening to your favorite song on the road? Or...or sitting in a train station trying to remind a friend that life might actually be worth living?

Silence.

Vagabond
Talk to me. You can't want to give that all up. Life's like the seasons. Ice eventually melts and every season has its fruit you can eat. Nothing is so hopeless that (*killing yourself is the answer*)—

Man
(*loudly and then lowering*)
Enough! Please. Just...

Silence.

Vagabond
I'm sorry. I didn't mean (*to overstep my boundaries*)—

Man
It's okay.

Vagabond
Look, I'm not trying to be one of those bullshit self-help guides, because that stuff's fucking fake. I just want to reach you, man. I want you to see another side to this. I'm not going to promise that things are going to get better. I'm not going to lie to you and say that it's gonna fix itself, but there's always a chance. You can't discount hope. Sure. There's a chance it might not get better. But we both know it almost always does. If not, at least it'll get tolerable. But I ain't gonna try to stop you. This is the one thing that you have absolute control over and it's not for me to take that away from you, but please. Please reconsider.

Silence.

Man

Go over it with me again...what you're gonna do tomorrow.

Silence. The Vagabond sighs.

Vagabond

I'm gonna go to the place at sunrise with two subs from Little Italy Sub Shop and stand over the hole.
I'm gonna call out to you. You're gonna respond, and I pull you out.

Man

And if I don't respond?

Vagabond

I'm going to pull you out of that hole at sunrise and we'll eat subs before I take you home.

Man

But if I don't respond?

Vagabond

Some things are easier to do than to say. I'm gonna do what you asked me if it comes to that. I promise.

Man

Let me hear it. Please.

Vagabond

If you don't respond, I take the shovel and I bury you.

Man

Thank you.

Vagabond

Don't thank me.

The sound of a train in the distance.

Vagabond

That's my train coming.

Man

(pulling out an envelope from his pocket)

Here take this. Half up front.

Vagabond

No. Tomorrow. I'll take it tomorrow.

Man

Okay.

Vagabond
See you later.

Man
I'll see you tomorrow. Well...you'll see me tomorrow.

Vagabond
We'll see each other tomorrow, man. I know we will.

Sound cue of a train pulling in and opening its doors. The Vagabond stands up and offers a hand to the Man. The Man shakes it.

Man
Goodbye.

Vagabond
Until tomorrow.

The Vagabond begins exiting offstage.

Man
Wait!

The Vagabond stops and looks back.

Man
What's your name?

The Vagabond chuckles.

Vagabond
I'll tell you at sunrise.

The Vagabond exits. Sound of a train departing. The Man sits alone for a moment. Silence. The lights fade.

End of Play

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Franky D. Gonzalez is a playwright living in Dallas, TX originally from Queens, NY. He holds a BA in Theatre from the University of North Texas and has been produced by several theatre companies and colleges in the Dallas-Ft. Worth metroplex. He also self-produces and directs his own films and plays and has had his film work featured in the Cannes Film Festival Short Film Corner in 2016, and won the AT&T Create-a-thon Dallas Edition in 2017 for his short film "Conversation(s)". "His theatre work has been featured on Art & Seek, The Column by John Garcia, Theater Jones, and most recently, Jenny Magazine. A proud member of the Dramatists Guild, Franky enjoys collecting movies, plays, and memories with his family.