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I Join the Robber Gang

I'm Huck Finn. You don't know about me unless you read *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. That book was made by Mr. Mark Twain. He told the truth, mainly. Well, there might have been a few things he stretched. But that's O.K. Seems like everybody stretches the truth sometime—except maybe Tom's Aunt Polly or the Widow Douglas. They're in the book, too.

Now, that book about Tom Sawyer ended just when Tom and me got rich. We found some robbers' gold hidden in a cave. We got \$6,000 each! Judge Thatcher, he kept the money for us. He gives it out to us a dollar a day, all year round. Why, that's more money than a fellow knows what to do with!

After that, the Widow Douglas took me in to live with her. Her sister, Miss Watson, lives there, too. They're both bent on civilizing me—giving me manners and religion and such. I ran away once. But Tom Sawyer hunted me up. He said I could be in his robber band—but only if I went back to the widow's.

The widow read to me from the Bible. She meant well, but those stories are about dead people. Truth is, I don't much care about dead people. Miss Watson was even worse. "Don't put your feet up there, Huckleberry Finn!" she'd say. She'd frown at me over her goggles, and sometimes she'd call me wicked. It all made me tired.

One night after Miss Watson had been pecking at me, I went up to my room. I sat there so lonesome I almost wished I was dead. Then a spider crawled up my arm, so I flipped it off. It landed in a candle and burned up! I don't need to tell you, that was an awful sign. It was bound to bring me bad luck.

I sat there shivering, thinking about the bad luck that was coming. Then I heard a sound from out in the trees.

“Me-yow! Me-yow!”

I recognized Tom’s call right away. So I scrambled out the window and slid to the ground. Sure enough, there was Tom Sawyer waiting for me.

Tom and me headed out of the garden. As we passed the kitchen, I tripped over a tree root. We dropped and laid still. Miss Watson’s slave Jim was sitting in the kitchen doorway. He got up and stretched his big bones. Then he calls out, “Who there? I hears something! Huh! I’m just gonna sit right down ’til I hears it again.” We stayed quiet until Jim began to snore.

Then Tom went into the kitchen to get us some candles. He left five cents on the table for pay. I wanted to sneak off right away, but not Tom! He had to play a trick on Jim first. He slipped Jim’s hat off and hung it up in a tree.

When Jim woke up in the morning, he told everyone that some witches had come in the night. “They set me under the trees and hung my hat on a limb. Look! They left me this five-cent piece!” The other slaves laughed some at Jim’s story. But they wouldn’t touch that five-cent piece. They thought the devil had put

his hands on it.

Well, anyway, me and Tom went on our way that night. We met up with some of the boys and took an old boat down the river a mile or two. First Tom made everybody swear to keep a secret. Then he showed us a cave in the hill. We lit candles and crawled in.

“Now, we’ll start this band of robbers,” Tom says proudly. “We’ll call it Tom Sawyer’s Gang.”

Everybody had to swear an oath. Tom had gotten the idea out of some pirate book. We swore to kill the families of anyone who told the gang’s secrets.

Then someone says, “What about Huck Finn? He ain’t got no family. His ol’ drunk father ain’t been seen around here in years.”

I wanted to join the gang real bad, so I offered them Miss Watson. When I said they could kill *her* if I talked, they agreed!

We all stuck a pin in our fingers to get some blood. Then we made a mark on a paper. We wrote our names on the cave wall in blood, too.

We elected Tom the first captain of our robber band. Then we started home.

I climbed into my window at daybreak.

The new clothes the widow had got me was all dirty with clay. I was dog-tired.

Next morning when Miss Watson saw my clothes, I was in big trouble! The widow, she just looked sorry and sad. Then Miss Watson took me in the closet and prayed.

Once I tried praying for what I wanted, but it didn't work. I got a fishline, but no hooks. That line weren't no good to me without hooks!

I hadn't seen my Pap for more than a year now. That was fine with me. He used to always be after me. Any time he could get his hands on me, he'd let me have it. Well, about this time they found a drowned body floating on its back in the river. They said it looked like my Pap, all ragged and long-haired. But I knowed that a drowned man don't float on his back, but on his face. It was probably a woman dressed up in a man's clothes. So I still worried that old Pap would turn up by and by. I wished he wouldn't.

Me and the gang, we played robber for about a month. Then the gang broke up. We hadn't robbed nobody. We hadn't killed no people, either. We just pretended.

One time Tom Sawyer says we should attack