
JEM TOUCHES THE WALL

Deborah McNemee

USD 402

Why did Dill have to say it?
The dare.
And with Scout there.
The house—Boo’s house--
It whispers while the moon,
Shy behind dark clouds,
Wants to see if I do it.
Wind breezes by, cools my sticky, nervous skin.
Wind carries whispers from the house
and laughter from the moon
and the warning from my sister.
“Don’t do it, Jem. Don’t do it.”
“I gotta,” I say.
My heart churns bold blood inside my veins.
Beating, beating, banging, in my brain.
Ba-bum.

Ba-bum.

Ba-bum.

Dill’s smug face shines
In the blinking moonlight.
I go.
I feel nothing but wind.
I hear nothing but whispers—
I dare you.

Don’t do it.

I gotta.

I run up the stairs,
 onto the porch,
 to the wall,
and back down.
Woosh. Woosh. Woosh.
Is it grass against my legs?
Is it whispers?
Is it wind?
Is it bold blood?

Or the bullet?

Author Biography:

Deborah Linn McNemee was nine years old when she wrote the first three chapters of a novel she hoped to publish someday. While that story never flourished, her modern feminist novel, [*Just Daisy: A Gatsby Retelling*](#) hit shelves in 2021. She strives to help teachers keep classic literature relevant for young readers with her educator blog, KeepingClassics.com. Her writing has been published in *Teachers and Writers Magazine* and *Kansas English* and on the Center for Mark Twain Studies website. She is a literature and composition teacher who currently holds the position of Gifted Facilitator for a Title 1 school district in Kansas where she quotes classic literature to her students on a daily basis. She can be reached at keepingclassics@gmail.com or on Instagram, @keepingclassics.

