

Day 1 - Reading Task

Goodnight Mister Tom

Chapter 18-20 Summary

It takes time for Will to recover from the ordeal in London. He often has nightmares and feels very tired. One night, Will is very feverish and constantly having nightmares, so Tom sits with him the whole night. Will's screaming brings Tom back to the night his wife died during childbirth.

Will starts to feel better and have fewer nightmares. Tom makes him a big breakfast one morning and Zach stops by. The two boys are delighted to see each other. Zach informs him that Mrs. Hartridge has had her baby, and this reminds Will of his own baby sister.

Later, Will is speaking with Tom and expresses his guilt over letting his baby sister, Trudy, die; he feels that it is his fault. Will realizes from his discussions with Zach that his mother must have met with a man in order to give birth to Trudy. This shocks Will, because his mother always spoke of this as a sin. Will is disturbed by her lie and Tom says that his mother is most likely a "very ill" person. Tom says that he kidnapped Will because he would've missed him if he were put in a children's home. Will tells Mr. Tom that he loves him.

It is August and Zach, Will, and Tom are travelling to the seaside for a two-week trip. They ride their bicycles into a fishing village called Salmouth. There, they are hosted by a widow named Mrs. Clarence.

Will is drawn to the dock where he watches the sea, which soothes him. They have supper with Mrs. Clancy, where Will eats fish for the first time.

The next day, Tom and the boys have breakfast and then take a picnic lunch to the beach. Will faces his fear of going into the ocean. They have lunch, take a nap in the cliffs, and go into the sea again. The following days pass in a similarly pleasant manner.

During their stay, there is news of more bombings on English cities, including London. Tom considers bringing the boys back to Little Weirwood, where he feels it might be safer, but ultimately decides to stay. Zach is worried about the safety of his parents who are in London, but the Littles inform him that they have called and are safe.

Tom, Will, and Zach return home. They are sad to leave the lovely beach town but are also looking forward to getting back. They come home to gifts and goodies from the boys' friends and Mrs. Fletcher.

On an August day before school starts up again, Zach, Will, George, and the twins go to explore Spooky Cott, an infamous abandoned cottage. The children are spooked by the different noises, and George and the twins run away. Zach also wants to leave, but Will is adamant about staying and exploring more. They hear a strange music coming from the cottage and then hear a man's voice inviting them inside, which initially startles the boys. The man is named Geoff and he speaks to the boys, explaining that he is also an evacuee. Geoff is an artist, which excites Will. After a bomb in London, Geoff has lost his fiancée, as well as friends and parents. He has also had his leg and ear blown off, and a resulting nervous breakdown. Geoff asks Will to draw something. Upon looking at Will's drawing, Geoff tells him he has "a gift." He offers to give Will art lessons.

Geoff, Will, and Zach sit by the fire and listen to a Brahms record. The boys explain to Geoff that this cottage is known as Spooky Cott, and Geoff says he has been staying there so that no one disturbs him.

Will returns home and is surprised to find a group of people, including a policeman and warden, sitting with Mr. Tom. There is also a psychiatrist and a woman from a children's home. The woman tells Will that his

mother has committed suicide. She says Will has to come to the home to be put with foster parents. The warden says that Tom broke the law when he kidnapped Will. Will refuses and firmly says that he wants to stay with Tom. He exclaims that Tom didn't kidnap him, but actually rescued him.

Will goes up to the attic while the adults talk. He is prepared to run away to Lucy's house to avoid being taken to the children's home. However, the group leaves and Tom comes and tells Will that they have agreed to let Tom adopt him. Tom just has to do the paperwork and then Will becomes his son. Will is delighted that Tom will be his father. Both of them dance and celebrate.

Chapter 21: Back to School - Extract

After they had eaten, Will and Zach left together and headed for the woods. There was still plenty of time before school started. The early-morning air was clear and crisp and all the fields and hedgerows were covered with a layer of sparkling dew. The sun filtered through the trees so that Will and Zach were constantly moving into patches of gloom and out into sudden patches of sunlight. They reached the small river and listened to it gently rippling past them.

Zach leaned on one leg, as was his habit, and with his hands deep in his pockets he stared anxiously into the water.

"I think war has started properly now," he muttered.

"But the Nazis won't bomb here," replied Will. "Will they? Mister Tom says he doesn't think they'd bother."

Zach gave a sigh.

"It's my parents *I'm* worried about. I know they're busy, but I wish they'd write or phone more often so I'd know they're all right. Last night, on the wireless, they said there was more heavy bombing."

"Couldn't they stay here?"

Zach shook his head.

"Father says if he can't fight for England he wants to help entertain the fighters and help protect the families that are left. That's why he joined the A.F.S."

"A.F.S.?"

"Auxiliary Fire Service. Mother feels the same." He slammed a fist into the open palm of his hand. "I wish I could visit them just to see if they're safe."

"There might be a letter waiting fer you now," said Will encouragingly.

"I doubt it."

They stared up through the colourfully clad branches. The sun spread through them like a warm X ray lighting the thin skeletal lines in each leaf.

Will and Zach chatted quietly, absorbing the peace of the river, and then turned back to the village.

They dropped by at the Littles' to see if there had been any post but there was none. Zach walked towards the graveyard cottage with Will and they took Sammy out for a romp in the fields. By the time school had started, it felt late enough to be the afternoon.

To their surprise and delight, sitting next to Miss Thorne at the front of the class was Geoffrey Sanderton.

"Mr. Sanderton and I have decided to choose a nature project," began Miss Thorne. "This means that we shall be going on expeditions which you will plan. We would also like some of you to write and illustrate a nature diary."

Zach looked a little disappointed.

"In addition to the project we shall be reading some of the nature poets—William Wordsworth, for example, and some of Shakespeare's sonnets."

At this Zach beamed.

"I thought it would be rather a good idea," added Geoffrey, "that, as we have to be careful with the amount of paint we use, we could create pictures using different-colored leaves and bark and anything interesting that you can find, and it might be fun too if we made up short poems to go with them."

"Perhaps an epic saga based on some expedition," said Miss Thorne, gazing directly at Zach. "And George," she remarked, looking up at him, "you will be in charge of some of the nature trails we shall take. Now are there any . . ."

She was interrupted by a knock at the door. Geoffrey opened it. Zach looked towards the hallway and was surprised to see Aunt Nance. Miss Thorne disappeared into the hallway with her and returned shortly. She glanced at Zach.

"You're to go home," she said gently.

Zach felt very hot and a little sick. He rose quietly from his desk and left the classroom. Will listened to his footsteps fade away down the hallway. He glanced up at Miss Thorne, who caught his eye and quickly turned away.

"Right," she said briskly, facing the class. "Let's see how your spelling has deteriorated over the summer holidays."

The remainder of the morning was taken up with arithmetic, sharing out books and planning the first "expedition," but Will's heart was elsewhere. As soon as it was lunch he ran to the Littles' and knocked on the back door.

"Come in, Will," said Mrs. Little, opening it. "Zach will be pleased to see you. He's upstairs packing."

"Packing?" gasped Will. "Why? What's wrong?"

"His father has been badly injured. One of the large warehouses by the docks caught fire and he was buried under fallen timber for several hours. He's in a hospital in London."

Will ran upstairs and found Zach kneeling over a small, battered case. He was holding a photograph of his father. He looked up at Will. His eyes were pink and swollen.

"I'm catching the Friday train to London," he said, his voice quivering. "Mother doesn't want me to, but I begged her to let me. I have to see him in case . . ." and he became hoarse and stifled a sob. "In case I never see him again."

Will squatted down beside him.

"I want you to take care of this," Zach said, handing him his old tattered copy of Shakespeare's works. "It was my great-grandfather's."

"Oh, Zach," protested Will, but Zach's pained expression prevented him from refusing. He took the book and smoothed the leather covers with his hand.

"I'll look after it real fine."

They spent a miserable afternoon together. Ginnie and George called round after lunch and Carrie rushed in later, for a few brief moments before having to fly home to do her homework. It was a wretched time for Zach, as he wanted to leave immediately. All the waiting only increased his feelings of frustration and helplessness.

The Littles drove him to the station in Weirwold the following morning. His mother had said that whatever happened he was to stay in London only for the weekend. She didn't want him to be injured as well, and she knew that his father would have felt the same way.

The day after Zach's sudden departure was Will's tenth birthday, Saturday, September 7th, 1940.

Will spent the morning at the Hartridges' and Padfields' cottages. In the afternoon he and Tom decorated the living room. Mrs. Fletcher and Mrs. Thatcher arrived armed with home-baked cakes and biscuits while Aunt Nance brought homemade ginger beer and a parcel that Zach had left for him. By late afternoon the cottage was filled with children, with Tom, Ginnie and George leading the games. The high spot of the party, however, was when everyone swarmed round the cottage screaming hysterically and hiding from Tom, who was chasing them and pretending to be a monster at the same time. They played musical chairs and pass the parcel, ate doughnuts with their hands tied behind their backs, passed oranges to each other under their chins and, of course, ate.

Will left Zach's parcel unopened until the last person had gone home and he and Tom had sat down to relax with a cup of tea. The table was already littered with books, candy and pots of paint. He picked up Zach's parcel and began to unwrap it.

Inside was part one of an epic adventure called *The Villainous Doctor Horror*. At the bottom was a little postscript. It read "P.S. Part two will be written on my return."

In addition to the poem were two new paintbrushes, a second-hand book on painters, and a lopsided sketch of Will in an artist's beret and smock. It showed him standing at an easel. The canvas on the easel was empty but Will himself was covered with paint.

"I shall put that on my wall," said Will half to himself and half to Tom.

At eight o'clock they listened intently to the news on the wireless.

It was reported that flares had been dropped all over London and hundreds of German planes had been spotted. Spitfires and Hurricanes had soared up into the skies to fight them. It was one of the longest massed raids that London was experiencing. While the news was being read, heavy bombing was still continuing. "Hope Zach's all right," said Will, frowning. Tom puffed at his pipe. "He's so skinny, a bomb would probably skip past him."

"I hope so."

The next day, for the first time in weeks, it rained. Will woke to the sound of it scuttling down the roof and bouncing off his open window. He washed and dressed quickly. Tom was already in the church organizing extra seating arrangements, for it was to be a national day of prayer.

At ten A.M. the villagers were shocked by a special news bulletin on the wireless.

"It is estimated," said the announcer, "that four hundred people at least were killed in the first few hours of air attacks. Fourteen hundred are believed to be seriously injured. London's Dockland is on fire and many homes in the East End have been blitzed to the ground."

The Littles still hadn't heard from Zach or his mother, and Will grew steadily more anxious. He woke in the early hours of Monday morning from a nightmare of amputation units, people with their heads blown off, vans with DEAD ONLY written on them and disfigured bloodstained people wandering and screaming through dense rubble.

He and Tom switched on the wireless for any early-morning news flashes. According to recent reports there had been continual bombing throughout the night, and fires were burning all over London. Becton gasworks had been hit. Moorgate lay in smoky ruins. Balham had been badly smashed. Bombs had fallen on one of the platforms on Victoria Station and on the outskirts of Windsor Castle. The news was devastating.

Will hurried on to school and spent the morning outside, gardening. He joined George, Ginnie, Lucy and Grace on a blackberrying expedition in the afternoon, and returned at dusk, flushed and happily tired, only to hear that Dover was being bombed.

The following morning he awoke to the sounds of voices downstairs. It was odd to have visitors so early unless, of course, he had overslept. He rose quickly and clattered down the ladder. As he approached the front room, he recognized the voices—they were the Littles'. His heart gave a lift. Perhaps they had news of Zach. He strode in excitedly and they turned to face him. Dr. Little looked grave and Aunt Nance had been crying. They didn't need to say anything. He knew Zach was dead. In one black moment he felt his legs buckling up underneath him and he collapsed into unconsciousness.

Task

Order the following events by putting numbers 1-9 in the boxes.

<i>Zach travels to London to visit his Father</i>	
<i>Will and Zach meet Geoff</i>	
<i>Will, Zach, George and the twins explore 'Spooky Cott'</i>	
<i>Zach dies</i>	
<i>Mrs Hartridge has her baby</i>	
<i>Tom wants to adopt Will</i>	
<i>Will, Tom and Zach travel to the seaside for a two-week holiday</i>	
<i>Will is told his mother has died</i>	
<i>It's Will's tenth birthday</i>	

ANSWERS

<i>Zach travels to London to visit his Father</i>	7
<i>Will and Zach meet Geoff</i>	4
<i>Will, Zach, George and the twins explore 'Spooky Cott'</i>	3
<i>Zach dies</i>	9
<i>Mrs Hartridge has her baby</i>	1
<i>Tom asks to adopt Will</i>	6
<i>Will, Tom and Zach travel to the seaside for a two-week holiday</i>	2
<i>Will is told his mother has died</i>	5
<i>It's Will's tenth birthday</i>	8