

Chapter 11: Gone

Chapter 11: Gone begins with an eerie shift in the atmosphere of the Heaven & Earth Grocery Store, as the overhead light flickers, signaling the arrival of an unexpected visitor. Dodo, hidden behind a trapdoor ladder, watches intently as Miss Chona's calm composure falters upon the entry of Doc Roberts. Doc, a man feared throughout the community, is dressed in a black coat and fedora, and his presence immediately unnerves Miss Chona. Known for handling her disability with grace and dignity, Miss Chona's reaction to Doc's arrival is one of increasing distress. The uneasy interaction between the two seems to heighten her condition, and the air becomes thick with tension, setting the stage for a moment of crisis.

As the conversation between Miss Chona and Doc intensifies, it quickly spirals into a heated argument over social issues that ultimately causes Miss Chona to have a seizure. Dodo, paralyzed by fear and confusion, watches helplessly as she collapses, overwhelmed by the sight of her sudden vulnerability. His protective instincts, deeply ingrained in him by Aunt Addie's teachings, compel him to act, yet he is torn by the warnings Aunt Addie had given him about remaining hidden and safe. She had always emphasized the importance of avoiding attention, especially in the presence of state officials like Doc Roberts, who might take him away to a special school. Dodo is caught in a whirlwind of emotions, desperately wanting to help Miss Chona but equally afraid of the consequences that might come with his actions.

The panic that grips Dodo intensifies when he realizes the full extent of the danger Miss Chona is in. Unable to stay silent any longer, he leaps over the butcher's counter to confront Doc, who is inappropriately handling Miss Chona after her collapse. Dodo's fear morphs into an unexpected surge of courage as he hurls himself at Doc, driven by the deep sense of loyalty and protectiveness he feels toward Miss Chona. This chaotic outburst sparks a struggle, with Dodo trying to defend her from further harm. In this

critical moment, Dodo's internal conflict between his desire to act and the lessons taught to him by Aunt Addie collide, forcing him to make a split-second decision to protect Miss Chona at all costs. His actions, though impulsive, demonstrate his growing need for agency and control over the circumstances surrounding him.

The tension reaches a fever pitch as Aunt Addie arrives just in time to witness the scene. Doc, in a fit of rage, pushes Dodo away, leading to further chaos as both adults try to stabilize Miss Chona, who is still unresponsive. Dodo, desperate to help, attempts to intervene, but the situation continues to spiral out of control. As the commotion escalates, the arrival of the police, summoned by Doc, adds a new layer of fear and urgency. Realizing the potential consequences of his actions, Dodo decides to flee the scene, scrambling through the yard and making his way to the roof of the building in an attempt to escape capture. The fear of being taken away and punished for his involvement in the disturbance pushes him to make this desperate escape.

In a moment of heightened panic, Dodo, now on the roof, takes a leap to avoid being caught by the pursuing policemen. His escape, however, is cut short as he loses his balance mid-air, falling into the hands of the authorities. The abruptness of the fall, coupled with the emotional and physical strain of the situation, results in a sudden blackout, leaving Dodo unconscious and vulnerable. This moment marks a significant turning point in Dodo's life, filled with intense emotions such as fear, loyalty, and the urgent desire for agency. As he loses consciousness, the story takes a somber turn, leaving the reader to question the future consequences of Dodo's impulsive actions. The chapter encapsulates the chaotic turmoil that has built up around Dodo's environment, highlighting the tension between personal safety, loyalty, and the yearning for control over his own fate.