

# Jem's pants

Literature



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

That night, the chill of the wind cut through me like thousands of stabbing needles. Even the tiniest movement tormented me with terror. I was here because my earlier agreement with Dill we had decided we were bored with our childish, pretence games, we wanted something more challenging, more dangerous. We wanted to see Boo Radley. I tried to stop Scout coming up Radley house with us. I didn't want Boo to endanger her but I didn't want her to know that.

Dill and I were going to try and spot Boo through his windows, I did not know, however that I would be making a return trip to collect my pants, which I was wearing when I fled from the house in panic from the wires of fence between the schoolyard Radley back yard. Every one of us was scared. I knew it, as we walked up to the squeaky Radley gate. Dill told us to 'spit on it' and I though he was crazy, but the gate stopped squeaking and we could enter without dread of being seen by any person creeping down the once familiar but now sinister moonlit street.

The land before us, behind the gate was eerie and unfamiliar to most people in Maycomb. Few people enter the space between the gate and house I was beginning to regret that I was part of that few. As we stole over the uneven, dull lawn, I had to be alert for danger as Scout was trying to be less of a 'girl' and look brave but if I'd have jumped into her skin just then, I would have felt as uneasy as I could be. The garden was large and quite overpowering. The trees loomed over us and the air was still, yet cooler than most nights. This jungle sounded busy, filled with activity, that of which made us uneasy.

I stepped in chicken droppings and made Dill and Scout, and myself, more anxious than before. We crept through the garden and then had a look through one of the dark, shuttered windows. Scout and I gave Dill a lift up. He couldn't see much only I think some curtains and a small light shining dimly somewhere in the house, further away. Cold sweat was pouring down my back like water on a block of melting ice. The fact that the sky was as blank as a canvas before painting and the garden plants were stirring and rustling discomfited me. I also doubted that the house was empty.

I wanted to sprint from the wilderness of a garden that second, but Dill wanted to go to the back yard. I am older than he is and I could not say I was scared in front of the company I had, if he was unafraid himself. As I put a foot up onto the steps on the dreary porch, it gave a deafening creak in the garden's stillness. I dived for cover, my heart pounding like a war drum, in the panic of being seen by the silhouettes within our targeted spying area. Suddenly a black shadow loomed from the murky shadows of the house, towards me. I acted impulsively, leaping from the porch and hurtled towards Scout and Dill.

We ran through the rickety collards. I tripped and my heart almost died as I heard a booming gunshot shattering the chattering neighbourhood. I feared for my company. I was sobbing silently and yelled at Dill and Scout to sprint towards the fence by the schoolyard as swiftly as they could. I was trying to ensure that Scout was unhurt, and would not be hurt by anything that satanic night. I was only hoping that she was less than half as intimidated and alarmed by this Radley dwelling-place as I was. Dill and I held the fence

while Scout detached herself from the tangles and escaped the villainous grounds.

As soon as Dill was through the wire, I bellowed out " Run" in between the sobs and breaths I took. They both bolted, expecting me to reach them quite easily and soon, but without help getting through the muddled wires, I became entwined in them, the cut iron tearing my pants and slashing my legs. The panic of possible forthcoming events engulfed me that moment. In my head I could see Boo Radley and Mr Nathan walking, actually, more like floating, towards me and I saw Atticus telling me how wrong I had been, and how disappointed he was in me. Neither of these things happened though,

Scout and Dill returned to enquire my absence from the escape, which obviously, being stuck in the fence, I was unable to take part in. My pants were glued to many wires, my legs, however, were not. I undid my belt and wriggled free of them. I left them there to return to at a later, less hellish point. As I walked briskly from the schoolyard, I was trying to act casual, but as I desperately wanted to get home, I was probably not making a very good job of it. When we walked around the corner, we found that we had jumped into a crowd of confusing yet familiar faces.

Neighbourly faces, but standing outside our schoolyard, many of them. They all stared at me in awe and bewilderment at not wearing pants. I froze and stuttered under the gazes of the enquirers. I picked Atticus out of the crowd and caught my breath. Dill pounced out from behind me and started to talk. He was telling the congregation that we had been playing the game of Strip Poker by Miss Rachel's fish pool. I nodded to confirm this blatant lie and

remember Atticus asking what we were playing with. I whispered to Dill " Do not say cards, because matches are dangerous but cards are fatal. So Dill replied and we got away. Dill could invent the most acceptable fantastical fibs I had ever known. We ran back to our house and Dill to Miss Rachel's and spoke not a single word more of it. Scout and I were practically silent, unless we were asked a question or spoken to. We had much to think about. I was fretting over a plan to retrieve my pants, as I had been told to get them back from Dill, who said he had won them from me in our earlier game. Dill did not have my pants, however, the Radley House did. That was a place I was not willing to re-visit.

I chose to do it that night while everyone, including Boo and Mr Nathan, would be asleep. I awoke and slipped into my older pants, sweater and boots, waking Scout. " Jem you are not going back are you? " enquired Scout with slight disapproval and despair in her voice. " Of course I am, I don't have a choice because Atticus will ask where the pants are. I will not lie to him. I have to do this, so don't you dare go and tell Atticus. Either stay here and keep your mouth closed or come with me. " I replied, extremely quietly.

She did not want to come with me and she would not tell Atticus, so I left. When I heard a slightest movement while I was walking towards the Radley House, it petrified me, every single one. I was thinking `will Boo be there waiting for me? Ready to hurt me and haunt me? ' I tried to think about other things. Impossible. I tried to stop thinking altogether. Also impossible. I now turned the corner of the schoolyard, to the fence. I had to stop. My pants were not mangled in the wires they were folded neatly on top of the fence.

They had also been completely repaired, no holes or tears at all were left, each one sewed up neatly. Mr Nathan must have done it, I thought but then I realised that he would have called Atticus on the telephone when he had found them, it was not him. It must have been Boo then. Nobody else came around here. Although, Boo was evil why would he do this? This puzzled me and it was imprinted into my thought stream for the next week. Maybe Mr Boo Radley was not as evil as we had first thought. Maybe he was just lonely and needed something to do, or someone to talk to.