

# Chapter 30

Chapter 30 opens with a moment of relative calm after the rain has finally ceased, leaving the roof untouched and clean, as if it had been waiting for this opportunity. Will watches the balloon above with a sense of growing unease, wondering about its hesitation in the sky. A sense of urgency grips him, as he fears the Witch might soon discover their plans, and he knows they must act quickly. In the solitude of his room, Will begins to think about the tools at his disposal, specifically his Boy Scout archery set, and wonders if he can use it to outwit the Witch. He doesn't want her to be able to report back and expose their secretive actions. Quietly, he grabs his bow and quiver, silently opening the window to communicate with the Witch through his thoughts, believing that even though she can't read minds, she may still sense his emotions and the excitement brewing within him.

As the clock strikes four in the morning, Will's resolve strengthens. He calls out, confidently challenging the Witch and claiming that their roof is clean and ready. The words leave his mouth with increasing certainty as the wind shifts beneath the balloon, and he feels an undeniable pull to act. With adrenaline surging, Will rushes outside, determined to confront the strange force that looms above. His heart races as he sprints toward the abandoned Redman house, its silence creating an ominous backdrop for what lies ahead. When he opens the door, darkness greets him, yet he steps inside, unwavering. Will climbs the decaying stairs to the roof, knowing he must act quickly. There, he hides his archery supplies behind a chimney, always keeping one eye on the approaching balloon, as his tension mounts.

The Witch, now acutely aware of Will's presence, hovers just out of sight, sensing something unusual but unable to pinpoint his exact location. As she moves erratically, circling the balloon, frustration and suspicion grow within her, making her increasingly unpredictable. Will, however, remains calm, his mind sharp as he uses his wits to

mislead her. With each inhalation and exhalation of the Witch's, he feels the weight of the moment building. Her presence intensifies the air around them, and Will takes a decisive step forward, daring her to approach him. This dangerous game of proximity heightens the tension, pushing Will to take his stand, as he prepares to use his bow for defense. The moment is electric, charged with anticipation, as Will's resolve hardens, and he feels the pulse of both fear and determination in his veins.

Just as Will draws his bow, disaster strikes. The string snaps, breaking his carefully executed plan and leaving him exposed in the face of the Witch's dark power. The Witch, sensing that victory is within her grasp, exhales a sigh of relief, unaware of the power that Will is about to unleash. In a final, desperate effort, Will grabs an arrowhead and flings it with all his strength at the balloon. The arrowhead rips through the fabric of the balloon, releasing a violent burst of air and color that sends a shockwave through the surrounding area. The sudden eruption knocks Will off balance, causing him to lose his grip and fall toward the ground below. However, the fall is softened by a nearby tree, breaking his descent and leaving him hanging by the branches. From his precarious position, Will watches as the balloon spirals upward, the Witch's distant cries echoing into the night, signaling her retreat.

Suspended in the tree, Will's heart pounds in his chest as he gathers himself, grateful to be alive. The chaos of the balloon's retreat slowly fades into the distance, and the surrounding world grows eerily quiet. Will takes a moment to collect his thoughts, his body still shaking from the adrenaline of the confrontation. The night has shifted from one of fear to one of triumph, and the silence offers him a chance to regroup. Once steady, he climbs down carefully from the tree, his mind racing with thoughts of the Witch's retreat and what it means for him and his future. Standing on the ground, Will reflects on how narrowly he escaped, feeling both the weight of the night's events and the fleeting sense of victory. Despite the relief, he knows the battle is not over, and that the Witch will surely return, but for now, he has survived. The experience has left him shaken but determined, knowing that whatever comes next, he is ready to face it.