

GEORGE ELIOT

TOM AND

MAGGIE

TULLIVER

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Tom and Maggie Tulliver

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George Eliot

Tom and Maggie Tulliver

Chapter I.

TOM MUST GO TO SCHOOL

"What I want, you know," said Mr. Tulliver of Dorlcote Mill – "what I want is to give Tom a good eddication. That was what I was thinking of when I gave notice for him to leave th' academy at Lady Day. I meant to put him to a downright good school at Midsummer.

"The two years at th' academy 'ud ha' done well enough," the miller went on, "if I'd meant to make a miller and farmer of him like myself. But I should like Tom to be a bit of a scholar, so as he might be up to the tricks o' these fellows as talk fine and write with a flourish. It 'ud be a help to me wi' these lawsuits and things."

Mr. Tulliver was speaking to his wife, a blond, comely woman in a fan-shaped cap.

"Well, Mr. Tulliver," said she, "you know best. But hadn't I better kill a couple o' fowl, and have th' aunts and uncles to dinner next week, so as you may hear what Sister Glegg and Sister Pullet have got to say about it? There's a couple o' fowl *wants* killing!"

"You may kill every fowl i' the yard if you like, Bessy, but I shall ask neither aunt nor uncle what I'm to do wi' my own lad," said Mr. Tulliver.

"Dear heart!" said Mrs. Tulliver, "how can you talk so, Mr. Tulliver? However, if Tom's to go to a new school, I should like him to go where I can wash him and mend him; else he might as well have calico as linen, for they'd be one as yallow as th' other before they'd been washed half a dozen times. And then, when the box is goin' backards and forrards, I could send the lad a cake, or a pork-pie, or an apple."

"Well, well, we won't send him out o' reach o' the carrier's cart, if other things fit in," said Mr. Tulliver. "But you mustn't put a spoke i' the wheel about the washin' if we can't get a school near enough. But it's an uncommon puzzling thing to know what school to pick."

Mr. Tulliver paused a minute or two, and dived with both hands into his pockets, as if he hoped to find some idea there. Then he said, "I know what I'll do, I'll talk it over wi' Riley. He's coming to-morrow."

"Well, Mr. Tulliver, I've put the sheets out for the best bed, and Kezia's got 'em hanging at the fire. They aren't the best sheets, but they're good enough for anybody to sleep in, be he who he will."

As Mrs. Tulliver spoke she drew a bright bunch of keys from her pocket, and singled out one, rubbing her thumb and finger up and down it with a placid smile while she looked at the clear fire.

"I think I've hit it, Bessy," said Mr. Tulliver, after a short silence. "Riley's as likely a man as any to know o' some school; he's had schooling himself, an' goes about to all sorts o' places – auctioneering and vallyin' and that. I want Tom to be such a sort o' man as Riley, you know – as can talk pretty nigh as well as if it was all wrote out for him, and a good solid knowledge o' business too."

"Well," said Mrs. Tulliver, "so far as talking proper, and knowing everything, and walking with a bend in his back, and setting his hair up, I shouldn't mind the lad being brought up to that. But them fine-talking men from the big towns mostly wear the false shirt-fronts; they wear a frill till it's all a mess, and then hide it with a bib; – I know Riley does. And then, if Tom's to go and live at Mudport, like Riley, he'll have a house with a kitchen hardly big enough to turn in, an' niver get a fresh egg for his breakfast, an' sleep up three pair o' stairs – or four, for what I know – an' be burnt to death before he can get down."

"No, no," said Mr. Tulliver; "I've no thoughts of his going to Mudport: I mean him to set up his office at St. Ogg's, close by us, an' live at home. I doubt Tom's a bit slowish. He takes after your family, Bessy."

"Yes, that he does," said Mrs. Tulliver; "he's wonderful for liking a deal o' salt in his broth. That was my brother's way, and my father's before him."

"It seems a bit of a pity, though," said Mr. Tulliver, "as the lad should take after the mother's side instead o' the little wench. The little un takes after my side, now: she's twice as 'cute as Tom."

"Yes, Mr. Tulliver, and it all runs to naughtiness. How to keep her in a clean pinafore two hours together passes my cunning. An' now you put me i' mind," continued Mrs. Tulliver, rising and going to the window, "I don't know where she is now, an' it's pretty nigh tea-time. Ah, I thought so – there she is, wanderin' up an' down by the water, like a wild thing. She'll tumble in some day."

Mrs. Tulliver rapped the window sharply, beckoned, and shook her head.

"You talk o' 'cuteness, Mr. Tulliver," she said as she sat down; "but I'm sure the child's very slow i' some things, for if I send her upstairs to fetch anything, she forgets what she's gone for."

"Pooh, nonsense!" said Mr. Tulliver. "She's a straight, black-eyed wench as anybody need wish to see; and she can read almost as well as the parson."

"But her hair won't curl, all I can do with it, and she's so franzy about having it put i' paper, and I've such work as never was to make her stand and have it pinched with th' irons."

"Cut it off – cut it off short," said the father rashly.

"How can you talk so, Mr. Tulliver? She's too big a gell – gone nine, and tall of her age – to have her hair cut short. – Maggie, Maggie," continued the mother, as the child herself entered the room, "where's the use o' my telling you to keep away from the water? You'll tumble in and be drowned some day, and then you'll be sorry you didn't do as mother told you."

Maggie threw off her bonnet. Now, Mrs. Tulliver, desiring her daughter to have a curled crop, had had it cut too short in front to be pushed behind the ears; and as it was usually straight an hour after it had been taken out of paper, Maggie was incessantly tossing her head to keep the dark, heavy locks out of her gleaming black eyes.

"Oh dear, oh dear, Maggie, what are you thinkin' of, to throw your bonnet down there? Take it upstairs, there's a good gell, an' let your hair be brushed, an' put your other pinafore on, an' change your shoes – do, for shame; an' come and go on with your patchwork, like a little lady."

"O mother," said Maggie in a very cross tone, "I don't want to do my patchwork."

"What! not your pretty patchwork, to make a counterpane for your Aunt Glegg?"

"It's silly work," said Maggie, with a toss of her mane – "tearing things to pieces to sew 'em together again. And I don't want to sew anything for my Aunt Glegg; I don't like her."

Exit Maggie, drawing her bonnet by the string, while Mr. Tulliver laughs audibly.

"I wonder at you as you'll laugh at her, Mr. Tulliver," said the mother. "An' her aunts will have it as it's *me* spoils her."

Chapter II.

THE CHOICE OF A SCHOOL

Mr. Riley, who came next day, was a gentleman with a waxen face and fat hands. He talked with his host for some time about the water supply to Dorlcote Mill. Then after a short silence Mr. Tulliver changed the subject.

"There's a thing I've got i' my head," said he at last, in rather a lower tone than usual, as he turned his head and looked at his companion.

"Ah!" said Mr. Riley, in a tone of mild interest.

"It's a very particular thing," Mr. Tulliver went on; "it's about my boy Tom."

At the sound of this name Maggie, who was seated on a low stool close by the fire, with a large book open on her lap, shook her heavy hair back and looked up eagerly.

"You see, I want to put him to a new school at Midsummer," said Mr. Tulliver. "He's comin' away from the 'cademy at Lady Day, an' I shall let him run loose for a quarter; but after that I want to send him to a downright good school, where they'll make a scholar of him."

"Well," said Mr. Riley, "there's no greater advantage you can give him than a good education."

"I don't mean Tom to be a miller and farmer," said Mr. Tulliver; "I see no fun i' that. Why, if I made him a miller, he'd be expectin' to take the mill an' the land, an' a-hinting at me as it was time for me to lay by. Nay, nay; I've seen enough o' that wi' sons."

These words cut Maggie to the quick. Tom was supposed capable of turning his father out of doors! This was not to be borne; and Maggie jumped up from her stool, forgetting all about her heavy book, which fell with a bang within the fender, and going up between her father's knees said, in a half-crying, half-angry voice, —

"Father, Tom wouldn't be naughty to you ever; I know he wouldn't."

"What! they mustn't say any harm o' Tom, eh?" said Mr. Tulliver, looking at Maggie with a twinkling eye. Then he added gently, "Go, go and see after your mother."

"Did you ever hear the like on't?" said Mr. Tulliver as Maggie retired. "It's a pity but what she'd been the lad."

Mr. Riley laughed, took a pinch of snuff, and said, —

"But your lad's not stupid, is he?" said Mr. Riley. "I saw him, when I was here last, busy making fishing-tackle; he seemed quite up to it."

"Well, he isn't stupid. He's got a notion o' things out o' door, an' a sort o' common sense, and he'll lay hold o' things by the right handle. But he's slow with his tongue, you see, and he reads but poorly, and can't abide the books, and spells all wrong, they tell me, an' you never hear him say 'cute things like the little wench. Now, what I want is to send him to a school where they'll make him a bit nimble with his tongue and his pen, and make a smart chap of him."

"You're quite in the right of it, Tulliver," observed Mr. Riley. "Better spend an extra hundred or two on your son's education than leave it him in your will."

"I dare say, now, you know of a school as 'ud be just the thing for Tom," said Mr. Tulliver.

Mr. Riley took a pinch of snuff, and waited a little before he said, —

"I know of a very fine chance for any one that's got the necessary money, and that's what you have, Tulliver. But if any one wanted his boy to be placed under a first-rate fellow, I know his man. He's an Oxford man, and a parson. He's willing to take one or two boys as pupils to fill up his time. The boys would be quite of the family — the finest thing in the world for them — under Stelling's eye continually."

"But do you think they'd give the poor lad twice o' pudding?" said Mrs. Tulliver, who was now in her place again.

"And what money 'ud he want?" said Mr. Tulliver.

"Stelling is moderate in his terms; he's not a grasping man," said Mr. Riley. "I've no doubt he'd take your boy at a hundred. I'll write to him about it if you like."

Mr. Tulliver rubbed his knees, and looked at the carpet.

"But belike he's a bachelor," observed Mrs. Tulliver, "an' I've no opinion o' house-keepers. It 'ud break my heart to send Tom where there's a housekeeper, an' I hope you won't think of it, Mr. Tulliver."

"You may set your mind at rest on that score, Mrs. Tulliver," said Mr. Riley, "for Stelling is married to as nice a little woman as any man need wish for a wife. There isn't a kinder little soul in the world."

"Father," broke in Maggie, who had stolen to her father's elbow again, listening with parted lips, while she held her doll topsy-turvy, and crushed its nose against the wood of the chair – "father, is it a long way off where Tom is to go? Shan't we ever go to see him?"

"I don't know, my wench," said the father tenderly. "Ask Mr. Riley; he knows."

Maggie came round promptly in front of Mr. Riley, and said, "How far is it, please sir?"

"Oh, a long, long way off," that gentleman answered. "You must borrow the seven-leagued boots to get to him."

"That's nonsense!" said Maggie, tossing her head and turning away with the tears springing to her eyes.

"Hush, Maggie, for shame of you, chattering so," said her mother. "Come and sit down on your little stool, and hold your tongue, do. But," added Mrs. Tulliver, who had her own alarm awakened, "is it so far off as I couldn't wash him and mend him?"

"About fifteen miles, that's all," said Mr. Riley. "You can drive there and back in a day quite comfortably. Or – Stelling is a kind, pleasant man – he'd be glad to have you stay."

"But it's too far off for the linen, I doubt," said Mrs. Tulliver sadly.

Chapter III. TOM COMES HOME

Tom was to arrive early one afternoon, and there was another fluttering heart besides Maggie's when it was late enough for the sound of the gig wheels to be expected; for if Mrs. Tulliver had a strong feeling, it was fondness for her boy.

At last the sound came, and in spite of the wind, which was blowing the clouds about, and was not likely to respect Mrs. Tulliver's curls and cap-strings, she came and stood outside the door with her hand on Maggie's head.

"There he is, my sweet lad! But he's got never a collar on; it's been lost on the road, I'll be bound, and spoilt the set!"

Mrs. Tulliver stood with her arms open; Maggie jumped first on one leg and then on the other; while Tom stepped down from the gig, and said, "Hallo, Yap! what, are you there?"

Then he allowed himself to be kissed willingly enough, though Maggie hung on his neck in rather a strangling fashion, while his blue eyes wandered towards the croft and the lambs and the river, where he promised himself that he would begin to fish the first thing to-morrow morning. He was a lad with light brown hair, cheeks of cream and roses, and full lips.

"Maggie," said Tom, taking her into a corner as soon as his mother was gone out to examine his box, "you don't know what I've got in my pockets," nodding his head up and down as a means of rousing her sense of mystery.

"No," said Maggie. "How stodgy they look, Tom! Is it marls (marbles) or cob-nuts?" Maggie's heart sank a little, because Tom always said it was "no good" playing with her at those games, she played so badly.

"Marls! no. I've swopped all my marls with the little fellows; and cobnuts are no fun, you silly – only when the nuts are green. But see here!" He drew something out of his right-hand pocket.

"What is it?" said Maggie in a whisper. "I can see nothing but a bit of yellow."

"Why, it's a new – Guess, Maggie!"

"Oh, I can't guess, Tom," said Maggie impatiently.

"Don't be a spitfire, else I won't tell you," said Tom, thrusting his hand back into his pocket.

"No, Tom," said Maggie, laying hold of the arm that was held stiffly in the pocket. "I'm not cross, Tom; it was only because I can't bear guessing. Please be good to me."

Tom's arm slowly relaxed, and he said, "Well, then, it's a new fish-line – 'two new uns – one for you, Maggie, all to yourself. I wouldn't go halves in the toffee and gingerbread on purpose to save the money; and Gibson and Spouncer fought with me because I wouldn't. And here's hooks; see here! I say, won't we go and fish to-morrow down by Round Pond? And you shall catch your own fish, and put the worms on, and everything. Won't it be fun!"

Maggie's answer was to throw her arms round Tom's neck and hug him, and hold her cheek against his without speaking, while he slowly unwound some of the line, saying, after a pause, —

"Wasn't I a good brother, now, to buy you a line all to yourself? You know, I needn't have bought it if I hadn't liked!"

"Yes, very, very good. I do love you, Tom."

Tom had put the line back in his pocket, and was looking at the hooks one by one, before he spoke again.

"And the fellows fought me because I wouldn't give in about the toffee."

"Oh dear! I wish they wouldn't fight at your school, Tom. Didn't it hurt you?"

"Hurt me? No," said Tom, putting up the hooks again. Then he took out a large pocket-knife, and slowly opened the largest blade and rubbed his finger along it. At last he said, —

"I gave Spouncer a black eye, I know – that's what he got by wanting to leather me; I wasn't going to go halves because anybody leathered me."

"Oh, how brave you are, Tom! I think you're like Samson. If there came a lion roaring at me, I think you'd fight him; wouldn't you, Tom?"

"How can a lion come roaring at you, you silly thing? There's no lions – only in the shows."

"No; but if we were in the lion countries – I mean, in Africa, where it's very hot – the lions eat people there. I can show it you in the book where I read it."

"Well, I should get a gun and shoot him."

"But if you hadn't got a gun. We might have gone out, you know, not thinking, just as we go fishing; and then a *great* lion might run towards us roaring, and we couldn't get away from him. What *should* you do, Tom?"

Tom paused, and at last turned away, saying, "But the lion isn't coming. What's the use of talking?"

"But I like to fancy how it would be," said Maggie, following him. "Just think what you would do, Tom."

"Oh, don't bother, Maggie! you're such a silly. I shall go and see my rabbits."

Upon this Maggie's heart began to flutter with fear, for she had bad news for Tom. She dared not tell the sad truth at once, but she walked after Tom in trembling silence as he went out.

"Tom," she said timidly, when they were out of doors, "how much money did you give for your rabbits?"

"Two half-crowns and a sixpence," said Tom promptly.

"I think I've got a great deal more than that in my steel purse upstairs. I'll ask mother to give it you."

"What for?" said Tom. "I don't want your money, you silly thing. I've got a great deal more money than you, because I'm a boy."

"Well, but, Tom, if mother would let me give you two half-crowns and a sixpence out of my purse to put into your pocket and spend, you know, and buy some more rabbits with it."

"More rabbits? I don't want any more."

"Oh, but, Tom, they're all dead!"

Tom stopped, and turned round towards Maggie. "You forgot to feed 'em, then, and Harry forgot?" he said, his colour rising for a moment. "I'll pitch into Harry – I'll have him turned away. And I don't love you, Maggie. You shan't go fishing with me to-morrow. I told you to go and see the rabbits every day." He walked on again.

"Yes, but I forgot; and I couldn't help it, indeed, Tom. I'm so very sorry," said Maggie, while the tears rushed fast.

"You're a naughty girl," said Tom severely, "and I'm sorry I bought you the fish-line. I don't love you."

"O Tom, it's very cruel," sobbed Maggie. "I'd forgive you if you forgot anything – I wouldn't mind what you did – I'd forgive you and love you."

"Yes, you're a silly; but I never do forget things – I don't."

"Oh, please forgive me, Tom; my heart will break," said Maggie, shaking with sobs, clinging to Tom's arm, and laying her wet cheek on his shoulder.

Tom shook her off. "Now, Maggie, you just listen. Aren't I a good brother to you?"

"Ye-ye-es," sobbed Maggie.

"Didn't I think about your fish-line all this quarter, and mean to buy it, and saved my money o' purpose, and wouldn't go halves in the toffee, and Spouncer fought me because I wouldn't?"

"Ye-ye-es – and I – lo-lo-love you so, Tom."

"But you're a naughty girl. Last holidays you licked the paint off my lozenge-box; and the holidays before that you let the boat drag my fish-line down when I'd set you to watch it, and you pushed your head through my kite, all for nothing."

"But I didn't mean," said Maggie; "I couldn't help it."

"Yes, you could," said Tom, "if you'd minded what you were doing. And you're a naughty girl, and you shan't go fishing with me to-morrow."

With this Tom ran away from Maggie towards the mill, meaning to greet Luke there, and complain to him of Harry.

"Oh, he is cruel!" Maggie sobbed aloud. She would stay up in the attic and starve herself – hide herself behind the tub, and stay there all night; and then they would all be frightened, and Tom would be sorry.

Thus Maggie thought in the pride of her heart, as she crept behind the tub; but presently she began to cry again at the idea that they didn't mind her being there.

Meanwhile, Tom was too much interested in his talk with Luke, and in going the round of the mill, to think of Maggie at all. But when he had been called in to tea, his father said, "Why, where's the little wench?" And Mrs. Tulliver, almost at the same moment, said, "Where's your little sister?"

"I don't know," said Tom. He didn't want to "tell" of Maggie, though he was angry with her; for Tom Tulliver was a lad of honour.

"What! hasn't she been playing with you all this while?" said the father. "She'd been thinking o' nothing but your coming home."

"I haven't seen her this two hours," says Tom.

"Goodness heart! she's got drowned," exclaimed Mrs. Tulliver, rising from her seat and running to the window.

"Nay, nay, she's none drowned," said Mr. Tulliver. – "You've been naughty to her, I doubt, Tom?"

"I'm sure I haven't, father," said Tom quickly. "I think she's in the house."

"Perhaps up in that attic," said Mrs. Tulliver, "a-singing and talking to herself, and forgetting all about meal-times."

"You go and fetch her down, Tom," said Mr. Tulliver, rather sharply. "And be good to her, do you hear? Else I'll let you know better."

Maggie, who had taken refuge in the attic, knew Tom's step, and her heart began to beat with the shock of hope. But he only stood still on the top of the stairs and said, "Maggie, you're to come down." Then she rushed to him and clung round his neck, sobbing, "O Tom, please forgive me! I can't bear it. I will always be good – always remember things. Do love me – please, dear Tom?" And the boy quite forgot his desire to punish her as much as she deserved; he actually began to kiss her in return, and say, —

"Don't cry, then, Magsie; here, eat a bit o' cake."

Maggie's sobs began to subside, and she put out her mouth for the cake and bit a piece; and then Tom bit a piece, just for company, and they ate together, and rubbed each other's cheeks and brows and noses together while they ate like two friendly ponies.

"Come along, Magsie, and have tea," said Tom at last.

So ended the sorrows of this day, and the next morning Maggie was to be seen trotting out with her own fishing-rod in one hand and a handle of the basket in the other. She had told Tom, however, that she should like him to put the worms on the hook for her.

They were on their way to the Round Pool – that wonderful pool which the floods had made a long while ago. The sight of the old spot always heightened Tom's good-humour, and he opened the basket and prepared their tackle. He threw Maggie's line for her, and put the rod into her hand. She thought it probable that the small fish would come to her hook, and the large ones to Tom's. But after a few moments she had forgotten all about the fish, and was looking dreamily at the glassy

water, when Tom said, in a loud whisper, "Look, look, Maggie!" and came running to prevent her from snatching her line away.

Maggie was frightened lest she had been doing something wrong, as usual; but presently Tom drew out her line and brought a large tench bouncing out upon the grass.

Tom was excited.

"O Magsie! you little duck! Empty the basket."

Maggie did not know how clever she had been; but it was quite enough that Tom called her Magsie, and was pleased with her. There was nothing to mar her delight in the whispers and the dreamy silences, when she listened to the light dipping sounds of the rising fish, and the gentle rustling, as if the willows and the reeds and the water had their happy whisperings also. Maggie thought it would make a very nice heaven to sit by the pool in that way, and never be scolded. She never knew she had a bite until Tom told her, it is true, but she liked fishing very much.

It was one of their happy mornings. They trotted along and sat down together, with no thought that life would ever change much for them. They would only get bigger and not go to school, and it would always be like the holidays; they would always live together, and be very, very fond of each other.

Chapter IV.

ALL ABOUT A JAM PUFF

It was Easter week, and Mrs. Tulliver's cheese-cakes were even more light than usual, so that no season could have been better for a family party to consult Sister Glegg and Sister Pullet and Sister Deane about Tom's going to school.

On Wednesday, the day before the aunts and uncles were coming, Tom and Maggie made several inroads into the kitchen, where great preparations were being made, and were induced to keep aloof for a time only by being allowed to carry away some of the good things to eat.

"Tom," said Maggie, as they sat on the boughs of the elder tree, eating their jam puffs, "shall you run away to-morrow?"

"No," said Tom slowly – "no, I shan't."

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