

"Let's roll in the tire," I suggested.

Jem sighed. "You know I'm too big."

"You c'n push."

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

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

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

Until it happened I did not realize that Jem was offended by my contradicting him on Hot Steams, and that he was patiently awaiting an opportunity to reward me. He did, by pushing the tire down the sidewalk with all the force in his body. Ground, sky and houses melted into a mad palette, my ears throbbled, I was suffocating. I could not put out my hands to stop, they were wedged between my chest and knees. I could only hope that Jem would outrun the tire and me, or that I would be stopped by a bump in the sidewalk. I heard him behind me, chasing and shouting.

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

"Scout, get away from there, come on!"

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

"Come on, Scout, don't just lie there!" Jem was screaming. "Get up, can'tcha?"

I got to my feet, trembling as I thawed.

"Get the tire!" Jem hollered. "Bring it with you! Ain't you got any sense at all?"

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

"Why didn't you bring it?" Jem yelled.

"Why don't *you* get it?" I screamed.

Jem was silent.

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

remember?"

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

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

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

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

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

"What?" asked Dill.

"Boo Radley."

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

"Boo Radley? How?" asked Dill.

Jem said, "Scout, you can be Mrs. Radley--"

"I declare if I will. I don't think--"

"Smatter?" said Dill. "Still scared?"

"He can get out at night when we're all asleep..." I said.

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

Dill said, "Jem, you and me can play and Scout can watch if she's scared."

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

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

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

[Contents](#) - [Prev](#) / [Next](#)

Chapter 5

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

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

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

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