

Will and His Dog and the Stolen Eggs

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Will and His Dog and the Stolen Eggs

One morning in the second week of April, during the Easter holidays, Will was sitting in his back garden. Will often sat in his back garden when he was on holiday if the weather was fine. He liked to sit on a chair on the patio and drink squash or maybe read one of his books. On this particular morning, Will was reading a book. His mum was inside the house and Will could hear the Hoover in one of the rooms upstairs. Clive lay stretched out on the path that led to the shed at the back of the garden.

“Hi Will,” said a voice from over the fence to the Thompson’s garden next door.

“Hi James,” replied Will. James had startled Will because he was concentrating on reading his book. Will had jumped when James had called him. James laughed. Will didn’t mind – he really liked James because he had taken him camping.

“Have you got a few moments for a chat?” asked James.

“Sure,” replied Will.

“Can I pop round in five minutes? Can you get Charlie over too?”

“He was going to come over later anyway. I’ll ring him now.”

Five minutes later, Will, Charlie, James and Alex were sat in Will’s kitchen. Will’s mum made James and Alex a cup of coffee each and some sodas for the boys. Will felt like he was at an important meeting because James seemed to be in a very serious mood.

“Will, Charlie,” said James, “I need your help.”

“Erm OK,” gulped Will. He couldn’t think how somebody like James might need help from a couple of eight year old boys.

“Do you know what an osprey is?” asked James.

Will and Charlie shook their heads.

“An osprey is a rare bird of prey. It is a hawk, larger in size than a buzzard but smaller than an eagle. There are only about two hundred pairs in this country and so they need to be protected.”

“I see,” said Will, “where do me and Charlie come into this?”

“A pair of ospreys have made their nest, which is also known as an eyrie, at the very top of one of my oak trees.”

“Where?” asked Charlie.

“Round the back of the pool beside the stream. The tree is on open ground and the only one there.”

“I know where you mean, by the disused barn,” said Will, “the tree is huge.”

“That’s it,” said James. He pulled a photo of the tree from his pocket. Will looked at it and nodded.

“So what has all this got to do with us?” asked Charlie.

James paused, took a sip of tea and shifted nervously in his chair.

“The eggs of rare birds are extremely valuable. There are people who will pay thieves a lot of money to steal the eggs for them.”

“We can’t guard the eggs,” said Will and Charlie together.

“I’m not asking you to guard them. I’m asking you to watch them for me. I have erected a hide about fifty metres away from the tree. It is well hidden and nobody can see it unless they know it is there.”

“What would we do if someone comes to steal the eggs?”

“You contact me on a walkie-talkie radio that I will give you. Stay put and out of sight. Me and some of the lads who work on the farm will come and catch the thief or thieves ourselves.”

“What about the police?” asked Will’s mum who had been listening to the conversation.

“We rang the police,” replied James. “The police said that if they were able to catch thieves stealing the eggs then they would prosecute them but that they are too busy to stand around at the bottom of a tree twenty-four hours a day just in case someone comes to steal a couple of eggs.”

“That’s not very helpful,” said Will’s mum.

“I know,” said James, “but I understand their point of view – they are very busy.”

Will took a sip of soda from his glass and Clive came in from the garden and lay down in his bed.

“What about security cameras?” said Charlie.

“We have them,” replied James, “but we need to know when the eggs are being stolen so that we can catch the thief or thieves and get the eggs back from them. A camera can film the eggs being stolen but it can’t tell us when they are being stolen. We need people there to alert us by radio. Members of the local bird society have been watching around the clock but tomorrow afternoon, for two hours, nobody is available. I can’t be there as I have important work on the farm to complete and Alex is working at the garden centre.”

“We could do it,” said Will.

“Thanks boys,” replied James. “The thing is that nobody probably knows that there are osprey eggs in the tree. I doubt that anyone would be stupid enough to attempt to steal the eggs in daylight for fear of being seen and reported. Even in the very unlikely event of someone trying to steal the eggs when you are there, nobody will see you because you will be in the hide. All you need to do is take pictures with my camera and contact me on the radio that I will give you.”

James showed the boys how to use the radio and the camera.

“The camera might look small but it has a very powerful zoom on it,” said James. “Make sure the radio is tuned to channel eight. The devices are fully charged and the batteries will last much longer than the time that you will need them for. Be careful with the camera because it is very expensive.”

“We will look after your gear James,” said Will.

“Thanks boys,” said James.

“No problem,” said Charlie.

The next day Will and Charlie arrived at the hide at two o'clock in the afternoon. There were two people inside from the local bird club. They said that they would be back at four o'clock for the next shift. That gave the boys two hours to watch the tree.

The hide was dug several feet down into the ground and it would not be easily spotted by anyone who did not know that it was there. There were two camping chairs inside and nothing else.

Will and Charlie sat down inside the hide and removed the radio and camera from Will's rucksack. There was a narrow slit in the green canvas through which they could see the tree and the surrounding field.

"This is going to be boring," said Charlie. "Nobody is going to try and steal the eggs, if there are any, in the middle of the day."

"I know," replied Will, "but we are doing it for James so it doesn't matter."

Ten minutes passed. Nothing

Twenty minutes passed. Nothing.

Thirty minutes. Will heard the engine of a vehicle approaching. The engine stopped and a car door was opened and then closed.

"Look," whispered Charlie.

A man had entered the field and was walking towards the tree. He was carrying a large green rucksack. The man stopped by the tree and bent down to tie up the laces on his boots. He was looking around while tying his laces up and Will wondered if they actually needed tying or if it was an excuse for the man to appear normal when what he was really doing was observing the area.

The man then removed a large pair of binoculars from his sack, raised them to his eyes and looked in every direction turning a complete circle as he did so. He was taking his time and obviously scanning the area for people who might be able to see him.

Satisfied that he was alone and that the tree was in a remote location, the man removed a drone from his ruck sack. He then removed a handheld controller and fixed a mobile phone to it. He flew the drone up to the top of the tree and held it there for a short time.

The boys had been silently watching the man.

“What is he doing?” asked Charlie.

“I think he is taking a look at the nest to see if there are eggs in it,” replied Will.

“He is very good with that drone,” said Charlie. “Dad had one for Christmas and crashed it into the side of the house. It was completely wrecked.”

The man landed the drone, packed it away into his rucksack and slipped the phone into a pocket on his jacket. He pulled a large box from his rucksack, attached a strap to it and slipped it over his shoulder. The box was made of plastic with two large clasps on the side.

“That box looks like a cross between a lunchbox and something you might see in a laboratory,” whispered Will.

The man took a step back from the tree and looked up at it for a couple of minutes.

“He’s working out the best way to climb it,” whispered Charlie.

“Probably,” replied Will.

The man looked around, again completing a full circle, and approached the tree. He was obviously an experienced climber and fit because he climbed from branch to branch with speed and great skill.

“I wish I could climb a tree that well,” said Will.

The boys watched the man reach the branch upon which the osprey's nest was perched. The man reached inside the nest, carefully removed two eggs and placed them inside the box that was slung over his shoulder.

"I think I know why he is stealing the eggs during the day," said Will.

"Why?" asked Charlie.

"Because the ospreys are out hunting for fish, probably at the pond, and the temperature is warm enough for the eggs to be left on their own for a short time," replied Will.

"He'd better hope that they don't come back and catch him stealing their eggs then."

"Yes, he needs to be quick. He is quick. Look he's coming back down. Quick, give me the radio."

Charlie gave Will the radio. Will turned it on, checked that it was tuned to channel eight and pressed the push-to-talk button.

"James, it's Will."

No response.

"James, it's Will," he repeated.

The radio crackled, "hi Will." It was James. "Is everything OK?"

"No, there is a man climbing down from the tree. He has stolen the eggs."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. Get here quick."

"Five minutes."

The radio went dead.

Will and Charlie stayed absolutely still in the hide as they watched the man climbing down from the tree. Their hearts were racing and they hoped James and his friends would get there in time.

"Oh no," exclaimed Charlie, "the camera. I'd forgotten the camera. I'm supposed to take pictures."

Charlie pulled the camera from his pocket, turned it on and pointed it at the tree. He zoomed in just as James had shown him and started to snap away.

“Charlie, the flash is on,” said Will.

“How do you turn it off?” asked Charlie desperately.

“I don’t know. Never mind, just get as many pictures as you can.”

Charlie returned to the slit in the canvas and started taking pictures again. The man, who was about fifteen metres from the ground, suddenly stopped climbing and looked directly at the hide.

“Oh no!” cried Charlie, “he has seen the flash. He knows someone is here.”

“Right, let’s get out of here,” said Will.

“No way, if he sees us he will be able to catch us.”

“Charlie, we have a head start. He will definitely catch us if we wait for him to get here.”

“You are right. Let’s go.”

Will stuffed the radio into his pocket and Charlie did the same with the camera. They exited the hide by lifting the flap in the canvas on the left of the structure. They knew they would be seen but there was no other way out.

“Hey!” the man shouted, “come here!”

Will and Charlie climbed over the fence that was immediately behind the hide and leapt into the neighbouring field. They ran as fast as they could across the field and towards the large pond beyond.

The man could easily have leapt down from the tree but he couldn’t risk damaging the eggs in his box. He was angry because he knew the boys were getting away. It didn’t matter, he would easily catch them up.

When he reached the ground, the man sprinted to the hide to check that nobody was in there. He ran to his jeep, opened the passenger door and placed the box containing the eggs into an insulated bag. He zipped the bag up, grabbed his rifle, slammed the door and made for the field.

Will and Charlie were already getting tired and were beginning to panic.

“Let’s go to the old well. He might not know it’s there. We can climb down the ladder into the well and crawl into the little tunnel halfway down the shaft. It is too narrow for him to squeeze into. I will radio James and tell him.”

The boys ran. They heard the man shouting from some distance away. They turned and looked in horror as the man began sprinting across the field. He was fast and it would not take him long to close the distance between them and him.

“He’s got a gun,” screamed Will.

They turned and ran for their lives. It would only take them a minute to reach the well which was on the other side of a small group of trees.

Will snatched the radio from his pocket. “James, James, we are going to the well.”

“James, help! The man is coming after us. We are going to the well!”

The boys crashed through the trees and ran to the well. Will pulled himself over the edge and began to descend the ladder into the well. Charlie followed him. They climbed quickly but carefully. They usually had a torch when they came down the well – but not today.

They reached the small passage that was built into the shaft of the well and crawled inside.

The man crashed through the trees and into the field beyond. The field was large, flat and had no crops growing in it. The boundaries of the field were visible. If the boys were in the field then the man would have been able to see them. He stopped – where could they have gone. He spun around to scan the group of trees through which he had just come. He could easily see that they were not hiding anywhere in the undergrowth.

Then he noticed the small circular wall of bricks that formed the mouth of the well’s shaft. He smiled and walked to the well. He peered over the edge to look down the well but could not see anything except darkness.

“I know you are down there,” shouted the man.

The boys froze.

“Don’t make me come down there and get you.”

Will knew that the radio wouldn’t be able to transmit a message to James from under the ground and he realised that they were now in big trouble. Nobody knew they were down there except the man. That was not good.

A shot rang out. Will heard the shot and the whizz of the bullet as it sped past the entrance to the tunnel into which the boys had crawled.

“He’s trying to shoot us,” cried Charlie.

Nothing.

Will heard a second shot but it sounded as though it was above ground. Then he heard engines, then shouting.

Nothing.

Then he heard James’s voice from above. “Are you two pansies going to stay down there all day or are you coming up for air?”

The boys couldn’t believe it.

“James!” shouted Will, “is that you?”

“Yes, now get up here!” replied James.

The boys crawled out from the tunnel and carefully climbed to the top of the well. James was waiting for them at the top and he extended his hand to help each boy over the top of the

wall. The sunlight blinded them for a few seconds after spending several minutes in the dark underground.

There were three other men with James. Will didn't know their names but he had seen them working on the farm with James. The engines that the boys had heard belonged to two double-seater quadbikes.

The man who had chased the boys was lying face down on the ground with two of James's friends pinning his arms and legs. He was struggling but it was obvious that he couldn't escape. He spat when he saw Will and Charlie.

"He tried to shoot us," said Charlie.

"He shot at us too," replied James. "He only had two rounds of ammunition in his rifle and so we quickly overpowered him."

One of the men was on his mobile phone talking to the police. James and one of the men marched the man back through the small group of trees, through the field and back to the lane. They walked as far as the gate to the field where the hide was.

Will and Charlie were given a lift back as passengers in the two quadbikes. The men driving the quadbikes flanked James, his friend and the man just in case he tried to escape.

The man said nothing but he was clearly very angry.

After ten minutes of waiting by the gate, they heard police sirens approaching. The man tried to escape one last time. He was strong and it took all four men to restrain him.

A police car arrived and skidded to a halt by the gate. Two police officers got out and, with the help of two of the men, they just about managed to handcuff the man who had stolen the eggs.

"I will now need to take a statement from all of you about what has happened here," said one of the police officers. "In a few days, one of my colleagues will need to speak to you again in more detail about this incident."

The man was put inside the back of the police car and the officers took the names and contact details of Will, Charlie, James and his friends. In turn, everyone gave a brief account of what had happened. The police officers made arrangements for the man's jeep to be towed away and took the camera from Charlie for evidence. They got into their car to leave.

“What about the eggs?” said James. “The eggs are the reason for all of this.”

“Where are the eggs?” one of the police officers asked the man.

The man did not speak.

“They will be in his jeep,” said Will. “He put them in a box.”

The man made no attempt to hand over the keys. James walked over to the jeep and tried the passenger door which, to his surprise, was unlocked. The man had been careless and, in his haste to catch the boys, had overlooked locking the jeep.

James removed the box from the insulated bag and set it carefully down on the ground. He unfastened the clasps and opened the box. There were two eggs inside. The eggs were placed inside two padded moulds which fitted their shape exactly. The eggs were held in place by more padding attached to the inside of the lid of the box.

“How will we get the eggs back into the nest?” asked James.

“Leave that to us,” said one of the police officers.

The police officer went over to the patrol car, opened the door and reached inside. He produced a radio from the car and spoke into it. He finished his conversation and walked back over to Will, Charlie, James and his friends.

“Those eggs will be back in the nest in the next thirty minutes.”

“How?” asked Will.

“Wait and see,” replied the police officer.

Eight minutes later they could hear the siren of another emergency vehicle approaching. Suddenly a fire engine came into view and turned off onto the lane. It stopped by the gate and three firemen climbed down from the cab.

“Right,” said the oldest fireman to the other two, “which one of you is going up that tree?” He pointed to the oak tree.

“I can see the nest,” replied the youngest fireman, “I’ll be up and down in no time.”

They all stood and watched as the young fireman slung the box containing the eggs over his shoulder and began to climb the tree.

He wasn’t as fast as the man who had stolen the eggs but he was pretty quick. They all applauded him when he climbed back down.

The police officers took the box as evidence and left to go back to the station. The firemen climbed back into the engine and returned to their headquarters.

“Well,” said James to his friends, “I am giving you the rest of the day off. Thanks for your help. Come on boys,” he said to Will and Charlie, “let’s get you home.

James rang Will’s mum who arrived in her car five minutes later. She was very cross with James when she learned what had happened but relieved that the boys were unhurt.

That evening, James and Alex treated Will and his parents to a meal at the local pub. Will had fish fingers, peas and chips for his main course and chocolate ice cream with a wafer for afters.

The police officers came to speak to Will and Charlie two days later. They said that the man had admitted trying to steal the eggs and also that he had fired a gun at the boys and then at James. He would probably go to prison for a long 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 online. This is not Will and Clive's only adventure and so, if you enjoyed this story, why not read the other books?