



SARAH LISS

ARMY OF LOVERS

**A COMMUNITY HISTORY
OF WILL MUNRO,**

**THE ARTIST, ACTIVIST, IMPRESARIO
AND CIVIC HERO WHO BROUGHT
TOGETHER TORONTO'S CLUB KIDS,
ART FAGS, HARDCORE BOYS, DRAG
QUEENS, ROCK'N'ROLL QUEERS,
NEEDLEWORK OBSESSIVES,
LIMP-WRISTED NELLIES, STONE
BUTCHES, NEW WAVE FREAKS,
UNABASHED PERVERTS, PROUD
PRUDES AND BEAUTIFUL DREAMERS**

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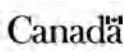
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(Exploded views)

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Dramatis Personae
in alphabetical order

Ryan Auger, a childhood friend

Cecilia Berkovic, friend, artist, designer, caregiver

Benjamin Boles, art-school classmate, first real boyfriend, musician,
writer

Dan Burke, notorious concert promoter, sometime addict, garage-
rock guru, raconteur

John Caffery, friend, caregiver, Vazaleen go-go dancer, member of
Kids on TV

Rori Caffrey, long-time friend, punk

Michael Cobb, U of T professor, queer theorist, caregiver, friend

Mark Connery, artist, punk, activist

Vaginal Davis, legendary performer, musician, artist, genderqueer,
lecturer, character

Beth Ditto, lead singer of Gossip

Ewan Exall, friend, punk, music promoter

Joel Gibb, bandleader of the Hidden Cameras, artist, friend, fellow
Meadowvale-ite

Andrew Harwood, artist, curator, gallerist, drag sensation

Kevin Hegge, filmmaker, DJ, friend, artist

Lorraine Hewitt, sex educator, punk, Vazaleen go-go dancer, friend

Peter Ho, primary caregiver, boyfriend, confidante

Joanne Huffa, friend, writer, punk, zinester, fellow Meadowvale-ite

Luis Jacob, artist, friend, sometime collaborator

Bennett JP, punk, filmmaker, friend

Bruce LaBruce, artist, filmmaker, pornographer, queer icon

Jeremy Laing, celebrated designer, artist, friend

Maggie MacDonald, sometime Hidden Camera, activist, zinester, performer, punk, friend

Max McCabe-Lokos, musician, actor, friend

Alex McClelland, ex-boyfriend, best friend, queer activist

Saira McLaren, artist, friend, former punk

Lynn McNeill, Beaver owner, former Lee's Palace bar manager and booker, Toronto fixture, gay rock-scene vet

Dave Munro, Will's brother, childhood adversary, lifelong champion, professional tattoo artist

Ian Munro, Will's father

Margaret Munro, Will's mother

Owen Pallett, friend, erstwhile Hidden Camera, occasional Arcade Fire collaborator, virtuosic musician

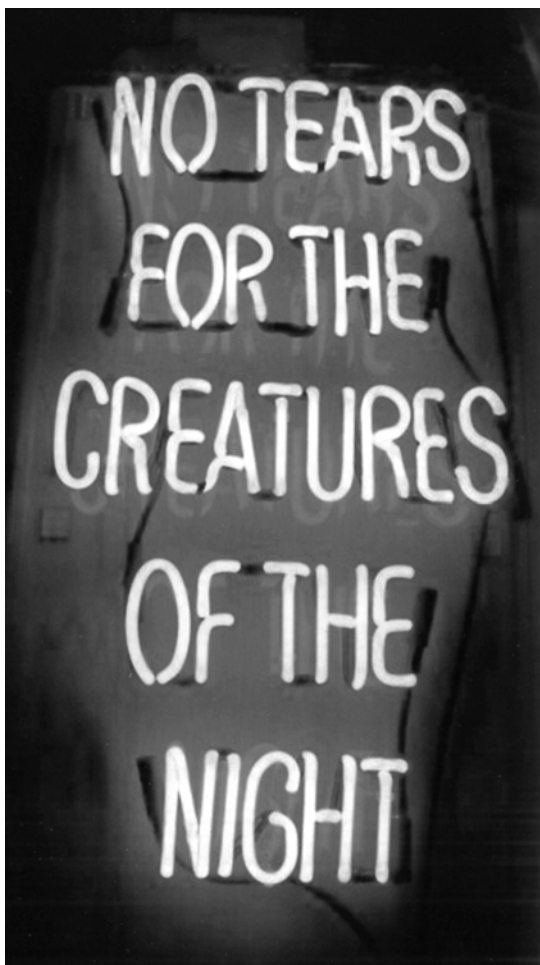
Peaches, Toronto-born international performer, pervert, queer icon

JD Samson, musician, performer, artist, member of Le Tigre and MEN

Amber Ternus, friend, punk, activist

Lex Vaughn, artist, performer, comedian, friend

'Gentleman' Reg Vermue, Light Fires/Gentleman Reg frontman, drag firecracker Regina the Gentlelady



No Tears for the Creatures of the Night,
a neon installation by Will from 2004



Will at one of his subway birthday parties

Preface Force of Will

No tears for the creatures of the night

No tears

My eyes are dry

Goodbye.

I feel so hollow; I just don't understand

Nothing's turned out like I planned.

– 'No Tears for the Creatures of the Night,' Tuxedomoon

This is a love letter to Will Munro. As I write this now, it is three years and a month, give or take, since he died at the unfathomably young age of thirty-five from brain cancer.

If you knew Will, this letter is for you. If you didn't know Will, I'm deeply sorry you missed out on meeting him. This letter is even more for you. You may not realize it, but whether you live in Toronto or Berlin or New York or beyond, chances are you've tripped over or passed by or sat in or danced at or made out to the soundtrack of something that exists only because of him.

Will Munro was a great many things – an acclaimed visual artist, a diehard activist, an awesome DJ, a business owner, a party promoter, a tireless advocate for underground bands – but above all else, he was a bringer-together of people, groups and things. This gentle, hilarious guy who looked, I swear, like a ghost-pale whippet, was the bridge between hardcore punk and drag queens, indie-rock and fetish parties, libertines and prudes, youth support groups and textile art. He was a creator, sure, but not just of objects; he created movements and transformation and, most of all, community.

Will was a pioneer in the geographical exodus of LGBTQ culture in Toronto. Certainly there were events happening in pockets outside the Church-Wellesley corridor – the city's hoary, storied Gay Village – before he came along, but he led a charge of queers from the Village into dive bars and rock clubs in the west end of the city, presaging the inevitable march of gentrification and leaving his mark (sometimes literally, tagged on the crumbling brick

of buildings in disrepair) along the way. In his hands, the Beaver, a modest joint that looked out over West Queen West, which at that point could barely be described as a neighbourhood in transition, was transformed from an unassuming brunch spot that served spillover crowds from the nearby boutique hotels into a de facto hub – not only for the queer community, but for a wide swath of both stroller-pushing locals and creative oddballs who chased their late-night booze with mid-morning espresso.

He was a fabric artist, and that medium seemed to inform his approach to everything – he wove, stitched, sewed and appliquéd things together that would never naturally have fused. He brought the sleaziest roadhouse rock into his monthly queer party, Vazaleen (originally Vaseline, until accusations of copyright infringement got in the way), which he launched in January 2000, and which was itself a novel bridge-building exercise that brought lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transfolk and genderqueers together under one roof. In an interview in 2003, Will explained the rationale behind his parties. ‘Everything I do in nightlife is a critique of mainstream gay nightlife,’ he said. ‘We need a space that’s not exclusively gay white men. We need a space where our straight friends can hang out. We need a space where cool, interesting people can mingle, get down, network, have sex, get dressed up. I gave it a good chance, but neither gay nor straight nightlife culture gave that to me.’

For a time, Vazaleen was the most idyllic, perverse, anything-goes community love-in you could imagine. My memories of most of these parties are admittedly hazy, but I can vouch for the energy inside Lee’s Palace when ‘Fox on the Run’ or ‘Fuck the Pain Away’ or ‘Jet Boy, Jet Girl’ was playing, and weird, blurry porn flickered on the walls, and Will was wearing a chicken suit, or a Limp Wrist T-shirt, or a little boy’s school uniform, or that peaked grey-wool cap he always wore, and smiling beatifically while a motley crew of weirdos bobbed for butt plugs. Will dreamed up Vazaleen at a time when gay parties were all about circuit house, and lesbian parties barely existed. Mixed crowds, especially ones that managed to welcome not only a wide spectrum of gender, but also race and class, were as common as unicorns.

Among Will's great gifts was his uncanny ability to combine activism with hedonism, to fuse edification and unabashed, over-the-top revelry. That might not sound like such a big deal, but it was, and is, for a bunch of reasons: traditionally, queer culture is not something that's been exceptionally well documented – it's challenging to keep track of a cause and a group that, until recently, was stigmatized and forced underground. Will seemed driven by a desire to share our collective history, and he did so in all his work. By quietly championing the idea that a diverse group of LGBTQ people simply coming together en masse at a nightclub could have political undertones, he kept the spirit of radical liberation alive at a time when the more revolutionary aspects of taking over space by and for freaks had been lost on – or dismissed by – the larger and more visible sectors of the movement. And yet he also created an environment where you never felt belittled for your personal beliefs.

You could chat, for instance, with same sex–marriage activists while local gay indie-folk band the Hidden Cameras played 'Ban Marriage,' a catchy critique of what they viewed as a conservative institution. Fresh-faced trans kids could safely talk about getting bashed for not passing, while, inches away, thirtysomething lesbians debated the merits of known versus unknown sperm donors and traded bondage tips. Stoic dyke cops clutching sweaty beers could take swigs and discuss class conflicts with the anti-poverty punks they'd recently intimidated at a rally – and most of the time, no one would come to blows. These exchanges were defined by an atmosphere of mutual respect.

The beauty of the spaces Will cultivated lies in their tendency to expose people to a host of different perspectives and spark the open discussions that can shift even the most embedded beliefs. Without them, the range of queer identities sometimes becomes distilled – in the media and within the subculture itself – to an inane dichotomy between 'good gays,' who strive for socially permissible forms of equality, and 'bad gays,' who cling to the bacchanalian practices left over from the disco era. The reality, which Will knew, is that there are way more than two, or even fifty, shades of gay.

In 2012, the Art Gallery of York University mounted a mammoth exhibition of Will's work, appropriately titled *History, Glamour, Magic*. Many visitors commented on the display of Will's trademark reconstructed Y-fronts, which hung like strings of hopeful Buddhist prayer flags across the gallery's cavernous ceiling. I loved the undies, but what gave me goose bumps was gazing up at a giant wall of screen-printed posters for Will's many events – from Vazaleen to Moustache (an amateur striptease night at the male strip club Remington's) to Peroxide (a sweaty electro night in Kensington Market, a neighbourhood known for its international food stalls and second-hand clothing shops) to No T.O. (a heady celebration of No Wave music) at the Beaver – and thinking, *This is our youth*. By that, I don't simply mean to reflect upon one particular cohort of late-twenty- and early-thirtysomethings – that wall of posters documented a particular coming-of-age experience for Toronto's queer community as a whole.

'The connections between young and old people in terms of talking to each other and sharing knowledge, they're eroding,' Will told me in 2003. 'Instead, it's all about fucking. That's great. That's fine. But if you don't have anything else, then what's gonna happen to our culture? Is our culture gonna become *Queer as Folk*? How can you look to the future if you don't know the past?' Crowds at all these events, but especially Vazaleen, were made up of people who ranged from eighteen to seventy-eight years old, and that collision between generations was crucial to both the energy at Will's parties and his investment in making sure LGBTQ history was kept alive.

This book is meant to capture a galvanizing moment in the evolution of the city and its subcultures by sharing the story of a kid who became an icon because he wanted to share the stories that moved him. We were barely more than friendly acquaintances, but I loved Will, and I feel as committed to keeping his history alive as he was to ensuring the memories of his forbears didn't fade away. Revisiting the changes he brought about was an intense, rewarding nostalgia trip for me, but the process was

driven by a desire to share Will and what he did with a generation that spills outside Toronto's city limits, whose members missed out on experiencing that brilliant, bracing sense of community.

Toronto still has brave and crazy punk-rock lovers who book shows with left-field weirdos knowing full well they'll lose money every time. There are kids doing drag, kids invading public space, kids dressing up and throwing parties. Just as I started to work on this book, several remarkable things were happening: in the summer of 2012, the Ontario legislature passed Toby's Act, a bill to codify the rights and protections of transfolk under the Human Rights Code. Brave, self-possessed LGBTQ youth faced off against the musty homophobes in the Catholic Church in their protracted fight – first to be allowed to have Gay-Straight Alliances in Catholic schools, and then to be able to call those groups by their rightful names. Glimmers of Will's spirit are alive when enterprising queens go all out with their outfits for Hot Nuts, an insane, mixed drag night, and when upstart collectives throw parties that are a priori inclusive and invested with history. An award in his name, given annually by the helpline at which he volunteered for many years, goes to a queer youth, or a queer youth organization, that encourages community growth through the arts. There is a fund in his name too, intended to provide support to queers living with cancer. Still, the idea of Will himself can be a question mark, even to those who were lucky enough to lose themselves on a dance floor while he manned the DJ booth.

There's a memorial for Will in Trinity Bellwoods, a sprawling, grassy park in downtown Toronto. Near the south end of the dog bowl, slightly west and due north of the main gates, you'll find a young tree and a plaque with his dates of birth and death, and a simple inscription: 'An army of lovers will never be defeated,' a seventies-era slogan derived from a poem by lesbian-feminist writer Rita Mae Brown, and a motto for the way Will lived his life. The original army of lovers lived in ancient Greece. Known as the Sacred Band of Thebes, it was revered as the most fearless, elite battalion at the time; its members were all men who loved men, a sissy squadron for whom Don't Ask, Don't Tell would've been an absurd joke. The army of lovers who participated in this

book was equally fierce, if less combative: I was lucky enough to find legions of storytellers with limp wrists and raised fists to help piece together a fallen fighter's life and work. Will's story wasn't mine to tell – like so many things in his life, it was a collective effort. Inevitably, like so many collective efforts, some voices are louder than others; others still were drowned out, or went unheard along the way. Some of those closest to Will demurred; their memories of him were still too fresh and painful to be offered up for human consumption. So there are still countless stories to tell about this man who made his city a better place, and I hope they get heard by many sets of ears. This book is not an obituary, but a reminder of what we've lost, and an appeal to do better, to band together, to remember his name.

This is a love letter to Will Munro, and a rallying cry for his army of lovers.

Part I Mississauga Goddam

*Mississauga goddam / Bears the treachery of my own man
I'll be wearing my disguise / Until I rid my life
Of Mississauga goddam
Mississauga people / Carry the weight of common evil
And go about their lives / With a whisper and a whine
About Mississauga goddam.*

– ‘Mississauga Goddam,’ The Hidden Cameras

People couldn't stop talking about his underwear. It's understandable; who'd expect the seeds of revolution to be sown (and sewn) in a pair – hundreds of pairs – of stained, stretched-out Y-fronts? But for Will Munro, briefs were both a medium and a muse, the raw materials of his work and the rich, earthy ideas that underpinned his art, replete with faint traces of the asses that had come before his hands had grazed those elastic waistbands. In 1997, at twenty-two, Will and his undies drew the ire of conservative blowhard Michael Coren, who raged and sputtered in right-wing rags and on talk radio about this young pervert's art-school thesis project: banners and curtains and walls made from reconstructed 'boys' underwear.'

Exactly two decades earlier, Gerald Hannon, a writer and journalist and eventual gay icon, scandalized uptight Toronto with his article 'Men Loving Boys Loving Men' in *The Body Politic*, a pioneering, collective-run, queer Canadian magazine. The sympathetic account of intergenerational sexual relationships profiled a trio of older men with a shared penchant for hooking up with fresh-faced youth. To mainstream readers, Hannon – and the publication – were promoting pedophilia. A string of breathless, outraged articles appeared in the *Toronto Sun*, and in January 1978, two months after Hannon's story was printed, Pink Triangle Press, the publisher of *The Body Politic*, was charged with distribution of 'immoral, indecent or scurrilous material.' It took over five years (including a retrial and several appeals) for the case to ultimately be decided in *The Body Politic's* favour.

So all those years later, there was a certain air of *déjà vu* when Coren called on tasteful Torontonians to express their disgust with a gay student's allegedly tasteless art exhibition by storming the gallery with dirty diapers in hand like pitchforks. How could underwear be art?

It could be, and it was. And in the end, the pundit's family-values offensive had the opposite effect of his desired outcome: nobody showed up with nappies, and Will Munro established himself as one of the most promising stars of the city's art scene, a kid who had something to say (about sex, queerness, masculinity, beauty, filth) and a way of saying it that was both unconventional and compelling.

Will's much-discussed undergarments weren't merely a salacious gimmick – they exposed his roots, his desires and his psyche, telling the story of a fastidious suburban misfit who fell in love with other boys, crafts, skateboarding and punk rock (in that order), and shed his inhibitions when he bolted for the big city. In one interview from 1999, he attributed his fascination to childhood deprivation: he'd yearned for Underoos, with their vibrant patterns that mimicked the costumes of superheroes and cartoon characters, and received plain, white Y-fronts ("They felt clinical and sterile ... and repressed") instead. As a teenager growing up in 1980s Mississauga, not entirely closeted but still evasive about his sexuality, he swiped a pair of briefs that belonged to a hardcore boy with whom he was enamoured, and kept them as a fetish object. And before he made a break for Toronto, Will coerced other skater dudes he knew to drop trou and pose for Polaroids, only to boldly out himself as their likenesses formed through a murky haze on the film.

The kid was more than his Hanes, though. Underneath it all, he was *Minor Threat*, *J.D.*'s, mock ribs, skull sweaters and hand-beaded breastplates. He was a crisis counsellor, a line cook, a skilled seamstress, a roller skater, a drag diva, a cheapskate and a drama queen. He was hardcore, homocore, queercore, straight-edge, feminist, anti-assimilationist and, at times, a vaginaphobe. He was a chatterbox who struggled to express his own emotions. He was a music fanatic who couldn't hear properly, being deaf in

one ear. He was driven by a desire to understand his own history, to keep the past alive in an age of ephemera and celebrate and share those impulses through conversations with others.

Here's where all of that came from.

Margaret Munro (mother): Will was born in Australia and lived there for about three months, and then we travelled home via New Zealand and Hawaii. He was not a good traveller. Will was also premature by a month. And because he was premature, he had breathing problems. He also – we learned when he was seven or eight – had a hearing problem, which stemmed from being induced. He was prone to asthma, and he ended up getting sick in New Zealand. We'd hold the kid's head over sulphur to allow him to breathe. It was very difficult, because he and David were only eighteen months apart, so we were travelling with two young ones.

Dave Munro (brother, childhood adversary, lifelong champion, professional tattoo artist): We were a year and a half apart – I'm older. About six months after Will was born, we moved back to Canada, just outside Montreal, to a suburb called Valois in Pointe-Claire. The house we moved into was my grandfather's house. My folks had bought it off of my grandparents. It was a nice house on



Will (left) and Dave at home

Queen Avenue, with a double lot and this big backyard. There was a little horrible pseudo-stream, which was more of a sewage line, behind the house. In 1980, we moved to Mississauga.

Ian Munro (father): The kids hated Mississauga. We finally ferreted out that they were looking for the same type of community we had left, something that had started as a summer retreat. A lot of those houses, they were still some of the originals of summer camps that got updated and insulated. There were giant trees and large properties.

Margaret Munro: In Pointe-Claire, there was a women's centre. The women got together and the kids got in another room and did all kinds of crafts. The kids all got together afterwards as a group, and we used to go camping together. When we moved up to Mississauga, which was really different, it took a year for the kids to feel like they belonged there, even on the street. They got along with the kids on the street, but they didn't have a whole bunch of friends. It was very difficult.

Dave Munro: Will was kind of sheepish as a kid. He was very quiet when he was younger. He was a very normal child, generally – he wasn't a kid that was burning cats. He modelled his notions of how he was going to move forward at a very early age on the good side of Boy Scouts, on Alex P. Keaton from *Family Ties*. He wanted monogrammed sweater vests. He wanted a briefcase. The first record he owned was *Hooked on Classics*. That anal-retentive side of him never left. And through that, he developed the need for acknowledgement. In a large public school system, no teacher can focus on any one student – there are too many students, and half of them are fucking assholes. And when that falls away, what do you do to get the pat on the back? Especially if you're not getting it at home, which was something that didn't happen a lot.

Ryan Auger (childhood friend): I met Will through our family friends when I was around eleven at a Scouts community picnic. Will was easy to spot because, where other boys had perhaps three or four

badges, Will literally had no room on his big red sash for even one more badge. He must have had 150 all up – I was certain they would start sewing his next row to his forehead. It's important to note that Robert Baden-Powell didn't just give these things away – each one required, on average, about 100 hours of work and a fairly robust little test to gauge your proficiency.

Dave Munro: Goal-oriented is one way of describing Will and his sash. He liked the visual acknowledgement of achievement.



Will being given the Chief Scouts Award in 1988 by Ontario's Lieutenant General Lincoln Alexander

Ryan Auger: When I joined the same Scouts group as Will the winter after, there was a buzz about the place because Will was going to represent our humble little pack (2nd Streetsville) at the 16th World Scouting Jamboree in Sydney, Australia.

Margaret Munro: Normally you went into scouting at thirteen; at age twelve, he rewrote the scouting book and presented it to his leader, who was a friend of ours. He was fourteen when he became a Queen's Scout, which is when you've gotten all your badges. He was the youngest one to become a Queen's Scout.

Dave Munro: One time, he wound up meeting the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, who was handing out these dipshit awards. We had to go to some bad church in Brampton. It was just one of those things. My folks thought it was an achievement. My father was heavily involved with scouting, and if you wanted to do

anything else outside of scouting, you'd fucking go to Scouts. The one bright side is the odd collection of people who are usually involved in these kinds of things. We had some fairly cool parental figures. Half of them were survivalists. They would dump you in the woods: 'Here's a Swiss Army knife, some matches and a tarp. We'll see you in three days.' I was really into that aspect of it, like, 'All right, I'll go get drunk in the woods.'

Ryan Auger: Will was top of the heap in our little world of adolescent awkwardness, but even at that age, he carried himself with a calmness and selflessness that prevented any suggestion that he needed to be taken down a peg. He really did have a quiet presence that attracted people to him – when he spoke, he was usually more thoughtful than his peers, and he had this subtle way that demonstrated to others that he'd already figured it out. He was a slight kid – no athlete, not a big personality, not especially funny, but still, he had this gravitas that made others stand up and take notice.

Dave Munro: The household was tumultuous at times. It could be very violent, and it was definitely verbally aggressive. When we were younger and living in Montreal, my dad was terrifying. Our folks are supportive, but it could be a very aggressive house. I would leave. I'd pop back up at three in the morning or something like that. At a very young age, probably by ten, I was already doing that, but Will would stay. We had an argument once about who had the rougher childhood. He was like, 'You're a fucking dick. You weren't there for the fucking anger.' And I'm like, 'Oh yeah, I kind of left you behind, didn't I?'

Margaret Munro: Our house had an open door, and that's where some of Will's approach to people came from, I think – helping people. I remember the kids going, 'If somebody's in trouble, they can come and live with us, right?' I said, 'What?' And they go, 'Well, you did that. You brought people into the house. So we can do the same thing.'

Dave Munro: Will was the kid who stayed after school and did extra projects. He cleaned the chalkboards; he'd be left in charge of the room when the teacher stepped out. There was a very adversarial nature between us because of it. If I got busted, it was because he turned me in. And that was generally how he handled things. He would periodically try to blackmail, but that wouldn't work out so well, because physically I've always been two of him. There was a push-comes-to-shove situation that would always happen between the two of us, especially when we were younger. Part of it would've been due to the aggressive nature of our household. And the area was kind of violent. You had the subtle violence of the quietness that happens inside houses with kids getting beaten. And these kids fought a lot. It was not unusual for you to be coming home and get chased by eight people. Though it had all the wonderful residuals of the suburbs, the neighbourhood also had that really horrible underbelly as well.

Joanne Huffa (friend, writer, punk, zinester, fellow Meadowvale-ite): These days, Meadowvale has a billion big-box stores, prefab mansions and condos. Back then, there were still lots of fields surrounding the subdivisions, Meadowvale Town Centre and the two manmade lakes that were the nature features of Meadowvale. The population was mostly families and fairly white, but became increasingly diverse every year. Joel Gibb of the Hidden Cameras also grew up in Meadowvale, and his song 'Mississauga Goddam' speaks volumes about our old suburban home.

Margaret Munro: David was a lot more outgoing, Will was a little more introverted. It may also have been his hearing condition. He became very good at lip-reading, and the funny part is that when he did get a hearing aid when he was seven, he came home from school and said, 'The teacher said we were in a noisy classroom because we're above the furnace, and I always thought she was just crazy. But it is noisy.'

Alex McClelland (ex-boyfriend, best friend, queer activist): He was totally in denial about his hearing problem. He used to have to

wear a hearing aid in school, and he just stopped wearing it. I don't know many people who are functionally half-deaf and fake going through life. He was really good at doing that, and he'd miss so much. He had one good ear, and if he cared, he would turn to you so he could hear you, and would be good at making people think he knew what they were saying. So he missed a lot of stuff.

Dave Munro: His hearing aid was regularly found in garbage, 'accidentally' on the bottom of his foot. That thing would be fucking put in sandwiches. My folks would ask the teachers to make sure he had it in his ear, which of course just brought more attention to it. A hearing aid doesn't just make people louder; it makes *everything* fucking louder. Chewing. You can hear yourself breathe. It's the most annoying thing in the world. Will learned how to recognize octave changes to see if he was in trouble – which is also why his pitch would change so drastically when he was speaking – and he made a point of looking at people when they were talking to him, which a lot of people don't really do in conversations. People were like, 'He really looked in the eyes when he was speaking to me.' Uh, no, he *had* to. Otherwise, he'd tell you what time it was. That was his go-to when he didn't hear you. And he never wore a watch, so he never gave you the right time.

Margaret Munro: The teachers would always comment that Will and Dave were really different artists, very incredible artists.

Ian Munro: It was all art, all the time. Education and the rest of it was just stuff that had to be done. But where Will really flourished was in the various art classes. Needless to say, he had a whole bunch of art teachers in love with him.

Dave Munro: I got into art because it attracted attention, and Will got into art because of me. We spent a lot of time in the car, so we spent a lot of time drawing stuff. There was a neighbour who was super sketchy and really scary. We were playing nicky nicky nine doors at his house, and he caught Will and literally grabbed him by the throat and picked him up. Scared the living piss out of

him. I freaked out and ran to get my dad to save Will. By the time we came back, I guess the guy had realized he had gone way too far. This guy made ducks, handmade loons and mallards, and he offered to show Will how to build ducks. Will made this loon. Even to this day, it's really kind of incredible. He was probably nine when he made it.

Ian Munro: At the daycare, the after-school programs, William and David were the only kids that didn't fight, particularly siblings. They called them the little old men, because they sat and talked and sorted out their problems. The big one ended up being the bodyguard for the little one. The little one did tricks in high school like going down the hall and pinching the football team's bums. And David would have to run after him and try to protect him. But one time, this guy had set David up for a fight after school, and the only person who didn't know about it was David. There they were facing off, and out of the crowd comes William, and he walks right up into this guy's face and says, 'You leave my brother alone,' and was able to double right up and punch him, because nobody paid attention to William. I'd been saying to David, 'Don't pick on your brother, because one of these days he's going to punch your head off.' Well, it wasn't David's head that got it first. I don't think to this day David has lived it down: 'My kid brother, a foot smaller, a lot lighter, gentle child, fought for me.'

Dave Munro: Through most of our growing up, my father was unemployed. My mother was carrying multiple mortgages on the house. Our cousins were living with us. There were health issues with my mother's parents, so she was travelling back and forth from Montreal regularly. That woman carried the fucking world on her shoulders and then some. She came from a very violent and abusive household. The coping skills you'd need to contend with those levels of stress, I can't even fathom. A lot of my mom's elderly family members – her aunts, her father and her mother – they all died in a three- to four-year period. It was a huge blow, mixed with everything else that was fucking exploding around her. She went on a sort of soul-seeking thing. By then, we were

starting into our teens, and things were starting to become severely unhinged. I was drinking all the time. By the age of eleven, I rarely drew a sober breath. Will, on the other hand, was the guy who cleaned up after the colossal messes I would make.

Margaret Munro: David got into booze, and Will was trying to tell us, and we weren't listening. That was one thing I don't think Will ever experienced or experimented with. He had a hate for booze and drugs, and was just not going there.

John Caffery (friend, caregiver, former Vazaleen go-go dancer, member of electro-punk trio Kids on TV): His dad had been a drinker for a while, and pretty early in life he made a decision that that wasn't for him. He was always straight-edge.

Alex McClelland: During his childhood, and when Will was a teenager, he told me that his dad would disappear for really long periods of time. Originally, Will said, they thought his dad was having an affair. Then later, they figured out his dad was sitting at the local Tim Hortons for hours on end talking to strangers. His dad was probably depressed. But Will remembered his mom telling him to call the Tim Hortons to ask the staff to tell his dad to come home so they could have dinner together, because otherwise his dad would just stay there.



Dave Munro: In Grade 6, or it might have been the summer before Grade 7, Will changed. It was an overt change. By then, me and my friends were already a couple years into skateboards. And, being Alex P. Keaton, he had very adverse feelings about that. We weren't furthering ourselves socially. We weren't going to fit in. 'You'll never be a good parent.' These are the

kinds of comments that would come out of his mouth. One day, he swiped a skateboard. Quite literally, there's five of us and four boards, and we're like, 'What the fuck?' And we go out and there he is, heading down the road, back and forth on the skateboard. The next thing was that he picked up a Minor Threat record – *Out of Step* – and all of a sudden that was it. That was the change, almost to a day. Will was like, 'Fuck doing after-school programs,' and started down his own path.

Ian Munro: Skateboarding like crazy. He had one or two or more skateboards he'd decorated. Of course, they used to swap them and find different trucks and wheels. They used to repaint them.

Margaret Munro: He worked at McDonald's for a long time, and then he ended up at the Keg. It was really funny because when he was working at the Keg, he used to do the salad bar, and he'd decorate it. One of the people who owned the place got really annoyed with him and told him, 'Stop that.' And then the patrons complained – they wanted it back!

Ian Munro: He used to carve potatoes. He made art out of the cheapest thing you could find in a big kitchen. The only time I was at the Keg, I went to see the salad bar and his creations, and that was the time he had been told not to do it. About two days later, after the weekend crowd, he said, 'I'm carving the potatoes again, Dad, if you want to come see them.' Inevitably, he got to rub it into the manager's nose.

Joanne Huffa: I was at Meadowvale Secondary before Will. I think Dave was in Grade 9 the year I was in Grade 13 (1988), but from what I can tell, things were pretty similar. There were lots of different cliques. I had friends in the new wave/proto-goth group, but my own friends were nerdier, mostly band kids and wannabe writers. Our group wasn't as cool (to me) as the kids who wore all black and took acid on the weekends, and we weren't the jocks, the preps, the breakdancers or the kids who spent Friday nights studying. We spent most of our Friday nights downtown

at *Rocky Horror* and, if we could, we'd be back downtown on Saturday shopping for vintage clothes and records.

Dave Munro: I started going to shows in '87. Will was probably about fourteen when he started going to shows, around 1989. It was a big deal because we didn't have access to a car. So if you were going to go downtown and see a band play, odds are you were going to be camping out downtown. It was two and a half hours by subway and bus to get to our neighbourhood, and then the transit to that area stopped after 10:30 p.m. Being Toronto, no band was even onstage by 10:30. You'd find a park to stay wide awake in. I'm sure if the parental units were half-aware of what we were up to at the time, they'd be like, 'What the fuck?' We would've been condemned.

Margaret Munro: They couldn't figure out how we figured out what they were up to. We could always hear them through the vents. And you know, it was really, really funny, because they were just like, 'How did you know what we were doing?'

Dave Munro: In the mid-eighties, skateboarding wasn't popular. There were probably about ten or twelve of us in a school of 1,500 that rode skateboards. There were even less who were interested in punk and hardcore music. But at the same time, you became very tight with those who were there, no matter what collection of douchebags they were – and they were fucking assholes! Half of them were in and out of jail or juvie. A lot of these kids – they were the periphery, they were the riff-raff. Will would be a part of it, but he'd go his own route as well. I think some of it maybe tied into a couple of kids who did skate he thought were cute.

Alex McClelland: The first way Will kind of explored his sexuality was that he learned how to tattoo using his brother's equipment, and he'd offer skater boys in the neighbourhood tattoos for free if he could take naked pictures of them. People would be into it.