

SETTING: *Various places in and around the town of St. Petersburg, Missouri. Spring, summer, 1846.*

AT RISE: *The street in front of Aunt Polly's house. It is a sunny afternoon.*

AUNT POLLY (O.S.)

Tom Sawyer! Tom Sawyer, you come back here now!

*(TOM enters at a run. He looks around, searching for a place to hide.)*

TOM SAWYER!

*(TOM runs off. AUNT POLLY runs on, holding an empty jar of jam. She looks around.)*

AUNT POLLY

I know it was you who ate my jam, boy! Where are you?!

*(To herself.)*

That boy will be the death of me yet! TOM SAWYER!

*(She runs off, passing HUCK FINN who enters carrying a fishing pole. HUCK looks back at her as TOM enters opposite, walking backwards, keeping an eye out for Aunt Polly. HUCK crosses to center. The two boys bump into each other.)*

TOM

Land sakes, Huckleberry Finn! You scared me to death! I thought you was Aunt Polly. She's thinks I got into her jam pot and ate up her jam.

HUCK

Well – did you, Tom?

TOM

Course I did. That's why I was hidin'. But it ain't my fault. See, I was playin' pirate and snuck into the pantry to dig for buried treasure and there was the jam pot just filled up with jam a-sittin' there and all of a sudden a powerful hunger overtook me – so I ate it.

HUCK

Why was you lookin' for buried treasure?

TOM

Why – to be rich, o’ course. A rich man can do anything he wants. Where you goin’, Huck? Fishin’? Whatcha got for bait?

HUCK

Three of the juiciest redworms you ever saw.

*(He pulls the worms out of his pocket and shows TOM. TOM whistles in admiration.)*

TOM

They sure are somethin’. Say, Huck – how about tradin’ me a redworm for one of these marbles.

*(He pulls a marble out of his pocket.)*

HUCK

Nope.

TOM

Two of these marbles?

*(HUCK spits and considers a moment then...)*

HUCK

Nope. What else you got?

TOM

Well, let’s see...

*(As TOM starts searching his pockets, AUNT POLLY enters behind him carrying a bucket of whitewash and a brush. TOM is oblivious.)*

I used to have me a red piece of glass I found near the river... but I traded that to Billy Fisher for my first marble...

*(AUNT POLLY grabs him by the ear.)*

Owww!

AUNT POLLY

Tom Sawyer. You’ve got in my jam pot for the last time.

TOM

Aunt Polly, it warn’t my fault! I was lookin’ for buried treasure...

AUNT POLLY

Buried treasure, my foot! Here!

*(She hands him the bucket and brush.)*

TOM

What's this?

AUNT POLLY

Your punishment. You will spend the rest of your day whitewashing this fence.

TOM

What?! You mean the whole thing? But Aunt Polly, that'll take all day – and I'm supposed to go fishin' with Huck!

*(AUNT POLLY pulls him aside.)*

AUNT POLLY

Huck Finn is a reprobate whose company you can well do without.

TOM

But Aunt Polly...

AUNT POLLY

The whole fence, Tom Sawyer – from top to bottom.

*(AUNT POLLY exits in a huff. TOM looks at the fence forlornly.)*

HUCK

Bye Tom. Have fun.

*(HUCK exits. TOM swipes at the fence with the paintbrush. JOE HARPER enters opposite, whistling. TOM spies him then suddenly gets an idea. He starts whitewashing the fence with a vengeance. JOE approaches and watches him a moment.)*

JOE

Hey there, Tom.

TOM

Why, it's you, Joe Harper. I warn't noticin'.

JOE

I'm goin' swimmin'. Wanna come?

TOM

Naw. I'd druther stay here and whitewash this fence.

JOE

Oh come, now, you don't mean to let on that you like whitewashin'?

TOM

Well, I don't see why I shouldn't to like it. Does a boy get a chance to whitewash a fence everyday?

*(TOM steps back to admire his work then paints another stroke.)*

JOE

Say, Tom, let me whitewash a little.

TOM

Well... no. You see, Aunt Polly's awful particular about this fence. I reckon there ain't one boy in a thousand – maybe two thousand – that can do it the way it's got to be done.

JOE

Oh c'mon– lemme just try. Give you a piece of chalk.

TOM

No, Joe – I'm afeard...

JOE

Two pieces of chalk!

TOM

Well, now – if you insist.

*(TOM exchanges his brush for the chalk. JOE starts to whitewash enthusiastically. BILLY FISHER enters carrying a burlap sack. He is wearing oversized pants held up with a rope. BILLY sees TOM and JOE and crosses to them.)*

TOM

Hey there, Billy Fisher. Joe, you missed a spot. Maybe I better take over.

JOE

I can do it, Tom.

BILLY

What's goin' on? Don't you all wanna play?

TOM

Play? Who has time for play? We got us some serious work here and Joe and I are the only in town that can do it proper.

BILLY

Let me try.

JOE

You'll mess it up.

BILLY

You can have my burlap sack, Tom.

TOM

Joe, give him the brush.

JOE

What?!

TOM

You had your turn. Besides – a burlap sack beats chalk hands down.

JOE

Fine. But I'll be back!

*(He hands BILLY the brush and runs off. BILLY starts whitewashing excitedly. JOHNNY MILLER enters with a pocketknife, whittling on a stick. He sees BILLY and TOM and crosses to them.)*

JOHNNY

Hey there, boys. Whatcha doin' there?

TOM

Johnny Miller, what does it look like we're doin'? We're whitewashin' the fence.

BILLY

How'm I doin', Tom?

TOM

All right, I reckon – but Joe was faster.

BILLY

Just watch this!

*(BILLY starts whitewashing faster.)*

TOM

That's real good, Billy!

JOHNNY

Can I take a turn? Huh, Tom?

TOM

Oh, now – I don't know, Johnny...

JOHNNY

Give you my pen knife.

TOM

Hmmm...

JOHNNY

It's brand new!

TOM

All right, then – Billy, give him the brush.

BILLY

But Tom...!

TOM

You had a turn...

*(JOHNNY grabs the paint brush from BILLY and begins whitewashing the fence.)*

Besides, a brand new pen knife beats a burlap sack any day.

*(JOE runs on carrying kite string.)*

JOE

Here's some kite string, Tom! Now it's my turn!

*(JOE throws the kite string at TOM and grabs the brush.)*

JOHNNY

Hey!

*(BILLY pulls the rope from around his waist.)*

BILLY

Here, take my rope!

*(He grabs onto the brush with JOE. JOHNNY pulls out his pockets. They are empty. Determined nonetheless, he grabs onto the brush with JOE and BILLY. The three of them paint the last of the fence together then collapse on the ground. TOM inspects the fence.)*

TOM

This fence looks real good, boys. Never let it be said that Tom Sawyer don't know how to show a fella a good time.

JOHNNY

I sure had fun, Tom! I sure did!

*(JOHNNY runs off.)*

BILLY

Me, too!

*(BILLY runs off.)*

JOE

Me three!

*(JOE runs off. TOM picks up the bucket and brush and calls off.)*

TOM

Aunt Polly? Aunt Polly!

*(AUNT POLLY enters.)*

AUNT POLLY

What is it, Tom? What sort of mischief have you gotten in...

*(AUNT POLLY spies the fence and stops short, astounded.)*

Well, I never! The fence – it's whitewashed!

TOM

Yes, ma'am.

AUNT POLLY

Well, Tom Sawyer – you *can* work when you're a mind to.

TOM

May I go play now?

AUNT POLLY

Yes, you may.

*(TOM stuffs his new treasures into his burlap sack.)*

TOM

Just wait 'til Huck Finn sees all this. I'll get me a redworm and go fishin' yet!

AUNT POLLY

Huck Finn...?

TOM

Bye, Aunt Polly!

*(He bumps into WIDOW DOUGLAS, who is entering.)*

Excuse me, Widder Douglas!

*(TOM exits.)*

AUNT POLLY

*(Calling after him)*

Tom Sawyer! What'd I say about playin' with that Huck Finn! Tom! Tom, you come back here!

WIDOW DOUGLAS

Won't do no good to holler after him, Polly. Boys will be boys.

AUNT POLLY

I don't mind Tom bein' a boy, Widow Douglas. I just don't like him playin' with that Huckleberry Finn. He's a bad influence.

WIDOW DOUGLAS

Oh, Huck Finn can't be all that bad. Why, I bet underneath all that dirt he's a real gentleman. He just needs someone to raise him up with a firm hand. I'd do it myself if he was ever worth a dollar... Oh look!

*(She points off.)*



WIDOW DOUGLAS (cont.)

There goes Doc Robinson. I need to talk to him about my rheumatism. Goodbye, Polly!

*(She starts to exit, waving to catch the doctor's attention.)*

Yoo-hoo! Doc Robinson!

*(She exits. AUNT POLLY shakes her head and exits opposite exits after him. The scene shifts to the next morning. We hear a school bell ringing. TOM enters.)*

AUNT POLLY (O.S.)

*Tom Sawyer!*

*(TOM looks back as AUNT POLLY enters carrying his strapful of school books which she hands to him.)*

AUNT POLLY

You forgot your schoolbooks again. Now, off to school with you and no stoppin' along the way to talk to that Huckleberry Finn! Get!

*(AUNT POLLY exits. TOM looks after her disconsolately. JUDGE THATCHER enters. He turns and looks behind him.)*

JUDGE THATCHER

Come along now, Becky!

*(BECKY THATCHER enters. TOM spies her and is immediately smitten by her beauty. Romantic music fills the air.)*

You don't want to be late for your first day of school, do you?

BECKY

No, sir.

JUDGE THATCHER

Then why are you dawdling?

BECKY

I'm scared, Papa. What if no one likes me?

JUDGE THATCHER

They'll like you just fine. Here...

*(He hands her a piece of chewing gum.)*

JUDGE THATCHER (cont.)

Chew this gum. It'll settle your nerves. Come along now.

*(They exit. TOM gazes after them. HUCK enters, carrying a sack.)*

HUCK

Hey there, Tom.

TOM

Huck – Huck, did you see her?

HUCK

See who?

TOM

That girl with the yellow pigtails. I ain't ever seen her before.

HUCK

Oh, that's Becky Thatcher. Her pap's the new judge in town.

TOM

She's the most beautiful girl I ever seen.

HUCK

Ha!

*(He spits on the ground.)*

Women. Just looky here what I got in this sack, Tom... Tom!

*(Romantic music ends.)*

Just looky here.

*(HUCK opens the sack. TOM peers in.)*

TOM

A dead cat!

HUCK

That's right.