

To Kill a Mockingbird Chapter 5

After enough of Scout's nagging, Jem finally gave up the Boo Radley game. Although Dill had asked Scout to marry him, he and Jem spent a lot of time on their own. Since Dill and Jem were inseparable, Scout began to spend the evenings on Miss Maudie Atkinson's porch. Miss Maudie had always allowed Jem and Scout to play in her yard across the street from the Finch house provided that they stayed out of her flowers. Before Scout began spending time with her on her porch, she and Jem had never really gotten to know Miss Maudie, but once they did, they found out that she was a nice lady despite her acidic tongue.

One night Scout asked her if Boo Radley was still alive. Miss Maudie said that he was and insisted that the stories Scout had heard were made up, a significant portion of the lies constructed by Miss Stephanie Crawford. Miss Maudie explained that when she'd known Arthur as a little boy, he'd been as polite as he could be to her, but maybe after so long inside that house he had gone crazy.

The next morning Dill and Jem decided to write Boo a note and stick it on the windowsill with a fishing pole so that they wouldn't have to go up to the house and risk getting caught. Dill and Scout were the lookouts, and Dill would ring a silver dinner bell if anyone was coming so that they could get away from the Radley place. The note requested that Boo come out and tell them what he does in there, and in exchange they would buy him an ice cream cone. As Jem struggled with the note and the pole, trying to make it stay on the sill of a window with a broken shutter, the bell started clanging and Dill stood face to face with Atticus. After Atticus lectured them about the privacy of Boo Radley and his family and their right to live in peace without children bothering them, he used his courtroom technique to trick Jem into admitting that the game they were playing did involve Boo Radley. Jem was so bewildered that he had been suckered that he didn't argue anymore and instead pouted because his father had tricked him.