1960

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

by Harper Lee

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DEDICATIO
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for Mr. Lee and Alice

in consideration of Love & Affection

Lawyers, I suppose, were children
once.

Charles
Lamb

PART ONE

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Chapter 1

When he was nearly thirteen, my brother Jem got his arm badly broken at the elbow. When it healed, and Jem's fears of never being able to play football were assuaged, he was seldom self-conscious about his injury. His left arm was somewhat shorter than his right; when he stood or walked, the back of his hand was at right angles to his body, his thumb parallel to his thigh. He couldn't have cared less, so long as he could pass and punt.

When enough years had gone by to enable us to look back on them, we sometimes discussed the events leading to his accident. I maintain that the Ewells started it all, but Jem, who was four years my senior, said it started long before that. He said it began the summer Dill came to us, when Dill first gave us the idea of making Boo Radley come out.

I said if he wanted to take a broad view of the thing, it really began with Andrew Jackson. If General Jackson hadn't run the Creeks up the creek, Simon Finch would never have paddled up the Alabama, and where would we be if he hadn't? We were far too old to settle an argument with a fist-fight, so we consulted Atticus. Our father said we were both right.

Being Southerners, it was a source of shame to some members of the family that we had no recorded ancestors on either side of the Battle of Hastings. All we had was Simon Finch, a fur-trapping apothecary from Cornwall whose piety was exceeded only by his stinginess. In England, Simon was irritated by the persecution of those who called themselves Methodists at the hands of their more liberal brethren, and as Simon called himself a Methodist, he worked his way across the Atlantic to Philadelphia, thence to Jamaica, thence to Mobile, and up the Saint Stephens. Mindful of John Wesley's strictures on the use of many words in buying and selling, Simon made a pile practicing medicine, but in this pursuit he was unhappy lest he be tempted into doing what he knew was not for the glory of God, as the putting on of gold and costly apparel. So Simon, having forgotten his teacher's dictum on the possession of human chattels, bought three slaves and with their aid established a homestead on the banks of the Alabama River some forty miles above Saint Stephens. He returned to Saint Stephens only once, to find a wife, and with her established a line that ran high to daughters. Simon lived to an impressive age and died rich.

It was customary for the men in the family to remain on Simon's homestead, Finch's Landing, and make their living from cotton. The place was self-sufficient: modest in comparison with the empires around it, the Landing nevertheless produced everything required to sustain life except ice, wheat flour, and articles

of clothing, supplied by river-boats from Mobile.

Simon would have regarded with impotent fury the disturbance between the North and the South, as it left his descendants stripped of everything but their land, yet the tradition of living on the land remained unbroken until well into the twentieth century, when my father, Atticus Finch, went to Montgomery to read law, and his younger brother went to Boston to study medicine. Their sister Alexandra was the Finch who remained at the Landing: she married a taciturn man who spent most of his time lying in a hammock by the river wondering if his trot-lines were full.

When my father was admitted to the bar, he returned to Maycomb and began his practice. Maycomb, some twenty miles east of Finch's Landing, was the county seat of Maycomb County. Atticus's office in the courthouse contained little more than a hat rack, a spittoon, a checkerboard and an unsullied Code of Alabama. His first two clients were the last two persons hanged in the Maycomb County jail. Atticus had urged them to accept the state's generosity in allowing them to plead Guilty to second-degree murder and escape with their lives, but they were Haverfords, in Maycomb County a name synonymous with jackass. The Haverfords had dispatched Maycomb's leading blacksmith in a misunderstanding arising from the alleged wrongful detention of a mare, were imprudent enough to do it in the presence of three witnesses, and insisted that the-son-of-a-bitch-had-it-coming-to-him was a good enough defense for anybody. They persisted in pleading Not Guilty to first-degree murder, so there was nothing much Atticus could do for his clients except be present at their departure, an occasion that was probably the beginning of my father's profound distaste for the practice of criminal law.

During his first five years in Maycomb, Atticus practiced economy more than anything; for several years thereafter he invested his earnings in his brother's education. John Hale Finch was ten years younger than my father, and chose to study medicine at a time when cotton was not worth growing; but after getting Uncle Jack started, Atticus derived a reasonable income from the law. He liked Maycomb, he was Maycomb County born and bred; he knew his people, they knew him, and because of Simon Finch's industry, Atticus was related by blood

or marriage to nearly every family in the town.

Maycomb was an old town, but it was a tired old town when I first knew it. In rainy weather the streets turned to red slop; grass grew on the sidewalks, the courthouse sagged in the square. Somehow, it was hotter then: a black dog suffered on a summer's day; bony mules hitched to Hoover carts flicked flies in the sweltering shade of the live oaks on the square. Men's stiff collars wilted by nine in the morning. Ladies bathed before noon, after their three-o'clock naps, and by nightfall were like soft teacakes with frostings of sweat and sweet talcum.

People moved slowly then. They ambled across the square, shuffled in and out of the stores around it, took their time about everything. A day was twenty-four hours long but seemed longer. There was no hurry, for there was nowhere to go, nothing to buy and no money to buy it with, nothing to see outside the boundaries of Maycomb County. But it was a time of vague optimism for some of the people: Maycomb County had recently been told that it had nothing to fear but fear itself.

We lived on the main residential street in town— Atticus, Jem and I, plus Calpurnia our cook. Jem and I found our father satisfactory: he played with us, read to us, and treated us with courteous detachment.

Calpurnia was something else again. She was all angles and bones; she was nearsighted; she squinted; her hand was wide as a bed slat and twice as hard. She was always ordering me out of the kitchen, asking me why I couldn't behave as well as Jem when she knew he was older, and calling me home when I wasn't ready to come. Our battles were epic and one-sided. Calpurnia always won, mainly because Atticus always took her side. She had been with us ever since Jem was born, and I had felt her tyrannical presence as long as I could remember.

Our mother died when I was two, so I never felt her absence. She was a Graham from Montgomery; Atticus met her when he was first elected to the state legislature. He was middle-aged then, she was fifteen years his junior. Jem was the product of their first year of marriage; four years later I was born, and two

years later our mother died from a sudden heart attack. They said it ran in her family. I did not miss her, but I think Jem did. He remembered her clearly, and sometimes in the middle of a game he would sigh at length, then go off and play by himself behind the car-house. When he was like that, I knew better than to bother him.

When I was almost six and Jem was nearly ten, our summertime boundaries (within calling distance of Calpurnia) were Mrs. Henry Lafayette Dubose's house two doors to the north of us, and the Radley Place three doors to the south. We were never tempted to break them. The Radley Place was inhabited by an unknown entity the mere description of whom was enough to make us behave for days on end; Mrs. Dubose was plain hell.

That was the summer Dill came to us.

Early one morning as we were beginning our day's play in the back yard, Jem and I heard something next door in Miss Rachel Haverford's collard patch. We went to the wire fence to see if there was a puppy— Miss Rachel's rat terrier was expecting— instead we found someone sitting looking at us. Sitting down, he wasn't much higher than the collards. We stared at him until he spoke:

"Hey."

"Hey yourself," said Jem pleasantly.

"I'm Charles Baker Harris," he said. "I can
read."

"So what?" I said.

"I just thought you'd like to know I can read. You got anything needs readin' I can do it..."

"How old are you," asked Jem, "four-and-a-half?"

"Goin' on
seven."

“Shoot no wonder, then,” said Jem, jerking his thumb at me. “Scout yonder’s been readin‘ ever since she was born, and she ain’t even started to school yet. You look right puny for goin’ on seven.”

“I’m little but I’m old,” he
said.

Jem brushed his hair back to get a better look. “Why don’t you come over, Charles Baker Harris?” he said. “Lord, what a name.”

“‘s not any funnier’n yours. Aunt Rachel says your name’s Jeremy Atticus Finch.”

Jem scowled. “I’m big enough to fit mine,” he said. “Your name’s longer’n you are. Bet it’s a foot longer.”

“Folks call me Dill,” said Dill, struggling under the fence.

“Do better if you go over it instead of under it,” I said. “Where’d you come from?”

Dill was from Meridian, Mississippi, was spending the summer with his aunt, Miss Rachel, and would be spending every summer in Maycomb from now on. His family was from Maycomb County originally, his mother worked for a photographer in Meridian, had entered his picture in a Beautiful Child contest and won five dollars. She gave the money to Dill, who went to the picture show twenty times on it.

“Don’t have any picture shows here, except Jesus ones in the courthouse sometimes,” said Jem. “Ever see anything good?”
Dill had seen *Dracula*, a revelation that moved Jem to eye him with the beginning of respect. “Tell it to us,” he said.

Dill was a curiosity. He wore blue linen shorts that buttoned to his shirt, his hair was snow white and stuck to his head like duckfluff; he was a year my senior but I towered over him. As he told us the old tale his blue eyes would lighten and darken; his laugh was sudden and happy; he habitually pulled at a cowlick in the center of his forehead.

When Dill reduced Dracula to dust, and Jem said the show sounded better than the book, I asked Dill where his father was: “You ain’t said anything about him.”

“I haven’t got one.”

“Is he
dead?”

“No...”

“Then if he’s not dead you’ve got one, haven’t you?”

Dill blushed and Jem told me to hush, a sure sign that Dill had been studied and found acceptable. Thereafter the summer passed in routine contentment. Routine contentment was: improving our treehouse that rested between giant twin chinaberry trees in the back yard, fussing, running through our list of dramas based on the works of Oliver Optic, Victor Appleton, and Edgar Rice Burroughs. In this matter we were lucky to have Dill. He played the character parts formerly thrust upon me— the ape in *Tarzan*, Mr. Crabtree in *The Rover Boys*, Mr. Damon in *Tom Swift*. Thus we came to know Dill as a pocket Merlin, whose head teemed with eccentric plans, strange longings, and quaint fancies.

But by the end of August our repertoire was vapid from countless reproductions, and it was then that Dill gave us the idea of making Boo Radley come out.

The Radley Place fascinated Dill. In spite of our warnings and explanations it drew him as the moon draws water, but drew him no nearer than the light-pole on the corner, a safe distance from the Radley gate. There he would stand, his arm around the fat pole, staring and wondering.

The Radley Place jutted into a sharp curve beyond our house. Walking south, one faced its porch; the sidewalk turned and ran beside the lot. The house was low, was once white with a deep front porch and green shutters, but had long ago darkened to the color of the slate-gray yard around it. Rain-rotted shingles drooped over the eaves of the veranda; oak trees kept the sun away. The remains

of a picket drunkenly guarded the front yard— a “swept” yard that was never swept— where johnson grass and rabbit-tobacco grew in abundance.

Inside the house lived a malevolent phantom. People said he existed, but Jem and I had never seen him. People said he went out at night when the moon was down, and peeped in windows. When people’s azaleas froze in a cold snap, it was because he had breathed on them. Any stealthy small crimes committed in Maycomb were his work. Once the town was terrorized by a series of morbid nocturnal events: people’s chickens and household pets were found mutilated; although the culprit was Crazy Addie, who eventually drowned himself in Barker’s Eddy, people still looked at the Radley Place, unwilling to discard their initial suspicions. A Negro would not pass the Radley Place at night, he would cut across to the sidewalk opposite and whistle as he walked. The Maycomb school grounds adjoined the back of the Radley lot; from the Radley chickenyard tall pecan trees shook their fruit into the schoolyard, but the nuts lay untouched by the children: Radley pecans would kill you. A baseball hit into the Radley yard was a lost ball and no questions asked.

The misery of that house began many years before Jem and I were born. The Radleys, welcome anywhere in town, kept to themselves, a predilection unforgivable in Maycomb. They did not go to church, Maycomb’s principal recreation, but worshiped at home; Mrs. Radley seldom if ever crossed the street for a mid-morning coffee break with her neighbors, and certainly never joined a missionary circle. Mr. Radley walked to town at eleven-thirty every morning and came back promptly at twelve, sometimes carrying a brown paper bag that the neighborhood assumed contained the family groceries. I never knew how old Mr. Radley made his living— Jem said he “bought cotton,” a polite term for doing nothing—but Mr. Radley and his wife had lived there with their two sons as long as anybody could remember.

The shutters and doors of the Radley house were closed on Sundays, another thing alien to Maycomb’s ways: closed doors meant illness and cold weather only. Of all days Sunday was the day for formal afternoon visiting: ladies wore corsets, men wore coats, children wore shoes. But to climb the Radley front steps

and call, “He-y,” of a Sunday afternoon was something their neighbors never did. The Radley house had no screen doors. I once asked Atticus if it ever had any; Atticus said yes, but before I was born.

According to neighborhood legend, when the younger Radley boy was in his teens he became acquainted with some of the Cunninghams from Old Sarum, an enormous and confusing tribe domiciled in the northern part of the county, and they formed the nearest thing to a gang ever seen in Maycomb. They did little, but enough to be discussed by the town and publicly warned from three pulpits: they hung around the barbershop; they rode the bus to Abbottsville on Sundays and went to the picture show; they attended dances at the county’s riverside gambling hell, the Dew-Drop Inn & Fishing Camp; they experimented with stumphole whiskey. Nobody in Maycomb had nerve enough to tell Mr. Radley that his boy was in with the wrong crowd.

One night, in an excessive spurt of high spirits, the boys backed around the square in a borrowed flivver, resisted arrest by Maycomb’s ancient beadle, Mr. Conner, and locked him in the courthouse outhouse. The town decided something had to be done; Mr. Conner said he knew who each and every one of them was, and he was bound and determined they wouldn’t get away with it, so the boys came before the probate judge on charges of disorderly conduct, disturbing the peace, assault and battery, and using abusive and profane language in the presence and hearing of a female. The judge asked Mr. Conner why he included the last charge; Mr. Conner said they cussed so loud he was sure every lady in Maycomb heard them. The judge decided to send the boys to the state industrial school, where boys were sometimes sent for no other reason than to provide them with food and decent shelter: it was no prison and it was no disgrace. Mr. Radley thought it was. If the judge released Arthur, Mr. Radley would see to it that Arthur gave no further trouble. Knowing that Mr. Radley’s word was his bond, the judge was glad to do so.

The other boys attended the industrial school and received the best secondary education to be had in the state; one of them eventually worked his way through engineering school at Auburn. The doors of the Radley house were closed on

weekdays as well as Sundays, and Mr. Radley's boy was not seen again for fifteen years.

But there came a day, barely within Jem's memory, when Boo Radley was heard from and was seen by several people, but not by Jem. He said Atticus never talked much about the Radleys: when Jem would question him Atticus's only answer was for him to mind his own business and let the Radleys mind theirs, they had a right to; but when it happened Jem said Atticus shook his head and said, "Mm, mm, mm."

So Jem received most of his information from Miss Stephanie Crawford, a neighborhood scold, who said she knew the whole thing. According to Miss Stephanie, Boo was sitting in the livingroom cutting some items from *The Maycomb Tribune* to paste in his scrapbook. His father entered the room. As Mr. Radley passed by, Boo drove the scissors into his parent's leg, pulled them out, wiped them on his pants, and resumed his activities.

Mrs. Radley ran screaming into the street that Arthur was killing them all, but when the sheriff arrived he found Boo still sitting in the livingroom, cutting up the Tribune. He was thirty-three years old then.

Miss Stephanie said old Mr. Radley said no Radley was going to any asylum, when it was suggested that a season in Tuscaloosa might be helpful to Boo. Boo wasn't crazy, he was high-strung at times. It was all right to shut him up, Mr. Radley conceded, but insisted that Boo not be charged with anything: he was not a criminal. The sheriff hadn't the heart to put him in jail alongside Negroes, so Boo was locked in the courthouse basement.

Boo's transition from the basement to back home was nebulous in Jem's memory. Miss Stephanie Crawford said some of the town council told Mr. Radley that if he didn't take Boo back, Boo would die of mold from the damp. Besides, Boo could not live forever on the bounty of the county.

Nobody knew what form of intimidation Mr. Radley employed to keep Boo out of sight, but Jem figured that Mr. Radley kept him chained to the bed most of the

time. Atticus said no, it wasn't that sort of thing, that there were other ways of making people into ghosts.

My memory came alive to see Mrs. Radley occasionally open the front door, walk to the edge of the porch, and pour water on her cannas. But every day Jem and I would see Mr. Radley walking to and from town. He was a thin leathery man with colorless eyes, so colorless they did not reflect light. His cheekbones were sharp and his mouth was wide, with a thin upper lip and a full lower lip. Miss Stephanie Crawford said he was so upright he took the word of God as his only law, and we believed her, because Mr. Radley's posture was ramrod straight.

He never spoke to us. When he passed we would look at the ground and say, "Good morning, sir," and he would cough in reply. Mr. Radley's elder son lived in Pensacola; he came home at Christmas, and he was one of the few persons we ever saw enter or leave the place. From the day Mr. Radley took Arthur home, people said the house died.

But there came a day when Atticus told us he'd wear us out if we made any noise in the yard and commissioned Calpurnia to serve in his absence if she heard a sound out of us. Mr. Radley was dying.

He took his time about it. Wooden sawhorses blocked the road at each end of the Radley lot, straw was put down on the sidewalk, traffic was diverted to the back street. Dr. Reynolds parked his car in front of our house and walked to the Radley's every time he called. Jem and I crept around the yard for days. At last the sawhorses were taken away, and we stood watching from the front porch when Mr. Radley made his final journey past our house.

"There goes the meanest man ever God blew breath into," murmured Calpurnia, and she spat meditatively into the yard. We looked at her in surprise, for Calpurnia rarely commented on the ways of white people.

The neighborhood thought when Mr. Radley went under Boo would come out, but it had another think coming: Boo's elder brother returned from Pensacola and took Mr. Radley's place. The only difference between him and his father was

their ages. Jem said Mr. Nathan Radley "bought cotton," too. Mr. Nathan would speak to us, however, when we said good morning, and sometimes we saw him coming from town with a magazine in his hand.

The more we told Dill about the Radleys, the more he wanted to know, the longer he would stand hugging the light-pole on the corner, the more he would wonder.

"Wonder what he does in there," he would murmur. "Looks like he'd just stick his head out the door."
Jem said, "He goes out, all right, when it's pitch dark. Miss Stephanie Crawford said she woke up in the middle of the night one time and saw him looking straight through the window at her... said his head was like a skull lookin' at her. Ain't you ever waked up at night and heard him, Dill? He walks like this-" Jem slid his feet through the gravel. "Why do you think Miss Rachel locks up so tight at night? I've seen his tracks in our back yard many a mornin', and one night I heard him scratching on the back screen, but he was gone time Atticus got there."

"Wonder what he looks like?" said Dill.

Jem gave a reasonable description of Boo: Boo was about six-and-a-half feet tall, judging from his tracks; he dined on raw squirrels and any cats he could catch, that's why his hands were bloodstained—if you ate an animal raw, you could never wash the blood off. There was a long jagged scar that ran across his face; what teeth he had were yellow and rotten; his eyes popped, and he drooled most of the time.

"Let's try to make him come out," said Dill. "I'd like to see what he looks like."

Jem said if Dill wanted to get himself killed, all he had to do was go up and knock on the front door.

Our first raid came to pass only because Dill bet Jem *The Gray Ghost* against two Tom Swifts that Jem wouldn't get any farther than the Radley gate. In all his life, Jem had never declined a dare.

Jem thought about it for three days. I suppose he loved honor more than his head,

for Dill wore him down easily: “You’re scared,” Dill said, the first day. “Ain’t scared, just respectful,” Jem said. The next day Dill said, “You’re too scared even to put your big toe in the front yard.” Jem said he reckoned he wasn’t, he’d passed the Radley Place every school day of his life.

“Always runnin‘,” I
said.

But Dill got him the third day, when he told Jem that folks in Meridian certainly weren’t as afraid as the folks in Maycomb, that he’d never seen such scary folks as the ones in Maycomb.

This was enough to make Jem march to the corner, where he stopped and leaned against the light-pole, watching the gate hanging crazily on its homemade hinge. “I hope you’ve got it through your head that he’ll kill us each and every one, Dill Harris,” said Jem, when we joined him. “Don’t blame me when he gouges your eyes out. You started it, remember.”

“You’re still scared,” murmured Dill patiently.

Jem wanted Dill to know once and for all that he wasn’t scared of anything: “It’s just that I can’t think of a way to make him come out without him gettin‘ us.” Besides, Jem had his little sister to think of.

When he said that, I knew he was afraid. Jem had his little sister to think of the time I dared him to jump off the top of the house: “If I got killed, what’d become of you?” he asked. Then he jumped, landed unhurt, and his sense of responsibility left him until confronted by the Radley Place.

“You gonna run out on a dare?” asked Dill. “If you are, then-”

“Dill, you have to think about these things,” Jem said. “Lemme think a minute... it’s sort of like making a turtle come out...”

“How’s that?” asked Dill.

“Strike a match under him.”

I told Jem if he set fire to the Radley house I was going to tell Atticus on him.

Dill said striking a match under a turtle was hateful.

“Ain’t hateful, just persuades him—‘s not like you’d chunk him in the fire,” Jem growled.

“How do you know a match don’t hurt him?”

“Turtles can’t feel, stupid,” said Jem.

“Were you ever a turtle, huh?”

“My stars, Dill! Now lemme think... reckon we can rock him...”

Jem stood in thought so long that Dill made a mild concession: “I won’t say you ran out on a dare an‘ I’ll swap you *The Gray Ghost* if you just go up and touch the house.”

Jem brightened. “Touch the house, that all?”

Dill
nodded.

“Sure that’s all, now? I don’t want you hollerin‘ something different the minute I get back.”

“Yeah, that’s all,” said Dill. “He’ll probably come out after you when he sees you in the yard, then Scout’n‘ me’ll jump on him and hold him down till we can tell him we ain’t gonna hurt him.”

We left the corner, crossed the side street that ran in front of the Radley house, and stopped at the gate.

“Well go on,” said Dill, “Scout and me’s right behind you.”

“I’m going,” said Jem, “don’t hurry me.”

He walked to the corner of the lot, then back again, studying the simple terrain as if deciding how best to effect an entry, frowning and scratching his head.

Then I sneered at him.

Jem threw open the gate and sped to the side of the house, slapped it with his palm and ran back past us, not waiting to see if his foray was successful. Dill and I followed on his heels. Safely on our porch, panting and out of breath, we looked back.

The old house was the same, droopy and sick, but as we stared down the street we thought we saw an inside shutter move. Flick. A tiny, almost invisible movement, and the house was still.

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Chapter 2

Dill left us early in September, to return to Meridian. We saw him off on the five o'clock bus and I was miserable without him until it occurred to me that I would be starting to school in a week. I never looked forward more to anything in my life. Hours of wintertime had found me in the treehouse, looking over at the schoolyard, spying on multitudes of children through a two-power telescope Jem had given me, learning their games, following Jem's red jacket through wriggling circles of blind man's buff, secretly sharing their misfortunes and minor victories. I longed to join them.

Jem condescended to take me to school the first day, a job usually done by one's parents, but Atticus had said Jem would be delighted to show me where my room

was. I think some money changed hands in this transaction, for as we trotted around the corner past the Radley Place I heard an unfamiliar jingle in Jem's pockets. When we slowed to a walk at the edge of the schoolyard, Jem was careful to explain that during school hours I was not to bother him, I was not to approach him with requests to enact a chapter of Tarzan and the Ant Men, to embarrass him with references to his private life, or tag along behind him at recess and noon. I was to stick with the first grade and he would stick with the fifth. In short, I was to leave him alone.

"You mean we can't play any more?" I asked.

"We'll do like we always do at home," he said, "but you'll see—school's different."

It certainly was. Before the first morning was over, Miss Caroline Fisher, our teacher, hauled me up to the front of the room and patted the palm of my hand with a ruler, then made me stand in the corner until noon.

Miss Caroline was no more than twenty-one. She had bright auburn hair, pink cheeks, and wore crimson fingernail polish. She also wore high-heeled pumps and a red-and-white-striped dress. She looked and smelled like a peppermint drop. She boarded across the street one door down from us in Miss Maudie Atkinson's upstairs front room, and when Miss Maudie introduced us to her, Jem was in a haze for days.

Miss Caroline printed her name on the blackboard and said, "This says I am Miss Caroline Fisher. I am from North Alabama, from Winston County." The class murmured apprehensively, should she prove to harbor her share of the peculiarities indigenous to that region. (When Alabama seceded from the Union on January 11, 1861, Winston County seceded from Alabama, and every child in Maycomb County knew it.) North Alabama was full of Liquor Interests, Big Mules, steel companies, Republicans, professors, and other persons of no background.
Miss Caroline began the day by reading us a story about cats. The cats had long conversations with one another, they wore cunning little clothes and lived in a

warm house beneath a kitchen stove. By the time Mrs. Cat called the drugstore for an order of chocolate malted mice the class was wriggling like a bucketful of catawba worms. Miss Caroline seemed unaware that the ragged, denim-shirted and floursack-skirted first grade, most of whom had chopped cotton and fed hogs from the time they were able to walk, were immune to imaginative literature. Miss Caroline came to the end of the story and said, "*Oh*, my, wasn't that nice?"

Then she went to the blackboard and printed the alphabet in enormous square capitals, turned to the class and asked, "Does anybody know what these are?"

Everybody did; most of the first grade had failed it last year.

I suppose she chose me because she knew my name; as I read the alphabet a faint line appeared between her eyebrows, and after making me read most of *My First Reader* and the stock-market quotations from *The Mobile Register* aloud, she discovered that I was literate and looked at me with more than faint distaste. Miss Caroline told me to tell my father not to teach me any more, it would interfere with my reading.

"Teach me?" I said in surprise. "He hasn't taught me anything, Miss Caroline. Atticus ain't got time to teach me anything," I added, when Miss Caroline smiled and shook her head. "Why, he's so tired at night he just sits in the livingroom and reads."

"If he didn't teach you, who did?" Miss Caroline asked good-naturedly. "Somebody did. You weren't born reading *The Mobile Register*."

"Jem says I was. He read in a book where I was a Bullfinch instead of a Finch. Jem says my name's really Jean Louise Bullfinch, that I got swapped when I was born and I'm really a-"

Miss Caroline apparently thought I was lying. "Let's not let our imaginations run away with us, dear," she said. "Now you tell your father not to teach you any more. It's best to begin reading with a fresh mind. You tell him I'll take over from

here and try to undo the damage-"

"Ma'am?"
"Your father does not know how to teach. You can have a seat now."

I mumbled that I was sorry and retired meditating upon my crime. I never deliberately learned to read, but somehow I had been wallowing illicitly in the daily papers. In the long hours of church—was it then I learned? I could not remember not being able to read hymns. Now that I was compelled to think about it, reading was something that just came to me, as learning to fasten the seat of my union suit without looking around, or achieving two bows from a snarl of shoelaces. I could not remember when the lines above Atticus's moving finger separated into words, but I had stared at them all the evenings in my memory, listening to the news of the day, Bills to Be Enacted into Laws, the diaries of Lorenzo Dow—anything Atticus happened to be reading when I crawled into his lap every night. Until I feared I would lose it, I never loved to read. One does not love breathing.

I knew I had annoyed Miss Caroline, so I let well enough alone and stared out the window until recess when Jem cut me from the covey of first-graders in the schoolyard. He asked how I was getting along. I told him.

"If I didn't have to stay I'd leave. Jem, that damn lady says Atticus's been teaching me to read and for him to stop it-"

"Don't worry, Scout," Jem comforted me. "Our teacher says Miss Caroline's introducing a new way of teaching. She learned about it in college. It'll be in all the grades soon. You don't have to learn much out of books that way—it's like if you wanta learn about cows, you go milk one, see?"

"Yeah Jem, but I don't wanta study cows, I-"

"Sure you do. You hafta know about cows, they're a big part of life in Maycomb County."

I contented myself with asking Jem if he'd lost his mind.

“I’m just trying to tell you the new way they’re teachin‘ the first grade, stubborn. It’s the Dewey Decimal System.”

Having never questioned Jem’s pronouncements, I saw no reason to begin now. The Dewey Decimal System consisted, in part, of Miss Caroline waving cards at us on which were printed “the,” “cat,” “rat,” “man,” and “you.” No comment seemed to be expected of us, and the class received these impressionistic revelations in silence. I was bored, so I began a letter to Dill. Miss Caroline caught me writing and told me to tell my father to stop teaching me. “Besides,” she said. “We don’t write in the first grade, we print. You won’t learn to write until you’re in the third grade.”

Calpurnia was to blame for this. It kept me from driving her crazy on rainy days, I guess. She would set me a writing task by scrawling the alphabet firmly across the top of a tablet, then copying out a chapter of the Bible beneath. If I reproduced her penmanship satisfactorily, she rewarded me with an open-faced sandwich of bread and butter and sugar. In Calpurnia’s teaching, there was no sentimentality: I seldom pleased her and she seldom rewarded me.

“Everybody who goes home to lunch hold up your hands,” said Miss Caroline, breaking into my new grudge against Calpurnia.

The town children did so, and she looked us over.

“Everybody who brings his lunch put it on top of his desk.”

Molasses buckets appeared from nowhere, and the ceiling danced with metallic light. Miss Caroline walked up and down the rows peering and poking into lunch containers, nodding if the contents pleased her, frowning a little at others. She stopped at Walter Cunningham’s desk. “Where’s yours?” she asked.

Walter Cunningham’s face told everybody in the first grade he had hookworms. His absence of shoes told us how he got them. People caught hookworms going barefooted in barnyards and hog wallows. If Walter had owned any shoes he would have worn them the first day of school and then discarded them until

mid- winter. He did have on a clean shirt and neatly mended overalls.

“Did you forget your lunch this morning?” asked Miss Caroline.

Walter looked straight ahead. I saw a muscle jump in his skinny jaw.

“Did you forget it this morning?” asked Miss Caroline. Walter’s jaw twitched again.

“Yeb’m,” he finally mumbled.

Miss Caroline went to her desk and opened her purse. “Here’s a quarter,” she said to Walter. “Go and eat downtown today. You can pay me back tomorrow.”
Walter shook his head. “Nome thank you ma’am,” he drawled softly.

Impatience crept into Miss Caroline’s voice: “Here Walter, come get it.”

Walter shook his head again.

When Walter shook his head a third time someone whispered, “Go on and tell her, Scout.”

I turned around and saw most of the town people and the entire bus delegation looking at me. Miss Caroline and I had conferred twice already, and they were looking at me in the innocent assurance that familiarity breeds understanding.

I rose graciously on Walter’s behalf: “Ah—Miss Caroline?”

“What is it, Jean
Louise?”

“Miss Caroline, he’s a Cunningham.”

I sat back
down.

“What, Jean
Louise?”

I thought I had made things sufficiently clear. It was clear enough to the rest of us: Walter Cunningham was sitting there lying his head off. He didn't forget his lunch, he didn't have any. He had none today nor would he have any tomorrow or the next day. He had probably never seen three quarters together at the same time in his life.

I tried again: "Walter's one of the Cunninghams, Miss Caroline."

"I beg your pardon, Jean Louise?"

"That's okay, ma'am, you'll get to know all the county folks after a while. The Cunninghams never took anything they can't pay back—no church baskets and no scrip stamps. They never took anything off of anybody, they get along on what they have. They don't have much, but they get along on it."

My special knowledge of the Cunningham tribe—one branch, that is—was gained from events of last winter. Walter's father was one of Atticus's clients. After a dreary conversation in our livingroom one night about his entailment, before Mr. Cunningham left he said, "Mr. Finch, I don't know when I'll ever be able to pay you."

"Let that be the least of your worries, Walter," Atticus said.
When I asked Jem what entailment was, and Jem described it as a condition of having your tail in a crack, I asked Atticus if Mr. Cunningham would ever pay us.

"Not in money," Atticus said, "but before the year's out I'll have been paid. You watch."

We watched. One morning Jem and I found a load of stovewood in the back yard. Later, a sack of hickory nuts appeared on the back steps. With Christmas came a crate of smilax and holly. That spring when we found a crokersack full of turnip greens, Atticus said Mr. Cunningham had more than paid him.

"Why does he pay you like that?" I asked.

"Because that's the only way he can pay me. He has no money."

“Are we poor, Atticus?”

Atticus nodded. “We are indeed.”

Jem’s nose wrinkled. “Are we as poor as the Cunninghams?”

“Not exactly. The Cunninghams are country folks, farmers, and the crash hit them hardest.”

Atticus said professional people were poor because the farmers were poor. As Maycomb County was farm country, nickels and dimes were hard to come by for doctors and dentists and lawyers. Entailment was only a part of Mr. Cunningham’s vexations. The acres not entailed were mortgaged to the hilt, and the little cash he made went to interest. If he held his mouth right, Mr. Cunningham could get a WPA job, but his land would go to ruin if he left it, and he was willing to go hungry to keep his land and vote as he pleased. Mr. Cunningham, said Atticus, came from a set breed of men.

As the Cunninghams had no money to pay a lawyer, they simply paid us with what they had. “Did you know,” said Atticus, “that Dr. Reynolds works the same way? He charges some folks a bushel of potatoes for delivery of a baby. Miss Scout, if you give me your attention I’ll tell you what entailment is. Jem’s definitions are very nearly accurate sometimes.”

If I could have explained these things to Miss Caroline, I would have saved myself some inconvenience and Miss Caroline subsequent mortification, but it was beyond my ability to explain things as well as Atticus, so I said, “You’re shamin‘ him, Miss Caroline. Walter hasn’t got a quarter at home to bring you, and you can’t use any stovewood.”

Miss Caroline stood stock still, then grabbed me by the collar and hauled me back to her desk. “Jean Louise, I’ve had about enough of you this morning,” she said. “You’re starting off on the wrong foot in every way, my dear. Hold out your hand.”

I thought she was going to spit in it, which was the only reason anybody in Maycomb held out his hand: it was a time-honored method of sealing oral contracts. Wondering what bargain we had made, I turned to the class for an answer, but the class looked back at me in puzzlement. Miss Caroline picked up her ruler, gave me half a dozen quick little pats, then told me to stand in the corner. A storm of laughter broke loose when it finally occurred to the class that Miss Caroline had whipped me.

When Miss Caroline threatened it with a similar fate the first grade exploded again, becoming cold sober only when the shadow of Miss Blount fell over them. Miss Blount, a native Maycombian as yet uninitiated in the mysteries of the Decimal System, appeared at the door hands on hips and announced: “If I hear another sound from this room I’ll burn up everybody in it. Miss Caroline, the sixth grade cannot concentrate on the pyramids for all this racket!”

My sojourn in the corner was a short one. Saved by the bell, Miss Caroline watched the class file out for lunch. As I was the last to leave, I saw her sink down into her chair and bury her head in her arms. Had her conduct been more friendly toward me, I would have felt sorry for her. She was a pretty little thing.

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Chapter 3

Catching Walter Cunningham in the schoolyard gave me some pleasure, but when I was rubbing his nose in the dirt Jem came by and told me to stop. “You’re bigger’n he is,” he
said.

“He’s as old as you, nearly,” I said. “He made me start off on the wrong foot.”

“Let him go, Scout.
Why?”

“He didn’t have any lunch,” I said, and explained my involvement in Walter’s dietary affairs.

Walter had picked himself up and was standing quietly listening to Jem and me. His fists were half cocked, as if expecting an onslaught from both of us. I stomped at him to chase him away, but Jem put out his hand and stopped me. He examined Walter with an air of speculation. “Your daddy Mr. Walter Cunningham from Old Sarum?” he asked, and Walter nodded.

Walter looked as if he had been raised on fish food: his eyes, as blue as Dill Harris’s, were red-rimmed and watery. There was no color in his face except at the tip of his nose, which was moistly pink. He fingered the straps of his overalls, nervously picking at the metal hooks.

Jem suddenly grinned at him. “Come on home to dinner with us, Walter,” he said. “We’d be glad to have you.”

Walter’s face brightened, then darkened.

Jem said, “Our daddy’s a friend of your daddy’s. Scout here, she’s crazy—she won’t fight you any more.”

“I wouldn’t be too certain of that,” I said. Jem’s free dispensation of my pledge irked me, but precious noontime minutes were ticking away. “Yeah Walter, I won’t jump on you again. Don’t you like butterbeans? Our Cal’s a real good cook.”

Walter stood where he was, biting his lip. Jem and I gave up, and we were nearly to the Radley Place when Walter called, “Hey, I’m comin‘!”

When Walter caught up with us, Jem made pleasant conversation with him. “A

hain't lives there," he said cordially, pointing to the Radley house. "Ever hear about him, Walter?"

"Reckon I have," said Walter. "Almost died first year I come to school and et them pecans—folks say he pizened 'em and put 'em over on the school side of the fence."
Jem seemed to have little fear of Boo Radley now that Walter and I walked beside him. Indeed, Jem grew boastful: "I went all the way up to the house once," he said to Walter.

"Anybody who went up to the house once oughta not to still run every time he passes it," I said to the clouds above.

"And who's runnin', Miss Priss?"

"You are, when ain't anybody with you."

By the time we reached our front steps Walter had forgotten he was a Cunningham. Jem ran to the kitchen and asked Calpurnia to set an extra plate, we had company. Atticus greeted Walter and began a discussion about crops neither Jem nor I could follow.

"Reason I can't pass the first grade, Mr. Finch, is I've had to stay out ever' spring an' help Papa with the choppin', but there's another'n at the house now that's field size."

"Did you pay a bushel of potatoes for him?" I asked, but Atticus shook his head at me.

While Walter piled food on his plate, he and Atticus talked together like two men, to the wonderment of Jem and me. Atticus was expounding upon farm problems when Walter interrupted to ask if there was any molasses in the house. Atticus summoned Calpurnia, who returned bearing the syrup pitcher. She stood waiting for Walter to help himself. Walter poured syrup on his vegetables and meat with a generous hand. He would probably have poured it into his milk glass had I not asked what the sam hill he was doing.

The silver saucer clattered when he replaced the pitcher, and he quickly put his hands in his lap. Then he ducked his head.

Atticus shook his head at me again. “But he’s gone and drowned his dinner in syrup,” I protested. “He’s poured it all over-”

It was then that Calpurnia requested my presence in the kitchen.

She was furious, and when she was furious Calpurnia’s grammar became erratic. When in tranquility, her grammar was as good as anybody’s in Maycomb. Atticus said Calpurnia had more education than most colored folks.
When she squinted down at me the tiny lines around her eyes deepened. “There’s some folks who don’t eat like us,” she whispered fiercely, “but you ain’t called on to contradict ‘em at the table when they don’t. That boy’s yo’ comp’ny and if he wants to eat up the table cloth you let him, you hear?”

“He ain’t company, Cal, he’s just a Cunningham-”

“Hush your mouth! Don’t matter who they are, anybody sets foot in this house’s yo‘ comp’ny, and don’t you let me catch you remarkin’ on their ways like you was so high and mighty! Yo‘ folks might be better’n the Cunninghams but it don’t count for nothin’ the way you’re disgracin‘ ’em—if you can’t act fit to eat at the table you can just set here and eat in the kitchen!”

Calpurnia sent me through the swinging door to the diningroom with a stinging smack. I retrieved my plate and finished dinner in the kitchen, thankful, though, that I was spared the humiliation of facing them again. I told Calpurnia to just wait, I’d fix her: one of these days when she wasn’t looking I’d go off and drown myself in Barker’s Eddy and then she’d be sorry. Besides, I added, she’d already gotten me in trouble once today: she had taught me to write and it was all her fault. “Hush your fussin‘,” she said.

Jem and Walter returned to school ahead of me: staying behind to advise Atticus of Calpurnia’s iniquities was worth a solitary sprint past the Radley Place. “She likes Jem better’n she likes me, anyway,” I concluded, and suggested that Atticus

lose no time in packing her off.

“Have you ever considered that Jem doesn’t worry her half as much?” Atticus’s voice was flinty. “I’ve no intention of getting rid of her, now or ever. We couldn’t operate a single day without Cal, have you ever thought of that? You think about how much Cal does for you, and you mind her, you hear?”

I returned to school and hated Calpurnia steadily until a sudden shriek shattered my resentments. I looked up to see Miss Caroline standing in the middle of the room, sheer horror flooding her face. Apparently she had revived enough to persevere in her profession.

“It’s alive!” she screamed.

The male population of the class rushed as one to her assistance. Lord, I thought, she’s scared of a mouse. Little Chuck Little, whose patience with all living things was phenomenal, said, “Which way did he go, Miss Caroline? Tell us where he went, quick! D.C.-” he turned to a boy behind him—“D.C., shut the door and we’ll catch him. Quick, ma’am, where’d he go?”

Miss Caroline pointed a shaking finger not at the floor nor at a desk, but to a hulking individual unknown to me. Little Chuck’s face contracted and he said gently, “You mean him, ma’am? Yessum, he’s alive. Did he scare you some way?”

Miss Caroline said desperately, “I was just walking by when it crawled out of his hair... just crawled out of his hair-”

Little Chuck grinned broadly. “There ain’t no need to fear a cootie, ma’am. Ain’t you ever seen one? Now don’t you be afraid, you just go back to your desk and teach us some more.”

Little Chuck Little was another member of the population who didn’t know where his next meal was coming from, but he was a born gentleman. He put his hand under her elbow and led Miss Caroline to the front of the room. “Now don’t you fret, ma’am,” he said. “There ain’t no need to fear a cootie. I’ll just fetch you

some cool water." The cootie's host showed not the faintest interest in the furor he had wrought. He searched the scalp above his forehead, located his guest and pinched it between his thumb and forefinger.

Miss Caroline watched the process in horrid fascination. Little Chuck brought water in a paper cup, and she drank it gratefully. Finally she found her voice. "What is your name, son?" she asked softly.

The boy blinked. "Who, me?" Miss Caroline nodded.

"Burris
Ewell."

Miss Caroline inspected her roll-book. "I have a Ewell here, but I don't have a first name... would you spell your first name for me?"

"Don't know how. They call me Burris't home."

"Well, Burris," said Miss Caroline, "I think we'd better excuse you for the rest of the afternoon. I want you to go home and wash your hair."

From her desk she produced a thick volume, leafed through its pages and read for a moment. "A good home remedy for—Burris, I want you to go home and wash your hair with lye soap. When you've done that, treat your scalp with kerosene."

"What fer, missus?"

"To get rid of the—er, cooties. You see, Burris, the other children might catch them, and you wouldn't want that, would you?"

The boy stood up. He was the filthiest human I had ever seen. His neck was dark gray, the backs of his hands were rusty, and his fingernails were black deep into the quick. He peered at Miss Caroline from a fist-sized clean space on his face. No one had noticed him, probably, because Miss Caroline and I had entertained the class most of the morning.

"And Burris," said Miss Caroline, "please bathe yourself before you come

back tomorrow."

The boy laughed rudely. "You ain't sendin' me home, missus. I was on the verge of leavin'—I done done my time for this year."

Miss Caroline looked puzzled. "What do you mean by that?"

The boy did not answer. He gave a short contemptuous snort.

One of the elderly members of the class answered her: "He's one of the Ewells, ma'am," and I wondered if this explanation would be as unsuccessful as my attempt. But Miss Caroline seemed willing to listen. "Whole school's full of 'em. They come first day every year and then leave. The truant lady gets 'em here 'cause she threatens 'em with the sheriff, but she's give up tryin' to hold 'em. She reckons she's carried out the law just gettin' their names on the roll and runnin' 'em here the first day. You're supposed to mark 'em absent the rest of the year..."

"But what about their parents?" asked Miss Caroline, in genuine concern.

"Ain't got no mother," was the answer, "and their paw's right contentious."

Burris Ewell was flattered by the recital. "Been comin' to the first day o' the first grade fer three year now," he said expansively. "Reckon if I'm smart this year they'll promote me to the second..."

Miss Caroline said, "Sit back down, please, Burris," and the moment she said it I knew she had made a serious mistake. The boy's condescension flashed to anger.

"You try and make me, missus."
Little Chuck Little got to his feet. "Let him go, ma'am," he said. "He's a mean one, a hard-down mean one. He's liable to start somethin', and there's some little folks here."

He was among the most diminutive of men, but when Burris Ewell turned toward him, Little Chuck's right hand went to his pocket. "Watch your step, Burris," he said. "I'd soon's kill you as look at you. Now go home."

Burris seemed to be afraid of a child half his height, and Miss Caroline took advantage of his indecision: “Burris, go home. If you don’t I’ll call the principal,” she said. “I’ll have to report this, anyway.”

The boy snorted and slouched leisurely to the door.

Safely out of range, he turned and shouted: “Report and be damned to ye! Ain’t no snot-nosed slut of a schoolteacher ever born c’n make me do nothin‘! You ain’t makin’ me go nowhere, missus. You just remember that, you ain’t makin‘ me go nowhere!”

He waited until he was sure she was crying, then he shuffled out of the building.

Soon we were clustered around her desk, trying in our various ways to comfort her. He was a real mean one... below the belt... you ain’t called on to teach folks like that... them ain’t Maycomb’s ways, Miss Caroline, not really... now don’t you fret, ma’am. Miss Caroline, why don’t you read us a story? That cat thing was real fine this mornin‘...

Miss Caroline smiled, blew her nose, said, “Thank you, darlings,” dispersed us, opened a book and mystified the first grade with a long narrative about a toadfrog that lived in a hall.

When I passed the Radley Place for the fourth time that day—twice at a full gallop —my gloom had deepened to match the house. If the remainder of the school year were as fraught with drama as the first day, perhaps it would be mildly entertaining, but the prospect of spending nine months refraining from reading and writing made me think of running away.

By late afternoon most of my traveling plans were complete; when Jem and I raced each other up the sidewalk to meet Atticus coming home from work, I didn’t give him much of a race. It was our habit to run meet Atticus the moment we saw him round the post office corner in the distance. Atticus seemed to have forgotten my noontime fall from grace; he was full of questions about school. My replies were monosyllabic and he did not press me.

Perhaps Calpurnia sensed that my day had been a grim one: she let me watch her fix supper. “Shut your eyes and open your mouth and I’ll give you a surprise,” she said.

It was not often that she made crackling bread, she said she never had time, but with both of us at school today had been an easy one for her. She knew I loved crackling bread.

“I missed you today,” she said. “The house got so lonesome ‘long about two o’clock I had to turn on the radio.”

“Why? Jem’n me ain’t ever in the house unless it’s rainin‘.”

“I know,” she said, “But one of you’s always in callin‘ distance. I wonder how much of the day I spend just callin’ after you. Well,” she said, getting up from the kitchen chair, “it’s enough time to make a pan of cracklin‘ bread, I reckon. You run along now and let me get supper on the table.”

Calpurnia bent down and kissed me. I ran along, wondering what had come over her. She had wanted to make up with me, that was it. She had always been too hard on me, she had at last seen the error of her fractious ways, she was sorry and too stubborn to say so. I was weary from the day’s crimes.

After supper, Atticus sat down with the paper and called, “Scout, ready to read?” The Lord sent me more than I could bear, and I went to the front porch. Atticus followed me.

“Something wrong, Scout?”

I told Atticus I didn’t feel very well and didn’t think I’d go to school any more if it was all right with him.

Atticus sat down in the swing and crossed his legs. His fingers wandered to his watchpocket; he said that was the only way he could think. He waited in amiable silence, and I sought to reinforce my position: “You never went to school and you do all right, so I’ll just stay home too. You can teach me like Granddaddy taught

you ‘n’ Uncle Jack.”
“No I can’t,” said Atticus. “I have to make a living. Besides, they’d put me in jail if I kept you at home—dose of magnesia for you tonight and school tomorrow.”

“I’m feeling all right, really.”

“Thought so. Now what’s the matter?”

Bit by bit, I told him the day’s misfortunes. “-and she said you taught me all wrong, so we can’t ever read any more, ever. Please don’t send me back, please sir.”

Atticus stood up and walked to the end of the porch. When he completed his examination of the wisteria vine he strolled back to me.

“First of all,” he said, “if you can learn a simple trick, Scout, you’ll get along a lot better with all kinds of folks. You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view-”

“Sir?”

“-until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.”

Atticus said I had learned many things today, and Miss Caroline had learned several things herself. She had learned not to hand something to a Cunningham, for one thing, but if Walter and I had put ourselves in her shoes we’d have seen it was an honest mistake on her part. We could not expect her to learn all Maycomb’s ways in one day, and we could not hold her responsible when she knew no better.

“I’ll be dogged,” I said. “I didn’t know no better than not to read to her, and she held me responsible—listen Atticus, I don’t have to go to school!” I was bursting with a sudden thought. “Burris Ewell, remember? He just goes to school the first day. The truant lady reckons she’s carried out the law when she gets his name on the roll-” “You can’t do that, Scout,” Atticus said. “Sometimes it’s better to bend the law a little in special cases. In your case, the law remains rigid. So to school

you must go."

"I don't see why I have to when he doesn't."

"Then listen."

Atticus said the Ewells had been the disgrace of Maycomb for three generations. None of them had done an honest day's work in his recollection. He said that some Christmas, when he was getting rid of the tree, he would take me with him and show me where and how they lived. They were people, but they lived like animals. "They can go to school any time they want to, when they show the faintest symptom of wanting an education," said Atticus. "There are ways of keeping them in school by force, but it's silly to force people like the Ewells into a new environment-"

"If I didn't go to school tomorrow, you'd force me to."

"Let us leave it at this," said Atticus dryly. "You, Miss Scout Finch, are of the common folk. You must obey the law." He said that the Ewells were members of an exclusive society made up of Ewells. In certain circumstances the common folk judiciously allowed them certain privileges by the simple method of becoming blind to some of the Ewells' activities. They didn't have to go to school, for one thing. Another thing, Mr. Bob Ewell, Burris's father, was permitted to hunt and trap out of season.

"Atticus, that's bad," I said. In Maycomb County, hunting out of season was a misdemeanor at law, a capital felony in the eyes of the populace.

"It's against the law, all right," said my father, "and it's certainly bad, but when a man spends his relief checks on green whiskey his children have a way of crying from hunger pains. I don't know of any landowner around here who begrudges those children any game their father can hit."

"Mr. Ewell shouldn't do that-"

"Of course he shouldn't, but he'll never change his ways. Are you going to take

out your disapproval on his children?"

"No sir," I murmured, and made a final stand: "But if I keep on goin' to school, we can't ever read any more..."

"That's really bothering you, isn't it?"

"Yes sir."

When Atticus looked down at me I saw the expression on his face that always made me expect something. "Do you know what a compromise is?" he asked.

"Bending the
law?"

"No, an agreement reached by mutual concessions. It works this way," he said. "If you'll concede the necessity of going to school, we'll go on reading every night just as we always have. Is it a bargain?"

"Yes sir!"

"We'll consider it sealed without the usual formality," Atticus said, when he saw me preparing to spit.

As I opened the front screen door Atticus said, "By the way, Scout, you'd better not say anything at school about our agreement."

"Why not?"

"I'm afraid our activities would be received with considerable disapprobation by the more learned authorities."

Jem and I were accustomed to our father's last-will-and-testament diction, and we were at all times free to interrupt Atticus for a translation when it was beyond our understanding.

"Huh, sir?"

“I never went to school,” he said, “but I have a feeling that if you tell Miss Caroline we read every night she’ll get after me, and I wouldn’t want her after me.”

Atticus kept us in fits that evening, gravely reading columns of print about a man who sat on a flagpole for no discernible reason, which was reason enough for Jem to spend the following Saturday aloft in the treehouse. Jem sat from after breakfast until sunset and would have remained overnight had not Atticus severed his supply lines. I had spent most of the day climbing up and down, running errands for him, providing him with literature, nourishment and water, and was carrying him blankets for the night when Atticus said if I paid no attention to him, Jem would come down. Atticus was right.

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Chapter 4

The remainder of my schooldays were no more auspicious than the first. Indeed, they were an endless Project that slowly evolved into a Unit, in which miles of construction paper and wax crayon were expended by the State of Alabama in its well-meaning but fruitless efforts to teach me Group Dynamics. What Jem called the Dewey Decimal System was school-wide by the end of my first year, so I had no chance to compare it with other teaching techniques. I could only look around me: Atticus and my uncle, who went to school at home, knew everything—at least, what one didn’t know the other did. Furthermore, I couldn’t help noticing that my father had served for years in the state legislature, elected each time without opposition, innocent of the adjustments my teachers thought essential to the development of Good Citizenship. Jem, educated on a half-Decimal half-Duncecap basis, seemed to function effectively alone or in a group, but Jem was a poor example: no tutorial system devised by man could have stopped him from

getting at books. As for me, I knew nothing except what I gathered from *Time magazine* and reading everything I could lay hands on at home, but as I inched sluggishly along the treadmill of the Maycomb County school system, I could not help receiving the impression that I was being cheated out of something. Out of what I knew not, yet I did not believe that twelve years of unrelieved boredom was exactly what the state had in mind for me.

As the year passed, released from school thirty minutes before Jem, who had to stay until three o'clock, I ran by the Radley Place as fast as I could, not stopping until I reached the safety of our front porch. One afternoon as I raced by, something caught my eye and caught it in such a way that I took a deep breath, a long look around, and went back.

Two live oaks stood at the edge of the Radley lot; their roots reached out into the side-road and made it bumpy. Something about one of the trees attracted my attention.

Some tinfoil was sticking in a knot-hole just above my eye level, winking at me in the afternoon sun. I stood on tiptoe, hastily looked around once more, reached into the hole, and withdrew two pieces of chewing gum minus their outer wrappers.
My first impulse was to get it into my mouth as quickly as possible, but I remembered where I was. I ran home, and on our front porch I examined my loot. The gum looked fresh. I sniffed it and it smelled all right. I licked it and waited for a while. When I did not die I crammed it into my mouth: Wrigley's Double-Mint.

When Jem came home he asked me where I got such a wad. I told him I found it.

"Don't eat things you find, Scout."

"This wasn't on the ground, it was in a tree."

Jem growled.

"Well it was," I said. "It was sticking in that tree yonder, the one comin' from

school."

"Spit it out right
now!"

I spat it out. The tang was fading, anyway. "I've been chewin' it all afternoon and I ain't dead yet, not even sick."

Jem stamped his foot. "Don't you know you're not supposed to even touch the trees over there? You'll get killed if you do!"

"You touched the house once!"

"That was different! You go gargle—right now, you hear me?"

"Ain't neither, it'll take the taste outa my mouth."

"You don't 'n' I'll tell Calpurnia on you!"

Rather than risk a tangle with Calpurnia, I did as Jem told me. For some reason, my first year of school had wrought a great change in our relationship: Calpurnia's tyranny, unfairness, and meddling in my business had faded to gentle grumblings of general disapproval. On my part, I went to much trouble, sometimes, not to provoke her.

Summer was on the way; Jem and I awaited it with impatience. Summer was our best season: it was sleeping on the back screened porch in cots, or trying to sleep in the treehouse; summer was everything good to eat; it was a thousand colors in a parched landscape; but most of all, summer was Dill.

The authorities released us early the last day of school, and Jem and I walked home together. "Reckon old Dill'll be coming home tomorrow," I said.

"Probably day after," said Jem. "Mis'sippi turns 'em loose a day later."

As we came to the live oaks at the Radley Place I raised my finger to point for the hundredth time to the knot-hole where I had found the chewing gum, trying to

make Jem believe I had found it there, and found myself pointing at another piece of tinfoil.

“I see it, Scout! I see it-”

Jem looked around, reached up, and gingerly pocketed a tiny shiny package. We ran home, and on the front porch we looked at a small box patchworked with bits of tinfoil collected from chewing-gum wrappers. It was the kind of box wedding rings came in, purple velvet with a minute catch. Jem flicked open the tiny catch. Inside were two scrubbed and polished pennies, one on top of the other. Jem examined them.

“Indian-heads,” he said. “Nineteen-six and Scout, one of em’s nineteen-hundred. These are real old.”

“Nineteen-hundred,” I echoed.
“Say-”

“Hush a minute, I’m
thinkin‘.”

“Jem, you reckon that’s somebody’s hidin‘ place?”

“Naw, don’t anybody much but us pass by there, unless it’s some grown person’s-”

“Grown folks don’t have hidin‘ places. You reckon we ought to keep ’em, Jem?”

“I don’t know what we could do, Scout. Who’d we give ‘em back to? I know for a fact don’t anybody go by there—Cecil goes by the back street an’ all the way around by town to get home.”

Cecil Jacobs, who lived at the far end of our street next door to the post office, walked a total of one mile per school day to avoid the Radley Place and old Mrs. Henry Lafayette Dubose. Mrs. Dubose lived two doors up the street from us; neighborhood opinion was unanimous that Mrs. Dubose was the meanest old woman who ever lived. Jem wouldn’t go by her place without Atticus beside him.

“What you reckon we oughta do, Jem?”
Finders were keepers unless title was proven. Plucking an occasional camellia, getting a squirt of hot milk from Miss Maudie Atkinson’s cow on a summer day, helping ourselves to someone’s scuppernongs was part of our ethical culture, but money was different.

“Tell you what,” said Jem. “We’ll keep ‘em till school starts, then go around and ask everybody if they’re theirs. They’re some bus child’s, maybe—he was too taken up with gettin’ outa school today an‘ forgot ’em. These are somebody’s, I know that. See how they’ve been slicked up? They’ve been saved.”

“Yeah, but why should somebody wanta put away chewing gum like that? You know it doesn’t last.”

“I don’t know, Scout. But these are important to somebody...”

“How’s that, Jem...?”

“Well, Indian-heads—well, they come from the Indians. They’re real strong magic, they make you have good luck. Not like fried chicken when you’re not lookin‘ for it, but things like long life ’n‘ good health, ’n‘ passin’ six-weeks tests... these are real valuable to somebody. I’m gonna put em in my trunk.”

Before Jem went to his room, he looked for a long time at the Radley Place. He seemed to be thinking again.

Two days later Dill arrived in a blaze of glory: he had ridden the train by himself from Meridian to Maycomb Junction (a courtesy title—Maycomb Junction was in Abbott County) where he had been met by Miss Rachel in Maycomb’s one taxi; he had eaten dinner in the diner, he had seen two twins hitched together get off the train in Bay St. Louis and stuck to his story regardless of threats. He had discarded the abominable blue shorts that were buttoned to his shirts and wore real short pants with a belt; he was somewhat heavier, no taller, and said he had seen his father. Dill’s father was taller than ours, he had a black beard (pointed), and was president of the L & N Railroad.

“I helped the engineer for a while,” said Dill,
yawning.

“In a pig’s ear you did, Dill. Hush,” said Jem. “What’ll we play today?”

“Tom and Sam and Dick,” said Dill. “Let’s go in the front yard.” Dill wanted the Rover Boys because there were three respectable parts. He was clearly tired of being our character man.

“I’m tired of those,” I said. I was tired of playing Tom Rover, who suddenly lost his memory in the middle of a picture show and was out of the script until the end, when he was found in Alaska.

“Make us up one, Jem,” I said.

“I’m tired of makin‘ ’em up.”

Our first days of freedom, and we were tired. I wondered what the summer would bring.

We had strolled to the front yard, where Dill stood looking down the street at the dreary face of the Radley Place. “I—smell—death,” he said. “I do, I mean it,” he said, when I told him to shut up.

“You mean when somebody’s dyin‘ you can smell it?”

“No, I mean I can smell somebody an‘ tell if they’re gonna die. An old lady taught me how.” Dill leaned over and sniffed me. “Jean—Louise—Finch, you are going to die in three days.”

“Dill if you don’t hush I’ll knock you bowlegged. I mean it, now-”

“Yawl hush,” growled Jem, “you act like you believe in Hot Steams.”

“You act like you don’t,” I said.

“What’s a Hot Steam?” asked Dill.

“Haven’t you ever walked along a lonesome road at night and passed by a hot place?” Jem asked Dill. “A Hot Steam’s somebody who can’t get to heaven, just wallows around on lonesome roads an‘ if you walk through him, when you die you’ll be one too, an’ you’ll go around at night suckin‘ people’s breath-”

“How can you keep from passing through
one?”

“You can’t,” said Jem. “Sometimes they stretch all the way across the road, but if you hafta go through one you say, ‘Angel-bright, life-in-death; get off the road, don’t suck my breath.’ That keeps ‘em from wrapping around you-”

“Don’t you believe a word he says, Dill,” I said. “Calpurnia says that’s nigger-talk.”

Jem scowled darkly at me, but said, “Well, are we gonna play anything or not?”
“Let’s roll in the tire,” I suggested.

Jem sighed. “You know I’m too big.”

“You c’n push.”

I ran to the back yard and pulled an old car tire from under the house. I slapped it up to the front yard. “I’m first,” I said.

Dill said he ought to be first, he just got here.

Jem arbitrated, awarded me first push with an extra time for Dill, and I
folded myself inside the tire.

Until it happened I did not realize that Jem was offended by my contradicting him on Hot Steams, and that he was patiently awaiting an opportunity to reward me. He did, by pushing the tire down the sidewalk with all the force in his body. Ground, sky and houses melted into a mad palette, my ears throbbed, I was suffocating. I could not put out my hands to stop, they were wedged between my chest and knees. I could only hope that Jem would outrun the tire and me, or that I

would be stopped by a bump in the sidewalk. I heard him behind me, chasing and shouting.

The tire bumped on gravel, skeetered across the road, crashed into a barrier and popped me like a cork onto pavement. Dizzy and nauseated, I lay on the cement and shook my head still, pounded my ears to silence, and heard Jem's voice: "Scout, get away from there, come on!"

I raised my head and stared at the Radley Place steps in front of me. I froze.

"Come on, Scout, don't just lie there!" Jem was screaming. "Get up, can'tcha?"

I got to my feet, trembling as I
thawed.

"Get the tire!" Jem hollered. "Bring it with you! Ain't you got any sense at all?"

When I was able to navigate, I ran back to them as fast as my shaking knees would carry me.

"Why didn't you bring it?" Jem yelled.

"Why don't *you* get it?" I screamed.

Jem was silent.

"Go on, it ain't far inside the gate. Why, you even touched the house once, remember?
"

Jem looked at me furiously, could not decline, ran down the sidewalk, treaded water at the gate, then dashed in and retrieved the tire.

"See there?" Jem was scowling triumphantly. "Nothin' to it. I swear, Scout, sometimes you act so much like a girl it's mortifyin'."

There was more to it than he knew, but I decided not to tell him.

Calpurnia appeared in the front door and yelled, “Lemonade time! You all get in outa that hot sun ‘fore you fry alive!” Lemonade in the middle of the morning was a summertime ritual. Calpurnia set a pitcher and three glasses on the porch, then went about her business. Being out of Jem’s good graces did not worry me especially. Lemonade would restore his good humor.

Jem gulped down his second glassful and slapped his chest. “I know what we are going to play,” he announced. “Something new, something different.”

“What?” asked Dill.

“Boo Radley.”

Jem’s head at times was transparent: he had thought that up to make me understand he wasn’t afraid of Radleys in any shape or form, to contrast his own fearless heroism with my cowardice.

“Boo Radley? How?” asked
Dill.

Jem said, “Scout, you can be Mrs. Radley-”

“I declare if I will. I don’t think-”

“‘Smatter?” said Dill. “Still
scared?”

“He can get out at night when we’re all asleep...” I said.

Jem hissed. “Scout, how’s he gonna know what we’re doin‘? Besides, I don’t think he’s still there. He died years ago and they stuffed him up the chimney.”

Dill said, “Jem, you and me can play and Scout can watch if she’s scared.”

I was fairly sure Boo Radley was inside that house, but I couldn’t prove it, and felt it best to keep my mouth shut or I would be accused of believing in Hot Steams, phenomena I was immune to in the daytime.

Jem parceled out our roles: I was Mrs. Radley, and all I had to do was come out and sweep the porch. Dill was old Mr. Radley: he walked up and down the sidewalk and coughed when Jem spoke to him. Jem, naturally, was Boo: he went under the front steps and shrieked and howled from time to time.

As the summer progressed, so did our game. We polished and perfected it, added dialogue and plot until we had manufactured a small play upon which we rang changes every day.

Dill was a villain's villain: he could get into any character part assigned him, and appear tall if height was part of the devilry required. He was as good as his worst performance; his worst performance was Gothic. I reluctantly played assorted ladies who entered the script. I never thought it as much fun as Tarzan, and I played that summer with more than vague anxiety despite Jem's assurances that Boo Radley was dead and nothing would get me, with him and Calpurnia there in the daytime and Atticus home at night.

Jem was a born
hero.

It was a melancholy little drama, woven from bits and scraps of gossip and neighborhood legend: Mrs. Radley had been beautiful until she married Mr. Radley and lost all her money. She also lost most of her teeth, her hair, and her right forefinger (Dill's contribution. Boo bit it off one night when he couldn't find any cats and squirrels to eat.); she sat in the livingroom and cried most of the time, while Boo slowly whittled away all the furniture in the house.

The three of us were the boys who got into trouble; I was the probate judge, for a change; Dill led Jem away and crammed him beneath the steps, poking him with the brushbroom. Jem would reappear as needed in the shapes of the sheriff, assorted townsfolk, and Miss Stephanie Crawford, who had more to say about the Radleys than anybody in Maycomb.

When it was time to play Boo's big scene, Jem would sneak into the house, steal

the scissors from the sewing-machine drawer when Calpurnia's back was turned, then sit in the swing and cut up newspapers. Dill would walk by, cough at Jem, and Jem would fake a plunge into Dill's thigh. From where I stood it looked real.

When Mr. Nathan Radley passed us on his daily trip to town, we would stand still and silent until he was out of sight, then wonder what he would do to us if he suspected. Our activities halted when any of the neighbors appeared, and once I saw Miss Maudie Atkinson staring across the street at us, her hedge clippers poised in midair.

One day we were so busily playing Chapter XXV, Book II of One Man's Family, we did not see Atticus standing on the sidewalk looking at us, slapping a rolled magazine against his knee. The sun said twelve noon.

"What are you all playing?" he asked.

"Nothing," said Jem.

Jem's evasion told me our game was a secret, so I kept quiet.

"What are you doing with those scissors, then? Why are you tearing up that newspaper? If it's today's I'll tan you."

"Nothing.
"

"Nothing what?" said Atticus.

"Nothing, sir."

"Give me those scissors," Atticus said. "They're no things to play with. Does this by any chance have anything to do with the Radleys?"

"No sir," said Jem, reddening.

"I hope it doesn't," he said shortly, and went inside the house.

"Je-m..."

“Shut up! He’s gone in the livingroom, he can hear us in there.”

Safely in the yard, Dill asked Jem if we could play any more.

“I don’t know. Atticus didn’t say we couldn’t-”

“Jem,” I said, “I think Atticus knows it anyway.”

“No he don’t. If he did he’d say he did.”

I was not so sure, but Jem told me I was being a girl, that girls always imagined things, that’s why other people hated them so, and if I started behaving like one I could just go off and find some to play with.

“All right, you just keep it up then,” I said. “You’ll find out.”

Atticus’s arrival was the second reason I wanted to quit the game. The first reason happened the day I rolled into the Radley front yard. Through all the head-shaking, quelling of nausea and Jem-yelling, I had heard another sound, so low I could not have heard it from the sidewalk. Someone inside the house was laughing.

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Chapter 5

My nagging got the better of Jem eventually, as I knew it would, and to my relief we slowed down the game for a while. He still maintained, however, that Atticus hadn’t said we couldn’t, therefore we could; and if Atticus ever said we couldn’t, Jem had thought of a way around it: he would simply change the names of the

characters and then we couldn't be accused of playing anything.

Dill was in hearty agreement with this plan of action. Dill was becoming something of a trial anyway, following Jem about. He had asked me earlier in the summer to marry him, then he promptly forgot about it. He staked me out, marked as his property, said I was the only girl he would ever love, then he neglected me. I beat him up twice but it did no good, he only grew closer to Jem. They spent days together in the treehouse plotting and planning, calling me only when they needed a third party. But I kept aloof from their more foolhardy schemes for a while, and on pain of being called a girl, I spent most of the remaining twilights that summer sitting with Miss Maudie Atkinson on her front porch.

Jem and I had always enjoyed the free run of Miss Maudie's yard if we kept out of her azaleas, but our contact with her was not clearly defined. Until Jem and Dill excluded me from their plans, she was only another lady in the neighborhood, but a relatively benign presence.

Our tacit treaty with Miss Maudie was that we could play on her lawn, eat her scuppernongs if we didn't jump on the arbor, and explore her vast back lot, terms so generous we seldom spoke to her, so careful were we to preserve the delicate balance of our relationship, but Jem and Dill drove me closer to her with their behavior.

Miss Maudie hated her house: time spent indoors was time wasted. She was a widow, a chameleon lady who worked in her flower beds in an old straw hat and men's coveralls, but after her five o'clock bath she would appear on the porch and reign over the street in magisterial beauty.

She loved everything that grew in God's earth, even the weeds. With one exception. If she found a blade of nut grass in her yard it was like the Second Battle of the Marne: she swooped down upon it with a tin tub and subjected it to blasts from beneath with a poisonous substance she said was so powerful it'd kill us all if we didn't stand out of the way.

"Why can't you just pull it up?" I asked, after witnessing a prolonged campaign

against a blade not three inches high.

“Pull it up, child, pull it up?” She picked up the limp sprout and squeezed her thumb up its tiny stalk. Microscopic grains oozed out. “Why, one sprig of nut grass can ruin a whole yard. Look here. When it comes fall this dries up and the wind blows it all over Maycomb County!” Miss Maudie’s face likened such an occurrence unto an Old Testament pestilence.

Her speech was crisp for a Maycomb County inhabitant. She called us by all our names, and when she grinned she revealed two minute gold prongs clipped to her eyeteeth. When I admired them and hoped I would have some eventually, she said, “Look here.” With a click of her tongue she thrust out her bridgework, a gesture of cordiality that cemented our friendship.

Miss Maudie’s benevolence extended to Jem and Dill, whenever they paused in their pursuits: we reaped the benefits of a talent Miss Maudie had hitherto kept hidden from us. She made the best cakes in the neighborhood. When she was admitted into our confidence, every time she baked she made a big cake and three little ones, and she would call across the street: “Jem Finch, Scout Finch, Charles Baker Harris, come here!” Our promptness was always rewarded.

In summertime, twilights are long and peaceful. Often as not, Miss Maudie and I would sit silently on her porch, watching the sky go from yellow to pink as the sun went down, watching flights of martins sweep low over the neighborhood and disappear behind the schoolhouse rooftops.
“Miss Maudie,” I said one evening, “do you think Boo Radley’s still alive?”

“His name’s Arthur and he’s alive,” she said. She was rocking slowly in her big oak chair. “Do you smell my mimosa? It’s like angels’ breath this evening.”

“Yessum. How do you know?”

“Know what,
child?”

“That B—Mr. Arthur’s still alive?”

“What a morbid question. But I suppose it’s a morbid subject. I know he’s alive, Jean Louise, because I haven’t seen him carried out yet.”

“Maybe he died and they stuffed him up the chimney.”

“Where did you get such a
notion?”

“That’s what Jem said he thought they did.”

“S-ss-ss. He gets more like Jack Finch every day.”

Miss Maudie had known Uncle Jack Finch, Atticus’s brother, since they were children. Nearly the same age, they had grown up together at Finch’s Landing. Miss Maudie was the daughter of a neighboring landowner, Dr. Frank Buford. Dr. Buford’s profession was medicine and his obsession was anything that grew in the ground, so he stayed poor. Uncle Jack Finch confined his passion for digging to his window boxes in Nashville and stayed rich. We saw Uncle Jack every Christmas, and every Christmas he yelled across the street for Miss Maudie to come marry him. Miss Maudie would yell back, “Call a little louder, Jack Finch, and they’ll hear you at the post office, I haven’t heard you yet!” Jem and I thought this a strange way to ask for a lady’s hand in marriage, but then Uncle Jack was rather strange. He said he was trying to get Miss Maudie’s goat, that he had been trying unsuccessfully for forty years, that he was the last person in the world Miss Maudie would think about marrying but the first person she thought about teasing, and the best defense to her was spirited offense, all of which we understood clearly.

“Arthur Radley just stays in the house, that’s all,” said Miss Maudie. “Wouldn’t you stay in the house if you didn’t want to come out?”

“Yessum, but I’d wanta come out. Why doesn’t he?”
Miss Maudie’s eyes narrowed. “You know that story as well as I do.”

“I never heard why, though. Nobody ever told me why.”

Miss Maudie settled her bridgework. “You know old Mr. Radley was a foot-washing Baptist-”

“That’s what you are, ain’t it?”

“My shell’s not that hard, child. I’m just a Baptist.”

“Don’t you all believe in foot-washing?”

“We do. At home in the bathtub.”

“But we can’t have communion with you all-”

Apparently deciding that it was easier to define primitive baptistry than closed communion, Miss Maudie said: “Foot-washers believe anything that’s pleasure is a sin. Did you know some of ‘em came out of the woods one Saturday and passed by this place and told me me and my flowers were going to hell?”

“Your flowers, too?”

“Yes ma’am. They’d burn right with me. They thought I spent too much time in God’s outdoors and not enough time inside the house reading the Bible.”

My confidence in pulpit Gospel lessened at the vision of Miss Maudie stewing forever in various Protestant hells. True enough, she had an acid tongue in her head, and she did not go about the neighborhood doing good, as did Miss Stephanie Crawford. But while no one with a grain of sense trusted Miss Stephanie, Jem and I had considerable faith in Miss Maudie. She had never told on us, had never played cat-and-mouse with us, she was not at all interested in our private lives. She was our friend. How so reasonable a creature could live in peril of everlasting torment was incomprehensible.

“That ain’t right, Miss Maudie. You’re the best lady I know.”

Miss Maudie grinned. “Thank you ma’am. Thing is, foot-washers think women are a sin by definition. They take the Bible literally, you know.”

“Is that why Mr. Arthur stays in the house, to keep away from women?”

“I’ve no
idea.”

“It doesn’t make sense to me. Looks like if Mr. Arthur was hankerin‘ after heaven he’d come out on the porch at least. Atticus says God’s loving folks like you love yourself-”

Miss Maudie stopped rocking, and her voice hardened. “You are too young to understand it,” she said, “but sometimes the Bible in the hand of one man is worse than a whiskey bottle in the hand of—oh, of your father.”

I was shocked. “Atticus doesn’t drink whiskey,” I said. “He never drunk a drop in his life—nome, yes he did. He said he drank some one time and didn’t like it.”

Miss Maudie laughed. “Wasn’t talking about your father,” she said. “What I meant was, if Atticus Finch drank until he was drunk he wouldn’t be as hard as some men are at their best. There are just some kind of men who—who’re so busy worrying about the next world they’ve never learned to live in this one, and you can look down the street and see the results.”

“Do you think they’re true, all those things they say about B—Mr. Arthur?”

“What
things?”

I told her.

“That is three-fourths colored folks and one-fourth Stephanie Crawford,” said Miss Maudie grimly. “Stephanie Crawford even told me once she woke up in the middle of the night and found him looking in the window at her. I said what did you do, Stephanie, move over in the bed and make room for him? That shut her up a while.”

I was sure it did. Miss Maudie’s voice was enough to shut anybody up.

“No, child,” she said, “that is a sad house. I remember Arthur Radley when he was a boy. He always spoke nicely to me, no matter what folks said he did. Spoke as nicely as he knew how.”

“You reckon he’s crazy?”

Miss Maudie shook her head. “If he’s not he should be by now. The things that happen to people we never really know. What happens in houses behind closed doors, what secrets-”

“Atticus don’t ever do anything to Jem and me in the house that he don’t do in the yard,” I said, feeling it my duty to defend my parent.

“Gracious child, I was raveling a thread, wasn’t even thinking about your father, but now that I am I’ll say this: Atticus Finch is the same in his house as he is on the public streets. How’d you like some fresh poundcake to take home?”

I liked it very much.

Next morning when I awakened I found Jem and Dill in the back yard deep in conversation. When I joined them, as usual they said go away.

“Will not. This yard’s as much mine as it is yours, Jem Finch. I got just as much right to play in it as you have.”

Dill and Jem emerged from a brief huddle: “If you stay you’ve got to do what we tell you,” Dill warned.

“We-ll,” I said, “who’s so high and mighty all of a sudden?”

“If you don’t say you’ll do what we tell you, we ain’t gonna tell you anything,” Dill continued.

“You act like you grew ten inches in the night! All right, what is it?”

Jem said placidly, “We are going to give a note to Boo Radley.”

“Just how?” I was trying to fight down the automatic terror rising in me. It was all right for Miss Maudie to talk—she was old and snug on her porch. It was different for us.

Jem was merely going to put the note on the end of a fishing pole and stick it through the shutters. If anyone came along, Dill would ring the bell.

Dill raised his right hand. In it was my mother’s silver dinner-bell.

“I’m goin‘ around to the side of the house,” said Jem. “We looked yesterday from across the street, and there’s a shutter loose. Think maybe I can make it stick on the window sill, at least.”

“Jem-”

“Now you’re in it and you can’t get out of it, you’ll just stay in it, Miss Priss!”

“Okay, okay, but I don’t wanta watch. Jem, somebody was-”

“Yes you will, you’ll watch the back end of the lot and Dill’s gonna watch the front of the house an‘ up the street, an’ if anybody comes he’ll ring the bell. That
clear?”

“All right then. What’d you write him?”

Dill said, “We’re askin‘ him real politely to come out sometimes, and tell us what he does in there—we said we wouldn’t hurt him and we’d buy him an ice cream.”

“You all’ve gone crazy, he’ll kill us!”

Dill said, “It’s my idea. I figure if he’d come out and sit a spell with us he might feel better.”

“How do you know he don’t feel good?”

“Well how’d you feel if you’d been shut up for a hundred years with nothin‘ but cats to eat? I bet he’s got a beard down to here-” “Like your daddy’s?”

“He ain’t got a beard, he-” Dill stopped, as if trying to remember.

“Uh huh, caughtcha,” I said. “You said ‘fore you were off the train good your daddy had a black beard-”

“If it’s all the same to you he shaved it off last summer! Yeah, an‘ I’ve got the letter to prove it—he sent me two dollars, too!”

“Keep on—I reckon he even sent you a mounted police uniform! That’n never showed up, did it? You just keep on tellin‘ ’em, son-”

Dill Harris could tell the biggest ones I ever heard. Among other things, he had been up in a mail plane seventeen times, he had been to Nova Scotia, he had seen an elephant, and his granddaddy was Brigadier General Joe Wheeler and left him his sword.

“You all hush,” said Jem. He scuttled beneath the house and came out with a yellow bamboo pole. “Reckon this is long enough to reach from the sidewalk?”

“Anybody who’s brave enough to go up and touch the house hadn’t oughta use a fishin‘ pole,” I said. “Why don’t you just knock the front door down?”

“This—is—different,” said Jem, “how many times do I have to tell you that?”

Dill took a piece of paper from his pocket and gave it to Jem. The three of us walked cautiously toward the old house. Dill remained at the light-pole on the front corner of the lot, and Jem and I edged down the sidewalk parallel to the side of the house. I walked beyond Jem and stood where I could see around the curve. “All clear,” I said. “Not a soul in sight.”

Jem looked up the sidewalk to Dill, who nodded.

Jem attached the note to the end of the fishing pole, let the pole out across the

yard and pushed it toward the window he had selected. The pole lacked several inches of being long enough, and Jem leaned over as far as he could. I watched him making jabbing motions for so long, I abandoned my post and went to him.

“Can’t get it off the pole,” he muttered, “or if I got it off I can’t make it stay. G’on back down the street, Scout.”

I returned and gazed around the curve at the empty road. Occasionally I looked back at Jem, who was patiently trying to place the note on the window sill. It would flutter to the ground and Jem would jab it up, until I thought if Boo Radley ever received it he wouldn’t be able to read it. I was looking down the street when the dinner-bell rang.

Shoulder up, I reeled around to face Boo Radley and his bloody fangs; instead, I saw Dill ringing the bell with all his might in Atticus’s face.

Jem looked so awful I didn’t have the heart to tell him I told him so. He trudged along, dragging the pole behind him on the sidewalk.

Atticus said, “Stop ringing that
bell.”

Dill grabbed the clapper; in the silence that followed, I wished he’d start ringing it again. Atticus pushed his hat to the back of his head and put his hands on his hips. “Jem,” he said, “what were you doing?”

“Nothin‘, sir.”

“I don’t want any of that. Tell me.”

“I was—we were just tryin‘ to give somethin’ to Mr. Radley.”

“What were you trying to give him?”

“Just a letter.”

“Let me see

it."

Jem held out a filthy piece of paper. Atticus took it and tried to read it. "Why do you want Mr. Radley to come out?"

Dill said, "We thought he might enjoy us..." and dried up when Atticus looked at him.

"Son," he said to Jem, "I'm going to tell you something and tell you one time: stop tormenting that man. That goes for the other two of you."

What Mr. Radley did was his own business. If he wanted to come out, he would. If he wanted to stay inside his own house he had the right to stay inside free from the attentions of inquisitive children, which was a mild term for the likes of us. How would we like it if Atticus barged in on us without knocking, when we were in our rooms at night? We were, in effect, doing the same thing to Mr. Radley. What Mr. Radley did might seem peculiar to us, but it did not seem peculiar to him. Furthermore, had it never occurred to us that the civil way to communicate with another being was by the front door instead of a side window? Lastly, we were to stay away from that house until we were invited there, we were not to play an asinine game he had seen us playing or make fun of anybody on this street or in this town-

"We weren't makin' fun of him, we weren't laughin' at him," said Jem, "we were just-"

"So that was what you were doing, wasn't it?"

"Makin' fun of
him?"

"No," said Atticus, "putting his life's history on display for the edification of the neighborhood."

Jem seemed to swell a little. "I didn't say we were doin' that, I didn't say it!"

Atticus grinned dryly. "You just told me," he said. "You stop this nonsense right

now, every one of you."

Jem gaped at him.

"You want to be a lawyer, don't you?" Our father's mouth was suspiciously firm, as if he were trying to hold it in line.

Jem decided there was no point in quibbling, and was silent. When Atticus went inside the house to retrieve a file he had forgotten to take to work that morning, Jem finally realized that he had been done in by the oldest lawyer's trick on record. He waited a respectful distance from the front steps, watched Atticus leave the house and walk toward town. When Atticus was out of earshot Jem yelled after him: "I thought I wanted to be a lawyer but I ain't so sure now!"

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Chapter 6

"Yes," said our father, when Jem asked him if we could go over and sit by Miss Rachel's fishpool with Dill, as this was his last night in Maycomb. "Tell him so long for me, and we'll see him next summer."

We leaped over the low wall that separated Miss Rachel's yard from our driveway. Jem whistled bob-white and Dill answered in the darkness.

"Not a breath blowing," said Jem. "Looka yonder."

He pointed to the east. A gigantic moon was rising behind Miss Maudie's pecan trees. "That makes it seem hotter," he said.

"Cross in it tonight?" asked Dill, not looking up. He was constructing a cigarette

from newspaper and string.

“No, just the lady. Don’t light that thing, Dill, you’ll stink up this whole end of town.”

There was a lady in the moon in Maycomb. She sat at a dresser combing her hair.

“We’re gonna miss you, boy,” I said. “Reckon we better watch for Mr. Avery?”

Mr. Avery boarded across the street from Mrs. Henry Lafayette Dubose’s house. Besides making change in the collection plate every Sunday, Mr. Avery sat on the porch every night until nine o’clock and sneezed. One evening we were privileged to witness a performance by him which seemed to have been his positively last, for he never did it again so long as we watched. Jem and I were leaving Miss Rachel’s front steps one night when Dill stopped us: “Golly, looka yonder.” He pointed across the street. At first we saw nothing but a kudzu-covered front porch, but a closer inspection revealed an arc of water descending from the leaves and splashing in the yellow circle of the street light, some ten feet from source to earth, it seemed to us. Jem said Mr. Avery misfigured, Dill said he must drink a gallon a day, and the ensuing contest to determine relative distances and respective prowess only made me feel left out again, as I was untalented in this area.

Dill stretched, yawned, and said altogether too casually. “I know what, let’s go for a walk.”

He sounded fishy to me. Nobody in Maycomb just went for a walk. “Where to, Dill?”

Dill jerked his head in a southerly direction.

Jem said, “Okay.” When I protested, he said sweetly, “You don’t have to come along, Angel May.”

“You don’t have to go. Remember-”

Jem was not one to dwell on past defeats: it seemed the only message he got

from Atticus was insight into the art of cross examination. “Scout, we ain’t gonna do anything, we’re just goin‘ to the street light and back.”

We strolled silently down the sidewalk, listening to porch swings creaking with the weight of the neighborhood, listening to the soft night-murmurs of the grown people on our street. Occasionally we heard Miss Stephanie Crawford laugh.

“Well?” said Dill.

“Okay,” said Jem. “Why don’t you go on home, Scout?”

“What are you gonna do?”

Dill and Jem were simply going to peep in the window with the loose shutter to see if they could get a look at Boo Radley, and if I didn’t want to go with them I could go straight home and keep my fat flopping mouth shut, that was all.

“But what in the sam holy hill did you wait till tonight?”

Because nobody could see them at night, because Atticus would be so deep in a book he wouldn’t hear the Kingdom coming, because if Boo Radley killed them they’d miss school instead of vacation, and because it was easier to see inside a dark house in the dark than in the daytime, did I understand?

“Jem,
please—”
“Scout, I’m tellin‘ you for the last time, shut your trap or go home—I declare to the Lord you’re gettin’ more like a girl every day!”

With that, I had no option but to join them. We thought it was better to go under the high wire fence at the rear of the Radley lot, we stood less chance of being seen. The fence enclosed a large garden and a narrow wooden outhouse.

Jem held up the bottom wire and motioned Dill under it. I followed, and held up the wire for Jem. It was a tight squeeze for him. “Don’t make a sound,” he whispered. “Don’t get in a row of collards whatever you do, they’ll wake the dead.”

With this thought in mind, I made perhaps one step per minute. I moved faster when I saw Jem far ahead beckoning in the moonlight. We came to the gate that divided the garden from the back yard. Jem touched it. The gate squeaked.

“Spit on it,” whispered Dill.

“You’ve got us in a box, Jem,” I muttered. “We can’t get out of here so easy.”

“Sh-h. Spit on it,
Scout.”

We spat ourselves dry, and Jem opened the gate slowly, lifting it aside and resting it on the fence. We were in the back yard.

The back of the Radley house was less inviting than the front: a ramshackle porch ran the width of the house; there were two doors and two dark windows between the doors. Instead of a column, a rough two-by-four supported one end of the roof. An old Franklin stove sat in a corner of the porch; above it a hat-rack mirror caught the moon and shone eerily.

“Ar-r,” said Jem softly, lifting his foot.

“‘Smatter?
”

“Chickens,” he breathed.

That we would be obliged to dodge the unseen from all directions was confirmed when Dill ahead of us spelled G-o-d in a whisper. We crept to the side of the house, around to the window with the hanging shutter. The sill was several inches taller than Jem.

“Give you a hand up,” he muttered to Dill. “Wait, though.” Jem grabbed his left wrist and my right wrist, I grabbed my left wrist and Jem’s right wrist, we crouched, and Dill sat on our saddle. We raised him and he caught the window sill.

“Hurry,” Jem whispered, “we can’t last much longer.”

Dill punched my shoulder, and we lowered him to the ground.

“What’d you see?”

“Nothing. Curtains. There’s a little teeny light way off somewhere, though.”

“Let’s get away from here,” breathed Jem. “Let’s go ‘round in back again. Sh-h,” he warned me, as I was about to protest.

“Let’s try the back window.”

“Dill, *no*,” I said.

Dill stopped and let Jem go ahead. When Jem put his foot on the bottom step, the step squeaked. He stood still, then tried his weight by degrees. The step was silent. Jem skipped two steps, put his foot on the porch, heaved himself to it, and teetered a long moment. He regained his balance and dropped to his knees. He crawled to the window, raised his head and looked in.

Then I saw the shadow. It was the shadow of a man with a hat on. At first I thought it was a tree, but there was no wind blowing, and tree-trunks never walked. The back porch was bathed in moonlight, and the shadow, crisp as toast, moved across the porch toward Jem.

Dill saw it next. He put his hands to his face.

When it crossed Jem, Jem saw it. He put his arms over his head and went rigid.

The shadow stopped about a foot beyond Jem. Its arm came out from its side, dropped, and was still. Then it turned and moved back across Jem, walked along the porch and off the side of the house, returning as it had come.

Jem leaped off the porch and galloped toward us. He flung open the gate, danced Dill and me through, and shooed us between two rows of swishing collards. Halfway through the collards I tripped; as I tripped the roar of a shotgun

shattered the neighborhood.

Dill and Jem dived beside me. Jem's breath came in sobs: "Fence by the schoolyard!—hurry, Scout!"

Jem held the bottom wire; Dill and I rolled through and were halfway to the shelter of the schoolyard's solitary oak when we sensed that Jem was not with us. We ran back and found him struggling in the fence, kicking his pants off to get loose. He ran to the oak tree in his shorts.

Safely behind it, we gave way to numbness, but Jem's mind was racing: "We gotta get home, they'll miss us."

We ran across the schoolyard, crawled under the fence to Deer's Pasture behind our house, climbed our back fence and were at the back steps before Jem would let us pause to rest.

Respiration normal, the three of us strolled as casually as we could to the front yard. We looked down the street and saw a circle of neighbors at the Radley front gate.

"We better go down there," said Jem. "They'll think it's funny if we don't show up."

Mr. Nathan Radley was standing inside his gate, a shotgun broken across his arm. Atticus was standing beside Miss Maudie and Miss Stephanie Crawford. Miss Rachel and Mr. Avery were near by. None of them saw us come up.

We eased in beside Miss Maudie, who looked around. "Where were you all, didn't you hear the commotion?"

"What happened?" asked Jem.

"Mr. Radley shot at a Negro in his collard patch."

"Oh. Did he hit
him?"

“No,” said Miss Stephanie. “Shot in the air. Scared him pale, though. Says if anybody sees a white nigger around, that’s the one. Says he’s got the other barrel waitin‘ for the next sound he hears in that patch, an’ next time he won’t aim high, be it dog, nigger, or—Jem *Finch!*”

“Ma’am?” asked
Jem.

Atticus spoke. “Where’re your pants, son?”

“Pants,
sir?”

“Pants.”

It was no use. In his shorts before God and everybody. I sighed.
“Ah—Mr. Finch?”

In the glare from the streetlight, I could see Dill hatching one: his eyes widened, his fat cherub face grew rounder.

“What is it, Dill?” asked
Atticus.

“Ah—I won ‘em from him,” he said vaguely.

“Won them? How?”

Dill’s hand sought the back of his head. He brought it forward and across his forehead. “We were playin‘ strip poker up yonder by the fishpool,” he said.

Jem and I relaxed. The neighbors seemed satisfied: they all stiffened. But what was strip poker?

We had no chance to find out: Miss Rachel went off like the town fire siren: “Do-o-o Jee-sus, Dill Harris! Gamblin‘ by my fishpool? I’ll strip-poker you, sir!”

Atticus saved Dill from immediate dismemberment. “Just a minute, Miss Rachel,” he said. “I’ve never heard of ‘em doing that before. Were you all playing cards?”

Jem fielded Dill’s fly with his eyes shut: “No sir, just with matches.”

I admired my brother. Matches were dangerous, but cards were fatal.

“Jem, Scout,” said Atticus, “I don’t want to hear of poker in any form again. Go by Dill’s and get your pants, Jem. Settle it yourselves.”

“Don’t worry, Dill,” said Jem, as we trotted up the sidewalk, “she ain’t gonna get you. He’ll talk her out of it. That was fast thinkin‘, son. Listen... you hear?”

We stopped, and heard Atticus’s voice:“...not serious... they all go through it, Miss Rachel...”

Dill was comforted, but Jem and I weren’t. There was the problem of Jem showing up some pants in the morning.

“‘d give you some of mine,” said Dill, as we came to Miss Rachel’s steps. Jem said he couldn’t get in them, but thanks anyway. We said good-bye, and Dill went inside the house. He evidently remembered he was engaged to me, for he ran back out and kissed me swiftly in front of Jem. “Yawl write, hear?” he bawled after us.

Had Jem’s pants been safely on him, we would not have slept much anyway. Every night-sound I heard from my cot on the back porch was magnified three-fold; every scratch of feet on gravel was Boo Radley seeking revenge, every passing Negro laughing in the night was Boo Radley loose and after us; insects splashing against the screen were Boo Radley’s insane fingers picking the wire to pieces; the chinaberry trees were malignant, hovering, alive. I lingered between sleep and wakefulness until I heard Jem murmur.

“Sleep, Little Three-Eyes?”

“Are you
crazy?”

“Sh-h. Atticus’s light’s out.”

In the waning moonlight I saw Jem swing his feet to the floor.

“I’m goin‘ after ’em,” he
said.

I sat upright. “You can’t. I won’t let you.”

He was struggling into his shirt. “I’ve got to.”

“You do an‘ I’ll wake up Atticus.”

“You do and I’ll kill you.”

I pulled him down beside me on the cot. I tried to reason with him. “Mr. Nathan’s gonna find ‘em in the morning, Jem. He knows you lost ’em. When he shows ‘em to Atticus it’ll be pretty bad, that’s all there is to it. Go’n back to bed.”

“That’s what I know,” said Jem. “That’s why I’m goin‘ after ’em.”

I began to feel sick. Going back to that place by himself—I remembered Miss Stephanie: Mr. Nathan had the other barrel waiting for the next sound he heard, be it nigger, dog... Jem knew that better than I.

I was desperate: “Look, it ain’t worth it, Jem. A lickin‘ hurts but it doesn’t last. You’ll get your head shot off, Jem. Please...”

He blew out his breath patiently. “I—it’s like this, Scout,” he muttered. “Atticus ain’t ever whipped me since I can remember. I wanta keep it that way.”

This was a thought. It seemed that Atticus threatened us every other day. “You mean he’s never caught you at anything.”

“Maybe so, but—I just wanta keep it that way, Scout. We shouldn’a done that

tonight, Scout."
It was then, I suppose, that Jem and I first began to part company. Sometimes I did not understand him, but my periods of bewilderment were short-lived. This was beyond me. "Please," I pleaded, "can'tcha just think about it for a minute—by yourself on that place—"

"Shut
up!"

"It's not like he'd never speak to you again or somethin'... I'm gonna wake him up, Jem, I swear I am—"

Jem grabbed my pajama collar and wrenched it tight. "Then I'm goin' with you —" I choked.

"No you ain't, you'll just make noise."

It was no use. I unlatched the back door and held it while he crept down the steps. It must have been two o'clock. The moon was setting and the lattice-work shadows were fading into fuzzy nothingness. Jem's white shirt-tail dipped and bobbed like a small ghost dancing away to escape the coming morning. A faint breeze stirred and cooled the sweat running down my sides.

He went the back way, through Deer's Pasture, across the schoolyard and around to the fence, I thought—at least that was the way he was headed. It would take longer, so it was not time to worry yet. I waited until it was time to worry and listened for Mr. Radley's shotgun. Then I thought I heard the back fence squeak. It was wishful thinking.

Then I heard Atticus cough. I held my breath. Sometimes when we made a midnight pilgrimage to the bathroom we would find him reading. He said he often woke up during the night, checked on us, and read himself back to sleep. I waited for his light to go on, straining my eyes to see it flood the hall. It stayed off, and I breathed again. The night-crawlers had retired, but ripe chinaberries drummed on the roof when the wind stirred, and the darkness was desolate with the barking of

distant dogs.

There he was, returning to me. His white shirt bobbed over the back fence and slowly grew larger. He came up the back steps, latched the door behind him, and sat on his cot. Wordlessly, he held up his pants. He lay down, and for a while I heard his cot trembling. Soon he was still. I did not hear him stir again.

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Chapter 7

Jem stayed moody and silent for a week. As Atticus had once advised me to do, I tried to climb into Jem's skin and walk around in it: if I had gone alone to the Radley Place at two in the morning, my funeral would have been held the next afternoon. So I left Jem alone and tried not to bother him.

School started. The second grade was as bad as the first, only worse—they still flashed cards at you and wouldn't let you read or write. Miss Caroline's progress next door could be estimated by the frequency of laughter; however, the usual crew had flunked the first grade again, and were helpful in keeping order. The only thing good about the second grade was that this year I had to stay as late as Jem, and we usually walked home together at three o'clock.

One afternoon when we were crossing the schoolyard toward home, Jem suddenly said: "There's something I didn't tell you."

As this was his first complete sentence in several days, I encouraged him: "About what?"

"About that night."

"You've never told me anything about that night," I said.

Jem waved my words away as if fanning gnats. He was silent for a while, then he

said, “When I went back for my breeches—they were all in a tangle when I was gettin‘ out of ’em, I couldn’t get ‘em loose. When I went back—” Jem took a deep breath. “When I went back, they were folded across the fence... like they were expectin’ me.”

“Across—
”

“And something else—” Jem’s voice was flat. “Show you when we get home. They’d been sewed up. Not like a lady sewed ‘em, like somethin’ I’d try to do. All crooked. It’s almost like—”

“—somebody knew you were comin‘ back for ’em.”

Jem shuddered. “Like somebody was readin‘ my mind... like somebody could tell what I was gonna do. Can’t anybody tell what I’m gonna do lest they know me, can they, Scout?”

Jem’s question was an appeal. I reassured him: “Can’t anybody tell what you’re gonna do lest they live in the house with you, and even I can’t tell sometimes.”

We were walking past our tree. In its knot-hole rested a ball of gray twine.

“Don’t take it, Jem,” I said. “This is somebody’s hidin‘ place.”

“I don’t think so, Scout.”

“Yes it is. Somebody like Walter Cunningham comes down here every recess and hides his things—and we come along and take ‘em away from him. Listen, let’s leave it and wait a couple of days. If it ain’t gone then, we’ll take it, okay?”

“Okay, you might be right,” said Jem. “It must be some little kid’s place—hides his things from the bigger folks. You know it’s only when school’s in that we’ve found things.”

“Yeah,” I said, “but we never go by here in the summertime.”

We went home. Next morning the twine was where we had left it. When it was still there on the third day, Jem pocketed it. From then on, we considered everything we found in the knot-hole our property. -

The second grade was grim, but Jem assured me that the older I got the better school would be, that he started off the same way, and it was not until one reached the sixth grade that one learned anything of value. The sixth grade seemed to please him from the beginning: he went through a brief Egyptian Period that baffled me—he tried to walk flat a great deal, sticking one arm in front of him and one in back of him, putting one foot behind the other. He declared Egyptians walked that way; I said if they did I didn't see how they got anything done, but Jem said they accomplished more than the Americans ever did, they invented toilet paper and perpetual embalming, and asked where would we be today if they hadn't? Atticus told me to delete the adjectives and I'd have the
facts.

There are no clearly defined seasons in South Alabama; summer drifts into autumn, and autumn is sometimes never followed by winter, but turns to a days-old spring that melts into summer again. That fall was a long one, hardly cool enough for a light jacket. Jem and I were trotting in our orbit one mild October afternoon when our knot-hole stopped us again. Something white was inside this time.

Jem let me do the honors: I pulled out two small images carved in soap. One was the figure of a boy, the other wore a crude dress. Before I remembered that there was no such thing as hoo-dooing, I shrieked and threw them down.

Jem snatched them up. "What's the matter with you?" he yelled. He rubbed the figures free of red dust. "These are good," he said. "I've never seen any these good."

He held them down to me. They were almost perfect miniatures of two children. The boy had on shorts, and a shock of soapy hair fell to his eyebrows. I looked up at Jem. A point of straight brown hair kicked downwards from his part. I had never noticed it before. Jem looked from the girl-doll to me. The girl-doll wore bangs. So did I.

“These are us,” he
said.

“Who did ‘em, you
reckon?”

“Who do we know around here who whittles?” he asked.

“Mr. Avery.”

“Mr. Avery just does like this. I mean carves.”

Mr. Avery averaged a stick of stovewood per week; he honed it down to a toothpick and chewed it.

“There’s old Miss Stephanie Crawford’s sweetheart,” I said.

“He carves all right, but he lives down the country. When would he ever pay any attention to us?”

“Maybe he sits on the porch and looks at us instead of Miss Stephanie. If I was him, I would.”
Jem stared at me so long I asked what was the matter, but got Nothing, Scout for an answer. When we went home, Jem put the dolls in his trunk.

Less than two weeks later we found a whole package of chewing gum, which we enjoyed, the fact that everything on the Radley Place was poison having slipped Jem’s memory.

The following week the knot-hole yielded a tarnished medal. Jem showed it to

Atticus, who said it was a spelling medal, that before we were born the Maycomb County schools had spelling contests and awarded medals to the winners. Atticus said someone must have lost it, and had we asked around? Jem camel-kicked me when I tried to say where we had found it. Jem asked Atticus if he remembered anybody who ever won one, and Atticus said no.

Our biggest prize appeared four days later. It was a pocket watch that wouldn't run, on a chain with an aluminum knife.

"You reckon it's white gold, Jem?"

"Don't know. I'll show it to Atticus."

Atticus said it would probably be worth ten dollars, knife, chain and all, if it were new. "Did you swap with somebody at school?" he asked.

"Oh, no sir!" Jem pulled out his grandfather's watch that Atticus let him carry once a week if Jem were careful with it. On the days he carried the watch, Jem walked on eggs. "Atticus, if it's all right with you, I'd rather have this one instead. Maybe I can fix it."

When the new wore off his grandfather's watch, and carrying it became a day's burdensome task, Jem no longer felt the necessity of ascertaining the hour every five minutes.

He did a fair job, only one spring and two tiny pieces left over, but the watch would not run. "Oh-h," he sighed, "it'll never go. Scout—?"

"Huh?"

"You reckon we oughta write a letter to whoever's leaving us these things?"

"That'd be right nice, Jem, we can thank 'em—what's wrong?"

Jem was holding his ears, shaking his head from side to side. "I don't get it, I just don't get it—I don't know why, Scout..." He looked toward the livingroom. "I've gotta good mind to tell Atticus—no, I reckon

not.”

“I’ll tell him for
you.”

“No, don’t do that, Scout. Scout?”

“Wha-t?”

He had been on the verge of telling me something all evening; his face would brighten and he would lean toward me, then he would change his mind. He changed it again. “Oh, nothin‘.”

“Here, let’s write a letter.” I pushed a tablet and pencil under his nose.

“Okay. Dear Mister...”

“How do you know it’s a man? I bet it’s Miss Maudie—been bettin‘ that for a long time.”

“Ar-r, Miss Maudie can’t chew gum—” Jem broke into a grin. “You know, she can talk real pretty sometimes. One time I asked her to have a chew and she said no thanks, that—chewing gum cleaved to her palate and rendered her speechless,” said Jem carefully. “Doesn’t that sound nice?”

“Yeah, she can say nice things sometimes. She wouldn’t have a watch and chain anyway.”

“Dear sir,” said Jem. “We appreciate the—no, we appreciate everything which you have put into the tree for us. Yours very truly, Jeremy Atticus Finch.”

“He won’t know who you are if you sign it like that, Jem.”

Jem erased his name and wrote, “Jem Finch.” I signed, “Jean Louise Finch (Scout),” beneath it. Jem put the note in an envelope.

Next morning on the way to school he ran ahead of me and stopped at the tree. Jem was facing me when he looked up, and I saw him go stark white.

“*Scout!*
”

I ran to
him.

Someone had filled our knot-hole with cement.

“Don’t you cry, now, Scout... don’t cry now, don’t you worry-” he muttered at me all the way to school.
When we went home for dinner Jem bolted his food, ran to the porch and stood on the steps. I followed him. “Hasn’t passed by yet,” he said.

Next day Jem repeated his vigil and was rewarded.

“Hidy do, Mr. Nathan,” he said.

“Morning Jem, Scout,” said Mr. Radley, as he went by.

“Mr. Radley,” said Jem.

Mr. Radley turned around.

“Mr. Radley, ah—did you put cement in that hole in that tree down yonder?”

“Yes,” he said. “I filled it up.”

“Why’d you do it, sir?”

“Tree’s dying. You plug ‘em with cement when they’re sick. You ought to know that, Jem.”

Jem said nothing more about it until late afternoon. When we passed our tree he gave it a meditative pat on its cement, and remained deep in thought. He seemed to be working himself into a bad humor, so I kept my distance.

As usual, we met Atticus coming home from work that evening. When we were at our steps Jem said, “Atticus, look down yonder at that tree, please sir.”

“What tree,
son?”

“The one on the corner of the Radley lot comin‘ from
school.”

“Yes?”

“Is that tree dyin‘?”

“Why no, son, I don’t think so. Look at the leaves, they’re all green and full, no brown patches anywhere—”

“It ain’t even sick?”

“That tree’s as healthy as you are, Jem. Why?”

“Mr. Nathan Radley said it was dyin‘.”

“Well maybe it is. I’m sure Mr. Radley knows more about his trees than we do.”

Atticus left us on the porch. Jem leaned on a pillar, rubbing his shoulders against it.
“Do you itch, Jem?” I asked as politely as I could. He did not answer. “Come on in, Jem,” I said.

“After while.”

He stood there until nightfall, and I waited for him. When we went in the house I saw he had been crying; his face was dirty in the right places, but I thought it odd that I had not heard him.

Chapter 8

For reasons unfathomable to the most experienced prophets in Maycomb County, autumn turned to winter that year. We had two weeks of the coldest weather since 1885, Atticus said. Mr. Avery said it was written on the Rosetta Stone that when children disobeyed their parents, smoked cigarettes and made war on each other, the seasons would change: Jem and I were burdened with the guilt of contributing to the aberrations of nature, thereby causing unhappiness to our neighbors and discomfort to ourselves.

Old Mrs. Radley died that winter, but her death caused hardly a ripple—the neighborhood seldom saw her, except when she watered her cannas. Jem and I decided that Boo had got her at last, but when Atticus returned from the Radley house he said she died of natural causes, to our disappointment.

“Ask him,” Jem whispered.

“You ask him, you’re the oldest.”

“That’s why you oughta ask him.”

“Atticus,” I said, “did you see Mr. Arthur?”

Atticus looked sternly around his newspaper at me: “I did not.”

Jem restrained me from further questions. He said Atticus was still touchous about us and the Radleys and it wouldn’t do to push him any. Jem had a notion that Atticus thought our activities that night last summer were not solely confined to strip poker. Jem had no firm basis for his ideas, he said it was merely a twitch.

Next morning I awoke, looked out the window and nearly died of fright. My screams brought Atticus from his bathroom half-shaven.

“The *world’s* endin‘, Atticus! Please do something—!” I dragged him to the window and pointed.

“No it’s not,” he said. “It’s snowing.”

Jem asked Atticus would it keep up. Jem had never seen snow either, but he knew what it was. Atticus said he didn’t know any more about snow than Jem did. “I think, though, if it’s watery like that, it’ll turn to rain.”

The telephone rang and Atticus left the breakfast table to answer it. “That was Eula May,” he said when he returned. “I quote—‘As it has not snowed in Maycomb County since 1885, there will be no school today.’”

Eula May was Maycomb’s leading telephone operator. She was entrusted with issuing public announcements, wedding invitations, setting off the fire siren, and giving first-aid instructions when Dr. Reynolds was away.

When Atticus finally called us to order and bade us look at our plates instead of out the windows, Jem asked, “How do you make a snowman?”

“I haven’t the slightest idea,” said Atticus. “I don’t want you all to be disappointed, but I doubt if there’ll be enough snow for a snowball, even.”

Calpurnia came in and said she thought it was sticking. When we ran to the back yard, it was covered with a feeble layer of soggy snow.

“We shouldn’t walk about in it,” said Jem. “Look, every step you take’s wasting it.”

I looked back at my mushy footprints. Jem said if we waited until it snowed some more we could scrape it all up for a snowman. I stuck out my tongue and caught a fat flake. It burned.

“Jem, it’s hot!”

“No it ain’t, it’s so cold it burns. Now don’t eat it, Scout, you’re wasting it. Let it

come down.”
“But I want to walk in
it.”

“I know what, we can go walk over at Miss Maudie’s.”

Jem hopped across the front yard. I followed in his tracks. When we were on the sidewalk in front of Miss Maudie’s, Mr. Avery accosted us. He had a pink face and a big stomach below his belt.

“See what you’ve done?” he said. “Hasn’t snowed in Maycomb since Appomattox. It’s bad children like you makes the seasons change.”

I wondered if Mr. Avery knew how hopefully we had watched last summer for him to repeat his performance, and reflected that if this was our reward, there was something to say for sin. I did not wonder where Mr. Avery gathered his meteorological statistics: they came straight from the Rosetta Stone.

“Jem Finch, you Jem
Finch!”

“Miss Maudie’s callin‘ you, Jem.”

“You all stay in the middle of the yard. There’s some thrift buried under the snow near the porch. Don’t step on it!”

“Yessum!” called Jem. “It’s beautiful, ain’t it, Miss Maudie?”

“Beautiful my hind foot! If it freezes tonight it’ll carry off all my azaleas!”

Miss Maudie’s old sunhat glistened with snow crystals. She was bending over some small bushes, wrapping them in burlap bags. Jem asked her what she was doing that for.

“Keep ‘em warm,” she
said.

“How can flowers keep warm? They don’t circulate.”

“I cannot answer that question, Jem Finch. All I know is if it freezes tonight these plants’ll freeze, so you cover ‘em up. Is that clear?”

“Yessum. Miss Maudie?”

“What,
sir?”

“Could Scout and me borrow some of your snow?”

“Heavens alive, take it all! There’s an old peach basket under the house, haul it off in that.” Miss Maudie’s eyes narrowed. “Jem Finch, what are you going to do with my snow?”
“You’ll see,” said Jem, and we transferred as much snow as we could from Miss Maudie’s yard to ours, a slushy operation.

“What are we gonna do, Jem?” I asked.

“You’ll see,” he said. “Now get the basket and haul all the snow you can rake up from the back yard to the front. Walk back in your tracks, though,” he cautioned.

“Are we gonna have a snow baby, Jem?”

“No, a real snowman. Gotta work hard, now.”

Jem ran to the back yard, produced the garden hoe and began digging quickly behind the woodpile, placing any worms he found to one side. He went in the house, returned with the laundry hamper, filled it with earth and carried it to the front yard.

When we had five baskets of earth and two baskets of snow, Jem said we were ready to begin.

“Don’t you think this is kind of a mess?” I asked.

“Looks messy now, but it won’t later,” he said.

Jem scooped up an armful of dirt, patted it into a mound on which he added another load, and another until he had constructed a torso.

“Jem, I ain’t ever heard of a nigger snowman,” I said.

“He won’t be black long,” he grunted.

Jem procured some peachtree switches from the back yard, plaited them, and bent them into bones to be covered with dirt.

“He looks like Stephanie Crawford with her hands on her hips,” I said. “Fat in the middle and little-bitty arms.”

“I’ll make ‘em bigger.” Jem sloshed water over the mud man and added more dirt. He looked thoughtfully at it for a moment, then he molded a big stomach below the figure’s waistline. Jem glanced at me, his eyes twinkling: “Mr. Avery’s sort of shaped like a snowman, ain’t he?”

Jem scooped up some snow and began plastering it on. He permitted me to cover only the back, saving the public parts for himself. Gradually Mr. Avery turned white.
Using bits of wood for eyes, nose, mouth, and buttons, Jem succeeded in making Mr. Avery look cross. A stick of stovewood completed the picture. Jem stepped back and viewed his creation.

“It’s lovely, Jem,” I said. “Looks almost like he’d talk to you.”

“It is, ain’t it?” he said shyly.

We could not wait for Atticus to come home for dinner, but called and said we had a big surprise for him. He seemed surprised when he saw most of the back yard in the front yard, but he said we had done a jim-dandy job. “I didn’t know how you were going to do it,” he said to Jem, “but from now on I’ll never worry about what’ll become of you, son, you’ll always have an idea.”

Jem's ears reddened from Atticus's compliment, but he looked up sharply when he saw Atticus stepping back. Atticus squinted at the snowman a while. He grinned, then laughed. "Son, I can't tell what you're going to be—an engineer, a lawyer, or a portrait painter. You've perpetrated a near libel here in the front yard. We've got to disguise this fellow."

Atticus suggested that Jem hone down his creation's front a little, swap a broom for the stovewood, and put an apron on him.

Jem explained that if he did, the snowman would become muddy and cease to be a snowman.

"I don't care what you do, so long as you do something," said Atticus. "You can't go around making caricatures of the neighbors."

"Ain't a characterture," said Jem. "It looks just like him."

"Mr. Avery might not think so."

"I know what!" said Jem. He raced across the street, disappeared into Miss Maudie's back yard and returned triumphant. He stuck her sunhat on the snowman's head and jammed her hedge-clippers into the crook of his arm. Atticus said that would be fine.

Miss Maudie opened her front door and came out on the porch. She looked across the street at us. Suddenly she grinned. "Jem Finch," she called. "You devil, bring me back my hat, sir!"

Jem looked up at Atticus, who shook his head. "She's just fussing," he said. "She's really impressed with your—accomplishments."

Atticus strolled over to Miss Maudie's sidewalk, where they engaged in an arm-waving conversation, the only phrase of which I caught was "...erected an absolute morphodite in that yard! Atticus, you'll never raise 'em!"

The snow stopped in the afternoon, the temperature dropped, and by nightfall Mr.

Avery's direst predictions came true: Calpurnia kept every fireplace in the house blazing, but we were cold. When Atticus came home that evening he said we were in for it, and asked Calpurnia if she wanted to stay with us for the night. Calpurnia glanced up at the high ceilings and long windows and said she thought she'd be warmer at her house. Atticus drove her home in the car.

Before I went to sleep Atticus put more coal on the fire in my room. He said the thermometer registered sixteen, that it was the coldest night in his memory, and that our snowman outside was frozen solid.

Minutes later, it seemed, I was awakened by someone shaking me. Atticus's overcoat was spread across me. "Is it morning already?"

"Baby, get up."

Atticus was holding out my bathrobe and coat. "Put your robe on first," he said.

Jem was standing beside Atticus, groggy and tousled. He was holding his overcoat closed at the neck, his other hand was jammed into his pocket. He looked strangely overweight.

"Hurry, hon," said Atticus. "Here're your shoes and socks."

Stupidly, I put them on. "Is it morning?"

"No, it's a little after one. Hurry now."

That something was wrong finally got through to me. "What's the matter?"

By then he did not have to tell me. Just as the birds know where to go when it rains, I knew when there was trouble in our street. Soft taffeta-like sounds and muffled scurrying sounds filled me with helpless dread.

"Whose is it?"

"Miss Maudie's, hon," said Atticus gently.

At the front door, we saw fire spewing from Miss Maudie's diningroom windows.

As if to confirm what we saw, the town fire siren wailed up the scale to a treble pitch and remained there, screaming.

“It’s gone, ain’t it?” moaned Jem.

“I expect so,” said Atticus. “Now listen, both of you. Go down and stand in front of the Radley Place. Keep out of the way, do you hear? See which way the wind’s blowing?”

“Oh,” said Jem. “Atticus, reckon we oughta start moving the furniture out?”

“Not yet, son. Do as I tell you. Run now. Take care of Scout, you hear? Don’t let her out of your sight.”

With a push, Atticus started us toward the Radley front gate. We stood watching the street fill with men and cars while fire silently devoured Miss Maudie’s house. “Why don’t they hurry, why don’t they hurry...” muttered Jem.

We saw why. The old fire truck, killed by the cold, was being pushed from town by a crowd of men. When the men attached its hose to a hydrant, the hose burst and water shot up, tinkling down on the pavement.

“Oh-h Lord, Jem...”

Jem put his arm around me. “Hush, Scout,” he said. “It ain’t time to worry yet. I’ll let you know when.”

The men of Maycomb, in all degrees of dress and undress, took furniture from Miss Maudie’s house to a yard across the street. I saw Atticus carrying Miss Maudie’s heavy oak rocking chair, and thought it sensible of him to save what she valued most.

Sometimes we heard shouts. Then Mr. Avery’s face appeared in an upstairs window. He pushed a mattress out the window into the street and threw down furniture until men shouted, “Come down from there, Dick! The stairs are going! Get outta there, Mr. Avery!”

Mr. Avery began climbing through the window.

“Scout, he’s stuck...” breathed Jem. “Oh God...”

Mr. Avery was wedged tightly. I buried my head under Jem’s arm and didn’t look again until Jem cried, “He’s got loose, Scout! He’s all right!”
I looked up to see Mr. Avery cross the upstairs porch. He swung his legs over the railing and was sliding down a pillar when he slipped. He fell, yelled, and hit Miss Maudie’s shrubbery.

Suddenly I noticed that the men were backing away from Miss Maudie’s house, moving down the street toward us. They were no longer carrying furniture. The fire was well into the second floor and had eaten its way to the roof: window frames were black against a vivid orange center.

“Jem, it looks like a pumpkin—”

“Scout, look!”

Smoke was rolling off our house and Miss Rachel’s house like fog off a riverbank, and men were pulling hoses toward them. Behind us, the fire truck from Abbottsville screamed around the curve and stopped in front of our house.

“That book...” I said.

“What?” said
Jem.

“That Tom Swift book, it ain’t mine, it’s Dill’s...”

“Don’t worry, Scout, it ain’t time to worry yet,” said Jem. He pointed. “Looka yonder.”

In a group of neighbors, Atticus was standing with his hands in his overcoat pockets. He might have been watching a football game. Miss Maudie was beside him.

“See there, he’s not worried yet,” said Jem.

“Why ain’t he on top of one of the houses?”

“He’s too old, he’d break his neck.”

“You think we oughta make him get our stuff out?”

“Let’s don’t pester him, he’ll know when it’s time,” said Jem.

The Abbottsville fire truck began pumping water on our house; a man on the roof pointed to places that needed it most. I watched our Absolute Morphodite go black and crumble; Miss Maudie’s sunhat settled on top of the heap. I could not see her hedge-clippers. In the heat between our house, Miss Rachel’s and Miss Maudie’s, the men had long ago shed coats and bathrobes. They worked in pajama tops and nightshirts stuffed into their pants, but I became aware that I was slowly freezing where I stood. Jem tried to keep me warm, but his arm was not enough. I pulled free of it and clutched my shoulders. By dancing a little, I could feel my feet.

Another fire truck appeared and stopped in front of Miss Stephanie Crawford’s. There was no hydrant for another hose, and the men tried to soak her house with hand extinguishers.

Miss Maudie’s tin roof quelled the flames. Roaring, the house collapsed; fire gushed everywhere, followed by a flurry of blankets from men on top of the adjacent houses, beating out sparks and burning chunks of wood.

It was dawn before the men began to leave, first one by one, then in groups. They pushed the Maycomb fire truck back to town, the Abbottsville truck departed, the third one remained. We found out next day it had come from Clark’s Ferry, sixty miles away.

Jem and I slid across the street. Miss Maudie was staring at the smoking black hole in her yard, and Atticus shook his head to tell us she did not want to talk. He led us home, holding onto our shoulders to cross the icy street. He said Miss

Maudie would stay with Miss Stephanie for the time being.

“Anybody want some hot chocolate?” he asked. I shuddered when Atticus started a fire in the kitchen stove.

As we drank our cocoa I noticed Atticus looking at me, first with curiosity, then with sternness. “I thought I told you and Jem to stay put,” he said.

“Why, we did. We stayed—”

“Then whose blanket is that?”

“Blanket?”

“Yes ma’am, blanket. It isn’t ours.”

I looked down and found myself clutching a brown woolen blanket I was wearing around my shoulders, squaw-fashion.

“Atticus, I don’t know, sir... I—”

I turned to Jem for an answer, but Jem was even more bewildered than I. He said he didn’t know how it got there, we did exactly as Atticus had told us, we stood down by the Radley gate away from everybody, we didn’t move an inch—Jem stopped.

“Mr. Nathan was at the fire,” he babbled, “I saw him, I saw him, he was tuggin‘ that mattress—Atticus, I swear...”

“That’s all right, son.” Atticus grinned slowly. “Looks like all of Maycomb was out tonight, in one way or another. Jem, there’s some wrapping paper in the pantry, I think. Go get it and we’ll—”

“Atticus, no sir!”

Jem seemed to have lost his mind. He began pouring out our secrets right and left in total disregard for my safety if not for his own, omitting nothing, knot-hole, pants and all.

"...Mr. Nathan put cement in that tree, Atticus, an' he did it to stop us findin' things—he's crazy, I reckon, like they say, but Atticus, I swear to God he ain't ever harmed us, he ain't ever hurt us, he coulda cut my throat from ear to ear that night but he tried to mend my pants instead... he ain't ever hurt us, Atticus—"

Atticus said, "Whoa, son," so gently that I was greatly heartened. It was obvious that he had not followed a word Jem said, for all Atticus said was, "You're right. We'd better keep this and the blanket to ourselves. Someday, maybe, Scout can thank him for covering her up."

"Thank who?" I asked.

"Boo Radley. You were so busy looking at the fire you didn't know it when he put the blanket around you."

My stomach turned to water and I nearly threw up when Jem held out the blanket and crept toward me. "He sneaked out of the house—turn 'round—sneaked up, an' went like this!"

Atticus said dryly, "Do not let this inspire you to further glory, Jeremy."

Jem scowled, "I ain't gonna do anything to him," but I watched the spark of fresh adventure leave his eyes. "Just think, Scout," he said, "if you'd just turned around, you'da seen him."

Calpurnia woke us at noon. Atticus had said we need not go to school that day, we'd learn nothing after no sleep. Calpurnia said for us to try and clean up the front yard.

Miss Maudie's sunhat was suspended in a thin layer of ice, like a fly in amber, and we had to dig under the dirt for her hedge-clippers. We found her in her back yard, gazing at her frozen charred azaleas. "We're bringing back your things, Miss Maudie," said Jem. "We're awful sorry."

Miss Maudie looked around, and the shadow of her old grin crossed her face. "Always wanted a smaller house, Jem Finch. Gives me more yard. Just think, I'll

have more room for my azaleas now!"

"You ain't grievin', Miss Maudie?" I asked, surprised. Atticus said her house was nearly all she had.

"Grieving, child? Why, I hated that old cow barn. Thought of settin' fire to it a hundred times myself, except they'd lock me up."

"But—
"

"Don't you worry about me, Jean Louise Finch. There are ways of doing things you don't know about. Why, I'll build me a little house and take me a couple of roomers and—gracious, I'll have the finest yard in Alabama. Those Bellingraths'll look plain puny when I get started!"

Jem and I looked at each other. "How'd it catch, Miss Maudie?" he asked.

"I don't know, Jem. Probably the flue in the kitchen. I kept a fire in there last night for my potted plants. Hear you had some unexpected company last night, Miss Jean Louise."

"How'd you
know?"

"Atticus told me on his way to town this morning. Tell you the truth, I'd like to've been with you. And I'd've had sense enough to turn around, too."

Miss Maudie puzzled me. With most of her possessions gone and her beloved yard a shambles, she still took a lively and cordial interest in Jem's and my affairs.

She must have seen my perplexity. She said, "Only thing I worried about last night was all the danger and commotion it caused. This whole neighborhood could have gone up. Mr. Avery'll be in bed for a week—he's right stove up. He's too old to do things like that and I told him so. Soon as I can get my hands clean and when Stephanie Crawford's not looking, I'll make him a Lane cake. That Stephanie's been after my recipe for thirty years, and if she thinks I'll give it to

her just because I'm staying with her she's got another think coming."

I reflected that if Miss Maudie broke down and gave it to her, Miss Stephanie couldn't follow it anyway. Miss Maudie had once let me see it: among other things, the recipe called for one large cup of sugar.

It was a still day. The air was so cold and clear we heard the courthouse clock clank, rattle and strain before it struck the hour. Miss Maudie's nose was a color I had never seen before, and I inquired about it.

"I've been out here since six o'clock," she said. "Should be frozen by now." She held up her hands. A network of tiny lines crisscrossed her palms, brown with dirt and dried blood.

"You've ruined 'em," said Jem. "Why don't you get a colored man?" There was no note of sacrifice in his voice when he added, "Or Scout'n'me, we can help you."

Miss Maudie said, "Thank you sir, but you've got a job of your own over there." She pointed to our yard.

"You mean the Morphodite?" I asked. "Shoot, we can rake him up in a jiffy."

Miss Maudie stared down at me, her lips moving silently. Suddenly she put her hands to her head and whooped. When we left her, she was still chuckling.

Jem said he didn't know what was the matter with her—that was just Miss Maudie.

Chapter 9

“You can just take that back, boy!”

This order, given by me to Cecil Jacobs, was the beginning of a rather thin time for Jem and me. My fists were clenched and I was ready to let fly. Atticus had promised me he would wear me out if he ever heard of me fighting any more; I was far too old and too big for such childish things, and the sooner I learned to hold in, the better off everybody would be. I soon forgot.

Cecil Jacobs made me forget. He had announced in the schoolyard the day before that Scout Finch’s daddy defended niggers. I denied it, but told Jem.

“What’d he mean sayin‘ that?” I asked.

“Nothing,” Jem said. “Ask Atticus, he’ll tell you.”

“Do you defend niggers, Atticus?” I asked him that evening.

“Of course I do. Don’t say nigger, Scout. That’s common.”

“‘s what everybody at school
says.”

“From now on it’ll be everybody less one—”

“Well if you don’t want me to grow up talkin‘ that way, why do you send me to school?”

My father looked at me mildly, amusement in his eyes. Despite our compromise, my campaign to avoid school had continued in one form or another since my first day’s dose of it: the beginning of last September had brought on sinking spells, dizziness, and mild gastric complaints. I went so far as to pay a nickel for the privilege of rubbing my head against the head of Miss Rachel’s cook’s son, who

was afflicted with a tremendous ringworm. It didn't take.

But I was worrying another bone. "Do all lawyers defend n-Negroes, Atticus?"

"Of course they do, Scout."

"Then why did Cecil say you defended niggers? He made it sound like you were runnin' a still."

Atticus sighed. "I'm simply defending a Negro—his name's Tom Robinson. He lives in that little settlement beyond the town dump. He's a member of Calpurnia's church, and Cal knows his family well. She says they're clean-living folks. Scout, you aren't old enough to understand some things yet, but there's been some high talk around town to the effect that I shouldn't do much about defending this man. It's a peculiar case—it won't come to trial until summer session. John Taylor was kind enough to give us a postponement..."
"If you shouldn't be defendin' him, then why are you doin' it?"

"For a number of reasons," said Atticus. "The main one is, if I didn't I couldn't hold up my head in town, I couldn't represent this county in the legislature, I couldn't even tell you or Jem not to do something again."

"You mean if you didn't defend that man, Jem and me wouldn't have to mind you any more?"

"That's about right."

"Why?
"

"Because I could never ask you to mind me again. Scout, simply by the nature of the work, every lawyer gets at least one case in his lifetime that affects him personally. This one's mine, I guess. You might hear some ugly talk about it at school, but do one thing for me if you will: you just hold your head high and keep

those fists down. No matter what anybody says to you, don't you let 'em get your goat. Try fighting with your head for a change... it's a good one, even if it does resist learning."

"Atticus, are we going to win
it?"

"No, honey."

"Then
why—"

"Simply because we were licked a hundred years before we started is no reason for us not to try to win," Atticus said.

"You sound like Cousin Ike Finch," I said. Cousin Ike Finch was Maycomb County's sole surviving Confederate veteran. He wore a General Hood type beard of which he was inordinately vain. At least once a year Atticus, Jem and I called on him, and I would have to kiss him. It was horrible. Jem and I would listen respectfully to Atticus and Cousin Ike rehash the war. "Tell you, Atticus," Cousin Ike would say, "the Missouri Compromise was what licked us, but if I had to go through it agin I'd walk every step of the way there an' every step back jist like I did before an' furthermore we'd whip 'em this time... now in 1864, when Stonewall Jackson came around by—I beg your pardon, young folks. Ol' Blue Light was in heaven then, God rest his saintly brow..."

"Come here, Scout," said Atticus. I crawled into his lap and tucked my head under his chin. He put his arms around me and rocked me gently. "It's different this time," he said. "This time we aren't fighting the Yankees, we're fighting our friends. But remember this, no matter how bitter things get, they're still our friends and this is still our home."

With this in mind, I faced Cecil Jacobs in the schoolyard next day: "You gonna take that back, boy?"

"You gotta make me first!" he yelled. "My folks said your daddy was a disgrace

an‘ that nigger oughta hang from the water-tank!”

I drew a bead on him, remembered what Atticus had said, then dropped my fists and walked away, “Scout’s a cow—ward!” ringing in my ears. It was the first time I ever walked away from a fight.

Somehow, if I fought Cecil I would let Atticus down. Atticus so rarely asked Jem and me to do something for him, I could take being called a coward for him. I felt extremely noble for having remembered, and remained noble for three weeks. Then Christmas came and disaster struck.

Jem and I viewed Christmas with mixed feelings. The good side was the tree and Uncle Jack Finch. Every Christmas Eve day we met Uncle Jack at Maycomb Junction, and he would spend a week with us.

A flip of the coin revealed the uncompromising lineaments of Aunt Alexandra and Francis.

I suppose I should include Uncle Jimmy, Aunt Alexandra’s husband, but as he never spoke a word to me in my life except to say, “Get off the fence,” once, I never saw any reason to take notice of him. Neither did Aunt Alexandra. Long ago, in a burst of friendliness, Aunty and Uncle Jimmy produced a son named Henry, who left home as soon as was humanly possible, married, and produced Francis. Henry and his wife deposited Francis at his grandparents’ every Christmas, then pursued their own pleasures.

No amount of sighing could induce Atticus to let us spend Christmas day at home. We went to Finch’s Landing every Christmas in my memory. The fact that Aunty was a good cook was some compensation for being forced to spend a religious holiday with Francis Hancock. He was a year older than I, and I avoided him on principle: he enjoyed everything I disapproved of, and disliked my ingenuous diversions.

Aunt Alexandra was Atticus’s sister, but when Jem told me about changelings and

siblings, I decided that she had been swapped at birth, that my grandparents had perhaps received a Crawford instead of a Finch. Had I ever harbored the mystical notions about mountains that seem to obsess lawyers and judges, Aunt Alexandra would have been analogous to Mount Everest: throughout my early life, she was cold and there.

When Uncle Jack jumped down from the train Christmas Eve day, we had to wait for the porter to hand him two long packages. Jem and I always thought it funny when Uncle Jack pecked Atticus on the cheek; they were the only two men we ever saw kiss each other. Uncle Jack shook hands with Jem and swung me high, but not high enough: Uncle Jack was a head shorter than Atticus; the baby of the family, he was younger than Aunt Alexandra. He and Aunty looked alike, but Uncle Jack made better use of his face: we were never wary of his sharp nose and chin.

He was one of the few men of science who never terrified me, probably because he never behaved like a doctor. Whenever he performed a minor service for Jem and me, as removing a splinter from a foot, he would tell us exactly what he was going to do, give us an estimation of how much it would hurt, and explain the use of any tongs he employed. One Christmas I lurked in corners nursing a twisted splinter in my foot, permitting no one to come near me. When Uncle Jack caught me, he kept me laughing about a preacher who hated going to church so much that every day he stood at his gate in his dressing-gown, smoking a hookah and delivering five-minute sermons to any passers-by who desired spiritual comfort. I interrupted to make Uncle Jack let me know when he would pull it out, but he held up a bloody splinter in a pair of tweezers and said he yanked it while I was laughing, that was what was known as relativity.

“What’s in those packages?” I asked him, pointing to the long thin parcels the porter had given him.

“None of your business,” he
said.