



Smiles to Go

By Jerry Spinelli

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Ninth grader Will Tuppence is in control.

He plans everything obsessively, from the perfect stargazing night with his crush, Mi-Su, to the regular Saturday-night games of Monopoly with his friends. He's even planned his entire adulthood: career as an astronomer; mint condition, black 1985 Jaguar XJS/12; two kids. . . .

But everything changes the day Will learns one startling fact: protons—those tiny atomic particles, the building blocks to the building blocks of life—can die. The one thing that was so certain in this world to Will has an expiration date.

And Will's carefully planned-out life?

Not so certain, either.

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Smiles to Go By Jerry Spinelli Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

SignatureReviewed by Gennifer CholdenkoLike the work of Sid Fleischman and the late Paula Danziger, a Jerry Spinelli novel makes me wish I could carry a Spinelli voice around in my head for the truly awful moments of my life: a trip to the emergency room or a run-in with a rabid police officer. Spinelli's voice is artful, amusing and, above all else, reassuring. There's no doubt Spinelli is a consummate pro. The first page confirms this with spot-on character description: He always had a jawbreaker in his mouth, and when he wasn't clacking it against his teeth he kept up a constant mutter about everything he did, as if he were a play-by-play announcer describing a game. The protagonist is the obsessive plan-making, star-gazing, chess-playing ninth-grader Will Tuppence, who has worked out a 12-point plan for himself clear through to the afterlife. Will is solidly characterized through voice, as in the epitaph he imagines on his tombstone—Here lies Will Tuppence. He Could Wait—and his wonderful descriptions of his own experience: The storm inside me had passed. Just dry husks of thought left on the ground. Even so, it's the girls who really shine in this loosely contemporary novel. Like *Stargirl* in Spinelli's winning novel of the same name, Will's love interest Mi-Su is completely and totally original, and Will's palpable longing for her is altogether real: It came to me during biology lab today. She was at another table, leaning over her fetal pig, and I couldn't stop staring at her. Mi-Su's baffling reactions to Will and to his best friend, BT, form the heart of this story, engaging the reader with a surprisingly fresh perspective on young love. Comic relief is provided by Tabby, Will's five-year-old sister, and her persistent but unrequited suitor, the five-year-old, orange-plastic-fish-mobile-riding Korbet Finn. One of the funniest scenes in the book occurs when Will consults Korbet on questions of love and the pursuit of one's romantic interest. The climax pulls Tabby into the fray and, perhaps a little too conveniently, resolves the love triangle among Will and BT and Mi-Su. Still, what makes a Spinelli novel isn't plotting so much as character, dialogue, voice and humor. The Spinelli touch remains true in this funny and thoroughly enjoyable read. *Gennifer Choldenko won a Newbery Honor for Al Capone Does My Shirts, the first of a projected trilogy. Her second Alcatraz novel is due in 2009 from Harcourt, while her most recent novel is If a Tree Falls at Lunch Period (Harcourt, 2007).*

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From School Library Journal

Grade 6–10—Will Tuppence is a sensible kid, good at science, with an average social life and a loud-mouthed little sister, Tabby, whom he does his very best to avoid. But when he learns that scientists have recorded the first instance of proton decay, his logical mind goes into free fall contemplating the implications. When, soon after, he catches his friends Mi-Su and BT kissing, his confusion skyrockets. Does he like Mi-Su himself? Would Mi-Su kiss him? Does it even matter now that all protons in the universe are impermanent? But the point of the story is not proton decay; nor is it the uncertainty that the phenomenon represents—as manifested in Will's life via the love triangle. The story ultimately hinges on Tabby, and Will's relationship with her. Events transpire to remind him of its centrality, around which his daily life and his very identity orbit. With narrative that is fast moving and often laugh-out-loud funny, this book would make an excellent addition to any collection. Short sentences and brief chapters make it a good pick for even reluctant readers. Spinelli lives up to his well-established precedent of stories full of warmth, humor, and memorable characters. Tabby, though at times slightly unbelievable in her precociousness, is a comical and endearing creation. Will's teenage insecurities, overanalyzing, and mood swings are entirely believable, and readers empathize fully with him while willing him to step outside himself and look around at what he has.—*Emma Runyan, The Winsor School, Boston, MA*

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From [Booklist](#)

High-school freshman Will Tuppence has girl trouble. His growing feelings for Mi-Su—good friend, fellow scientist, Monopoly tycoon, and pizza enthusiast—may or may not be reciprocated. And there's his kindergarten sister, Tabby, whose life's work is to pester him until he's crazy. Add to those problems a strained relationship with another friend (and romantic rival) BT, a love-hate fascination with a skateboard ride down Dead Man's Hill, and proof of the immutable death of the proton, and Will is facing a tough a year. The story is heavy with themes, but they find able support in Spinelli's careful structure and sensitive characterization. Every individual is believably familiar but still very original. Tabby, precocious and needy, is positively unforgettable, and Will's sporadically successful struggle to outgrow his adolescent self-involvement is always credible. As in *Crash* (1996), Spinelli employs a fresh voice and honest perspective to mine the prickly intersections of family, friendship, and growing up, with emotionally resonant results.

Grades 6-10. --Thom Barthelmess

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Alicia Wescott:

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