

Chapter 35

Chapter 35 opens in a tense and haunting atmosphere within Ned's Night Spot, where Charles Halloway, exhausted and sleepless, sits absorbed in his thoughts. The quiet that follows a nearby parade feels unnervingly still, amplifying the unease that hangs in the air. Charles, troubled by the weight of his thoughts, reflects on the unsettling events outside, noticing how the world around him feels slightly off, like something is waiting to unfold. He hesitates to pay for his coffee, his unease growing with every passing moment. As if summoned by his growing discomfort, the door suddenly swings open, revealing a stranger with tattooed hands—each adorned with an eye on every finger. This peculiar figure immediately grabs Halloway's attention, and he becomes even more alert as he witnesses a parade of shadows. The sight of a skeletal figure, known as Mr. Skull, playing a chilling xylophone on the street below intensifies the sense of dread that seems to permeate the town.

As Halloway watches the strange scene unfold, his attention is drawn to the innocent call of a boy, which diverts his focus toward the emerging figure of the Dwarf. With a jingle bell attached to his attire and a fragmented personality, the Dwarf appears like a lost soul, searching for something that cannot be explained. The Dwarf's gaze unexpectedly locks with that of the young boy, filling Will and Jim with an overwhelming sense of fear and anxiety. Their instincts kick in as they try to hide themselves, feeling the ominous weight of the Dwarf's presence. The feeling of dread becomes inescapable, and as they shrink into the shadows, the threat feels imminent. Meanwhile, Will's father, unknowingly heading into danger, steps outside to purchase a cigar, unaware that he is drawing closer to the source of the terror unfolding on the street below. The quiet, sinister events around him continue to unfold as Halloway, still trying to make sense of the strange happenings, feels the tightening grip of fear that threatens to take hold of everyone involved.

The chapter takes a darker turn when Charles Halloway engages in a conversation with the Illustrated Man, whose cryptic exchanges reveal more about the sinister forces at play. The Illustrated Man speaks of two boys, Will and Jim, who have been selected as special guests for the Cooger-Dark Combined Shows, a carnival with darker intentions. Halloway listens intently, his heart racing as the pieces of a disturbing puzzle begin to fall into place. The realization begins to dawn on him that the boys' involvement with the carnival is far more dangerous than he had initially suspected. As Will's heart pounds with fear, he watches his father unknowingly stumble toward the truth. The discovery that the boys' faces are now etched in the palm of the Illustrated Man feels like a cruel confirmation of their entanglement in the carnival's web of evil. Halloway remains unaware of the extent of the threat, though the pieces of the puzzle are beginning to align, and the chilling truth is becoming harder to ignore.

The tension heightens when Mr. Dark confronts Charles Halloway directly, demanding information about Will and Jim. The malicious tone of Mr. Dark's voice sends a shiver down Halloway's spine as he becomes fully aware of the danger now closing in on the boys. In a moment of intense dread, Jim braces for whatever comes next, while Will is filled with an overwhelming sense of terror as their names are revealed. The realization that the carnival has been watching them all along is enough to drive fear into their hearts. Mr. Dark's words are sharp and threatening, and his sinister intent becomes more apparent with each passing moment. The fear that has been building throughout the chapter reaches its climax as the depth of the carnival's control over the boys is fully realized. Mr. Dark's manipulation runs deep, and the truth of his power is now clear. As the chapter draws to a close, Charles Halloway, desperate to protect the boys, urges them to remain hidden until nightfall. His mind races as he formulates a plan to confront the nightmare that is fast approaching, knowing that the danger they face is far from over. The chapter ends with a lingering sense of dread, leaving readers on edge, eagerly awaiting what will come next in the battle against the encroaching darkness.