

Chapters 28 and 29 Summary

Chapter 28

- It's a warm but windy moonless evening as Jem and Scout walk from their house to the high school, Jem carrying Scout's ham costume. The kids joke about "haints," which no longer seem scary now that they're so grown up. As they pass through a field, someone leaps out at them with a light. Eek! Oh, it's only Cecil Jacobs.
- They all head over the auditorium, and Scout wriggles into her slightly mashed ham costume. But she falls asleep and misses her cue, earning a big scolding from Mrs. Merriweather. Scout doesn't want to face anyone after her goof, so she keeps her ham costume on for anonymity. Not that dressing as a giant ham is a great way to ensure anonymity.
- They leave the school to go back the way they came, through the midnight-black field. Scout realizes she's forgotten her shoes. When they turn back to get them the lights at the school go off, and Jem tells her she'll have to go back tomorrow. Jem seems nervous about something, and tells Scout to shush for a while. Scout tells him she's too old to play these games. It's not a game. Jem tells her he hears something when they're walking, but it stops when they do.
- Jem says it's probably just Cecil. How can Cecil see them in the darkness? The fat streaks in her ham are made with reflective paint. Scout shouts a teasing comment at Cecil Jacobs, but doesn't get any response. It's weird for Cecil to delay the payoff of a prank for so long.
- Can Scout take off her costume? She thinks so, but she's not wearing much under it. Jem has her dress, but she can't put it on in the dark. And then Scout realizes that Jem knows their stalker isn't Cecil, but he's pretending he thinks it is so as not to scare her. Then the stalker runs towards them, and it's not a kid. It's a man. Jem screams at Scout to run, but she's off-kilter in her ham costume and she falls to the ground. There's fighting, but Scout can't see. More fighting, and then a crunch and a scream from Jem.
- Scout runs back towards Jem and crashes into a man's stomach. The man squeezes her until she can barely breathe, but suddenly falls backwards; Scout thinks Jem must have gotten up. The night is quiet again, except for the sound of a man wheezing. Scout calls out Jem's name, but he doesn't answer. Eventually Scout realizes that there's two men under the tree besides her and Jem.
- She says Atticus's name hesitatingly, but still gets no answer. The man walks towards the road, and Scout goes to where he had been, looking for Jem. Instead she finds a man lying on the ground smelling of booze. Scout finally makes her way over the road, and in the light of the street lamp Scout sees a man carrying Jem, whose arm is hanging at an unnatural angle. The man heads to the Finch house, where Atticus lets him in.
- There's a bunch of running around, and Atticus and Alexandra call a doctor and the sheriff, in that order. Aunt Alexandra de-hams Scout and asks her what happened, but Scout says she doesn't know. Dr. Reynolds arrives and tends to Jem's broken arm and concussion, and then to Scout, who's also gotten knocked around the head. In Jem's room, Scout sees Atticus, Aunt Alexandra, and a man she doesn't know. Mr. Tate arrives with news: he's found a pink dress, some pieces of ham-colored cloth—and the corpse of Bob Ewell, who's been stabbed to death.

Chapter 29

- Scout climbs into Atticus's lap and tells the story: how she had forgotten her shoes, how they thought it was Cecil so they shouted at him (the sheriff interrupts here to ask if Atticus heard anything: he didn't, but he had the radio on); how she heard the footsteps behind them; how she was still wearing the ham costume. Mr. Tate says the costume explains the strange marks he found on the body, and Atticus goes to get the now squashed ham.
- They look at the costume, and it's more than squashed—there's a cut where Mr. Ewell had slashed at Scout with a knife. Atticus never thought Ewell would go after the kids, but Tate says that there are some men who are just bad. They go back to Scout's story, and when Tate asks who the other man was, Scout gestures towards the stranger in the corner. Scout finally looks at the man properly and sees his paleness, his thinness, his colorless eyes, and realizes—she's looking at Boo Radley. He smiles shyly at her, and tears come to Scout's eyes as she says, "Hey, Boo".

How would Boo know that the children needed him?
