

Will and His Dog and the Cheats

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Will and His Dog and the Cheats

Every summer, on the third Saturday of August, the village held a summer fair. The fair was the biggest event of the year and everyone went to it from near and far.

Will had always gone to the fair with his parents and looked forward to the event. This year was no different and, by midday, Will, his mum and his dad were at the fair.

Cars were parked on the field next to the fair and stewards directed the drivers where to park. It was then a short walk along the lane to the fair.

Will's dad loved going to the fair because he liked to look at the vintage cars and drink beer out of a plastic cup in the huge marquee tent. Will's mum loved the fair because she liked to look at the various stalls buying stuff that Will's dad said they didn't need. Will loved the fair because, well he just loved it – especially the hotdogs.

There were lots of children from Will's school at the fair with their parents. The children waved at Will when they saw him – he waved back.

“Come on Will,” said Will's Dad, “let's go and look at the cars.”

“I'll meet you in the marquee in an hour,” said Will's mum, “we can get a burger or a hotdog.”

Will's mum made for the stalls and spent the hour looking around for things that she might like to buy. Will spent the hour with his dad looking at the old cars. He enjoyed himself

because his dad was able to tell him everything about the cars. Will's dad knew when each car had been built, where it was from, how fast it would have been able to go and other points of interest such as engine sizes.

The family met back up at the marquee and ordered food – three hotdogs, two bottles of water and a plastic cup of beer.

“Look,” said Will, “there’s Alex and James.”

Alex and James were at the other end of the marquee. Alex was chatting with an older lady and James was inspecting a very large marrow. Will ran over to them.

“Hello Will,” chirped James. “What do you think of my marrow? It’s going to win this year.”

“Win what?” asked Will.

“The contest to see who can grow the heaviest marrow,” replied James. “I think that you will agree that my marrow is the largest here.”

“It doesn’t mean that it’s the heaviest,” interrupted the old lady to whom Alex had been speaking. “I think you will find that my marrow will surely be the heaviest and that I will win the competition for the fifth year in a row.”

“It’s only a bit of fun,” said Alex.

The old lady scowled at James, turned and strode to a nearby table. She sat down and glared at James. There were two other men sat at the table and they glared at James too.

“Calm down James,” said Alex, “it’s only a silly competition.”

“Who was that?” asked Will nodding towards the old lady.

“That,” replied James, “is Angela Shelton. She owns a farm a couple of miles from our farm. Those two goons sat with her are her sons. She always wins the heaviest marrow competition but not this year. I weighed my marrow at the farm before I came here and it is a whopping fifty-six kilograms – more than her marrow was last year.”

Will didn’t know how heavy a marrow usually was or how heavy it would need to be to win the competition but fifty-six kilogrammes did sound like a lot.

There were about ten marrows in the competition but Angela Shelton's and James's marrows were the largest. Will thought that James's marrow looked slightly larger than Angela Shelton's.

"Ladies and gentlemen, if I might have your attention please," said Mr Perkins – the head judge of the competition. "The judges will be ready shortly to inspect and weigh the marrows. May I ask you all to leave the tent while the judging takes place. We will call everyone back in when we are finished to announce the winner."

"Fine," said James, "let's get this over and done with."

Everyone went outside into the sun and Will's parents chatted with Alex. Most people were chatting to each other about this and that. Will hated it when grownups started chatting because most of the time, in his opinion, they talked about rubbish or stuff that he didn't understand. James was restless and paced around as he waited nervously for the judges to make their decision.

Will stood by his dad for a few minutes and wasn't paying any attention to what was being said. He gazed around at nothing in particular and was growing impatient because he wanted to see more of the fair. Suddenly he noticed the two lads who had been sat at the table with Angela Shelton appear from the side of the tent. Will thought it odd that they hadn't left the tent by the same exit as everyone else.

Twenty minutes passed before the announcement to re-enter the tent was made. The four judges were stood at the front and everyone stood in silence waiting to find out who had won.

"In third place," announced Mr Perkins, "is Mr Thatcher's marrow weighing in at forty-three kilograms."

There was polite applause as Mr Thatcher shook hands with the judges. Then silence.

"In second place, weighing in at fifty-one kilograms, is the marrow of Mr James Robinson."

"What?" shouted James, "my marrow weighs fifty-six kilograms!"

"Mr Robinson," said Mr Perkins firmly, "I can assure you that we have checked the weights and that our decision is final."

“This is a fix!” shouted James. He turned on his heels and stormed out of the tent – Alex followed him.

There were gasps of surprise from some people. Others just stood in shocked silence.

“It gives me great pleasure,” continued Mr Perkins, “to announce that the winner of the competition this year is Mrs Angela Shelton. Her pumpkin weighed in at fifty-six kilograms which, I think, is a record for this event.”

Applause followed and Angela Shelton stepped forward to collect her trophy. She looked very pleased with herself. Will had made up his mind. He did not like her one bit.

The rest of the afternoon passed quickly and Will had forgotten all about the incident with James and the marrow. Will managed to see everything at the fair and he even sat in the fire engine that had been brought from the local fire station – that had been cool.

In the evening, Will, his parents and Clive went around to the Thompson’s house next door. Alex had made some pizza to try and cheer James up. Will’s dad took a bottle of wine with him as a gift and Will’s mum took some flowers for Mrs Thompson. Everyone was in the back garden.

“Sorry about earlier,” said James when they arrived.

“Don’t worry about it,” said Will’s dad. “You should have seen their faces when you walked out.”

“It was fixed,” said Alex. “Somebody must have swapped James’s marrow with Mrs Shelton’s when everyone left the tent.”

Will thought back to the fair and something suddenly occurred to him.

“I saw Mrs Shelton’s sons appear from the side of the marquee while everyone was waiting outside for the judges to make their decision,” said Will. “That was several minutes after we had left the tent.”

“I knew it!” shouted James. “They did it. They swapped the marrows. What cheats!”

“That’s disgusting,” said Alex.

“There is another marrow competition next Saturday at the summer fair in town,” said James. “I’ve got a marrow which will be larger than the one I had today by the time it has grown. I am going to win.”

“Oh no,” groaned Alex, “that means we’ve got to go through all of this again.”

Will laughed.

Will ate his pizza. The Thompson’s and Will’s parents drank wine and chatted at the table on the patio. Clive lay down on the grass and went to sleep. Alex played on her phone.

James sat on his own, saying nothing, completely lost in his thoughts.

“Right,” said James after a while. “I’ve got a plan.”

Alex put her phone away, Will continued to eat his pizza.

“How would you, Charlie and Clive fancy coming over to the farm to camp out in the tent next Friday night?” said James.

“Yes please,” replied Will. “Charlie will definitely want to go.”

Will’s parents agreed that Will could go camping with James and Alex. Will rang Charlie and his parents said that it would be fine.

Friday afternoon came around and Will was very excited at the prospect of going to camp in one of James’s fields.

James came to collect the boys and Clive after they had eaten lunch and took them over to the farm in his jeep. Will and Charlie helped James pitch two tents and lay out the sleeping bags and all the gear that they would need. James and Alex would sleep in the larger of the two tents and Will, Clive and Charlie would share the smaller one.

Alex arrived a little after six o’clock. James already had a fire burning and burgers frying in a pan. The boys stayed up until it went dark. James had told them scary stories and so they were more than ready to zip themselves up in the tent with Clive. Will had a little nightlight that was powered by a battery – he kept it on.

It was half past two in the morning when Clive suddenly got up from his mat in the tent. Charlie and Will had been disturbed by Clive's sudden movement and they woke up too.

"What is it Clive?" asked Will.

The boys recoiled in horror as the zip on their tent began to move. Clive started to growl.

"Shhhh," whispered James as he opened the tent, "put your shoes on boys." Will could see Alex stood behind James in the moonlight.

James motioned that everyone should be still and quiet. Everyone was suddenly very alert and listened out for the slightest sound – even though they didn't know what they were listening out for.

Will could hear the low revving of an engine. The source of the noise sounded like it was coming from just down the lane that ran in front of the farm. The noise was getting louder but the vehicle seemed to be approaching very slowly.

Suddenly the engine stopped.

Will heard two car doors close and then footsteps. He was scared but he knew that James wouldn't let anything bad happen to them. The tents had been pitched at the front of the garden by the hedge that separated the farm from the lane. Will could see through gaps in the hedge.

James, Alex, Will, Charlie and Clive waited in silence. Clive sensed that he was to remain quiet and did not move.

Two sets of footsteps could now be heard clearly.

Closer.

Closer.

Two men suddenly came into view through the gaps in the hedge – Angela Shelton’s sons.

They crept by the hedge within five metres of where Will was stood watching them. The men seemed completely unaware that they were being watched.

The men walked through the farm gate, up the drive and disappeared behind the farm house.

“Right,” said James, “I’m going to follow them. Alex, you know what to do. See you back here in a few minutes.”

James ran across the lawn and disappeared behind the farm house.

“Quick boys, with me,” whispered Alex.

Alex ran across the lawn, out of the gate and down the lane in direction that they had heard the engine a few moments earlier. The boys and Clive followed her.

A jeep was parked about thirty metres down the lane.

“Stay here,” said Alex. She jogged over to the jeep and crouched down onto the ground beside the front wheel on the righthand side of the vehicle.

“What is she doing?” asked Charlie.

“I don’t know,” replied Will.

They couldn’t see what Alex was doing in the dark but it looked like she was unscrewing something on the wheel.

A hissing sound suddenly started coming from the direction of the jeep. Alex sprang up and ran around to the front wheel on the other side. More hissing could be heard a few seconds later.

“She’s letting the air out of the tyres!” exclaimed Will.

Less than a minute later, Alex sprinted back to the boys grinning. “Come on, back to the tent.”

“What did you do that for?” asked Will, confused.

“It’s all part of James’s plan,” replied Alex, “see you in the morning.”

Will zipped up the tent and it was not long before the boys were soundly asleep again.

Meanwhile, James had followed the two men and watched them from behind the corner of a barn. They had stopped at James’s vegetable patch at the spot where he grew his marrows. James could overhear their conversation.

“Blinking heck these are big marrows,” said one of the men. “How does he get them to grow so big?”

“I dunno,” replied the other man. “Shall we take the biggest one?”

“No, we can’t do that because he will notice it is missing in the morning. We will just have to swap them like we did last week.”

James smiled to himself – ‘not this time,’ he thought.

James ran back to the tents and hid behind the hedge. Alex was waiting for him.

“Everything go to plan?” he asked her. Alex nodded.

James and Alex watched the men leave the farm and walk down the lane. They heard their shouts of surprise and then anger when they discovered what had happened to their jeep.

James smiled. Alex laughed.

James knew that the men would not have a pump powerful enough to inflate their tyres with them in the jeep. They couldn’t ask anyone for help because it was the middle of the night. They wouldn’t have been able to explain their being down the lane even if they had seen someone.

The men groaned and started the two mile walk back to their farm. They would have to return and collect the jeep with their trailer in the morning and take it to a garage where they could pump up the tyres.

The men knew that they had been outwitted and that it was probably James who had let their tyres down.

“He might think he’s won,” said one of the men, “but we will win the marrow competition and I can’t wait to see his face when that happens.”

James and Alex zipped up their tent and fell asleep.

The next morning James woke the boys up. They ate breakfast together in the kitchen of the farm house. James had made scrambled egg on toast with sausages and bacon. It was delicious. Clive ate three sausages for his breakfast.

“I have scrubbed my marrow clean,” said James proudly, “and weighed it. It weighs sixty-three kilogrammes and it is the biggest marrow I have ever grown. I am going to win with it today for certain.”

“What about Mrs Shelton’s sons?” asked Will.

“Don’t you worry about them,” smiled James. “I have a plan.”

James drove Will, Charlie and Clive to the fair in his car – Alex followed in hers. James chuckled to himself as he drove down the lane passing the abandoned jeep with the flat tyres.

The fair was very similar to the one the weekend before. Will, Charlie and Clive had a good look around while James took his marrow to the marquee to be judged. They had all agreed to meet back at the marquee at midday.

They met at the marquee and Alex bought Will and Charlie a cup of squash each. The boys sat down and watched the judges chatting as they inspected the marrows.

Angela Shelton was there and she made her way across to James. “I hope you are going to be a better loser this week Mr Robinson,” said Angela.

“I won’t have to be,” replied James, “it is obvious that my marrow is much larger than yours. I’m going to win.”

Mrs Shelton turned and began to walk away from James but he called after her. “I hope your boys enjoyed their walk back last night.”

Angela Shelton shook her fists in anger and strode across the marquee to a table where her sons were sat. She sat down at the table and glared at James.

Mr Perkins made his announcement that everyone should leave the tent while the judges weighed the marrows. James told Will to leave his ruck sack on the chair he had been sat on. The chair was on the front row and James explained that if the bag was left there then Will would be able to return to the seat when everyone was let back into the tent.

Everyone shuffled out of the tent and waited outside. James and Will watched the tent while Charlie took Clive for a short walk. Two minutes later James nudged Will and pointed to the left side of the tent. Sure enough, the two men who had been at the farm during the night appeared. The swap had been made.

“Oh no!” said Will, “you can’t let them get away with it James.”
James winked at Will and grinned.

Mr Perkins called everyone back inside the tent and Will and James made their way to the front row to take the seats that they had sat on before.

The tent was filled with people.

Silence.

“In third place,” announced Mr Perkins, “is Mr Baker’s marrow weighing in at fifty-two kilogrammes.”

Polite applause followed.

“In second place,” continued Mr Perkins, “is Mr James Robinson with a marrow weighing fifty-seven kilogrammes.”

Will couldn't believe it. James got up and shook hands with the judges and sat down again smiling. Will was so confused.

“In first place,” said Mr Perkins, “with the most magnificent marrow I have seen for many years, is Mrs Angela Shelton. The winning pumpkin weighs an impressive sixty-three kilograms.”

There was loud applause and Angela Shelton made her way to the front to receive the trophy.

James jumped up from his seat, which startled Will, and made his way to the front.

“Now then Mr Robinson,” said Mr Perkins quickly, “we don't want a scene.”

Angela Shelton looked confused and everyone was silent.

“Will, please pass me your ruck sack,” said James. Will gave James his bag.

James unzipped the bag and removed a digital camcorder from inside. Will had thought that the bag had felt heavier earlier but he hadn't mentioned it.

James pulled out the small screen that was attached the camcorder and quickly found what he was looking for. James played the video clip to the judges who gasped in horror at what they were watching. There, in digital clarity, was a recording of Angela Shelton's two sons swapping her marrow with James's marrow as everyone was leaving the tent.

Mr Perkins cleared his throat. “I am shocked at what I have just seen. Mrs Shelton, you are now disqualified from this competition. Mr Robinson, I pronounce you as the winner of this competition and congratulate you on growing such a heavy marrow.”

“Yes!” shouted James.

“Yes!” shouted Will.

Everyone clapped and James held his trophy high in the air.

Angela Shelton and her sons were nowhere to be seen and had already left the tent.

James dropped Will and Charlie back to their houses and invited them and their parents to his farm for a celebratory party which he planned on throwing that evening.

At seven o'clock, Charlie and his parents, Will, his parents and Clive, Alex and her parents arrived at the farm.

It was a great evening with lots of eating, drinking, dancing and laughing.

At ten o'clock the Thompson's decided that it was time for them to go home.

"Don't go yet," said James. "I'd like everyone to gather in the garden for a few short moments."

James's mum had made a beautiful cake which she had laid out on a table in the middle of the lawn. James's dad was cutting the cake into slices.

"I'd like to make an announcement," said James. Alex walked over to James and stood beside him. "It's not just winning the marrow competition that I am celebrating this evening. This afternoon I asked Alex to marry me and she said yes."

Alex held out her left hand and displayed a ring with a diamond in it.

Then there was uproar.

Will's mum started crying and hugged Charlie's mum. Alex's mum started crying and hugged James's mum. Alex started crying and hugged her mum and then James's mum. There was a lot of hugging and crying going on. The mums flocked around Alex looking at her ring.

Alex's dad shook James's hand and then James's dad's hand. Will's dad shook Charlie's dad's hand. Then Will's dad shook Alex's dad's hand. There was a lot of handshaking going on. The dads then opened bottles of beer and started drinking them. James joined them.

Will, Charlie and Clive just stood there in the middle of it all not really knowing what to do.

"It's all a bit soppy really isn't it Will?" said Charlie.

"Yes it is," replied Will, "but it's pretty cool too,"

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

