

Literature & Composition 8

March 23-27

Time Allotment: 45 minutes per day

Student Name: _____

Teacher Name: _____

Packet Overview

Date	Objective(s)	Page Number
Monday, March 23	Ch 8: <i>1. Identify what Scout thinks the causes of the snow are.</i> <i>2. Retell how the characters react to the fire at Miss Maudie's house; analyze what these reactions display about each character.</i>	3
Tuesday, March 24	Ch 9: <i>1. Retell the conflict that Jem and Scout face in Ch 9; Summarize Scout's reaction to the conflict and what Atticus does/says in response</i> <i>2. Retell Atticus & Uncle Jacks' conversation about the upcoming court case.</i>	6
Wednesday, March 25	Ch 10: <i>1. Identify the difference between shooting mockingbirds and other birds; identify the solemnity of Atticus' use of the word "sin"</i> <i>2. Compare & Contrast Jem and Scouts' view of their father before and after the Tim Johnson affair.</i>	8
Thursday, March 26	Ch 11: <i>1. Characterize Mrs. Dubose. Be sure to not her attitude towards others and what she says to the Finches</i> <i>2. Paraphrase Atticus' understanding of courage and his reasons for wanting the children to know Mrs. Dubose.</i>	10
Friday, March 27	Review <i>2. Use the week's vocabulary in proper context.</i> <i>1. Imitate the style of To Kill a Mockingbird by composing a description of a family member.</i>	12

Dear Students,

We hope that you enjoy continuing to read this wonderful book! We miss hearing your insights and learning from your thoughts. Since we will not be reading with you in person, we want to give you a reminder. As you read, write (and hopefully discuss this text with family and friends via technology) please keep in mind that the text may contain words that, though they are used to create authenticity, are not appropriate to reuse in daily discussion. If you are referencing text in your writing, you may write out such words with the first letter followed by a slash. An example of this would be “n-----”.

Fondly,

Your 8th Grade Lit Teachers

Additional Notes:

- i. Assignments should be completed preferably in (a) a notebook or loose-leaf paper, but if you do not have access to these, you may type your work.
- ii. Title each assignment with the DATE (see above).
- iii. If not in a notebook, keep all your written work in a folder (physical folder if written, digital folder if typed).
- iv. If you do not have a physical copy of *To Kill A Mockingbird*, a PDF copy of the text is included at the end of this packet. Also, the text can be downloaded at [http://www.kkworld.com/kitablar/harper li masqarachini oldurmek-eng.pdf](http://www.kkworld.com/kitablar/harper_li_masqarachini_oldurmek-eng.pdf)

Academic Honesty

I certify that I completed this assignment independently in accordance with the GHNO Academy Honor Code.

Student signature:

I certify that my student completed this assignment independently in accordance with the GHNO Academy Honor Code.

Parent signature:

Monday, March 23

Literature & Composition Unit: *To Kill A Mockingbird*
Lesson 1: Chapter 8 (Snow and Fire in Maycomb)

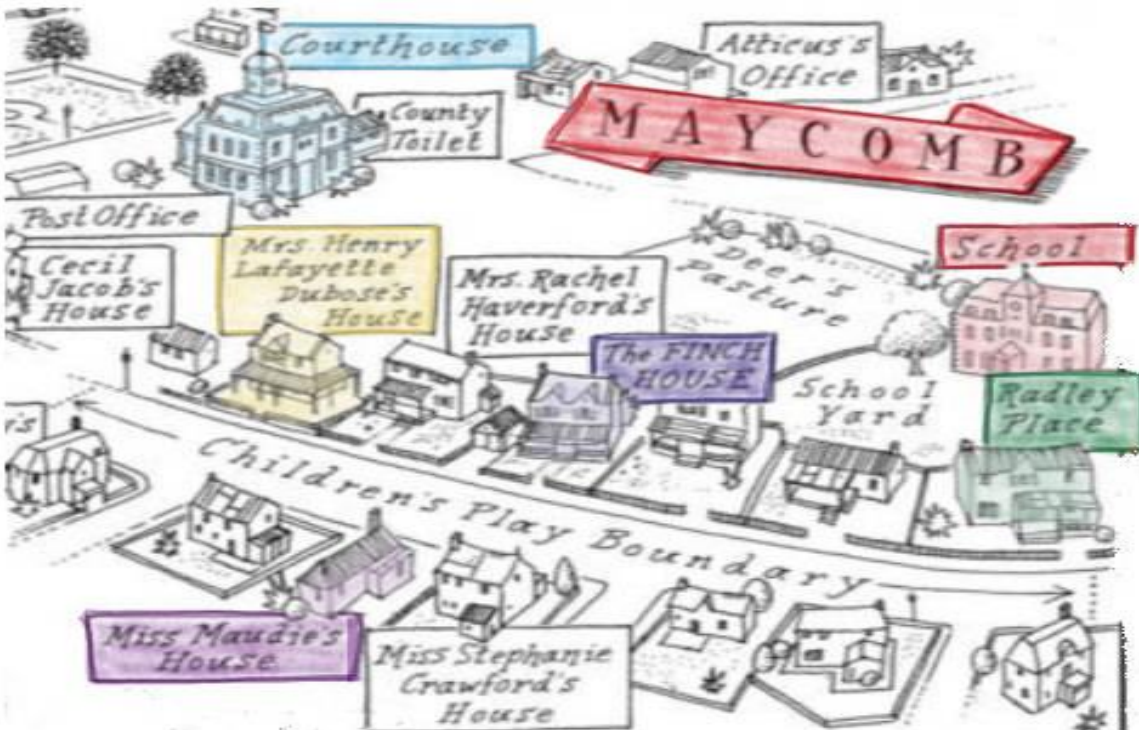
Lesson 1 Socratic Question: Keep these questions in mind as you read and study this lesson!
What kind of people live in Maycomb? (What do they care about\ talk about\relate to others? How are the Finches similar or dissimilar to them?)

Objective: Be able to do this by the end of this lesson.

1. Identify what Scout thinks the causes of the snow are.
2. Retell how the characters react to both the fire at Miss Maudie’s house; analyze what these actions display about each character.

Review

As we read in Chapter 7, Scout and Jem have been reprimanded for “playing Boo Radley” but their playacting went so far that they ended up scaring themselves when Scout got too close to the Radley house, and Jem lost his pants. Here is a map of the town of Maycomb. Use this map to identify different places in the reading.



Instructions

- | |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">I. <u>Read & Annotate</u> Chapter 8 (found at the end of this packet)II. <u>Write</u> a response to questions 1-4.III. <u>Memorize</u> the definitions for the 3 vocabulary words. |
|--|

II. Answer the following questions in 3-4 complete sentences.

1. What are the two causes of the snow that Scout identifies? (One is reasonably scientific the other has to do with her conscience)

2. How do Scout and Jem make a snowman, who does it look like?

3. Describe how the neighbors react to the fire at Miss Maudie's house. What do each of them do?

4. How does Miss Maudie react to her loss? Why does her response surprise Scout?

Compose ONE question of your own from Chapter 8.

III. Find these words in Chapter 8, reread the whole sentence, circle the vocabulary word and memorize the definitions provided below:

Unfathomable: (adj) incapable of being fully explored or understood.

Caricature: (n) a picture, description, or imitation of a person in which certain striking characteristics are exaggerated in order to create a comic or grotesque effect.

Cordial: (adj) warm and friendly

Closing: Check your understanding of the Chapter.

1. **Write** a 5-6 sentence answer to these questions: What did you learn about the Finches and their neighbors during the incident of the house fire? (Atticus, Mr. Avery, Scout, Jem, Boo Radley, Miss Maudie)

Tuesday, March 24

Literature & Composition Unit: *To Kill A Mockingbird*
Lesson 2: Chapter 9

Lesson 2 Socratic Guiding Question: Keep this question in mind as you read and study this lesson!
How are Atticus and his children similar or dissimilar to their relatives?

Objective: Be able to do this by the end of this lesson.

1. Identify the conflict that Jem and Scout face in Ch 9; summarize Scout’s reaction to the conflict and what Atticus does/says in response
2. Retell the substance of Atticus & Uncle Jacks’ conversation about the upcoming court case.

Instructions:

- I. Read & Annotate Chapter 9 (found at the end of this packet)
- II. Write a response to questions 1-4.
- III. Memorize the definitions for the 3 vocabulary words.

II. Answer the following questions in 3-4 complete sentences.

1. Why does Scout beat up Cecil Jacobs? How did this fight signify “the beginning of a rather thin time?”

2. According to Atticus is there truth in the accusation that Cecil Jacobs makes? What is Atticus’ explanation of the insult that Cecil called him? Does Atticus think of it as an insult?

3. Why does Scout fight Francis (also going against Atticus’ request to not fight)?

4. Why reason does Attius give Uncle Jack for taking the case? Why does Scout say that Atticus wanted her to hear every word?

Compose ONE question of your own from Chapter 9.

III. Find these words in Chapter 9, reread the whole sentence, circle the vocabulary word and memorize the definitions provided below:

Lineaments: (n) a distinctive feature or characteristic, especially of the face.

Ingenuous: (adj) [of a person or action] innocent and unsuspecting.

Mortify: (v) 1. cause (someone) to feel embarrassed, ashamed, or humiliated.
2. subdue (the body or its needs and desires) by self-denial or discipline.

Closing: Check your understanding of the Chapter.

1. Write a 5-6 sentence answer to these questions: How did Scout's fight with Cecil Jacobs signify "the beginning of a rather thin time?" What are "thin times?" Is Atticus aware of Jem and Scout's situation?

Wednesday, March 25

Literature & Composition Unit: *To Kill A Mockingbird*
Lesson 2: Chapter 10

Lesson 2 Socratic Guiding Question: Keep this question in mind as you read and study this lesson!
What does the brief discussion of mockingbirds have to do with the title?

Objective: Be able to do this by the end of this lesson.

1. Identify the difference between shooting mockingbirds and other birds; identify the solemnity of Atticus’ use of the word “sin”
2. Compare & Contrast Jem and Scouts’ view of their father before and after the Tim Johnson affair.

Instructions:

- I. Read & Annotate Chapter 10 (found at the end of this packet)
- II. Write a response to questions 1-4.
- III. Memorize the definitions for the 3 vocabulary words.

II. Answer the following questions in 3-4 complete sentences.

1. What is Jem and Scout’s opinion of Atticus’ skills and abilities? How does Atticus compare the fathers of their schoolmates?

2. Why do Atticus and Miss Maudie say that it is a sin to kill a Mockingbird? What is a sin?

3. Why does Atticus shoot Tim Johnson? (What is wrong with Tim Johnson? Why doesn't Heck Tate do it?)

4. What do Scout and Jem think about Atticus after the Tim Johnson incident? How has their view of him changed?

Compose ONE question of your own from Chapter 10.

III. Find these words in Chapter 10, reread the whole sentence, circle the vocabulary word and memorize the definitions provided below:

Feeble: (adj) lacking physical strength, especially as a result of age or illness.

Meddle: (v) 1. interfere in or busy oneself unduly with something that is not one's concern.
2. touch or handle (something) without permission.

Vehemently: (adv) in a forceful, passionate, or intense manner; with great feeling.

Closing: Check your understanding of the Chapter.

1. **Write** a 5-6 sentence answer to these questions: What does Jem mean when he says that "Atticus is a gentleman, just like me!"? Why doesn't Atticus practice his skill of marksmanship? Why does he end up shooting the dog? How is Jem like his father?

Thursday, March 26

Literature & Composition Unit: *To Kill A Mockingbird*
Lesson 2: Chapter 11

Lesson 2 Socratic Guiding Question: What kind of people live in Maycomb? (What do they care about\ talk about\relate to others? How are the Finches similar or dissimilar to them?)

Objective: Be able to do this by the end of this lesson.

1. Characterize Mrs. Dubose. Be sure to not her attitude towards others and what she says to the Finches
2. Paraphrase Atticus' understanding of courage and his reasons for wanting the children to know Mrs. Dubose.

Instructions:

- I. Read & Annotate Chapter 11 (found at the end of this packet)
- II. Write a response to questions 1-4.
- III. Memorize the definitions for the 3 vocabulary words.

II. Answer the following questions in 3-4 complete sentences.

1. Why does Jem wreck Mrs. Dubose's camellias? What is the consequence?

2. What does Mrs. Dubose look like? How does she act towards the Finches?

3. Why does Atticus say that Mrs. Dubose was a great lady? What does she give Jem?

4. What does Atticus say that courage is? Why is Mrs. Dubose courageous?

Compose ONE question of your own from Chapter 11.

III. Find these words in Chapter 11, reread the whole sentence, circle the vocabulary word and memorize the definitions provided below:

Passé: (n) no longer fashionable; out of date.

Apoplectic: (adj) overcome with anger; extremely indignant.

Morphine: (n) an analgesic and narcotic drug obtained from opium and used medicinally to relieve pain.

Closing: Check your understanding of the Chapter.

1. **Write** a 5-6 sentence answer to these questions: At the end the Chapter, Atticus says that even if Mrs. Dubose hadn't demanded that Jem read to her, Atticus would have sent him over anyway. Why?

Friday, March 27

Literature & Composition Unit: *To Kill A Mockingbird*
Lesson 5: Vocabulary Assessment & Writing Assignment

Lesson 5

Objective: Be able to do this by the end of this lesson.

1. Use the week's vocabulary in proper context
2. Imitate the style of *To Kill a Mockingbird* by composing a description of a family member.

Instructions:

- I. Fill in the vocabulary word that you think is most appropriate.
- II. Choose an accurate synonym to replace the vocabulary word.
- III. Compose a descriptive essay in the style of *To Kill A Mockingbird*.

I. Fill in the vocabulary word that you think is most appropriate given the context of the sentence.

- | | | |
|-----------------|--------------|---------------|
| a. Unfathomable | e. Ingenuous | i. Vehemently |
| b. Caricature | f. Mortify | j. Passé |
| c. Cordial | g. Feeble | k. Apoplectic |
| d. Lineaments | h. Meddle | l. Morphine |

1. The Prince pushed the door _____ as he rushed in to greet the captured Princess.
2. The Princess' greeting was _____, you could even say it was beyond friendly.
3. The Princess' pet frog was _____ due to a lack of flies and water.
4. The joy of the Princess' parents at the return of their daughter was _____.
5. Unfortunately, the Princess had been locked in the tower so long that her dress was _____.

II. Choose THE MOST accurate synonym to replace the vocabulary word in its original sentence. Write the number of the question and the letter that best fits in your notebook or highlight the answer.

1. 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.
 - a. Educated
 - b. Friendly
 - c. Healthy
 - d. Talkative

2. I guess it ain't your fault if Uncle Atticus is a n-----lover besides, but I'm here to tell you it certainly does **mortify** the rest of the family-
 - a. Punish
 - b. Please
 - c. Embarrass
 - d. Interest

3. Atticus was **feeble**: he was nearly fifty.
 - a. Wise
 - b. Weak
 - c. Old
 - d. Foolish

4. When we were small, Jem and I confined our activities to the southern neighborhood, but when I was well into the second grade at school and tormenting Boo Radley became **passé**, the business section of Maycomb drew us frequently up the street past the real property of Mrs. Henry Lafayette Dubose.
 - a. Special
 - b. Childish
 - c. Out-of-date
 - d. Fascinating

5. Once she heard Jem refer to our father as "Atticus" and her reaction was **apoplectic**.
 - a. Astonishment
 - b. Anger
 - c. Anxiety
 - d. Approval

III. Compose your own description!

Name _____ Date _____

Prompt: In *To Kill A Mockingbird*, Scout’s lively imagination paints a picture of her home town, Maycomb, and the people that live in it. In at least 7 sentences describe a relative of yours. Besides their physical appearance, be sure to give an idea of their personality and habits. Use descriptive language in order to create a clear image for your reader!

Here are some literary devices that you can use.

Simile: is a figure of speech that makes a comparison, showing similarities between two different things.

Hyperbole: An extravagant expression, not intended to be taken literally. An overstatement. (Hyperbole is very similar to exaggeration.)

Descriptive Adjectives: The descriptive adjectives can be simply defined as the type of adjectives that are used to express the size, color, or shape of a person, a thing, an animal, or a place.

Personification: A form of imagery. Speaking about a non-human object as if it had human characteristics.

Alliteration: is a literary device where two or more words in a phrase or line of poetry share the same beginning consonant sound.

“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.

[Contents](#) - [Prev](#) / [Next](#)

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 touchy 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 backyard 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 caricature," 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 backyard 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 grimed 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.

[Contents](#) - [Prev](#) / [Next](#)

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

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 ingenious 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 Auntie 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.

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 Yanks, 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, Auntie 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 Auntie was a good cook was some compensation for being forced to spend a religious

Jem said, "How's Rose Aylmer?"

Rose Aylmer was Uncle Jack's cat. She was a beautiful yellow female Uncle Jack said was one of the few women he could stand permanently. He reached into his coat pocket and brought out some snapshots. We admired them.

"She's gettin' fat," I said.

"I should think so. She eats all the leftover fingers and ears from the hospital."

"Aw, that's a damn story," I said.

"I beg your pardon?"

Atticus said, "Don't pay any attention to her, Jack. She's trying you out. Cal says she's been cussing fluently for a week, now." Uncle Jack raised his eyebrows and said nothing. I was proceeding on the dim theory, aside from the innate attractiveness of such words, that if Atticus discovered I had picked them up at school he wouldn't make me go.

But at supper that evening when I asked him to pass the damn ham, please, Uncle Jack pointed at me. "See me afterwards, young lady," he said.

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 leather booksack, five shirts and an untied bow tie.

"That's nice," I lied. "Jem and me got air rifles, and Jem got a chemistry set—"

"A toy one, I reckon."

"No, a real one. He's gonna make me some invisible ink, and I'm gonna write to Dill in it."

Francis asked what was the use of that.

"Well, can't you just see his face when he gets a letter from me with nothing in it? It'll drive him nuts."

Talking to Francis gave me the sensation of settling slowly to the bottom of the ocean. He was the most boring child I ever met. As he lived in Mobile, he could not inform on me to school authorities, but he managed to tell everything he knew to Aunt Alexandra, who in turn unburdened herself to Atticus, who either forgot it or gave me hell, whichever struck his fancy. But the only time I ever heard Atticus speak sharply to anyone was when I once heard him say, "Sister, I do the best I can with them!" It had something to do with my going around in overalls.

Aunt Alexandra was fanatical on the subject of my attire. I could not possibly hope to be a lady if I wore breeches; when I said I could do nothing in a dress, she said I wasn't supposed to be doing things that required pants. Aunt Alexandra's vision of my deportment involved playing with small stoves, tea sets, and wearing the Add-A-Pearl necklace she gave me when I was born; furthermore, I should be a ray of sunshine in my father's lonely life. I suggested that one could be a ray of

sunshine in pants just as well, but Auntie said that one had to behave like a sunbeam, that I was born good but had grown progressively worse every year. She hurt my feelings and set my teeth permanently on edge, but when I asked Atticus about it, he said there were already enough sunbeams in the family and to go on about my business, he didn't mind me much the way I was.

At Christmas dinner, I sat at the little table in the diningroom; Jem and Francis sat with the adults at the dining table. Auntie had continued to isolate me long after Jem and Francis graduated to the big table. I often wondered what she thought I'd do, get up and throw something? I sometimes thought of asking her if she would let me sit at the big table with the rest of them just once, I would prove to her how civilized I could be; after all, I ate at home every day with no major mishaps. When I begged Atticus to use his influence, he said he had none—we were guests, and we sat where she told us to sit. He also said Aunt Alexandra didn't understand girls much, she'd never had one.

But her cooking made up for everything: three kinds of meat, summer vegetables from her pantry shelves; peach pickles, two kinds of cake and ambrosia constituted a modest Christmas dinner. Afterwards, the adults made for the livingroom and sat around in a dazed condition. Jem lay on the floor, and I went to the back yard. "Put on your coat," said Atticus dreamily, so I didn't hear him. Francis sat beside me on the back steps. "That was the best yet," I said.

"Grandma's a wonderful cook," said Francis. "She's gonna teach me how."

"Boys don't cook." I giggled at the thought of Jem in an apron.

"Grandma says all men should learn to cook, that men oughta be careful with their wives and wait on 'em when they don't feel good," said my cousin.

"I don't want Dill waitin' on me," I said. "I'd rather wait on him."

"Dill?"

"Yeah. Don't say anything about it yet, but we're gonna get married as soon as we're big enough. He asked me last summer."

Francis hooted.

"What's the matter with him?" I asked. "Ain't anything the matter with him."

"You mean that little runt Grandma says stays with Miss Rachel every summer?"

“That’s exactly who I mean.”

“I know all about him,” said Francis.

“What about him?”

“Grandma says he hasn’t got a home—”

“Has too, he lives in Meridian.”

“—he just gets passed around from relative to relative, and Miss Rachel keeps him every summer.”

“Francis, that’s not so!”

Francis grinned at me. “You’re mighty dumb sometimes, Jean Louise. Guess you don’t know any better, though.”

“What do you mean?”

“If Uncle Atticus lets you run around with stray dogs, that’s his own business, like Grandma says, so it ain’t your fault. I guess it ain’t your fault if Uncle Atticus is a nigger-lover besides, but I’m here to tell you it certainly does mortify the rest of the family—”

“Francis, what the hell do you mean?”

“Just what I said. Grandma says it’s bad enough he lets you all run wild, but now he’s turned out a nigger-lover we’ll never be able to walk the streets of Maycomb agin. He’s ruinin’ the family, that’s what he’s doin’.”

Francis rose and sprinted down the catwalk to the old kitchen. At a safe distance he called, “He’s nothin’ but a nigger-lover!”

“He is not!” I roared. “I don’t know what you’re talkin’ about, but you better cut it out this red hot minute!”

I leaped off the steps and ran down the catwalk. It was easy to collar Francis. I said take it back quick.

Francis jerked loose and sped into the old kitchen. “Nigger-lover!” he yelled.

When stalking one’s prey, it is best to take one’s time. Say nothing, and as sure as eggs he will become curious and emerge. Francis appeared at the kitchen door.

“You still mad, Jean Louise?” he asked tentatively.

“Nothing to speak of,” I said.

Francis came out on the catwalk.

“You gonna take it back, Fra—ancis?” But I was too quick on the draw. Francis shot back into the kitchen, so I retired to the steps. I could wait patiently. I had sat there perhaps five minutes when I heard Aunt Alexandra speak: “Where’s Francis?”

“He’s out yonder in the kitchen.”

“He knows he’s not supposed to play in there.”

Francis came to the door and yelled, “Grandma, she’s got me in here and she won’t let me out!”

“What is all this, Jean Louise?”

I looked up at Aunt Alexandra. “I haven’t got him in there, Aunty, I ain’t holdin’ him.”

“Yes she is,” shouted Francis, “she won’t let me out!”

“Have you all been fussing?”

“Jean Louise got mad at me, Grandma,” called Francis.

“Francis, come out of there! Jean Louise, if I hear another word out of you I’ll tell your father. Did I hear you say hell a while ago?”

“None.”

“I thought I did. I’d better not hear it again.”

Aunt Alexandra was a back-porch listener. The moment she was out of sight Francis came out head up and grinning. “Don’t you fool with me,” he said.

He jumped into the yard and kept his distance, kicking tufts of grass, turning around occasionally to smile at me. Jem appeared on the porch, looked at us, and went away. Francis climbed the mimosa tree, came down, put his hands in his pockets and strolled around the yard. “Hah!” he said. I asked him who he thought he was, Uncle Jack? Francis said he reckoned I got told, for me to just sit there and leave him alone.

“I ain’t botherin’ you,” I said.

Francis looked at me carefully, concluded that I had been sufficiently subdued, and crooned softly, “Nigger-lover...”

This time, I split my knuckle to the bone on his front teeth. My left impaired, I sailed in with my right, but not for long. Uncle Jack pinned my arms to my sides and said, "Stand still!"

Aunt Alexandra ministered to Francis, wiping his tears away with her handkerchief, rubbing his hair, patting his cheek. Atticus, Jem, and Uncle Jimmy had come to the back porch when Francis started yelling.

"Who started this?" said Uncle Jack.

Francis and I pointed at each other. "Grandma," he bawled, "she called me a whore-lady and jumped on me!"

"Is that true, Scout?" said Uncle Jack.

"I reckon so."

When Uncle Jack looked down at me, his features were like Aunt Alexandra's.

"You know I told you you'd get in trouble if you used words like that? I told you, didn't I?"

"Yes sir, but—"

"Well, you're in trouble now. Stay there."

I was debating whether to stand there or run, and tarried in indecision a moment too long: I turned to flee but Uncle Jack was quicker. I found myself suddenly looking at a tiny ant struggling with a bread crumb in the grass.

"I'll never speak to you again as long as I live! I hate you an', despise you an' hope you die tomorrow!" A statement that seemed to encourage Uncle Jack, more than anything. I ran to Atticus for comfort, but he said I had it coming and it was high time we went home. I climbed into the back seat of the car without saying good-bye to anyone, and at home I ran to my room and slammed the door. Jem tried to say something nice, but I wouldn't let him.

When I surveyed the damage there were only seven or eight red marks, and I was reflecting upon relativity when someone knocked on the door. I asked who it was; Uncle Jack answered.

"Go away!"

Uncle Jack said if I talked like that he'd lick me again, so I was quiet. When he

entered the room I retreated to a corner and turned my back on him. "Scout," he said, "do you still hate me?"

"Go on, please sir."

"Why, I didn't think you'd hold it against me," he said. "I'm disappointed in you—you had that coming and you know it."

"Didn't either."

"Honey, you can't go around calling people—"

"You ain't fair," I said, "you ain't fair."

Uncle Jack's eyebrows went up. "Not fair? How not?"

"You're real nice, Uncle Jack, an' I reckon I love you even after what you did, but you don't understand children much."

Uncle Jack put his hands on his hips and looked down at me. "And why do I not understand children, Miss Jean Louise? Such conduct as yours required little understanding. It was obstreperous, disorderly and abusive—"

"You gonna give me a chance to tell you? I don't mean to sass you, I'm just tryin' to tell you."

Uncle Jack sat down on the bed. His eyebrows came together, and he peered up at me from under them. "Proceed," he said.

I took a deep breath. "Well, in the first place you never stopped to gimme a chance to tell you my side of it—you just lit right into me. When Jem an' I fuss Atticus doesn't ever just listen to Jem's side of it, he hears mine too, an' in the second place you told me never to use words like that except in ex-extreme provocation, and Francis provoked me enough to knock his block off—"

Uncle Jack scratched his head. "What was your side of it, Scout?"

"Francis called Atticus somethin', an' I wasn't about to take it off him."

"What did Francis call him?"

"A nigger-lover. I ain't very sure what it means, but the way Francis said it—tell you one thing right now, Uncle Jack, I'll be—I swear before God if I'll sit there and let him say somethin' about Atticus."

"He called Atticus that?"

"Yes sir, he did, an' a lot more. Said Atticus'd be the ruination of the family an' he let Jem an me run wild..."

From the look on Uncle Jack's face, I thought I was in for it again. When he said, "We'll see about this," I knew Francis was in for it. "I've a good mind to go out there tonight."

"Please sir, just let it go. Please."

"I've no intention of letting it go," he said. "Alexandra should know about this. The idea of—wait'll I get my hands on that boy..."

"Uncle Jack, please promise me somethin', please sir. Promise you won't tell Atticus about this. He—he asked me one time not to let anything I heard about him make me mad, an' I'd ruther him think we were fightin' about somethin' else instead. Please promise..."

"But I don't like Francis getting away with something like that—"

"He didn't. You reckon you could tie up my hand? It's still bleedin' some."

"Of course I will, baby. I know of no hand I would be more delighted to tie up. Will you come this way?"

Uncle Jack gallantly bowed me to the bathroom. While he cleaned and bandaged my knuckles, he entertained me with a tale about a funny nearsighted old gentleman who had a cat named Hodge, and who counted all the cracks in the sidewalk when he went to town. "There now," he said. "You'll have a very unladylike scar on your wedding-ring finger."

"Thank you sir. Uncle Jack?"

"Ma'am?"

"What's a whore-lady?"

Uncle Jack plunged into another long tale about an old Prime Minister who sat in the House of Commons and blew feathers in the air and tried to keep them there when all about him men were losing their heads. I guess he was trying to answer my question, but he made no sense whatsoever.

Later, when I was supposed to be in bed, I went down the hall for a drink of water and heard Atticus and Uncle Jack in the livingroom:

"I shall never marry, Atticus."

"Why?"

"I might have children."

Atticus said, "You've a lot to learn, Jack."

"I know. Your daughter gave me my first lessons this afternoon. She said I didn't understand children much and told me why. She was quite right. Atticus, she told me how I should have treated her—oh dear, I'm so sorry I romped on her."

Atticus chuckled. "She earned it, so don't feel too remorseful."

I waited, on tenterhooks, for Uncle Jack to tell Atticus my side of it. But he didn't. He simply murmured, "Her use of bathroom invective leaves nothing to the imagination. But she doesn't know the meaning of half she says—she asked me what a whore-lady was..."

"Did you tell her?"

"No, I told her about Lord Melbourne."

"Jack! When a child asks you something, answer him, for goodness' sake. But don't make a production of it. Children are children, but they can spot an evasion quicker than adults, and evasion simply muddles 'em. No," my father mused, "you had the right answer this afternoon, but the wrong reasons. Bad language is a stage all children go through, and it dies with time when they learn they're not attracting attention with it. Hotheadedness isn't. Scout's got to learn to keep her head and learn soon, with what's in store for her these next few months. She's coming along, though. Jem's getting older and she follows his example a good bit now. All she needs is assistance sometimes."

"Atticus, you've never laid a hand on her."

"I admit that. So far I've been able to get by with threats. Jack, she minds me as well as she can. Doesn't come up to scratch half the time, but she tries."

"That's not the answer," said Uncle Jack.

"No, the answer is she knows I know she tries. That's what makes the difference. What bothers me is that she and Jem will have to absorb some ugly things pretty soon. I'm not worried about Jem keeping his head, but Scout'd just as soon jump on someone as look at him if her pride's at stake..."

Chapter 10

I waited for Uncle Jack to break his promise. He still didn't.

"Atticus, how bad is this going to be? You haven't had too much chance to discuss it."

"It couldn't be worse, Jack. The only thing we've got is a black man's word against the Ewells'. The evidence boils down to you-did—I-didn't. The jury couldn't possibly be expected to take Tom Robinson's word against the Ewells'—are you acquainted with the Ewells?"

Uncle Jack said yes, he remembered them. He described them to Atticus, but

Atticus said, "You're a generation off. The present ones are the same, though."

"What are you going to do, then?"

"Before I'm through, I intend to jar the jury a bit—I think we'll have a reasonable chance on appeal, though. I really can't tell at this stage, Jack. You know, I'd hoped to get through life without a case of this kind, but John Taylor pointed at me and said, 'You're it.'"

"Let this cup pass from you, eh?"

"Right. But do you think I could face my children otherwise? You know what's going to happen as well as I do, Jack, and I hope and pray I can get Jem and Scout through it without bitterness, and most of all, without catching Maycomb's usual disease. Why reasonable people go stark raving mad when anything involving a Negro comes up, is something I don't pretend to understand... I just hope that Jem and Scout come to me for their answers instead of listening to the town. I hope they trust me enough... Jean Louise?"

My scalp jumped. I stuck my head around the corner. "Sir?"

"Go to bed."

I scurried to my room and went to bed. Uncle Jack was a prince of a fellow not to let me down. But I never figured out how Atticus knew I was listening, and it was not until many years later that I realized he wanted me to hear every word he said.

Atticus was feeble: he was nearly fifty. When Jem and I asked him why he was so old, he said he got started late, which we felt reflected upon his abilities and manliness. He was much older than the parents of our school contemporaries, and there was nothing Jem or I could say about him when our classmates said, "My father—"

Jem was football crazy. Atticus was never too tired to play keep-away, but when Jem wanted to tackle him Atticus would say, "I'm too old for that, son."

Our father didn't do anything. He worked in an office, not in a drugstore. Atticus did not drive a dump-truck for the county, he was not the sheriff, he did not farm, work in a garage, or do anything that could possibly arouse the admiration of anyone.

Besides that, he wore glasses. He was nearly blind in his left eye, and said left eyes were the tribal curse of the Finches. Whenever he wanted to see something well, he turned his head and looked from his right eye.

He did not do the things our schoolmates' fathers did: he never went hunting, he did not play poker or fish or drink or smoke. He sat in the livingroom and read.

With these attributes, however, he would not remain as inconspicuous as we wished him to: that year, the school buzzed with talk about him defending Tom Robinson, none of which was complimentary. After my bout with Cecil Jacobs when I committed myself to a policy of cowardice, word got around that Scout Finch wouldn't fight any more, her daddy wouldn't let her. This was not entirely correct: I wouldn't fight publicly for Atticus, but the family was private ground. I would fight anyone from a third cousin upwards tooth and nail. Francis Hancock, for example, knew that.

When he gave us our air-rifles Atticus wouldn't teach us to shoot. Uncle Jack instructed us in the rudiments thereof; he said Atticus wasn't interested in guns. Atticus said to Jem one day, "I'd rather you shot at tin cans in the back yard, but I

know you'll go after birds. Shoot all the bluejays you want, if you can hit 'em, but remember it's a sin to kill a mockingbird."

That was the only time I ever heard Atticus say it was a sin to do something, and I asked Miss Maudie about it.

"Your father's right," she said. "Mockingbirds don't do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don't eat up people's gardens, don't nest in corncribs, they don't do one thing but sing their hearts out for us. That's why it's a sin to kill a mockingbird."

"Miss Maudie, this is an old neighborhood, ain't it?"

"Been here longer than the town."

"Nome, I mean the folks on our street are all old. Jem and me's the only children around here. Mrs. Dubose is close on to a hundred and Miss Rachel's old and so are you and Atticus."

"I don't call fifty very old," said Miss Maudie tartly. "Not being wheeled around yet, am I? Neither's your father. But I must say Providence was kind enough to burn down that old mausoleum of mine, I'm too old to keep it up—maybe you're right, Jean Louise, this is a settled neighborhood. You've never been around young folks much, have you?"

"Yessum, at school."

"I mean young grown-ups. You're lucky, you know. You and Jem have the benefit of your father's age. If your father was thirty you'd find life quite different."

"I sure would. Atticus can't do anything..."

"You'd be surprised," said Miss Maudie. "There's life in him yet."

"What can he do?"

"Well, he can make somebody's will so airtight can't anybody meddle with it."

"Shoot..."

"Well, did you know he's the best checker-player in this town? Why, down at the Landing when we were coming up, Atticus Finch could beat everybody on both sides of the river."

"Good Lord, Miss Maudie, Jem and me beat him all the time."

"It's about time you found out it's because he lets you. Did you know he can play a Jew's Harp?"

This modest accomplishment served to make me even more ashamed of him.

"Well..." she said.

"Well, what, Miss Maudie?"

"Well nothing. Nothing—it seems with all that you'd be proud of him. Can't everybody play a Jew's Harp. Now keep out of the way of the carpenters. You'd better go home, I'll be in my azaleas and can't watch you. Plank might hit you."

I went to the back yard and found Jem plugging away at a tin can, which seemed stupid with all the bluejays around. I returned to the front yard and busied myself for two hours erecting a complicated breastworks at the side of the porch, consisting of a tire, an orange crate, the laundry hamper, the porch chairs, and a small U.S. flag Jem gave me from a popcorn box.

When Atticus came home to dinner he found me crouched down aiming across the street. "What are you shooting at?"

"Miss Maudie's rear end."

Atticus turned and saw my generous target bending over her bushes. He pushed his hat to the back of his head and crossed the street. "Maudie," he called, "I thought I'd better warn you. You're in considerable peril."

Miss Maudie straightened up and looked toward me. She said, "Atticus, you are a devil from hell."

When Atticus returned he told me to break camp. "Don't you ever let me catch you pointing that gun at anybody again," he said.

I wished my father was a devil from hell. I sounded out Calpurnia on the subject.

"Mr. Finch? Why, he can do lots of things."

"Like what?" I asked.

Calpurnia scratched her head. "Well, I don't rightly know," she said.

Jem underlined it when he asked Atticus if he was going out for the Methodists and Atticus said he'd break his neck if he did, he was just too old for that sort of

thing. The Methodists were trying to pay off their church mortgage, and had challenged the Baptists to a game of touch football. Everybody in town's father was playing, it seemed, except Atticus. Jem said he didn't even want to go, but he was unable to resist football in any form, and he stood gloomily on the sidelines with Atticus and me watching Cecil Jacobs's father make touchdowns for the Baptists.

One Saturday Jem and I decided to go exploring with our air-rifles to see if we could find a rabbit or a squirrel. We had gone about five hundred yards beyond the Radley Place when I noticed Jem squinting at something down the street. He had turned his head to one side and was looking out of the corners of his eyes.

"Whatcha looking at?"

"That old dog down yonder," he said.

"That's old Tim Johnson, ain't it?"

"Yeah."

Tim Johnson was the property of Mr. Harry Johnson who drove the Mobile bus and lived on the southern edge of town. Tim was a liver-colored bird dog, the pet of Maycomb.

"What's he doing?"

"I don't know, Scout. We better go home."

"Aw Jem, it's February."

"I don't care, I'm gonna tell Cal."

We raced home and ran to the kitchen.

"Cal," said Jem, "can you come down the sidewalk a minute?"

"What for, Jem? I can't come down the sidewalk every time you want me."

"There's somethin' wrong with an old dog down yonder."

Calpurnia sighed. "I can't wrap up any dog's foot now. There's some gauze in the bathroom, go get it and do it yourself."

Jem shook his head. "He's sick, Cal. Something's wrong with him."

"What's he doin', trying to catch his tail?"

"No, he's doin' like this."

Jem gulped like a goldfish, hunched his shoulders and twitched his torso. "He's goin' like that, only not like he means to."

"Are you telling me a story, Jem Finch?" Calpurnia's voice hardened.

"No Cal, I swear I'm not."

"Was he runnin'?"

"No, he's just moseyin' along, so slow you can't hardly tell it. He's comin' this way."

Calpurnia rinsed her hands and followed Jem into the yard. "I don't see any dog," she said.

She followed us beyond the Radley Place and looked where Jem pointed. Tim Johnson was not much more than a speck in the distance, but he was closer to us. He walked erratically, as if his right legs were shorter than his left legs. He reminded me of a car stuck in a sandbed.

"He's gone lopsided," said Jem.

Calpurnia stared, then grabbed us by the shoulders and ran us home. She shut the wood door behind us, went to the telephone and shouted, "Gimme Mr. Finch's office!"

"Mr. Finch!" she shouted. "This is Cal. I swear to God there's a mad dog down the street a piece—he's comin' this way, yes sir, he's—Mr. Finch, I declare he is—old Tim Johnson, yes sir... yessir... yes—"

She hung up and shook her head when we tried to ask her what Atticus had said.

She rattled the telephone hook and said, "Miss Eula May—now ma'am, I'm through talkin' to Mr. Finch, please don't connect me no more—listen, Miss Eula May, can you call Miss Rachel and Miss Stephanie Crawford and whoever's got a phone on this street and tell 'em a mad dog's comin'? Please ma'am!"

Calpurnia listened. "I know it's February, Miss Eula May, but I know a mad dog when I see one. Please ma'am hurry!"

Calpurnia asked Jem, "Radleys got a phone?"

Jem looked in the book and said no. "They won't come out anyway, Cal."

"I don't care, I'm gonna tell 'em."

She ran to the front porch, Jem and I at her heels. "You stay in that house!" she yelled.

Calpurnia's message had been received by the neighborhood. Every wood door within our range of vision was closed tight. We saw no trace of Tim Johnson. We watched Calpurnia running toward the Radley Place, holding her skirt and apron above her knees. She went up to the front steps and banged on the door. She got no answer, and she shouted, "Mr. Nathan, Mr. Arthur, mad dog's comin'! Mad dog's comin'!"

"She's supposed to go around in back," I said.

Jem shook his head. "Don't make any difference now," he said.

Calpurnia pounded on the door in vain. No one acknowledged her warning; no one seemed to have heard it.

As Calpurnia sprinted to the back porch a black Ford swung into the driveway. Atticus and Mr. Heck Tate got out.

Mr. Heck Tate was the sheriff of Maycomb County. He was as tall as Atticus, but thinner. He was long-nosed, wore boots with shiny metal eye-holes, boot pants and a lumber jacket. His belt had a row of bullets sticking in it. He carried a heavy rifle. When he and Atticus reached the porch, Jem opened the door.

"Stay inside, son," said Atticus. "Where is he, Cal?"

"He oughta be here by now," said Calpurnia, pointing down the street.

"Not runnin', is he?" asked Mr. Tate.

"Naw sir, he's in the twitchin' stage, Mr. Heck."

"Should we go after him, Heck?" asked Atticus.

"We better wait, Mr. Finch. They usually go in a straight line, but you never can tell. He might follow the curve—hope he does or he'll go straight in the Radley back yard. Let's wait a minute."

"Don't think he'll get in the Radley yard," said Atticus. "Fence'll stop him. He'll probably follow the road..."

I thought mad dogs foamed at the mouth, galloped, leaped and lunged at throats, and I thought they did it in August. Had Tim Johnson behaved thus, I would have

been less frightened.

Nothing is more deadly than a deserted, waiting street. The trees were still, the mockingbirds were silent, the carpenters at Miss Maudie's house had vanished. I heard Mr. Tate sniff, then blow his nose. I saw him shift his gun to the crook of his arm. I saw Miss Stephanie Crawford's face framed in the glass window of her front door. Miss Maudie appeared and stood beside her. Atticus put his foot on the rung of a chair and rubbed his hand slowly down the side of his thigh.

"There he is," he said softly.

Tim Johnson came into sight, walking dazedly in the inner rim of the curve parallel to the Radley house.

"Look at him," whispered Jem. "Mr. Heck said they walked in a straight line. He can't even stay in the road."

"He looks more sick than anything," I said.

"Let anything get in front of him and he'll come straight at it."

Mr. Tate put his hand to his forehead and leaned forward. "He's got it all right, Mr. Finch."

Tim Johnson was advancing at a snail's pace, but he was not playing or sniffing at foliage: he seemed dedicated to one course and motivated by an invisible force that was inching him toward us. We could see him shiver like a horse shedding flies; his jaw opened and shut; he was a list, but he was being pulled gradually toward us.

"He's lookin' for a place to die," said Jem.

Mr. Tate turned around. "He's far from dead, Jem, he hasn't got started yet."

Tim Johnson reached the side street that ran in front of the Radley Place, and what remained of his poor mind made him pause and seem to consider which road he would take. He made a few hesitant steps and stopped in front of the Radley gate; then he tried to turn around, but was having difficulty.

Atticus said, "He's within range, Heck. You better get him before he goes down the side street—Lord knows who's around the corner. Go inside, Cal."

Calpurnia opened the screen door, latched it behind her, then unlatched it and held onto the hook. She tried to block Jem and me with her body, but we looked out

from beneath her arms.

“Take him, Mr. Finch.” Mr. Tate handed the rifle to Atticus; Jem and I nearly fainted.

“Don’t waste time, Heck,” said Atticus. “Go on.”

“Mr. Finch, this is a one-shot job.”

Atticus shook his head vehemently: “Don’t just stand there, Heck! He won’t wait all day for you—”

“For God’s sake, Mr. Finch, look where he is! Miss and you’ll go straight into the Radley house! I can’t shoot that well and you know it!”

“I haven’t shot a gun in thirty years—”

Mr. Tate almost threw the rifle at Atticus. “I’d feel mighty comfortable if you did now,” he said.

In a fog, Jem and I watched our father take the gun and walk out into the middle of the street. He walked quickly, but I thought he moved like an underwater swimmer: time had slowed to a nauseating crawl.

When Atticus raised his glasses Calpurnia murmured, “Sweet Jesus help him,” and put her hands to her cheeks.

Atticus pushed his glasses to his forehead; they slipped down, and he dropped them in the street. In the silence, I heard them crack. Atticus rubbed his eyes and chin; we saw him blink hard.

In front of the Radley gate, Tim Johnson had made up what was left of his mind. He had finally turned himself around, to pursue his original course up our street. He made two steps forward, then stopped and raised his head. We saw his body go rigid.

With movements so swift they seemed simultaneous, Atticus’s hand yanked a ball-tipped lever as he brought the gun to his shoulder.

The rifle cracked. Tim Johnson leaped, flopped over and crumpled on the sidewalk in a brown-and-white heap. He didn’t know what hit him.

Mr. Tate jumped off the porch and ran to the Radley Place. He stopped in front of the dog, squatted, turned around and tapped his finger on his forehead above his

left eye. “You were a little to the right, Mr. Finch,” he called.

“Always was,” answered Atticus. “If I had my ‘dnuthers I’d take a shotgun.”

He stooped and picked up his glasses, ground the broken lenses to powder under his heel, and went to Mr. Tate and stood looking down at Tim Johnson.

Doors opened one by one, and the neighborhood slowly came alive. Miss Maudie walked down the steps with Miss Stephanie Crawford.

Jem was paralyzed. I pinched him to get him moving, but when Atticus saw us coming he called, “Stay where you are.”

When Mr. Tate and Atticus returned to the yard, Mr. Tate was smiling. “I’ll have Zeebo collect him,” he said. “You haven’t forgot much, Mr. Finch. They say it never leaves you.”

Atticus was silent.

“Atticus?” said Jem.

“Yes?”

“Nothin’.”

“I saw that, One-Shot Finch!”

Atticus wheeled around and faced Miss Maudie. They looked at one another without saying anything, and Atticus got into the sheriff’s car. “Come here,” he said to Jem. “Don’t you go near that dog, you understand? Don’t go near him, he’s just as dangerous dead as alive.”

“Yes sir,” said Jem. “Atticus—”

“What, son?”

“Nothing.”

“What’s the matter with you, boy, can’t you talk?” said Mr. Tate, grinning at Jem.

“Didn’t you know your daddy’s—”

“Hush, Heck,” said Atticus, “let’s go back to town.”

When they drove away, Jem and I went to Miss Stephanie’s front steps. We sat waiting for Zeebo to arrive in the garbage truck.

Jem sat in numb confusion, and Miss Stephanie said, “Uh, uh, uh, who’d a thought of a mad dog in February? Maybe he wadn’t mad, maybe he was just crazy. I’d

hate to see Harry Johnson's face when he gets in from the Mobile run and finds Atticus Finch's shot his dog. Bet he was just full of fleas from somewhere—”

Miss Maudie said Miss Stephanie'd be singing a different tune if Tim Johnson was still coming up the street, that they'd find out soon enough, they'd send his head to Montgomery.

Jem became vaguely articulate: “d you see him, Scout? d you see him just standin' there?... n' all of a sudden he just relaxed all over, an' it looked like that gun was a part of him... an' he did it so quick, like... I hafta aim for ten minutes 'fore I can hit somethin'...”

Miss Maudie grinned wickedly. “Well now, Miss Jean Louise,” she said, “still think your father can't do anything? Still ashamed of him?”

“Nome,” I said meekly.

“Forgot to tell you the other day that besides playing the Jew's Harp, Atticus Finch was the dearest shot in Maycomb County in his time.”

“Dead shot...” echoed Jem.

“That's what I said, Jem Finch. Guess you'll change your tune now. The very idea, didn't you know his nickname was Ol' One-Shot when he was a boy? Why, down at the Landing when he was coming up, if he shot fifteen times and hit fourteen doves he'd complain about wasting ammunition.”

“He never said anything about that,” Jem muttered.

“Never said anything about it, did he?”

“No ma'am.”

“Wonder why he never goes huntin' now,” I said.

“Maybe I can tell you,” said Miss Maudie. “If your father's anything, he's civilized in his heart. Marksmanship's a gift of God, a talent—oh, you have to practice to make it perfect, but shootin' s different from playing the piano or the like. I think maybe he put his gun down when he realized that God had given him an unfair advantage over most living things. I guess he decided he wouldn't shoot till he had to, and he had to today.”

“Looks like he'd be proud of it,” I said.

“People in their right minds never take pride in their talents,” said Miss Maudie. We saw Zeebo drive up. He took a pitchfork from the back of the garbage truck and gingerly lifted Tim Johnson. He pitched the dog onto the truck, then poured something from a gallon jug on and around the spot where Tim fell. “Don't yawl come over here for a while,” he called.

When we went home I told Jem we'd really have something to talk about at school on Monday. Jem turned on me.

“Don't say anything about it, Scout,” he said.

“What? I certainly am. Ain't everybody's daddy the dearest shot in Maycomb County?”

Jem said, “I reckon if he'd wanted us to know it, he'da told us. If he was proud of it, he'da told us.”

“Maybe it just slipped his mind,” I said.

“Nav, Scout, it's something you wouldn't understand. Atticus is real old, but I wouldn't care if he couldn't do anything—I wouldn't care if he couldn't do a blessed thing.”

Jem picked up a rock and threw it jubilantly at the carhouse. Running after it, he called back: “Atticus is a gentleman, just like me!”

[Contents](#) - [Prev](#) / [Next](#)

Chapter 11

When we were small, Jem and I confined our activities to the southern neighborhood, but when I was well into the second grade at school and tormenting Boo Radley became passe, the business section of Maycomb drew us frequently up the street past the real property of Mrs. Henry Lafayette Dubose. It was impossible to go to town without passing her house unless we wished to walk a mile out of the way. Previous minor encounters with her left me with no desire

for more, but Jem said I had to grow up some time.

Mrs. Dubose lived alone except for a Negro girl in constant attendance, two doors up the street from us in a house with steep front steps and a dog-trot hall. She was very old; she spent most of each day in bed and the rest of it in a wheelchair. It was rumored that she kept a CSA pistol concealed among her numerous shawls and wraps.

Jem and I hated her. If she was on the porch when we passed, we would be raked by her wrathful gaze, subjected to ruthless interrogation regarding our behavior, and given a melancholy prediction on what we would amount to when we grew up, which was always nothing. We had long ago given up the idea of walking past her house on the opposite side of the street; that only made her raise her voice and let the whole neighborhood in on it.

We could do nothing to please her. If I said as humbly as I could, "Hey, Mrs. Dubose," I would receive for an answer, "Don't you say hey to me, you ugly girl! You say good afternoon, Mrs. Dubose!"

She was vicious. Once she heard Jem refer to our father as "Atticus" and her reaction was apoplectic. Besides being the sassiest, most disrespectful mutts who ever passed her way, we were told that it was quite a pity our father had not remarried after our mother's death. A lovelier lady than our mother never lived, she said, and it was heartbreaking the way Atticus Finch let her children run wild. I did not remember our mother, but Jem did—he would tell me about her sometimes—and he went livid when Mrs. Dubose shot us this message.

Jem, having survived Boo Radley, a mad dog and other terrors, had concluded that it was cowardly to stop at Miss Rachel's front steps and wait, and had decreed that we must run as far as the post office corner each evening to meet Atticus coming from work. Countless evenings Atticus would find Jem furious at something Mrs. Dubose had said when we went by.

"Easy does it, son," Atticus would say. "She's an old lady and she's ill. You just hold your head high and be a gentleman. Whatever she says to you, it's your job not to let her make you mad." Jem would say she must not be very sick, she hollered so. When the three of us came to her house, Atticus would sweep off his hat, wave gallantly to her and say, "Good evening, Mrs. Dubose! You look like a

picture this evening."

I never heard Atticus say like a picture of what. He would tell her the courthouse news, and would say he hoped with all his heart she'd have a good day tomorrow. He would return his hat to his head, swing me to his shoulders in her very presence, and we would go home in the twilight. It was times like these when I thought my father, who hated guns and had never been to any wars, was the bravest man who ever lived.

The day after Jem's twelfth birthday his money was burning up his pockets, so we headed for town in the early afternoon. Jem thought he had enough to buy a miniature steam engine for himself and a twirling baton for me.

I had long had my eye on that baton: it was at V. J. Elmore's, it was bedecked with sequins and tinsel, it cost seventeen cents. It was then my burning ambition to grow up and twirl with the Maycomb County High School band. Having developed my talent to 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,

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 recititude 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.

What Jem did was something I’d do as a matter of course had I not been under Atticus’s interdiction, which I assumed included not fighting horrible old ladies. We had just come to her gate when Jem snatched my baton and ran flailing wildly up the steps into Mrs. Dubose’s front yard, forgetting everything Atticus had said, forgetting that she packed a pistol under her shawls, forgetting that if Mrs. Dubose missed, her girl Jessie probably wouldn’t.

He did not begin to calm down until he had cut the tops off every camellia bush Mrs. Dubose owned, until the ground was littered with green buds and leaves. He bent my baton against his knee, snapped it in two and threw it down.

By that time I was shrieking. Jem yanked my hair, said he didn’t care, he’d do it again if he got a chance, and if I didn’t shut up he’d pull every hair out of my head. I didn’t shut up and he kicked me. I lost my balance and fell on my face. Jem picked me up roughly but looked like he was sorry. There was nothing to say.

We did not choose to meet Atticus coming home that evening. We skulked around the kitchen until Calpurnia threw us out. By some voo-doo system Calpurnia seemed to know all about it. She was a less than satisfactory source of palliation, but she did give Jem a hot biscuit-and-butter which he tore in half and shared with me. It tasted like cotton.

We went to the livingroom. I picked up a football magazine, found a picture of Dixie Howell, showed it to Jem and said, “This looks like you.” That was the nicest thing I could think to say to him, but it was no help. He sat by the windows, hunched down in a rocking chair, scowling, waiting. Daylight faded.

Two geological ages later, we heard the soles of Atticus’s shoes scrape the front

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

steps. The screen door slammed, there was a pause—Atticus was at the hat rack in the hall—and we heard him call, “Jem!” His voice was like the winter wind.

Atticus switched on the ceiling light in the livingroom and found us there, frozen still. He carried my baton in one hand, its filthy yellow tassel trailed on the rug. He held out his other hand; it contained fat camellia buds.

“Jem,” he said, “are you responsible for this?”

“Yes sir.”

“Why’d you do it?”

Jem said softly, “She said you lawed for niggers and trash.”

“You did this because she said that?”

Jem’s lips moved, but his, “Yes sir,” was inaudible.

“Son, I have no doubt that you’ve been annoyed by your contemporaries about me lawing for niggers, as you say, but to do something like this to a sick old lady is inexcusable. I strongly advise you to go down and have a talk with Mrs. Dubose,” said Atticus. “Come straight home afterward.”

Jem did not move.

“Go on, I said.”

I followed Jem out of the livingroom. “Come back here,” Atticus said to me. I came back.

Atticus picked up the *Mobile Press* and sat down in the rocking chair Jem had vacated. For the life of me, I did not understand how he could sit there in cold blood and read a newspaper when his only son stood an excellent chance of being murdered with a Confederate Army relic. Of course Jem antagonized me sometimes until I could kill him, but when it came down to it he was all I had. Atticus did not seem to realize this, or if he did he didn’t care.

I hated him for that, but when you are in trouble you become easily tired: soon I was hiding in his lap and his arms were around me.

“You’re mighty big to be rocked,” he said.

“You don’t care what happens to him,” I said. “You just send him on to get shot at when all he was doin’ was standin’ up for you.”

Atticus pushed my head under his chin. “It’s not time to worry yet,” he said. “I never thought Jem’d be the one to lose his head over this—thought I’d have more trouble with you.”

I said I didn’t see why we had to keep our heads anyway, that nobody I knew at school had to keep his head about anything.

“Scout,” said Atticus, “when summer comes you’ll have to keep your head about far worse things... it’s not fair for you and Jem, I know that, but sometimes we have to make the best of things, and the way we conduct ourselves when the chips are down—well, all I can say is, when you and Jem are grown, maybe you’ll look back on this with some compassion and some feeling that I didn’t let you down. This case, Tom Robinson’s case, is something that goes to the essence of a man’s conscience—Scout, I couldn’t go to church and worship God if I didn’t try to help that man.”

“Atticus, you must be wrong...”

“How’s that?”

“Well, most folks seem to think they’re right and you’re wrong...”

“They’re certainly entitled to think that, and they’re entitled to full respect for their opinions,” said Atticus, “but before I can live with other folks I’ve got to live with myself. The one thing that doesn’t abide by majority rule is a person’s conscience.”

When Jem returned, he found me still in Atticus’s lap, “Well, son?” said Atticus. He set me on my feet, and I made a secret reconnaissance of Jem. He seemed to be all in one piece, but he had a queer look on his face. Perhaps she had given him a dose of calomel.

“I cleaned it up for her and said I was sorry, but I ain’t, and that I’d work on ‘em ever Saturday and try to make ‘em grow back out.”

“There was no point in saying you were sorry if you aren’t,” said Atticus. “Jem, she’s old and ill. You can’t hold her responsible for what she says and does. Of course, I’d rather she’d have said it to me than to either of you, but we can’t always have our ‘druthers.”

Jem seemed fascinated by a rose in the carpet. “Atticus,” he said, “she wants me

to read to her.”

“Read to her?”

“Yes sir. She wants me to come every afternoon after school and Saturdays and read to her out loud for two hours. Atticus, do I have to?”

“Certainly.”

“But she wants me to do it for a month.”

“Then you’ll do it for a month.”

Jem planted his big toe delicately in the center of the rose and pressed it in.

Finally he said, “Atticus, it’s all right on the sidewalk but inside it’s—it’s all dark and creepy. There’s shadows and things on the ceiling...”

Atticus smiled grimly. “That should appeal to your imagination. Just pretend you’re inside the Radley house.”

The following Monday afternoon Jem and I climbed the steep front steps to Mrs. Dubose’s house and padded down the open hallway. Jem, armed with *Ivanhoe* and full of superior knowledge, knocked at the second door on the left.

“Mrs. Dubose?” he called.

Jessie opened the wood door and unlatched the screen door.

“Is that you, Jem Finch?” she said. “You got your sister with you. I don’t know—”

“Let ‘em both in, Jessie,” said Mrs. Dubose. Jessie admitted us and went off to the kitchen.

An oppressive odor met us when we crossed the threshold, an odor I had met many times in rain-rotted gray houses where there are coal-oil lamps, water dippers, and unbleached domestic sheets. It always made me afraid, expectant, watchful.

In the corner of the room was a brass bed, and in the bed was Mrs. Dubose. I wondered if Jem’s activities had put her there, and for a moment I felt sorry for her. She was lying under a pile of quilts and looked almost friendly.

There was a marble-topped washstand by her bed; on it were a glass with a teaspoon in it, a red ear syringe, a box of absorbent cotton, and a steel alarm clock

standing on three tiny legs.

“So you brought that dirty little sister of yours, did you?” was her greeting. Jem said quietly, “My sister ain’t dirty and I ain’t scared of you,” although I noticed his knees shaking.

I was expecting a tirade, but all she said was, “You may commence reading, Jeremy.”

Jem sat down in a cane-bottom chair and opened *Ivanhoe*. I pulled up another one and sat beside him.

“Come closer,” said Mrs. Dubose. “Come to the side of the bed.”

We moved our chairs forward. This was the nearest I had ever been to her, and the thing I wanted most to do was move my chair back again.

She was horrible. Her face was the color of a dirty pillowcase, and the corners of her mouth glistened with wet, which inched like a glacier down the deep grooves enclosing her chin. Old-age liver spots dotted her cheeks, and her pale eyes had black pinpoint pupils. Her hands were knobby, and the cuticles were grown up over her fingernails. Her bottom plate was not in, and her upper lip protruded; from time to time she would draw her nether lip to her upper plate and carry her chin with it. This made the wet move faster.

I didn’t look any more than I had to. Jem reopened *Ivanhoe* and began reading. I tried to keep up with him, but he read too fast. When Jem came to a word he didn’t know, he skipped it, but Mrs. Dubose would catch him and make him spell it out. Jem read for perhaps twenty minutes, during which time I looked at the soot-stained mantelpiece, out the window, anywhere to keep from looking at her. As he read along, I noticed that Mrs. Dubose’s corrections grew fewer and farther between, that Jem had even left one sentence dangling in mid-air. She was not listening.

I looked toward the bed.

Something had happened to her. She lay on her back, with the quilts up to her chin. Only her head and shoulders were visible. Her head moved slowly from side to side. From time to time she would open her mouth wide, and I could see her tongue undulate faintly. Cords of saliva would collect on her lips; she would draw

them in, then open her mouth again. Her mouth seemed to have a private existence of its own. It worked separate and apart from the rest of her, out and in, like a clam hole at low tide. Occasionally it would say, "Pt," like some viscous substance coming to a boil.

I pulled Jem's sleeve.

He looked at me, then at the bed. Her head made its regular sweep toward us, and Jem said, "Mrs. Dubose, are you all right?" She did not hear him.

The alarm clock went off and scared us stiff. A minute later, nerves still tingling, Jem and I were on the sidewalk headed for home. We did not run away, Jessie sent us: before the clock wound down she was in the room pushing Jem and me out of it.

"Shoo," she said, "you all go home."

Jem hesitated at the door.

"It's time for her medicine," Jessie said. As the door swung shut behind us I saw Jessie walking quickly toward Mrs. Dubose's bed.

It was only three forty-five when we got home, so Jem and I drop-kicked in the back yard until it was time to meet Atticus. Atticus had two yellow pencils for me and a football magazine for Jem, which I suppose was a silent reward for our first day's session with Mrs. Dubose. Jem told him what happened.

"Did she frighten you?" asked Atticus.

"No sir," said Jem, "but she's so nasty. She has fits or somethin'. She spits a lot."

"She can't help that. When people are sick they don't look nice sometimes."

"She scared me," I said.

Atticus looked at me over his glasses. "You don't have to go with Jem, you know."

The next afternoon at Mrs. Dubose's was the same as the first, and so was the next, until gradually a pattern emerged: everything would begin normally—that is, Mrs. Dubose would hound Jem for a while on her favorite subjects, her camellias and our father's nigger-loving propensities; she would grow increasingly silent, then go away from us. The alarm clock would ring, Jessie would shoo us out, and the rest of the day was ours.

"Atticus," I said one evening, "what exactly is a nigger-lover?"

Atticus's face was grave. "Has somebody been calling you that?"

"No sir, Mrs. Dubose calls you that. She warms up every afternoon calling you that. Francis called me that last Christmas, that's where I first heard it."

"Is that the reason you jumped on him?" asked Atticus.

"Yes sir..."

"Then why are you asking me what it means?"

I tried to explain to Atticus that it wasn't so much what Francis said that had infuriated me as the way he had said it. "It was like he'd said snot-nose or somethin'."

"Scout," said Atticus, "nigger-lover is just one of those terms that don't mean anything—like snot-nose. It's hard to explain—ignorant, trashy people use it when they think somebody's favoring Negroes over and above themselves. It's slipped into usage with some people like ourselves, when they want a common, ugly term to label somebody."

"You aren't really a nigger-lover, then, are you?"

"I certainly am. I do my best to love everybody... I'm hard put, sometimes—baby, it's never an insult to be called what somebody thinks is a bad name. It just shows you how poor that person is, it doesn't hurt you. So don't let Mrs. Dubose get you down. She has enough troubles of her own."

One afternoon a month later Jem was ploughing his way through Sir Walter Scott, as Jem called him, and Mrs. Dubose was correcting him at every turn, when there was a knock on the door. "Come in!" she screamed.

Atticus came in. He went to the bed and took Mrs. Dubose's hand. "I was coming from the office and didn't see the children," he said. "I thought they might still be here."

Mrs. Dubose smiled at him. For the life of me I could not figure out how she could bring herself to speak to him when she seemed to hate him so. "Do you know what time it is, Atticus?" she said. "Exactly fourteen minutes past five. The alarm clock's set for five-thirty. I want you to know that."

It suddenly came to me that each day we had been staying a little longer at Mrs. Dubose's, that the alarm clock went off a few minutes later every day, and that she was well into one of her fits by the time it sounded. Today she had antagonized Jem for nearly two hours with no intention of having a fit, and I felt hopelessly trapped. The alarm clock was the signal for our release; if one day it did not ring, what would we do?

"I have a feeling that Jem's reading days are numbered," said Atticus.

"Only a week longer, I think," she said, "just to make sure..."

Jem rose. "But—"

Atticus put out his hand and Jem was silent. On the way home, Jem said he had to do it just for a month and the month was up and it wasn't fair.

"Just one more week, son," said Atticus.

"No," said Jem. "Yes," said Atticus.

The following week found us back at Mrs. Dubose's. The alarm clock had ceased sounding, but Mrs. Dubose would release us with, "That'll do," so late in the afternoon Atticus would be home reading the paper when we returned. Although her fits had passed off, she was in every other way her old self: when Sir Walter Scott became involved in lengthy descriptions of moats and castles, Mrs. Dubose would become bored and pick on us:

"Jeremy Finch, I told you you'd live to regret tearing up my camellias. You regret it now, don't you?"

Jem would say he certainly did.

"Thought you could kill my Snow-on-the-Mountain, did you? Well, Jessie says the top's growing back out. Next time you'll know how to do it right, won't you? You'll pull it up by the roots, won't you?"

Jem would say he certainly would.

"Don't you mutter at me, boy! You hold up your head and say yes ma'am. Don't guess you feel like holding it up, though, with your father what he is."

Jem's chin would come up, and he would gaze at Mrs. Dubose with a face devoid of resentment. Through the weeks he had cultivated an expression of polite and detached interest, which he would present to her in answer to her most blood-

curdling inventions.

At last the day came. When Mrs. Dubose said, "That'll do," one afternoon, she added, "And that's all. Good-day to you."

It was over. We bounded down the sidewalk on a spree of sheer relief, leaping and howling.

That spring was a good one: the days grew longer and gave us more playing time. Jem's mind was occupied mostly with the vital statistics of every college football player in the nation. Every night Atticus would read us the sports pages of the newspapers. Alabama might go to the Rose Bowl again this year, judging from its prospects, not one of whose names we could pronounce. Atticus was in the middle of Windy Seaton's column one evening when the telephone rang.

He answered it, then went to the hat rack in the hall. "I'm going down to Mrs.

Dubose's for a while," he said. "I won't be long."

But Atticus stayed away until long past my bedtime. When he returned he was carrying a candy box. Atticus sat down in the livingroom and put the box on the floor beside his chair.

"What'd she want?" asked Jem.

We had not seen Mrs. Dubose for over a month. She was never on the porch any more when we passed.

"She's dead, son," said Atticus. "She died a few minutes ago."

"Oh," said Jem. "Well."

"Well is right," said Atticus. "She's not suffering any more. She was sick for a long time. Son, didn't you know what her fits were?"

Jem shook his head.

"Mrs. Dubose was a morphine addict," said Atticus. "She took it as a pain-killer for years. The doctor put her on it. She'd have spent the rest of her life on it and died without so much agony, but she was too contrary—"

"Sir?" said Jem.

Atticus said, "Just before your escapade she called me to make her will. Dr. Reynolds told her she had only a few months left. Her business affairs were in

perfect order but she said, "There's still one thing out of order."

"What was that?" Jem was perplexed.

"She said she was going to leave this world beholden to nothing and nobody. Jem, when you're sick as she was, it's all right to take anything to make it easier, but it wasn't all right for her. She said she meant to break herself of it before she died, and that's what she did."

Jem said, "You mean that's what her fits were?"

"Yes, that's what they were. Most of the time you were reading to her I doubt if she heard a word you said. Her whole mind and body were concentrated on that alarm clock. If you hadn't fallen into her hands, I'd have made you go read to her anyway. It may have been some distraction. There was another reason—"

"Did she die free?" asked Jem.

"As the mountain air," said Atticus. "She was conscious to the last, almost. Conscious," he smiled, "and cantankerous. She still disapproved heartily of my doings, and said I'd probably spend the rest of my life bailing you out of jail. She had Jessie fix you this box—"

Atticus reached down and picked up the candy box. He handed it to Jem.

Jem opened the box. Inside, surrounded by wads of damp cotton, was a white, waxy, perfect camellia. It was a Snow-on-the-Mountain.

Jem's eyes nearly popped out of his head. "Old hell-devil, old hell-devil!" he screamed, flinging it down. "Why can't she leave me alone?"

In a flash Atticus was up and standing over him. Jem buried his face in Atticus's shirt front. "Sh-h," he said. "I think that was her way of telling you—everything's all right now, Jem, everything's all right. You know, she was a great lady."

"A lady?" Jem raised his head. His face was scarlet. "After all those things she said about you, a lady?"

"She was. She had her own views about things, a lot different from mine, maybe... son, I told you that if you hadn't lost your head I'd have made you go read to her. I wanted you to see something about her—I wanted you to see what real courage is, instead of getting the idea that courage is a man with a gun in his hand. It's when you know you're licked before you begin but you begin anyway

and you see it through no matter what. You rarely win, but sometimes you do. Mrs. Dubose won, all ninety-eight pounds of her. According to her views, she died beholden to nothing and nobody. She was the bravest person I ever knew." Jem picked up the candy box and threw it in the fire. He picked up the camellia, and when I went off to bed I saw him fingering the wide petals. Atticus was reading the paper.

PART TWO

[Contents](#) - [Prev](#) / [Next](#)

Chapter 12

Jem was twelve. He was difficult to live with, inconsistent, moody. His appetite was appalling, and he told me so many times to stop pestering him I consulted Atticus: "Reckon he's got a tapeworm?" Atticus said no, Jem was growing. I must be patient with him and disturb him as little as possible.

This change in Jem had come about in a matter of weeks. Mrs. Dubose was not cold in her grave—Jem had seemed grateful enough for my company when he went to read to her. Overnight, it seemed, Jem had acquired an alien set of values and was trying to impose them on me: several times he went so far as to tell me what to do. After one altercation when Jem hollered, "It's time you started bein' a girl and acting right!" I burst into tears and fled to Calpurnia.

"Don't you fret too much over Mister Jem—" she began.

"Mister Jem?"

"Yeah, he's just about Mister Jem now."

"He ain't that old," I said. "All he needs is somebody to beat him up, and I ain't big enough."

"Baby," said Calpurnia, "I just can't help it if Mister Jem's growin' up. He's