



Attestation sur l'honneur 990i pdf axa

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?" "Yeah, he's just about Mister Jem?" "Yeah, he's j 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, and by 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 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 love me forever and marry me as soon as he got enough money together, so please write. The fact that I had a permanent fiance 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 not looking, the longings we sometimes felt each other feel. 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 May comb 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 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 bringin4 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, an41 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 bringin4 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 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 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 'tendon 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 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. "Well how-?" "She said." She said. "She said." She said." She said." She said. "She said." She said 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, 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 Sunday, with only one exception. 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," 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 Calpunia 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 Calpumia 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 lettin4 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 rapin4 his girl an' had him arrested an4 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 May comb knows what kind of folks the Ewells are they'd be glad to hire Helen... what's rape, Cal?" "It's somethin4 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?" "LinhT?" 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?" 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 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's eldest son. If I had ever thought about it, I would have known that Calpurnia's eldest son. If I had ever thought about it, I would have known that Calpurnia's eldest son. If I had ever thought about it, I would have known that Calpurnia's eldest son. If I had ever thought about it, I would have known that Calpurnia's eldest son. If I had ever thought about it, I would have known that Calpurnia's eldest son. If I had ever thought about it, I would have known that Calpurnia's eldest son. If I had ever thought about it, I would have known that Calpurnia's eldest son. If I had ever thought about it, I would have known that Calpurnia's eldest son. If I had ever thought about it, I would have known that Calpurnia's eldest son. 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If I had ever thought about it, I would have known that Calpurnia's eldest son. If I had ever thought about it, I would have known that Calpurnia' 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. 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 May comb 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 grandaddy said Mr. Blackstone wrote fine English—" 'That's why you don't talk like the rest of 'em," said Jem. 'The 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 have 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 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 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. 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. Ealpurnia, "Was the second thing she said. "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, Aunty?" 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." "For a while." "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 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 ma'am, how are you, Jean Louise? Fine, thank you ma'am, how are you? Very well, thank you ma'am, how are you? Ver 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 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 long visits with Aunt Alexandra, consisting mostly of Miss Stephanie Stephan 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 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 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 Gambling Streak, a Gambling Streak, a Gambling Streak, a Mean Streak, 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 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, 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, lop off a little here, add a bit there and adjust the center of the county to meet his requirements. 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. May comb's proportion of professional people ran high: one went there to have his teeth pulled, his wagon fixed, 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 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 No 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 May comb 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 find the livingroom overrun with May comb ladies, sipping, whispering, fanning, and I would be called: "Jean Louise, come speak to these ladies." When I appeared in the doorway, Aunty 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 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 said 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. "1 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," 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 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 will," he said. "You better take some soda." "I will," he said. "I will," he said. "I will," he said. "You better take some soda." "I will," he said." "I w 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. 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 Calpumia. Atticus seemed to enjoy it, but Aunt Alexandra, who was sitting in a comer 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 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 to think of. A daughter to think of a pink cotton penitentiary closing in on me, and for the second time in my life I thought of running away. sooner or later and it might as well be tonight. We don't need her now." Atticus's voice was even: "Alexandra, Calpumia'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, pu 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 worry in ' him to death—" I said Atticus didn't appear to have 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 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, 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 minc 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 and looked at the floor by 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 cornin'. 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 com 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 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 sear chin4 all the picture shows in Meridian." Dill grinned. "You oughta let your mother know where you are," said Jem. "You oughta let your mother know you're here..." 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 somethin4, he tells you." Dill nuttered. "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." "Wr. Finch, don't tell Aunt Rachel, don't tell 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 knowinV' We left him without a word. Dill 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 WorryiiT, 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 ah 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 doin4 what they say they're gonna do half the time. "That wasn't it, he-they just wasn't it, he-they just wasn't interested in me." This was the weirdest reason for flight I had ever heard. "Well, they do in there?" "Woltin4, just sittin' and readin4-but they didn't want me with 'em." I pushed the pillow to the headboard and sat up. "You know something? I was fixin4 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 know what—you don't want 4em 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 me, I can't telling me right—your folks couldn't 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 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... " Contents - Prev / Next 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 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 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... " "Don't be foolish, Heck," Atticus said. "This is Maycomb." "... said I was just uneasy." "Heck, we've gotten one postponement of this case just to make sure there's nothing to be uneasy about. This is Saturday," Atticus said. "Trial'll probably be Monday. You can keep him one night, can't you? I don't think anybody in Maycomb'll begrudge me a client, with times this hard." There was a murmur of glee that died suddenly when Mr. Link Deas said, "Nobody around here's up to anything, it's that Old Sarum bunch I'm worried about... can't you get a—what is it, Heck?" "Change of venue," said Mr. Tate. "Not much point in that, now is it?" Atticus said something inaudible. I turned to Jem, who waved me to silence, "-besides," Atticus was saying, "you're not scared of that crowd, are you?" "... know how they go to church most of the day..." Atticus said. "This is a special occasion, though..." someone said. They murmured and buzzed until Aunty said if Jem didn't turn on the livingroom lights he would disgrace the family. Jem didn't hear her. "-don't see why you touched it in the first place," Mr. Link Deas was saying. "You've got everything." "Do you really think so?" This was Atticus's dangerous question. "Do you really think you want truth is." There was a murmur among the group of men, made more ominous when Atticus, the telephone's ringing!" The men jumped a little and scattered; they were people we saw every day: merchants, in-town farmers; Dr. Reynolds was there; so was Mr. Avery. "Well, answer it, son," called Atticus. Laughter broke them up. When Atticus switched on the overhead light in the livingroom he found Jem at the window, pale except for the vivid mark of the screen on his nose. "Why on earth are you all sitting in the dark?" he asked. Jem watched him go to his chair and pick up the evening paper. sometimes think Atticus subjected every crisis of his life to tranquil evaluation behind The Mobile Register, The Birmingham News and The Montgomery Advertiser. "They wanted to get you, didn't they?" Jem went to him. "They wanted to get you, didn't they?" Jem went to him. "They wanted to get you, didn't they?" Atticus lowered the paper and gazed at Jem. "What have you been reading?" he asked. Then he said gently, "No son, those were our friends." "It wasn't a—a gang?" Jem was looking from the corners of his eyes. Atticus tried to stifle a smile but didn't make it. "No, we don't have mobs and that nonsense in May comb." "Ku Klux got after some Catholics one time." "No ever heard of a gang in May comb." "It wasn't a—a gang?" Jem was looking from the corners of his eyes. Atticus tried to stifle a smile but didn't make it. "No ever heard of a gang in May comb." "Ku Klux got after some Catholics one time." "No ever heard of any Catholics in May comb." "It wasn't a—a gang?" Jem was looking from the corners of his eyes. Atticus tried to stifle a smile but didn't make it. "No ever heard of a gang in May comb." "Ku Klux got after some Catholics in May comb." "It wasn't a—a gang?" Jem was looking from the corners of his eyes. Atticus tried to stifle a smile but didn't make it. "No ever heard of a gang in May comb." "It wasn't a—a gang?" Jem was looking from the corners of his eyes. Atticus tried to stifle a smile but didn't make it. "No ever heard of a gang in May comb." "It wasn't a—a gang?" Jem was looking from the corners of his eyes. Atticus tried to stifle a smile but didn't make it. "No Maycomb either," said Atticus, "you're confusing that with something else. Way back about nineteen-twenty there was a Klan, but it was a political organization more than anything. Besides, they couldn't find anybody to scare. They paraded by Mr. Sam Levy's house one night, but Sam just stood on his porch and told 'em things had come to a pretty pass, he'd sold 'em the very sheets on their backs. Sam made 'em so ashamed of themselves they went away." The Levy family met all criteria for being Fine Folks: they did the best they could with the sense they had, and they had been living on the same plot of ground in Maycomb for five generations. "The Ku Klux's gone," said Atticus. "It'll never come back." I walked home with Dill and returned in time to overhear Atticus saying to Aunty, . in favor of Southern womanhood as much as anybody, but not for preserving polite fiction at the expense of human life," a pronouncement that made me suspect they had been fusing again. I sought Jem and found him in his room, on the bed deep in thought. "Have they been at it?" I asked. "Sort of. She won't let him alone about Tom Robinson. She almost said Atticus was disgrachT the family. Scout... I'm scared." "Scared about Atticus. Somebody might hurt him." Jem preferred to remain mysterious; all he would say to my questions was go on and leave him alone. Next day was Sunday. In the interval between Sunday School and Church when the congregation stretched its legs, I saw Atticus standing in the yard with another knot of men. Mr. Heck Tate was present, and I wondered if he had seen the light. He never went to church. Even Mr. Underwood was there. Mr. Underwood had no use for any organization but The May comb Tribune, of which he was the sole owner, editor, and printer. His days were spent at his linotype, where he refreshed himself occasionally from an ever-present gallon jug of cherry wine. He rarely gathered news; people brought it to him. It was said that he made up every edition of The Maycomb Tribune out of his own head and wrote it down on the linotype. This was believable. Something must have been up to haul Mr. Underwood out. I caught Atticus coming in the door, and he said that they'd kept him there in the first place there wouldn't have been any fuss. I watched him take his seat on the third row from the front, and I heard him rumble, "Nearer my God to thee," some notes behind the rest of us. He never sat with Aunty, Jem and me. He liked to be by himself in church. The fake peace that prevailed on Sundays was made more irritating by Aunt Alexandra's presence. Atticus would flee to his office directly after dinner, where if we sometimes looked in on him, we would find him sitting back in his swivel chair reading. Aunt Alexandra composed herself for a two-hour nap and dared us to make any noise in the yard, the neighborhood was resting. Jem in his old age had taken to his room with a stack of football magazines. So Dill and I spent our Sundays creeping around in Deer's Pasture. Shooting on Sundays was prohibited, so Dill and I kicked Jem's football around the pasture for a while, which was no fun. Dill asked if I'd like to have a poke at Boo Radley. I said I didn't think it'd be nice to bother him, and spent the rest of the afternoon filling Dill in on last winter's events. He was considerably impressed. We parted at suppertime, and after our meal Jem and I were settling down to a routine evening, when Atticus did something that interested us: he came into the livingroom carrying a long electrical extension cord. There was a light bulb on the end. "You folks'll be in bed when I come back, so I'll say good night now." With that, and after our meal Jem and I were settling down to a routine evening, when Atticus did something that interested us: he came into the livingroom carrying a long electrical extension cord. There was a light bulb on the end. "I'm going out for a while," he said. "You folks'll be in bed when I come back, so I'll say good night now." With that, and after our meal Jem and I were settling down to a routine evening, when Atticus did something that interested us: he came into the livingroom carrying a long electrical extension cord. There was a light bulb on the end. "I'm going out for a while," he said. "You folks'll be in bed when I come back, so I'll say good night now." With that, and the end interested us: he came into the livingroom carrying a long electrical extension cord. There was a light bulb on the end. "I'm going out for a while," he said. "You folks'll be in bed when I come back, so I'll say good night now." With that, and the end interested us: he came into the livingroom carrying a long electrical extension cord. There was a light bulb on the end. "I'm going out for a while," he came into the living out for a while, when the end is the end of he put his hat on and went out the back door. "He's takin' the car," said Jem. Our father had a few peculiarities: one was, he never ate desserts; another was that he liked to walk. As far back as I could remember, there was always a Chevrolet in excellent condition in the carhouse, and Atticus put many miles on it in business trips, but in May comb he walked to and from his office four times a day, covering about two miles. He said his only exercise was walking. In May comb, if one went for a walk with no definite purpose in mind, it was correct to believe one's mind incapable of definite purpose. Later on, I bade my aunt and brother good night and was well into a book when I heard Jem rattling around in his room. His go-to-bed noises were so familiar to me that I knocked on his door: "Why ain't you going to bed?" "I'm goin' anyway, hear?" Jem saw that he would have to fight me to keep me home, and I suppose he thought a fight would antagonize Aunty, so he gave in with little grace. I dressed quickly. We waited until Aunty's light went out, and we walked quietly down the back steps. There was no moon tonight. "Dill'll wanta come," I whispered. "So he will," said Jem gloomily. We leaped over the driveway wall, cut through Miss Rachel's side yard and went to Dill's window. Jem whistled bob-white. Dill's face appeared at the screen, disappeared, and five minutes later he unhooked the screen, disappeared, and five minutes later he unhooked the screen and crawled out. An old campaigner, he did not speak until we were on the sidewalk. "What's up?" "Jem's got the look-arounds," an affliction Calpumia said all boys caught at his age. "I've just got this feeling," Jem said, "just this feeling." We went by Mrs. Dubose's house, standing empty and shuttered, her camellias grown up in weeds and johnson grass. There were eight more houses to the post office corner. The south side of the square was deserted. Giant monkey-puzzle bushes bristled on each corner, and between them an iron hitching rail glistened under the street lights. A light shone in the courthouse square of stores surrounded the courthouse square is dim lights burned from deep within them. Atticus's office was in the courthouse when he began his law practice, but after several years of it he moved to quieter quarters in the Maycomb Bank building. When we rounded the corner of the square, we saw the car parked in front of the bank. "He's in there," said Jem. But he wasn't. His office was reached by a long hallway. Looking down the hall, we should have seen Atticus Finch, Attorney-at-Law in small sober letters against the light from behind his door. It was dark. Jem peered in the bank door to make sure. He turned the knob. The door was locked. "Let's go up the street. Maybe he's visitin4 Mr. Underwood." Mr. Underwood not only ran The Maycomb Tribune office, he lived in it. That is, above it. He covered the courthouse and jailhouse news simply by looking out his upstairs window. The office building was on the northwest corner of the square, and to reach it we had to pass the jail. The Maycomb jail was the most venerable and hideous of the county's buildings. Atticus said it was like something Cousin Joshua St. Clair might have designed. It was certainly someone's dream. Starkly out of place in a town of square-faced stores and steep-roofed houses, the Maycomb jail was a miniature Gothic joke one cell wide and two cells high, complete with tiny battlements and flying buttresses. Its fantasy was heightened by its red brick facade and the thick steel bars at its ecclesiastical windows. It stood on no lonely hill, but was wedged between Tyndal's Hardware Store and The Maycomb Tribune office. The jail was Maycomb's only conversation piece: its detractors said it looked like a Victorian privy; its supporters said it gave the town a good solid respectable look, and no stranger would ever suspect that it was full of niggers. As we walked up the sidewalk, we saw a solitary light burning in the distance. 'That's funny,'' said Jem, "jail doesn't have an outside light." "Looks like it's over the door," said Dill. A long extension cord ran between the bars of a second-floor window and down the side of the building. In the light from its bare bulb, Atticus was sitting propped against the front door. He was sitting in one of his office chairs, and he was reading, oblivious of the nightbugs dancing over his head. I made to run, but Jem caught me. "Don't go to him," he said, "he might not like it. He's all right, let's go home. I just wanted to see where he was." We were taking a short cut across the square when four dusty cars came in from the Meridian highway, moving slowly in a line. They went around the square, passed the bank building, and stopped in front of the jail. Nobody got out. We saw Atticus look up from his newspaper. He closed it, folded it deliberately, dropped it in his lap, and pushed his hat to the back of his head. He seemed to be expecting them. "Come on," whispered Jem. We streaked across the square, across the street, until we were in the shelter of the Jitney Jungle door. Jem peeked up the sidewalk. "We can get closer," he said. We ran to Tyndal's Hardware door-near enough, at the same time discreet. In ones and twos, men got out of the cars. Shadows became substance as lights revealed solid shapes moving toward the jail door. Atticus remained where he was. The men hid him from view. "He in there, Mr. Finch?" a man said. "He is," we heard Atticus answer, "and he's asleep. Don't wake him up." In obedience to my father, there followed what I later realized was a sickeningly comic aspect of an unfunny situation: the men talked in near-whispers. "You know what we want," another man said. "Get aside from the door, Mr. Finch." "You can turn around and go home again, Walter," Atticus said pleasantly. "Heck Tate's around somewhere." "The hell he is," said another man. "Heck's bunch's so deep in the woods they won't get out till mornhT." "Indeed? Why so?" "Called 'em off on a snipe hunt," was the succinct answer. "Didn't you think a'that, Mr Finch?" "Thought about it, but didn't believe it. Well then," my father's voice was still the same, "that changes things, doesn't it?" "It do," another deep voice said. Its owner was a shadow. "Do you really think so?" This was the second time I heard Atticus ask that question in two days, and it meant somebody's man would get jumped. This was too good to miss. I broke away from Jem and ran as fast as I could to Atticus. Jem shrieked and tried to catch me, but I had a lead on him and Dill. I pushed my way through dark smelly bodies and burst into the circle of light. "H-ey, Atticus!" I thought he would have a fine surprise, but his face killed my joy. A flash of plain fear was going out of his eyes,

but returned when Dill and Jem wriggled into the light. There was a smell of stale whiskey and pigpen about, and when I glanced around I discovered that these men were strangers. They were not the people I saw last night. Hot embarrassment shot through me: I had leaped triumphantly into a ring of people I had never seen before. Atticus got up from his chair, but he was moving slowly, like an old man. He put the newspaper down very carefully, adjusting its creases with lingering fingers. They were trembling a little. "Go home, Jem," he said. 'Take Scout and Dill home." We were accustomed to prompt, if not always cheerful acquiescence to Atticus's instructions, but from the way he stood Jem was not thinking of budging. "Go home, I said." Jem shook his head. As Atticus's fists went to his hips, so did Jem's, and as they faced each other I could see little resemblance between them: Jem's soft brown hair and square-cut features, but they were somehow alike. "Son, I said go home." Jem shook his head. "I'll send him home," a burly man said, and grabbed Jem roughly by the collar. He yanked Jem nearly off his feet. "Don't you touch him!" I kicked the man swiftly. Barefooted, I was surprised to see him fall back in real pain. I intended to kick his shin, but aimed too high. "That'll do, Scout." Atticus put his hand on my shoulder. "Don't kick folks. No - " he said, as I was pleading justification. "Ain't nobody gonna do Jem that way," I said. "All right, Mr. Finch, get 'em outa here," someone growled. "You got fifteen seconds to get 'em outa here." In the midst of this strange assembly, Atticus stood trying to make Jem mind him. "I ain't going," was his steady answer to Atticus's threats, requests, and finally, "Please Jem, take them home." I was a summer's night, but felt Jem had his own reasons for doing as he did, in view of his prospects once Atticus did get him home. I looked around the crowd. It was a summer's night, but the men were dressed, most of them, in overalls and denim shirts buttoned up to the collars. I thought they must be cold- natured, as their sleeves were unrolled and buttoned at the cuffs. Some wore hats pulled firmly down over their ears. face, and at the center of the semi-circle I found one. "Hey, Mr. Cunningham." The man did not hear me, it seemed. "Hey, Mr. Cunningham." The man did not hear me, it seemed. "Hey, Mr. Cunningham." The man did not hear me, it seemed. "Hey, Mr. Cunningham." The man did not hear me, it seemed. "Hey, Mr. Cunningham." The man did not hear me, it seemed. "Hey, Mr. Cunningham." The man did not hear me, it seemed. "Hey, Mr. Cunningham." The man did not hear me, it seemed. "Hey, Mr. Cunningham." The man did not hear me, it seemed. "Hey, Mr. Cunningham." The man did not hear me, it seemed. "Hey, Mr. Cunningham." The man did not hear me, it seemed. "Hey, Mr. Cunningham." The man did not hear me, it seemed. "Hey, Mr He seemed uncomfortable; he cleared his throat and looked away. My friendly overture had fallen flat. Mr. Cunningham wore no hat, and the top half of his forehead was white in contrast to his sunscorched face, which led me to believe that he wore one most days. He shifted his feet, clad in heavy work shoes. "Don't you remember me, Mr. Cunningham? I'm Jean Louise Finch. You brought us some hickory nuts one time, remember?" I began to sense the futility one feels when unacknowledged by a chance acquaintance. "I go to school with Walter," I began again. "He's in my grade," I said, "and he does right well. He's a good boy," I added, "a real nice boy. We brought him home for dinner one time. Maybe he told you about me, I beat him up one time but he was real nice boy. We brought him home for dinner one time. you were interested in. Mr. Cunningham displayed no interest in his son, so I tackled his entailment once more in a last-ditch effort to make him feel at home. "Entailments are bad," I was addressing the entire aggregation. The men were all looking at me, some had their mouths half-open. Atticus had stopped poking at Jem: they were standing together beside Dill. Their attention amounted to fascination. Atticus's mouth, even, was half-open, an attitude he had once described as uncouth. Our eyes met and he shut it. "Well, Atticus's mouth, even, was half-open, an attitude he had once described as uncouth. Our eyes met and he shut it. "Well, Atticus's mouth, even, was half-open, and the shut it." takes a long time sometimes... that you ail'd ride it out together..." I was slowly drying up, wondering what idiocy I had committed. Entailments seemed all right enough for livingroom talk. I began to feel sweat gathering at the edges of my hair; I could stand anything but a bunch of people looking at me. They were quite still. "What's the matter?" I asked. Atticus said nothing. I looked around and up at Mr. Cunningham, whose face was equally impassive. Then he did a peculiar thing. He squatted down and took me by both shoulders. "I'll tell him you said hey, little lady," he said. Then he straightened up and waved a big paw. "Let's clear out," he called. "Let's get going, boys." As they had come in ones and twos the men shuffled back to their ramshackle cars. Doors slammed, engines coughed, and they were gone. I turned to Atticus, but Atticus had gone to the wall. I went to him and pulled his sleeve. "Can we go home now?" He nodded, produced his handkerchief, gave his face a going-over and blew his nose violently. "Mr. Finch?" A soft husky voice came from the darkness above: "They gone?" Atticus stepped back and looked up. "They voice cut crisply through the night: "You're damn tootin' they won't. Had you covered all the time, Atticus." Mr. Underwood and a double-barreled shotgun were leaning out his window above The Maycomb Tribune office. It was long past my bedtime and I was growing quite tired; it seemed that Atticus and Mr. Underwood would talk for the rest of the night, Mr. Underwood out the window and Atticus up at him. Finally Atticus returned, switched off the light above the jail door, and picked up his chair. "Can I carry it for you, Mr. Finch?" asked Dill. He had not said a word the whole time. "Why, thank you, son." Walking toward the office, Dill and I fell into step behind Atticus and Jem. Dill was encumbered by the chair, and his pace was slower. Atticus and Jem were well ahead of us, and I assumed that Atticus was giving him hell for not going home, but I was wrong. As they passed under a streetlight, Atticus reached out and massaged Jem's hair, his one gesture of affection. Chapter 16 Jem heard me. He thrust his head around the connecting door. As he came to my bed went off; we heard him turn over, and we waited until he was still again. Jem took me to his room and put me in bed beside him. 'Try to go to sleep," he said, "It'll be all over after tomorrow, maybe." We had come in quietly, so as not to wake Aunty. Atticus killed the engine in the driveway and coasted to the carhouse; we went in the back door and to our rooms without a word. I was very tired, and was drifting into sleep when the memory of Atticus calmly folding his newspaper and pushing back his hat became Atticus standing in the middle of an empty waiting street, pushing up his glasses. The full meaning of the night's events hit me and I began crying. Jem was awfully nice about it: for once he didn't remind me that people nearly nine years old didn't do things like that. Everybody's appetite was delicate this morning, except Jem's: he ate his way through three eggs. Atticus watched in frank admiration; Aunt Alexandra sipped coffee and radiated waves of disapproval. Children who slipped out at night were a disgrace to the family. Atticus said he was right glad his disgraces had come along, but Aunty said, "Nonsense, Mr. Underwood was there all the time." "You know, it's a funny thing about Braxton," said Atticus. "He despises Negroes, won't have one near him." Local opinion held Mr. Underwood to be an intense, profane little man, whose father in a fey fit of humor christened Braxton Bragg, a name Mr. Underwood had done his best to live down. Atticus said naming people after Confederate generals made slow steady drinkers. Calpurnia was serving Aunt Alexandra more coffee, and she shook her head at what I thought was a pleading winning look. "You're still too little," she said. "I'll tell you when you ain't." I said it might help my stomach. "All right," she said, and got a cup from the sideboard. She poured one tablespoonful of coffee into it and filled the cup to the brim with milk. I thanked her by sticking out my tongue at it, and looked up to catch Aunty's warning frown. But she was frowning at Atticus. said, "Don't talk like that in front of her." "Talk like what in front of her." "Talk like what in front of her." "Well, I'm sure Cal knows it." I was beginning to notice a subtle change in my father these days, that came out when he talked with Aunt Alexandra. It was a quiet digging in, never outright irritation. There was a faint starchiness in his voice when he said, "Anything fit to say at the table's fit to say at the table's fit to say in front of Calpurnia. She knows what she means to this family." "I don't think it's a good habit, Atticus. It encourages them. You know how they talk among themselves. Every thing that happens in this town's out to the Quarters before sundown." My father put down his knife. "I don't know of any law that says they can't talk. Maybe if we didn't give them so much to talk about they'd be quiet. Why don't you drink your coffee, Scout?" I was playing in it with the spoon. "I thought Mr. Cunningham was a friend of ours. You told me a long time ago he was." "He still is." "But last night he wanted to hurt you." Atticus placed his fork beside his knife and pushed his plate aside. "Mr. Cunningham's basically a good man," he said, "he just has his blind spots along with the rest of us." Jem spoke. "Don't call that a blind spot. He'da killed you last night when he first went there. "He might have hurt me a little," Atticus conceded, "but son, you'll understand folks a little better when you're older. A mob's always made up of people, no matter what. Mr. Cunningham was part of a mob last night, but he was still a man. Every mob in every little Southern town is always made up of people, no matter what. Mr. Cunningham was part of a mob last night, but he was still a man. it?" "I'll say not," said Jem. "So it took an eight-year-old child to bring 'em to their senses, didn't it?" said Atticus. 'That proves something—that a gang of wild animals can be stopped, simply because they're still human. Hmp, maybe we need a police force of children... you children last night made Walter Cunningham stand in my shoes for a minute That was enough." Well, I hoped Jem would understand folks a little better when he was older; I wouldn't. "First day Walter comes back to school'll be his last," I affirmed. "You see, don't you," said Aunt Alexandra, "what comes of things like this. Don't say I haven't told you." Atticus said he'd never say that, pushed out his chair and got up. "There's a day ahead, so excuse me. Jem, I don't want you and Scout downtown today, please." As Atticus departed, Dill came bounding down the hall into the diningroom. "It's all over town this morning," he announced, "all about how we held off a hundred folks with our bare hands..." Aunt Alexandra stared him to silence. "It was not a hundred folks," she said, "and nobody held anybody off. It was just a nest of those Cunninghams, drunk and disorderly." "Aw, Aunty, that's just Dill's way," said Jem. He signaled us to follow him. "You all stay in the yard today," she said, "and nobody held anybody off. It was not a hundred folks," she said, "and nobody held anybody off. It was not a hundred folks," she said, "and nobody held anybody off. It was not a hundred folks," she said, "and nobody held anybody off. It was not a hundred folks," she said, "and nobody held anybody off. It was not a hundred folks," she said, "and nobody held anybody off. It was not a hundred folks," she said, "and nobody held anybody off. It was not a hundred folks," she said, "and nobody held anybody off. It was not a hundred folks," she said, "and nobody held anybody off. It was not a hundred folks," she said, "and nobody held anybody off. It was not a hundred folks," she said, "and nobody held anybody off. It was not a hundred folks," she said, "and nobody held anybody off. It was not a hundred folks," she said, "and nobody held anybody off. 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"Yonder's some Mennonites," Jem said to Dill. 'They don't have buttons." They lived deep in the woods, did most of their trading across the river, and rarely came to May comb. Dill was interested. "They've all got blue eyes," Jem explained, "and the men can't shave after they marry. Their wives like for 'em to tickle 'em with their beards." Mr. X Billups rode by on a mule and waved to us. "He's a funny man," said Jem. "X's his name, not his initial. He was in court one time and they asked him his name. He said X Billups. Clerk asked him to spell it and he said X. Asked him again and he said X. They kept at it till he wrote X on a sheet of paper and held it up for everybody to see. They asked him where he got his name and he said that's the way his folks signed him up when he was born." As the county went by us, Jem gave Dill the histories and general attitudes of the more prominent figures: Mr. Tensaw Jones voted the straight Prohibition ticket; Miss Emily Davis dipped snuff in private; Mr. Byron Waller could play the violin; Mr. Jake Slade was cutting his third set of teeth. A wagonload of unusually stern-faced citizens appeared. When they pointed to Miss Maudie Atkinson's yard, ablaze with summer flowers, Miss Maudie herself came out on the porch. There was an odd thing about Miss Maudie—on her porch she was too far away for us to see her features clearly, but we could always catch her mood by the way she stood. She was now standing arms akimbo, her shoulders drooping a little, her head cocked to one side, her glasses winking in the sunlight. We knew she wore a grin of the uttermost wickedness. The driver of the wagon slowed down his mules, and a shrill-voiced woman called out: "He that cometh in vanity departeth in darkness!" Miss Maudie answered: "A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance!" I guess that the foot-washers thought that the foot-washers the foot-w objected to Miss Maudie's yard was a mystery, heightened in my mind because for someone who spent all the daylight hours outdoors, Miss Maudie's command of Scripture was formidable. "You goin' to court this morning?" asked Jem. We had strolled over. "I am not," she said. "I have no business with the court this morning." "Aren't you goin' down to watch?" asked Dill. "I am not. 't's morbid, watching a poor devil on trial for his life. Look at all those folks, it's like a Roman carnival." 'They hafta try him in public, I don't have to go, do I?" Miss Stephanie Crawford came by. She wore a hat and gloves. "Um, um, um," she said. "Look at all those folks—you'd think William Jennings Bryan was speakhT." "And where are you going, Stephanie go to the Jitney Jungle in a hat in her life. "Well," said Miss Stephanie, "I thought I might just look in at the courthouse, to see what Atticus's up to." "Better be careful he doesn't hand you a subpoena." We asked Miss Maudie to elucidate: she might as well be called on to testify. We held off until noon, when Atticus came home to dinner and said they'd spent the morning picking the jury. After dinner, we stopped by for Dill and went to town. It was a gala occasion. There was no room at the public hitching rail for another animal, mules and wagons were parked under every available tree. The courthouse square was covered with picnic parties sitting on newspapers, washing down biscuit and syrup with warm milk from fruit jars. Some people were gnawing on cold chicken and cold fried pork chops. The more affluent chased their food with drugstore Coca-Cola in bulb-shaped soda glasses. Greasy-faced children popped-the-whip through the crowd, and babies lunched at their mothers' breasts. In a far corner of the square, the Negroes sat quietly in the sun, dining on sardines, crackers, and the more vivid flavors of Nehi Cola. Mr. Dolphus Raymond sat with them. "Jem," said Dill, "he's drinkin4 out of a sack." Mr. Dolphus Raymond seemed to be so doing: two yellow drugstore straws ran from his mouth to the depths of a brown paper bag. 'Ain't ever seen anybody do that," murmured Dill. "How does he keep what's in it in it?" Jem giggled. "He's got a Co-Cola bottle full of whiskey in there. That's so's not to upset the ladies. You'll see him sip it all afternoon, he'll step out for a while and fill it back up." "Why's he sittin4 with the colored folks?" "Always does. He likes 'em better'n he likes us, I reckon. Lives by himself way down near the county line. He's got a colored woman and all sorts of mixed chillun. Show you some of 'em if we see 'em." "He doesn't look like trash," said Dill. "He's not, he owns all one side of the riverbank down there, and he's from a real old family to boot." 'Then why does he do like that?" 'The was supposed to marry one of the—the Spencer ladies, I think. They were gonna have a huge weddin', but they didn't—after the rehearsal the bride went upstairs and blew her head off. Shotgun. She pulled the trigger with her toes." "Did they ever know why?" "No," said Jem, "nobody ever knew quite why but Mr. Dolphus. They said it was because she found out about his colored woman, he reckoned he could keep her and get married too. He's been sorta drunk ever since. You know, though, he's real good to those chillun—" "Jem," I asked, "what's a mixed child?" "Half white. They're real sad." "Sad, how come?" "They don't belong anywhere. Colored folks won't have 'em because they're half white; white folks won't have 'em cause they're half white; white folks won't have ' clutching a Negro woman's hand walked toward us. He looked all Negro to me: he was rich chocolate with flaring nostrils and beautiful teeth. Sometimes he would skip happily, and the Negro woman tugged his hand to make him stop. Jem waited until they passed us. "That's one of the little ones," he said. "How can you tell?" asked Dill. "He looked black to me." "You can't sometimes, not unless you know who they are. " "Well how do you know who they are." "Well how do you know we ain't Negroes?" "Uncle Jack Finch says we really don't know. He says as far as he can trace back the Finches we ain't, but for all he knows we mighta come straight out of Ethiopia durin' the Old Testament." "Well if we came out durin' the Old Testament it's too long ago to matter." "That's what I thought," said Jem, "but around here once you have a drop of Negro blood, that makes you all black. Hey, look—" Some invisible signal had made the lunchers on the square rise and scatter bits of newspaper, cellophane, and wrapping paper. Children came to mothers, babies were cradled on hips as men in sweat-stained hats collected their families and herded their breeches. There were few women and children among them, which seemed to dispel the holiday mood. They waited patiently at the doors behind the white families. "Let's go in," said Jem. The Maycomb County courthouse was faintly reminiscent of Arlington in one respect: the concrete pillars supporting its south roof were too heavy for their light burden. The pillars were all that remained standing when the original courthouse burned in 1856. Another courthouse was early Victorian, presenting an unoffensive vista when seen from the north. From the other side, however, Greek revival columns clashed with a big nineteenth-century clock tower housing a rusty unreliable instrument, a view indicating a people determined to preserve every physical scrap of the past. To reach the courtroom, on the second floor, one passed sundry sunless county cubbyholes: the other side, however, Greek revival columns clashed with a big nineteenth-century clock tower housing a rusty unreliable instrument, a view indicating a people determined to preserve every physical scrap of the past. tax assessor, the tax collector, the county clerk, the county solicitor, the circuit clerk, the judge of probate lived in cool dim hutches that smelled of decaying record books mingled with old damp cement and stale urine. It was necessary to turn on the lights in the daytime; there was always a film of dust on the rough floorboards. The inhabitants of these offices were creatures of their environment: little gray-faced men, they seemed untouched by wind or sun. We knew there was a crowd, but we had not bargained for the multitudes in the first-floor hallway. I got separated from Jem and Dill, but made my way toward the wall by the stairwell, knowing Jem would come for me eventually. I found myself in the middle of the Idlers' Club and made myself as unobtrusive as possible. This was a group of white-shirted, khaki-trousered, suspendered old men who had spent their twilight days doing same on pine benches under the live oaks on the square. Attentive critics of courthouse business, Atticus said they knew as much law as the Chief Justice, from long years of observation. Normally, they were the court's only spectators, and today they seemed resentful of the interruption of their comfortable routine. When they speck, their voices sounded casually important. The conversation was about my father. "... thinks he knows what he's doing," one said. "Oh h now, I wouldn't say that," said another. "He reads all right, that's all he does." The club snickered. "Lemme tell you somethin4 now, Billy," a third said, "you know the court appointed him to defend this nigger." "Yeah, but Atticus aims to defend him. That's what I don't like about it." This was news, news that put a different light on things: Atticus had to, whether he wanted to or not. I thought it odd that he hadn't said anything to us about it— we could have used it many times in defending him and ourselves. He had to, that's why he was doing it, equaled fewer fights and less fussing. But did that explain the town's attitude? The court appointed Atticus to defend him. Atticus aimed to defend him. That's what they didn't like about it. It was confusing. The Negroes, having waited for the white people to go upstairs, began to come in. "Whoa now, just a minute," said a club member, holding up his walking stick. "Just don't start up them there stairs yet awhile." The club began its stiffjointed climb and ran into Dill and Jem on their way down looking for me. They squeezed past and Jem called, "Scout, come on, there ain't a seat left. We'll hafta stand up." "Looka there, now." he said irritably, as the black people surged upstairs. The old men ahead of them would take most of the standing room. We were out of luck and it was my fault, Jem informed me. We stood miserably by the wall. "Can't you all get in?" Reverend Sykes was looking down at us, black hat in hand. "Hey, Reverend Sykes edged his way upstairs. In a few moments he was back. 'There's not a seat downstairs. Do you all reckon it'll be all right if you all came to the balcony with me?" "Gosh yes," said Jem. Happily, we sped ahead of Reverend Sykes to the courtroom floor. There, we went up a covered staircase and waited at the door. Reverend Sykes to the courtroom floor. There, we went up a covered staircase and waited at the door. Reverend Sykes to the courtroom floor. There, we went up a covered staircase and waited at the door. their front-row seats. The Colored balcony ran along three walls of the courtroom like a second-story veranda, and from it we could see everything. The jury sat to the left, under long windows. Sunburned, lanky, they seemed to be all farmers, but this was natural: townfolk rarely sat on juries, they were either struck or excused. One or two of the jury looked vaguely like dressed-up Cunninghams. At this stage they sat straight and alert. The circuit solicitor and another man, Atticus and Tom Robinson sat at tables with their backs to us. There was a brown book and some yellow tablets on the solicitor's table; Atticus's was bare. Just inside the railing that divided the spectators from the court, the witnesses sat on cowhide-bottomed chairs. Their backs were to us. Judge Taylor was on the bench, looking like a sleepy old shark, his pilot fish writing rapidly below in front of him. Judges I had ever seen: amiable, white-haired, slightly ruddy-faced, he was a man who ran his court with an alarming informality—he sometimes propped his feet up, he often cleaned his fingernails with his pocket knife. In long equity hearings, especially after dinner, he gave the impression of dozing, an impression dispelled forever when a lawyer once deliberately pushed a pile of books to the floor in a desperate effort to wake him up. Without opening his eyes, Judge Taylor murmured, "Mr. Whitley, do that again and it'll cost you one hundred dollars." He was a man learned in the law, and although he seemed to take his job casually, in reality he kept a firm grip on any proceedings that came before him. Old Sarum, their stamping grounds, was populated by two families separate and apart in the beginning, but unfortunately bearing the same name. The Cunningham separate and took to the law. During a controversy of this character, Jeems Cunningham testified that his mother spelled it Cunningham on deeds and things, but she was really a Coningham, she was an uncertain speller, a seldom reader, and was given to looking far away sometimes when she sat on the front gallery in the evening. After nine hours of listening to the eccentricities of Old Sarum's inhabitants, Judge Taylor threw the case out of court. When asked upon what grounds, Judge Taylor said, "Champertous connivance," and declared he hoped to God the litigants were satisfied by each having had their public say. They were. That was all they had wanted in the first place. Judge Taylor had one interesting habit. He permitted smoking in his courtroom but did not himself indulge: sometimes, if one was lucky, one had the privilege of watching him put a long dry cigar into his mouth and munch it slowly up. Bit by bit the dead cigar would disappear, to reappear some hours later as a flat slick mess, its essence extracted and mingling with Judge Taylor's digestive juices. I once asked Atticus how Mrs. Taylor stood to kiss him, but Atticus said they didn't kiss much. The witness stand was to the right of Judge Taylor, and when we got to our seats Mr. Heck Tate's testify in?" Mr. Tate had dressed for the occasion. He wore an ordinary business suit, which made him look somehow like every other man: gone were his high boots, lumber jacket, and bullet-studded belt. From that moment he ceased to terrify me. He was sitting forward in the witness chair, his hands clasped between his knees, listening attentively to the circuit solicitor. The solicitor, a Mr. Gilmer, not well known to us. He was from Abbottsville; we saw him only when court convened, and that rarely, for court was of no special interest to Jem and me. A balding, smooth-faced man, he could have been anywhere between forty and sixty. Although his back was to us, we knew he had a slight cast in one of his eyes which he used to his advantage: he seemed to be looking at a person when he was actually doing nothing of the kind, thus he was hell on juries and witnesses. The jury, thinking likewise. "... in your own words, Mr. Tate," Mr. Gilmer was saying. "Well," said Mr. Tate, touching his glasses and speaking to his knees, "I was called-" "Could you say it to the jury, Mr. Tate said, "I was fetched by Bob-by Mr. Bob Ewell yonder, one night, sir?" Mr. Tate said, "I was fetched by Bob-by Mr. Bob Ewell yonder, one night of November twenty-first. I was just leaving my office to go home when B-Mr. Ewell came in, very excited he was, and said get out to his house guick, some nigger'd raped his girl." "Did you go?" "Certainly. Got in the car and went out as fast as I could." "And what did you find?" "Found her lying on the floor in the middle of the front room, one on the right as you go in. She was pretty well beat up, but I heaved her to her feet and she washed her face in a bucket in the comer and said she was all right. I asked her who hurt her and she said it was Tom Robinson—" Judge Taylor, who had been concentrating on his fingernails, looked up as if he were expecting an objection, but Atticus was quiet. "—asked her if he beat her like that, she said yes he did. So I went down to Robinson's house and brought him back. She identified him as the one, so I took him in. That's all there was to it." "Thank you," said Mr. Gilmer. Judge Taylor said, "Any questions, Atticus?" "Yes," said my father. He was sitting behind his table; his chair was skewed to one side, his legs were crossed and one arm was resting on the back of his chair. "Did you call a doctor, Sheriff? Did anybody call a doctor?" asked Atticus. "No sir," said Mr. Tate. "Didn't call a doctor?" "No sir," repeated Mr. Tate. "Why not?" There was an edge to Atticus's voice. "Well I can tell you why I didn't. It wasn't necessary, Mr. Finch. She was mighty banged up. Something sho' happened, it was obvious." "But you didn't is not set if you why I didn't. It wasn't necessary, Mr. Finch. She was mighty banged up. Something sho' happened, it was obvious." "But you didn't is not set if you why I didn't. It wasn't necessary, Mr. Finch. She was mighty banged up. Something sho' happened, it was obvious." "But you didn't is not set if you why I didn't. It wasn't necessary, Mr. Finch. She was mighty banged up. Something sho' happened, it was obvious." "But you didn't is not set if you why I didn't. It wasn't necessary, Mr. Finch. She was mighty banged up. Something sho' happened, it was obvious." "But you didn't is not set if you why I didn't. It wasn't necessary, Mr. Finch. She was mighty banged up. Something sho' happened, it was obvious." "But you didn't is not set if you why I didn't. It wasn't necessary, Mr. Finch. She was mighty banged up. Something sho' happened, it was obvious." "But you didn't is not set if you why I didn't. It wasn't necessary is not set if you why I didn't. It wasn't necessary is not set if you why I didn't. It wasn't necessary is not set if you why I didn't. It wasn't necessary is not set if you why I didn't. It wasn't necessary is not set if you why I didn't. It wasn't necessary is not set if you why I didn't. It wasn't necessary is not set if you why I didn't. It wasn't necessary is not set if you why I didn't. It wasn't necessary is not set if you why I didn't. It wasn't necessary is not set if you why I didn't. It wasn't necessary is not set if you why I didn't. It wasn't necessary is not set if you why I didn't. It wasn't necessary is not set if you why I didn't. It wasn't necessary is not set if you why I didn't. It wasn't necessary is not you why I didn't. call a doctor? While you were there did anyone send for one, fetch one, carry her to one?" "No sir-" Judge Taylor broke in. "He's answered the question three times, Atticus. He didn't call a doctor." Atticus said, "I just wanted to make sure, Judge," and the judge smiled. Jem's hand, which was resting on the balcony rail, tightened around it. He drew in his breath suddenly. Glancing below, I saw no corresponding reaction, and wondered if Jem was trying to be dramatic. Dill was watching peacefully, and got a terse, "Sh-h!" "Sheriff," Atticus was saying, "you say she was mighty banged up. In what way?" "Well-" "Just describe her injuries, Heck." "Well, she was beaten around the head. There was already bruises comin' on her arms, and it happened about thirty minutes before—" "How do you know?" Mr. Tate prinned. "Sorry, that's what they said. Anyway, she was pretty bruised up when I got there, and she had a black eye comnT." "Which eye?" Mr. Tate blinked and ran his hands through his hair. "Let's see," he said softly, then he looked at Atticus as if he considered the question childish. "Can't you remember?" Atticus asked. Mr. Tate pointed to an invisible person five inches in front of him and said, "Her left." "Wait a minute, Sheriff," said Atticus. "Was it her left looking the same way you were?" Mr. Tate said, "Oh yes, that'd make it her right. It was her right eye, Mr. Finch. I remember now, she was bunged up on that side of her face..." Mr. Tate blinked again, as if something had suddenly been made plain to him. Then he turned his head and looked around at Tom Robinson. As if by instinct, Tom Robinson raised his head. Something had been made plain to Atticus also, and it brought him to his feet. "Sheriff, please repeat what you said." "It was her right eye, I said." "No... " Atticus walked to the court reporter's desk and bent down to the furiously scribbling hand. It stopped, flipped back the shorthand pad, and the court reporter said, "'Mr. Finch. I remember now she was bunged up on that side of the face."' Atticus looked up at Mr. Tate. "Which side again, Heck?" "The right side, Mr. Finch, but she had more bruises—you wanta hear about 'em?" Atticus seemed to be bordering on another question, but he thought better of it and said, "Yes, what were her other injuries?" As Mr. Tate answered, Atticus turned and looked at Tom Robinson as if to say this was something they hadn't bargained for. "... her arms were bruised, and she showed me her neck?" "I'd say they were all around, Mr. Finch." "You would?" "Yes sir, she had a small throat, anybody could'a reached around it with—" "Just answer the question yes or no, please, Sheriff," said Atticus dryly, and Mr. Tate fell silent. Atticus sat down and nodded to Mr. Tate, who rose stiffly and stepped down from the witness stand. Below us, heads turned, feet scraped the floor, babies were shifted to shoulders, and a few children scampered out of the courtroom. The Negroes behind us whispered softly among themselves; Dill was asking Reverend Sykes said he didn't know. So far, things were utterly dull: nobody had thundered, there were no arguments between opposing counsel, there was no drama; a grave disappointment to all present, it seemed. Atticus was proceeding amiably, as if he were involved in a title dispute. With his infinite capacity for calming turbulent seas, he could make a rape case as dry as a sermon. Gone was the terror in my mind of stale whiskey and barnyard smells, of sleepy- eyed sullen men, of a husky voice calling in the night, "Mr. Finch? They gone?" Our nightmare had gone with daylight, everything would come out all right. All the spectators were as relaxed as Judge Taylor, except Jem. His mouth was twisted into a purposeful half-grin, and his eyes happy about, and he said something about corroborating evidence, which made me sure he was showing off. . .Robert E. Lee Ewell!" In answer to the clerk's booming voice, a little bantam cock of a man rose and strutted to the stand, the back of his neck. We also saw no resemblance to his namesake. A shock of wispy new- washed hair stood up from his forehead; his nose was thin, pointed, and shiny; he had no chin to speak of—it seemed to be part of his crepey neck. "-so help me God," he crowed. Every town the size of Maycomb had families like the Ewells. No economic fluctuations changed their status—people like the Ewells lived as guests of the county in prosperity as well as in the depths of a depression. No truant officers could keep their numerous offspring in school; no public health officer could free them from congenital defects, various worms, and the diseases indigenous to filthy surroundings. May comb's Ewells lived behind the town garbage dump in what was once a Negro cabin. The cabin's plank walls were supplemented with sheets of corrugated iron, its roof shingled with tin cans hammered flat, so only its general shape suggested its original design: square, with four tiny rooms opening onto a shotgun hall, the cabin rested uneasily upon four irregular lumps of limestone. Its windows were merely open spaces in the walls, which in the summertime were covered with greasy strips of cheesecloth to keep out the varmints that feasted on Maycomb's refuse. The varmints that feasted on Maycomb's refuse. The varmints that feasted on Maycomb's refuse. passed for a fence was bits of tree-limbs, broomsticks and tool shafts, all tipped with rusty hammer-heads, snaggle-toothed rake heads, shovels, axes and grubbing hoes, held on with pieces of barbed wire. Enclosed by this barricade was a dirty yard containing the remains of a Model-T Ford (on blocks), a discarded dentist's chair, an ancient icebox plus lesser items: old shoes, worn-out table radios, picture frames, and fruit jars, under which scrawny orange chickens pecked hopefully. One comer of the yard, though, bewildered Maycomb. Against the fence, in a line, were six chipped-enamel slop jars holding brilliant red geraniums, cared for as tenderly as if they belonged to Miss Maudie Atkinson, had Miss Maudie deigned to permit a geranium on her premises. People said they were Mayella Ewell's. Nobody was quite sure how many children were always several dirty-faced ones at the windows when anyone passed by. Nobody had occasion to pass by except at Christmas, when the churches delivered baskets, and when the mayor of Maycomb asked us to please help the garbage collector by dumping our own trees and trash. Atticus took us with him last Christmas when he complied with the mayor's request. A dirt road ran from the highway past the dump, down to a small Negro settlement some five hundred yards beyond the Ewells4. It was necessary either to back out to the highway or go the full length of the road and turn around; most people turned around in the frosty December dusk, their cabins looked neat and snug with pale blue smoke rising from the chimneys and doorways glowing amber from the fires inside. There were delicious smells about: chicken, bacon frying crisp as the twilight air. Jem and I detected squirrel cooking, but it took an old countryman like Atticus to identify possum and rabbit, aromas that vanished when we rode back past the Ewell residence. All the little man on the witness stand had that made him any better than his nearest neighbors was, that if scrubbed with lye soap in very hot water, his skin was white. "Mr. Robert Ewell?" asked Mr. Gilmer's back stiffened a little, and I felt sorry for him. Perhaps I'd better explain something now. I've heard that lawyers' children, on seeing their parents in court in the heat of argument, get the wrong idea: they think opposing counsel to be the personal enemies of their parents, they suffer agonies, and are surprised to see them often go out arm-in-arm with their tormenters during the first recess. This was not true of Jem and me. We acquired no traumas from watching our father win or lose. I'm sorry that I can't provide to see them often go out arm-in-arm with their tormenters during the first recess. any drama in this respect; if I did, it would not be true. We could tell, however, when debate became more acrimonious than professional, but this was from watching lawyers other than our father. I never heard Atticus raise his voice in my life, except to a deaf witness. Mr. Gilmer was doing his job, as Atticus was doing his. Besides, Mr. Ewell was Mr. Gilmer's witness, and he had no business being rude to him of all people. "Are you the father of Mayella Ewell?" was the answer. Judge Taylor stirred. He turned slowly in his swivel chair and looked benignly at the witness. "Are you the father of Mayella Ewell?" he asked, in a way that made the laughter below us stop suddenly. "Yes sir," Mr. Ewell said meekly. Judge Taylor went on in tones of good will: "This the first time you've ever been in court? I don't recall ever seeing you here." At the witness's affirmative nod he continued, "Well, let's get something straight. There will be no more audibly obscene speculations on any subject from anybody in this courtroom as long as I'm sitting here. Do you understand?" Mr. Ewell nodded, but I don't think he did. Judge Taylor sighed and said, "All right, Mr. Gilmer?" 'Thank you, sir. Mr. Ewell, would you tell us in your own words what happened on the evening of November twenty-first, please?" Jem grinned and pushed his hair back. Just-in-your-own words was Mr. Gilmer's trademark. We often wondered who else's words Mr. Gilmer was afraid his witness might employ. "Well, the night of November twenty-one I was comin' in from the woods with a load o'kindlin' and just as I got to the fence I heard Mayella scream in4 like a stuck hog inside the house -" Here Judge Taylor glanced sharply at the witness and must have decided his speculations devoid of evil intent, for he subsided sleepily. "What time was it, Mr. Ewell?" "Just 'fore sundown. Well, I was sayin' Mayella was screaming?" said Mr. Gilmer. Mr. Ewell looked confusedly at the judge. "Well, Mayella was raisin4 this holy racket so I dropped m'load and run as fast as I could but I run into th' fence, but when I got distangled I run up to th4 window and I seen—" Mr. Ewell's face grew scarlet. He stood up and pointed his finger at Tom Robinson. "—I seen that black nigger yonder ruttin' on my Mayella!" So serene was Judge Taylor's court, that he had few occasions to use his gavel, but he hammered fully five minutes. Atticus was on his feet at the bench saying something to him, Mr. Heck Tate as first officer of the county stood in the middle aisle quelling the packed courtroom. Behind us, there was an angry muffled groan from the colored people. Reverend Sykes leaned across Dill and me, pulling at Jem's elbow. "Mr. Jem," he said, "you better take Miss Jean Louise home. Mr. Jem, you hear me?" Jem turned his head. "Scout, go home. Dill, you'n4Scout go home." "You gotta make me first," I said, remembering Atticus's blessed dictum. Jem scowled furiously at me, then said to Reverend Sykes, "I think it's okay, Reverend, she doesn't understand it." I was mortally offended. "I most certainly do, I c'n understand anything you can." "Aw hush. She doesn't understand it, Reverend Sykes's black eyes were anxious. "Mr. Finch know you all are here? This ain't fit for Miss Jean Louise or you boys either." Jem shook his head. "He can't see us this far away. It's all right, Reverend." I knew Jem would win, because I knew nothing could make him leave now. Dill and I were safe, for a while: Atticus could see us from where he was, if he looked. As Judge Taylor banged his gavel, Mr. Ewell was sitting smugly in the witness chair, surveying his handiwork. With one phrase he had turned happy picknickers into a sulky, tense, murmuring crowd, being slowly hypnotized by gavel taps lessening in intensity until the only sound in the courtroom was a dim pink-pink: the judge might have been rapping the bench with a pencil. In possession of his court once more, Judge Taylor leaned back in his chair. He looked suddenly weary; his age was showing, and I thought about what Atticus had said—he and Mrs. Taylor didn't kiss much—he must have been nearly seventy. "There has been a request," Judge Taylor said, "that this courtroom be cleared of spectators, or at least of women and children, a request that will be denied for the time being. People generally see what they look for, and hear what they listen for, and hear in silence or you will leave this courtroom, but you won't leave it until the whole boiling of you come before me on contempt charges. Mr. Ewell, you will keep your testimony within the confines of Christian English usage, if that is possible. Proceed, Mr. Gilmer." Mr. Ewell reminded me of a deaf-mute. I was sure he had never heard the words Judge Taylor directed at him—his mouth struggled silently with them—but their import registered on his face. Smugness faded from it, replaced by a dogged earnestness that fooled Judge Taylor not at all: as long as Mr. Ewell was on the stand, the judge kept his eyes on him, as if daring him to make a false move. Mr. Gilmer and Atticus exchanged glances. Atticus was sitting down again, his fist rested on his cheek and we could not see his face. Mr. Gilmer looked rather desperate. A question from Judge Taylor made him relax: "Mr. Ewell, did you see the defendant having sexual intercourse with your daughter?" "Yes, I did." The spectators were quiet, but the defendant said something. Atticus whispered to him, and Tom Robinson was silent. "You say you were at the window?" asked Mr. Gilmer. "Yes sir." "How far is it from the ground?" "bout three foot." "Did you have a clear view of the room?" "Yes sir." "Well, it was all slung about, like there was a fight." "Well, I run around the house to get in, but he run out the front door just ahead of me. I sawed who he was, all right. I was too distracted about Mayella to run after'im. I run in the house and she was lyin' on the floor squallin' — " "Then what did you do?" "Why, I run for Tate quick as I could. I knowed who it was, all right, lived down yonder in that nigger-nest, passed the house every day. Jedge, I've asked this county for fifteen years to clean out that nest down yonder, they're dangerous to live around 'sides devaluin' my property—" "Thank you, Mr. Ewell," said Mr. Gilmer hurriedly. The witness made a hasty descent from the stand and ran smack into Atticus, who had risen to question him. Judge Taylor permitted the court to laugh. "Just a minute, sir," said Atticus genially. "Could I ask you a question or two?" Mr. Ewell backed up into the witness chair, settled himself, and regarded Atticus with haughty suspicion, an expression common to May comb County witnesses when confronted by opposing counsel. "Mr. Ewell," Atticus began, "folks were doing a lot of running that night. Let's see, you say you ran to the house, you ran to the window, you ran to Mayella, you ran for Mr. Tate. Did you, during all this running, run for a doctor?" "Wadn't no need to. I seen what happened." "But there's one thing I don't understand," said Atticus. "Weren't you concerned with Mayella's condition?" "I most positively was," said Mr. Ewell. "I seen who done it." "No, I mean her physical condition. Did you not think the nature of her injuries." warranted immediate medical attention?" "What?" "Didn't you think she should have had a doctor, immediately?" The witness said he never thought of it, he had it would have cost him five dollars. "That all?" he asked. "Not quite," said Atticus casually. "Mr. Ewell, you heard the sheriff's testimony, didn't you?" "How's that?" "You were in the courtroom when Mr. Heck Tate was on the stand, weren't you? You heard everything he said, didn't you?" Mr. Ewell considered the matter carefully, and seemed to decide that the question was safe. "Yes," he said. "Do you agree with his description of Mayella's injuries?" "How's that?" Atticus looked around at Mr. Gilmer and smiled. Mr. Ewell seemed determined not to give the defense the time of day. "Mr. Tate testified that her right eye was blackened, that she was beaten around the-" "Oh yeah," said the witness. "I hold with everything Tate said." "You do?" asked Atticus mildly. "I just want to make sure." He went to the court reporter. said something, and the reporter entertained us for some minutes by reading Mr. Tate's testimony as if it were stock-market quotations: "... which eye her left oh yes that'd make it her right eye Mr. Finch I remember now she was bunged." He flipped the page. "Up on that side of the face Sheriff please repeat what you said it was her right eye I said—" "Thank you, Bert," said Atticus. "You heard it again, Mr. Ewell. Do you have anything to add to it? Do you agree with the sheriff?" "I holds with Tate. Her eye was blacked and she was mighty beat up." The little man seemed to have forgotten his previous humiliation from the bench. It was becoming evident that he thought Atticus an easy match. He seemed to grow ruddy again; his chest swelled, and once more he was a red little rooster. I thought he'd burst his shirt at Atticus's next question: "Mr. Ewell, can you read and write?" Mr. Gilmer interrupted. "Objection," he said. "Can't see what witness's literacy has to do with the case, irrelevant'n'immaterial." Judge Taylor was about to speak but Atticus said, "Judge, if you'll allow the question plus another one you'll soon see." "All right, let's see," said Judge Taylor, "but make sure we see, Atticus. Overruled." Mr. Gilmer seemed as curious as the rest of us as to what bearing the state of Mr. Ewell's education had on the case. "I'll repeat the question," said Atticus. "Can you read and write?" "I most positively can." "Will you write your name and show us?" "I most positively will. How do you think I sign my relief checks?" Mr. Ewell was endearing himself to his fellow citizens. The whispers and chuckles below us probably had to do with what a card he was. I was becoming nervous. Atticus seemed to know what he was doing—but it seemed to me that he'd gone frog-sticking without a light. Never, never, never, never, on cross-examination ask a witness a question you don't already know the answer to, was a tenet I absorbed with my baby-food. Do it, and you'll often get an answer you don't want, an answer to was reaching into the inside pocket of his coat. He drew out an envelope, then reached into his vest pocket and unclipped his fountain pen. He moved leisurely, and had turned so that he was in full view of the jury. He unscrewed the fountain-pen cap and placed it gently on his table. name for us?" he asked. "Clearly now, so the jury can see you do it." Mr. Ewell wrote on the back of the envelope and looked up complacently to see Mr. Gilmer half-sitting, half-standing at his table. The jury was watching him, one man was leaning forward with his hands over the railing. "What's so interestin'?" he asked. "You're left-handed, Mr. Ewell," said Judge Taylor. Mr. Ewell, "said Judge Taylor. Mr. Ewell," said Judge Taylor. Mr. Ewell, "said Judge Taylor. Mr. Ewell turned angrily to the judge and said he didn't see what his being left-handed, Mr. Ewell turned angrily to the judge and said he didn't see what his being left-handed had to do with it, that he was a Christ-fearing man and Atticus Finch was taking advantage of him. Tricking lawyers like Atticus Finch took advantage of him all the time with their tricking ways. He had told them what happened, he'd say it again and again — which he did. Nothing Atticus asked him after that shook his story, that he'd looked through the window, then ran the nigger off, then ran the question. "About your writing with your left hand, are you ambidextrous, Mr. Ewell?" "I most positively am not, I can use one hand good as the other," he added, glaring at the defense table. Jem seemed to be having a quiet fit. He was pounding the balcony rail softly, and once he whispered, "We've got him." I didn't think so: Atticus was trying to show, it seemed to me, that Mr. Ewell could have beaten up Mayella. That much I could follow. If her right eye was blacked and she was beaten mostly on the right eye was blacked and she was beaten mostly on the right eye was blacked and she was beaten would easily be left-handed. too. Like Mr. Heck Tate, I imagined a person facing me, went through a swift mental pantomime, and concluded that he might have held her with his left. I looked down at him. His back was to us, but I could see his broad shoulders and bull-thick neck. He could easily have done it. I thought Jem was counting his right hand and pounded her with his left. chickens. DMU Timestamp: December 19, 2018 18:14

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