

Will and His Dog and the Man in the Trees

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Will and His Dog and the Man in the Trees

Will hated shopping. He looked forward to the day when he would be old enough to be left at home while his mum went to the shops without him.

“Why can’t you order the groceries online?” Will moaned one morning as he got into his mum’s car to go shopping.

“I like to see the food for myself before I buy it,” replied his mum. “I don’t want to hear any moaning from you today Will. We have to shop otherwise we will run out of food and go hungry.”

Will thought that the other reason that Will’s mum enjoyed shopping so much was that she liked to gossip with other mums. He slumped down in the back of the car and hoped that today his mum wouldn’t take too long in the supermarket.

Will followed his mum around the supermarket as she pushed the trolley from aisle to aisle. He could predict the order in which she would buy stuff – veg first, then bread, then milk and so on. Will saw another kid from his class in school. Will thought that the boy looked as miserable to be there as he was.

By the time Will’s mum had finished her shopping and reached the tills, she had chatted to three different mums. Each conversation, in Will’s opinion had been a complete waste of time. The first conversation had been about the rising price of bread. The second conversation had been all about another mum who Will had never met. The third conversation, the longest, had been about where the best place was to buy school uniform.

Will had had enough of it all.

As they queued for the tills, Will watched the people in front of them. An old lady was immediately in front of them. She only had a packet of biscuits and some tea bags. In front of the old lady was a young man Will guessed to be in his twenties. He had long hair, a beard and his clothes were very shabby. He only had a packet of crisps to buy. Will guessed that it wouldn't be long before he was out of the shop and back in the car on his way home.

"You're two pence short," snapped the girl serving on the till to the shabbily dressed young man.

"I'm sorry," said the man.

"Well you can't have the crisps if you don't have the money," replied the girl.

The old lady in front of Will's mum turned around to speak to her. "It's disgusting to see people like that around here."

Will's mum didn't reply to the old lady but instead reached inside her purse and found a two pence coin.

"Here," said Will's mum, as she stretched over to pass the coin to the girl on the till.

The girl on the till looked disappointed but took the coin and gave the man the bag of crisps with a scowl.

The man looked past the old lady to Will's mum and thanked her. He left the shop.

"We don't want people like that around here," said the old lady.

The girl on the till agreed with her.

Will's mum passed no comment.

Will thought about the young man in the car on the way home.

"Mum," said Will, "why did that man not have enough money to buy the crisps in the shop?"

"He is probably homeless Will," replied his mum. "Sometimes when things go wrong in the lives of people, they find themselves on the street with no money and nowhere to live."

Will thought that it was very sad that the young man didn't have anywhere to live and he hoped that he would not end up like that when he was older.

The next morning, Will and Charlie walked up to the heath on the outskirts of the village to kick Will's ball about for an hour or two. They often went to the heath because nobody ever seemed to go there. There was a small pond at the heath, several copses (small groups of trees) and a large open space where the boys liked to play football.

About an hour of football had passed and the boys were getting tired.

"Shall we take a break?" asked Charlie.

"Yes, I'm exhausted," replied Will.

"Look what I have got in my rucksack," said Charlie. He pulled out a packet of digestive biscuits.

"Nice one Charlie," said Will, "I'm starving."

The boys sat down on the grass and began to eat Charlie's biscuits.

"I'm glad we didn't bring Clive for once," said Will.

"Why's that?" replied Charlie.

"Because he would be pestering us for biscuits all the time."

The boys laughed at the thought of it. Clive was always hungry.

Charlie suddenly stood up and a look of concern flashed across his face.

"Look Will. There's someone in the trees over there." Charlie pointed to a copse on the other side of the heath. "Come on, let's go."

Will got up and looked in the direction in which Charlie had pointed. The young man from the supermarket who Will had seen the day before was making his way through the trees towards them.

"Run!" shouted Charlie but Will stood still.

"I know him," said Will. "Well, I don't know him, but I saw him yesterday at the supermarket. He didn't have enough money for a packet of crisps and so my mum paid for them instead."

"I don't like the look of him," said Charlie.

The boys decided that it was time to leave and started walking away from the approaching man.

“Hey wait!” shouted the man. “Please, wait.”

Charlie kept on walking but Will stopped and turned around to face the young man. “What do you want?” asked Will.

“Wait, I know you,” said the man, “you were the kid in the shop yesterday.”

“I know,” replied Will, “my mum paid for your crisps. What is your name?”

“Jason,” replied the man, “what’s yours?”

“I’m Will, and this is Charlie,” said Will as he pointed to Charlie who had now come to join them.

“Would you like some biscuits?” asked Charlie.

“Yes please, I’m very hungry.”

Charlie removed the packet of biscuits from his rucksack. He gave one to Will, kept one for himself and gave the rest of the packet to Jason.

“Thanks,” said Jason as he stuffed the biscuits into his mouth like a hungry wolf.

“Erm, OK, we’d best be going now then,” said Charlie.

“Yeah, bye,” said Will.

The boys turned and began walking very quickly in the direction of the gate that led off the heath and onto the lane back to the village.

“Scary guy,” said Will when he was sure that Jason wasn’t following them.

“Did you see how he was eating the biscuits?” asked Charlie.

“I know,” said Will. “Did you see the black bin liners in the trees? He must be sleeping there.”

Will and Charlie walked back to their own houses and Will spent the rest of the day thinking about Jason. He felt bad about how he had not stopped to talk to him and how rude they had been in their eagerness to get away from the heath so quickly. Will felt sorry for Jason and he decided that he was going to help him somehow – now all he had to do was figure out how.

Will decided that he was going back to the heath the next day and that he would take some food to Jason. He knew that Charlie would not go there because he was scared of Jason. Will

would definitely take Clive with him but he knew that he needed a grown up there too. He knew that he could not tell his parents because they would ring the police and Jason would be taken away.

Alex. She would help him.

“I’m just going next door to see Alex,” said Will to his mum.

“Alright,” replied his mum, “don’t be there too long there though because she won’t want you hanging around her all day long.”

Will walked the short route to the house next door and rang the doorbell. Alex answered the door.

“Hi Will,” said Alex, “what can I do for you?”

“Well,” said Will, “I need you to help me and go with me somewhere tomorrow. There’s this man, called Jason, he lives in the trees up on the heath and I want to take him some food tomorrow.”

“I don’t know Will,” said Alex, “if he is sleeping rough, he might be dangerous.”

“He’s not,” replied Will, “he’s nice and he needs my help.”

“Alright Will, I’ll take you, but you must tell your mum and dad.”

“Thanks Alex, I knew you’d help me.”

Will went back to his house and told his mum everything. Will’s mum was not happy about the situation even though she was proud of Will for wanting to help Jason. She spoke to Will’s dad about it when he returned home from work.

“Will, come in here please,” said Will’s dad after supper. “Your mum and me are not happy about your plans to go and see this man Tomorrow. We think it is too dangerous for you and Alex.”

“Please dad, please let me go to help Jason,” pleaded Will.

There was silence while Will’s dad thought about it all. “Right, you can go, but I will be coming with you.”

“Thanks dad,” said Will. He was feeling much better about the situation now that he had told his parents. He also felt much safer knowing that his dad would be there with him.

Alex knocked on Will’s front door at ten o’clock the next morning. “Did you tell your mum and dad?” asked Alex. “Are you ready to go?”

“Yes to both questions,” said Will.

Will’s dad appeared from behind the hall. “Morning Alex, I will be coming with you.”

“Phew,” said Alex.

Will’s mum had made four cheese rolls for Jason. She had put them in a plastic food bag with a packet of crisps and two bottles of water. She hugged Will and told him to be careful.

“He might not even be there,” said Will’s dad as they drove through the village.

“Maybe it’s best if you wait in the car,” said Alex. “If he sees a man he might run off. If it’s just me, Clive and Will he probably won’t be as scared.”

“That’s fine,” said Will’s dad, “I’ll wait in the car but I will be watching. You need to tell him that I am here with you too.”

They all agreed.

Will’s heart was racing when they reached the heath. They parked the car, Clive jumped out and ran out in front onto the heath.

Will and Alex cautiously walked onto the heath and Will nodded to the copse where he thought that Jason had been living.

Jason had seen them first and was already making his way towards them.

“Hello Will,” he shouted. “Who is your friend?”

“My name is Alex,” shouted Alex back at him. “Will’s dad is just over there in the car.”

“Don’t worry, I’m not a threat to you,” said Jason.

“I have bought some food for you to eat,” said Will.

Jason’s face lit up. “Really? That is so kind of you Will.”

Will gave Jason the plastic food bag. Jason started to eat the rolls and Alex screwed up her face in disgust at the greedy way in which he gulped down the water and gobbled down the rolls.

“Sorry about the way I eat,” said Jason after noticing Alex’s reaction. “I am starving.”

“Why are you here?” asked Alex.

Jason cleared his throat and a sudden sadness passed across his face.

“I lived with my nan about ten miles from here. I looked after her and she gave me a place to stay in return. She died two months ago and the house went back to the council. I had nowhere to go. No family. No friends. No one.”

Jason paused as if he was thinking about what he would say next. It seemed that a lot had happened to him during the last two months.

“I walked across fields from village to village but people turned away and wouldn’t help me. I slept on benches, in parks and in shop doorways. It is cold in the nights now but it will get colder in the winter. I have decided to hitch a ride to London to try to find a shelter for the homeless in which to stay or maybe try to get a job so I can earn some money.”

“That’s awful, you poor man,” said Alex.

“What about the vicar?” blurted out Will without really thinking about what he was saying.

“What about him?” replied Alex.

“Well, he always says in assemblies in school that we should try to help one another. Jason could go and see the vicar. The vicar will help him, I am sure of it.”

Alex wasn’t so sure but she thought it might be worth a try.

Jason went back with them to the car and introduced himself to Will’s dad. They drove to the vicarage, got out of the car, walked up the path and knocked on the front door. Will’s dad waited in the car with Clive.

“What if he won’t help me?” said Jason, “nobody has helped me so far.”

“The vicar is a good man,” replied Will, “plus he owes me a favour because not long ago he locked me and Charlie in the church for most of the night.”

Jason looked back at Will in disbelief but didn't say anything.

The vicar opened his front door and was clearly surprised to see Will, Alex and Jason standing on his door step.

“Hello Will,” said the vicar, “what can I do for you?”

“This is Alex,” Will gestured towards Alex, “and this is Jason. He has been sleeping up on the heath and doesn't have anywhere to go or anyone to help him. I told him that you would know what to do.”

“Of course,” said the vicar, “come inside.”

They went inside the vicarage and were directed into the vicar's office. Jason told the vicar the story that he had told Will and Alex. The vicar asked him a few questions such as his age, where he had gone to school and so on. It turned out that Jason was twenty years old and that the vicar thought he had known his nan but couldn't be sure.

“First things first,” said the vicar as he got up from his chair. “Upstairs for a shower Jason. I will get a clean towel for you. You can take a razor from the packet on the sink and have a shave. While you are doing that, we will look through the clothes that have been donated to us to send to the charity shop. We will find you something to wear. The clothes you are wearing now will have to be thrown out I am afraid.”

“Thank you,” said Jason, “I haven't had a shower for two months.”

“It smells more like three,” said Alex.

They laughed and Jason went upstairs.

“First door on the left,” said the vicar.

Will found a decent pair of shoes for Jason. The vicar found some trousers that he thought might fit Jason. Alex found a shirt and jumper which she thought would look good on Jason. The vicar also gave Jason some of his clean underwear. The vicar placed the clothes on a chair outside the bathroom door.

Will's dad knocked on the vicarage door to say that he was going for walk with Clive. Will, Alex and the vicar waited in the vicarage kitchen for Jason to finish his washing and shaving. The vicar's wife came home from shopping in town. The vicar told her what was happening and so she made everyone a cup of tea to drink while they waited.

Thirty minutes later Jason appeared in his new clothes. He was clean shaven and looked quite respectable.

"Wow," said Alex, "what a change."

"Thanks," replied Jason, "I feel so much better."

They all went and sat down in the lounge so that they could discuss what Jason might do next to improve his situation. There was a piano in the lounge. Jason went over to it and, without asking, he pulled out the stool, sat down and started to play.

Will did not know what Jason was playing but it was clearly very impressive and full of expression. Nobody said a word while he was playing. They looked at each other with surprised expressions and just listened until Jason had finished playing.

There was stunned silence as Jason got up from the piano and pushed the stool back underneath the keyboard.

Then applause.

"That was amazing," gasped Will.

"Fantastic," said Alex.

"So beautifully played," said the vicar's wife.

"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed the vicar, "wherever did you learn to play the piano that well?"

"My nan taught me," replied Jason. "I'm glad she didn't hear that performance though because I haven't been able to practise for two months and there were lots of mistakes in it."

"Well I didn't notice any mistakes," said the vicar's wife.

"Trust me, they were there," replied Jason.

Everyone sat in silence sipping their tea.

“Ha!,” cried the vicar suddenly. “I know who your nan was. She used to teach piano. I heard her play at a concert in a local church some years ago. She was a fine pianist.”

“She was,” replied Jason smiling, “she taught piano me since I was a young boy.”

“Tell me,” said the vicar thoughtfully, “do you also know how to play the organ?”

“Why yes,” replied Jason, “I used to practise regularly in our local church. I used to play for the services at the church for a while until nan became ill.”

“Well, it just so happens that we are looking for an organist at our church. Based on the wonderful playing that I’ve just heard from you, I’d like to offer you the job. What do you say?”

“I’d say yes,” replied Jason with a big grin.

The vicar and Jason shook hands.

“The landlord at the local pub is looking for someone to play the piano on Friday and Saturday evenings in the restaurant,” said the vicar. “He will be very glad to meet you.”

“Thank you so much,” said Jason to the vicar.

“I think,” said the vicar, “that you should really be thanking young Will here. You would still be up on the heath had it not been for Will’s kindness.”

“Thanks Will,” said Jason, “I owe you big time.”

“You’re welcome,” said Will.

Will and Alex left the vicarage and went back to the car. Will’s dad and Clive were waiting for them. Alex dropped them off back at Will’s house.

Will told his mum and dad everything that had happened in the vicarage. Will’s mum and dad were very proud of Will and they gave him extra pocket money.

Jason began his new job at the church the next day and he also met the landlord of the local pub. He was offered a job at the local newsagents and rented a room above the shop.

Everything seemed to be going Jason’s way at last and he was so grateful to Will and the vicar.

Exactly a week after Will had first seen Jason at the supermarket, his mum took him shopping again. The visit was exactly the same as the previous one – veg first, then bread, then milk and so on. His mum chatted to four different women about various things – Will was so bored.

The same girl was working on the till and Will noticed that the same old lady was in front of them in the queue. Jason was in front of the old lady and he smiled as when he saw Will.

“Hi Will,” said Jason, “how are you doing?”

“I’m fine,” replied Will, “how are you settling in?”

“Great,” said Jason, “why don’t you come and hear me play at the concert I am giving in the church next weekend.”

“We will be there,” replied Will’s mum.

“That will be four pounds exactly sir,” said the girl serving on the till.

“Thanks,” said Jason as he handed over the money.

“See you soon Will,” said Jason as he left the shop.

Will grinned back.

“It’s nice to see that sort of person moving to the village,” said the old lady. “He is a lovely man and plays the piano so very well. The vicar speaks very highly of him you know. I heard him practising the organ while I was arranging the flowers in church during the week. He is a polite young man and I am hoping that he will teach my grandchildren to play the piano.”

Will’s mum nodded politely.

“Much better than that awful person who was in here last week. Do you remember him? Dreadful man.” sneered the old lady.

Will’s mum wasn’t going to say anything but Will couldn’t help but speak. “It was the same person,” shouted Will, “can’t you see that?”

The old lady turned and smiled at Will. “Yes, I’m sure you are right dear.”

When they left the shop, Will was confused. “Why didn’t that lady believe me – that Jason was the same man who was here last week?”

“Some people are just like that Will,” replied his mum with a sigh, “you will learn that as you get older.”

Will shrugged his shoulders. His mum smiled.

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?