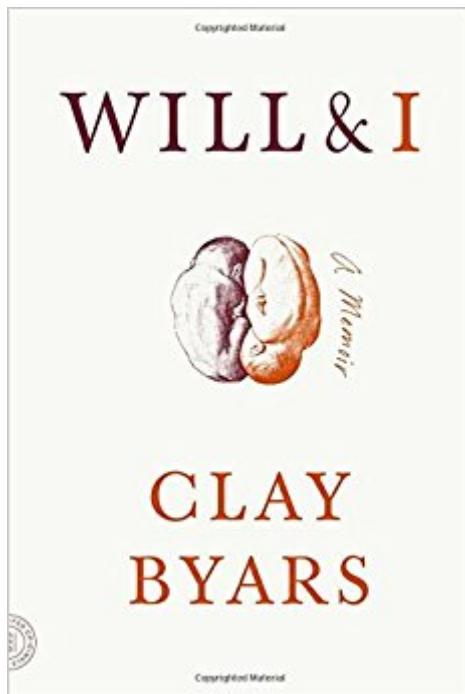


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Will & I: A Memoir



Synopsis

Clay Byars was recovering at home from a near-fatal car crash when he suffered a massive stroke. He was just eighteen years old. He awoke, back in the hospital, and was told he would be paralyzed from the eyes down for the rest of his life. Determined to defy the odds, Clay quickly and miraculously began to recover his mobility but discovered just how different his life would be—*a disparity embodied by his identical twin brother, Will.* As Will went on to graduate from college, marry, and start a family, Clay carved out a unique existence, doing the seemingly impossible by living on his own on a remote farm in Alabama. With haunting clarity and heartrending honesty, Will & I tells the unlikely story of Clay's life and his coping mechanisms, including weekly singing lessons that not only teach him to use his voice but remind him of his will to exist. In this singular and striking meditation on vulnerability and vitality, we're invited to see how Clay sees the world—and how the world sees him—as he bravely challenges himself and his abilities at every turn.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"A visceral, electric memoir." —Danne Romine Powell, *The Charlotte Observer*"[An] intensely powerful memoir . . . Compact, substantial and thoroughly compelling—*reminiscent of neurosurgeon Paul Kalanithi's posthumous bestseller, When Breath Becomes Air.*" —Alice Cary, *BookPage*"In this memoir of suffering and recovery, Narrative editor Byars recounts his struggle to master a body shattered by tragedy . . . A fascinating, if chilling, meditation

on the aftermath of trauma . . . A remarkable conclusion to his long calvary." ¢Publishers Weekly" A tragic accident gives birth to a writer . . . This memoir of recovery against considerable odds traces the relationship between the brothers, their innate closeness, and what changed after the accident and what didn't. . . His memoir is remarkably free of sentimentality or self-pity. He found both an outlet and a vocation in his writing, and he had to come to terms with the loss of those who had been prepared to lose him. A stark, honest book that reads like a writer's apprenticeship amid harrowing circumstances." ¢Kirkus "An elegant, spare, and at times wry memoir . . . One thing is clear: Byars can write, and readers of this slim narrative¢it can almost be read in one sitting¢are sure to follow Byars wherever he may lead us next." ¢Booklist "[A] personal, critical, and unsentimental examination of what it means to outgrow fear when there is nothing left to lose, how to find choice when it feels like every option has been stripped away, and how transformation arrives in moments of surrender." ¢Kate Parrish, Sewanee.edu "An unusual and strikingly beautiful piece of memory work." ¢John Jeremiah Sullivan, author of *Pulphead* "A story from the fine edge where soul and body meet, *Will & I* explores our common vulnerability and the tiny decisions and accidents that bloom in our lives. Clay Byars writes with gentle wisdom, great kindness, and a deep respect for simple profundity of life." ¢Catherine Lacey, author of *Nobody Is Ever Missing* "Will & I is proof that there is a sideways path to honesty¢œnot the clichÃ© of settled honesty or sentimental ¢œtruth,¢œbut a sideways path that keeps opening and striving, finally arriving at the next unexpected turn. Under the veil of direct telling, the book brilliantly enacts a complex construction¢œreconstruction¢œand ultimate surrender of a self to the vagaries of existence. As a person, Clay Byars had to learn how to sing in order to speak; as a writer, he has given us a very beautiful first song." ¢Brent Hendricks, author of *A Long Day at the End of the World*

Clay Byars attended the Sewanee School of Letters in Tennessee and is an assistant editor for *Narrative Magazine*. He lives with his two dogs on a farm outside Birmingham, Alabama.

I read this in one sitting. I can't stop thinking about it. Byars' writing style is so unique for a memoir. Flowery prose and tear-jerking moments are replaced with raw and real words that draw you into the story not as a cheerleader, but as a participant. You won't find platitudes or cliches. What you will find is reality. The detachment Byars seems to have might throw some readers, but it likely will draw most readers even further into his story. I too felt locked-in, or as much as I could without

actually being that way. The interactions between Clay and his twin, Will, feel real, not contrived or made-for-TV. His sister and parents provide a stable and supportive background to the unbelievable story as it unfolds. The main reason I find this book so thought-provoking is not the conclusion. It is the unapologetic way in which Byars presents it. The non-linear style he employs makes you see his life and struggles as moments out of time, much like I assume he remembers, or better yet, lives his story. Well done and real!

Clay Byars book brings the best of a good memoir: nuggets of universal truth wrapped in an unflinchingly honest package. It is altogether appropriate that the eloquence of the material ("It was the season of brochure pictures

Remarkable story. Unsentimental but deeply moving memoir; strongly recommend.

Incredible true story of survival against long odds. In a few pages, "Will & I" will change the way you view yourself and the world. Highly recommended!

I thought the storytelling was brilliant and captivating. The story could have leaned towards sappy, but Byars keeps the reader engaged without tricks. I appreciate the double meaning of the title. Byars's will is certainly formidable. I can't wait to read his next book.

Quit whining about your life for a minute and read this book. You'll be glad you did. Beautifully written, life changing stuff here from Clay Byars.

This memoir's perspective is fresh, rare, and sensitive. Byars takes us on a journey inside the mind of a brain-injured patient who articulates thoughts and emotions that are transfixing, inspiring, and sometimes frightening. His story soars and even sings.

This is such a well written memoir that allows readers to take this horrific and heroic journey with the author. I couldn't put it down. I laughed out loud, cried and cringed at some of the awful things this man had to endure. It left me wanting more!

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