

THE LAST TASK

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Chapter 1

A Job In Madrid

It is a hot fall day in West Trent. Tom and Stan sit on the grass. They are best pals.

A big red truck stands on the block. On the front of the truck, it says, “WE GET YOU TO YOUR NEXT STOP.”

Stan is sad that the truck has his best pal Tom’s stuff in it.

Tom and Stan do not say much. They sit in the sun next to Stan’s swing set. But they do not plan to do a thing. They are sad that this is their last day.

The stamp plant in West Trent was shut down last May. All of the plant’s staff have lost their jobs.

Stan's dad had a job in the stamp plant and he was let go. He still has no job. West Trent is not that big. With the plant shut down, there are not a lot of jobs left for Stan's dad.

Tom's dad had a job in the plant as well. Stan and Tom's wish was for their dads to get jobs fast. They did not wish the next job for Tom's dad to be in Madrid. But it is.

Tom's dad is Spanish and he got a job in Madrid. Tom will be living there with his mom and dad. They do not plan to be back. Stan will miss Tom a lot.

In the spring, Stan lost his gran, Gran Jenn. She was his dad's mom. Then his dad lost his job. In the fall, his best pal is off to Madrid.

This is a lot for Stan.

Stan sits next to Tom as the men bring out beds, the TV set and a big box with a tag that says, 'Tom's Stuff'.

Tom tells Stan that the men will ship their things all the way past the Atlantic.

"Mom thinks Madrid will be fun," he adds.

Stan stands up. He kicks a rock off the grass and sags.

"Fun or not, I still wish you did not have to go," he grunts.

"I wish to stay with you in West Trent," Tom says. "But it is not up to me."

Chapter 2

A Gift From Tom

At 1 p.m., a cab stops next to the truck. Tom's dad brings out the bags and stuffs them in the trunk of the cab. Tom's mom tells Tom to get in the cab.

Stan's chin drops to his chest.

"You must go!" sniffs Stan.

"Yes. Call me and tell me what I miss in West Trent," Tom says with a small grin.

Stan nods.

"Tom, we are all set," says his dad. "Be quick! We must go if you still plan to..."

"Yes, Dad!" Tom yells in a rush to hush him.

Then, he hugs Stan.

Stan does not let the hug go.

He will not let Tom go.

But Tom steps back. He brings out a black tin chest from his bag.

He hands it to Stan. “And this, this is for you if you miss me.”

On top of the lid, a red tag says, “To: Stan, From: Tom.”

Stan grabs the lid to lift it and check what is in it.

“Not yet,” Tom stops Stan.

“What is this?” Stan asks. “Is it a gift?”

“I will not tell you,” Tom winks at Stan.

Then he runs to the cab.

“This is my last task in West Trent,” he yells as he jumps in the back of the cab. “And you must finish it.”

“What task?” Stan yells.

“Just finish it for me!” Tom yells back as the cab sets off.

Next, the big red truck is off as well. Dust puffs up as the cab and the truck pass by Stan.