

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

ACT I

A guitar plays a simple melody. Jean Louise enters from the audience and walks up onto the stage, absorbed by the surroundings and her memories. When she feels ready, she turns to the audience and begins to speak.

JEAN LOUISE

When he was nearly thirteen, my brother Jem got his arm badly broken at the elbow. When it healed and Jem's fears of never being able to play football were assuaged, he was seldom self-conscious about his injury. His left arm ended up somewhat shorter than his right but he couldn't have cared less, so long as he could pass and punt.

When enough years had gone by to enable us to look back on them, we sometimes discussed the events leading to his accident. I maintain that the Ewells started it all, but Jem, who was three years my senior, said it really began earlier that summer, when Dill first gave us the idea of making Boo Radley come out.

I said if he wanted to take a broad view of the thing, it really began with Andrew Jackson. If General Jackson hadn't run the Creeks up the creek, our ancestor Simon Finch would never have paddled up the Alabama, and where would we be if he hadn't? At the time we were far too old to settle an argument with a fist-fight, so we consulted Atticus - who said we were both right.

We lived in Maycomb, Alabama, Jem and I, our father Atticus, plus Calpurnia, our cook. Maycomb was an old town, but it was a tired old town when I first knew it. In rainy weather the streets turned to red slop; grass grew on the sidewalks and the courthouse sagged in the square. Somehow it was hotter then. A black dog suffered on a summer's day. Men's stiff collars wilted by nine in the morning. Ladies bathed before noon, after their three-o'clock naps, and by nightfall were like soft teacakes with frostings of sweat and sweet talcum. A day was twenty-four hours long but seemed longer. There was nowhere to go, nothing to buy, no money to buy it with, and nothing to see outside the boundaries of Maycomb County.

Still, Jem and I waited for summer with impatience. It was our best season: it was sleeping on the back screened porch in cots, or trying to persuade Atticus to let us sleep in the treehouse. Summer was everything good to eat; it was a thousand colors in a parched landscape. The authorities released us early on the last day of school that year, and Jem and I walked home together. I was free

