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Dramatic Publishing

THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER

by
Samuel L. Clemens

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by
Charlotte B. Chorpensing



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(THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER)

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THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER

A Comedy in Four Acts
For Fourteen Men, Six Women, and Extras as Desired

CHARACTERS

| | |
|----------------|---------------------|
| AUNT POLLY | HOOPER |
| TOM SAWYER | THE SHERIFF |
| SID SAWYER | JUDGE THATCHER |
| BEN ROGERS | THE MINISTER |
| JOE HARPER | THE MINISTER'S WIFE |
| HUCK FINN | THE WIDOW DOUGLAS |
| BECKY THATCHER | MRS. THATCHER |
| MUFF POTTER | MR. HARPER |
| INJUN JOE | MRS. HARPER |
| DR. ROBINSON | BUD RIVERSON |

TOWNSPEOPLE

SYNOPSIS

ACT ONE: A back street, running between Aunt Polly's house and the Thatcher home.

ACT TWO, Scene One: Just outside the graveyard. It is nearly "midnight exact."

Scene Two: The same. A week later, late morning.

ACT THREE: Jackson's Island. Early the next morning.

ACT FOUR: Aunt Polly's bedroom, the next morning.

THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER
was first produced in 1946 by the
Goodman Theatre, Chicago, Illinois.

ACT ONE

SCENE: *A back street, running between Aunt Polly's house, L and the Thatcher home, R. The famous fence runs diagonally across the stage, separating the yard from the street. It is a picket fence on the Thatcher side, a board fence on Aunt Polly's.*

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: *The stage is empty. A music lesson is going on in the Thatcher house. BECKY is playing "Happy Farmer."*

AUNT POLLY (*within*). Tom Sawyer!

(TOM flies out of his door and crouches behind the barrel, thus keeping hidden from AUNT POLLY. He licks his fingers with great relish and wipes his hand on his trousers. AUNT POLLY follows, switch in hand. She stops on the step.)

AUNT POLLY. Tom! Tom Sawyer! *(AUNT POLLY comes through the gate, to the front of the barrel, and stands surveying the street. TOM slides on around the barrel, still out of her sight. AUNT POLLY cups her hand over her mouth and calls down the street.)* Tom! Y-o-u—T-o-m! What's gone with the boy, I wonder? *(She makes a vicious cut with her switch.)* Well, I lay, if I get hold of him—

(AUNT POLLY turns back to the house. SID has come out on the porch, watching. As AUNT POLLY comes up on the steps, SID spies TOM, who has risen part way, and is about to make a stealthy escape down the street. SID points to him.)

SID. There he goes, Aunt Polly! *(AUNT POLLY makes a dash after TOM and seizes him by the slack of his roundabout.)*

AUNT POLLY. There! I might of thought of that barrel. The door to the jam closet is standin' open, sir. How does that come?

TOM. I don't know, Aunt.

AUNT POLLY. What you been doin' in there?

TOM *(involuntarily licking his lips)*. Nothin'!

AUNT POLLY. Nothin'! Look at your mouth! Look at your pants! Look at the crotches of your fingers! What is that truck?

TOM. I don't know, Aunt.

AUNT POLLY. Well, I know. It's jam, that's what it is. Forty times I've said if you didn't let that jam alone, I'd skin you. Take off that roundabout.

TOM. Honest, Aunt...

AUNT POLLY. Off with it, now! *(TOM pulls it off, and the switch is in the air over him, when he points back of AUNT POLLY, as if alarmed.)*

TOM. Look behind you! *(AUNT POLLY whirls around, snatches her skirts out of danger. TOM leaps across BECKY's fence, and is over and hidden before she realizes the hoax. She turns back, and stands surprised a moment. She breaks into a gentle laugh.)*

AUNT POLLY. Hang the boy! Can't I never learn anything? Ain't he played me tricks enough like that fer

me to be lookin' out fer him? Old fools is the biggest fools there is. And my goodness, he never plays them twice alike. (*AUNT POLLY goes onto the porch, shaking her head. Then, as she turns back for one last shake over his disappearance, she suddenly straightens up, her gentleness gone. She has seen TOM, who is stealing off.*) Thomas Sawyer, come here this minute! (*TOM slinks back. AUNT POLLY marches down the steps and through the gate, and has him by the ear, then lets go her hold as she meets his guileless look.*) Oh, Tom, I love you so and you seem to try every way you can to break my old heart by your outrageousness —I ought to switch you good fer stealin' jam. But laws-a-me, you're my own dead sister's boy and I ain't got the heart to lash you.

TOM. I won't take any more of that jam, Aunt.

AUNT POLLY. You mighty sure, Tom?

TOM. They ain't any more. I've et it.

AUNT POLLY. Tom, Tom, you're full of the old scratch, and I ain't doin' my duty by you not to whale you good. I'll just be obleeged to set you to work to punish you. You'll whitewash this fence before you take one step to play.

TOM. Oh, Aunt, it's Saturday!

AUNT POLLY. I know it's mighty hard to make you work Saturday—when all the other boys is havin' holiday. But I got to do some of my duty by you or I'll be the ruination of you.

TOM. I'd druther take a lickin'! I'd druther take a thousand lickin's! (*He snatches off his roundabout.*) Here! Lam me! I won't run away! (*He grins up at her from under her uplifted arm.*) There ain't anything behind you this time. (*AUNT POLLY laughs in spite of herself.*)

AUNT POLLY. Boy, you know if you can make me laugh, I can't hit you a lick. But I can see that you whitewash this fence, and mebbe that'll do you 'most as much good as a thrashin'.

TOM. Not now, Aunt! Oh, please, Aunt, not now! (*SID comes to them.*)

SID. I know what's stirrin' him up so, Aunt. Becky Thatcher's coming out as soon as she's finished her music lesson. He's going to teacher her how to draw a house. I was weeding the flowers up against the fence when they was in Becky's yard, and I heard 'em say so.

TOM. I'll lick you for spyin' on me!

AUNT POLLY. For shame, Tom!

TOM. Well, anyway, Aunt, I promised Becky. I got to keep my word, ain't I?

AUNT POLLY. You can keep your word after your work is done. (*The music stops in the Thatcher house.*)

TOM. She'll come out.

SID. Will she laugh when she sees him sweating over this fence! You'd ought to have heard the airs he put on because she had to take a music lesson on Saturday! "I'd just like to see anybody make me work on a holiday!" That's the way he went on.

AUNT POLLY. Oh, it is, is it! Well, sir, you'll see it right now.

SID. I'll get the pail and the brushes for you. (*SID goes hippity-hoppity through the yard, light with pleasure.*)

TOM. It would take all afternoon, and I got to meet Joe and Huck at the town pump at four o'clock.

AUNT POLLY. I reckon they'll have to do without you. (*She starts off with finality.*)

TOM. Muff Potter's goin' to show us a new fishin' place. (*AUNT POLLY wheels on him.*)

AUNT POLLY. How often have I told you not to trail around after old Muff Potter?

TOM. Muff ain't never done anything to hurt anybody.

AUNT POLLY. He's a drunken old rip. He ain't fitten fer boys to be runnin' after.

TOM. He mends all us boys' kites and things. And he knows fishin' places that no one else in this town knows. He's waitin' for me.

AUNT POLLY. That settles it. You aren't goin' to stir from this house.

TOM. It's a secret place. We've swore never to tell.

AUNT POLLY. You got to work on that fence.

TOM. If I ain't there, they'll leave me out of it. They'll laugh at me and crow over me.

AUNT POLLY. Here's Sidy. Take your brush and go to work.

(SID re-enters with a pail and brushes.)

TOM. That brush won't work. It's stiff.

SID. You never cleaned it when you quit last time. Nor this one—the time before. I brought mine. I always clean it good. You can use it till you soak yours out.

AUNT POLLY. That's a good boy, Sidy. Run along and play, now. *(SID virtuously goes off. TOM shouts after him.)*

TOM. I'll lick you for this?

AUNT POLLY. Fer shame, Tom! What would Becky think of you, if she heard you?

TOM. Shucks! A girl ain't nothin'. Thin skinned and chicken hearted.

AUNT POLLY. Get to work before you aggravate me any more. And try and see if you can't be a good boy fer once. *(TOM begins work.)*

BEN *(offstage)*. Tom! Hey, Tom! Hey, Tom! *(AUNT POLLY goes triumphantly off, feeling a sense of duty well done. TOM lays down his brush at once. He sits on the barrel and looks longingly up the street.)*

TOM. Blame it.

BEN *(offstage)*. We're waitin' for you.

TOM. By jings! *(A sudden idea hits him. He jumps from the barrel and seizes a brush, laughing excitedly.)* I bet it works.

(TOM begins working with fancy strokes, apparently deeply absorbed. BEN enters, eating a huge red apple. He slowly loses interest in his apple, watching TOM, who is absorbed in his work.)

BEN. Hi, hi! You're up a stump, aren't you? *(TOM casts a sidelong glance at the apple and licks his lips, but continues to seem absorbed in the dainty use of his brush.)* Hello, old chap. Got to work, hey? *(TOM wheels suddenly, pretending vast surprise.)*

TOM. Why, it's you, Ben! I warn't noticin'.

BEN. I'm goin' swimmin' with some of the boys. Don't you wish you could?

TOM. Shucks, swimmin' ain't nothin'!

BEN. Of course you'd druther work, wouldn't you? Of course you would.

TOM. What do you call work?

BEN. Why, ain't that work?

TOM. Well, mebbe it is and mebbe it ain't. All I know is, it suits Tom Sawyer.

BEN. Oh, come now, you don't mean to let on you like it.

TOM. Like it? Well, I don't see why I oughtn't to like it.

Does a fellow get a chance to whitewash a fence every day? (*BEN gazes admiringly at TOM's sweeping strokes, munching his apple. Finally, it is too much for him.*)

BEN. Say, Tom, lemme whitewash awhile.

TOM. I reckon it would hardly do, Ben.

BEN. Why not?

TOM. You see, Aunt Polly's awful particular about this fence—right here on the back street, you know. If it warn't where Judge Thatcher could see it, I wouldn't mind, and she wouldn't. But she's awful particular about it. It's got to be done very careful. (*He returns to work.*)

BEN. I'll be careful. I'll be awful careful.

TOM. You'd do the best you know how, of course. But I reckon there ain't one boy in a thousand, mebbe two thousand, that can do it the way it's got to be done.

BEN. Is that so? Well, lemme try! Only just a little.

TOM. Ben, I'd like to, honest Injun, but if I was to let you tackle this fence and anything was to happen to it...

BEN. I'd let you, if you was me, Tom.

TOM. Well, the colored boy wanted to do it and Aunt Polly wouldn't let him, and Sid wanted to and she wouldn't let Sid. Now, don't you see how I'm fixed?

BEN. Say! I'll give you the core of my apple. (*TOM reaches for the apple, but thinks better of it.*)

TOM. Well—No, Ben. I'm afeered.

BEN. I'll give you all of it.

TOM. Well, try, Ben. I'll keep an eye on it. You dip the brush, and squash some out—so's it won't drip—so—
(*TOM sits on he barrel, eating the apple, while BEN*

works ecstatically at the fence. JOE and HUCK, off-stage, whistle and meow. TOM grabs the brush. BEN takes another from the pail.) Gimme the brush, Ben. I'll show you. Slap it on, free, like this. Then take a big sweep. Then finish it up very careful—so.

(TOM steps back on the last words, touching the fence gingerly with dainty dabs of the brush, surveying it between touches, the brush poised in the air, with many airs and graces. JOE and HUCK enter. HUCK carries a dead cat by the tail. They watch TOM in astonishment and growing envy.)

JOE. Hello, Tom. *(TOM merely concentrates on a bit of work.)* Hello, Tom!

TOM. Oh, hello, Joe.

HUCK. Hello.

TOM. Hello yourself, Huck Finn, and see how you like it.

JOE. Hey, Tom, I thought we was goin' with Muff Potter to that fishin' place. *(TOM surveys his work.)*

TOM. Shucks, fishin' ain't nothin'.

JOE. What you doin'?

TOM. Huh? Doin'? Oh, touchin' up what Ben's done a little. I hadn't ought to let anyone do a lick of this but myself. It's awful particular. But Ben, here, he was so set on tryin' it, he gave me his apple for the chance. He does pretty good, if I watch him some.

BEN *(with a sweep of the brush)*. Mine's as smooth as yourn.

TOM. I wouldn't say as smooth, exactly, Ben, but I don't reckon Aunt Polly'll notice the difference, and she's awful strict about this fence. *(TOM shows more and more artistry, and BEN tries to outdo him.)*

JOE. Lemme take a whack at it.

HUCK. No! Lemme!

JOE. I'll give you this piece of blue bottle glass to look through. *(He holds it up.)*

HUCK. I'll give you two fish hooks, and a marble, and a key. *(HUCK lays his barter on the barrel as he speaks.)*

TOM. A key?

HUCK. Lookee!

TOM. What does it unlock?

HUCK. Nothin'. But it's a *genwine* key. *(He pronounces it with a long "i.")*

JOE. I'll give you my kite that Muff Potter's just mended for me.

TOM. Where is it?

JOE. Muff's got it. He's down to the town pump, waitin' for us.

TOM. Of course, I can't tell if you're good enough till I see what you do. But you fetch the kite, and I'll give you a try at the fence. *(JOE runs to the exit, cups his hands, and shouts.)*

JOE. Hey, Muff! Muff Potter!

MUFF *(offstage)*. Hey...

JOE. I want my kite. *(JOE runs off. HUCK points to his barter, spread out on the barrel.)*

HUCK. Is it a trade?

TOM. Well, I don't know, Huckleberry. Them's mighty little things. What's that you got?

HUCK. Dead cat.

TOM. Lemme see him, Huck. Where'd you get him?

HUCK. Bought him off'n a boy.

TOM. What did you give?

HUCK. A hoop and a hoop stick, and a piece of licorice, and a bladder I got at the slaughter house.

TOM. Say, what is dead cats good for, Huck?

HUCK. Good fer? Cure warts with.

TOM. How do you cure warts with dead cats?

HUCK. Why, you take your cat and go and get in the graveyard 'long about midnight, where somebody wicked'd just been buried. And when it's midnight, a devil will come—or mebbe two or three—but you can't see them, you can only hear something like a wind, or mebbe hear 'em talk. And when they're takin' that feller away, you heave your cat after 'em and say, "Devil follow corpse, cat follow devil, warts follow cat." Then you walk home without speakin' to anybody, 'cause if you speak to anybody, the charms busted. That'll fetch any wart.

TOM. Say, Huck, when you goin' to try the cat?

HUCK. Tonight. They buried old Hoss Williams today. I reckon the devils'll come after him tonight.

TOM. Say, Huck, lemme go with you?

HUCK. Lemme whitewash?

TOM. Well, I reckon that'll make up for these bein' so little. It's a trade.

(JOE comes rushing back with the kite.)

JOE. Here's the kite. Kin I have a brush? *(TOM takes the kite, which he covets greatly, and puts it safely over the fence.)*

TOM. Well, yes, Joe, I reckon this is worth a while, if you'll be careful. *(TOM hands each a brush. BECKY's piano begins again, and TOM listens entranced, as the brushes ply eagerly.)* I tell you what. Do you hear that tune?

ALL . Yes.

TOM. Just swing your arms to that. Then you'll be as even as I could be. All of your brushes dip! Get ready. Go! *(They work to the music, their whole bodies in rhythm.)*

HUCK. Oh, this's a whack!

JOE. It's great!

BEN. I like this! *(TOM sits on the barrel, listening to the music. It stops, and he starts and looks off hastily towards the source of it.)*

TOM. You fellows begin on the inside of the fence, now. I'll watch this side to see that it dries right.

BEN. We ain't done here, yet.

TOM. Never mind that.

JOE. I'd rather stay out here.

TOM. Whose fence is this, anyway? Mebbe you don't want to whitewash anymore?

JOE. Oh, yes, I do! I'll go on the other side, if you say so. I don't care.

TOM. All right. Take the pail with you.

(The BOYS go inside in haste, disappearing behind the fence. BECKY enters, coming through the garden, pencil and paper in hand. She stops, demurely, watching TOM, whose consciousness of her approach is signified by an attack of "showing off." He turns handsprings, walks on his hands, whistles the tune she was playing, etc.)

BECKY. That's pretty.

TOM. Why, Becky! When did you come out?

BECKY. Just now.

TOM. Did you bring the pencil and paper?

BECKY. Lots of it. (*TOM brings the barrel. He wants to be away from the BOYS.*)

TOM. We'll use this for a table.

BECKY. It's nicer on my porch.

TOM. I reckon I'd better show you here, Becky. You see, I told the boys I'd let them whitewash Aunt Polly's fence, if they was good enough. So I have to keep an eye on it. Just wait till I see how they're goin', will you? (*He goes to the gate, "showing off" his authority with all his might.*) Well, that's pretty good, Joe. So's yours, Huck. Ben's all right, too. Except you don't do the cracks right. I'll show you—watch. (*The BOYS look over the fence. They grin at BECKY, who smiles shyly back at them, but they are too intent on the fascinating pastime of whitewashing to bother with a "girl."*) Hand me the pail, Joe. Ben, I'll use your brush. Gee-whillikins! Do you call that takin' care of a brush? The handle is all over whitewash! (*BEN cleans it on his trousers.*)

HUCK. I don't reckon mine's fitten to use, either. (*JOE has scoured his on his trousers.*)

JOE. Use mine.

TOM. That's better. Now, watch. (*TOM dips the brush, makes a great ceremony of getting just enough whitewash on it, and a greater one of working the tip of the brush into the crack between two boards. He eyes BECKY as he does so. BECKY is admiring him. She begins to write.*) There. Think you can do it? (*The BOYS, eager, snatch their brushes and begin to work. TOM joins BECKY, who is busy with her pencil and paper on the barrel.*) What you writin'?

BECKY. Nothing.