

Will and His Dog and the Boat

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Will and His Dog and the Boat

It was late August and the summer holidays were coming to an end. It seemed so long ago to Will since he had been to school and played with his friends. He had spent much of his time during the holidays with his best friend Charlie, who lived opposite him, and this had helped him not feel lonely.

On the morning of the last Tuesday of August Will and Charlie had decided to have a picnic lunch in the woods near to their houses. They had both asked their mums if they could go for a picnic and Will's mum had called Charlie's mum to agree the rules that the boys should keep to – after all, they were only eight years old. Will thought that his mum was a worrying old fuss pot sometimes, but he knew that all mums worry about their kids – it's just what they do.

Will and Charlie set out at three minutes past ten and they had been told to be back no later than five o'clock that afternoon. Will's dog, Clive, walked beside them wagging his tail and ran on in front because he was excited – Clive was always excited.

Will had ham sandwiches with Willato ketchup and Charlie had cheese rolls with pickle. Will's mum had given them a bottle of water and a bag of crisps each. The boys knew that they would put the crisps into their sandwiches because that is what they always did when their mums weren't around.

They set off up the lane that led from the end of their street towards the woods that they weren't usually allowed to go into on their own. Will was a little nervous about going into the woods but he hid it from Charlie. Charlie was a little scared about going into the woods but he didn't tell Will. Clive wasn't nervous or scared about going into the woods and his eagerness to run amongst the trees gave the boys courage.

"Come on then," said Will cheerfully. "Let's go into the woods and find somewhere to eat our picnic."

"Let's go," Charlie replied, "I hope we don't get lost."

The boys and Clive walked through the woods and carried on for some time before coming to a small clearing amongst some trees. They agreed that the clearing would be a good place to sit and enjoy their picnics. The boys ate their sandwiches (with the added crisps crushed into them) and Clive enjoyed two sausages that Will's mum had put in a plastic box for him.

"Where do we go from here?" asked Charlie when they had finished eating their lunch.

"I'm not sure," replied Will. "I've never been this far into the woods before."

There were several paths which all led in different directions from the clearing and Clive had already started to make his way towards the one directly in front of them. It looked as if the path went further into the trees and followed a steep hill downwards.

"Come on," said Will, "let's follow Clive."

They followed the path for a few minutes and then Will suddenly stopped and raised his hand as if to signal that he had heard something.

"Do you hear that?" Will asked, "it sounds like the trickling water of a stream."

Charlie could hear it too and said, "come on then, let's go and find it."

Clive ran on and, after a short time, he disappeared as the path wound left and then right, but still sloped downwards. The sound of the water got louder the further they walked and they could hear Clive barking ahead of them.

When they finally reached the stream, Clive was standing on the bank with his paws in the water enjoying a drink. The water looked so clear and cool that Will didn't blame him for wanting to drink it. There was a crooked wooden bench beside the stream and the boys sat down on it until Clive had finished lapping up the water.

"I think we should walk along the stream for a while and see where it leads," said Charlie. "I didn't know there was a stream here," replied Will. "Yes, let's see where it leads us."

As they followed their way along the banks of the stream, it widened and soon it became a river. The water changed from being clear to a murky brown and it began to flow faster.

"Can we stop for a rest?" asked Will.

Charlie was tired too and said, "yes that is a good idea."

The boys stopped underneath a bridge and had a drink from their water bottles.

"Do you think that we should turn back now?" asked Charlie.

"Maybe," replied Will. "I am quite tired and we have walked quite a long way. I don't think the river is going to lead us anywhere exciting. Maybe we can try to..." Will suddenly stopped talking mid-sentence and pointed towards a thick bunch of reeds that were growing beside the riverbank.

Charlie looked where Will was pointing. "Woah," he gasped.

Amongst the reeds was a small, wooden boat. It had been tied to a tree by an old rope. Inside the boat there were two wooden oars.

"Do you think we could go for a little sail on the river in it?" said Will.

"No way!" replied Charlie loudly. "I've been in a little boat with my dad on a lake, but never on an actual river. It's too dangerous Will. It doesn't look very sturdy and I don't like the way it is bobbing about on the water."

"Come on Charlie," said Will. "I think we should get in and just row it out into the middle of the river and then come back. What could go wrong?"

Charlie thought about it for a few seconds and then said, "I think it would be alright if we are careful."

Will smiled and hopped into the boat. It rocked when he landed and it was so unsteady that he fell over onto his bottom. Charlie laughed, untied the rope and climbed into the boat more carefully than Will had. Clive jumped in, wagged his tail and started barking with excitement.

Charlie used one of the oars to push away from the bank and out of the reeds. There were two small planks of wood in the boat which served as seats. Will sat on the front plank facing backwards and Charlie sat on the rear plank facing forwards. Clive stood proudly at the very front of the boat and it seemed to the boys that he thought that he was the captain.

"Which way does the person who is rowing face?" asked Will.

"I think he would sit where you are because that's where my dad sat when we went rowing," replied Charlie.

"We need to switch places then," said Will.

"Why?" replied Charlie nervously, "I don't know how to use the oars or how to row."

"What?" exclaimed Will, "I thought you said you had been in a rowing boat with your dad."

"I have," shouted Charlie, "but that doesn't mean that I know how to row. You went to London on the train last year but I don't expect that you know how to drive one."

Will realised that they were now in big trouble because neither of them could row. The boat had drifted quite a long way from the bank and into the main stream of the river. The current was much stronger in the middle of the river and Will could feel the boat being pushed forward.

"Quick," shouted Will, "let's lean over the side and try and touch the riverbed with the oars to push ourselves back to the bank."

They leaned over the side of the boat but the water was too deep.

"Oh no," gasped Charlie as his oar was swept away by the current. Now they only had one oar left.

The boat began to pick up speed and the boys sat down in the boat and clung tightly onto the sides. They realised that they had completely lost control of the boat and that there was nothing they would be able to do. Even Clive seemed worried and he started to bark loudly.

“This is your fault Will!” shouted Charlie. “I knew we shouldn’t have gone on the water in this stupid boat.”

“I’m sorry,” replied Will, “I thought it would be fun. I think the boat is going to crash and sink.”

The boat picked up speed as the river continued to widen and the current took the boat with even more force. Will was very frightened and he started to cry – so did Charlie.

“We are going to have to jump into the river and swim,” shouted Will.

“I can’t swim well enough,” replied Charlie. “I will drown.”

“Charlie, we will be swept out to sea if we don’t jump. Clive is a very strong swimmer and you can cling on to him.”

The river started to bend to the right and Will had given up all hope of getting to the bank safely in the boat. When they reached the bend in the river the boat continued in a straight line. It seemed that the boat was going too quickly to turn and that it wasn’t going to follow the bend in the river. The boys quickly realised that the boat was going to crash into the bank and that they only had a few seconds to prepare for the impact. They stood up, balanced themselves as best they could and prepared to jump.

The boat slammed into the river bank and the force of the impact knocked the boys over. There was a crack as the wood at the bow of the boat splintered – water immediately began to flood into the boat.

The boys sprang back up in a second and jumped off the boat and onto the riverbank. Clive had jumped into the river and was crawling out of the water and onto the bank. He wagged his tail and shook himself dry.

Charlie and Will watched the little boat as it began to sink under the water.

“Come on,” said Will sadly, “we need to go home. I am so sorry for getting into the boat.”

“It’s alright,” Charlie replied, “but we shouldn’t have taken it because it wasn’t our boat to take.”

“I know,” said Will, “I feel really bad and I am not proud of myself. I will never do anything like that ever again. Are we still friends?”

“Of course we are,” laughed Charlie – “best friends.”

Will smiled.

“Now we need to get home,” said Will.

“We need to follow the river back to where we joined it,” said Charlie.

“How far do you think we sailed? It must have been at least a mile. I can’t even see the bridge that we found the boat under.”

“Let’s get going then,” said Will.

The boys walked along the riverbank for about an hour until they reached the bridge where they had found the boat. The boys were exhausted but Clive seemed to be enjoying himself. He would run on and then back to them covering at least twice the distance that they had walked.

A young man was stood where Will and Charlie had found the boat. He was staring out along the river and was holding the rope that had been used to tie the boat up.

The man looked at the boys as they approached and said, “did you see a small wooden rowing boat floating down the river when you were walking?”

“Erm no sorry,” replied Charlie sounding not very sure of himself.

“Sir, I am so sorry,” said Will – rather more quickly and louder than he would have liked.

“We took the boat. My friend didn’t want to but I made him. We thought that we could row it out into the middle of the river and then back again. Unfortunately, the current was too strong for us and neither of us knew how to row. The boat crashed into the riverbank about a mile away and it has sunk. We only managed to jump clear just in time.”

Will couldn’t believe that he had admitted to taking the boat and was very worried about what the young man might say or do.

There was silence for a short time – although it felt like a long time to Will and Charlie.

The young man, to their surprise, suddenly started to laugh. “It was a rickety old boat and I hardly ever used it. I was coming to put it in my trailer and take it to my friend’s farm to chop up for firewood. I am surprised that you managed to keep it afloat on the river for as long as you did. You have had quite an adventure by the look of you.”

“Phew,” said Charlie, obviously relieved. “Thanks for being so good about it.”

“Don’t worry,” replied the young man, “you have saved me the job of taking the boat away. You should be more like your friend though because he told the truth but you tried to lie to me.”

“I know,” said Charlie, “but I didn’t want to get into trouble.”

“Never mind this time, but you must always tell the truth in future,” said the young man.

“What are your names?”

“I’m Will and this is Charlie,”

“Well lads, it’s been nice meeting you.” The young man turned away and began to walk in the opposite direction along the river.

“Thanks!” shouted Charlie.

“Yeah thanks!” shouted Will.

The young man didn’t turn around but kept on walking and raised his right arm as if to wave to them.

Will, Charlie and Clive climbed the path that led back to the clearing where they had eaten their lunch earlier. They were very tired by the time they reached the clearing and decided to sit down for a few minutes.

“Oh no,” groaned Charlie as he glanced at his watch. “It’s gone four o’clock! We have to be back home by five o’clock. There is not enough time.”

“We will have to run then,” said Will as he stood up and started walking towards the path that led away to the left.

“Where are you going?” shouted Charlie, “it’s this path!” Charlie pointed towards the path to the right.

“Oh no!” said Will, “I’m not sure which path is the right one.”

“Neither am I,” groaned Charlie, “we are going to be in big trouble now.”

Clive was standing at the start of the path that led away from the middle of the clearing. He was barking and wagging his tail clearly waiting for the boys to follow him.

“Come on!” shouted Will, “Clive will have picked up our scent from earlier. He will know the way home.”

Clive ran on and the boys followed him as quickly as they could. They ran through the woods, down the lane that led to the end of their street and crashed through the front door of Will’s house at one minute before five o’clock.

Clive ran straight through into the kitchen and started lapping up water from his bowl. Will and Charlie flopped onto the sofa out of breath and with their pulses racing.

Will’s mum bought them a glass of water each and they told her about their day – except the part about the boat. Charlie was allowed to stay for tea and the boys ate a pizza each, three slices of garlic bread and two bowls of ice cream. Will’s dad couldn’t believe how hungry the boys were – neither could they for that matter.

Three days later, on Friday evening, Will’s mum and dad had invited their neighbours over for pizza in the back garden. Mr and Mrs Thompsen arrived at seven o’clock and their daughter Alex and her boyfriend James arrived a little later.

Will and Charlie had recovered from their adventure in the boat and had put it in the back of their minds. They had agreed not to tell their parents or mention it again.

The boys were sat on a rug in the middle of the lawn while the grownups were sat on chairs around a table on the patio.

James walked over to Will and Charlie and said, “been in any rowing boats lately boys?”

Will and Charlie were stunned at what James had just said.

“H-how do you know about that?” stammered Will – nearly choking on his pizza.

“Don’t worry lads,” said James, “your secret is safe with me. The man you spoke to, who owned the boat, is my best mate. He was supposed to be bringing it to my dad’s farm so we

could chop it up for firewood. When he told me that the boys were called Will and Charlie I knew straight away who he was talking about.”

Will and Charlie looked at each other and burst into laughter.

“What are you two laughing about?” asked Will’s mum.

“Nothing!” they said at the same time.

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?

