

From Chapter One-- "Rat Stick at Twilight"

When we got to the sewer tunnel, the Creelys stopped and balanced themselves on top of some creek rocks. The late afternoon was cloudy and smelled like rain. The air was still, except for the cool sewer dampness blowing upon us.

The Creelys stepped onto the slab beneath the tunnel and started slapping their sticks against the metal bars that crossed the top half of the entrance, until Frank Creely's stick flipped out of his hand and landed on the other side.

"Go get it," he told his younger brother. ...

From Chapter Three-- "Taddy Keegan"

I ran across Washington Road, not waiting for the light to change or caring about the tooting horns, because I had made it through the tunnel and nothing could touch me...

Inside the cooling dusk light, I ran past the Kaufman's Department Store site and across Kaufman's Field, which felt like mine. I glanced down toward the creek, which was barely visible under the shadowy trees, and thought I could still see the opening of the sewer tunnel inside the closing darkness.

And it was mine, too.

From Chapter Four-- "The Garden and the Creek"

Because Sundays really are the saddest days. Which I kept forgetting until Sunday came again. And Sunday evenings the worst of all. Because Sundays were meant for family. But the need for family never seemed like enough, since there was always something that family couldn't touch, but which I touched when I drank the creek water and which still touched me through the darkening air . . .

. . . as Taddy Keegan flies down the wild brown creek in the falling twilight, with nothing touching him, while I stand wishing it would rain so hard I can't breathe.

From Chapter Eight-- "The Back Porch"

I thought about my mother sitting below under the yellow corrugated porch roof, enjoying the sound of the rain, and how nice it would be to sit with her, especially since my sister had probably gone out and left her there alone. "Listen to that rain!" my mother would say to me. "Do you believe it?" Like the rain was a miracle.

And it was falling hard on Taddy Keegan and Georgie-Porgie under the oak tree, making them go home sooner than they wanted.

And Marla Hawkins, in her dark house hearing the rain against the living room windows, but not enjoying it because she was still angry at the boy who jumped off her back porch and ran away . . . making me wish I could be sudden-asleep so I wouldn't have to think about Marla

Hawkins anymore. Like passing out under the oak tree, and drifting back to where I was before ever going inside her house. ...

Because Taddy Keegan was right. All we want is to wake up and not know where we are. But it only lasts for a little while, which isn't enough.

Chapter Ten-- "The Mayfair"

And I did exactly as Georgie-Porgie said. I even hit the right button, stopping the elevator between floors, which didn't seem to surprise her as she stood slightly smiling with her arms unfolding.

But I couldn't make myself move farther. My head and body felt frozen, just like the elevator. And I wondered what it would be like if I stayed like that forever, with the slow ticking seconds that you can actually hear even when there is no clock...

Patty Hasty moved instead and touched my hands...

From Chapter Eleven-- "The Great Carnegie"

I tried not to think about my mother driving to the Hill District, where the boys sit on front stoops in the cold, keeping watch on their street, and where the city buses are afraid to go because the rocks can fall like hail from Negro hands . . . and they will notice Lorraine sitting

quietly next to my mother who talks on and on. Lorraine occasionally nodding, her gray Negro hair covered in a purple babushka, saying, “Yes, Mrs. . . . Yes.” ...

From Chapter Twelve-- “The Rivers”

I didn't hear about it until everyone was ready to head downtown. Craig McCann stopped by in a hurry, his body wiggling and his hand jabbing at his thick glasses as he stood on our front steps.

He talked sideways at me. “You don't want to miss this,” he said excitedly. “The Keegans are taking their two-man raft down to the rivers. Taddy says he's going to jump off the ‘Bridge to Nowhere.’”

From Chapter Fourteen-- “...and the Hill”

I could still see Taddy Keegan sitting on his white rock, but I couldn't see myself. Because you can never really see yourself when you remember the past. And that's why you never really know what happened to you, or what you looked like. And you can't recognize yourself on a tape recorder, either, because we get carried away from ourselves so easily, until Kaufman's Hill looks much smaller than it used to be. And beyond . . . the new woods Taddy Keegan told me about that I really did explore one time, and the tree fort was there, just like Taddy Keegan said. But there was no way up to it, unless you could somehow climb a tree that

had no lower branches. So I wondered how anyone built it there, high among the pointed leaves flickering green and silver. And it was too late to go back there again, because an old-age home and a chain restaurant were sitting in its place.