

# Chapter 20

Chapter 20 opens with Will and Jim, both trapped in frustrating situations at home. Their parents, burdened by their own worries and frustrations, express their discontent, sending the boys to their rooms, hungry and full of confusion. The evening unfolds with growing chaos, as the tension in the household escalates—doors slam shut, and locks are heard clanking. Will, feeling isolated and cut off, stands by his door, reflecting on the silence that surrounds him. His thoughts turn to Miss Foley, someone he wishes he could confide in, but as he considers reaching out to her, he realizes she would never respond, leaving him to grapple with a troubling thought. He starts to believe that Miss Foley's nephew is far from the innocent person he appears to be. The unease he feels only deepens as he tries to make sense of this growing mystery.

As the night continues, Jim across the street finds himself in a similar situation, caught in a web of parental control and expectations. Like Will, Jim seeks solace in the quiet of his room, hoping to find comfort in familiar surroundings. The boys, each in their separate spaces, begin to search for small distractions—hidden stashes of candy or snacks that will take their minds off the growing tension. Time drags on, and the weight of the night becomes unbearable. Will's mind races with thoughts of his father, who is now approaching his door, signaling an important moment. Will hopes for an open conversation, but when his father merely stands outside, seemingly lost in thought, he is left longing for a connection that is not forthcoming. The moment builds with anticipation, but Will is met with silence, feeling more distant from his father than ever.

A brief exchange between Will's parents further intensifies his feelings of abandonment. His father offers a vague warning to be careful, but his words lack clarity or comfort, only increasing Will's uncertainty about what's happening. When the door finally shuts, Will is left alone, urging his father to stay inside as he senses the

growing danger in the world around him. Isolated in his room, Will's thoughts drift to the library across town, a place where he has always sought refuge in times of trouble. The library, with its quiet spaces and endless books, had always been his sanctuary, offering a chance to escape from the worries of the world. Yet, tonight, despite the comfort it offers, Will knows something is different. The events unfolding are no longer part of the usual childhood trials but are becoming something far more complex and frightening.

In a desperate attempt to connect with Jim, Will throws pebbles at his friend's window, hoping to elicit a response. But the minutes stretch on, and the silence between them grows, amplifying Will's growing anxiety. Jim, who is usually quick to respond to their shared mischief, remains silent, making Will feel more isolated and uncertain than ever. Will's concern deepens, especially as he reflects on Miss Foley's nephew and the strange, unsettling influence he seems to have over Jim. Will begins to fear that Jim might be drawn into something dark and dangerous, something they cannot easily escape. His concern for his friend intensifies, and with a final marble thrown in frustration, he realizes that Jim is not just absent in body but in spirit as well. As Will lies back on his bed, cold and stiff from his restlessness, he feels the weight of the night pressing down on him. A growing sense of urgency fills him, as he senses that something important is about to happen, though he remains unsure of what it is or how to prevent it. The chapter ends with Will left in the dark, his mind racing, aware that he is at the precipice of something much larger than he can comprehend. The sense of impending change lingers, and he knows that he, Jim, and Miss Foley's nephew are caught in a web that is rapidly closing in around them.