

shamin' him, Miss Caroline. Walter hasn't got a quarter at home to bring you, and you can't use any stovewood."

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

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

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

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

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Chapter 3

Catching Walter Cunningham in the schoolyard gave me some pleasure, but when I was rubbing his nose in the dirt Jem came by and told me to stop. "You're

bigger'n he is," he said.

"He's as old as you, nearly," I said. "He made me start off on the wrong foot."

"Let him go, Scout. Why?"

"He didn't have any lunch," I said, and explained my involvement in Walter's dietary affairs.

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

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

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

Walter's face brightened, then darkened.

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

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

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

When Walter caught up with us, Jem made pleasant conversation with him. "A hain't lives there," he said cordially, pointing to the Radley house. "Ever hear about him, Walter?"

"Reckon I have," said Walter. "Almost died first year I come to school and et them pecans—folks say he pizened 'em and put 'em over on the school side of the fence."

Jem seemed to have little fear of Boo Radley now that Walter and I walked beside him. Indeed, Jem grew boastful: "I went all the way up to the house once," he said to Walter.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

She was furious, and when she was furious Calpurnia's grammar became erratic. When in tranquility, her grammar was as good as anybody's in Maycomb. Atticus said Calpurnia had more education than most colored folks.

When she squinted down at me the tiny lines around her eyes deepened. “There’s some folks who don’t eat like us,” she whispered fiercely, “but you ain’t called on to contradict ‘em at the table when they don’t. That boy’s yo’ comp’ny and if he wants to eat up the table cloth you let him, you hear?”

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

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

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

Jem and Walter returned to school ahead of me: staying behind to advise Atticus of Calpurnia’s iniquities was worth a solitary sprint past the Radley Place. “She likes Jem better’n she likes me, anyway,” I concluded, and suggested that Atticus lose no time in packing her off.

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

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

“It’s alive!” she screamed.

The male population of the class rushed as one to her assistance. Lord, I thought,

she's scared of a mouse. Little Chuck Little, whose patience with all living things was phenomenal, said, "Which way did he go, Miss Caroline? Tell us where he went, quick! D.C.-" he turned to a boy behind him—"D.C., shut the door and we'll catch him. Quick, ma'am, where'd he go?"

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

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

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

Little Chuck Little was another member of the population who didn't know where his next meal was coming from, but he was a born gentleman. He put his hand under her elbow and led Miss Caroline to the front of the room. "Now don't you fret, ma'am," he said. "There ain't no need to fear a cootie. I'll just fetch you some cool water." The cootie's host showed not the faintest interest in the furor he had wrought. He searched the scalp above his forehead, located his guest and pinched it between his thumb and forefinger.

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

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

"Burriss Ewell."

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

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

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

From her desk she produced a thick volume, leafed through its pages and read for

a moment. “A good home remedy for—Burriss, I want you to go home and wash your hair with lye soap. When you’ve done that, treat your scalp with kerosene.”

“What fer, missus?”

“To get rid of the—er, cooties. You see, Burriss, the other children might catch them, and you wouldn’t want that, would you?”

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

“And Burriss,” said Miss Caroline, “please bathe yourself before you come back tomorrow.”

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

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

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

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

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

“Ain’t got no mother,” was the answer, “and their paw’s right contentious.”

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

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

“You try and make me, missus.”

Little Chuck Little got to his feet. “Let him go, ma’am,” he said. “He’s a mean one, a hard-down mean one. He’s liable to start somethin’, and there’s some little folks here.”

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

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

The boy snorted and slouched leisurely to the door.

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

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

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

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

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

By late afternoon most of my traveling plans were complete; when Jem and I raced each other up the sidewalk to meet Atticus coming home from work, I didn’t give him much of a race. It was our habit to run meet Atticus the moment

we saw him round the post office corner in the distance. Atticus seemed to have forgotten my noontime fall from grace; he was full of questions about school. My replies were monosyllabic and he did not press me.

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

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

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

"Why? Jem'n me ain't ever in the house unless it's rainin'."

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

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

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

"Something wrong, Scout?"

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

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

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

“I’m feeling all right, really.”

“Thought so. Now what’s the matter?”

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

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

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

“Sir?”

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

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

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

“I don’t see why I have to when he doesn’t.”

“Then listen.”

Atticus said the Ewells had been the disgrace of Maycomb for three generations. None of them had done an honest day’s work in his recollection. He said that

some Christmas, when he was getting rid of the tree, he would take me with him and show me where and how they lived. They were people, but they lived like animals. “They can go to school any time they want to, when they show the faintest symptom of wanting an education,” said Atticus. “There are ways of keeping them in school by force, but it’s silly to force people like the Ewells into a new environment-”

“If I didn’t go to school tomorrow, you’d force me to.”

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

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

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

“Mr. Ewell shouldn’t do that-”

“Of course he shouldn’t, but he’ll never change his ways. Are you going to take out your disapproval on his children?”

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

“That’s really bothering you, isn’t it?”

“Yes sir.”

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

“Bending the law?”

“No, an agreement reached by mutual concessions. It works this way,” he said. “If

you'll concede the necessity of going to school, we'll go on reading every night just as we always have. Is it a bargain?"

"Yes sir!"

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

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

"Why not?"

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

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

"Huh, sir?"

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

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

Chapter 4

The remainder of my schooldays were no more auspicious than the first. Indeed, they were an endless Project that slowly evolved into a Unit, in which miles of construction paper and wax crayon were expended by the State of Alabama in its well-meaning but fruitless efforts to teach me Group Dynamics. What Jem called the Dewey Decimal System was school-wide by the end of my first year, so I had no chance to compare it with other teaching techniques. I could only look around me: Atticus and my uncle, who went to school at home, knew everything—at least, what one didn't know the other did. Furthermore, I couldn't help noticing that my father had served for years in the state legislature, elected each time without opposition, innocent of the adjustments my teachers thought essential to the development of Good Citizenship. Jem, educated on a half-Decimal half-Duncecap basis, seemed to function effectively alone or in a group, but Jem was a poor example: no tutorial system devised by man could have stopped him from getting at books. As for me, I knew nothing except what I gathered from *Time magazine* and reading everything I could lay hands on at home, but as I inched sluggishly along the treadmill of the Maycomb County school system, I could not help receiving the impression that I was being cheated out of something. Out of what I knew not, yet I did not believe that twelve years of unrelieved boredom was exactly what the state had in mind for me.

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

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

Some tinfoil was sticking in a knot-hole just above my eye level, winking at me in the afternoon sun. I stood on tiptoe, hastily looked around once more, reached into the hole, and withdrew two pieces of chewing gum minus their outer wrappers.

My first impulse was to get it into my mouth as quickly as possible, but I remembered where I was. I ran home, and on our front porch I examined my loot. The gum looked fresh. I sniffed it and it smelled all right. I licked it and waited for a while. When I did not die I crammed it into my mouth: Wrigley's Double-Mint.

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

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

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

Jem growled.

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

"Spit it out right now!"

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

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

"You touched the house once!"

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

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

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

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

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

The authorities released us early the last day of school, and Jem and I walked

home together. "Reckon old Dill'll be coming home tomorrow," I said.

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

As we came to the live oaks at the Radley Place I raised my finger to point for the hundredth time to the knot-hole where I had found the chewing gum, trying to make Jem believe I had found it there, and found myself pointing at another piece of tinfoil.

"I see it, Scout! I see it—"

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

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

"Nineteen-hundred," I echoed. "Say—"

"Hush a minute, I'm thinkin'."

"Jem, you reckon that's somebody's hidin' place?"

"Naw, don't anybody much but us pass by there, unless it's some grown person's—"

"Grown folks don't have hidin' places. You reckon we ought to keep 'em, Jem?"

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

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

"What you reckon we oughta do, Jem?"

Finders were keepers unless title was proven. Plucking an occasional camellia, getting a squirt of hot milk from Miss Maudie Atkinson's cow on a summer day, helping ourselves to someone's scuppernongs was part of our ethical culture, but money was different.

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

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

"I don't know, Scout. But these are important to somebody..."

"How's that, Jem...?"

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

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

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

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

"In a pig's ear you did, Dill. Hush," said Jem. "What'll we play today?"

"Tom and Sam and Dick," said Dill. "Let's go in the front yard." Dill wanted the Rover Boys because there were three respectable parts. He was clearly tired of

being our character man.

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

“Make us up one, Jem,” I said.

“I’m tired of makin’ ’em up.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

“You act like you don’t,” I said.

“What’s a Hot Steam?” asked Dill.

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

“How can you keep from passing through one?”

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

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

Jem scowled darkly at me, but said, “Well, are we gonna play anything or not?”

“Let’s roll in the tire,” I suggested.

Jem sighed. “You know I’m too big.”

“You c’n push.”

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

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

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

Until it happened I did not realize that Jem was offended by my contradicting him on Hot Steams, and that he was patiently awaiting an opportunity to reward me.

He did, by pushing the tire down the sidewalk with all the force in his body.

Ground, sky and houses melted into a mad palette, my ears throbbed, I was suffocating. I could not put out my hands to stop, they were wedged between my chest and knees. I could only hope that Jem would outrun the tire and me, or that I would be stopped by a bump in the sidewalk. I heard him behind me, chasing and shouting.

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

“Scout, get away from there, come on!”

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

“Come on, Scout, don’t just lie there!” Jem was screaming. “Get up, can’tcha?”

I got to my feet, trembling as I thawed.

“Get the tire!” Jem hollered. “Bring it with you! Ain’t you got any sense at all?”

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

“Why didn’t you bring it?” Jem yelled.

“Why don’t *you* get it?” I screamed.

Jem was silent.

“Go on, it ain’t far inside the gate. Why, you even touched the house once,

remember?”

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

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

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

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

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

“What?” asked Dill.

“Boo Radley.”

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

“Boo Radley? How?” asked Dill.

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

“I declare if I will. I don’t think-”

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

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

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

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

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

Jem parceled out our roles: I was Mrs. Radley, and all I had to do was come out

and sweep the porch. Dill was old Mr. Radley: he walked up and down the sidewalk and coughed when Jem spoke to him. Jem, naturally, was Boo: he went under the front steps and shrieked and howled from time to time.

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

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

Jem was a born hero.

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

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

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

When Mr. Nathan Radley passed us on his daily trip to town, we would stand still and silent until he was out of sight, then wonder what he would do to us if he suspected. Our activities halted when any of the neighbors appeared, and once I

saw Miss Maudie Atkinson staring across the street at us, her hedge clippers poised in midair.

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

"What are you all playing?" he asked.

"Nothing," said Jem.

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

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

"Nothing."

"Nothing what?" said Atticus.

"Nothing, sir."

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

"No sir," said Jem, reddening.

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

"Je-m..."

"Shut up! He's gone in the livingroom, he can hear us in there."

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

"I don't know. Atticus didn't say we couldn't-"

"Jem," I said, "I think Atticus knows it anyway."

"No he don't. If he did he'd say he did."

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

"All right, you just keep it up then," I said. "You'll find out."

Atticus's arrival was the second reason I wanted to quit the game. The first reason happened the day I rolled into the Radley front yard. Through all the head-

shaking, quelling of nausea and Jem-yelling, I had heard another sound, so low I could not have heard it from the sidewalk. Someone inside the house was laughing.

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Chapter 5

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

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

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

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