



# Chapter 1

**Y**ou don't know about me without you have read a book by the name of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. But that ain't no matter. That book was made by Mr. Mark Twain, and he told the truth, mainly. There was things that he stretched, but that's nothing: I never seen anybody but lied one time or another, without it was Tom's Aunt Polly, or the Widow Douglas, or maybe Mary, who all is told about in that book.

The way that book winds up is this: Tom and me found the money that the robbers hid in the cave, and it made us rich. We got six thousand dollars apiece—all gold. It was an awful sight of money when it was piled up. Judge Thatcher took it and put it out at interest, and it fetched us a dollar a day apiece all year 'round—more than a body could tell what to do with.

The Widow Douglas took me for her son and planned to civilize me, but it was rough living in the house all the time, considering how dismal regular

and decent the widow was in all her ways. So when I couldn't stand it no more, I lit out. I got back into my old rags, slept in my sugar barrel, and was free and satisfied. But Tom Sawyer hunted me up and said he was going to start a band of robbers, and I could join if I'd go back to the widow and be respectable. So I went back.

The widow cried over me and called me a poor lost lamb. She put me in new clothes again, and I couldn't do nothing but sweat and feel all cramped up. Then the old thing began again. The widow rung a bell for supper, and I had to come right away. When I got to the table, I couldn't go right to eating but had to wait for the widow to tuck down her head and grumble a little over the food, though there warn't anything the matter with it—that is, nothing except that everything was cooked by itself. In a barrel of odds and ends, it's different; things get mixed up, and the juice kind of swaps around, and the things taste better.

After supper the widow got out her Bible and learned me about Moses. At first I was all in a sweat to find out about him. But by and by she said that Moses had been dead a long time. Then I didn't care about him no more because I don't take no stock in dead people.

Pretty soon I wanted to smoke and asked the widow to let me. She wouldn't. She said it was a nasty practice and wasn't clean, and I mustn't do it anymore. That's just the way with some people.

They get down on a thing when they don't know nothing about it. Here she was bothering about Moses, who was no kin to her, and no use to anybody—being gone, you see—yet finding fault with me for doing a thing that had some good in it. The widow took snuff. Of course, *that* was all right because she done it herself.

The widow's sister, Miss Watson, a skinny old maid with eyeglasses, come to live with the widow. She set to learning me to spell. She worked me hard for about an hour. Then the widow made her ease up. I couldn't 've stood it much longer. Then for an hour it was deadly dull, and I was fidgety. Miss Watson said, "Don't put your feet up there, Huckleberry. Don't scrunch up like that, Huckleberry. Set up straight. Don't yawn and stretch like that, Huckleberry. Why don't you try to behave?"

Miss Watson told me all about Hell, and I said I wished I was there. She got mad then. But I didn't mean no harm. All I wanted was to go somewheres. I warn't particular. She said it was wicked to say what I said. She said *she* was going to live so that she'd go to Heaven. Well, I couldn't see no advantage in going where *she* was going, so I made up my mind I wouldn't try for it. Miss Watson told me all about Heaven. She said all a body had to do there was to go around all day with a harp and sing, forever. So I didn't think much of it. But I never said so. I asked Miss Watson if she

reckoned Tom Sawyer would go to Heaven, and she said, "Not by a long sight!" I was glad about that because I wanted Tom and me to be together.

By and by, Miss Watson and the widow fetched the niggers\* in and had prayers.

Then everybody was off to bed. I went up to my room with a piece of candle and put it on the table. I set down in a chair by the window and tried to think of something cheerful, but it warn't no use. I felt so lonesome that I almost wished I was dead. The stars was shining, and the leaves rustled in the woods ever so mournful. I heard an owl, a ways off, hoo-hooing about somebody that was dead, and a dog crying about somebody that was going to die. Away out in the woods I heard the sound that a ghost makes when it wants to tell about something that's on its mind but can't make itself understood, and so can't rest easy in its grave and has to go around every night grieving. I got so downhearted and scared that I did wish I had some company. I got out my pipe for a smoke 'cause the widow wouldn't know.

After a long time, I heard the clock away off in the town go "boom" twelve times. Then all was still again, stiller than ever.

Pretty soon I heard a twig snap down in the dark amongst the trees. Something was stirring. I

\*Although the word "nigger" is insulting today, Huck does not intend it as a racist slur. In his day, uneducated people often used the term instead of "Negro."

set still and listened. Directly I could just barely hear "Meow, meow" down there. I says "Meow" as soft as I could, put out the light, and scrambled out of the window onto the shed. I slipped down to the ground and crawled in amongst the trees. There was Tom Sawyer waiting for me.

Tom and me tiptoed down a path towards the end of the widow's garden, stooping down so that the branches wouldn't scrape our heads. When we was passing the kitchen, I fell over a root and made a noise. We scrouched down and laid still.

Miss Watson's big nigger, Jim, was setting in the kitchen door. Tom and me could see him pretty clear because there was a light behind him. Jim got up and stretched his neck out a minute, listening. "Who dere?" He listened some more. Then he come down and stood right between Tom and me. We nearly could've touched him. "Who dere?" Jim says again. He set down on the ground between Tom and me, leaned his back against a tree, and stretched his legs out 'til one of them almost touched one of mine. My nose begun to itch. It itched 'til the tears come into my eyes. But I didn't dare scratch. This miserableness went on six or seven minutes, but it seemed longer than that. Then Jim begun to breathe heavy. Next he begun to snore.

Tom made a sign to me—a little noise with his mouth—and we went creeping away on our hands and knees. When we was ten foot off, Tom said he

hadn't got enough candles; he would slip into the kitchen and get some more. I didn't want him to try. I said Jim might wake up. But Tom wanted to risk it. So we slid in there and got three candles. Tom laid five cents on the table as payment.

As soon as Tom was back, we headed to the steep hill on the other side of the house. When we got to the top, we looked down on the town and could see three or four lights twinkling. The stars over us was sparkling ever so fine. Down by the town was the Mississippi, a whole mile broad and awful still and grand.

We went down the hill and found Joe Harper and Ben Rogers hid in the old tannery. We unhitched a skiff and pulled down the river two and a half miles, to the big scar on the hillside, and went ashore.

We went to a clump of bushes. Tom made Joe and Ben swear to keep the secret and then showed them a hole in the hill, right in the thickest part of the bushes. We lit the candles and crawled in on our hands and knees. We went about two hundred yards. Then the cave opened up. Tom poked around amongst the passages. Pretty soon he ducked under a wall where you wouldn't 've noticed that there was a hole. We went along a narrow place and got into a kind of room, all damp and cold. We stopped there.

Tom says, "Now we'll start this band of robbers and call it Tom Sawyer's Gang. Everybody

that wants to join has to take an oath and write his name in blood.”

Everybody was willing.

Tom got out a sheet of paper that he had wrote the oath on and read it. It swore every boy to stick to the band and never tell any of its secrets. If anybody done anything to any boy in the band, whichever boy was ordered to kill that person must do it, and he mustn't eat or sleep 'til he killed them. If anybody that belonged to the band told the secrets, he must have his throat cut. His carcass would be burned and the ashes scattered all around. The gang would blot his name off of the list with blood, put a curse on it, and never mention it again.

Everybody said it was a real beautiful oath and asked Tom if he got it out of his own head. He said some of it, but the rest was out of books about pirates and robbers. He said that every high-toned gang had an oath.

Joe thought it would be good to kill the families of boys that told the secrets. Tom said that was a good idea, so he took a pencil and wrote it in.

Then Ben says, “Huck ain't got no family. What you going to do about *him*?”

“He's got a father,” Tom says.

“Yes, he's got a father, but you can't never find him these days. He used to lay drunk with the hogs in the tannery, but he ain't been seen for a year or more.”

I was glad that I hadn't seen Pap for more than a year. I didn't want to see him no more. He always hit me when he was sober and could get his hands on me. I took to the woods most of the time when he was around.

The boys talked it over. They was going to rule me out because every boy must have a family or somebody else to kill, or it wouldn't be fair. Nobody could think of anything to do. I was almost ready to cry when I thought of Miss Watson. I told them that they could kill *her*.

Everybody said, "She'll do. Huck can come in."

Then we all stuck a pin in our finger, to get blood to sign with, and signed the paper.

"Now," Ben says, "what's this gang's line of business?"

"Robbery and murder," Tom says.

"What are we going to rob—houses or cattle?"

"Stealing cattle and such things ain't robbery. It's burglary," Tom says. "We ain't burglars. That ain't no sort of style. We're highwaymen. We stop stagecoaches and carriages on the road, with masks on, and kill the people and take their watches and money."

"Must we always kill the people?" Joe says.

"Certainly. Some authorities think different, but mostly it's considered best to kill them—except some that you bring to the cave and keep here 'til people pay you money to set them free.



And you don't kill the women. You're always polite to them. By and by, they fall in love with you and never want to go home."

Tom said we'd meet again next week and rob somebody and kill some people. Ben said he couldn't get out much except for Sundays, so he wanted to begin next Sunday. But Tom and Joe said it would be wicked to do it on Sunday. We agreed to get together and fix a day as soon as we could. Then we elected Tom first captain and Joe second captain and started home.

I clumb up the shed and crept into my window just before daybreak. My new clothes was all dirty with grease and clay, and I was real tired.

In the morning I got a good scolding from Miss Watson on account of my clothes. The widow didn't scold; she just cleaned off the grease and clay and looked so sad that I thought I'd behave awhile if I could.

Miss Watson told me to pray every day, and I'd get whatever I asked for. But it warn't so. I tried it. Once I got a fishing line but no hooks. A fishing line warn't any good to me without hooks. I tried for the hooks three or four times, but I couldn't make it work. I went and told the widow about it, and she said the thing a body could get by praying was "spiritual gifts." She said I must do everything I could for other people and never think about myself. I went out in the woods and turned it over in my mind a long time, but I couldn't see no

advantage to it, so I decided not to worry about it anymore. Sometimes the widow would take me aside and talk about Heaven in a way to make a body's mouth water. But maybe the next day Miss Watson would take hold and knock it all down again. I saw there must be two Heavens. A poor fellow would do all right in the widow's Heaven, but if Miss Watson's got him, there warn't no help for him anymore.

The gang played robbers now and then for about a month. Then I resigned. So did Ben and Joe. We hadn't robbed or killed nobody, only just pretended. We'd hop out of the woods and go charging down on hog drivers and women carting garden stuff to market, but we never robbed any of them. Tom called the hogs "gold" and the fruit and vegetables "jewelry." We'd go back to the cave and talk about how much loot we'd got, but I couldn't see no profit in it.