***Number the Stars***

***Chapter 14***

***Summary:***

### ***On the Dark Path***

* Annemarie gets going. Talk about scary circumstances: it's still nighttime, the weather is pretty nasty, and she's all alone. She knows where she's going, but that doesn't seem to make it any better. (We're freaked out just thinking about it.)
* To pass the time, she pretends she's telling her sister the tale of "Little Red Riding-Hood." Weirdly, the walk she's taking kind of corresponds to the events in the story.
* Annemarie talks through the story as she walks through the forest. In spite of—or maybe because of—the story, she starts to freak herself out.
* Even though it's slower, Annemarie stays in the [**less traveled**](https://www.shmoop.com/road-not-taken/) parts of the woods, so there's less of a chance she'll run into someone.
* She thinks while she walks—good way to stay distracted. She remembers different versions of the fairy tale she's told to her sister, and she thinks about the visits she's taken to Henrik's home in the past. She thinks about her mother's life there, too, and how her mom will have to see the doctor.
* As she gets closer to her destination, Annemarie reaches the point in the story where the wolf usually appears. She freaks herself out even more, thinking she's hearing wolf sounds, even though that's totally unrealistic.
* Or not.
* Sure enough, she does run into a wolf of sorts—several, in fact: Nazi soldiers accompanied by dogs.

***Brief Summary:***

Annemarie realizes how cold the dawn is as she hurries along the path. She does her best to run, but it is difficult in the still-dark dawn to run without falling. She tells herself the story of Little Red Riding-Hood to comfort herself in the dark forest. She knows the woods well and is usually unafraid. These woods are not filled with dangerous animals like wolves, but they might be filled with German soldiers. At a fork in the path, she chooses the path that winds deeper into the woods, rather than risk being seen running along the road to the harbor where the other path leads. As the light increases, she picks up speed. She's nearly at the end of the Red Riding-Hood tale, and the harbor is just around the bend. She gets to the part in the story where Red Riding-Hood hears a noise in the woods. Just then, she, too, hears a noise. She freezes, then takes a few cautious steps forward. Just around the bend, she runs into four armed soldiers, holding two huge dogs on leashes.

***Brief Analysis:***

The author uses the well-known tale of Little Red Riding-Hood, familiar to most readers, to build the suspense in this short, but dramatic, scene. The little girl running through the dangerous woods has obviously much in common with Red Riding-Hood, and by telling herself this story, Annemarie is comforting herself with thoughts of safer times. She is not alone in the woods; in her mind she's safe at home, reading the story to her younger sister. She thinks ironically of how she always changed up the story to make it scarier to Kirsti. This time she changes it to make it less scary, but no fairy tale can save her from the very real danger awaiting her at the end of the path.

***Critical Study:***

Although the sun has started to rise, the forest is still very dark. As Annemarie rushes to the harbor, she reminds herself of the story of Red Riding Hood, which she has told to [Kirsti](https://www.gradesaver.com/number-the-stars/study-guide/character-list#kirsti) many times. Although she can hear animals scampering through the forest, Annemarie is not scared—she has played here before in the daytime, and she knows there are no wolves. She also knows to avoid taking the road through town, where she will risk being stopped by soldiers.

Annemarie continues down the path, with Red Riding Hood keeping her mind occupied and her fear in check. She is about to arrive at the harbor when suddenly, she runs into four German soldiers. They have two angry dogs that growl at Annemarie.

Throughout [*Number the Stars*](https://www.gradesaver.com/number-the-stars), Annemarie shows a great deal of maturity and wisdom for a ten-year- old. However, she shows that she still has a childlike spirit in Chapter 14, and her innocence and imagination actually save her life. In order to keep herself calm as she travels down the dark path, she tells herself the story of Red Riding Hood, who also had to take a scary journey through the woods to help her grandmother. By returning to her childhood fantasy during a fearful experience, Annemarie learns that childhood experiences can be a source of comfort and therefore, strength.

In Chapter 14, Lowry alternates between the story of Red Riding Hood and Annemarie’s journey as she travels down the path. By doing this, she gives readers a direct window into Annemarie’s thoughts. She also shows the similarities between Red Riding Hood’s story and Annemarie’s task. Both characters must be brave to help their loved ones. Also, both characters are forced into dangerous situations where they do not fully understand what is happening. Like Red Riding Hood, Annemarie is helps her friends and family by drawing on her internal well of courage.

***Critical Analysis:***

Annemarie shivers in the early morning cold. She is on the path to the boat. The light of the meadow soon fades away and only the dark woods lie ahead. It is hard to run with the basket on her arm. Annemarie thinks of a story she has sometimes told Kirsti, the story of *Little Red Riding-Hood.* She smiles remembering her sister's constant interruptions. Annemarie starts to tell the story to herself. She hears a noise on the path and stops, but nothing is there. Annemarie tells herself that Kirsti would have been scared, that she would have thought it was a wolf, like in the story. But these woods are not like the ones in the story, Annemarie says to herself. She comes to a split in the path. One way leads to a bigger, lighter road, but it is too risky. Annemarie continues on the path through the woods. She sees why the people going to Henrik's boat needed guidance.

Annemarie continues telling herself the story of Little Red Riding-Hood. When she tells her sister the story, Annemarie sometimes changes her description of the path. Today she makes the path in the story full of light and bird songs. She runs by a meadow where cows usually graze. This is where Mrs. Johansen's dog had waited for her after school when she was a child. Annemarie can hear the sea and see the light coming from over Sweden. She goes by the blueberry patch, one of her favorite spots in summers past. Reentering the dark woods, Annemarie thinks of her mother's ankle. She hopes that the doctor has come by now.

One last turn and she is almost at her destination, a familiar path. The story continues in her head: Little Red Riding-Hood hears a noise. At this point in the story, Kirsti would have been excited. Kirsti always pressed her sister on; she knew it was a wolf. But Annemarie would tell her sister that Little Red Riding-Hood did not know what it was. As she thinks this, Annemarie hears a noise. She stops. Ahead she can see the very last turn. She thinks her imagination might be tricking her. She hears a growl. Four soldiers appear with a pair of dogs.

***Significance:***

Annemarie runs through the cold woods, thinking of the story of "Little Red Riding Hood" and of the times she's told the story to her sister as she runs. She thinks of the dangers in the woods, of soldiers. She thinks, too, of her mother and hopes her mother has called the doctor. Annemarie is almost to the harbor, running "as fast as she had at school." She continues to think about "Little Red Riding Hood," about the times she had paused before telling Kirsti "she heard a growl." Today, it is Annemarie who hears footsteps and a growl. Just then she sees four German soldiers with two big dogs standing in the path in front of her, and they look intimidating.

The reader should recall the references to fairy tales at the onset of the novel. There, the stories were framed in the context of cultural history and stories Annemarie told her little sister. Here, Annemarie uses the "Little Red Riding Hood" tale to give herself hope. She has told the tale to Kirsti often while walking through the woods. Annemarie remembers those repetitions of the story and imagines herself as the hero. She is faced with wolves—in this case in the form of dogs and soldiers—and she must be brave.

The reader already knows the soldiers can be cruel, but the reader will also recall that Little Red Riding Hood is victorious in the end. There is tension in the story, fear for Annemarie, worry that she will fail, but all of that is assuaged by the allusions to the fairy tale. The heroine of a fair -tale will ultimately be victorious. Readers know that. Even as Annemarie faces cruel men and growling dogs, readers know she will be brave and overcome. Fairy tales end with victory for the righteous, and [Lowry](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Number-the-Stars/author/) is drawing that expectation by referencing the "Little Red Riding Hood" story so overtly.

***Summary and Analysis Part by Part:***

***Summary Part 1:***

As [**Annemarie**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/annemarie-johansen) walks through the woods with the basket over her arm, she shivers in the gray, chilly October morning. The path curves deeper into the forest, and Annemarie picks up speed. She runs through the woods, imagining herself as Little Red Riding-Hood—a story she has often told to [**Kirsti**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/kirsti-johansen) at bedtime. At the same time, walking the familiar road, she remembers the story [**Mama**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/mrs-johansen-mama) has told her of her own childhood, walking through the woods to school each day. Annemarie tries not to worry about her mother, though she can’t help thinking of the poor woman with her hurt ankle back at the house.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Annemarie has always been the one who comforts her younger sister with fanciful stories and fairy tales. Now that she is in the dark woods on her own, in pursuit of completing a mission whose failure could pose danger not just to herself but to many people she loves, Annemarie is the one in need of comfort, and she turns to familiar tales of bravery and intrepidness to bolster her spirit.

***Summary Part 2:***

As [**Annemarie**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/annemarie-johansen) gets deeper and deeper into the woods, she keeps hearing noises, and thinks of how, when telling the story of Little Red Riding-Hood to [**Kirsti**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/kirsti-johansen), she always makes sure to draw out the part where Little Red runs into the wolf and make it as scary as possible. Annemarie tries to tell herself that the noises she’s hearing are just rustling trees and snapping twigs, but just as she rounds the bend that empties out into the harbor, she finds herself face to face with four Nazi soldiers—and two large dogs.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Annemarie’s worst fears come true—just like Little Red Riding-Hood, she encounters her own “big bad wolf” deep in the heart of the forest. Annemarie’s courage, bravery, and ability to blur the line between fantasy and reality is about to be put to the ultimate test.