

(The Conversion of Willie Heaps)

by
(Razvan Anton)

(Adapted from the short story with the same title
by Hugh Garner)

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FADE IN:

EXT. BLUE WROXTER'S HILL - DAY

DARK mist gently creeps down the old trees standing beside the country road. RED sun falls from the sky and melts on the ground, while YELLOW dried grass waltzes with the wind against the silent BLUE sky.

Downhill , in front of a WHITE house, a BOY (12, blond, blue eyes) sits on the white fence looking up the road.

Irregular SOUNDS of footsteps approaching . WILLIE HEAPS (30, delayed, long and skinny, brown teeth) runs down the hill towards the child.

BOY (O.S.)

Although he was thirty years old he didn't seem much older than me. My father said it was silly for a full-grown man to play with a twelve year old boy, even if Willie was a little simple, he was the only real friend I had.

Willie stops in the middle of the road then waves to the child to come up with him.

BOY (CONT'D)

Where to?

WILLIE

(shouting)

Down to Angus Gordon's place.

BOY

I have to ask my mother.

Willie climbs on the fence next to the kid.

WILLIE

(still shouting)

Hurry up then. I want to get going before it's dark.

Coming to the screen door, MOTHER(37) wiping a plate with a dish towel.

BOY

Can I go with Willie?

MOTHER

Oh...I guess so.

She glances suspicious at Willie.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Hello Willie!

He freezes.

(MOTHER (CONT'D)

(to her son)

Don't you be late young man.

The kid waves to his mother then hurries after Willie who was already a few steps ahead of him.

EXT. COUNTRYROAD - DAY

The child has a hard time following Willie, who keeps turning his head towards the kid as if enchanted by a magic spell.

BOY (O.S.)

Willie was an expert at gelding colts,
and once or twice a month during the
summer he would take me with him to other
farms around the district.

Finally, the boy rushes beside him and moves to the right.

WILLIE

(breathing heavily)

We've got a new preacher at the
Pentecostal.

They climb a fence and walk along the rail tracks.

EXT. RAIL TRACKS - DAY

They both walk side by side, although Willie is continuously sidetracked. His unbalanced walk gives him the appearance of a madman.

WILLIE

...his name is Reverend Blounsbury.

BOY

What happened to the other one?

WILLIE

Mr. Oldsworth? He gone to the city

Willie DRAGS the child who kept remaining behind.

WILLIE (CONT'D)

Reverend Blounsbury is a better preacher
anyways.

BOY

Is he a real minister with minister's
clothes?

WILLIE

God's servant don't need 'em.

Willie SWALLOWS his saliva.

WILLIE (CONT'D)

I got saved last Sunday.

BOY

(smiling)

How do you get saved?

WILLIE

You go kneel down at the front of the
Mission.

BOY

(laughing)

Is that all?

WILLIE

(shouting)

Everybody sings and sometimes the women
cry.

BOY

How many times you been saved Willie?

Willie scratches his beard.

WILLIE

Oncet. Oncet is all you can be saved.

BOY

(breathing heavily)

Was you scared much?

WILLIE

Nope. Ain't nothing to be scared for.

BOY

Do you believe in that Willie?

WILLIE

I sure believe in it. Hell!

BOY

That makes you sure you're going to heaven don't it?

WILLIE

Yep.

His steps get LOUDER on the old cinder road.

BOY

Does the new minister save anybody at all?

WILLIE

Yep. He a better preacher than the other one.

BOY

(breathing heavily)

Is that all they do at the Pentecostal Willie?

WILLIE

No. They sing and the minister says a sermon. He says is a sin to go out with a woman cos' Jesus didn't do it, and it's sinful when men do it.

The boy stops to catch his breath.

BOY

I wisht we didn't have to go down to Angus' place. The fellas are down catching bullfrogs at the dam. Perry got one last night as big as a saucer.

WILLIE

They don't know nuthin about catching frogs.

Willie SNAPS his fingers.

WILLIE (CONT'D)

You wait and see what we catch tomorrow night.

They cross the tracks and get back on the countryroad.

EXT. COUNTRYROAD - DAWN

The SUN was laying low behind a grove of hardwood. Over the low spots in the high fields high-climbing SWARMS of gnats boiled and tumbled in the warm air. The crickets WHISTLED at them from every fence post as they HURRIED along the road.

BOY

How old is the colt at Gordon's, Willie?

WILLIE

I dunno. There's two of them Angus said.

BOY

It must hurt them Willie?

WILLIE

For a while. I guess. They get over it.

BOY

What does it do, Willie?

Willie pulls a BLADE from his pocket and shows it to the boy.

WILLIE

Makes 'em big and quiet. They can't work good unless they're cut.

BOY

I feel sorry for the colts.

WILLIE

Don't you get sick again or else I won't bring you.

BOY

I ain't gonna be sick no more.

EXT. GORDON'S PLACE - NIGHT

Willie and the boy arrive at a house surrounded by WHITE fences. The cattle and horses STAMP in the stable behind the barn.

WILLIE
ANGUS? Hello!

To the boy.

WILLIE (CONT'D)
I don't want to hafta come over here
again next week.

BOY
Maybe they'll be back soon.

WILLIE
We ain't got much time to wait.

BOY
They'll come in a minute.

Willie goes to the door and KNOCKS.

WILLIE
I won't come over again next week.

He KICKS the bottom step beneath the door.

BOY
Maybe they'll come home soon Willie.

WILLIE
(shouting)
Why didn't they wait! Why'd they go away
when they knew I was coming over!

Willie KICKS the step again. Even harder than the last
time.

WILLIE (CONT'D)
(to himself)
They could have stayed in. Angus Gordon
is a sinner anyways. Even Reverend
Blounsbury says so.

BOY
Can't you do it anyway Willie?

WILLIE
I'm going to fix 'em colts anyways.

BOY
That's right Willie. We might as well.

INT. STABLE - NIGHT

Willie opens the stable door, and the colts WHINNIED from the DARKNESS. The boy looks on the shelf located behind the stable door.

BOY
(shouting scared)
I can't find a lamp Willie!

WILLIE
I've got one.

The LIGHT of a struck match throws a sudden FLASH on Willie's face who displays a horrific grin.

The colts are tied at the end of a short row of stalls. A team of horses and a big Holstein bull were tied in the next stall.

WILLIE (CONT'D)
Help me out with them!

The kid FREEZES in front of the stable door.

WILLIE (CONT'D)
Come on, come on, we can't stand here!

The LIGHT from the lamp dangles on Willie's face revealing his YELLOW dirty teeth. He avoids the boy's eyes.

WILLIE (CONT'D)
There is too much sin around here! Angus is a poor sinner 'an we gotta help him before he's punished by God!

BOY
Let's wait till another time, Willie.

WILLIE
Now is the time!

BOY
I don't want to.

Willie looks at the boy.

WILLIE
You gotta. There's too much sin.

The scared horses lift their feet from the floor, their heads high and their eyes BRIGHT in the lantern LIGHT.

Willie grabs one of the colts and drags it into the yard.

EXT. YARD - NIGHT

They bring the horse down and tie its feet down. Willie works fast while HUMMING a little religious hymn. Willie castrates the animal in a flash and the colt snorts and stretches its neck when Willie was done.

WILLIE

(whispering)

You'll never sin, little horse!

He lifts his bloody knife to the light HUMMING even LOUDER. He turns the colt loose, and the boy opens the gate letting it through.

Willie grabs the next colt and with the boy's help he ties the rope around its legs still humming out of tune.

WILLIE (CONT'D)

No more sin! There'll be no more sin!

He goes down and castrates the other colt. He is slower this time so the animal SCREAMS in angst.

The boys holds the lantern close to the animal, throwing the LIGHT on this gruesome scenery. Willie's hands are DRIPPING the blood of the colt. The kid's face reveals fear and disgust.

BOY

Can we go now, Willie?

Willie completely ignores him.

WILLIE

I will not let them sin. I will stop all the sin in the world!

BOY

Let's go home now.

WILLIE

Not yet. I've got work to do.

BOY

Come on Willie, please!

WILLIE

No, not yet.

Across the street, in a vicinity house a LIGHT turns on in the kitchen. The top of the hill is covered with a thick dark mist.

Willie walks back into the stable and puts the lantern on a ledge then walks toward a big white bull.

BOY

Please Willie! I think I hear Mr Gordon Coming.

WILLIE

Angus Gordon is a goddamn sinner! We're all sinners! I have the power to stop all sin!

He catches the bull by the tail, and swung its haunches against the wall. A cloud of dust rises from the floor and the stable is filled with the NOISE of the big beast BANGING against the timbers. The horses are STAMPING in their stalls.

The boy sees Willie with the knife in his hand then turns around crouches on his knees and begins to scream.

WILLIE (CONT'D)

The Lord be praised! No more sin!

The kid runs across the yard and climbs over a fence into a pasture. The LIGHT from a lantern FLOATS in the piercing darkness towards the pigsty. A LOUD click of the latch on the pig-sty door, and the lantern disappears inside, LIGHTING UP the cracks between the boards.

Noisy GRUNTS, then startled SQUEALS break the silence of the hills.

The BELLOW of the bull grows weaker, but the night is filled with the SQUEALS of the pigs and hogs. Willie HUMS a hymn in the distance.

DISSOLVE TO:

Willie comes out of the pig sty, his eyes bugged out, his shirt stained with blood and the SOUNDS of hens clucking fills and the swish of wings against the wood CRACKED the night.

Willie holds the lantern with his left hand and a white hen with his right. He DROPS the lantern and releases a CRY at the top of his voice towards the sky.

He strangles the hen LAUGHING and HUMMING his tuneless song. He throws the WIGGLING body on the ground and picks up the lantern.

WILLIE (CONT'D)

Boy? Boy where are you?

He lifts the lantern up high.

WILLIE (CONT'D)

Boy?

Willie sees the child ready to climb the fence.

WILLIE (CONT'D)

Come on here, you poor little sinner.

The boy jumps over the fence and runs like a madman. Willie's eyes stare at the dark MUMBLING his lips covered with foamy SPIT.

EXT. TURNER'S PLACE - NIGHT

A dog barks LOUD in the DARK. A light SHINES from inside the house. The boy runs down towards the LIGHT. The child fights off the angered dog as it tries to grab at his legs. The door opens and BERT TURNER (59) runs outside holding a gun. Seeing the boy, he rushes to help him.

INT. TURNER'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Turner DROPS the boy on a solid wooden chair and hands him a glass of water. The kid GULPS the water and catches his breath.

TURNER

What's the matter boy?

BOY

It's Willie Heaps, He's gone crazy! He's cutting all the animals at the Gordon's. He's KILLED the pigs and chickens too!

MRS. TURNER (49) enters the room.

MRS. TURNER

What did he say?

MR TURNER

It's Willie Heaps, I'd better telephone
his father.

Mr Turner bolts the door while Mrs. Turner brings a cup of coffee and hands it to the kid who can barely hold it from fright.

MONTAGE SEQUENCE

--Bert talks on the phone

--Two cars park outside

--A group of men with guns and flashlights walk through the forest.

-- Early in the morning a farmer discovers Willie's corpse lying in the ditch all covered in blood.

--An ambulance takes Willie's corpse and drives off.

BOY (V.O.)

A search party was out all night looking for Willie. Early next morning Willie had been found in a ditch by a farmer, self-mutilated and nearly dead from loss of blood. An ambulance was sent from Brantford and they took Willie to the hospital there. He died the following night.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WILLIE'S FUNERAL - DAY

Willie lies dead in the coffin. Everyone dressed up in BLACK and crying standing around the corpse. His face all swollen and badly covered up with make up. MR HEAPS(63) and MRS HEAPS(61) crying the loudest . Mrs. Heaps' face is RED from too much crying. REVEREND BLOUNSBURY (31, tall and skinny, dressed in a BLACK shiny suit) comes out from the crowd and puts his hand on the boy's shoulder.

REVEREND BLOUNSBURY

And this is Willie's little friend, is it?

The boy's mother nods looking up at the priest.

REVEREND BLOUNSBURY
(CONT'D)

Poor child, to be bereft of a friend so soon in life.

The kid backs away.

REVEREND BLOUNSBURY
(CONT'D)

(coming closer to the child)
But don't grieve, lad, Willie sits at the right of his MAKER. He had been saved, you know.

The child's mother nods distantly.

REVEREND BLOUNSBURY
And how about you? Have you been converted yet, young man?

BOY
(yells and looks towards the door)

NO!

The child moves towards the door.

MOTHER
My, what's come over that boy!

The kid escapes the funeral and runs out the door.

EXT. WILLIE'S FUNERAL - CONTINUOUS

The boy runs on the country road, leaving a cloud thick WHITE dust behind him.

THE END

