

Will and His Dog Get Trapped in the Dark

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Cover Image by Paul Cook

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Will and His Dog Get Trapped in the Dark

Will had spent the afternoon playing football with his best friend Charlie in a field on the outskirts of the village where they lived. Like Will, Charlie was eight years old. Will's dog, Clive, was also with them because he enjoyed running around the field and the boys liked having him along with them.

Will and Charlie's mums had told the boys that they had to be back home no later than four o'clock that afternoon and that they weren't allowed to go anywhere else except the field. That suited the boys because they got very tired when they played football and so they planned on being back home before four o'clock.

By three o'clock, the boys had been kicking Will's ball around for about two hours and they were exhausted. They decided to finish playing and to walk back to their houses.

They had been walking for about five minutes when it started to rain very heavily. Within a few seconds the boys were soaking wet. They were only wearing T-shirts and shorts and so they decided to shelter under a large oak tree until the rain stopped. Clive didn't seem to mind the rain and ran around quite happily getting drenched all the while.

"This rain is so heavy," said Will, "look how it's bouncing off the road."

It was true that the rain storm was heavier than either boy could remember ever having seen before.

"We can't stay here for long Will," replied Charlie, "and it's too far to make a run for it back to our houses. How about we shelter in the church?"

The tree under which the boys were sheltering was just in front of the church gate and it would be a short run down the path to the main building.

"Will it be open?" asked Will.

"Probably," replied Charlie, "I go there every Sunday with my family and I know everyone there. We can shelter in the porch if the main door is locked."

"OK," said Will, "let's go. Come on Charlie."

The boys ran from the tree, through the church gate, up the path leading to the church and into the porch.

They were out of breath, soaking wet and cold. The rain was hammering down – even more than before.

The main door of the church was ajar and so they went inside. Nobody was in the church that they could see and Charlie indicated that they should sit down on some chairs by a table that had several piles of hymn books on it.

Will got up after a few minutes and thought that it might be a nice idea to take a look around the church. He had been there before but had never paid much attention. The church seemed like an interesting place to Will and he knew that his mum and dad had got married there. He had seen pictures of their wedding day and tried to imagine his parents stood at the steps halfway down the church getting married.

Will and Charlie walked around the church and found a little side chapel to the left of the main part of the church. It was tucked away behind the organ and, even though Charlie went to the church every Sunday, he had never noticed it before.

The chapel had a few chairs in it and a bible on a table. The boys sat down and it was only then that they realised how tired they were from playing football for several hours. They sat in silence listening to the sound of the rain on the roof and fell asleep.

First, Will was aware of how cold he was. Then he was aware of the sound of the rain. He opened his eyes and, to his horror, he realised that it was completely dark and he couldn't see anything. He knew that he wasn't in his bed at home because he was sat on a chair.

“Mum!” shouted Will loudly. “Dad!”

His voice echoed like he was in a large building.

He suddenly remembered that he was in the church.

“Charlie, Charlie, wake up! Clive, where are you?” shouted Will desperately.

To his relief, Will heard Clive get up from lying down on the floor and felt his nose sniffing his leg.

“Where, what?” said Charlie groggily.

“Wake up Charlie!” shouted Will, “we are still in the church.”

“What time is it?” asked Charlie, “it's completely dark.”

“I don't know, I don't have a watch but it must be late. We are going to be in so much trouble. Let's get out of here.”

“OK follow me,” said Charlie, “but be careful not to bump into anything. I don't like the dark and I can't get out of here fast enough.”

“Me neither,” replied Will.

The boys and Clive made their way back through the church and to the main door. Charlie felt around for the large metal latch and tried to lift it.

Nothing.

He tried again but it wouldn't budge.

“We are locked in,” gasped Charlie. “The vicar must have locked up earlier and didn't know that we were in the side chapel.”

“So we are trapped?” asked Will?

“It looks like it,” replied Charlie hopelessly.

Will banged on the heavy wooden main door of the church with his fists and both boys cried for help as loudly as they could. Clive barked loudly to help make as much noise as possible. They were able to keep up the banging, yelling and barking for about three or four minutes before they became too tired to continue.

“It’s no use,” groaned Will, “no one can hear us in here.”

“Plus, the rain hammering down outside is making such a racket,” replied Charlie.

Will grabbed the cold metal latch which opened the main door of the church with both hands and rattled it loudly. It was no good, the door was locked securely and he soon gave up.

“Is there another door out of here?” asked Will.

“No,” replied Charlie. “Will, I can’t spend the night in here. It’s too, it’s too scary.”

Will could hear that Charlie’s voice was trembling with fear – he felt the same way too.

“What if there are ghosts in here?” said Will.

Last year Will’s class had spent the morning visiting the church and the vicar had told them a story about a battle that had taken place outside the church nearly four hundred years before between soldiers loyal to King Charles the first and men who didn’t want a royal family. The battle had taken place in the field between the back of the church and the castle. Many soldiers had died or had been injured in the battle and the men who were loyal to the king used the church as their base. It was likely that many men had died from their injuries in the church which, in Will’s opinion, meant that there probably were ghosts in there.

“Quick, let’s turn the lights on!” shouted Charlie.

“Where are the switches?” replied Will.

“Just here by the main door. There’s about ten switches on the wall to the left.”

“Great,” said Will, “when people see that the lights are on in the church they will come and get us.”

Charlie searched for the light switches and Will could just make out the shape of him in the darkness as he traced his hands up and down the wall.

“Yes,” shouted Charlie, “I’ve found them.”

Will heard the click of a switch but no lights came on. Will then heard Charlie try all of the other switches – each one with more desperation.

“Oh no!” groaned Charlie, “the power must be out.”

“This is terrible,” said Will, “I am so scared.”

“Me too,” replied Charlie.

The boys started shouting for help again but they knew that nobody could hear them and so they stopped soon afterwards. Will could feel Clive rubbing against his leg and so he crouched down and gave him a hug.

“We can’t spend the night in here,” said Will – his voice trembling. He could feel tears in his eyes and was glad that Charlie couldn’t see him crying. “You know this church Charlie. How can we get some light? Are there candles?”

Charlie thought for a moment.

“There are candles on the altar and the matches are kept in the vestry where the choir and the vicar get into their robes before a service. If we could get in there then maybe we could find the matches and light a candle.”

“Where is the vestry?” asked Will.

“It is at the other end of the church to the left of the altar but it will be locked. There is a key hanging on a hook under the choir stalls by the vestry door.”

Neither boy wanted to venture back into the church because at least when they were beside the main door they felt like they were at the exit and therefore nearest to their escape point. Even though it was dark, the boys could sense the huge open space in the main part of the church.

“OK,” said Charlie, “follow me but go slowly.”

Will tried to imagine the layout of the church as he moved very slowly behind Charlie.

Charlie used his right hand to feel along the top of the pew (which was basically a long wooden bench) at the back of the church. When he reached the end of the pew, he turned right to walk down the main aisle of the church. Will could just about make out Charlie’s shape as he moved in the darkness and he could hear Clive padding beside him. Charlie felt the end of each pew with his right hand as the boys walked down the aisle.

“Stop!” whispered Charlie suddenly and Will was aware that he had stopped moving ahead of him. “I think I saw something move over to the right.”

“Don’t say that Charlie!” replied Will.

Both boys stood absolutely still, rigid with terror at the possibility of there being someone or something else in the church with them. Clive started to growl. Will wanted to turn around and run back to the main door but he knew that he wouldn’t be able to do it in the darkness.

“H-h-hello!” stammered Charlie.

Silence.

“Who’s there?” spluttered Will.

Nothing.

The boys stood still and tried to make out anything that they could in the darkness and strained their ears for even the slightest sound. All Will could hear was the rain outside and Clive’s growling. All Charlie could hear was the rain and Will’s breathing.

“I don’t think there is anything there,” whispered Will after a few minutes.

“It must have been my imagination,” replied Charlie. “Come on, we are halfway there and nearly at the steps that lead up to the next section of the church.”

The boys shuffled on slowly until Charlie hit the first step with his foot.

“I’m at the steps,” said Charlie. He waited until Will was alongside him and then they walked slowly up the three steps that led to the next section of the church.

Will knew that this section was where the choir sat and that there was a large organ on the left.

Charlie walked forward a little faster now and made his way over to the choir stalls on the left.

“I am going to get the key to the vestry,” said Charlie with determination in his voice which gave Will a little hope.

Will could hear Charlie rummaging around trying to find the key.

It didn't take Charlie long to locate the key. “Yes!” he exclaimed as his hand found the cold metal key.

“Well done!” shouted Will.

Charlie found the lock on the wooden door, inserted the key and turned it clockwise. The door opened. The boys and Clive entered the vestry. Will had never been inside the vestry before and so he didn't know the layout. Charlie had been in there many times.

“Will, there is a table beside the wall straight ahead of you. When you get to the table, try and see if there is a box of matches on it. I'm going to search the cupboards.”

“OK, I'll try,” replied Will as he made his way slowly across the vestry – not sure how big or small it was. After six or seven steps, he felt a chair move against his leg as he nudged it gently. He put his hands beyond the chair and felt the surface of a table. He carefully moved the chair and sat down.

“I'm at the table,” said Will.

“Good,” replied Charlie. “I'm struggling to find my way around these cupboards and I'm scared that I might knock something over and break it.”

Will moved his hands slowly and carefully over the surface of the table. He could feel a pen, a pile of leaflets and a vertical metal rod. His fingers followed the rod upwards until he felt it change shape into something which felt about the size of a tennis ball – a light bulb. Will followed the metal rod back down to the table and found that it was stood on a flat metal base. He moved his hands across the base which was smooth and cold. Will was about to restart his search for matches when his middle finger felt the shape of what could only be a switch on the base of the light. He instinctively flicked the switch and jumped backwards knocking the chair over with surprise as the light turned on and blinded him.

“Woah!” shouted Charlie.

The light seemed so bright after so much time in almost complete darkness and it took the boys several seconds to readjust their eyes. The relief felt by both boys was obvious and Charlie could see that Will had been crying – he didn't mention it. Will thought that Charlie looked very pale and frightened – but he didn't say anything. Clive ran to Will with his tail wagging.

“Thank goodness for that. Well done Will,” said Charlie.

“It's OK. Quick, lock the door so that we are safe.”

Charlie ran to the door, removed the key from the outside, closed the door and locked it from the inside. For the first time since they had woken up, both boys felt safe. They sat down on

the chairs beside the table with the light on and allowed themselves some time to calm down and come to their senses. They said nothing and listened to the rain lashing against the windows of the vestry. They could hear sirens wailing and Will thought he could hear a helicopter overhead.

“Do you think that someone will see the light shining through the window?” asked Will.

“No because the vestry is at the back of the church and there is only a graveyard out there.” Will shuddered.

“Why do think the electricity works in here but not for the lights in the church?” said Charlie.

“I don’t know,” replied Will, “maybe there’s another switch that you need to flick for them to work.”

“We could stay in here all night,” said Charlie, “someone will unlock the church in the morning and we can go home then. If we are cold then we take a choir robe from the wardrobe and put one on.”

“I don’t want to stay here all night Charlie. What about our parents? They will be worried.”

“And cross,” added Charlie.

“What can we do to attract attention to ourselves and let people know that we are here?” asked Will.

“We could start the organ up and play it to make some noise. It is very loud when the organist plays it on Sunday morning.”

“Do you know how to play the organ Charlie? How do you get it going? There seems to be lots of pipes and levers on it which we wouldn’t know how to work.”

“I don’t know how to work it,” snapped Charlie. “Have you got a better idea?”

Will didn’t have a better idea, that was the problem. He looked around the room for something, anything that they might be able to use. There wasn’t a telephone to ring their parents on. There was the table with the light on, some wardrobes and another table with piles of books stacked on it. On the windowsill there was an old rag, a candle in a brass holder and a little bell. A bell!

“That’s it!” shouted Will springing up out of his chair. “The bells in the church tower! You can hear them ringing from anywhere in the village. Let’s go and ring them. I watched a programme once about some people who were ringing church bells - they just pulled on a rope to make them ring. It can’t be that difficult and I think we could do it. This is probably our only hope of being found.”

“Great idea Will,” replied Charlie who seemed very excited at the thought of it.

“How do we get to them?” asked Will.

“There is a door at the very back of the church although I’ve never been up into the tower before. The key is kept in here in this box.” Charlie was pointing to a little metal box that was attached to the wall just above the other table. Will rushed over to open it and, to his surprise, it was unlocked.

“Grab all of the keys,” said Charlie, “one of them will fit the door to the tower.”

“Are you sure you want to go back out into the church?” asked Will with fear in his voice.

“We will be in the dark again.”

“Not with these we won’t,” replied Charlie grinning. In his hand he held a box of matches. “I just found these matches underneath that rag on the windowsill. This candle was also on the windowsill and I’m going to use it to light our way.”

“Well done Charlie!” shouted Will.

Charlie lit the candle and held it out in front of him. He slipped the box of matches into his pocket in case the flame blew out. Will walked behind him back out into the church and made sure that he had collected all of the keys from the box.

The light of the candle was less bright than they had hoped and it barely lit a metre in front of them. The boys were not as frightened as they had been before because they could see the light shining through the open doorway of the vestry and, now that they had a plan, they felt braver.

It took them less than a minute to walk to the back of the church. Clive ran to the back and was waiting for them when they got there.

Charlie shone the candle on the lock of the door to the tower and Will tried four of the keys before he found the one that would unlock it.

“This is the one,” said Will excitedly as he turned the key in the lock. “Stay here Clive, you can’t go up there boy. You stay here and guard the door for us.” Clive sat down and did as he was told.

“Pass me the candle,” said Will, “I’ll go first.”

The tower was as dark as the church and there was a dusty smell that made the boys want to cough or sneeze, or both. They carefully climbed four flights of steps made from wooden planks and reached a platform which they assumed must be where the bells were rung from.

Charlie found a rope hanging from the roof and pulled it. Nothing happened. He pulled it again – harder this time. No sound.

“Let me try,” said Will. He gave Charlie the candle and approached the rope.

Will pulled on the rope. Nothing happened. He pulled the rope again but this time he clung to it tightly and lifted his feet off the floor. The rope bore all of Will’s weight and the faintest noise rang out from above them.

“We need more weight,” said Will. “Put the candle down and let’s pull the rope together.” Charlie put the candle down and joined Will at the rope.

“One, two, three – pull!” shouted Will. The boys pulled hard. Nothing.

They pulled again and felt something pulling against the rope from above.

Three times.

Four times.

Five times. A loud noise rang out from above them as the bell began to ring.

Will and Charlie kept pulling the rope. It was hard work and, even when they had found a rhythm of pulling and releasing the rope, they soon began to get tired. There was no way that either boy was going to give up until they had completely run out of energy.

After about five minutes of ringing the bell, they heard the sirens that they had heard earlier. The sirens didn't seem to be moving like before but seemed to have remained in the same place somewhere near to the church.

Clive suddenly started barking below and the boys stopped pulling the ropes to go and investigate. They heard the main door being unlocked and several pairs of feet rushing into the church.

“Police!” shouted a man’s voice loudly from below. “Who is in here? There are three officers here. Show yourself!”

“Up here!” shouted the boys at the same time.

“Is that Will and Charlie?” asked the voice from below.

“Yes!” shouted the boys.

“Come down boys,” a woman’s voice said. “You are not in trouble. We are just glad to have found you.”

Will collected the candle and led the way back down the steps. He blew the candle out before he reached the bottom of the steps because the lights were on in the church and he could see where he was going. Clive ran over to Will and Charlie when they finally re-entered the church, his tail wagging.

“You’ve got some explaining to do lads,” said the sternest of the three police officers. “We have had the police helicopter up searching and five patrol cars out looking for you. Your parents are frantic with worry.”

Will and Charlie explained what had happened and how they had come to find themselves trapped inside the church. They explained about how they had decided to ring the bells to draw attention to themselves.

The stern policeman’s face changed, he smiled and said, “you have been very brave boys and your sensible actions have saved us a night of searching the area. This was not your fault and your parents will be very pleased to see you and very proud of how you have conducted yourselves.”

The woman police officer went to ring Will and Charlie’s parents and the vicar took them to the vicarage for some biscuits and orange squash.

“I am so very sorry,” said the vicar, “it was me who locked you in by mistake. I didn’t check the side chapel and, as I didn’t hear anyone come in, I thought the church was empty. I do hope your parents won’t be cross with me.”

“It’s OK,” said Will, “we were pretty scared in the church in the dark though.”

“I imagine that you were,” replied the vicar. “Why didn’t you turn the lights on? Charlie you would have surely known where the light switches were.”



“We tried to turn them on,” replied Charlie, “but they didn’t work.”

“Ah, now I see,” said the vicar. “You probably tried the switches to the left of the main door. Last week we had the wiring changed and now the light switches are on a new plastic box to the right of the main door.”

Will and Charlie looked at each and started to laugh.

Will and Charlie’s parents arrived five minutes later and thanked the vicar and the police officers. Will’s mum apologised to the police officers for the fuss that the boys had caused. The police officers told them what had happened, that it wasn’t Will and Charlie’s fault and how sensible they had been. Will and Charlie’s parents took the boys home.

It was nearly midnight when Will finally walked through the front door of his house. His mum started to cry with relief and gave Will the biggest cuddle he had ever had. Will’s dad stroked Clive and gave him two slices of ham out of the fridge. Clive snaffled the ham down in five seconds flat. Clive then lay on his mat, stretched out his legs and fell asleep as if nothing had happened.

Will was starving and his mum cooked him sausages, chips and beans as a treat. He told his mum and dad everything that had happened in the church.

Will slept for twelve hours that night and didn’t wake until lunchtime the next day. As he made his way downstairs he heard the front door bell ringing. He opened the door and Charlie rushed in thrusting a newspaper at him.

“Look Will,” shouted Charlie excitedly, “we’re in the paper.”

“Where?” replied Will as he snatched the newspaper out of Charlie’s hand so that he could see for himself.

The local newspaper had covered the whole incident and across the front page there was the headline – ‘Missing Boys Found in Church!’ There was a picture of the stern police officer, the church and the vicar. The vicar gave a statement saying how sorry he was for locking the boys in the church and the police officer gave an account of how brave and sensible the boys had been.

Will and Charlie decided that they weren’t going to go anywhere that day – especially to the church.

The end.

Dear reader, I hope you enjoyed my story. I wrote this story for my eight year old son to read during the COVID-19 lockdown. He enjoyed reading the story and so I decided to share it.

This is not Will and Clive’s only adventure and so, if you enjoyed this story, why not read the other books?