**Tom Robinson**

**From Chapter 24**

The front door slammed and I heard Atticus’s footsteps in the hall. Automatically I wondered what time it was. Not nearly time for him to be home, and on Missionary Society days he usually stayed downtown until black dark.

He stopped in the doorway. His hat was in his hand, and his face was white.

“Excuse me, ladies,” he said. “Go right ahead with your meeting, don’t let me disturb you.

Alexandra, could you come to the kitchen a minute? I want to borrow Calpurnia for a while.”

He didn’t go through the diningroom, but went down the back hallway and entered the kitchen from the rear door. Aunt Alexandra and I met him. The diningroom door opened again and Miss Maudie joined us. Calpurnia had half risen from her chair.

“Cal,” Atticus said, “I want you to go with me out to Helen Robinson’s house—” “What’s the matter?” Aunt Alexandra asked, alarmed by the look on my father’s face. “Tom’s dead.”

Aunt Alexandra put her hands to her mouth.

“They shot him,” said Atticus. “He was running. It was during their exercise period. They said he just broke into a blind raving charge at the fence and started climbing over. Right in front of them—”

shook.

“Didn’t they try to stop him? Didn’t they give him any warning?” Aunt Alexandra’s voice

“Oh yes, the guards called to him to stop. They fired a few shots in the air, then to kill. They

got him just as he went over the fence. They said if he’d had two good arms he’d have made it, he was moving that fast. Seventeen bullet holes in him. They didn’t have to shoot him that much. Cal, I want you to come out with me and help me tell Helen.”

“Yes sir,” she murmured, fumbling at her apron. Miss Maudie went to Calpurnia and untied

it.

“This is the last straw, Atticus,” Aunt Alexandra said.

“Depends on how you look at it,” he said. “What was one Negro, more or less, among two

hundred of ‘em? He wasn’t Tom to them, he was an escaping prisoner.”

Atticus leaned against the refrigerator, pushed up his glasses, and rubbed his eyes. “We had such a good chance,” he said. “I told him what I thought, but I couldn’t in truth say that we had more than a good chance. I guess Tom was tired of white men’s chances and preferred to take his own. Ready, Cal?”

“Yessir, Mr. Finch.” “Then let’s go.”

Aunt Alexandra sat down

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