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[LIGHTS UP ON CARDIFF HILL. A LOUD BLAST FROM A TOY TRUMPET IS HEARD, OFF. MR. TWAIN EXITS QUIETLY. TOM RUMMAGES QUICKLY BEHIND AN OLD LOG AND COMES UP WITH A TOY SWORD AND TIN TRUMPET. HE BLOWS AN ANSWERING BLAST ON THE TRUMPET AND BEGINS "WARILY" TO LOOK AROUND HIM IN ALL DIRECTIONS.]

TOM

(AS ROBIN HOOD; TO
IMAGINARY
COMPANIONS)

Hold, my merry men!

Keep hid til I blow.

[JOE HARPER ENTERS,
TIN TRUMPET IN ONE
HAND, AND HIS OWN
TOY SWORD IN THE
OTHER.]

TOM (CONT'D)

Hold! Who comes here

into Sherwood Forest

without my pass?

JOE

Guy of Guisborne wants

no man's pass. Who art

thou that...

(FALTERS)

that...

TOM

(PROMPTING)

...dares to hold such
language.

JOE

Who art thou that dares to
hold such language?

TOM

I, indeed! I am Robin
Hood, as thy caitiff
carcass soon shall know.

JOE

Then art thou indeed that
famous outlaw? Right
gladly will I dispute with
thee the passes of the
merry wood. Have at
thee!

[TOM AND JOE STRIKE
FENCING POSES, FOOT
TO FOOT, AND BEGIN
A GRAVE, CAREFUL
COMBAT, "TWO UP
AND TWO DOWN".]

TOM

(GETTING INTO IT)

Now, if you've got the
hang, go it lively!

[THEY "GO IT LIVELY"
FOR A MOMENT.
OFFSTAGE, AUNT
POLLY IS HEARD,
CALLING FROM A
DISTANCE.]

AUNT POLLY (O.S.)

TOM! YOU-U-U TOM!

TOM

(IGNORING HER; TO
JOE)

Fall! fall! Why don't you
fall?!

JOE

I shan't. Why don't you
fall yourself? You're
getting the worst of it!

TOM

Why that ain't nothing. I
can't fall; that ain't the way
it is in the book. The
Book says, "Then with
one backhand stroke he
slew poor Guy of
Guisborne." You're to
turn around and let me hit
you in the back.

[AS AUNT POLLY
CONTINUES TO CALL
FOR TOM, JOE
RELUCTANTLY PLAYS

IT BY "THE BOOK",
RECEIVES HIS
WHACK, AND FALLS.
SATISFIED, TOM
IMMEDIATELY
BEGINS TO STASH HIS
TOYS BACK UNDER
THE LOG.]

JOE

(GETS UP)

Now, you got to let me
kill you. That's fair.

TOM

Why, I can't do that, it
ain't in the book.

(LOOKS TO THE
SOUND OF HIS AUNT'S
VOICE)

'Sides, I've got to go now.

JOE

(CALLING AFTER HIM;
DISMAYED)

Well, It's blamed mean -
that's all I have to say...

[TOM EXITS IN ONE
DIRECTION, JOE IN
ANOTHER. MR.
TWAIN STEPS INTO
THE LINGERING
LIGHT.]

MARK TWAIN

Tom was also aware that
there was a limit as to how

far he could test his Aunt's
patience.

LIGHTS UP ON AUNT POLLY'S FENCE. PRESENTLY, TOM PEERS AROUND THE SIDE OF IT, LOOKS AT THE SIDEWALK PAST HIM - STOPS - AND, IN A MIND-BOGGLING IMPERSONATION OF A STEAMBOAT DOCKING, BACKS UP!]

BEN

(TO TOM)

Hi-yi! You're up a stump, ain't
you!

(NO RESPONSE.)

Hello!

(TAKES A BITE OF HIS
APPLE)

You've got to work, ain't you?

TOM

(FALSE CASUAL)

Oh, it's you, Ben. I warn't
noticing.

[HE EYES BEN'S APPLE
LONGINGLY; GOES BACK TO
WORK.]

BEN

Say - I'm going in a-swimming, I
am. Don't you wish you could?

(NO RESPONSE.)

But of course, you'd druther work,
wouldn't you. 'Course you would.

[HE STARTS TO GO. TOM
STOPS HIM.]

TOM

What do you call work?

BEN

Why, ain't that work?

TOM

Well, maybe it is, and maybe it isn't. All I know is that it suits me just fine.

BEN

(STARES IN ASTONISHMENT)

Oh, come on! - 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. It's not every day a boy gets a chance to whitewash a fence, now is it?

[TOM ADDS A FEW "ARTISTIC" TOUCHES TO HIS WORK; BEN EYES HIM WARILY.]

BEN

Say, Tom...let me whitewash a little.

TOM

(STRINGING HIM ALONG)

No - no, I reckon it wouldn't hardly do. You see, Aunt Polly's awful particular about this fence. It's got to be done very careful. 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.

BEN

No - is that so? Oh, come on -
lemme just try.

TOM

Ben, I'd like to, honest injun. But
Aunt Polly - well... If you was to
tackle this fence, and anything
was to happen to it...

BEN

Oh, shucks, I'll be careful...

(HE REACHES FOR TOM'S
BRUSH)

... Say, I'll give you half my apple.

TOM

(STRUGGLING FOR
POSSESSION OF THE BRUSH)

Well, here - no, Ben, now don't.

I'm afeared...

BEN

I'll give you all of it!

[SO TOM GIVES UP THE
BRUSH, TAKES THE APPLE,
AND RETIRES TO A NEARBY
BARREL TO EAT AND
WATCH IN COMFORT.
MEANWHILE, AMY
LAWRENCE, MARY AUSTIN

AND JIM HOLLIS ENTER AND
SIDLE OVER TO BEN.]

AMY

What on earth are you up to, Ben
Rogers?

BEN

This is very 'xacting work, Amy;
and only certain special people
gets to do it, so you better give
me some room.

JIM

'Sthat so? Who says?

BEN

(INDICATING TOM)

Tom Sawyer says. And you've
got to pay for the privilege, too.

[JIM SAUNTERS OVER TO
TOM; THE TWO GIRLS
FOLLOW.]

JIM

What'd I got to pay to work on
that there fence of your'n?

TOM

Depends. Let's see what you got
in your pockets.

[JIM EMPTIES AN
INCREDIBLE ASSORTMENT
OF JUNK ONTO THE
GROUND IN FRONT OF TOM]

TOM (CONT'D)

(NODS SOLEMNLY)

Well, I reckon that'll do.

[HE REACHES INTO HIS
BACK POCKET FOR
ANOTHER BRUSH; JIM
TAKES IT AND JOINS BEN AT
THE FENCE. THE GIRLS
LINGER EXPECTANTLY.
TOM TRIES TO IGNORE
THEM, BUT FAILS.]

TOM

(SIGHS HEAVILY)

Hi, Amy.

AMY

(COY GIGGLE)

Hi, Tom.

TOM

Hi, Mary.

MARY

Hi, Tom.

AMY

We ain't got no pockets, Tom, but
couldn't we work on your fence,
anyways?

TOM

(REACHES INSIDE HIS SHIRT
FOR MORE BRUSHES.)

Well, now, I reckon ladies ought
to be able to get into this kind of
thing for free.

AMY

Thanks, Tom. I guess this means
you still like me some, huh Tom?

TOM

'Course it does, Amy.

[AMY SMILES SMUGLY OFF
PAST TOM. TOM TURNS TO
SEE WHAT SHE'S SMILING
AT AND FINDS HIMSELF
STARING UP AT BECKY
THATCHER! BECKY GLARES
AT AMY, THEN AT TOM -
AND MOVES OFF DOWN THE
SIDEWALK WITH ALL
DELIBERATE SPEED. TOM
RUSHES AFTER HER.
THROUGHOUT THE
FOLLOWING, AMY MAKES A
SHOW OF WHITEWASHING
WHILE TRYING TO
EAVESDROP.]

TOM

Becky, wait! Don't go. Becky,
what's wrong?

BECKY

I don't think I'm going to be
engaged to you anymore, Tom.

TOM

Shh! - not so loud, Becky, that
were supposed to be a secret.

BECKY

My mother was right, you're just a
no-account ruffian, Tom Sawyer.

TOM

No, I ain't!

BECKY

Yes, you are!

TOM

No, I ain't.

BECKY

Yes, you are!

TOM & BECKY

(AD LIB, AD INFINITUM)

Ain't! Are! Ain't! Are!

TOM

Prove it!

BECKY

You told me you didn't care for
Amy Lawrence anymore.

TOM

Well, and that was the truth. I
swear it. I don't care one bit for
Amy Lawrence, no more.

BECKY

Yes, you do, Tom - you know you
do.

TOM

No, I don't.

BECKY

You do!

TOM

Don't!

BECKY & TOM

(AD LIB, AS BEFORE)

Do! Don't! Do! Don't!

[SUDDENLY, AMY BURSTS
INTO TEARS AND RUNS
OFF.]

TOM

Amy, where you going? What
about the fence?

BECKY

I don't think that was a very nice
thing to do, Tom, right in front of
her and all.

[SHE TURNS ON HER HEEL
AND WALKS OFF.]

TOM

Now, wait a minute, Becky. That
ain't fair...

[BILLY AND JOHN HAVE
ENTERED AND NOW
APPROACH TOM.]

JOHN

Say Tom, how 'bout letting us
work on your fence?

TOM

(BACK TO BUSINESS)

What'll you give for it.

BILLY

I got a piece of lickrish and a
fishhook.

TOM

Lets' see 'em...

[LIGHTS FADE ON SCENE AS
ANOTHER BARTERING
SESSION BEGINS.]

MARK TWAIN

Tom had discovered a great law
of human nature without knowing
it - namely, that in order to make
a man or a boy covet a thing, it is
only necessary to make the thing
difficult to attain. And by the end
of the day the fence had three
coats of whitewash and Tom was
literally rolling in wealth.