

Shakespeare's Bones

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Cast of Characters

BEN: 17, nerdy. More into engineering than English. Glad to have gone to England for the Spring, but gladder to be home. Usually, gladder to be home.

WILL: Shakespeare.

ACT IScene 1

A teenage boy's bedroom: A bed on one wall, a desk on another, a rug on the floor in between. There's a wardrobe on the back wall. Late afternoon light streams in through the window. BEN, 17, is asleep on his bed. He's wearing a Union Jack T-shirt. His suitcase stands, fully packed, in the corner. His backpack, fully packed, on the bed.

Later.

The shadows are longer, the light dimmer. Night has crept up on the room. There's moonlight coming through the window. It's a weird hour, like 3am, a surreal jetlagged moment.

Ben wakes up.

He's stiff. He stretches.

BEN

Darn.

He puts his backpack on the floor, opens it, puts his laptop on his desk. Straightens it, looks at it again.

That's fine. For now. He leaves his laptop and opens the wardrobe. He goes to unpack his suitcase. Kneels, unzips it.

In a swirl of light and with a crack of thunder, out of the suitcase pops

WILLIAM FUCKING SHAKESPEARE.

WILL

*I am Shakespeare's spirit,
Doom'd for a certain term to stay interr'd,
confin'd fast to my rotting bones,
As my poor choice in my days of nature
Keeps me in my grave--*

Ben is frozen, staring. He blinks.

BEN

Oh, I'm really jetlagged.

WILL

I've sat cramped in that suitcase planning this speech for fourteen hours! Tough crowd.

BEN

What?

WILL

Thief, you've stolen something of mine, and I have cursed you for it, as was written on my stone.

BEN

What are you talking about.

WILL

My bones, man! Do you not follow?

BEN

Wait... What? I didn't... I didn't steal anything--
This is my suitcase--

Ben crouches by the suitcase and picks up one of the items in it.

BEN

Wait. This isn't my suitcase--What the hell is this?

It's a skull. He holds it up á la Yorick.

WILL

That's my bones.

*Ben shrieks shortly and drops the skull.
Shakespeare catches it before it shatters.*

WILL

Be more careful with my bones, will you?

BEN

I didn't steal any bones!

WILL

Then why do you have my bones?

BEN

I don't know why I have your bones! What do you mean, I stole your bones? I have no idea why I have your bones! Why do I have your bones?

WILL

How would I know why you have my bones? I just live

here.

Ben paces. Should he run downstairs? He starts for the door--But no. What would he even do? He turns back to the bed. Maybe he should sleep and then this'll turn out to be fake. But this is something he needs to deal with.

BEN

Okay. Okay, okay. Um. Umm... Can you, uh, tell me why you're here?

WILL

My bones.

BEN

Your bones.

WILL

A word of advice: Never say anything you don't mean.

I thought it would be clever to write a poetic sort of a curse on my tombstone--

'Good friend for Jesus sake forbear
To dig the dust enclosed here.
Blessed be the man that spares these stones,
And cursed be he that moves my bones.'

BEN

And--

WILL

Well. Here I am. Tied to my bones for eternity. I couldn't leave. Do you have any idea how dull it is to sit in a grave for four hundred years?

BEN

Well--

WILL

Absolutely you don't.

BEN

Guess not.

WILL

So this is a nice change of scenery, I suppose. But being trapped in your suitcase--oof.

BEN

That's not my suitcase. I think I took the wrong suitcase.

WILL

The suitcase's ownership doesn't make it more or less comfortable, villain.

BEN

Look... Mr. Shakespeare, it's very nice to meet you, but I don't want to be caught with your bones. So, umm... I'm going to call the authorities to come get you.

Ben crosses to his desk and opens his laptop. Shakespeare watches with a kind of detached interest.

BEN

have you seen one of these before?

WILL

I'm dead, not an idiot. Do you know how many tourists visit my grave every day? Of course I've seen a laptop. Idiot. You absolute imbecile.

BEN

Umm... Okay. I'll just find who to call, and then--

While Ben types, Will examines a magazine on Ben's desk. It's some airline mag.

SHAKESPEARE

How does this work? I have seen people take these-- Photographs, but how are they copied--

Will starts.

WILL

Anne?

BEN

Anne?

WILL

This feature on Anne Hathaway--My wife's name is Anne Hathaway.

BEN

Not that Anne Hathaway.

WILL
Show me.

BEN
What?

WILL
Show me your Anne.

BEN
Mr. Shakespeare, I--

*Ben's hands move of his own accord. He types
"Anne Hathaway" into the search bar on google.*

BEN
What on earth--

WILL
Oh. Well. I guess that's part of the curse, then.

BEN
The curse? I have to obey you?

*But Shakespeare's attention isn't on Ben for
long. He's wholly enthralled by the computer
screen, and the woman on it.*

Anne Hathaway.

WILL
You're wrong. That may well be my Anne.

BEN
Excuse me?

WILL
Don't you understand? She waited for me. Not in her
same lifetime, no, but through time--She's been
reborn all these hundreds of years. Love isn't so
weak as to end with death, boy. I wasn't the husband
I ought to have been, but now I have a chance, at
long last, to do her right.

BEN
Wait, what?

WILL
You have to do as I tell you. Well, I tell you to get
me to Anne.

BEN

I'm seventeen.

WILL

In my day you'd have been married or dead already.

BEN

No, like, it's literally impossible.

WILL

With the power of love, nothing is impossible. I've waited four hundred years for a wife I thought I didn't love, but all this time only she was on my mind. This must be fate. I feel it in my bones.

As if propelled by an unknown force--Or, more specifically, a very familiar force in a neck ruff and goatee--Ben marches out of his bedroom door. Will, delighted, follows.

Blackout.