

### *Robert Essay*

Like all humans Robert too has both negative and positive characteristics. His tainted characteristics include resentment of successful people, particularly since he is not making a success of his own musical career. However it is music which forms a common bond between the protagonist Amy and himself. It is through music that Robert's genuine kindness and sensitivity reaches Amy and helps her to recover from her guilt of the tragic death of her father Will Erker. Robert is a genuine character who contributes highly towards Amy's recovery.

The flaws in Robert's character are a result of his dwindling musical career. Robert is obviously unemployed as he is always at home working on songs with strange lyrics. The song "Bobby ate a hotdog an hour before he fell" is a strong contrast to the highly successful songs of Will, which were still popular three years after his death. Robert's restricted wardrobe and the shack like residence he shares with his mentally disturbed sister are also evidence of his failures. Robert's decision to sing "The Mercer Street Blues" is an acknowledgment of the failures of the Street and indirectly of himself. His frustration especially towards successful people causes rude outbursts as evidenced by "14 years of business suites, 18 years of shit", towards the welfare worker. Robert's resentment is directly a result of the lack of success he has had in the past.

While Robert's life is flawed, his genuine characteristics outweigh them. For "five long years" Robert's intellectually challenged sister has been insanely pursuing the hairdresser responsible for her disastrous hair cut and "for five long years" Robert has been looking after her. Robert is caring and affectionate especially to his sister; this is shown through his simple gestures, comments and questions. "Where are you going?", and "I'll be interested to see" are voluntary comments which show his sense of compassion and willingness to help others. His genuine kindness and willingness to help are also shown by the interest he took in helping Amy even after Tanya the night before has warned "I don't want you anywhere near my daughter". Robert's genuine character is constantly flowing throughout the film; which is more obvious to the audience than his flaws.

The common bond of music formed the foundation upon which Robert's and Amy's relationship grew. It was only after Amy and Tanya moved to the city that Amy's ability to hear and sing music was discovered. Even in the city Tanya's choice of turning off the radio when ever one of Will's songs came on is the result of Tanya not picking up Amy's selective hearing and speech. On the other hand with Robert, Amy is once again able to share the common bond of music (she had once shared with her father), and reveal her ability to sing and her music. Robert not only recognizes Amy's condition but he is also able to bridge the gap in Amy's life left by her father.

The audience was given the first indication of the role Robert would play in Amy's life through the scene of them in the lush green park, running and singing; a replica of an opening scene where Amy is running through the golden grass of outback Australia with Will. The repetition of the scenes reminds the audience of the close relationship that Amy shared with her father and the beginning of a close relationship with Robert. Robert's presence in Tanya's and Amy's lives increases through the progression of the film; although his direct participation in Amy's recovery stops after Dr Urquhart becomes involved. While Amy's and Robert's relationship progressively increased throughout the film Robert's initial involvement in Amy's recovery declined towards the end of the film when he was restricted to observing her recovery.

Accidental happenings on a whole contributed more towards Amy's recovery than Robert. The effect of unplanned events was a central theme in the film. For young Amy Erker and her mother accidents have dictated their lives ever since the unfortunate death of Will. If it wasn't for unexpected events such as the persistence of the Welfare workers and moving into Mercer Street, Tanya may never have discovered Amy's condition; especially as Tanya is also absorbed in her own grieving process cause her to be negligent of Amy's grief. One of Tanya's "... I never really talked about... it was too painful..." (Will's death) was her admission of her pain and her ignorance of Amy's. Accidental happenings were more responsible for Amy's recovery than Robert in the sense that they created the situations in which Robert was able to hear Amy. If it wasn't for Amy observing the car of the Welfare workers and subsequently hiding in Robert's yard, Robert may never have had the opportunity to hear her sing. Accidental happenings on a whole contribute more towards Amy's recovery than Robert.

Though Robert's genuine kindness and sensitivity along with his love for music are responsible for Amy's recovery it was the child psychologist and accidental happenings which played a more significant role in Amy's recovery. While Robert's central role in Amy's recovery withered, he was constant presence in Amy's and Tanya's lives. Though Robert was responsible for initiating Amy's recovery, it was Dr Urquhart and accidental events that contributed most towards Amy's recovery.