

i will be alive

written by

W James

Revised 10.28.21

EXT. REC CENTER BATHROOM - DAY

Feet lead the body as CHESTER (30s) paces back and forth.

Chester is an exposed nerve ending as he smokes a CIGARETTE in hopes it will alleviate the anxiety.

CHESTER

Fuck. What the hell are you doing?

Chester tears himself down like bad drywall.

In the next breath, he tries to be his biggest cheerleader.

CHESTER

Ya, just go up there and...

COACH KASSANDRA (O.S.)

Pitch.

Chester hops like an elephant to a mouse.

CHESTER

Jeezus.

COACH KASSANDRA (40s) built like a bear, voice like a teddy.

She and Chester wear the same Jersey.

COACH KASSANDRA

Poor time to sneak off for a smoke.

CHESTER

Helps me focus.

Coach Cassandra does not buy but keeps the conversation moving.

COACH KASSANDRA

Look, you're going to do fine. Just don't hit anyone.

Chester pauses.

CHESTER

Wouldn't dream of it. Besides, it's just like baseball.

Coach Cassandra clocks Chester's ignorance.

COACH KASSANDRA

Well, yes and no.

They both look at each other, very much not on the same wavelength.

Chester looks over the shoulder of Kassandra and YOUNG JEFFERY (14), making his way underneath a tent.

COACH KASSANDRA

Well, you can finish your smoke on the way...

Chester is not listening to Kassandra. Chester does his best to hide the worry coursing through his body.

Coach Kassandra notices Chester not paying attention but isn't concerned with where his attention is.

COACH KASSANDRA

(under her breath)

They don't make volunteers like they used to.

Coach Kassandra snaps her fingers to get Chester's attention.

Chester snaps to.

Coach Kassandra cloaks her frustration with over-excitement.

COACH KASSANDRA

Come along, you need to meet the team.

Chester exhales a large puff of cigarette smoke before following Kassandra.

EXT. SOCCER FIELD - DAY

A white spray-painted cone shoots out from a corner point, home plate.

TWO BLUE CUSHIONED CYLINDERS act not just as bases but as sentinels on the field.

One at the end of each baseline.

Various PEOPLE take their seats in lawn chairs.

Each sideline is laced with tents, one after the next.

Under one tent is Coach Kassandra and Chester.

Chester still enjoys what last bit of cigarette he has.

COACH KASSANDRA
Team, we have a new pitcher.

Coach Cassandra gestures toward Chester.

Chester stumbles through his words.

CHESTER
Hi, I'm Jason.

REVEAL: A group of about seven individuals stand in front of Chester.

Most are in the process of putting BLINDFOLDS on.

The teammates in front of Chester are all visually impaired people of various backgrounds.

All of whom wear the same jersey. An extra few are sighted.

TEAM
Hi Jason.

Chester clocks JEFFERY (30s) as the sweat bullets begin to fly from his brow.

Chester goes to wave with an awkward smile, but Coach Cassandra knocks his hand away.

Chester nods.

CHESTER
Right.

Coach Cassandra recomposes herself.

COACH KASSANDRA
All right, hands in, everyone.

With the help of a few sighted teammates. The team has their hands in. Even Chester.

COACH KASSANDRA
Bandits on three.

Chester's eyes are locked on Jeffery.

COACH KASSANDRA
One.

Chester gulps as he wipes the sweat from his forehead.

COACH KASSANDRA
Two.

Chester's heart is in his throat, and there's nothing to do, but choke on it.

COACH KASSANDRA

Three.

TEAM

Bandits!

Chester is the team's echo but only by a second or two.

CHESTER

Bandits.

The team scatters, but Chester is rocked as he tries to make himself invisible.

COACH KASSANDRA

Alright, kid, let's getcha to the mound shall, we?

Invisibility unsuccessful, as Cassandra leads Chester to the mound.

EXT. SOCCER FIELD - DAY

A blindfolded BATTER makes his way to HOME PLATE.

The Batter and Chester both wear the same Jersey.

Chester stands on the mound with eyes as soulless as ever.

CHESTER

Ready...

He glances toward Coach Cassandra.

Cassandra gives him an eager thumbs-up.

Chester pulls a TAB out of a softball-sized BEEP BASEBALL.

The ball begins to BEEP a high-pitched beep. It's a rapid, successive beep.

This isn't how traditional baseball is played?

CHESTER

Pitch.

Chester winds up quite slow and quite solemn as he lets go of the baseball underhanded.

The ball travels toward the plate.

The blindfolded batter makes contact and sends the ball soaring toward center field.

A new loud tone emits down the first baseline as the batter sprints toward the new sound.

The new higher frequency tone comes from the large blue cylinder about a hundred and fifty feet from the plate.

Chester and THE CATCHER are the only sighted players on the field.

The ball lands in the gap between center field and right field.

Two opposing PLAYERS converge on the ball.

They, too, are blindfolded.

The batter sprints with all he has toward the pylon.

Chester watches with a bit of amazement.

And the beginnings of a smile form on his face.

The Batter dives toward the pylon.

The opposing players dive for the ball.

Chester looks back and forth, trying to gauge who is going to get to their goals first.

Chester's team is ecstatic.

The opposing players get the ball, just as they are about to raise the ball over their heads.

The Batter sails through the blue cylinder knocking it over.

An UMPIRE (50s), not blindfolded, stands near the pylon.

UMPIRE

Safe! That's one run for the
Bandits.

A small smile creeps on Chester's face.

This moment.

If he could bottle this moment.

This joy.

That is until Chester looks to see Jeffery approaching the batter's box with the help of a SIGHTED TEAMMATE.

Chester gives Jeffery a deep, somber glare.

And the joy, just like that, is gone.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY - FLASHBACK

Jeffery's voice emits like a calm, old ocean.

JEFFERY (V.O.)
There is nothing more to do,
Chester.

Young Jeffery stands in the batter's box.

JEFFERY (V.O.)
There is only penance.

YOUNG CHESTER (14) stands on the mound.

Young Chester feels the seams of the BASEBALL. Young Jeffery grips the RUBBER of the BAT.

JEFFERY (V.O.)
From this moment...

Chester winds up to pitch.

JEFFERY (V.O.)
Into infinity.

The ball soars through the air and hits Young Jeffery square in the face.

Young Chester stands there.

EXT. SOCCER FIELD - DAY

Chester snaps to while on the mound.

Jeffery makes himself comfortable in the batter's box.

Hype woman Coach Kassandra yells from the tents.

COACH KASSANDRA
Just like the last one.

Chester nods to himself, attempts any matter of composure.

CHESTER

Ready.

Jeffery squares up in the batter's box.

Chester pulls the pin.

CHESTER

Pitch.

The underhanded pitch leaves Chester's hand.

WOOSH.

High and Inside.

JEFFERY

Watch it! I could feel the wind on
that one.

Kassandra grips her hat with a cringe.

CHESTER

Just slipped, is all.

Chester receives the ball from the catcher.

Chester's anxiety wells looking for a place to escape.

CHESTER

Ready.

Jeffery readies in the box.

CHESTER (CONT'D)

Pitch.

The ball leaves Chester's hand speedier than the last time.

BAM!

The ball finds Jeffery's side, and Jeffery winces in pain.

JEFFERY

What the hell?

Chester is silent.

JEFFERY

Well, you got something to say for
yourself?

Coach Kassandra pinches the crest of her nose.

Chester takes a deep breath in.

And out.

CHESTER

Did you know there are 216 seams on a baseball?

JEFFERY

And?

Chester thinks of something to say.

CHESTER

And you wouldn't have a baseball without its seams. No game without its seams.

JEFFERY

Jason, what are you going on about?

Chester is on autopilot.

CHESTER

And if a seam rips, there are 215 other seams to hold the leather and the string together.

JEFFERY

Glad you got baseball facts. Can you please pitch the ball?

CHESTER

But after enough wear and enough tear, the seams they begin to unravel. They begin to return the ball to its leather and its string. And then there is no game.

Jeffery stays quiet.

Chester walks toward Jeffery.

CHESTER

I have been out of the game for a long time, Jeff.

JEFFERY

And what would you have me do about it, Jason?

CHESTER

Not Jason. Chester.

Jeffery takes a moment to recollect.

JEFFERY
Chester? JV baseball Chester?

CHESTER
One and the same.

Coach Kassandra looks around and yells from the tents.

COACH KASSANDRA
What the hell is going on over
there?

The crowd is confused by what is going on.

Everything inside Jeffery recognizes Chester, like when a doctor hits the soft part of the knee and the leg reacts.

JEFFERY
And you came here to do what, Chet?

CHESTER
To apologize for letting the seams
unravel as they did.

Chester's whole body wants to reject this interaction.

JEFFERY
Few decades late for that, don't
you think?

Chester scratches his head.

CHESTER
Probably.

Jeffery clicks his tongue. Empathetic.

JEFFERY
I've lived a life since then,
Chester...

Coach Kassandra gives a very concerned look towards Jeffery.

Chester begins to pace around.

JEFFERY
And I stopped looking for an
apology a long time ago.

CHESTER
But I'm here now. That means
something, right?

Jeffery begins to fume.

JEFFERY
 You invade my space. My place.
 Unannounced. Just to bring up some
 decades-old shit?

Chester stays quiet.

JEFFERY
 All for an accident? Really?

Chester puts all his energy into his hands.

CHESTER
 Accident? No, I threw that ball **at**
 you.

Chester and Jeffery's truths are rocked.

JEFFERY
 Chester, the ball slipped. It
slipped.

Chester is frantic as he tries to piece together memories.

Jeffery grabs his shirt.

JEFFERY
 Chester...

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY - FLASHBACK

Chester's voice emits like a calm, old ocean.

CHESTER (V.O.)
 I knew you had moved on.

Young Jeffery is conscious on the ground as his eyes flicker,
 trying to make sense of his new world.

CHESTER (V.O.)
 Stitched your life back together.

A BASEBALL lies near Young Jeffery.

CHESTER (V.O.)
 And I had missed that togetherness
 so much.

Young Chester runs away from Young Jeffery.

CHESTER (V.O.)
That I was willing to pull at the
seams one more time.

Whether Chester runs to get help or runs to get away is
ambiguous.

EXT. SOCCER FIELD - DAY

Chester's eyes blink, processing this new data.

*Or maybe it was data that's been there the entire time,
dwelling under the weight of the guilt?*

JEFFERY
All these years, I gave you the
benefit of the doubt

Jeffery shoves Chester.

CHESTER
It's been so long that I didn't
think of it being anything else.

Jeffery's fumes have boiled over.

JEFFERY
But now there's doubt where before
there wasn't. Haven't you done
enough?

Chester struggles with the words.

Chester deflates with defeat, his plan falling apart at the
seams.

CHESTER
I thought it would help. I thought
we could put it behind us.

JEFFERY
Not we. Today was never about us.

Chester exhales.

CHESTER
I'm sorry.

Jeffery shakes his hand and pinches the crest of his nose.

Jeffery gains some of his composure back.

JEFFERY

Fine. Apology accepted. Now, can we
get back to the game?

For Chester, those words do not bring much comfort.

CHESTER

Sure.

Jeffery is escorted back to the batter's box, and Chester
returns to the mound.

The whole crowd readies themselves.

Kassandra readies herself.

Jeffery's hands tighten around his bat.

Chester feels the seams of the ball.

There is nothing more left to do.

CHESTER

Ready.

Chester pulls the pin.

CHESTER

Pitch.

Chester sends the pitch right down the pipe.

CRACK!

Jeffery makes perfect contact.

The ball is a line drive right towards... Chester.

Chester sees the ball coming for him and in the split second,
it takes to get out of the way...

Chester stays.

The ball meets Chester's face with punishing force.

Chester falls to the ground.

Coach Kassandra rushes toward him.

The world slows for Chester as it begins to blur.

The light and texture of the world begin to coalesce.

A smile creeps across his face.

A penitent one no more.

CUT TO WHITE.