

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.

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## PART TWO

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### 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

gonna want to be off to himself a lot now, doin' whatever boys do, so you just come right on in the kitchen when you feel lonesome. We'll find lots of things to do in here."

The beginning of that summer boded well: Jem could do as he pleased; Calpurnia would do until Dill came. She seemed glad to see me when I appeared in the kitchen, and by watching her I began to think there was some skill involved in being a girl.

But summer came and Dill was not there. I received a letter and a snapshot from him. The letter said he had a new father whose picture was enclosed, and he would have to stay in Meridian because they planned to build a fishing boat. His father was a lawyer like Atticus, only much younger. Dill's new father had a pleasant face, which made me glad Dill had captured him, but I was crushed. Dill concluded by saying he would love me forever and not to worry, he would come get me and marry me as soon as he got enough money together, so please write.

The fact that I had a permanent fiancé was little compensation for his absence: I had never thought about it, but summer was Dill by the fishpool smoking string, Dill's eyes alive with complicated plans to make Boo Radley emerge; summer was the swiftness with which Dill would reach up and kiss me when Jem was not looking, the longings we sometimes felt each other feel. With him, life was routine; without him, life was unbearable. I stayed miserable for two days.

As if that were not enough, the state legislature was called into emergency session and Atticus left us for two weeks. The Governor was eager to scrape a few barnacles off the ship of state; there were sit-down strikes in Birmingham; bread lines in the cities grew longer, people in the country grew poorer. But these were events remote from the world of Jem and me.

We were surprised one morning to see a cartoon in the *Montgomery Advertiser* above the caption, "Maycomb's Finch." It showed Atticus barefooted and in short pants, chained to a desk: he was diligently writing on a slate while some frivolous-looking girls yelled, "Yoo-hoo!" at him.

"That's a compliment," explained Jem. "He spends his time doin' things that wouldn't get done if nobody did 'em."

"Huh?"

In addition to Jem's newly developed characteristics, he had acquired a maddening air of wisdom.

"Oh, Scout, it's like reorganizing the tax systems of the counties and things. That kind of thing's pretty dry to most men."

"How do you know?"

"Oh, go on and leave me alone. I'm readin' the paper."

Jem got his wish. I departed for the kitchen.

While she was shelling peas, Calpurnia suddenly said, "What am I gonna do about you all's church this Sunday?"

"Nothing, I reckon. Atticus left us collection."

Calpurnia's eyes narrowed and I could tell what was going through her mind.

"Cal," I said, "you know we'll behave. We haven't done anything in church in years."

Calpurnia evidently remembered a rainy Sunday when we were both fatherless and teacherless. Left to its own devices, the class tied Eunice Ann Simpson to a chair and placed her in the furnace room. We forgot her, trooped upstairs to church, and were listening quietly to the sermon when a dreadful banging issued from the radiator pipes, persisting until someone investigated and brought forth Eunice Ann saying she didn't want to play Shadrach any more—Jem Finch said she wouldn't get burnt if she had enough faith, but it was hot down there.

"Besides, Cal, this isn't the first time Atticus has left us," I protested.

"Yeah, but he makes certain your teacher's gonna be there. I didn't hear him say this time—reckon he forgot it." Calpurnia scratched her head. Suddenly she smiled. "How'd you and Mister Jem like to come to church with me tomorrow?"

"Really?"

"How 'bout it?" grinned Calpurnia.

If Calpurnia had ever bathed me roughly before, it was nothing compared to her supervision of that Saturday night's routine. She made me soap all over twice, drew fresh water in the tub for each rinse; she stuck my head in the basin and washed it with Octagon soap and castile. She had trusted Jem for years, but that

night she invaded his privacy and provoked an outburst: “Can’t anybody take a bath in this house without the whole family lookin’?”

Next morning she began earlier than usual, to “go over our clothes.” When Calpurnia stayed overnight with us she slept on a folding cot in the kitchen; that morning it was covered with our Sunday habiliments. She had put so much starch in my dress it came up like a tent when I sat down. She made me wear a petticoat and she wrapped a pink sash tightly around my waist. She went over my patent-leather shoes with a cold biscuit until she saw her face in them.

“It’s like we were goin’ to Mardi Gras,” said Jem. “What’s all this for, Cal?”

“I don’t want anybody sayin’ I don’t look after my children,” she muttered.

“Mister Jem, you absolutely can’t wear that tie with that suit. It’s green.”

““smatter with that?”

“Suit’s blue. Can’t you tell?”

“Hee hee,” I howled, “Jem’s color blind.”

His face flushed angrily, but Calpurnia said, “Now you all quit that. You’re gonna go to First Purchase with smiles on your faces.”

First Purchase African M.E. Church was in the Quarters outside the southern town limits, across the old sawmill tracks. It was an ancient paint-peeled frame building, the only church in Maycomb with a steeple and bell, called First Purchase because it was paid for from the first earnings of freed slaves. Negroes worshiped in it on Sundays and white men gambled in it on weekdays.

The churchyard was brick-hard clay, as was the cemetery beside it. If someone died during a dry spell, the body was covered with chunks of ice until rain softened the earth. A few graves in the cemetery were marked with crumbling tombstones; newer ones were outlined with brightly colored glass and broken Coca-Cola bottles. Lightning rods guarding some graves denoted dead who rested uneasily; stumps of burned-out candles stood at the heads of infant graves. It was a happy cemetery.

The warm bittersweet smell of clean Negro welcomed us as we entered the churchyard—Hearts of Love hairdressing mingled with asafoetida, snuff, Hoyt’s Cologne, Brown’s Mule, peppermint, and lilac talcum.

When they saw Jem and me with Calpurnia, the men stepped back and took off their hats; the women crossed their arms at their waists, weekday gestures of respectful attention. They parted and made a small pathway to the church door for us. Calpurnia walked between Jem and me, responding to the greetings of her brightly clad neighbors.

“What you up to, Miss Cal?” said a voice behind us.

Calpurnia’s hands went to our shoulders and we stopped and looked around: standing in the path behind us was a tall Negro woman. Her weight was on one leg; she rested her left elbow in the curve of her hip, pointing at us with upturned palm. She was bullet-headed with strange almond-shaped eyes, straight nose, and an Indian-bow mouth. She seemed seven feet high.

I felt Calpurnia’s hand dig into my shoulder. “What you want, Lula?” she asked, in tones I had never heard her use. She spoke quietly, contemptuously.

“I wants to know why you bringin’ white chillun to nigger church.”

“They’s my comp’ny,” said Calpurnia. Again I thought her voice strange: she was talking like the rest of them.

“Yeah, an’ I reckon you’s comp’ny at the Finch house durin’ the week.”

A murmur ran through the crowd. “Don’t you fret,” Calpurnia whispered to me, but the roses on her hat trembled indignantly.

When Lula came up the pathway toward us Calpurnia said, “Stop right there, nigger.”

Lula stopped, but she said, “You ain’t got no business bringin’ white chillun here —they got their church, we got our’n. It is our church, ain’t it, Miss Cal?”

Calpurnia said, “It’s the same God, ain’t it?”

Jem said, “Let’s go home, Cal, they don’t want us here—”

I agreed: they did not want us here. I sensed, rather than saw, that we were being advanced upon. They seemed to be drawing closer to us, but when I looked up at Calpurnia there was amusement in her eyes. When I looked down the pathway again, Lula was gone. In her place was a solid mass of colored people.

One of them stepped from the crowd. It was Zeebo, the garbage collector. “Mister Jem,” he said, “we’re mighty glad to have you all here. Don’t pay no ‘tention to

Lula, she's contentious because Reverend Sykes threatened to church her. She's a troublemaker from way back, got fancy ideas an' haughty ways—we're mighty glad to have you all."

With that, Calpurnia led us to the church door where we were greeted by Reverend Sykes, who led us to the front pew.

First Purchase was unceiled and unpainted within. Along its walls unlighted kerosene lamps hung on brass brackets; pine benches served as pews. Behind the rough oak pulpit a faded pink silk banner proclaimed God Is Love, the church's only decoration except a rotogravure print of Hunt's *The Light of the World*. There was no sign of piano, organ, hymn-books, church programs—the familiar ecclesiastical impedimenta we saw every Sunday. It was dim inside, with a damp coolness slowly dispelled by the gathering congregation. At each seat was a cheap cardboard fan bearing a garish Garden of Gethsemane, courtesy Tyndal's Hardware Co. (You-Name-It-We-Sell-It).

Calpurnia motioned Jem and me to the end of the row and placed herself between us. She fished in her purse, drew out her handkerchief, and untied the hard wad of change in its corner. She gave a dime to me and a dime to Jem. "We've got ours," he whispered. "You keep it," Calpurnia said, "you're my company." Jem's face showed brief indecision on the ethics of withholding his own dime, but his innate courtesy won and he shifted his dime to his pocket. I did likewise with no qualms. "Cal," I whispered, "where are the hymn-books?"

"We don't have any," she said.

"Well how—?"

"Sh-h," she said. Reverend Sykes was standing behind the pulpit staring the congregation to silence. He was a short, stocky man in a black suit, black tie, white shirt, and a gold watch-chain that glinted in the light from the frosted windows.

He said, "Brethren and sisters, we are particularly glad to have company with us this morning. Mister and Miss Finch. You all know their father. Before I begin I will read some announcements."

Reverend Sykes shuffled some papers, chose one and held it at arm's length. "The

Missionary Society meets in the home of Sister Annette Reeves next Tuesday. Bring your sewing.”

He read from another paper. “You all know of Brother Tom Robinson’s trouble. He has been a faithful member of First Purchase since he was a boy. The collection taken up today and for the next three Sundays will go to Helen—his wife, to help her out at home.”

I punched Jem. “That’s the Tom Atticus’s de—”  
“Sh-h!”

I turned to Calpurnia but was hushed before I opened my mouth. Subdued, I fixed my attention upon Reverend Sykes, who seemed to be waiting for me to settle down. “Will the music superintendent lead us in the first hymn,” he said.

Zeebo rose from his pew and walked down the center aisle, stopping in front of us and facing the congregation. He was carrying a battered hymn-book. He opened it and said, “We’ll sing number two seventy-three.”

This was too much for me. “How’re we gonna sing it if there ain’t any hymn-books?”

Calpurnia smiled. “Hush baby,” she whispered, “you’ll see in a minute.”

Zeebo cleared his throat and read in a voice like the rumble of distant artillery: “There’s a land beyond the river.”

Miraculously on pitch, a hundred voices sang out Zeebo’s words. The last syllable, held to a husky hum, was followed by Zeebo saying, “That we call the sweet forever.”

Music again swelled around us; the last note lingered and Zeebo met it with the next line: “And we only reach that shore by faith’s decree.”

The congregation hesitated, Zeebo repeated the line carefully, and it was sung. At the chorus Zeebo closed the book, a signal for the congregation to proceed without his help.

On the dying notes of “Jubilee,” Zeebo said, “In that far-off sweet forever, just beyond the shining river.”

Line for line, voices followed in simple harmony until the hymn ended in a

melancholy murmur.

I looked at Jem, who was looking at Zeebo from the corners of his eyes. I didn't believe it either, but we had both heard it.

Reverend Sykes then called on the Lord to bless the sick and the suffering, a procedure no different from our church practice, except Reverend Sykes directed the Deity's attention to several specific cases.

His sermon was a forthright denunciation of sin, an austere declaration of the motto on the wall behind him: he warned his flock against the evils of heady brews, gambling, and strange women. Bootleggers caused enough trouble in the Quarters, but women were worse. Again, as I had often met it in my own church, I was confronted with the Impurity of Women doctrine that seemed to preoccupy all clergymen.

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

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

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

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

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



put ours in. Gimme your dime, Scout.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

My curiosity burst: “Why were you all takin’ up collection for Tom Robinson’s wife?”

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

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

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

“Why not, Reverend?”

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

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

Calpurnia, in her navy voile dress and tub of a hat, walked between Jem and me. “It’s because of what folks say Tom’s done,” she said. “Folks aren’t anxious to— to have anything to do with any of his family.”

“Just what did he do, Cal?”

Calpurnia sighed. “Old Mr. Bob Ewell accused him of rapin’ his girl an’ had him arrested an’ put in jail—”

“Mr. Ewell?” My memory stirred. “Does he have anything to do with those Ewells that come every first day of school an’ then go home? Why, Atticus said they were absolute trash—I never heard Atticus talk about folks the way he talked about the Ewells. He said—”

“Yeah, those are the ones.”

“Well, if everybody in Maycomb knows what kind of folks the Ewells are they’d be glad to hire Helen... what’s rape, Cal?”

“It’s somethin’ you’ll have to ask Mr. Finch about,” she said. “He can explain it better than I can. You all hungry? The Reverend took a long time unwindin’ this morning, he’s not usually so tedious.”

“He’s just like our preacher,” said Jem, “but why do you all sing hymns that way?”

“Linin’?” she asked.

“Is that what it is?”

“Yeah, it’s called linin’. They’ve done it that way as long as I can remember.”

Jem said it looked like they could save the collection money for a year and get some hymn-books.

Calpurnia laughed. “Wouldn’t do any good,” she said. “They can’t read.”

“Can’t read?” I asked. “All those folks?”

“That’s right,” Calpurnia nodded. “Can’t but about four folks in First Purchase read... I’m one of ‘em.”

“Where’d you go to school, Cal?” asked Jem.

“Nowhere. Let’s see now, who taught me my letters? It was Miss Maudie Atkinson’s aunt, old Miss Buford—”

“Are you *that* old?”

“I’m older than Mr. Finch, even.” Calpurnia grinned. “Not sure how much, though. We started rememberin’ one time, trying to figure out how old I was—I can remember back just a few years more’n he can, so I’m not much older, when you take off the fact that men can’t remember as well as women.”

“What’s your birthday, Cal?”

“I just have it on Christmas, it’s easier to remember that way—I don’t have a real birthday.”

“But Cal,” Jem protested, “you don’t look even near as old as Atticus.”

“Colored folks don’t show their ages so fast,” she said.

“Maybe because they can’t read. Cal, did you teach Zeebo?”

“Yeah, Mister Jem. There wasn’t a school even when he was a boy. I made him learn, though.”

Zeebo was Calpurnia’s eldest son. If I had ever thought about it, I would have known that Calpurnia was of mature years—Zeebo had half-grown children—but then I had never thought about it.

“Did you teach him out of a primer, like us?” I asked.

“No, I made him get a page of the Bible every day, and there was a book Miss Buford taught me out of—bet you don’t know where I got it,” she said.

We didn’t know.

Calpurnia said, “Your Granddaddy Finch gave it to me.”

“Were you from the Landing?” Jem asked. “You never told us that.”

“I certainly am, Mister Jem. Grew up down there between the Buford Place and the Landin’. I’ve spent all my days workin’ for the Finches or the Bufords, an’ I

moved to Maycomb when your daddy and your mamma married.”

“What was the book, Cal?” I asked.

“Blackstone’s *Commentaries*.”

Jem was thunderstruck. “You mean you taught Zeebo outa *that*?”

“Why yes sir, Mister Jem.” Calpurnia timidly put her fingers to her mouth. “They were the only books I had. Your granddaddy said Mr. Blackstone wrote fine English—”

“That’s why you don’t talk like the rest of ‘em,” said Jem.

“The rest of who?”

“Rest of the colored folks. Cal, but you talked like they did in church...”

That Calpurnia led a modest double life never dawned on me. The idea that she had a separate existence outside our household was a novel one, to say nothing of her having command of two languages. “Cal,” I asked, “why do you talk nigger-talk to the—to your folks when you know it’s not right?”

“Well, in the first place I’m black—”

“That doesn’t mean you hafta talk that way when you know better,” said Jem.

Calpurnia tilted her hat and scratched her head, then pressed her hat down carefully over her ears. “It’s right hard to say,” she said. “Suppose you and Scout talked colored-folks’ talk at home it’d be out of place, wouldn’t it? Now what if I talked white-folks’ talk at church, and with my neighbors? They’d think I was puttin’ on airs to beat Moses.”

“But Cal, you know better,” I said.

“It’s not necessary to tell all you know. It’s not ladylike—in the second place, folks don’t like to have somebody around knowin’ more than they do. It aggravates ‘em. You’re not gonna change any of them by talkin’ right, they’ve got to want to learn themselves, and when they don’t want to learn there’s nothing you can do but keep your mouth shut or talk their language.”

“Cal, can I come to see you sometimes?”

She looked down at me. “See me, honey? You see me every day.”

“Out to your house,” I said. “Sometimes after work? Atticus can get me.”

“Any time you want to,” she said. “We’d be glad to have you.”

We were on the sidewalk by the Radley Place.

“Look on the porch yonder,” Jem said.

I looked over to the Radley Place, expecting to see its phantom occupant sunning himself in the swing. The swing was empty.

“I mean our porch,” said Jem.

I looked down the street. Enarmored, upright, uncompromising, Aunt Alexandra was sitting in a rocking chair exactly as if she had sat there every day of her life.

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## Chapter 13

“Put my bag in the front bedroom, Calpurnia,” was the first thing Aunt Alexandra said. “Jean Louise, stop scratching your head,” was the second thing she said.

Calpurnia picked up Auntie’s heavy suitcase and opened the door. “I’ll take it,” said Jem, and took it. I heard the suitcase hit the bedroom floor with a thump. The sound had a dull permanence about it. “Have you come for a visit, Auntie?” I asked. Aunt Alexandra’s visits from the Landing were rare, and she traveled in state. She owned a bright green square Buick and a black chauffeur, both kept in an unhealthy state of tidiness, but today they were nowhere to be seen.

“Didn’t your father tell you?” she asked.

Jem and I shook our heads.

“Probably he forgot. He’s not in yet, is he?”

“Nome, he doesn’t usually get back till late afternoon,” said Jem.

“Well, your father and I decided it was time I came to stay with you for a while.”

“For a while” in Maycomb meant anything from three days to thirty years. Jem and I exchanged glances.

“Jem’s growing up now and you are too,” she said to me. “We decided that it would be best for you to have some feminine influence. It won’t be many years, Jean Louise, before you become interested in clothes and boys—”

I could have made several answers to this: Cal’s a girl, it would be many years before I would be interested in boys, I would never be interested in clothes... but I kept quiet.

“What about Uncle Jimmy?” asked Jem. “Is he comin’, too?”

“Oh no, he’s staying at the Landing. He’ll keep the place going.”

The moment I said, “Won’t you miss him?” I realized that this was not a tactful question. Uncle Jimmy present or Uncle Jimmy absent made not much difference, he never said anything. Aunt Alexandra ignored my question.

I could think of nothing else to say to her. In fact I could never think of anything to say to her, and I sat thinking of past painful conversations between us: How are you, Jean Louise? Fine, thank you ma’am, how are you? Very well, thank you, what have you been doing with yourself? Nothin’. Don’t you do anything? Nome. Certainly you have friends? Yessum. Well what do you all do? Nothin’.

It was plain that Aunty thought me dull in the extreme, because I once heard her tell Atticus that I was sluggish.

There was a story behind all this, but I had no desire to extract it from her then. Today was Sunday, and Aunt Alexandra was positively irritable on the Lord’s Day. I guess it was her Sunday corset. She was not fat, but solid, and she chose protective garments that drew up her bosom to giddy heights, pinched in her waist, flared out her rear, and managed to suggest that Aunt Alexandra’s was once an hour-glass figure. From any angle, it was formidable.

The remainder of the afternoon went by in the gentle gloom that descends when relatives appear, but was dispelled when we heard a car turn in the driveway. It was Atticus, home from Montgomery. Jem, forgetting his dignity, ran with me to meet him. Jem seized his briefcase and bag, I jumped into his arms, felt his vague dry kiss and said, “‘d you bring me a book? ’d you know Aunty’s here?”

Atticus answered both questions in the affirmative. “How’d you like for her to come live with us?”

I said I would like it very much, which was a lie, but one must lie under certain circumstances and at all times when one can't do anything about them.

“We felt it was time you children needed—well, it's like this, Scout,” Atticus said. “Your aunt's doing me a favor as well as you all. I can't stay here all day with you, and the summer's going to be a hot one.”

“Yes sir,” I said, not understanding a word he said. I had an idea, however, that Aunt Alexandra's appearance on the scene was not so much Atticus's doing as hers. Aunty had a way of declaring What Is Best For The Family, and I suppose her coming to live with us was in that category.

Maycomb welcomed her. Miss Maudie Atkinson baked a Lane cake so loaded with shinny it made me tight; Miss Stephanie Crawford had long visits with Aunt Alexandra, consisting mostly of Miss Stephanie shaking her head and saying, “Uh, uh, uh.” Miss Rachel next door had Aunty over for coffee in the afternoons, and Mr. Nathan Radley went so far as to come up in the front yard and say he was glad to see her.

When she settled in with us and life resumed its daily pace, Aunt Alexandra seemed as if she had always lived with us. Her Missionary Society refreshments added to her reputation as a hostess (she did not permit Calpurnia to make the delicacies required to sustain the Society through long reports on Rice Christians); she joined and became Secretary of the Maycomb Amanuensis Club. To all parties present and participating in the life of the county, Aunt Alexandra was one of the last of her kind: she had river-boat, boarding-school manners; let any moral come along and she would uphold it; she was born in the objective case; she was an incurable gossip. When Aunt Alexandra went to school, self-doubt could not be found in any textbook, so she knew not its meaning. She was never bored, and given the slightest chance she would exercise her royal prerogative: she would arrange, advise, caution, and warn.

She never let a chance escape her to point out the shortcomings of other tribal groups to the greater glory of our own, a habit that amused Jem rather than annoyed him: “Aunty better watch how she talks—scratch most folks in Maycomb and they're kin to us.”

Aunt Alexandra, in underlining the moral of young Sam Merriweather's suicide,

said it was caused by a morbid streak in the family. Let a sixteen-year-old girl giggle in the choir and Aunty would say, "It just goes to show you, all the Penfield women are flighty." Everybody in Maycomb, it seemed, had a Streak: a Drinking Streak, a Gambling Streak, a Mean Streak, a Funny Streak.

Once, when Aunty assured us that Miss Stephanie Crawford's tendency to mind other people's business was hereditary, Atticus said, "Sister, when you stop to think about it, our generation's practically the first in the Finch family not to marry its cousins. Would you say the Finches have an Incestuous Streak?"

Aunty said no, that's where we got our small hands and feet.

I never understood her preoccupation with heredity. Somewhere, I had received the impression that Fine Folks were people who did the best they could with the sense they had, but Aunt Alexandra was of the opinion, obliquely expressed, that the longer a family had been squatting on one patch of land the finer it was.

"That makes the Ewells fine folks, then," said Jem. The tribe of which Burris Ewell and his brethren consisted had lived on the same plot of earth behind the Maycomb dump, and had thrived on county welfare money for three generations.

Aunt Alexandra's theory had something behind it, though. Maycomb was an ancient town. It was twenty miles east of Finch's Landing, awkwardly inland for such an old town. But Maycomb would have been closer to the river had it not been for the nimble-wittedness of one Sinkfield, who in the dawn of history operated an inn where two pig-trails met, the only tavern in the territory.

Sinkfield, no patriot, served and supplied ammunition to Indians and settlers alike, neither knowing or caring whether he was a part of the Alabama Territory or the Creek Nation so long as business was good. Business was excellent when Governor William Wyatt Bibb, with a view to promoting the newly created county's domestic tranquility, dispatched a team of surveyors to locate its exact center and there establish its seat of government. The surveyors, Sinkfield's guests, told their host that he was in the territorial confines of Maycomb County, and showed him the probable spot where the county seat would be built. Had not Sinkfield made a bold stroke to preserve his holdings, Maycomb would have sat in the middle of Winston Swamp, a place totally devoid of interest. Instead, Maycomb grew and sprawled out from its hub, Sinkfield's Tavern, because



Sinkfield reduced his guests to myopic drunkenness one evening, induced them to bring forward their maps and charts, lop off a little here, add a bit there, and adjust the center of the county to meet his requirements. He sent them packing next day armed with their charts and five quarts of shinny in their saddlebags—two apiece and one for the Governor.

Because its primary reason for existence was government, Maycomb was spared the grubbiness that distinguished most Alabama towns its size. In the beginning its buildings were solid, its courthouse proud, its streets graciously wide.

Maycomb's proportion of professional people ran high: one went there to have his teeth pulled, his wagon fixed, his heart listened to, his money deposited, his soul saved, his mules vetted. But the ultimate wisdom of Sinkfield's maneuver is open to question. He placed the young town too far away from the only kind of public transportation in those days—river-boat—and it took a man from the north end of the county two days to travel to Maycomb for store-bought goods. As a result the town remained the same size for a hundred years, an island in a patchwork sea of cottonfields and timberland.

Although Maycomb was ignored during the War Between the States, Reconstruction rule and economic ruin forced the town to grow. It grew inward. New people so rarely settled there, the same families married the same families until the members of the community looked faintly alike. Occasionally someone would return from Montgomery or Mobile with an outsider, but the result caused only a ripple in the quiet stream of family resemblance. Things were more or less the same during my early years.

There was indeed a caste system in Maycomb, but to my mind it worked this way: the older citizens, the present generation of people who had lived side by side for years and years, were utterly predictable to one another: they took for granted attitudes, character shadings, even gestures, as having been repeated in each generation and refined by time. Thus the dicta No Crawford Minds His Own Business, Every Third Merriweather Is Morbid, The Truth Is Not in the Delafields, All the Bufords Walk Like That, were simply guides to daily living: never take a check from a Delafield without a discreet call to the bank; Miss Maudie Atkinson's shoulder stoops because she was a Buford; if Mrs. Grace Merriweather sips gin out of Lydia E. Pinkham bottles it's nothing unusual—her

mother did the same.

Aunt Alexandra fitted into the world of Maycomb like a hand into a glove, but never into the world of Jem and me. I so often wondered how she could be Atticus's and Uncle Jack's sister that I revived half-remembered tales of changelings and mandrake roots that Jem had spun long ago.

These were abstract speculations for the first month of her stay, as she had little to say to Jem or me, and we saw her only at mealtimes and at night before we went to bed. It was summer and we were outdoors. Of course some afternoons when I would run inside for a drink of water, I would find the livingroom overrun with Maycomb ladies, sipping, whispering, fanning, and I would be called: "Jean Louise, come speak to these ladies."

When I appeared in the doorway, Auntie would look as if she regretted her request; I was usually mud-splashed or covered with sand.

"Speak to your Cousin Lily," she said one afternoon, when she had trapped me in the hall.

"Who?" I said.

"Your Cousin Lily Brooke," said Aunt Alexandra.

"She our cousin? I didn't know that."

Aunt Alexandra managed to smile in a way that conveyed a gentle apology to Cousin Lily and firm disapproval to me. When Cousin Lily Brooke left I knew I was in for it.

It was a sad thing that my father had neglected to tell me about the Finch Family, or to install any pride into his children. She summoned Jem, who sat warily on the sofa beside me. She left the room and returned with a purple-covered book on which *Meditations of Joshua S. St. Clair* was stamped in gold.

"Your cousin wrote this," said Aunt Alexandra. "He was a beautiful character."

Jem examined the small volume. "Is this the Cousin Joshua who was locked up for so long?"

Aunt Alexandra said, "How did you know that?"

"Why, Atticus said he went round the bend at the University. Said he tried to

shoot the president. Said Cousin Joshua said he wasn't anything but a sewer-inspector and tried to shoot him with an old flintlock pistol, only it just blew up in his hand. Atticus said it cost the family five hundred dollars to get him out of that one—”

Aunt Alexandra was standing stiff as a stork. “That’s all,” she said. “We’ll see about this.”

Before bedtime I was in Jem’s room trying to borrow a book, when Atticus knocked and entered. He sat on the side of Jem’s bed, looked at us soberly, then he grinned.

“

Er—h’rm,” he said. He was beginning to preface some things he said with a throaty noise, and I thought he must at last be getting old, but he looked the same. ”I don’t exactly know how to say this,” he began.

“Well, just say it,” said Jem. “Have we done something?”

Our father was actually fidgeting. “No, I just want to explain to you that—your Aunt Alexandra asked me... son, you know you’re a Finch, don’t you?”

“That’s what I’ve been told.” Jem looked out of the corners of his eyes. His voice rose uncontrollably, “Atticus, what’s the matter?”

Atticus crossed his knees and folded his arms. “I’m trying to tell you the facts of life.”

Jem’s disgust deepened. “I know all that stuff,” he said.

Atticus suddenly grew serious. In his lawyer’s voice, without a shade of inflection, he said: “Your aunt has asked me to try and impress upon you and Jean Louise that you are not from run-of-the-mill people, that you are the product of several generations’ gentle breeding—” Atticus paused, watching me locate an elusive redbug on my leg.

“Gentle breeding,” he continued, when I had found and scratched it, “and that you should try to live up to your name—” Atticus persevered in spite of us: “She asked me to tell you you must try to behave like the little lady and gentleman that you are. She wants to talk to you about the family and what it’s meant to Maycomb County through the years, so you’ll have some idea of who you are, so

you might be moved to behave accordingly,” he concluded at a gallop.

Stunned, Jem and I looked at each other, then at Atticus, whose collar seemed to worry him. We did not speak to him.

Presently I picked up a comb from Jem’s dresser and ran its teeth along the edge.

“Stop that noise,” Atticus said.

His curtness stung me. The comb was midway in its journey, and I banged it down. For no reason I felt myself beginning to cry, but I could not stop. This was not my father. My father never thought these thoughts. My father never spoke so. Aunt Alexandra had put him up to this, somehow. Through my tears I saw Jem standing in a similar pool of isolation, his head cocked to one side.

There was nowhere to go, but I turned to go and met Atticus’s vest front. I buried my head in it and listened to the small internal noises that went on behind the light blue cloth: his watch ticking, the faint crackle of his starched shirt, the soft sound of his breathing.

“Your stomach’s growling,” I said.

“I know it,” he said.

“You better take some soda.”

“I will,” he said.

“Atticus, is all this behavin’ an’ stuff gonna make things different? I mean are you —?”

I felt his hand on the back of my head. “Don’t you worry about anything,” he said. “It’s not time to worry.” When I heard that, I knew he had come back to us. The blood in my legs began to flow again, and I raised my head. “You really want us to do all that? I can’t remember everything Finches are supposed to do...”

“I don’t want you to remember it. Forget it.”

He went to the door and out of the room, shutting the door behind him. He nearly slammed it, but caught himself at the last minute and closed it softly. As Jem and I stared, the door opened again and Atticus peered around. His eyebrows were raised, his glasses had slipped. “Get more like Cousin Joshua every day, don’t I? Do you think I’ll end up costing the family five hundred dollars?”

I know now what he was trying to do, but Atticus was only a man. It takes a woman to do that kind of work.

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## Chapter 14

Although we heard no more about the Finch family from Aunt Alexandra, we heard plenty from the town. On Saturdays, armed with our nickels, when Jem permitted me to accompany him (he was now positively allergic to my presence when in public), we would squirm our way through sweating sidewalk crowds and sometimes hear, “There’s his chillun,” or, “Yonder’s some Finches.” Turning to face our accusers, we would see only a couple of farmers studying the enema bags in the Mayco Drugstore window. Or two dumpy countrywomen in straw hats sitting in a Hoover cart.

“They c’n go loose and rape up the countryside for all of ‘em who run this county care,” was one obscure observation we met head on from a skinny gentleman when he passed us. Which reminded me that I had a question to ask Atticus.

“What’s rape?” I asked him that night.

Atticus looked around from behind his paper. He was in his chair by the window. As we grew older, Jem and I thought it generous to allow Atticus thirty minutes to himself after supper.

He sighed, and said rape was carnal knowledge of a female by force and without consent.

“Well if that’s all it is why did Calpurnia dry me up when I asked her what it was?”

Atticus looked pensive. “What’s that again?”

“Well, I asked Calpurnia comin’ from church that day what it was and she said ask you but I forgot to and now I’m askin’ you.”

His paper was now in his lap. “Again, please,” he said.

I told him in detail about our trip to church with Calpurnia. Atticus seemed to enjoy it, but Aunt Alexandra, who was sitting in a corner quietly sewing, put down her embroidery and stared at us.

“You all were coming back from Calpurnia’s church that Sunday?”

Jem said, “Yessum, she took us.”

I remembered something. “Yessum, and she promised me I could come out to her house some afternoon. Atticus. I’ll go next Sunday if it’s all right, can I? Cal said she’d come get me if you were off in the car.”

“You may *not*.”

Aunt Alexandra said it. I wheeled around, startled, then turned back to Atticus in time to catch his swift glance at her, but it was too late. I said, “I didn’t ask you!”

For a big man, Atticus could get up and down from a chair faster than anyone I ever knew. He was on his feet. “Apologize to your aunt,” he said.

“I didn’t ask her, I asked you—”

Atticus turned his head and pinned me to the wall with his good eye. His voice was deadly: “First, apologize to your aunt.”

“I’m sorry, Aunty,” I muttered.

“Now then,” he said. “Let’s get this clear: you do as Calpurnia tells you, you do as I tell you, and as long as your aunt’s in this house, you will do as she tells you. Understand?”

I understood, pondered a while, and concluded that the only way I could retire with a shred of dignity was to go to the bathroom, where I stayed long enough to make them think I had to go. Returning, I lingered in the hall to hear a fierce discussion going on in the livingroom. Through the door I could see Jem on the sofa with a football magazine in front of his face, his head turning as if its pages contained a live tennis match.

“...you’ve got to do something about her,” Aunty was saying. “You’ve let things go on too long, Atticus, too long.”

“I don’t see any harm in letting her go out there. Cal’d look after her there as well as she does here.”

Who was the “her” they were talking about? My heart sank: me. I felt the starched walls of a pink cotton penitentiary closing in on me, and for the second time in my life I thought of running away. Immediately.

“Atticus, it’s all right to be soft-hearted, you’re an easy man, but you have a daughter to think of. A daughter who’s growing up.”

“That’s what I am thinking of.”

“And don’t try to get around it. You’ve got to face it sooner or later and it might as well be tonight. We don’t need her now.”

Atticus’s voice was even: “Alexandra, Calpurnia’s not leaving this house until she wants to. You may think otherwise, but I couldn’t have got along without her all these years. She’s a faithful member of this family and you’ll simply have to accept things the way they are. Besides, sister, I don’t want you working your head off for us—you’ve no reason to do that. We still need Cal as much as we ever did.”

“But Atticus—”

“Besides, I don’t think the children’ve suffered one bit from her having brought them up. If anything, she’s been harder on them in some ways than a mother would have been... she’s never let them get away with anything, she’s never indulged them the way most colored nurses do. She tried to bring them up according to her lights, and Cal’s lights are pretty good—and another thing, the children love her.”

I breathed again. It wasn’t me, it was only Calpurnia they were talking about. Revived, I entered the livingroom. Atticus had retreated behind his newspaper and Aunt Alexandra was worrying her embroidery. Punk, punk, punk, her needle broke the taut circle. She stopped, and pulled the cloth tighter: punk-punk-punk. She was furious.

Jem got up and padded across the rug. He motioned me to follow. He led me to his room and closed the door. His face was grave.

“They’ve been fussing, Scout.”

Jem and I fussed a great deal these days, but I had never heard of or seen anyone quarrel with Atticus. It was not a comfortable sight.

“Scout, try not to antagonize Aunty, hear?”

Atticus’s remarks were still rankling, which made me miss the request in Jem’s question. My feathers rose again. “You tryin’ to tell me what to do?”

“Naw, it’s—he’s got a lot on his mind now, without us worrying him.”

“Like what?” Atticus didn’t appear to have anything especially on his mind.

“It’s this Tom Robinson case that’s worryin’ him to death—”

I said Atticus didn’t worry about anything. Besides, the case never bothered us except about once a week and then it didn’t last.

“That’s because you can’t hold something in your mind but a little while,” said Jem. “It’s different with grown folks, we—”

His maddening superiority was unbearable these days. He didn’t want to do anything but read and go off by himself. Still, everything he read he passed along to me, but with this difference: formerly, because he thought I’d like it; now, for my edification and instruction.

“Jee crawling hova, Jem! Who do you think you are?”

“Now I mean it, Scout, you antagonize Aunty and I’ll—I’ll spank you.”

With that, I was gone. “You damn morphodite, I’ll kill you!” He was sitting on the bed, and it was easy to grab his front hair and land one on his mouth. He slapped me and I tried another left, but a punch in the stomach sent me sprawling on the floor. It nearly knocked the breath out of me, but it didn’t matter because I knew he was fighting, he was fighting me back. We were still equals.

“Ain’t so high and mighty now, are you!” I screamed, sailing in again. He was still on the bed and I couldn’t get a firm stance, so I threw myself at him as hard as I could, hitting, pulling, pinching, gouging. What had begun as a fist-fight became a brawl. We were still struggling when Atticus separated us.

“That’s all,” he said. “Both of you go to bed right now.”

“Taah!” I said at Jem. He was being sent to bed at my bedtime.

“Who started it?” asked Atticus, in resignation.

“Jem did. He was tryin’ to tell me what to do. I don’t have to mind *him* now, do I?”



Atticus smiled. "Let's leave it at this: you mind Jem whenever he can make you. Fair enough?"

Aunt Alexandra was present but silent, and when she went down the hall with Atticus we heard her say, "...just one of the things I've been telling you about," a phrase that united us again.

Ours were adjoining rooms; as I shut the door between them Jem said, "Night, Scout."

"Night," I murmured, picking my way across the room to turn on the light. As I passed the bed I stepped on something warm, resilient, and rather smooth. It was not quite like hard rubber, and I had the sensation that it was alive. I also heard it move.

I switched on the light and looked at the floor by the bed. Whatever I had stepped on was gone. I tapped on Jem's door.

"What," he said.

"How does a snake feel?"

"Sort of rough. Cold. Dusty. Why?"

"I think there's one under my bed. Can you come look?"

"Are you bein' funny?" Jem opened the door. He was in his pajama bottoms. I noticed not without satisfaction that the mark of my knuckles was still on his mouth. When he saw I meant what I said, he said, "If you think I'm gonna put my face down to a snake you've got another think comin'. Hold on a minute."

He went to the kitchen and fetched the broom. "You better get up on the bed," he said.

"You reckon it's really one?" I asked. This was an occasion. Our houses had no cellars; they were built on stone blocks a few feet above the ground, and the entry of reptiles was not unknown but was not commonplace. Miss Rachel Haverford's excuse for a glass of neat whiskey every morning was that she never got over the fright of finding a rattler coiled in her bedroom closet, on her washing, when she went to hang up her negligee.

Jem made a tentative swipe under the bed. I looked over the foot to see if a snake would come out. None did. Jem made a deeper swipe.

“Do snakes grunt?”

“It ain’t a snake,” Jem said. “It’s somebody.”

Suddenly a filthy brown package shot from under the bed. Jem raised the broom and missed Dill’s head by an inch when it appeared.

“God Almighty.” Jem’s voice was reverent.

We watched Dill emerge by degrees. He was a tight fit. He stood up and eased his shoulders, turned his feet in their ankle sockets, rubbed the back of his neck. His circulation restored, he said, “Hey.”

Jem petitioned God again. I was speechless.

“I’m ‘bout to perish,” said Dill. “Got anything to eat?”

In a dream, I went to the kitchen. I brought him back some milk and half a pan of corn bread left over from supper. Dill devoured it, chewing with his front teeth, as was his custom.

I finally found my voice. “How’d you get here?”

By an involved route. Refreshed by food, Dill recited this narrative: having been bound in chains and left to die in the basement (there were basements in Meridian) by his new father, who disliked him, and secretly kept alive on raw field peas by a passing farmer who heard his cries for help (the good man poked a bushel pod by pod through the ventilator), Dill worked himself free by pulling the chains from the wall. Still in wrist manacles, he wandered two miles out of Meridian where he discovered a small animal show and was immediately engaged to wash the camel. He traveled with the show all over Mississippi until his infallible sense of direction told him he was in Abbott County, Alabama, just across the river from Maycomb. He walked the rest of the way.

“How’d you get here?” asked Jem.

He had taken thirteen dollars from his mother’s purse, caught the nine o’clock from Meridian and got off at Maycomb Junction. He had walked ten or eleven of the fourteen miles to Maycomb, off the highway in the scrub bushes lest the authorities be seeking him, and had ridden the remainder of the way clinging to the backboard of a cotton wagon. He had been under the bed for two hours, he thought; he had heard us in the diningroom, and the clink of forks on plates nearly

drove him crazy. He thought Jem and I would never go to bed; he had considered emerging and helping me beat Jem, as Jem had grown far taller, but he knew Mr. Finch would break it up soon, so he thought it best to stay where he was. He was worn out, dirty beyond belief, and home.

“They must not know you’re here,” said Jem. “We’d know if they were lookin’ for you...”

“Think they’re still searchin’ all the picture shows in Meridian.” Dill grinned.

“You oughta let your mother know where you are,” said Jem. “You oughta let her know you’re here...”

Dill’s eyes flickered at Jem, and Jem looked at the floor. Then he rose and broke the remaining code of our childhood. He went out of the room and down the hall.

“Atticus,” his voice was distant, “can you come here a minute, sir?”

Beneath its sweat-streaked dirt Dill’s face went white. I felt sick. Atticus was in the doorway.

He came to the middle of the room and stood with his hands in his pockets, looking down at Dill.

I finally found my voice: “It’s okay, Dill. When he wants you to know somethin’, he tells you.”

Dill looked at me. “I mean it’s all right,” I said. “You know he wouldn’t bother you, you know you ain’t scared of Atticus.”

“I’m not scared...” Dill muttered.

“Just hungry, I’ll bet.” Atticus’s voice had its usual pleasant dryness. “Scout, we can do better than a pan of cold corn bread, can’t we? You fill this fellow up and when I get back we’ll see what we can see.”

“Mr. Finch, don’t tell Aunt Rachel, don’t make me go back, *please* sir! I’ll run off again—!”

“Whoa, son,” said Atticus. “Nobody’s about to make you go anywhere but to bed pretty soon. I’m just going over to tell Miss Rachel you’re here and ask her if you could spend the night with us—you’d like that, wouldn’t you? And for goodness’ sake put some of the county back where it belongs, the soil erosion’s bad enough as it is.”

Dill stared at my father's retreating figure.

"He's tryin' to be funny," I said. "He means take a bath. See there, I told you he wouldn't bother you."

Jem was standing in a corner of the room, looking like the traitor he was. "Dill, I had to tell him," he said. "You can't run three hundred miles off without your mother knowin'."

We left him without a word.

Dill ate, and ate, and ate. He hadn't eaten since last night. He used all his money for a ticket, boarded the train as he had done many times, coolly chatted with the conductor, to whom Dill was a familiar sight, but he had not the nerve to invoke the rule on small children traveling a distance alone if you've lost your money the conductor will lend you enough for dinner and your father will pay him back at the end of the line.

Dill made his way through the leftovers and was reaching for a can of pork and beans in the pantry when Miss Rachel's Do-oo Je-sus went off in the hall. He shivered like a rabbit.

He bore with fortitude her Wait Till I Get You Home, Your Folks Are Out of Their Minds Worryin', was quite calm during That's All the Harris in You Coming Out, smiled at her Reckon You Can Stay One Night, and returned the hug at long last bestowed upon him.

Atticus pushed up his glasses and rubbed his face.

"Your father's tired," said Aunt Alexandra, her first words in hours, it seemed. She had been there, but I suppose struck dumb most of the time. "You children get to bed now."

We left them in the diningroom, Atticus still mopping his face. "From rape to riot to runaways," we heard him chuckle. "I wonder what the next two hours will bring."

Since things appeared to have worked out pretty well, Dill and I decided to be civil to Jem. Besides, Dill had to sleep with him so we might as well speak to him.

I put on my pajamas, read for a while and found myself suddenly unable to keep my eyes open. Dill and Jem were quiet; when I turned off my reading lamp there

was no strip of light under the door to Jem's room.

I must have slept a long time, for when I was punched awake the room was dim with the light of the setting moon.

"Move over, Scout."

"He thought he had to," I mumbled. "Don't stay mad with him."

Dill got in bed beside me. "I ain't," he said. "I just wanted to sleep with you. Are you waked up?"

By this time I was, but lazily so. "Why'd you do it?"

No answer. "I said why'd you run off? Was he really hateful like you said?"

"Naw..."

"Didn't you all build that boat like you wrote you were gonna?"

"He just said we would. We never did."

I raised up on my elbow, facing Dill's outline. "It's no reason to run off. They don't get around to doin' what they say they're gonna do half the time..."

"That wasn't it, he—they just wasn't interested in me."

This was the weirdest reason for flight I had ever heard. "How come?"

"Well, they stayed gone all the time, and when they were home, even, they'd get off in a room by themselves."

"What'd they do in there?"

"Nothin', just sittin' and readin'—but they didn't want me with 'em."

I pushed the pillow to the headboard and sat up. "You know something? I was fixin' to run off tonight because there they all were. You don't want 'em around you all the time, Dill—"

Dill breathed his patient breath, a half-sigh.

"—good night, Atticus's gone all day and sometimes half the night and off in the legislature and I don't know what—you don't want 'em around all the time, Dill, you couldn't do anything if they were."

"That's not it."

As Dill explained, I found myself wondering what life would be if Jem were

different, even from what he was now; what I would do if Atticus did not feel the necessity of my presence, help and advice. Why, he couldn't get along a day without me. Even Calpurnia couldn't get along unless I was there. They needed me.

“Dill, you ain't telling me right—your folks couldn't do without you. They must be just mean to you. Tell you what to do about that—”

Dill's voice went on steadily in the darkness: “The thing is, what I'm tryin' to say is—they do get on a lot better without me, I can't help them any. They ain't mean. They buy me everything I want, but it's now—you've-got-it-go-play-with-it. You've got a roomful of things. I-got-you-that-book-so-go-read-it.” Dill tried to deepen his voice. “You're not a boy. Boys get out and play baseball with other boys, they don't hang around the house worryin' their folks.”

Dill's voice was his own again: “Oh, they ain't mean. They kiss you and hug you good night and good mornin' and good-bye and tell you they love you—Scout, let's get us a baby.”

“Where?”

There was a man Dill had heard of who had a boat that he rowed across to a foggy island where all these babies were; you could order one—

“That's a lie. Aunty said God drops 'em down the chimney. At least that's what I think she said.” For once, Aunty's diction had not been too clear.

“Well that ain't so. You get babies from each other. But there's this man, too—he has all these babies just waitin' to wake up, he breathes life into 'em...”

Dill was off again. Beautiful things floated around in his dreamy head. He could read two books to my one, but he preferred the magic of his own inventions. He could add and subtract faster than lightning, but he preferred his own twilight world, a world where babies slept, waiting to be gathered like morning lilies. He was slowly talking himself to sleep and taking me with him, but in the quietness of his foggy island there rose the faded image of a gray house with sad brown doors.

“Dill?”

“Mm?”

“Why do you reckon Boo Radley’s never run off?”

Dill sighed a long sigh and turned away from me.

“Maybe he doesn’t have anywhere to run off to...”

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## Chapter 15

After many telephone calls, much pleading on behalf of the defendant, and a long forgiving letter from his mother, it was decided that Dill could stay. We had a week of peace together. After that, little, it seemed. A nightmare was upon us.

It began one evening after supper. Dill was over; Aunt Alexandra was in her chair in the corner, Atticus was in his; Jem and I were on the floor reading. It had been a placid week: I had minded Aunty; Jem had outgrown the treehouse, but helped Dill and me construct a new rope ladder for it; Dill had hit upon a foolproof plan to make Boo Radley come out at no cost to ourselves (place a trail of lemon drops from the back door to the front yard and he’d follow it, like an ant). There was a knock on the front door, Jem answered it and said it was Mr. Heck Tate.

“Well, ask him to come in,” said Atticus.

“I already did. There’s some men outside in the yard, they want you to come out.”

In Maycomb, grown men stood outside in the front yard for only two reasons: death and politics. I wondered who had died. Jem and I went to the front door, but Atticus called, “Go back in the house.”

Jem turned out the livingroom lights and pressed his nose to a window screen. Aunt Alexandra protested. “Just for a second, Aunty, let’s see who it is,” he said. Dill and I took another window. A crowd of men was standing around Atticus. They all seemed to be talking at once.

“...movin’ him to the county jail tomorrow,” Mr. Tate was saying, “I don’t look for any trouble, but I can’t guarantee there won’t be any...”