

AUTHOR OF *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD*

HARPER LEE

GO SET A WATCHMAN

A NOVEL



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ABOUT THE BOOK

From Harper Lee comes a landmark new novel set two decades after her beloved Pulitzer Prize-winning masterpiece, *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Maycomb, Alabama. Twenty-six-year-old Jean Louise Finch – ‘Scout’ – returns home from New York City to visit her ageing father, Atticus. Set against the backdrop of the civil rights tensions and political turmoil that were transforming the South, Jean Louise’s homecoming turns bittersweet when she learns disturbing truths about her close-knit family, the town and the people dearest to her. Memories from her childhood flood back, and her values and assumptions are thrown into doubt. Featuring many of the iconic characters from *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Go Set a Watchman* perfectly captures a young woman, and a world, in painful yet necessary transition out of the illusions of the past – a journey that can be guided only by one’s own conscience.

Written in the mid-1950s, *Go Set a Watchman* imparts a fuller, richer understanding and appreciation of Harper Lee. Here is an unforgettable novel of wisdom, humanity, passion, humour and effortless precision – a profoundly affecting work of art that is both wonderfully evocative of another era and relevant to our own times. It not only confirms the enduring brilliance of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, but also serves as its essential companion, adding depth, context and new meaning to a classic.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Harper Lee was born in 1926 in Monroeville, Alabama. She is the author of the acclaimed *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and has been awarded the Pulitzer Prize, the Presidential Medal of Freedom and numerous other literary awards and honours.

ALSO BY HARPER LEE

To Kill a Mockingbird

GO SET A WATCHMAN

HARPER LEE



WILLIAM HEINEMANN: LONDON

In memory of Mr. Lee and Alice

PART I

1

SINCE ATLANTA, SHE had looked out the dining-car window with a delight almost physical. Over her breakfast coffee, she watched the last of Georgia's hills recede and the red earth appear, and with it tin-roofed houses set in the middle of swept yards, and in the yards the inevitable verbena grew, surrounded by whitewashed tires. She grinned when she saw her first TV antenna atop an unpainted Negro house; as they multiplied, her joy rose.

Jean Louise Finch always made this journey by air, but she decided to go by train from New York to Maycomb Junction on her fifth annual trip home. For one thing, she had the life scared out of her the last time she was on a plane: the pilot elected to fly through a tornado. For another thing, flying home meant her father rising at three in the morning, driving a hundred miles to meet her in Mobile, and doing a full day's work afterwards: he was seventy-two now and this was no longer fair.

She was glad she had decided to go by train. Trains had changed since her childhood, and the novelty of the experience amused her: a fat genie of a porter materialized when she pressed a button on a wall; at her bidding a stainless steel washbasin popped out of another wall, and there was a john one could prop one's feet on. She resolved not to be intimidated by several messages stenciled around her compartment—a roomette, they called it—but when she went to bed the night before, she succeeded in folding herself up into the wall because she had ignored an injunction to pull this lever down over brackets, a situation remedied by the porter to her embarrassment, as her habit was to sleep only in pajama tops.

Luckily, he happened to be patrolling the corridor when the trap snapped shut with her in it: "I'll get you out, Miss," he called in answer to her poundings from within. "No please," she said. "Just tell me how to get out." "I can do it with my back turned," he said, and did.

When she awoke that morning the train was switching and chugging in the Atlanta yards, but in obedience to another sign in her compartment she stayed in bed until College Park flashed by. When she dressed, she put on

her Maycomb clothes: gray slacks, a black sleeveless blouse, white socks, and loafers. Although it was four hours away, she could hear her aunt's sniff of disapproval.

When she was starting on her fourth cup of coffee the Crescent Limited honked like a giant goose at its northbound mate and rumbled across the Chattahoochee into Alabama.

The Chattahoochee is wide, flat, and muddy. It was low today; a yellow sandbar had reduced its flow to a trickle. Perhaps it sings in the wintertime, she thought: I do not remember a line of that poem. Piping down the valleys wild? No. Did he write to a waterfowl, or was it a waterfall?

She sternly repressed a tendency to boisterousness when she reflected that Sidney Lanier must have been somewhat like her long-departed cousin, Joshua Singleton St. Clair, whose private literary preserves stretched from the Black Belt to Bayou La Batre. Jean Louise's aunt often held up Cousin Joshua to her as a family example not lightly to be discountenanced: he was a splendid figure of a man, he was a poet, he was cut off in his prime, and Jean Louise would do well to remember that he was a credit to the family. His pictures did the family well—Cousin Joshua looked like a ratty Algernon Swinburne.

Jean Louise smiled to herself when she remembered her father telling her the rest of it. Cousin Joshua was cut off, all right, not by the hand of God but by Caesar's hosts:

When at the University, Cousin Joshua studied too hard and thought too much; in fact, he read himself straight out of the nineteenth century. He affected an Inverness cape and wore jackboots he had a blacksmith make up from his own design. Cousin Joshua was frustrated by the authorities when he fired upon the president of the University, who in his opinion was little more than a sewage disposal expert. This was no doubt true, but an idle excuse for assault with a deadly weapon. After much passing around of money Cousin Joshua was moved across the tracks and placed in state accommodations for the irresponsible, where he remained for the rest of his days. They said he was reasonable in every respect until someone mentioned that president's name, then his face would become distorted, he would assume a whooping crane attitude and hold it for eight hours or more, and nothing or nobody could make him lower his leg until he forgot about that man. On clear days Cousin Joshua read Greek, and he left a thin volume of verse printed privately by a firm in Tuscaloosa. The poetry was

so ahead of its time no one has deciphered it yet, but Jean Louise's aunt keeps it displayed casually and prominently on a table in the livingroom.

Jean Louise laughed aloud, then looked around to see if anyone had heard her. Her father had a way of undermining his sister's lectures on the innate superiority of any given Finch: he always told his daughter the rest of it, quietly and solemnly, but Jean Louise sometimes thought she detected an unmistakably profane glint in Atticus Finch's eyes, or was it merely the light hitting his glasses? She never knew.

The countryside and the train had subsided to a gentle roll, and she could see nothing but pastureland and black cows from window to horizon. She wondered why she had never thought her country beautiful.

The station at Montgomery nestled in an elbow of the Alabama, and when she got off the train to stretch her legs, the returning familiar with its drabness, lights, and curious odors rose to meet her. There is something missing, she thought. Hotboxes, that's it. A man goes along under the train with a crowbar. There is a clank and then *s-sss-sss*, white smoke comes up and you think you're inside a chafing dish. These things run on oil now.

For no reason an ancient fear gnawed her. She had not been in this station for twenty years, but when she was a child and went to the capital with Atticus, she was terrified lest the swaying train plunge down the riverbank and drown them all. But when she boarded again for home, she forgot.

The train clacketed through pine forests and honked derisively at a gaily painted bell-funneled museum piece sidetracked in a clearing. It bore the sign of a lumber concern, and the Crescent Limited could have swallowed it whole with room to spare. Greenville, Evergreen, Maycomb Junction.

She had told the conductor not to forget to let her off, and because the conductor was an elderly man, she anticipated his joke: he would rush at Maycomb Junction like a bat out of hell and stop the train a quarter of a mile past the little station, then when he bade her goodbye he would say he was sorry, he almost forgot. Trains changed; conductors never did. Being funny at flag stops with young ladies was a mark of the profession, and Atticus, who could predict the actions of every conductor from New Orleans to Cincinnati, would be waiting accordingly not six steps away from her point of debarkation.

Home was Maycomb County, a gerrymander some seventy miles long and spreading thirty miles at its widest point, a wilderness dotted with tiny settlements the largest of which was Maycomb, the county seat. Until

comparatively recently in its history, Maycomb County was so cut off from the rest of the nation that some of its citizens, unaware of the South's political predilections over the past ninety years, still voted Republican. No trains went there—Maycomb Junction, a courtesy title, was located in Abbott County, twenty miles away. Bus service was erratic and seemed to go nowhere, but the Federal Government had forced a highway or two through the swamps, thus giving the citizens an opportunity for free egress. But few people took advantage of the roads, and why should they? If you did not want much, there was plenty.

The county and the town were named for a Colonel Mason Maycomb, a man whose misplaced self-confidence and overweening willfulness brought confusion and confoundment to all who rode with him in the Creek Indian Wars. The territory in which he operated was vaguely hilly in the north and flat in the south, on the fringes of the coastal plain. Colonel Maycomb, convinced that Indians hated to fight on flat land, scoured the northern reaches of the territory looking for them. When his general discovered that Maycomb was meandering in the hills while the Creeks were lurking in every pine thicket in the south, he dispatched a friendly Indian runner to Maycomb with the message, *Move south, damn you*. Maycomb was convinced this was a Creek plot to trap him (was there not a blue-eyed, red-headed devil leading them?), he made the friendly Indian runner his prisoner, and he moved farther north until his forces became hopelessly lost in the forest primeval, where they sat out the wars in considerable bewilderment.

After enough years had passed to convince Colonel Maycomb that the message might have been genuine after all, he began a purposeful march to the south, and on the way his troops encountered settlers moving inland, who told them the Indian Wars were about over. The troops and the settlers were friendly enough to become Jean Louise Finch's ancestors, and Colonel Maycomb pressed on to what is now Mobile to make sure his exploits were given due credit. Recorded history's version does not coincide with the truth, but these are the facts, because they were passed down by word of mouth through the years, and every Maycombian knows them.

"... get your bags, Miss," the porter said. Jean Louise followed him from the lounge car to her compartment. She took two dollars from her billfold: one for routine, one for releasing her last night. The train, of course, rushed like a bat out of hell past the station and came to a stop 440 yards beyond it.

The conductor appeared, grinning, and said he was sorry, he almost forgot. Jean Louise grinned back and waited impatiently for the porter to put the yellow step in place. He handed her down and she gave him the two bills.

Her father was not waiting for her.

She looked up the track toward the station and saw a tall man standing on the tiny platform. He jumped down and ran to meet her.

He grabbed her in a bear hug, put her from him, kissed her hard on the mouth, then kissed her gently. "Not here, Hank," she murmured, much pleased.

"Hush, girl," he said, holding her face in place. "I'll kiss you on the courthouse steps if I want to."

The possessor of the right to kiss her on the courthouse steps was Henry Clinton, her lifelong friend, her brother's comrade, and if he kept on kissing her like that, her husband. Love whom you will but marry your own kind was a dictum amounting to instinct within her. Henry Clinton was Jean Louise's own kind, and now she did not consider the dictum particularly harsh.

They walked arm-in-arm down the track to collect her suitcase. "How's Atticus?" she said.

"His hands and shoulders are giving him fits today."

"He can't drive when they're like that, can he?"

Henry closed the fingers of his right hand halfway and said, "He can't close them any more than this. Miss Alexandra has to tie his shoes and button his shirts when they're like that. He can't even hold a razor."

Jean Louise shook her head. She was too old to rail against the inequity of it, but too young to accept her father's crippling disease without putting up some kind of fight. "Isn't there anything they can do?"

"You know there isn't," Henry said. "He takes seventy grains of aspirin a day and that's all."

Henry picked up her heavy suitcase, and they walked back toward the car. She wondered how she would behave when her time came to hurt day in and day out. Hardly like Atticus: if you asked him how he was feeling he would tell you, but he never complained; his disposition remained the same, so in order to find out how he was feeling, you had to ask him.

The only way Henry found out about it was by accident. One day when they were in the records vault at the courthouse running a land title, Atticus hauled out a heavy mortgage book, turned stark white, and dropped it.

“What’s the matter?” Henry had said. “Rheumatoid arthritis. Can you pick it up for me?” said Atticus. Henry asked him how long he’d had it; Atticus said six months. Did Jean Louise know it? No. Then he’d better tell her. “If you tell her she’ll be down here trying to nurse me. The only remedy for this is not to let it beat you.” The subject was closed.

“Want to drive?” said Henry.

“Don’t be silly,” she said. Although she was a respectable driver, she hated to operate anything mechanical more complicated than a safety pin: folding lawn chairs were a source of profound irritation to her; she had never learned to ride a bicycle or use a typewriter; she fished with a pole. Her favorite game was golf because its essential principles consisted of a stick, a small ball, and a state of mind.

With green envy, she watched Henry’s effortless mastery of the automobile. Cars are his servants, she thought. “Power steering? Automatic transmission?” she said.

“You bet,” he said.

“Well, what if everything shuts off and you don’t have any gears to shift. You’d be in trouble then, wouldn’t you?”

“But everything won’t shut off.”

“How do you know?”

“That’s what faith is. Come here.”

Faith in General Motors. She put her head on his shoulder.

“Hank,” she said presently. “What really happened?”

This was an old joke between them. A pink scar started under his right eye, hit the corner of his nose, and ran diagonally across his upper lip. Behind his lip were six false front teeth not even Jean Louise could induce him to take out and show her. He came home from the war with them. A German, more to express his displeasure at the end of the war than anything else, had bashed him in the face with a rifle butt. Jean Louise had chosen to think this a likely story: what with guns that shot over the horizon, B-17s, V-bombs, and the like, Henry had probably not been within spitting distance of the Germans.

“Okay, honey,” he said. “We were down in a cellar in Berlin. Everybody had too much to drink and a fight started—you like to hear the believable, don’t you? Now will you marry me?”

“Not yet.”

“Why?”

“I want to be like Dr. Schweitzer and play until I’m thirty.”

“He played all right,” said Henry grimly.

Jean Louise moved under his arm. “You know what I mean,” she said.

“Yes.”

There was no finer young man, said the people of Maycomb, than Henry Clinton. Jean Louise agreed. Henry was from the southern end of the county. His father had left his mother soon after Henry was born, and she worked night and day in her little crossroads store to send Henry through the Maycomb public schools. Henry, from the time he was twelve, boarded across the street from the Finch house, and this in itself put him on a higher plane: he was his own master, free from the authority of cooks, yardmen, and parents. He was also four years her senior, which made a difference then. He teased her; she adored him. When he was fourteen his mother died, leaving him next to nothing. Atticus Finch looked after what little money there was from the sale of the store—her funeral expenses took most of it—he secretly supplemented it with money of his own, and got Henry a job clerking in the Jitney Jungle after school. Henry graduated and went into the Army, and after the war he went to the University and studied law.

Just about that time, Jean Louise’s brother dropped dead in his tracks one day, and after the nightmare of that was over, Atticus, who had always thought of leaving his practice to his son, looked around for another young man. It was natural for him to engage Henry, and in due course Henry became Atticus’s legman, his eyes, and his hands. Henry had always respected Atticus Finch; soon it melded to affection and Henry regarded him as a father.

He did not regard Jean Louise as a sister. In the years when he was away at the war and the University, she had turned from an overalled, fractious, gun-slinging creature into a reasonable facsimile of a human being. He began dating her on her annual two-week visits home, and although she still moved like a thirteen-year-old boy and abjured most feminine adornment, he found something so intensely feminine about her that he fell in love. She was easy to look at and easy to be with most of the time, but she was in no sense of the word an easy person. She was afflicted with a restlessness of spirit he could not guess at, but he knew she was the one for him. He would protect her; he would marry her.

“Tired of New York?” he said.

“No.”

“Give me a free hand for these two weeks and I’ll make you tired of it.”

“Is that an improper suggestion?”

“Yes.”

“Go to hell, then.”

Henry stopped the car. He turned off the ignition switch, slewed around, and looked at her. She knew when he became serious about something: his crew cut bristled like an angry brush, his face colored, its scar reddened.

“Honey, do you want me to put it like a gentleman? Miss Jean Louise, I have now reached an economic status that can provide for the support of two. I, like Israel of Old, have labored seven years in the vineyards of the University and the pastures of your daddy’s office for you—”

“I’ll tell Atticus to make it seven more.”

“Hateful.”

“Besides,” she said, “it was Jacob anyway. No, they were the same. They always changed their names every third verse. How’s Aunty?”

“You know good and well she’s been fine for thirty years. Don’t change the subject.”

Jean Louise’s eyebrows flickered. “Henry,” she said primly, “I’ll have an affair with you but I won’t marry you.”

It was exactly right.

“Don’t be such a damn child, Jean Louise!” Henry sputtered, and forgetting the latest dispensations from General Motors, grabbed for a gearshift and stomped at a clutch. These denied him, he wrenched the ignition key violently, pressed some buttons, and the big car glided slowly and smoothly down the highway.

“Slow pickup, isn’t it?” she said. “No good for city driving.”

Henry glared at her. “What do you mean by that?”

In another minute this would become a quarrel. He was serious. She’d better make him furious, thus silent, so she could think about it.

“Where’d you get that appalling tie?” she said.

Now.

She was almost in love with him. No, that’s impossible, she thought: either you are or you aren’t. Love’s the only thing in this world that is unequivocal. There are different kinds of love, certainly, but it’s a you-do or you-don’t proposition with them all.

She was a person who, when confronted with an easy way out, always took the hard way. The easy way out of this would be to marry Hank and let

him labor for her. After a few years, when the children were waist-high, the man would come along whom she should have married in the first place. There would be searchings of hearts, fevers and frets, long looks at each other on the post office steps, and misery for everybody. The hollering and the high-mindedness over, all that would be left would be another shabby little affair à la the Birmingham country club set, and a self-constructed private Gehenna with the latest Westinghouse appliances. Hank didn't deserve that.

No. For the present she would pursue the stony path of spinsterhood. She set about restoring peace with honor:

"Honey, I'm sorry, truly sorry," she said, and she was.

"That's okay," said Henry, and slapped her knee. "It's just that I could kill you sometimes."

"I know I'm hateful."

Henry looked at her. "You're an odd one, sweet. You can't dissemble."

She looked at him. "What are you talking about?"

"Well, as a general rule, most women, before they've got 'em, present to their men smiling, agreeing faces. They hide their thoughts. You now, when you're feeling hateful, honey, you *are* hateful."

"Isn't it fairer for a man to be able to see what he's letting himself in for?"

"Yes, but don't you see you'll never catch a man that way?"

She bit her tongue on the obvious, and said, "How do I go about being an enchantress?"

Henry warmed to his subject. At thirty, he was an adviser. Maybe because he was a lawyer. "First," he said dispassionately, "hold your tongue. Don't argue with a man, especially when you know you can beat him. Smile a lot. Make him feel big. Tell him how wonderful he is, and wait on him."

She smiled brilliantly and said, "Hank, I agree with everything you've said. You are the most perspicacious individual I've met in years, you are six feet five, and may I light your cigarette? How's that?"

"Awful."

They were friends again.