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

"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.

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!"

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 most lively 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?"

"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

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—bet she's gettin' 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.

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

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

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 just 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

When supper was over, Uncle Jack went to the livingroom and sat down. He slapped his thighs for me to come sit on his lap. I liked to smell him: he was like a bottle of alcohol and something pleasantly sweet. He pushed back my bangs and looked at me. "You're more like Atticus than your mother," he said. "You're also growing out of your pants a little."

"I reckon they fit all right."

"You like words like damn and hell now, don't you?"

I said I reckoned so.

"Well I don't," said Uncle Jack, "not unless there's extreme provocation connected with 'em. I'll be here a week, and I don't want to hear any words like that while I'm here. Scout, you'll get in trouble if you go around saying things like that. You want to grow up to be a lady, don't you?"

I said not particularly.

"Of course you do. Now let's get to the tree."

We decorated the tree until bedtime, and that night I dreamed of the two long packages for Jem and me. Next morning Jem and I dived for them: they were from Atticus, who had written Uncle Jack to get them for us, and they were what we had asked for.

"Don't point them in the house," said Atticus, when Jem aimed at a picture on the wall.

"You'll have to teach 'em to shoot," said Uncle Jack.

"That's your job," said Atticus. "I merely bowed to the inevitable."

It took Atticus's courtroom voice to drag us away from the tree. He declined to let us take our air rifles to the Landing (I had already begun to think of shooting Francis) and said if we made one false move he'd take them away from us for good.

Finch's Landing consisted of three hundred and sixty-six steps down a high bluff and ending in a jetty. Farther down stream, beyond the bluff, were traces of an old cotton landing, where Finch Negroes had loaded bales and produce, unloaded blocks of ice, flour and sugar, farm equipment, and feminine apparel. A two-rut road ran from the riverside and vanished among dark trees. At the end of the road was a two-storied white house with porches circling it upstairs and downstairs. In his old age, our ancestor Simon Finch had built it to please his nagging wife, but with the porches all resemblance to ordinary houses of its era ended. The internal arrangements of the Finch house were indicative of Simon's guilelessness and the absolute trust with which he regarded his offspring.

There were six bedrooms upstairs, four for the eight female children, one for Welcome Finch, the sole son, and one for visiting relatives. Simple enough; but the daughters' rooms could be reached only by one staircase, Welcome's room and the guestroom only by another. The Daughters' Staircase was in the ground-floor bedroom of their parents, so Simon always knew the hours of his daughters' nocturnal comings and goings.

There was a kitchen separate from the rest of the house, tacked onto it by a wooden catwalk; in the back yard was a rusty bell on a pole, used to summon field hands or as a distress signal; a widow's walk was on the roof, but no widows walked there—from it, Simon oversaw his overseer, watched the river-boats, and gazed into the lives of surrounding landholders.

There went with the house the usual legend about the Yankees: one Finch female, recently engaged, donned her complete trousseau to save it from raiders in the neighborhood; she became stuck in the door to the Daughters' Staircase but was doused with water and finally pushed through. When we arrived at the Landing, Aunt Alexandra kissed Uncle Jack, Francis kissed Uncle Jack, Uncle Jimmy shook hands silently with Uncle Jack, Jem and I gave our presents to Francis, who gave us a present. Jem felt his age and gravitated to the adults, leaving me to entertain our cousin. Francis was eight and slicked back his hair.

"What'd you get for Christmas?" I asked politely.

"Just what I asked for," he said. Francis had requested a pair of knee-pants, a red

where I could throw up a stick and almost catch it coming down, I had caused Calpurnia to deny me entrance to the house every time she saw me with a stick in my hand. I felt that I could overcome this defect with a real baton, and I thought it generous of Jem to buy one for me.

Mrs. Dubose was stationed on her porch when we went by.

"Where are you two going at this time of day?" she shouted. "Playing hooky, I suppose. I'll just call up the principal and tell him!" She put her hands on the wheels of her chair and executed a perfect right face.

"Aw, it's Saturday, Mrs. Dubose," said Jem.

"Makes no difference if it's Saturday," she said obscurely. "I wonder if your father knows where you are?"

"Mrs. Dubose, we've been goin' to town by ourselves since we were this high." Jem placed his hand palm down about two feet above the sidewalk.

"Don't you lie to me!" she yelled. "Jeremy Finch, Maudie Atkinson told me you broke down her scuppernong arbor this morning. She's going to tell your father and then you'll wish you never saw the light of day! If you aren't sent to the reform school before next week, my name's not Dubose!"

Jem, who hadn't been near Miss Maudie's scuppernong arbor since last summer, and who knew Miss Maudie wouldn't tell Atticus if he had, issued a general denial.

"Don't you contradict me!" Mrs. Dubose bawled. "And you—" she pointed an arthritic finger at me—"what are you doing in those overalls? You should be in a dress and camisole, young lady! You'll grow up waiting on tables if somebody doesn't change your ways—a Finch waiting on tables at the O.K. Café—hah!"

I was terrified. The O.K. Café was a dim organization on the north side of the square. I grabbed Jem's hand but he shook me loose.

"Come on, Scout," he whispered. "Don't pay any attention to her, just hold your head high and be a gentleman."

But Mrs. Dubose held us: "Not only a Finch waiting on tables but one in the courthouse lawing for niggers!"

Jem stiffened. Mrs. Dubose's shot had gone home and she knew it:

"Yes indeed, what has this world come to when a Finch goes against his raising? I'll tell you!" She put her hand to her mouth. When she drew it away, it trailed a long silver thread of saliva. "Your father's no better than the niggers and trash he works for!"

Jem was scarlet. I pulled at his sleeve, and we were followed up the sidewalk by a philippic on our family's moral degeneration, the major premise of which was that half the Finches were in the asylum anyway, but if our mother were living we would not have come to such a state.

I wasn't sure what Jem resented most, but I took umbrage at Mrs. Dubose's assessment of the family's mental hygiene. I had become almost accustomed to hearing insults aimed at Atticus. But this was the first one coming from an adult. Except for her remarks about Atticus, Mrs. Dubose's attack was only routine. There was a hint of summer in the air—in the shadows it was cool, but the sun was warm, which meant good times coming: no school and Dill.

Jem bought his steam engine and we went by Elmore's for my baton. Jem took no pleasure in his acquisition; he jammed it in his pocket and walked silently beside me toward home. On the way home I nearly hit Mr. Link Deas, who said, "Look out now, Scout!" when I missed a toss, and when we approached Mrs. Dubose's house my baton was grimy from having picked it up out of the dirt so many times.

She was not on the porch.

In later years, I sometimes wondered exactly what made Jem do it, what made him break the bonds of "You just be a gentleman, son," and the phase of self-conscious rectitude he had recently entered. Jem had probably stood as much guff about Atticus lawing for niggers as had I, and I took it for granted that he kept his temper—he had a naturally tranquil disposition and a slow fuse. At the time, however, I thought the only explanation for what he did was that for a few minutes he simply went mad.

worse. Again, as I had often met it in my own church, I was confronted with the Impurity of Women doctrine that seemed to preoccupy all clergymen.

Jem and I had heard the same sermon Sunday after Sunday, with only one exception. Reverend Sykes used his pulpit more freely to express his views on individual lapses from grace: Jim Hardy had been absent from church for five Sundays and he wasn't sick; Constance Jackson had better watch her ways—she was in grave danger for quarreling with her neighbors; she had erected the only spite fence in the history of the Quarters.

Reverend Sykes closed his sermon. He stood beside a table in front of the pulpit and requested the morning offering, a proceeding that was strange to Jem and me. One by one, the congregation came forward and dropped nickels and dimes into a black enameled coffee can. Jem and I followed suit, and received a soft, "Thank you, thank you," as our dimes clinked.

To our amazement, Reverend Sykes emptied the can onto the table and raked the coins into his hand. He straightened up and said, "This is not enough, we must have ten dollars."

The congregation stirred. "You all know what it's for—Helen can't leave those children to work while Tom's in jail. If everybody gives one more dime, we'll have it—" Reverend Sykes waved his hand and called to someone in the back of the church. "Alec, shut the doors. Nobody leaves here till we have ten dollars."

Calpurnia scratched in her handbag and brought forth a battered leather coin purse. "Naw Cal," Jem whispered, when she handed him a shiny quarter, "we can put ours in. Gimme your dime, Scout."

The church was becoming stuffy, and it occurred to me that Reverend Sykes intended to sweat the amount due out of his flock. Fans crackled, feet shuffled, tobacco-chewers were in agony.

Reverend Sykes startled me by saying sternly, "Carlow Richardson, I haven't seen you up this aisle yet."

A thin man in khaki pants came up the aisle and deposited a coin. The congregation murmured approval.

Reverend Sykes then said, "I want all of you with no children to make a sacrifice and give one more dime apiece. Then we'll have it."

Slowly, painfully, the ten dollars was collected. The door was opened, and the gust of warm air revived us. Zeebo lined On *Jordan's Stormy Banks*, and church was over.

I wanted to stay and explore, but Calpurnia propelled me up the aisle ahead of her. At the church door, while she paused to talk with Zeebo and his family, Jem and I chatted with Reverend Sykes. I was bursting with questions, but decided I would wait and let Calpurnia answer them.

"We were 'specially glad to have you all here," said Reverend Sykes. "This church has no better friend than your daddy."

My curiosity burst: "Why were you all takin' up collection for Tom Robinson's wife?"

"Didn't you hear why?" asked Reverend Sykes. "Helen's got three little'uns and she can't go out to work—"

"Why can't she take 'em with her, Reverend?" I asked. It was customary for field Negroes with tiny children to deposit them in whatever shade there was while their parents worked—usually the babies sat in the shade between two rows of cotton. Those unable to sit were strapped papoose-style on their mothers' backs, or resided in extra cotton bags.

Reverend Sykes hesitated. "To tell you the truth, Miss Jean Louise, Helen's finding it hard to get work these days… when it's picking time, I think Mr. Link Deas'll take her."

"Why not, Reverend?"

Before he could answer, I felt Calpurnia's hand on my shoulder. At its pressure I said, "We thank you for lettin' us come." Jem echoed me, and we made our way homeward.

"Cal, I know Tom Robinson's in jail an' he's done somethin' awful, but why won't folks hire Helen?" I asked.

The courtroom was still, and again I wondered where the babies were. Judge Taylor’s cigar was a brown speck in the center of his mouth; Mr. Gilmer was writing on one of the yellow pads on his table, trying to outdo the court reporter, whose hand was jerking rapidly. “Shoot,” I muttered, “we missed it.”

Atticus was halfway through his speech to the jury. He had evidently pulled some papers from his briefcase that rested beside his chair, because they were on his table. Tom Robinson was toying with them.

“…absence of any corroborative evidence, this man was indicted on a capital charge and is now on trial for his life…”

I punched Jem. “How long’s he been at it?”

“He’s just gone over the evidence,” Jem whispered, “and we’re gonna win, Scout. I don’t see how we can’t. He’s been at it ‘bout five minutes. He made it as plain and easy as—well, as I’da explained it to you. You could’ve understood it, even.”

“Did Mr. Gilmer—?”

“Sh-h. Nothing new, just the usual. Hush now.”

We looked down again. Atticus was speaking easily, with the kind of detachment he used when he dictated a letter. He walked slowly up and down in front of the jury, and the jury seemed to be attentive: their heads were up, and they followed Atticus’s route with what seemed to be appreciation. I guess it was because Atticus wasn’t a thunderer.

Atticus paused, then he did something he didn’t ordinarily do. He unhitched his watch and chain and placed them on the table, saying, “With the court’s permission—”

Judge Taylor nodded, and then Atticus did something I never saw him do before or since, in public or in private: he unbuttoned his vest, unbuttoned his collar, loosened his tie, and took off his coat. He never loosened a scrap of his clothing until he undressed at bedtime, and to Jem and me, this was the equivalent of him standing before us stark naked. We exchanged horrified glances.

Atticus put his hands in his pockets, and as he returned to the jury, I saw his gold collar button and the tips of his pen and pencil winking in the light.

“Gentlemen,” he said. Jem and I again looked at each other. Atticus might have said, “Scout.” His voice had lost its tardiness, its detachment, and he was talking to the jury as if they were folks on the post office corner.

“Gentlemen,” he was saying, “I shall be brief, but I would like to use my remaining time with you to remind you that this case is not a difficult one, it requires no minute sifting of complicated facts, but it does require you to be sure beyond all reasonable doubt as to the guilt of the defendant. To begin with, this case should never have come to trial. This case is as simple as black and white.

“The state has not produced one iota of medical evidence to the effect that the crime Tom Robinson is charged with ever took place. It has relied instead upon the testimony of two witnesses whose evidence has not only been called into serious question on cross-examination, but has been flatly contradicted by the defendant. The defendant is not guilty, but somebody in this courtroom is.

“I have nothing but pity in my heart for the chief witness for the state, but my pity does not extend so far as to her putting a man’s life at stake, which she has done in an effort to get rid of her own guilt.

“I say guilt, gentlemen, because it was guilt that motivated her. She has committed no crime, she has merely broken a rigid and time-honored code of our society, a code so severe that whoever breaks it is hounded from our midst as unfit to live with. She is the victim of cruel poverty and ignorance, but I cannot pity her: she is white. She knew full well the enormity of her offense, but because her desires were stronger than the code she was breaking, she persisted in breaking it. She persisted, and her subsequent reaction is something that all of us have known at one time or another. She did something every child has done—she tried to put the evidence of her offense away from her. But in this case she was no child hiding stolen contraband: she struck out at her victim—of necessity she must put him away from her—he must be removed from her presence, from this world. She must destroy the evidence of her offense.

“What was the evidence of her offense? Tom Robinson, a human being. She must put Tom Robinson away from her. Tom Robinson was her daily reminder of what she did. What did she do? She tempted a Negro.

“She was white, and she tempted a Negro. She did something that in our society is unspeakable: she kissed a black man. Not an old Uncle, but a strong young Negro man. No code mattered to her before she broke it, but it came crashing down on her afterwards.

“Her father saw it, and the defendant has testified as to his remarks. What did her father do? We don’t know, but there is circumstantial evidence to indicate that Mayella Ewell was beaten savagely by someone who led almost exclusively with his left. We do know in part what Mr. Ewell did: he did what any God-fearing, persevering, respectable white man would do under the circumstances—he swore out a warrant, no doubt signing it with his left hand, and Tom Robinson now sits before you, having taken the oath with the only good hand he possesses—his right hand.

“And so a quiet, respectable, humble Negro who had the unmitigated temerity to ‘feel sorry’ for a white woman has had to put his word against two white people’s. I need not remind you of their appearance and conduct on the stand—you saw them for yourselves. The witnesses for the state, with the exception of the sheriff of Maycomb County, have presented themselves to you gentlemen, to this court, in the cynical confidence that their testimony would not be doubted, confident that you gentlemen would go along with them on the assumption—the evil assumption—that *all* Negroes lie, that *all* Negroes are basically immoral beings, that *all* Negro men are not to be trusted around our women, an assumption one associates with minds of their caliber.

“Which, gentlemen, we know is in itself a lie as black as Tom Robinson’s skin, a lie I do not have to point out to you. You know the truth, and the truth is this: some Negroes lie, some Negroes are immoral, some Negro men are not to be trusted around women—black or white. But this is a truth that applies to the human race and to no particular race of men. There is not a person in this courtroom who has never told a lie, who has never done an immoral thing, and there is no man living who has never looked upon a woman without desire.”

Atticus paused and took out his handkerchief. Then he took off his glasses and wiped them, and we saw another “first”: we had never seen him sweat—he was one of those men whose faces never perspired, but now it was shining tan.

“One more thing, gentlemen, before I quit. Thomas Jefferson once said that all men are created equal, a phrase that the Yankees and the distaff side of the Executive branch in Washington are fond of hurling at us. There is a tendency in this year of grace, 1935, for certain people to use this phrase out of context, to satisfy all conditions. The most ridiculous example I can think of is that the people who run public education promote the stupid and idle along with the industrious—because all men are created equal, educators will gravely tell you, the children left behind suffer terrible feelings of inferiority. We know all men are not created equal in the sense some people would have us believe—some people are smarter than others, some people have more opportunity because they’re born with it, some men make more money than others, some ladies make better cakes than others—some people are born gifted beyond the normal scope of most men.

“But there is one way in this country in which all men are created equal—there is one human institution that makes a pauper the equal of a Rockefeller, the stupid man the equal of an Einstein, and the ignorant man the equal of any college president. That institution, gentlemen, is a court. It can be the Supreme Court of the United States or the humblest J.P. court in the land, or this honorable court which you serve. Our courts have their faults, as does any human institution, but in this country our courts are the great levelers, and in our courts all men are created equal.

“I’m no idealist to believe firmly in the integrity of our courts and in the jury system—that is no ideal to me, it is a living, working reality. Gentlemen, a court is no better than each man of you sitting before me on this jury. A court is only as sound as its jury, and a

shoulder as he whispered. Atticus took his coat off the back of his chair and pulled it over his shoulder. Then he left the courtroom, but not by his usual exit. He must have wanted to go home the short way, because he walked quickly down the middle aisle toward the south exit. I followed the top of his head as he made his way to the door. He did not look up.

Someone was punching me, but I was reluctant to take my eyes from the people below us, and from the image of Atticus's lonely walk down the aisle.

"Miss Jean Louise?"

I looked around. They were standing. All around us and in the balcony on the opposite wall, the Negroes were getting to their feet. Reverend Sykes's voice was as distant as Judge Taylor's:

"Miss Jean Louise, stand up. Your father's passin'."

Chapter 22

It was Jem's turn to cry. His face was streaked with angry tears as we made our way through the cheerful crowd. "It ain't right," he muttered, all the way to the corner of the square where we found Atticus waiting. Atticus was standing under the street light looking as though nothing had happened: his vest was buttoned, his collar and tie were neatly in place, his watch-chain glistened, he was his impassive self again.

"It ain't right, Atticus," said Jem.

"No son, it's not right."

We walked home.

Aunt Alexandra was waiting up. She was in her dressing gown, and I could have sworn she had on her corset underneath it. "I'm sorry, brother," she murmured. Having never heard her call Atticus "brother" before, I stole a glance at Jem, but he was not listening. He would look up at Atticus, then down at the floor, and I wondered if he thought Atticus somehow responsible for Tom Robinson's conviction.

"Is he all right?" Aunty asked, indicating Jem.

"He'll be so presently," said Atticus. "It was a little too strong for him." Our father sighed. "I'm going to bed," he said. "If I don't wake up in the morning, don't call me."

"I didn't think it wise in the first place to let them—"

"This is their home, sister," said Atticus. "We've made it this way for them, they might as well learn to cope with it."

"But they don't have to go to the courthouse and wallow in it—"

"It's just as much Maycomb County as missionary teas."

"Atticus—" Aunt Alexandra's eyes were anxious. "You are the last person I thought would turn bitter over this."

"I'm not bitter, just tired. I'm going to bed."

"Atticus—" said Jem bleakly.

He turned in the doorway. "What, son?"

"How could they do it, how could they?"

"I don't know, but they did it. They've done it before and they did it tonight and they'll do it again and when they do it—seems that only children weep. Good night."

But things are always better in the morning. Atticus rose at his usual ungodly hour and was in the livingroom behind the *Mobile Register* when we stumbled in. Jem's morning face posed the question his sleepy lips struggled to ask.

"It's not time to worry yet," Atticus reassured him, as we went to the diningroom. "We're not through yet. There'll be an appeal, you can count on that. Gracious alive, Cal, what's all this?" He was staring at his breakfast plate.

Calpurnia said, "Tom Robinson's daddy sent you along this chicken this morning. I fixed it."

"You tell him I'm proud to get it—bet they don't have chicken for breakfast at the White House. What are these?"

"Rolls," said Calpurnia. "Estelle down at the hotel sent 'em."

difference between a man who's going to convict and a man who's a little disturbed in his mind, isn't there? He was the only uncertainty on the whole list."

"What kin was that man to Mr. Walter Cunningham?" I asked.

Atticus rose, stretched and yawned. It was not even our bedtime, but we knew he wanted a chance to read his newspaper. He picked it up, folded it, and tapped my head. "Let's see now," he droned to himself. "I've got it. Double first cousin."

"How can that be?"

"Two sisters married two brothers. That's all I'll tell you—you figure it out."

I tortured myself and decided that if I married Jem and Dill had a sister whom he married our children would be double first cousins. "Gee minetti, Jem," I said, when Atticus had gone, "they're funny folks. 'd you hear that, Aunty?"

Aunt Alexandra was hooking a rug and not watching us, but she was listening. She sat in her chair with her workbasket beside it, her rug spread across her lap. Why ladies hooked woolen rugs on boiling nights never became clear to me.

"I heard it," she said.

I remembered the distant disastrous occasion when I rushed to young Walter Cunningham's defense. Now I was glad I'd done it. "Soon's school starts I'm gonna ask Walter home to dinner," I planned, having forgotten my private resolve to beat him up the next time I saw him. "He can stay over sometimes after school, too. Atticus could drive him back to Old Sarum. Maybe he could spend the night with us sometime, okay, Jem?"

"We'll see about that," Aunt Alexandra said, a declaration that with her was always a threat, never a promise. Surprised, I turned to her. "Why not, Aunty? They're good folks."

She looked at me over her sewing glasses. "Jean Louise, there is no doubt in my mind that they're good folks. But they're not our kind of folks."

Jem says, "She means they're yappy, Scout."

"What's a yap?"

"Aw, tacky. They like fiddlin' and things like that."

"Well I do too—"

"Don't be silly, Jean Louise," said Aunt Alexandra. "The thing is, you can scrub Walter Cunningham till he shines, you can put him in shoes and a new suit, but he'll never be like Jem. Besides, there's a drinking streak in that family a mile wide. Finch women aren't interested in that sort of people."

"Aun-ty," said Jem, "she ain't nine yet."

"She may as well learn it now."

Aunt Alexandra had spoken. I was reminded vividly of the last time she had put her foot down. I never knew why. It was when I was absorbed with plans to visit Calpurnia's house—I was curious, interested; I wanted to be her "company," to see how she lived, who her friends were. I might as well have wanted to see the other side of the moon. This time the tactics were different, but Aunt Alexandra's aim was the same. Perhaps this was why she had come to live with us—to help us choose our friends. I would hold her off as long as I could: "If they're good folks, then why can't I be nice to Walter?"

"I didn't say not to be nice to him. You should be friendly and polite to him, you should be gracious to everybody, dear. But you don't have to invite him home."

"What if he was kin to us, Aunty?"

"The fact is that he is not kin to us, but if he were, my answer would be the same."

"Aunty," Jem spoke up, "Atticus says you can choose your friends but you sho' can't choose your family, an' they're still kin to you no matter whether you acknowledge 'em or not, and it makes you look right silly when you don't."

"That's your father all over again," said Aunt Alexandra, "and I still say that Jean Louise will not invite Walter Cunningham to this house. If he were her double first cousin once removed he would still not be received in this house unless he comes to see Atticus on business. Now that is that."

She had said Indeed Not, but this time she would give her reasons: "But I want to play

Alexandra, I never saw such charlotte… just lovely… I never can get my crust like this, never can… who'd've thought of little dewberry tarts… Calpurnia?… who'da thought it… anybody tell you that the preacher's wife's… nooo, well she is, and that other one not walkin' yet…"

They became quiet, and I knew they had all been served. Calpurnia returned and put my mother's heavy silver pitcher on a tray. "This coffee pitcher's a curiosity," she murmured, "they don't make 'em these days."

"Can I carry it in?"

"If you be careful and don't drop it. Set it down at the end of the table by Miss Alexandra. Down there by the cups'n things. She's gonna pour."

I tried pressing my behind against the door as Calpurnia had done, but the door didn't budge. Grinning, she held it open for me. "Careful now, it's heavy. Don't look at it and you won't spill it."

My journey was successful: Aunt Alexandra smiled brilliantly. "Stay with us, Jean Louise," she said. This was a part of her campaign to teach me to be a lady.

It was customary for every circle hostess to invite her neighbors in for refreshments, be they Baptists or Presbyterians, which accounted for the presence of Miss Rachel (sober as a judge), Miss Maudie and Miss Stephanie Crawford. Rather nervous, I took a seat beside Miss Maudie and wondered why ladies put on their hats to go across the street. Ladies in bunches always filled me with vague apprehension and a firm desire to be elsewhere, but this feeling was what Aunt Alexandra called being "spoiled."

The ladies were cool in fragile pastel prints: most of them were heavily powdered but unrouged; the only lipstick in the room was Tangee Natural. Cutex Natural sparkled on their fingernails, but some of the younger ladies wore Rose. They smelled heavenly. I sat quietly, having conquered my hands by tightly gripping the arms of the chair, and waited for someone to speak to me.

Miss Maudie's gold bridgework twinkled. "You're mighty dressed up, Miss Jean Louise," she said, "Where are your britches today?"

"Under my dress."

I hadn't meant to be funny, but the ladies laughed. My cheeks grew hot as I realized my mistake, but Miss Maudie looked gravely down at me. She never laughed at me unless I meant to be funny.

In the sudden silence that followed, Miss Stephanie Crawford called from across the room, "Whatcha going to be when you grow up, Jean Louise? A lawyer?"

"Nome, I hadn't thought about it…" I answered, grateful that Miss Stephanie was kind enough to change the subject. Hurriedly I began choosing my vocation. Nurse? Aviator? "Well…"

"Why shoot, I thought you wanted to be a lawyer, you've already commenced going to court."

The ladies laughed again. "That Stephanie's a card," somebody said. Miss Stephanie was encouraged to pursue the subject: "Don't you want to grow up to be a lawyer?"

Miss Maudie's hand touched mine and I answered mildly enough, "Nome, just a lady."

Miss Stephanie eyed me suspiciously, decided that I meant no impertinence, and contented herself with, "Well, you won't get very far until you start wearing dresses more often."

Miss Maudie's hand closed tightly on mine, and I said nothing. Its warmth was enough.

Mrs. Grace Merriweather sat on my left, and I felt it would be polite to talk to her. Mr. Merriweather, a faithful Methodist under duress, apparently saw nothing personal in singing, "Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me…" It was the general opinion of Maycomb, however, that Mrs. Merriweather had sobered him up and made a reasonably useful citizen of him. For certainly Mrs. Merriweather was the most devout lady in Maycomb. I searched for a topic of interest to her. "What did you all study this afternoon?" I asked.

"Oh child, those poor Mrunas," she said, and was off. Few other questions would be

“What does who want, Alexandra?” Miss Maudie asked.

“I mean this town. They’re perfectly willing to let him do what they’re too afraid to do themselves—it might lose ‘em a nickel. They’re perfectly willing to let him wreck his health doing what they’re afraid to do, they’re—”

“Be quiet, they’ll hear you,” said Miss Maudie. “Have you ever thought of it this way, Alexandra? Whether Maycomb knows it or not, we’re paying the highest tribute we can pay a man. We trust him to do right. It’s that simple.”

“Who?” Aunt Alexandra never knew she was echoing her twelve-year-old nephew.

“The handful of people in this town who say that fair play is not marked White Only; the handful of people who say a fair trial is for everybody, not just us; the handful of people with enough humility to think, when they look at a Negro, there but for the Lord’s kindness am I.” Miss Maudie’s old crispness was returning: “The handful of people in this town with background, that’s who they are.”

Had I been attentive, I would have had another scrap to add to Jem’s definition of background, but I found myself shaking and couldn’t stop. I had seen Enfield Prison Farm, and Atticus had pointed out the exercise yard to me. It was the size of a football field.

“Stop that shaking,” commanded Miss Maudie, and I stopped. “Get up, Alexandra, we’ve left ‘em long enough.”

Aunt Alexandra rose and smoothed the various whalebone ridges along her hips. She took her handkerchief from her belt and wiped her nose. She patted her hair and said, “Do I show it?”

“Not a sign,” said Miss Maudie. “Are you together again, Jean Louise?”

“Yes ma’am.”

“Then let’s join the ladies,” she said grimly.

Their voices swelled when Miss Maudie opened the door to the diningroom. Aunt Alexandra was ahead of me, and I saw her head go up as she went through the door.

“Oh, Mrs. Perkins,” she said, “you need some more coffee. Let me get it.”

“Calpurnia’s on an errand for a few minutes, Grace,” said Miss Maudie. “Let me pass you some more of those dewberry tarts. ‘dyou hear what that cousin of mine did the other day, the one who likes to go fishing?”

And so they went, down the row of laughing women, around the diningroom, refilling coffee cups, dishing out goodies as though their only regret was the temporary domestic disaster of losing Calpurnia. The gentle hum began again. “Yes sir, Mrs. Perkins, that J. Grimes Everett is a martyred saint, he… needed to get married so they ran… to the beauty parlor every Saturday afternoon… soon as the sun goes down. He goes to bed with the… chickens, a crate full of sick chickens, Fred says that’s what started it all. Fred says…”

Aunt Alexandra looked across the room at me and smiled. She looked at a tray of cookies on the table and nodded at them. I carefully picked up the tray and watched myself walk to Mrs. Merriweather. With my best company manners, I asked her if she would have some.

After all, if Aunty could be a lady at a time like this, so could I.

Chapter 25

“Don’t do that, Scout. Set him out on the back steps.”

“Jem, are you crazy?…”

“I said set him out on the back steps.”

Sighing, I scooped up the small creature, placed him on the bottom step and went back to my cot. September had come, but not a trace of cool weather with it, and we were still sleeping on the back screen porch. Lightning bugs were still about, the night crawlers and flying insects that beat against the screen the summer long had not gone wherever they go when autumn comes.

A roly-poly had found his way inside the house; I reasoned that the tiny varmint had

to the cabin. They stayed inside a long time, and Atticus came out alone. When they drove back by the dump, some of the Ewells hollered at them, but Dill didn't catch what they said.

Maycomb was interested by the news of Tom's death for perhaps two days; two days was enough for the information to spread through the county. "Did you hear about?… No? Well, they say he was runnin' fit to beat lightnin'…" To Maycomb, Tom's death was typical. Typical of a nigger to cut and run. Typical of a nigger's mentality to have no plan, no thought for the future, just run blind first chance he saw. Funny thing, Atticus Finch might've got him off scot free, but wait—? Hell no. You know how they are. Easy come, easy go. Just shows you, that Robinson boy was legally married, they say he kept himself clean, went to church and all that, but when it comes down to the line the veneer's mighty thin. Nigger always comes out in 'em.

A few more details, enabling the listener to repeat his version in turn, then nothing to talk about until *The Maycomb Tribune* appeared the following Thursday. There was a brief obituary in the Colored News, but there was also an editorial.

Mr. B. B. Underwood was at his most bitter, and he couldn't have cared less who canceled advertising and subscriptions. (But Maycomb didn't play that way: Mr. Underwood could holler till he sweated and write whatever he wanted to, he'd still get his advertising and subscriptions. If he wanted to make a fool of himself in his paper that was his business.) Mr. Underwood didn't talk about miscarriages of justice, he was writing so children could understand. Mr. Underwood simply figured it was a sin to kill cripples, be they standing, sitting, or escaping. He likened Tom's death to the senseless slaughter of songbirds by hunters and children, and Maycomb thought he was trying to write an editorial poetical enough to be reprinted in *The Montgomery Advertiser*.

How could this be so, I wondered, as I read Mr. Underwood's editorial. Senseless killing—Tom had been given due process of law to the day of his death, he had been tried openly and convicted by twelve good men and true, my father had fought for him all the way. Then Mr. Underwood's meaning became clear: Atticus had used every tool available to free men to save Tom Robinson, but in the secret courts of men's hearts Atticus had no case. Tom was a dead man the minute Mayella Ewell opened her mouth and screamed.

The name Ewell gave me a queasy feeling. Maycomb had lost no time in getting Mr. Ewell's views on Tom's demise and passing them along through that English Channel of gossip, Miss Stephanie Crawford. Miss Stephanie told Aunt Alexandra in Jem's presence ("Oh foot, he's old enough to listen.") that Mr. Ewell said it made one down and about two more to go. Jem told me not to be afraid, Mr. Ewell was more hot gas than anything. Jem also told me that if I breathed a word to Atticus, if in any way I let Atticus know I knew, Jem would personally never speak to me again.

Chapter 26

School started, and so did our daily trips past the Radley Place. Jem was in the seventh grade and went to high school, beyond the grammar-school building; I was now in the third grade, and our routines were so different I only walked to school with Jem in the mornings and saw him at mealtimes. He went out for football, but was too slender and too young yet to do anything but carry the team water buckets. This he did with enthusiasm; most afternoons he was seldom home before dark.

The Radley Place had ceased to terrify me, but it was no less gloomy, no less chilly under its great oaks, and no less uninviting. Mr. Nathan Radley could still be seen on a clear day, walking to and from town; we knew Boo was there, for the same old reason—nobody'd seen him carried out yet. I sometimes felt a twinge of remorse, when passing by the old place, at ever having taken part in what must have been sheer torment to Arthur Radley—what reasonable recluse wants children peeping through his shutters, delivering greetings on the end of a fishing-pole, wandering in his collards at night? And yet I remembered. Two Indian-head pennies, chewing gum, soap dolls, a rusty medal, a

"It is not," he said. "It's not okay to hate anybody."

"Atticus," I said, "there's somethin' I don't understand. Miss Gates said it was awful, Hitler doin' like he does, she got real red in the face about it—"

"I should think she would."

"But—"

"Yes?"

"Nothing, sir." I went away, not sure that I could explain to Atticus what was on my mind, not sure that I could clarify what was only a feeling. Perhaps Jem could provide the answer. Jem understood school things better than Atticus.

Jem was worn out from a day's water-carrying. There were at least twelve banana peels on the floor by his bed, surrounding an empty milk bottle. "Whatcha stuffin' for?" I asked.

"Coach says if I can gain twenty-five pounds by year after next I can play," he said. "This is the quickest way."

"If you don't throw it all up. Jem," I said, "I wanta ask you somethin'."

"Shoot." He put down his book and stretched his legs.

"Miss Gates is a nice lady, ain't she?"

"Why sure," said Jem. "I liked her when I was in her room."

"She hates Hitler a lot…"

"What's wrong with that?"

"Well, she went on today about how bad it was him treatin' the Jews like that. Jem, it's not right to persecute anybody, is it? I mean have mean thoughts about anybody, even, is it?"

"Gracious no, Scout. What's eatin' you?"

"Well, coming out of the courthouse that night Miss Gates was—she was goin' down the steps in front of us, you musta not seen her—she was talking with Miss Stephanie Crawford. I heard her say it's time somebody taught 'em a lesson, they were gettin' way above themselves, an' the next thing they think they can do is marry us. Jem, how can you hate Hitler so bad an' then turn around and be ugly about folks right at home—"

Jem was suddenly furious. He leaped off the bed, grabbed me by the collar and shook me. "I never wanta hear about that courthouse again, ever, ever, you hear me? You hear me? Don't you ever say one word to me about it again, you hear? Now go on!"

I was too surprised to cry. I crept from Jem's room and shut the door softly, lest undue noise set him off again. Suddenly tired, I wanted Atticus. He was in the livingroom, and I went to him and tried to get in his lap.

Atticus smiled. "You're getting so big now, I'll just have to hold a part of you." He held me close. "Scout," he said softly, "don't let Jem get you down. He's having a rough time these days. I heard you back there."

Atticus said that Jem was trying hard to forget something, but what he was really doing was storing it away for a while, until enough time passed. Then he would be able to think about it and sort things out. When he was able to think about it, Jem would be himself again.

Chapter 27

Things did settle down, after a fashion, as Atticus said they would. By the middle of October, only two small things out of the ordinary happened to two Maycomb citizens. No, there were three things, and they did not directly concern us—the Finches—but in a way they did.

The first thing was that Mr. Bob Ewell acquired and lost a job in a matter of days and probably made himself unique in the annals of the nineteen-thirties: he was the only man I ever heard of who was fired from the WPA for laziness. I suppose his brief burst of fame brought on a briefer burst of industry, but his job lasted only as long as his notoriety: Mr. Ewell found himself as forgotten as Tom Robinson. Thereafter, he resumed his regular weekly appearances at the welfare office for his check, and

"I think I understand," said Atticus. "It might be because he knows in his heart that very few people in Maycomb really believed his and Mayella's yarns. He thought he'd be a hero, but all he got for his pain was… was, okay, we'll convict this Negro but get back to your dump. He's had his fling with about everybody now, so he ought to be satisfied. He'll settle down when the weather changes."

"But why should he try to burgle John Taylor's house? He obviously didn't know John was home or he wouldn't've tried. Only lights John shows on Sunday nights are on the front porch and back in his den…"

"You don't know if Bob Ewell cut that screen, you don't know who did it," said Atticus. "But I can guess. I proved him a liar but John made him look like a fool. All the time Ewell was on the stand I couldn't dare look at John and keep a straight face. John looked at him as if he were a three-legged chicken or a square egg. Don't tell me judges don't try to prejudice juries," Atticus chuckled.

By the end of October, our lives had become the familiar routine of school, play, study. Jem seemed to have put out of his mind whatever it was he wanted to forget, and our classmates mercifully let us forget our father's eccentricities. Cecil Jacobs asked me one time if Atticus was a Radical. When I asked Atticus, Atticus was so amused I was rather annoyed, but he said he wasn't laughing at me. He said, "You tell Cecil I'm about as radical as Cotton Tom Heflin."

Aunt Alexandra was thriving. Miss Maudie must have silenced the whole missionary society at one blow, for Aunty again ruled that roost. Her refreshments grew even more delicious. I learned more about the poor Mrunas' social life from listening to Mrs. Merriweather: they had so little sense of family that the whole tribe was one big family. A child had as many fathers as there were men in the community, as many mothers as there were women. J. Grimes Everett was doing his utmost to change this state of affairs, and desperately needed our prayers.

Maycomb was itself again. Precisely the same as last year and the year before that, with only two minor changes. Firstly, people had removed from their store windows and automobiles the stickers that said NRA—WE DO OUR PART. I asked Atticus why, and he said it was because the National Recovery Act was dead. I asked who killed it: he said nine old men.

The second change in Maycomb since last year was not one of national significance. Until then, Halloween in Maycomb was a completely unorganized affair. Each child did what he wanted to do, with assistance from other children if there was anything to be moved, such as placing a light buggy on top of the livery stable. But parents thought things went too far last year, when the peace of Miss Tutti and Miss Frutti was shattered.

Misses Tutti and Frutti Barber were maiden ladies, sisters, who lived together in the only Maycomb residence boasting a cellar. The Barber ladies were rumored to be Republicans, having migrated from Clanton, Alabama, in 1911. Their ways were strange to us, and why they wanted a cellar nobody knew, but they wanted one and they dug one, and they spent the rest of their lives chasing generations of children out of it.

Misses Tutti and Frutti (their names were Sarah and Frances), aside from their Yankee ways, were both deaf. Miss Tutti denied it and lived in a world of silence, but Miss Frutti, not about to miss anything, employed an ear trumpet so enormous that Jem declared it was a loudspeaker from one of those dog Victrolas.

With these facts in mind and Halloween at hand, some wicked children had waited until the Misses Barber were thoroughly asleep, slipped into their livingroom (nobody but the Radleys locked up at night), stealthily made away with every stick of furniture therein, and hid it in the cellar. I deny having taken part in such a thing.

"I heard 'em!" was the cry that awoke the Misses Barber's neighbors at dawn next morning. "Heard 'em drive a truck up to the door! Stomped around like horses. They're in New Orleans by now!"

Miss Tutti was sure those traveling fur sellers who came through town two days ago had purloined their furniture. "Da-rk they were," she said. "Syrians."

He put on his hat. "Now I may be wrong, of course, but I think he's very alive. Shows all the symptoms of it. Go have a look at him, and when I come back we'll get together and decide."

Dr. Reynolds's step was young and brisk. Mr. Heck Tate's was not. His heavy boots punished the porch and he opened the door awkwardly, but he said the same thing Dr. Reynolds said when he came in. "You all right, Scout?" he added.

"Yes sir, I'm goin' in to see Jem. Atticus'n'them's in there."

"I'll go with you," said Mr. Tate.

Aunt Alexandra had shaded Jem's reading light with a towel, and his room was dim. Jem was lying on his back. There was an ugly mark along one side of his face. His left arm lay out from his body; his elbow was bent slightly, but in the wrong direction. Jem was frowning.

"Jem…?"

Atticus spoke. "He can't hear you, Scout, he's out like a light. He was coming around, but Dr. Reynolds put him out again."

"Yes sir." I retreated. Jem's room was large and square. Aunt Alexandra was sitting in a rocking-chair by the fireplace. The man who brought Jem in was standing in a corner, leaning against the wall. He was some countryman I did not know. He had probably been at the pageant, and was in the vicinity when it happened. He must have heard our screams and come running.

Atticus was standing by Jem's bed.

Mr. Heck Tate stood in the doorway. His hat was in his hand, and a flashlight bulged from his pants pocket. He was in his working clothes.

"Come in, Heck," said Atticus. "Did you find anything? I can't conceive of anyone low-down enough to do a thing like this, but I hope you found him."

Mr. Tate sniffed. He glanced sharply at the man in the corner, nodded to him, then looked around the room—at Jem, at Aunt Alexandra, then at Atticus.

"Sit down, Mr. Finch," he said pleasantly.

Atticus said, "Let's all sit down. Have that chair, Heck. I'll get another one from the livingroom."

Mr. Tate sat in Jem's desk chair. He waited until Atticus returned and settled himself. I wondered why Atticus had not brought a chair for the man in the corner, but Atticus knew the ways of country people far better than I. Some of his rural clients would park their long-eared steeds under the chinaberry trees in the back yard, and Atticus would often keep appointments on the back steps. This one was probably more comfortable where he was.

"Mr. Finch," said Mr. Tate, "tell you what I found. I found a little girl's dress—it's out there in my car. That your dress, Scout?"

"Yes sir, if it's a pink one with smockin'," I said. Mr. Tate was behaving as if he were on the witness stand. He liked to tell things his own way, untrammeled by state or defense, and sometimes it took him a while.

"I found some funny-looking pieces of muddy-colored cloth—"

"That's m'costume, Mr. Tate."

Mr. Tate ran his hands down his thighs. He rubbed his left arm and investigated Jem's mantelpiece, then he seemed to be interested in the fireplace. His fingers sought his long nose.

"What is it, Heck?" said Atticus.

Mr. Tate found his neck and rubbed it. "Bob Ewell's lyin' on the ground under that tree down yonder with a kitchen knife stuck up under his ribs. He's dead, Mr. Finch."

Chapter 29

Aunt Alexandra got up and reached for the mantelpiece. Mr. Tate rose, but she declined assistance. For once in his life, Atticus's instinctive courtesy failed him: he sat where he was.

Somehow, I could think of nothing but Mr. Bob Ewell saying he'd get Atticus if it took him the rest of his life. Mr. Ewell almost got him, and it was the last thing he did.

"Are you sure?" Atticus said bleakly.

"He's dead all right," said Mr. Tate. "He's good and dead. He won't hurt these children again."

"I didn't mean that." Atticus seemed to be talking in his sleep. His age was beginning to show, his one sign of inner turmoil, the strong line of his jaw melted a little, one became aware of telltale creases forming under his ears, one noticed not his jet-black hair but the gray patches growing at his temples.

"Hadn't we better go to the livingroom?" Aunt Alexandra said at last.

"If you don't mind," said Mr. Tate, "I'd rather us stay in here if it won't hurt Jem any. I want to have a look at his injuries while Scout… tells us about it."

"Is it all right if I leave?" she asked. "I'm just one person too many in here. I'll be in my room if you want me, Atticus." Aunt Alexandra went to the door, but she stopped and turned. "Atticus, I had a feeling about this tonight—I—this is my fault," she began. "I should have—"

Mr. Tate held up his hand. "You go ahead, Miss Alexandra, I know it's been a shock to you. And don't you fret yourself about anything—why, if we followed our feelings all the time we'd be like cats chasin' their tails. Miss Scout, see if you can tell us what happened, while it's still fresh in your mind. You think you can? Did you see him following you?"

I went to Atticus and felt his arms go around me. I buried my head in his lap. "We started home. I said Jem, I've forgot m'shoes. Soon's we started back for 'em the lights went out. Jem said I could get 'em tomorrow…"

"Scout, raise up so Mr. Tate can hear you," Atticus said. I crawled into his lap.

"Then Jem said hush a minute. I thought he was thinkin'—he always wants you to hush so he can think—then he said he heard somethin'. We thought it was Cecil."

"Cecil?"

"Cecil Jacobs. He scared us once tonight, an' we thought it was him again. He had on a sheet. They gave a quarter for the best costume, I don't know who won it—"

"Where were you when you thought it was Cecil?"

"Just a little piece from the schoolhouse. I yelled somethin' at him—"

"You yelled, what?"

"Cecil Jacobs is a big fat hen, I think. We didn't hear nothin'—then Jem yelled hello or somethin' loud enough to wake the dead—"

"Just a minute, Scout," said Mr. Tate. "Mr. Finch, did you hear them?"

Atticus said he didn't. He had the radio on. Aunt Alexandra had hers going in her bedroom. He remembered because she told him to turn his down a bit so she could hear hers. Atticus smiled. "I always play a radio too loud."

"I wonder if the neighbors heard anything…" said Mr. Tate.

"I doubt it, Heck. Most of them listen to their radios or go to bed with the chickens. Maudie Atkinson may have been up, but I doubt it."

"Go ahead, Scout," Mr. Tate said.

"Well, after Jem yelled we walked on. Mr. Tate, I was shut up in my costume but I could hear it myself, then. Footsteps, I mean. They walked when we walked and stopped when we stopped. Jem said he could see me because Mrs. Crenshaw put some kind of shiny paint on my costume. I was a ham."

"How's that?" asked Mr. Tate, startled.

Atticus described my role to Mr. Tate, plus the construction of my garment. "You should have seen her when she came in," he said, "it was crushed to a pulp."

Mr. Tate rubbed his chin. "I wondered why he had those marks on him, His sleeves were perforated with little holes. There were one or two little puncture marks on his arms to match the holes. Let me see that thing if you will, sir."

Atticus fetched the remains of my costume. Mr. Tate turned it over and bent it around to get an idea of its former shape. "This thing probably saved her life," he said. "Look."

Chapter 30

"Mr. Arthur, honey," said Atticus, gently correcting me. "Jean Louise, this is Mr. Arthur Radley. I believe he already knows you."

If Atticus could blandly introduce me to Boo Radley at a time like this, well—that was Atticus.

Boo saw me run instinctively to the bed where Jem was sleeping, for the same shy smile crept across his face. Hot with embarrassment, I tried to cover up by covering Jem up.

"Ah-ah, don't touch him," Atticus said.

Mr. Heck Tate sat looking intently at Boo through his horn-rimmed glasses. He was about to speak when Dr. Reynolds came down the hall.

"Everybody out," he said, as he came in the door. "Evenin', Arthur, didn't notice you the first time I was here."

Dr. Reynolds's voice was as breezy as his step, as though he had said it every evening of his life, an announcement that astounded me even more than being in the same room with Boo Radley. Of course… even Boo Radley got sick sometimes, I thought. But on the other hand I wasn't sure.

Dr. Reynolds was carrying a big package wrapped in newspaper. He put it down on Jem's desk and took off his coat. "You're quite satisfied he's alive, now? Tell you how I knew. When I tried to examine him he kicked me. Had to put him out good and proper to touch him. So scat," he said to me.

"Er—" said Atticus, glancing at Boo. "Heck, let's go out on the front porch. There are plenty of chairs out there, and it's still warm enough."

I wondered why Atticus was inviting us to the front porch instead of the livingroom, then I understood. The livingroom lights were awfully strong.

We filed out, first Mr. Tate—Atticus was waiting at the door for him to go ahead of him. Then he changed his mind and followed Mr. Tate.

People have a habit of doing everyday things even under the oddest conditions. I was no exception: "Come along, Mr. Arthur," I heard myself saying, "you don't know the house real well. I'll just take you to the porch, sir."

He looked down at me and nodded.

I led him through the hall and past the livingroom.

"Won't you have a seat, Mr. Arthur? This rocking-chair's nice and comfortable."

My small fantasy about him was alive again: he would be sitting on the porch… right pretty spell we're having, isn't it, Mr. Arthur?

Yes, a right pretty spell. Feeling slightly unreal, I led him to the chair farthest from Atticus and Mr. Tate. It was in deep shadow. Boo would feel more comfortable in the dark.

Atticus was sitting in the swing, and Mr. Tate was in a chair next to him. The light from the livingroom windows was strong on them. I sat beside Boo.

"Well, Heck," Atticus was saying, "I guess the thing to do—good Lord, I'm losing my memory…" Atticus pushed up his glasses and pressed his fingers to his eyes. "Jem's not quite thirteen… no, he's already thirteen—I can't remember. Anyway, it'll come before county court—"

"What will, Mr. Finch?" Mr. Tate uncrossed his legs and leaned forward.

"Of course it was clear-cut self defense, but I'll have to go to the office and hunt up—"

"Mr. Finch, do you think Jem killed Bob Ewell? Do you think that?"

"You heard what Scout said, there's no doubt about it. She said Jem got up and yanked him off her—he probably got hold of Ewell's knife somehow in the dark… we'll find out tomorrow."

"Mis-ter Finch, hold on," said Mr. Tate. "Jem never stabbed Bob Ewell."

Atticus was silent for a moment. He looked at Mr. Tate as if he appreciated what he said. But Atticus shook his head.

"Heck, it's mighty kind of you and I know you're doing it from that good heart of yours,

doorknob. He gently released my hand, opened the door, went inside, and shut the door behind him. I never saw him again.

Neighbors bring food with death and flowers with sickness and little things in between. Boo was our neighbor. He gave us two soap dolls, a broken watch and chain, a pair of good-luck pennies, and our lives. But neighbors give in return. We never put back into the tree what we took out of it: we had given him nothing, and it made me sad.

I turned to go home. Street lights winked down the street all the way to town. I had never seen our neighborhood from this angle. There were Miss Maudie’s, Miss Stephanie’s—there was our house, I could see the porch swing—Miss Rachel’s house was beyond us, plainly visible. I could even see Mrs. Dubose’s.

I looked behind me. To the left of the brown door was a long shuttered window. I walked to it, stood in front of it, and turned around. In daylight, I thought, you could see to the postoffice corner.

Daylight… in my mind, the night faded. It was daytime and the neighborhood was busy. Miss Stephanie Crawford crossed the street to tell the latest to Miss Rachel. Miss Maudie bent over her azaleas. It was summertime, and two children scampered down the sidewalk toward a man approaching in the distance. The man waved, and the children raced each other to him.

It was still summertime, and the children came closer. A boy trudged down the sidewalk dragging a fishingpole behind him. A man stood waiting with his hands on his hips. Summertime, and his children played in the front yard with their friend, enacting a strange little drama of their own invention.

It was fall, and his children fought on the sidewalk in front of Mrs. Dubose’s. The boy helped his sister to her feet, and they made their way home. Fall, and his children trotted to and fro around the corner, the day’s woes and triumphs on their faces. They stopped at an oak tree, delighted, puzzled, apprehensive.

Winter, and his children shivered at the front gate, silhouetted against a blazing house. Winter, and a man walked into the street, dropped his glasses, and shot a dog.

Summer, and he watched his children’s heart break. Autumn again, and Boo’s children needed him.

Atticus was right. One time he said you never really know a man until you stand in his shoes and walk around in them. Just standing on the Radley porch was enough.

The street lights were fuzzy from the fine rain that was falling. As I made my way home, I felt very old, but when I looked at the tip of my nose I could see fine misty beads, but looking cross-eyed made me dizzy so I quit. As I made my way home, I thought what a thing to tell Jem tomorrow. He’d be so mad he missed it he wouldn’t speak to me for days. As I made my way home, I thought Jem and I would get grown but there wasn’t much else left for us to learn, except possibly algebra.

I ran up the steps and into the house. Aunt Alexandra had gone to bed, and Atticus’s room was dark. I would see if Jem might be reviving. Atticus was in Jem’s room, sitting by his bed. He was reading a book.

“Is Jem awake yet?”

“Sleeping peacefully. He won’t be awake until morning.”

“Oh. Are you sittin‘ up with him?”

“Just for an hour or so. Go to bed, Scout. You’ve had a long day.”

“Well, I think I’ll stay with you for a while.”

“Suit yourself,” said Atticus. It must have been after midnight, and I was puzzled by his amiable acquiescence. He was shrewder than I, however: the moment I sat down I began to feel sleepy.

“Whatcha readin‘?” I asked.

Atticus turned the book over. “Something of Jem’s. Called *The Gray Ghost*.”

I was suddenly awake. “Why’d you get that one?”

“Honey, I don’t know. Just picked it up. One of the few things I haven’t read,” he said pointedly.

“Read it out loud, please, Atticus. It’s real scary.”