"Have a chew, Scout." Jem dug into his pocket and extracted a Tootsie Roll. It took a few minutes to work the candy into a comfortable wad inside my jaw.

Jem was rearranging the objects on his dresser. His hair stuck up behind and down in front, and I wondered if it would ever look like a man's—maybe if he shaved it off and started over, his hair would grow back neatly in place. His eyebrows were becoming heavier, and I noticed a new slimness about his body. He was growing taller. When he looked around, he must have thought I would start crying again, for he said, "Show you something if you won't tell anybody." I said what. He unbuttoned his shirt, grinning shyly.

"Well what?"

"Well can't you see it?" "Well no."

"Well it's hair." "Where?"

"There. Right there."

He had been a comfort to me, so I said it looked lovely, but I didn't see anything. "It's real nice, Jem."

"Under my arms, too," he said. "Goin' out for football next year. Scout, don't let Aunty aggravate you."

It seemed only yesterday that he was telling me not to aggravate Aunty.

"You know she's not used to girls," said Jem, "leastways, not girls like you. She's trying to make you a lady. Can't you take up sewin' or somethin'?"

"Hell no. She doesn't like me, that's all there is to it, and I don't care. It was her callin' Walter Cunningham trash that got me goin', Jem, not what she said about being a problem to Atticus. We got that all straight one time, I asked him if I was a problem and he

step out here and see what's in the kitchen, Mr. Finch."

We followed him. The kitchen table was loaded with enough food to bury the family: hunks of salt pork, tomatoes, beans, even scuppernongs. Atticus grinned when he found a jar of pickled pigs' knuckles. "Reckon Aunty'll let me eat these in the diningroom?"

Calpurnia said, "This was all 'round the back steps when I got here this morning. They—they 'preciate what you did, Mr. Finch. They—they aren't oversteppin' themselves, are they?"

Atticus's eyes filled with tears. He did not speak for a moment. "Tell them I'm very grateful," he said. "Tell them—tell them they must never do this again.

Times are too hard…"

He left the kitchen, went in the diningroom and excused himself to Aunt Alexandra, put on his hat and went to town.

We heard Dill's step in the hall, so Calpurnia left Atticus's uneaten breakfast on the table. Between rabbit-bites Dill told us of Miss Rachel's reaction to last night, which was: if a man like Atticus Finch wants to butt his head against a stone wall it's his head.

"I'da got her told," growled Dill, gnawing a chicken leg, "but she didn't look much like tellin' this morning. Said she was up half the night wonderin' where I was, said she'da had the sheriff after me but he was at the hearing."

"Dill, you've got to stop goin' off without tellin' her," said Jem. "It just aggravates her."

Dill sighed patiently. "I told her till I was blue in the face where I was goin'— she's just seein' too many snakes in the closet. Bet that woman drinks a pint for breakfast every morning—know she drinks two glasses full. Seen her."

"Don't talk like that, Dill," said Aunt Alexandra. "It's not

becoming to a child. It's—cynical."

"I ain't cynical, Miss Alexandra. Tellin' the truth's not cynical, is it?"

"The way you tell it, it is."

Jem's eyes flashed at her, but he said to Dill, "Let's go. You can take that runner with you."

When we went to the front porch, Miss Stephanie Crawford was busy telling it to Miss Maudie Atkinson and Mr. Avery. They looked around at us and went on talking. Jem made a feral noise in his throat. I wished for a weapon.

"I hate grown folks lookin' at you," said Dill. "Makes you feel like you've done something."

Miss Maudie yelled for Jem Finch to come there.

Jem groaned and heaved himself up from the swing. "We'll go with you," Dill said.

Miss Stephanie's nose quivered with curiosity. She wanted to know who all gave us permission to go to court—she didn't see us but it was all over town this morning that we were in the Colored balcony. Did Atticus put us up there as a sort of—? Wasn't it right close up there with all those—? Did Scout understand all the—? Didn't it make us mad to see our daddy beat?

"Hush, Stephanie." Miss Maudie's diction was deadly. "I've not got all the morning to pass on the porch—Jem Finch, I called to find out if you and your colleagues can eat some cake. Got up at five to make it, so you better say yes. Excuse us, Stephanie. Good morning, Mr. Avery."

There was a big cake and two little ones on Miss Maudie's kitchen table. There should have been three little ones. It was not like Miss Maudie to forget Dill, and we must have shown it. But we

—to help us choose our friends. I would hold her off as long as I could: "If they're good folks, then why can't I be nice to Walter?"

"I didn't say not to be nice to him. You should be friendly and polite to him, you should be gracious to everybody, dear. But you don't have to invite him home."

"What if he was kin to us, Aunty?"

"The fact is that he is not kin to us, but if he were, my answer would be the same."

"Aunty," Jem spoke up, "Atticus says you can choose your friends but you sho' can't choose your family, an' they're still kin to you no matter whether you acknowledge 'em or not, and it makes you look right silly when you don't."

"That's your father all over again," said Aunt Alexandra, "and I still say that Jean Louise will not invite Walter Cunningham to this house. If he were her double first cousin once removed he would still not be received in this house unless he comes to see Atticus on business. Now that is that."

She had said Indeed Not, but this time she would give her reasons: "But I want to play with Walter, Aunty, why can't I?"

She took off her glasses and stared at me. "I'll tell you why," she said. "Because— he—is—trash, that's why you can't play with him. I'll not have you around him, picking up his habits and learning Lord-knows-what. You're enough of a problem to your father as it is."

I don't know what I would have done, but Jem stopped me. He caught me by the shoulders, put his arm around me, and led me sobbing in fury to his bedroom.

Atticus heard us and poked his head around the door. "'s all right, sir," Jem said gruffly, "'s not anything." Atticus went away.

“Soon’s school starts I’m gonna ask Walter home to dinner,” I planned, having forgotten my private resolve to beat him up the next time I saw him. “He can stay over sometimes after school, too. Atticus could drive him back to Old Sarum. Maybe he could spend the night with us sometime, okay, Jem?”

“We’ll see about that,” Aunt Alexandra said, a declaration that with her was always a threat, never a promise. Surprised, I turned to her. “Why not, Aunty? They’re good folks.”

She looked at me over her sewing glasses. “Jean Louise, there is no doubt in my mind that they’re good folks. But they’re not our kind of folks.”

Jem says, “She means they’re yappy, Scout.”

“What’s a yap?”

“Aw, tacky. They like fiddlin‘ and things like that.”

“Well I do too—”

“Don’t be silly, Jean Louise,” said Aunt Alexandra. “The thing is, you can scrub Walter Cunningham till he shines, you can put him in shoes and a new suit, but he’ll never be like Jem. Besides, there’s a drinking streak in that family a mile wide. Finch women aren’t interested in that sort of people.”

“Aun-ty,” said Jem, “she ain’t nine yet.”

“She may as well learn it now.”

Aunt Alexandra had spoken. I was reminded vividly of the last time she had put her foot down. I never knew why. It was when I was absorbed with plans to visit Calpurnia’s house—I was curious, interested; I wanted to be her “company,” to see how she lived, who her friends were. I might as well have wanted to see the other side of the moon. This time the tactics were different, but Aunt Alexandra’s aim was the same. Perhaps this was why she had come to live with us

understood when she cut from the big cake and gave the slice to Jem.

As we ate, we sensed that this was Miss Maudie’s way of saying that as far as she was concerned, nothing had changed. She sat quietly in a kitchen chair, watching us.

Suddenly she spoke: “Don’t fret, Jem. Things are never as bad as they seem.”

Indoors, when Miss Maudie wanted to say something lengthy she spread her fingers on her knees and settled her bridgework. This she did, and we waited.

“I simply want to tell you that there are some men in this world who were born to do our unpleasant jobs for us. Your father’s one of them.”

“Oh,” said Jem. “Well.”

“Don’t you oh well me, sir,” Miss Maudie replied, recognizing Jem’s fatalistic noises, “you are not old enough to appreciate what I said.”

Jem was staring at his half-eaten cake. “It’s like bein‘ a caterpillar in a cocoon, that’s what it is,” he said. “Like somethin’ asleep wrapped up in a warm place. I always thought Maycomb folks were the best folks in the world, least that’s what they seemed like.”

“We’re the safest folks in the world,” said Miss Maudie. “We’re so rarely called on to be Christians, but when we are, we’ve got men like Atticus to go for us.”

Jem grinned ruefully. “Wish the rest of the county thought that.” “You’d be surprised how many of us do.”

“Who?” Jem’s voice rose. “Who in this town did one thing to help Tom Robinson, just who?”

“His colored friends for one thing, and people like us. People like Judge Taylor. People like Mr. Heck Tate. Stop eating and start

thinking, Jem. Did it ever strike you that Judge Taylor naming Atticus to defend that boy was no accident? That Judge Taylor might have had his reasons for naming him?"

This was a thought. Court-appointed defenses were usually given to Maxwell Green, Maycomb's latest addition to the bar, who needed the experience.

Maxwell Green should have had Tom Robinson's case.

"You think about that," Miss Maudie was saying. "It was no accident. I was sittin' there on the porch last night, waiting. I waited and waited to see you all come down the sidewalk, and as I waited I thought, Atticus Finch won't win, he can't win, but he's the only man in these parts who can keep a jury out so long in a case like that. And I thought to myself, well, we're making a step—it's just a baby- step, but it's a step."

"'t's all right to talk like that—can't any Christian judges an' lawyers make up for heathen juries," Jem muttered. "Soon's I get grown—"

"That's something you'll have to take up with your father," Miss Maudie said.

We went down Miss Maudie's cool new steps into the sunshine and found Mr. Avery and Miss Stephanie Crawford still at it. They had moved down the sidewalk and were standing in front of Miss Stephanie's house. Miss Rachel was walking toward them.

"I think I'll be a clown when I get grown," said Dill. Jem and I stopped in our tracks.

"Yes sir, a clown," he said. "There ain't one thing in this world I can do about folks except laugh, so I'm gonna join the circus and laugh my head off."

"You got it backwards, Dill," said Jem. "Clowns are sad, it's folks that laugh at them."

make one of them change his mind. "If we'd had two of that crowd, we'd've had a hung jury."

Jem said slowly, "You mean you actually put on the jury a man who wanted to kill you the night before? How could you take such a risk, Atticus, how could you?"

"When you analyze it, there was little risk. There's no difference between one man who's going to convict and another man who's going to convict, is there? There's a faint difference between a man who's going to convict and a man who's a little disturbed in his mind, isn't there? He was the only uncertainty on the whole list."

"What kin was that man to Mr. Walter Cunningham?" I asked.

Atticus rose, stretched and yawned. It was not even our bedtime, but we knew he wanted a chance to read his newspaper. He picked it up, folded it, and tapped my head. "Let's see now," he droned to himself. "I've got it. Double first cousin."

"How can that be?"

"Two sisters married two brothers. That's all I'll tell you—you figure it out."

I tortured myself and decided that if I married Jem and Dill had a sister whom he married our children would be double first cousins. "Gee minetti, Jem," I said, when Atticus had gone, "they're funny folks. 'd you hear that, Aunty?"

Aunt Alexandra was hooking a rug and not watching us, but she was listening. She sat in her chair with her workbasket beside it, her rug spread across her lap. Why ladies hooked woolen rugs on boiling nights never became clear to me.

"I heard it," she said.

I remembered the distant disastrous occasion when I rushed to young Walter Cunningham's defense. Now I was glad I'd done it.

jury's vote's supposed to be secret. Serving on a jury forces a man to make up his mind and declare himself about something. Men don't like to do that. Sometimes it's unpleasant."

"Tom's jury sho' made up its mind in a hurry," Jem muttered.

Atticus's fingers went to his watchpocket. "No it didn't," he said, more to himself than to us. "That was the one thing that made me think, well, this may be the shadow of a beginning. That jury took a few hours. An inevitable verdict, maybe, but usually it takes 'em just a few minutes. This time—" he broke off and looked at us. "You might like to know that there was one fellow who took considerable wearing down—in the beginning he was rarin' for an outright acquittal."

"Who?" Jem was astonished.

Atticus's eyes twinkled. "It's not for me to say, but I'll tell you this much. He was one of your Old Sarum friends…"

"One of the Cunninghams?" Jem yelped. "One of—I didn't recognize any of 'em… you're jokin'." He looked at Atticus from the corners of his eyes.

"One of their connections. On a hunch, I didn't strike him. Just on a hunch. Could've, but I didn't."

"Golly Moses," Jem said reverently. "One minute they're tryin' to kill him and the next they're tryin' to turn him loose… I'll never understand those folks as long as I live."

Atticus said you just had to know 'em. He said the Cunninghams hadn't taken anything from or off of anybody since they migrated to the New World. He said the other thing about them was, once you earned their respect they were for you tooth and nail. Atticus said he had a feeling, nothing more than a suspicion, that they left the jail that night with considerable respect for the Finches. Then too, he said, it took a thunderbolt plus another Cunningham to

"Well I'm gonna be a new kind of clown. I'm gonna stand in the middle of the ring and laugh at the folks. Just looka yonder," he pointed. "Every one of 'em oughta be ridin' broomsticks. Aunt Rachel already does."

Miss Stephanie and Miss Rachel were waving wildly at us, in a way that did not give the lie to Dill's observation.

"Oh gosh," breathed Jem. "I reckon it'd be ugly not to see 'em."

Something was wrong. Mr. Avery was red in the face from a sneezing spell and nearly blew us off the sidewalk when we came up. Miss Stephanie was trembling with excitement, and Miss Rachel caught Dill's shoulder. "You get on in the back yard and stay there," she said. "There's danger a'comin'."

"'s matter?" I asked.

"Ain't you heard yet? It's all over town—"

At that moment Aunt Alexandra came to the door and called us, but she was too late. It was Miss Stephanie's pleasure to tell us: this morning Mr. Bob Ewell stopped Atticus on the post office corner, spat in his face, and told him he'd get him if it took the rest of his life.

Chapter 23

"I wish Bob Ewell wouldn't chew tobacco," was all Atticus said about it.

According to Miss Stephanie Crawford, however, Atticus was leaving the post office when Mr. Ewell approached him, cursed him, spat on him, and threatened to kill him. Miss Stephanie (who, by the time she had told it twice was there and had seen it all—passing by from the Jitney Jungle, she was)—Miss Stephanie said Atticus didn't bat an eye, just took out his handkerchief and wiped his face and stood there and let Mr. Ewell call him names wild horses could not bring her to repeat. Mr. Ewell was a veteran of an obscure war; that plus Atticus's peaceful reaction probably prompted him to inquire, "Too proud to fight, you nigger-lovin' bastard?" Miss Stephanie said Atticus said, "No, too old," put his hands in his pockets and strolled on. Miss Stephanie said you had to hand it to Atticus Finch, he could be right dry sometimes.

Jem and I didn't think it entertaining.

"After all, though," I said, "he was the deadest shot in the county one time. He could—"

"You know he wouldn't carry a gun, Scout. He ain't even got one—" said Jem. "You know he didn't even have one down at the jail that night. He told me havin' a gun around's an invitation to somebody to shoot you."

"This is different," I said. "We can ask him to borrow one." We did, and he said, "Nonsense."

Dill was of the opinion that an appeal to Atticus's better nature

Atticus leaned back in his rocking-chair. For some reason he looked pleased with Jem. "I was wondering when that'd occur to you," he said. "There are lots of reasons. For one thing, Miss Maudie can't serve on a jury because she's a woman—"

"You mean women in Alabama can't—?" I was indignant.

"I do. I guess it's to protect our frail ladies from sordid cases like Tom's. Besides," Atticus grinned, "I doubt if we'd ever get a complete case tried—the ladies'd be interrupting to ask questions."

Jem and I laughed. Miss Maudie on a jury would be impressive. I thought of old Mrs. Dubose in her wheelchair—"Stop that rapping, John Taylor, I want to ask this man something." Perhaps our forefathers were wise.

Atticus was saying, "With people like us—that's our share of the bill. We generally get the juries we deserve. Our stout Maycomb citizens aren't interested, in the first place. In the second place, they're afraid. Then, they're—"

"Afraid, why?" asked Jem.

"Well, what if—say, Mr. Link Deas had to decide the amount of damages to award, say, Miss Maudie, when Miss Rachel ran over her with a car. Link wouldn't like the thought of losing either lady's business at his store, would he? So he tells Judge Taylor that he can't serve on the jury because he doesn't have anybody to keep store for him while he's gone. So Judge Taylor excuses him.

Sometimes he excuses him wrathfully."

"What'd make him think either one of 'em'd stop trading with him?" I asked.

Jem said, "Miss Rachel would, Miss Maudie wouldn't. But a jury's vote's secret, Atticus."

Our father chuckled. "You've many more miles to go, son. A

life has interfered with your reasoning process. Those are twelve reasonable men in everyday life, Tom's jury, but you saw something come between them and reason. You saw the same thing that night in front of the jail. When that crew went away, they didn't go as reasonable men, they went because we were there. There's something in our world that makes men lose their heads—they couldn't be fair if they tried. In our courts, when it's a white man's word against a black man's, the white man always wins. They're ugly, but those are the facts of life."

"Doesn't make it right," said Jem stolidly. He beat his fist softly on his knee. "You just can't convict a man on evidence like that—you can't."

"You couldn't, but they could and did. The older you grow the more of it you'll see. The one place where a man ought to get a square deal is in a courtroom, be he any color of the rainbow, but people have a way of carrying their resentments right into a jury box. As you grow older, you'll see white men cheat black men every day of your life, but let me tell you something and don't you forget it—whenever a white man does that to a black man, no matter who he is, how rich he is, or how fine a family he comes from, that white man is trash."

Atticus was speaking so quietly his last word crashed on our ears. I looked up, and his face was vehement. "There's nothing more sickening to me than a low- grade white man who'll take advantage of a Negro's ignorance. Don't fool yourselves—it's all adding up and one of these days we're going to pay the bill for it. I hope it's not in you children's time."

Jem was scratching his head. Suddenly his eyes widened. "Atticus," he said, "why don't people like us and Miss Maudie ever sit on juries? You never see anybody from Maycomb on a jury—they all come from out in the woods."

might work: after all, we would starve if Mr. Ewell killed him, besides be raised exclusively by Aunt Alexandra, and we all knew the first thing she'd do before Atticus was under the ground good would be to fire Calpurnia. Jem said it might work if I cried and flung a fit, being young and a girl. That didn't work either. But when he noticed us dragging around the neighborhood, not eating, taking little interest in our normal pursuits, Atticus discovered how deeply frightened we were. He tempted Jem with a new football magazine one night; when he saw Jem flip the pages and toss it aside, he said, "What's bothering you, son?"

Jem came to the point: "Mr. Ewell."

"What has happened?"

"Nothing's happened. We're scared for you, and we think you oughta do something about him."

Atticus smiled wryly. "Do what? Put him under a peace bond?" "When a man says he's gonna get you, looks like he means it."

"He meant it when he said it," said Atticus. "Jem, see if you can stand in Bob Ewell's shoes a minute. I destroyed his last shred of credibility at that trial, if he had any to begin with. The man had to have some kind of comeback, his kind always does. So if spitting in my face and threatening me saved Mayella Ewell one extra beating, that's something I'll gladly take. He had to take it out on somebody and I'd rather it be me than that houseful of children out there. You understand?"

Jem nodded.

Aunt Alexandra entered the room as Atticus was saying, "We don't have anything to fear from Bob Ewell, he got it all out of his system that morning."

"I wouldn't be so sure of that, Atticus," she said. "His kind'd

do anything to pay off a grudge. You know how those people are."

"What on earth could Ewell do to me, sister?"

"Something furtive," Aunt Alexandra said. "You may count on that." "Nobody has much chance to be furtive in Maycomb," Atticus answered.

After that, we were not afraid. Summer was melting away, and we made the most of it. Atticus assured us that nothing would happen to Tom Robinson until the higher court reviewed his case, and that Tom had a good chance of going free, or at least of having a new trial. He was at Enfield Prison Farm, seventy miles away in Chester County. I asked Atticus if Tom's wife and children were allowed to visit him, but Atticus said no.

"If he loses his appeal," I asked one evening, "what'll happen to him?"

"He'll go to the chair," said Atticus, "unless the Governor commutes his sentence. Not time to worry yet, Scout. We've got a good chance."

Jem was sprawled on the sofa reading *Popular Mechanics*. He looked up. "It ain't right. He didn't kill anybody even if he was guilty. He didn't take anybody's life."

"You know rape's a capital offense in Alabama," said Atticus.

"Yessir, but the jury didn't have to give him death—if they wanted to they could've gave him twenty years."

"Given," said Atticus. "Tom Robinson's a colored man, Jem. No jury in this part of the world's going to say, 'We think you're guilty, but not very,' on a charge like that. It was either a straight acquittal or nothing."

Jem was shaking his head. "I know it's not right, but I can't figure out what's wrong—maybe rape shouldn't be a capital

offense…"

Atticus dropped his newspaper beside his chair. He said he didn't have any quarrel with the rape statute, none what ever, but he did have deep misgivings when the state asked for and the jury gave a death penalty on purely circumstantial evidence. He glanced at me, saw I was listening, and made it easier. "—I mean, before a man is sentenced to death for murder, say, there should be one or two eye-witnesses. Some one should be able to say, 'Yes, I was there and saw him pull the trigger.'"

"But lots of folks have been hung—hanged—on circumstantial evidence," said Jem.

"I know, and lots of 'em probably deserved it, too—but in the absence of eye- witnesses there's always a doubt, some times only the shadow of a doubt. The law says 'reasonable doubt,' but I think a defendant's entitled to the shadow of a doubt. There's always the possibility, no matter how improbable, that he's innocent."

"Then it all goes back to the jury, then. We oughta do away with juries." Jem was adamant.

Atticus tried hard not to smile but couldn't help it. "You're rather hard on us, son. I think maybe there might be a better way. Change the law. Change it so that only judges have the power of fixing the penalty in capital cases."

"Then go up to Montgomery and change the law."

"You'd be surprised how hard that'd be. I won't live to see the law changed, and if you live to see it you'll be an old man."

This was not good enough for Jem. "No sir, they oughta do away with juries. He wasn't guilty in the first place and they said he was."

"If you had been on that jury, son, and eleven other boys like you, Tom would be a free man," said Atticus. "So far nothing in your