THE ADVENTURES OF

HUCKLEBERRY FINN

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Introduction

Mark Twain was born in Florida, Missouri in 1835. He received little education and at the age of thirteen started working as a printer. Later, he helped his brother to produce a local newspaper for which he wrote short stories from time to time. When he was twenty he left printing and began to work on the great Mississippi river boats. He said later in his life that he had met most of the characters in his stories on the river. In 1862 he started writing regularly for newspapers. His first book, a collection of short stories, appeared in 1867. He continued to write books, mainly about his travels and the people he met on them, but his best known stories are *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), *The Prince and the Pauper* (1880) and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884).

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is said to be Mark Twain's finest book. Huckleberry is an uneducated but very cheerful and friendly boy, full of common sense. He runs away from his cruel father, and meets a slave, Jim, who is running away from his master. Together they travel far down the Mississippi river, having many adventures and meeting many people of the sort that Mark Twain himself met when he was working on the river.

Contents

1. Tom Sawyer's gang

You don't know about me, unless you've read *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, but that doesn't matter.

Now the way the book ends is this: Tom and I found the money that the robbers had hidden in the cave. We got six thousand dollars each—all gold. Well, Judge Thatcher put it out at interest, and it brought each of us a dollar a day all the year round. The Widow Douglas took me as her son and declared she would civilize me; but living in the house all the time was hard, considering how terribly regular and proper the widow was in all her ways, and so when I couldn't bear it any longer, I ran away. Then Tom Sawyer said he was going to start a band of robbers, and I might join if I would go back to the widow. So I went.

The widow cried over me, and called me a poor lost sheep. She put me in those new clothes once more, and I could do nothing but sweat and feel very uncomfortable. Then the old ways started again. The widow rang a bell for supper and you had to come in time. When you got to the table you couldn't begin to eat, but you had to wait for the widow to bend her head and complain a little over the food, though there wasn't anything the matter with it.

Her sister, Miss Watson, an old lady who wore glasses, had just come to live with her. She made me work hard at a spelling book for about an hour. Then it was very dull, and I couldn't sit still. Miss Watson would say, "Don't put your feet up there, Huckleberry"; and "Don't lie like that—sit up straight"; and soon she would say, "Don't sigh and stretch like that—why don't you try to behave?"

At last they brought the servants in and had prayers and everybody went off to bed. I sat down by my bedroom window. I felt so lonely. I heard a night-bird, far away, calling about somebody that was dead, and a dog howling

about somebody that was going to die. I got so miserable and frightened; I did wish I had some company.

After a long time I heard the clock away in the town go boom—boom—boom—twelve strokes, and all still again, stiller than ever. Then I heard a branch break, down in the dark among the trees: something was moving. Soon I heard a faint "*me-yow! me-yow!*" down there. That *was* good! "*Me-yow! me-yow!*" said I, softly as I could. I put out the light, climbed out of the window on to the shed, and slipped down to the ground. Sure enough, there was Tom Sawyer waiting for me.

We went down the hill on the other side of the house and found Joe Harper and Ben Rogers, and two or three more of the boys. We untied a boat, rowed two and a half miles down the river to the big mark on the hillside, and landed.

We went to some bushes, and Tom showed us a hole in the hill. We lit our candles and crawled in. At last we got into a cave, all damp and cold, and there we stopped.

"Now we'll start this band of robbers," said Tom. "Everybody that wants to join has got to swear to keep to the rules, and write his name in blood."

He took out a sheet of paper, on which he had written the rules, and read it. Every boy had to swear to stick to the band and never tell any of the secrets; and if anybody did anything to any boy of the band, whichever boy was ordered to kill that person and his family must do it. Everybody said it was really beautiful.

"Now," said Ben Rogers, "what's the line of business of this gang?"

"We stop carriages on the road, with masks on," said Tom, "and kill the people and take their watches and money. Except some that you bring to the cave here and keep till they're ransomed."

"Ransomed? What's that?"

"I don't know. But that's what they do. I've seen it in books; and so of course that's what we've got to do."

"But how can we do it if we don't know what it is?"

"Why, dash it all, we've *got* to do it. Do you want to do different from what's in the books, and spoil everything?"

"But, Tom Sawyer, how on earth are these fellows going to be ransomed if we don't know how to do it to them? Now what do you *think* it is?"

"Well, I don't know. But perhaps keeping them till they're ransomed means keeping them till they're dead."

"A troublesome lot they'll be, eating up everything and always trying to get loose."

"How you talk, Ben Rogers. How can they get loose when there's a guard over them, ready to shoot them down if they move a finger?"

"A guard. Well, that *is good.* So somebody's got to sit up all night and never get any sleep, just to watch them. I think that's foolish. Why can't someone take a big stick and ransom them as soon as they get here?"

"Because it's not like that in the books, that's why."

"All right. I say, do we kill the women too?"

"Well, Ben Rogers, if I was as stupid as you I'd keep my mouth shut. Kill the women? No; nobody ever saw anything like that in the books. You fetch them to the cave, and you're always ever so polite to them; and after a time they fall in love with you and never want to go home any more."

"Soon we'll have the cave so packed with women and fellows waiting to be ransomed that there'll be no room for the robbers. But go ahead, I've got nothing to say."

We elected Tom Sawyer as first captain and Joe Harper as second captain of the gang, and then started home. I climbed up the shed and crept through the window just before day was breaking. My new clothes were covered with candle-grease and clay, and I was tired out.

I got a good scolding in the morning, from Miss Watson, on account of my clothes; but the widow didn't scold me, but only cleaned off the grease and clay. She looked so sorry that I thought I would behave a while if I could.

Father hadn't been seen for more than a year, and I was glad. He always used to beat me. Well, about this time he was found drowned, about twelve miles above the town, so people said. They thought it was father, because this drowned man was just about his size, was ragged, and had very long hair.

We played robbers now and then for about a month and then all the boys resigned. We hadn't robbed anybody, we hadn't killed any people, but only pretended. We used to jump out of the woods and charge pig-drivers and women in carts taking vegetables to market, but we never robbed any of them. Tom Sawyer called the pigs "bars of gold" and the vegetables "jewels", and we would go to the cave and discuss how many people we had killed. Once Tom sent a boy to run about the town with a burning stick (which was a sign for the gang to get together), and then he said he had got secret news that next day a whole company of Spanish merchants and rich Arabs was going to camp in Cave Hollow with two hundred elephants, six hundred horses, and over a thousand donkeys, all loaded down with diamonds; and they would have a guard of only four hundred soldiers, and so we would lie in wait and kill the lot and seize the diamonds. He said we must clean our guns and swords and get ready. They were only made of wood and rubbing them till you rotted wouldn't have improved them in the least.

I didn't believe that we could beat such a crowd of Spaniards and Arabs, but I wanted to see the horses and elephants, so I was present the next day, Saturday. When we got the word, we rushed out of the woods and down the hill. But there were no Spaniards, no Arabs, no horses, and no elephants. It was nothing but a Sunday-school trip. We broke it up and chased the children, but we got nothing but some cakes. Then the teacher charged us and made us drop everything and run. I didn't see any diamonds and I told Tom Sawyer so. He said there were loads of them there, and the Arabs and elephants, too. I asked him why we couldn't see them. He said that if I'd read a book called *Don Quixote* I'd know without asking. He said it was all done by magic. We had enemies which he called magicians, and they had turned the whole thing into a children's Sunday-school, just to annoy us. I said that the thing for us to do was to go for the magicians, but Tom Sawyer called me a fool.

"Why," he said, "a magician could call up a lot of devils, and they would cut you to pieces before you could say Jack Robinson. They are as tall as a tree and as big as a church."

"Well," I said, "suppose we got some devils to help *us*—can't we beat the other crowd then?"

"How are we going to get them?"

"I don't know. How do *they* get them?"

"Well, they rub an old lamp or an iron ring, and then the devils come rushing in, with thunder and lightning and clouds of smoke. They belong to whoever rubs the lamp or ring. If he tells them to build a castle forty miles long, and fill it full of sweets, or whatever you want, and fetch a king's daughter from China for you to marry—they've got to do it before sunrise next morning."

I decided I would see if there was anything in it. I got an old tin lamp and an iron ring and rubbed and rubbed till I sweated like a horse, calculating to build a castle and sell it; but none of the devils came. So then I judged that Tom Sawyer had just imagined all that stuff.

2. Huck lives with his father

Three or four months passed, and it was well into the winter, now. I had been to school most of the time and could spell and read and write just a little.

At first I hated the school, but after a time I got used to it. The widow's ways, too, weren't so hard on me. She said I was getting on satisfactorily and that she wasn't ashamed of me.

One morning I happened to upset the salt at breakfast. I reached for some of it as quickly as I could to throw over my left shoulder to keep off bad luck, but Miss Watson said, "Take your hands away, Huckleberry; what an awkward boy you are!"

I started out after breakfast feeling worried. I went down the front garden and climbed over the high board fence. There was an inch of snow on the ground, and I saw somebody's tracks. I bent down to look at them. There was a cross in the left boot-heel made with big nails, to keep off the devil.

I was up in a second and flying down the hill. I was at Judge Thatcher's in no time.

"Why, my boy, you're all out of breath," he said. "Have you come for your interest?"

"No, sir," I said. "I want to give it to you—and the six thousand. Please take it, and don't ask me anything—then I won't have to tell lies."

He considered the matter, and then wrote something on a piece of paper.

"There," he said. "That means that I have bought it from you and paid you for it. Here's a dollar for you. Now, you sign it."

So I signed and left.

When I went up to my room that night, there sat father!

I had shut the door. Then I turned round, and there he was. I wasn't really frightened of him.

He was almost fifty, and looked it. His hair was long and uncombed and greasy, and hung down, and you could see his eyes shining through. It was all black; so were his long whiskers. There wasn't any colour in his face, where his face showed. As for his clothes, they were just rags. I noticed that the window was up; so he had climbed in by the shed. He kept looking me all over.

"Fine clothes—very," he said at last. "You think you're somebody, don't you? You're educated, too, they say; can read and write. You think you're better than your father, don't you, because he can't? I say, let me hear you read."

I took up a book and began something about George Washington and the wars. When I'd read for about a minute, he knocked the book across the room.

"You can do it," he said. "Now look here; if I catch you about that school I'll skin you."

He sat there staring at me and then said:

"Aren't you a sweet-scented pet? A bed; and bed-clothes; and a looking-glass; and a rug on the floor—and your father has to sleep in the street. And they say you're rich. I've been in town two days, and I've heard nothing but about you being rich. I heard it down the river, too. That's why I've come. Get me that money tomorrow; I want it."

"I haven't any money. Ask Judge Thatcher. He'll tell you the same."

"All right. I'll ask him. Say, how much have you got in your pocket?"

"Only a dollar, and I want that to—"

"Hand it over."

He took it and said he was going down town to get some whisky.

The next day he was drunk, and he went to Judge Thatcher's and tried to make him give up the money, but he couldn't, and then he swore he'd make the law force him.

The judge and the widow went to law to get the court to take me away from him and let one of them look after me; but it was a new judge who didn't know the old man,

and he said he'd rather not take a child away from his father.

That pleased the old man. He said he'd beat me if I didn't raise some money for him. I borrowed three dollars from Judge Thatcher, and father took it and got drunk and went cursing and yelling all over the town, banging a tin pan, till nearly midnight; then they put him in prison, and the next day they had him in court, and imprisoned him again for a week.

When father was set free he went for Judge Thatcher in the court to make him give up that money, and he went for me, too, for not giving up school. He began to hang about the widow's too much, and so she told him that if he didn't keep away she would get him into trouble. He *was* angry. He said he would show who was Huck's master. So one day in the spring he caught me and took me about three miles up the river to an old log hut in the woods.

I never got a chance to run off. He always locked the door of the hut and kept the key under his head at night. He had a gun and we fished and hunted, and that was what we lived on. Every now and then he locked me in and went down to the store and exchanged fish and what he had shot for whisky and brought it home and got drunk and beat me. Two months passed by, and my clothes became just rags and dirt.

But at last father began to use the stick too much, and I couldn't stand it. I had tried many times to get out of that hut, but I couldn't find a way. There wasn't a window big enough for a dog to get through. The chimney was too narrow. The door was hard wood, two inches thick. However, I found something at last—an old rusty woodsaw, lying between the beams and the boards of the roof. I greased it, and began to saw out a part of a big bottom log. It was a long job, but I was getting towards the end of it when I heard father's gun in the woods. I got rid of the signs of my work and hid the saw.

The old man made me go to the boat and fetch the things he had brought. There was a fifty-pound bag of flour, meat, powder and shot, four gallons of whisky, and some other

things. I got them all up to the hut, and then it was about dark.

After supper father started on the whisky. I judged he would be quite drunk in about an hour, and then I would steal the key, or saw myself out. He drank and drank, and after a time fell down on his blankets. But he didn't sleep soundly. He groaned, and threw himself this way and that for a long time. At last I became so sleepy that I couldn't keep my eyes open, and before I knew what I was doing I was fast asleep, with the candle still burning.

I don't know how long I was asleep, but all of a sudden there was an awful scream and I was up. There was father, looking wild and jumping all over the place and yelling about snakes. He said they were crawling up his legs; then he would jump and scream and say that one had bitten him on the face; but I couldn't see any snakes. I've never seen a man so wild-eyed. Soon he was tired out and fell down, breathing heavily. He lay still for a while, groaning. Then he didn't make a sound. I could hear the night-birds and the wolves away in the woods and it seemed terribly still.

At last he jumped up, looking wild. He saw me and came for me. He chased me round and round the place with his knife, calling me the Angel of Death and saying that he would kill me, and then I wouldn't come for him any more. I told him I was only Huck, but he laughed *such* a fearful laugh, and roared and cursed and kept on chasing me. Once when I turned and slipped under his arm he reached out and got me by the coat between my shoulders, and I thought I was finished; but I slid out of the coat as quick as lightning, and saved myself. Soon he was tired out, and dropped with his back against the door. He said he would rest a minute and then kill me. He put his knife under him and said he would sleep and get strong, and then he would see who was master.

As soon as he was asleep I got the gun. I pointed it towards father and sat down to wait for him to stir. And how slowly the time dragged along in the stillness.

3. Huck escapes

"Get up!"

I opened my eyes and looked around, trying to make out where I was. The sun was up and I had been sound asleep. Father was standing over me, looking sour—and sick, too.

"What are you doing with this gun?" he said.

"Somebody tried to get in, so I was waiting for him," I said.

"Why didn't you wake me up?"

"Well, I tried to, but couldn't."

"All right. Get out and see if there's a fish on the lines for breakfast."

He unlocked the door, and I went up the river bank. Some branches were floating down and so I knew that the river had begun to rise. All at once a canoe appeared, a beauty, fourteen feet long. I dived head first off the bank, in my clothes, and swam out to her. I climbed in and paddled her ashore. I decided to hide her properly, and then, instead of living in the woods when I escaped, I'd go down the river about fifty miles and camp in one place.

When father came along I was hard at it taking up a line. He cursed me a little for being so slow, but I told him I had fallen into the river. We took five fish off the lines and went home.

When we lay down after breakfast to sleep, both of us being nearly worn out, I began to think that if I could arrange some way of keeping father and the widow from trying to follow me, it would be much better than trusting to luck to get far enough off before they missed me.

Soon father sat up to drink another barrel of water.

"That man wasn't here for any good," he said. "I'd have shot him. Next time, wake me up—do you hear?"

What he said gave me the very idea I wanted. I said to

myself, now I can arrange it so that no one will think of following me.

About twelve o'clock we went along up the river bank. A lot of wood was floating by. Soon we noticed part of a log raft, nine logs fastened together. We pulled it ashore and had dinner. Nine logs were enough for father; he must hurry to town and sell. So he locked me in and started off in the boat, with the raft. I went to work with my saw on that log again. Before he was on the other side of the river I was out of the hole; he and his raft were just a dot on the water.

I took the bag of flour to where the canoe was hidden, and the meat, the whisky, the coffee and sugar, the powder and shot, the bucket, my old saw and two blankets, the frying-pan and the coffee-pot—everything that was worth a cent. I wanted an axe, but there was only one, and I knew why I was going to leave that. I fetched the gun and finished loading.

I had worn the ground a good deal, crawling out of the hole and dragging out so many things. I put that right as well as I could from the outside by scattering dust on the place, which covered up the smoothness and the sawdust. Then I fixed the piece of log back in its place and put two stones under it and one against it to hold it there.

It was all grass right up to the canoe; so I hadn't left a track. I took the gun into the woods and was hunting round for some birds when I saw a wild pig; pigs soon went wild there after they had got away from the farms. I shot this fellow and took him into camp.

I broke in the door with the axe. I carried the pig in, made a cut in his throat with the axe, and laid him on the floor to bleed. I put a lot of stones in an old bag and dragged it from the pig down to the river, where I threw it in. You could easily see that something had been dragged over the ground.

I covered the axe with blood, pulled out some of my hair and stuck it on the back of the axe, which I threw in the corner. I dropped the pig in the river. Now I thought of something else. I brought the bag of flour from the canoe to the hut and set it where it used to stand. After tearing a hole in the bottom of the bag, I carried it across the grass to a