

To Kill a Mockingbird Chapter 14

As the summer went on, Scout and Jem heard more and more about their family in the whisperings of the townspeople when they walked past. Scout overheard someone say "rape" and remembered that she'd never asked Atticus about the definition. That night in the living room after dinner, Scout interrupted his reading to ask and he gave her the legal definition that she didn't understand but didn't question. In the course of their conversation, it came out that she and Jem had gone to church with Cal. Scout also remembered that she had wanted to visit Cal at home, but Alexandra said no before Atticus could answer. Scout insisted that she'd asked Atticus, and she got in trouble for sassing her aunt. Scout was mortified that Atticus had corrected her so harshly, so she went to the bathroom to escape the heat and retain what was left of her dignity. On her way back to the living room, she listened outside the door as Atticus and Alexandra argued. Alexandra insisted that Calpurnia wasn't needed anymore, but Atticus refused to let her go because she was part of the family to him and his children.

Jem took Scout upstairs and told her that he would spank her if she bothered her aunt any more. Enraged at being reprimanded again that night, Scout just lit into him. When Atticus came upstairs and broke up the fight, Scout asked if she had to mind Jem now, too. Their father answered that she only had to mind him if he could make her and sent them both to bed.

As Scout prepared for bed, she stepped on something warm and dry, but when she turned on the light, it had disappeared under her bed. She called Jem thinking it was a snake, and he got the broom to sweep it out. It turned out to be Dill hiding under her bed. He'd run away from home, and he expected them to hide him for a while. Although Scout was willing, Jem called Atticus and told him what was going on. Dill and Scout were astonished at his betrayal. Atticus told Dill's Aunt Rachel where he was so that Dill's parents wouldn't be worried, and it was agreed that Dill could stay with them for the night.

During the night Dill came and crawled in bed with Scout rather than sleep with Jem. He'd run away because his mother and her new husband didn't really need him around. Scout didn't know how he felt because she knew that Atticus and Cal needed her around. As they drifted off to sleep Scout wondered aloud why Boo Radley never ran away, and Dill suggested that maybe he had nowhere to run to.