

MISS MAUDIE. Do you smell my mimosa? It's like angels' breath.

SCOUT (*uninterested*). Yessum.

MISS MAUDIE (*trying to encourage her*). And hear those birds! (*Curiously*.) You do hear the mockingbirds?

SCOUT (*conceding*). Yessum. (*Maybe SHE's being rude. Feeling SHE must say something.*) When Atticus gave Jem an' me air rifles, he asked us never to shoot mockingbirds.

MISS MAUDIE. And he's right. Mockingbirds just make music. They don't eat up people's gardens; don't nest in corncribs; they don't do one thing but sing their hearts out. That's why it's a sin to kill a mockingbird.

SCOUT. Miss Maudie, this is an old neighborhood, ain't it?

MISS MAUDIE. Been here longer than the town.

SCOUT. No, I mean the folks on our street are all old. Jem an' me's the only children. Mrs. Dubose is close on a hundred and Miss Stephanie's old. So are you, and Atticus—he's ancient!

MISS MAUDIE (*laughing*). Not being wheeled around yet. Neither is your father.

SCOUT. He's nearly fifty! (*Truly concerned*.) Jem asked him why he was so old an' he said—(*What kind of an answer is this?*)—he got started late.

MISS MAUDIE (*emphatically*). You're lucky! You and Jem have the benefit of your father's age. If Atticus was thirty, you'd find life quite different.

SCOUT (*equally emphatic*). I sure would. (*Unhappily*.) Atticus can't do anything.

MISS MAUDIE (*exasperated*). What do you want him to do?

SCOUT (*wouldn't it be wonderful!*). Drive a dump truck for the county. Run for sheriff. Farm or work in a gar-

age or something else worth mentioning. (*Bitterly*.) Other fathers go hunting, play poker, and they fish.

MISS MAUDIE (*bewildered*). Seems to me you'd be proud of him.

SCOUT (*a cry*). Why? He works in a law office and he reads.

BOY'S VOICE (*off*). Hey, Scout—

SCOUT (*uneasily*). The way some folks are starting to go on, you'd think he was running a still.

BOY'S VOICE (*off*). Scout—how come your daddy defends niggers? (*SCOUT has risen and SHE comes to the porch rail, her fists clenched.*)

SCOUT (*shouting back*). I know it's you, Walter Cunningham. Keep this up 'n' I'll give you another whipping.

BOY'S VOICE (*off, defiant*). Scout's daddy defends niggers!

SCOUT. You gonna take that back, boy?

BOY'S VOICE (*off*). You gonna make me? My folks say that niggers oughta hang from the water tank.

SCOUT (*starting toward direction of VOICE*). I'll never speak to you again as long as I live! I hate you an' despise you, an' hope you die tomorrow!

BOY'S VOICE (*off, going*). Everyone says your daddy's a disgrace!

SCOUT (*close to tears*). Come back, you coward.

BOY'S VOICE (*off, further away*). Everyone!

SCOUT. Coward! (*But HE's gone. SCOUT looks after him, momentarily drained. MISS MAUDIE has the impulse to be helpful, but SHE can't think how.*)

(CALPURNIA comes out of the house. Probably SHE has heard the shouts.)