

Goodnight Mister Tom – Michelle Magorian

Chapter 2: Little Weirwold

It is the end of William's first day in Little Weirwold. Tom has made a bedroom for William in the attic, so they must climb up the ladder. He has never had a bedroom of his own before.

He made Willie cocoa and left him with Sammy to look at the "straw roofs" while he went upstairs to put up more blackouts. Willie sat back on the pouffe and traced his finger over the pictures. He blew over his cocoa and gave Sammy some of the skin. Tom appeared at the door with a lamp and Sammy began to crawl between his legs.

"Thought you was being too good for it to last," Tom said as Sammy tugged at his trouser leg. "Give me the cocoa, William, and you carry the book."

Willie climbed up the ladder, but the enormous socks kept making him slip. After much balancing and juggling with cocoa, book and dog, they all three eventually reached the attic.

It was a tiny room, shaped rather like a ridge tent. The ceiling sloped downwards at both sides with a straight piece in the center. The wooden floor was covered by two mats. A small bed lay under one of the rafters, and blackouts were pinned on the slanting window beside it. Tom had swept the room clean and had fixed a lamp to a hook on the white plaster ceiling.

Beside the bed was a low wooden table. "For yer books and such," said Tom. He pointed to a china chamber pot on the floor at the end of the bed. "That's so's you don't have to go outside if you wants to go to the toilet," he explained.

The heat from the front room rose up through the floorboards, so that the room was warm. Willie crawled under the bed and curled up into a ball. "What you doin'?" asked Tom. "You gets into it, not under it."

"Wot, right inside?" exclaimed Willie.

Tom drew back the sheets and Willie climbed in between them. He stroked the blankets with his hands.

Sammy, meanwhile, was standing impatiently at Tom's side, wagging his tail in lunatic fashion. "Go on, you daft dog," said Tom, and Sammy leaped onto the bed between Willie's arms and licked his face. Slowly Willie put his arms around him, gave a small cry and burst into tears.

"Sorry, mister," he blurted out, and he buried his head in the dog's fur.

Tom sat on the edge of the bed until the crying had subsided a little.

"'Ere," he said, handing him a large white handkerchief. "'Ave a blow in that."

Willie looked up shamefacedly. "I ain't ungrateful, mister, honest. I'm happy." And with that he gave another sob.

Tom nodded and Sammy licked his face.

"You can have the lamp lit fer ten minutes," he said, patting the dog, "but mind you behave yerself, Sammy."