

To Kill a Mockingbird Chapter 28

Scout and Jem walked to the auditorium together on that black, warm night, and on their way Cecil Jacobs, Scout's classmate, jumped out from behind the oak tree and scared them as a Halloween prank. When it was time for the pageant to begin, Scout and Cecil went to don their costumes and waited for their part to come. As Mrs. Merriweather droned on through the history of Maycomb County, Scout had nestled down in her costume and fallen asleep. She didn't wake until the end and although she ran on then, it was too late. Her cue had long since passed. When Jem went backstage for her, Scout was too mortified to take her costume off or leave the auditorium until everyone was gone. Jem had humored her, and when the place was cleared out, they started across the field for home.

On the walk home Jem made Scout stop a few times because he thought he heard something behind them. They thought it was Cecil trying to pull his prank one more time, but he didn't respond to their jibes. When they walked she could hear the footsteps behind them and the steps stopped when she and Jem did. Jem led her by the ham hock because she couldn't take her costume off since she wasn't wearing much beneath it. When they reached the oak tree where Cecil had scared them before, Scout and Jem stopped but the footsteps behind them didn't. Jem screamed at Scout to run, but she was knocked down and her costume made it impossible to get up. She heard scuffling, the sound of metal tearing metal and bodies tangling on the ground in a struggle, and then Jem grabbed her and pulled her toward the road. Scout's head and shoulders were exposed, but the rest of her was so tangled in the chicken wire that they couldn't move fast enough. They had almost made it to the road before Jem's body was jerked back into the darkness. Scout heard more fighting in the darkness and then a crunching sound preceded Jem's scream. She ran toward his yelp and ran into a soft stomach. Her arms were still pinned at her sides as the man squeezed the breath out of her. As she was being crunched, someone from behind her assailant grabbed him and flung him to the ground. She thought it was Jem as another struggle ensued that ended with the wheezing sound of one man and the heavy, sob-like breathing of another. Scout heard the man walk heavily and awkwardly toward the road, and she headed in the direction she thought was home. On her hurried way saw a man carrying Jem pass under the streetlight. Jem's arm was hanging bizarrely from his body and in the light from the front door Scout saw Atticus help the strange man carry Jem inside. Jem was unconscious, his arm badly broken, but Scout was okay.

Heck Tate, the sheriff, came over and they gathered in Jem's room. Alexandra was in a rocking chair in the corner of the room and Atticus was standing by Jem's bed. The man who'd carried Jem in was standing in a corner pressed against the wall. Scout assumed he was some countryman she didn't know who'd heard their screams and come to help. Heck told them that Bob Ewell was under the tree with a kitchen knife stuck under his ribs.