his and Mayella's yarns. He thought he'd be a hero, but all he got for his pain was… was, okay, we'll convict this Negro but get back to your dump. He's had his fling with about everybody now, so he ought to be satisfied. He'll settle down when the weather changes."

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

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

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

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

"Because they don't bother you," Jem answered in the darkness. He had turned out his reading light.

"Reckon you're at the stage now where you don't kill flies and mosquitoes now, I reckon," I said. "Lemme know when you change your mind. Tell you one thing, though, I ain't gonna sit around and not scratch a redbug."

"Aw dry up," he answered drowsily.

Jem was the one who was getting more like a girl every day, not I. Comfortable, I lay on my back and waited for sleep, and while waiting I thought of Dill. He had left us the first of the month with firm assurances that he would return the minute school was out—he guessed his folks had got the general idea that he liked to spend his summers in Maycomb. Miss Rachel took us with them in the taxi to Maycomb Junction, and Dill waved to us from the train window until he was out of sight. He was not out of mind: I missed him. The last two days of his time with us, Jem had taught him to swim—

Taught him to swim. I was wide awake, remembering what Dill had told me.

Barker's Eddy is at the end of a dirt road off the Meridian highway about a mile from town. It is easy to catch a ride down the highway on a cotton wagon or from a passing motorist, and the short walk to the creek is easy, but the prospect of walking all the way back home at dusk, when the traffic is light, is tiresome, and swimmers are careful not to stay too late.

According to Dill, he and Jem had just come to the highway when they saw Atticus driving toward them. He looked like he had not seen them, so they both waved. Atticus finally slowed down; when they caught up with him he said, "You'd better catch a ride back. I won't be going home for a while." Calpurnia was in the back seat. Jem protested, then pleaded, and Atticus said, "All right, you can come with us if you stay in the car."

On the way to Tom Robinson's, Atticus told them what had happened.

They turned off the highway, rode slowly by the dump and past the Ewell residence, down the narrow lane to the Negro cabins. Dill said a crowd of black children were playing marbles in Tom's front yard. Atticus parked the car and got out. Calpurnia followed him through the front gate.

Dill heard him ask one of the children, "Where's your mother, Sam?" and heard Sam say, "She down at Sis Stevens's, Mr. Finch. Want me run fetch her?"

Dill said Atticus looked uncertain, then he said yes, and Sam scampered off. "Go on with your game, boys," Atticus said to the children.

A little girl came to the cabin door and stood looking at Atticus. Dill said her hair was a wad of tiny stiff pigtails, each ending in a bright bow. She grinned from ear to ear and walked toward our father, but she was too small to navigate the steps. Dill said Atticus went to her, took off his hat, and offered her his finger. She grabbed it and he eased her down the steps. Then he gave her to Calpurnia.

Sam was trotting behind his mother when they came up. Dill said Helen said, "'evenin', Mr. Finch, won't you have a seat?" But she didn't say any more.

Neither did Atticus.

"Scout," said Dill, "she just fell down in the dirt. Just fell down in the dirt, like a giant with a big foot just came along and stepped on her. Just ump—" Dill's fat foot hit the ground. "Like you'd step on an ant."

Dill said Calpurnia and Atticus lifted Helen to her feet and half carried, half walked her to the cabin. They stayed inside a long time, and Atticus came out alone. When they drove back by the dump,

Helen went to work next morning and used the public road. Nobody chunked at her, but when she was a few yards beyond the Ewell house, she looked around and saw Mr. Ewell walking behind her. She turned and walked on, and Mr. Ewell kept the same distance behind her until she reached Mr. Link Deas's house. All the way to the house, Helen said, she heard a soft voice behind her, crooning foul words. Thoroughly frightened, she telephoned Mr. Link at his store, which was not too far from his house. As Mr. Link came out of his store he saw Mr. Ewell leaning on the fence. Mr. Ewell said, "Don't you look at me, Link Deas, like I was dirt. I ain't jumped your—"

"First thing you can do, Ewell, is get your stinkin' carcass off my property. You're leanin' on it an' I can't afford fresh paint for it. Second thing you can do is stay away from my cook or I'll have you up for assault—"

"I ain't touched her, Link Deas, and ain't about to go with no nigger!"

"You don't have to touch her, all you have to do is make her afraid, an' if assault ain't enough to keep you locked up awhile, I'll get you in on the Ladies' Law, so get outa my sight! If you don't think I mean it, just bother that girl again!"

Mr. Ewell evidently thought he meant it, for Helen reported no further trouble.

"I don't like it, Atticus, I don't like it at all," was Aunt Alexandra's assessment of these events. "That man seems to have a permanent running grudge against everybody connected with that case. I know how that kind are about paying off grudges, but I don't understand why he should harbor one—he had his way in court, didn't he?"

"I think I understand," said Atticus. "It might be because he knows in his heart that very few people in Maycomb really believed

scratching noise. “Hush,” he said to Ann Taylor, his fat nondescript dog. Then he realized he was speaking to an empty room; the scratching noise was coming from the rear of the house.

Judge Taylor clumped to the back porch to let Ann out and found the screen door swinging open. A shadow on the corner of the house caught his eye, and that was all he saw of his visitor. Mrs. Taylor came home from church to find her husband in his chair, lost in the writings of Bob Taylor, with a shotgun across his lap.

The third thing happened to Helen Robinson, Tom’s widow. If Mr. Ewell was as forgotten as Tom Robinson, Tom Robinson was as forgotten as Boo Radley. But Tom was not forgotten by his employer, Mr. Link Deas. Mr. Link Deas made a job for Helen. He didn’t really need her, but he said he felt right bad about the way things turned out. I never knew who took care of her children while Helen was away. Calpurnia said it was hard on Helen, because she had to walk nearly a mile out of her way to avoid the Ewells, who, according to Helen, “chunked at her” the first time she tried to use the public road. Mr. Link Deas eventually received the impression that Helen was coming to work each morning from the wrong direction, and dragged the reason out of her. “Just let it be, Mr. Link, please suh,” Helen begged. “The hell I will,” said Mr. Link. He told her to come by his store that afternoon before she left. She did, and Mr. Link closed his store, put his hat firmly on his head, and walked Helen home. He walked her the short way, by the Ewells‘. On his way back, Mr. Link stopped at the crazy gate.

“Ewell?” he called. “I say Ewell!”

The windows, normally packed with children, were empty.

“I know every last one of you’s in there a-layin‘ on the floor! Now hear me, Bob Ewell: if I hear one more peep outa my girl Helen about not bein’ able to walk this road I’ll have you in jail before sundown!” Mr. Link spat in the dust and walked home.

some of the Ewells hollered at them, but Dill didn’t catch what they said.

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

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

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

How could this be so, I wondered, as I read Mr. Underwood’s editorial. Senseless killing—Tom had been given due process of law

to the day of his death; he had been tried openly and convicted by twelve good men and true; my father had fought for him all the way. Then Mr. Underwood's meaning became clear: Atticus had used every tool available to free men to save Tom Robinson, but in the secret courts of men's hearts Atticus had no case. Tom was a dead man the minute Mayella Ewell opened her mouth and screamed.

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

Chapter 27

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

The first thing was that Mr. Bob Ewell acquired and lost a job in a matter of days and probably made himself unique in the annals of the nineteen-thirties: he was the only man I ever heard of who was fired from the WPA for laziness. I suppose his brief burst of fame brought on a briefer burst of industry, but his job lasted only as long as his notoriety: Mr. Ewell found himself as forgotten as Tom Robinson. Thereafter, he resumed his regular weekly appearances at the welfare office for his check, and received it with no grace amid obscure mutterings that the bastards who thought they ran this town wouldn't permit an honest man to make a living. Ruth Jones, the welfare lady, said Mr. Ewell openly accused Atticus of getting his job. She was upset enough to walk down to Atticus's office and tell him about it. Atticus told Miss Ruth not to fret, that if Bob Ewell wanted to discuss Atticus's "getting" his job, he knew the way to the office.

The second thing happened to Judge Taylor. Judge Taylor was not a Sunday-night churchgoer: Mrs. Taylor was. Judge Taylor savored his Sunday night hour alone in his big house, and churchtime found him holed up in his study reading the writings of Bob Taylor (no kin, but the judge would have been proud to claim it). One Sunday night, lost in fruity metaphors and florid diction, Judge Taylor's attention was wrenched from the page by an irritating

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

Chapter 26

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

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

We had almost seen him a couple of times, a good enough score for anybody.

But I still looked for him each time I went by. Maybe someday

we would see him. I imagined how it would be: when it happened, he'd just be sitting in the swing when I came along. "Hidy do, Mr. Arthur," I would say, as if I had said it every afternoon of my life. "Evening, Jean Louise," he would say, as if he had said it every afternoon of my life, "right pretty spell we're having, isn't it?" "Yes sir, right pretty," I would say, and go on.

It was only a fantasy. We would never see him. He probably did go out when the moon was down and gaze upon Miss Stephanie Crawford. I'd have picked somebody else to look at, but that was his business. He would never gaze at us.

"You aren't starting that again, are you?" said Atticus one night, when I expressed a stray desire just to have one good look at Boo Radley before I died. "If you are, I'll tell you right now: stop it. I'm too old to go chasing you off the Radley property. Besides, it's dangerous. You might get shot. You know Mr. Nathan shoots at every shadow he sees, even shadows that leave size-four bare footprints. You were lucky not to be killed."

I hushed then and there. At the same time I marveled at Atticus. This was the first he had let us know he knew a lot more about something than we thought he knew. And it had happened years ago. No, only last summer—no, summer before last, when… time was playing tricks on me. I must remember to ask Jem.

So many things had happened to us, Boo Radley was the least of our fears. Atticus said he didn't see how anything else could happen, that things had a way of settling down, and after enough time passed people would forget that Tom Robinson's existence was ever brought to their attention.

Perhaps Atticus was right, but the events of the summer hung over us like smoke in a closed room. The adults in Maycomb never discussed the case with Jem and me; it seemed that they discussed it with their children, and their attitude must have been that neither of

"If you don't throw it all up. Jem," I said, "I wanta ask you somethin'." "Shoot." He put down his book and stretched his legs.

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

"Why sure," said Jem. "I liked her when I was in her room." "She hates Hitler a lot…"

"What's wrong with that?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

As I had never liked arithmetic, I spent the period looking out the window. The only time I ever saw Atticus scowl was when Elmer Davis would give us the latest on Hitler. Atticus would snap off the radio and say, "Hmp!" I asked him once why he was impatient with Hitler and Atticus said, "Because he's a maniac."

This would not do, I mused, as the class proceeded with its sums. One maniac and millions of German folks. Looked to me like they'd shut Hitler in a pen instead of letting him shut them up. There was something else wrong—I would ask my father about it.

I did, and he said he could not possibly answer my question because he didn't know the answer.

"But it's okay to hate Hitler?"

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

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

"I should think she would."

"But—"

"Yes?"

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

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

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

us could help having Atticus for a parent, so their children must be nice to us in spite of him. The children would never have thought that up for themselves: had our classmates been left to their own devices, Jem and I would have had several swift, satisfying fist-fights apiece and ended the matter for good. As it was, we were compelled to hold our heads high and be, respectively, a gentleman and a lady. In a way, it was like the era of Mrs. Henry Lafayette Dubose, without all her yelling. There was one odd thing, though, that I never understood: in spite of Atticus's shortcomings as a parent, people were content to re-elect him to the state legislature that year, as usual, without opposition. I came to the conclusion that people were just peculiar, I withdrew from them, and never thought about them until I was forced to.

I was forced to one day in school. Once a week, we had a Current Events period. Each child was supposed to clip an item from a newspaper, absorb its contents, and reveal them to the class. This practice allegedly overcame a variety of evils: standing in front of his fellows encouraged good posture and gave a child poise; delivering a short talk made him word-conscious; learning his current event strengthened his memory; being singled out made him more than ever anxious to return to the Group.

The idea was profound, but as usual, in Maycomb it didn't work very well. In the first place, few rural children had access to newspapers, so the burden of Current Events was borne by the town children, convincing the bus children more deeply that the town children got all the attention anyway. The rural children who could, usually brought clippings from what they called The Grit Paper, a publication spurious in the eyes of Miss Gates, our teacher. Why she frowned when a child recited from The Grit Paper I never knew, but in some way it was associated with liking fiddling, eating syrupy biscuits for lunch, being a holy-roller, singing Sweetly Sings the Donkey and pronouncing it dunkey, all of which the state paid teachers to discourage.

Even so, not many of the children knew what a Current Event was. Little Chuck Little, a hundred years old in his knowledge of cows and their habits, was halfway through an Uncle Natchell story when Miss Gates stopped him: "Charles, that is not a current event. That is an advertisement."

Cecil Jacobs knew what one was, though. When his turn came, he went to the front of the room and began, "Old Hitler—"

"Adolf Hitler, Cecil," said Miss Gates. "One never begins with Old anybody." "Yes ma'am," he said. "Old Adolf Hitler has been prosecutin' the—" "Persecuting Cecil…"

"Nome, Miss Gates, it says here—well anyway, old Adolf Hitler has been after the Jews and he's puttin' 'em in prisons and he's taking away all their property and he won't let any of 'em out of the country and he's washin' all the feeble- minded and—"

"Washing the feeble-minded?"

"Yes ma'am, Miss Gates, I reckon they don't have sense enough to wash themselves, I don't reckon an idiot could keep hisself clean. Well anyway, Hitler's started a program to round up all the half-Jews too and he wants to register 'em in case they might wanta cause him any trouble and I think this is a bad thing and that's my current event."

"Very good, Cecil," said Miss Gates. Puffing, Cecil returned to his seat. A hand went up in the back of the room. "How can he do that?"

"Who do what?" asked Miss Gates patiently.

"I mean how can Hitler just put a lot of folks in a pen like that, looks like the govamint'd stop him," said the owner of the hand.

"Hitler is the government," said Miss Gates, and seizing an opportunity to make education dynamic, she went to the blackboard. She printed DEMOCRACY in large letters. "Democracy," she said.

"Does anybody have a definition?"

"Us," somebody said.

I raised my hand, remembering an old campaign slogan Atticus had once told me about.

"What do you think it means, Jean Louise?"

"'Equal rights for all, special privileges for none,'" I quoted.

"Very good, Jean Louise, very good," Miss Gates smiled. In front of DEMOCRACY, she printed WE ARE A. "Now class, say it all together, 'We are a democracy.'"

We said it. Then Miss Gates said, "That's the difference between America and Germany. We are a democracy and Germany is a dictatorship. Dictator-ship," she said. "Over here we don't believe in persecuting anybody. Persecution comes from people who are prejudiced. Prejudice," she enunciated carefully. "There are no better people in the world than the Jews, and why Hitler doesn't think so is a mystery to me."

An inquiring soul in the middle of the room said, "Why don't they like the Jews, you reckon, Miss Gates?"

"I don't know, Henry. They contribute to every society they live in, and most of all, they are a deeply religious people. Hitler's trying to do away with religion, so maybe he doesn't like them for that reason."

Cecil spoke up. "Well I don't know for certain," he said, "they're supposed to change money or somethin', but that ain't no cause to persecute 'em. They're white, ain't they?"

Miss Gates said, "When you get to high school, Cecil, you'll learn that the Jews have been persecuted since the beginning of history, even driven out of their own country. It's one of the most terrible stories in history. Time for arithmetic, children."