

TEASER

FADE IN:

[A] ATTIC BEDROOM - MORNING
SID IS DRESSED AND READY FOR
SCHOOL, BUT TOM IS JUST
PULLING ON HIS PANTS WHEN A
LOUD "YEOWL" IS HEARD, O.S..
TOM MOVES QUICKLY TO THE OPEN
WINDOW, RETURNS THE SIGNAL
WITH A HUSHED "MEOW", THEN
CALLS DOWN.

TOM

(LOUD WHISPER)

Huck?

(NO ANSWER)

Joe?...

THE VOICE OF MARK TWAIN IS
HEARD, OVER:

MARK TWAIN (V.O.)

Ladies and gentlemen, I
wish to tell you a story
about a boy who lived a
great many years ago in the
Mississippi Valley, not far
from here. His name is
Tom. Tom Sawyer. And he
lived in this small house
by the river with his
widowed Aunt Polly and his
half-brother Sid.

LIGHTS UP ON AUNT POLLY,
STANDING IN THE KITCHEN
BELOW. SHE CALLS UP TO
THEM.

AUNT POLLY

You-u-u Tom! Sid! Time
for school!

SID OBEDIENTLY HURRIES
DOWNSTAIRS. ANOTHER
"YEOWL" IS HEARD. HURRYING
TO GET HIS CLOTHES ON, TOM
STARTS TO ANSWER WITH
ANOTHER "MEOW" BUT AUNT
POLLY'S VOICE STOPS HIM.

AUNT POLLY

Tom! What on earth are you
up to?

TOM

(CALLING DOWN TO HER)

Nothing.

ANOTHER "YEOWL", MORE
INSISTENT. TOM GRABS HIS
FISHING POLE AND STARTS TO
CLIMB OUT THE WINDOW AND
DOWN.

AUNT POLLY

Well get a move on then!

TOM

Yes'm, I'm coming...!

A FINAL "YEOWL" IS FOLLOWED
BY THE SOUND OF ROCKS
"CLATTERING" AGAINST
GARBAGE CANS.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

(SLEEPY INFURIATED)

Scat, you devil!

ON THE GROUND, TOM LOOKS
AROUND NERVOUSLY, THEN
HURRIES OFF. TWAIN
REAPPEARS, SMILING AFTER
TOM. LIGHTS FADE ON AUNT
POLLY'S HOUSE.

MARK TWAIN

Now there are one or two
things you ought to know
before we begin. Tom hated
school, and avoided it at
every opportunity. Tom
also had a taste for
adventure. He had read
Robin Hood and Treasure
Island. And amongst his
friends and companions he
was considered something of
an expert on the subject of
outlaws and pirates.

[B] CARDIFF HILL.

A LOUD BLAST FROM A TOY TRUMPET IS HEARD, O.C. 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.

End of TEASER

ACT I

[A] AUNT POLLY'S HOUSE -
DAY

WITH SID CLOSE BEHIND, AUNT
POLLY STEPS OFF THE PORCH TO
CALL AGAIN, AND TOM SNEAKS
INTO THE HOUSE BEHIND THEM.

AUNT POLLY

(EXASPERATED)

What's wrong with that boy,
I wonder...

(SENSING HE'S SOMEWHERE
NEARBY)

Well, I lay if I get hold
of you, I'll...

SID SPOTS TOM AND YANKS AT
HER SKIRT. SHE TURNS,
SPOTS TOM AND GOES AFTER
HIM. INSIDE, TOM HAS JUST
DIPPED HIS HAND INTO THE
JAM POT ON THE TABLE WHEN
SHE CATCHES UP WITH HIM.

There! I knew you were
somewhere's about.

(CATCHES HIM UP BY THE EAR)

What have you been up to?

TOM

(WINCING AND SQUIRMING)

Nothing.

AUNT POLLY

Nothing! Just look at you
- filthy! And look at your
hands! - what is that mess?

SID

(TATTLES SMUGLY)

Jam.

AUNT POLLY

It's jam - that's what it
is. Now where's that
switch?

ANTICIPATING THE REQUEST
PERFECTLY, SID WHIPS THE
SWITCH OUT FROM BEHIND HIS
BACK. AUNT POLLY DOES A
SLIGHT DOUBLE-TAKE, TAKES
IT FROM HIM, AND RAISES IT
OVER HER HEAD, PREPARING TO
TAKE AFTER TOM WITH IT.

TOM

(TO SID; VENOMOUS)

I'll get you for this,
Siddy!

AUNT POLLY

Forty times I've said if
you didn't let that jam
alone I'd skin you.

TOM

Look behind you, Aunt
Polly!!

AUNT POLLY TURNS IN ALARM,
AND TOM INSTANTLY BOLTS OUT
OF THE HOUSE AND OFF.
MOMENTARILY, AUNT POLLY
BREAKS INTO A GENTLE LAUGH.

AUNT POLLY

Hang the boy, can't I never
learn anything?

(LAUGHS AGAIN)

He's full of the ol' Devil,
that one.

(ASIDE)

But, laws-a-me, he's my own
dead sister's boy, poor
thing, and I ain't got the
heart to lash him, somehow.
But I've got to do some of
my duty by him, or I'll be
the ruination of the child.

(THINKS.)

I'll just be obliged to
make him work tomorrow to
punish him.

[D] AUNT POLLY'S FENCE.

TOM PEERS AROUND THE SIDE OF IT, LOOKS UP AND DOWN, THEN MOVES AROUND IN FRONT AND SETS HIS PAIL OF WHITEWASH DOWN. HE NO SOONER SETS BRUSH TO BOARD WHEN BEN ROGERS HOPS-SKIPS-JUMPS DOWN 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. 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.