

## The Glorious Whitewasher

“Tom!”

No answer.

“Tom! Where is that boy? *Tom!* If I find you, I’ll ...” the old lady stopped talking.

She looked under the bed. There was no boy there. She called again.

A noise came from behind her. She turned and grabbed Tom by the shirt.

“There you are! What have you been doing?”

“Nothing.”

“I don’t believe you. Look at your sticky hands. I told you to leave that jam alone. You need a spanking.”

The old lady raised her hand.

“Look behind you, Aunt!”

She turned around.

The boy ran out the door. He scrambled over the fence.

Aunt Polly started to laugh. “I guess

I'll never learn," she said to herself. "He's always playing tricks on me. I've spoiled him. But he's my sister's boy. I have to take care of him now that she's dead. I just don't have the heart to spank him."

Aunt Polly sighed. "He'll skip school this afternoon. Then I'll have to punish him. But I've got to do my duty."

Tom *did* skip school. He had a very good day.

At supper, Aunt Polly tried to trap Tom. She wanted him to say he'd skipped school.

"It was warm today. Wasn't it, Tom?" she asked. "Didn't you want to swim?"

“No, ma’am.”

She felt Tom’s shirt. It was dry.

Tom knew what was coming. “My hair is damp. Some of us got our heads wet.”

That morning, she had sewn his shirt collar shut. Now she checked it. It was still sewn shut. She was surprised. She thought Tom had done the right thing.

Then Tom’s brother, Sid, spoke up. “Aunt Polly, I thought you sewed his shirt with white thread. Look, that thread is black.”

“I *did* sew it with white. Tom!” Aunt Polly shouted.

But Tom was out the door. “Sid,” he yelled, “I’ll get you for that!”



Saturday morning came bright and fresh. Tom stood on the sidewalk with a bucket of white paint and a brush. He looked at the fence sadly. It was time to take his punishment for skipping school.

Tom dipped his brush in the bucket. He started painting. His friends would come soon. They would make fun of him. He hated the thought of it.

Then he had a *wonderful* idea! He went happily to work painting the fence.