Tom Sawyer's Club

TOM AND I WALKED QUIETLY ALONG A PATH AMONG THE TREES.

When we passed near the Widow's kitchen, I fell and made a noise. We lay very still. Miss Watson's black slave, Jim, was sitting in the kitchen door. We could see him clearly because there was a light behind him. He stood up and asked, "Who's there?"

Jim stood listening, then walked toward us. We didn't make a sound. Then he stood where Tom and I were hiding and asked again, "Who are you? I know that I heard something. I'll just sit here until I hear the noise again."

Jim sat on the ground between Tom and me. He leaned against the tree we were hiding behind. He almost touched my leg. My nose began to feel uncomfortable and I wanted to rub it, but I dared not. We sat quietly for a long time. Then Jim began to breathe heavily and we knew that he was asleep. Very quietly, Tom and I stood up and walked away.

Then Tom decided that we would need some candles. He also wanted to play a trick on Jim. I said, "No, forget the candles. Jim'll wake up, and then the Widow will learn that I'm not in bed."

But Tom loved jokes and he loved danger. He walked quietly into the kitchen and took three candles. He left five cents on the table to pay for them. Then he walked quietly to Jim and took Jim's hat off his head and hung it on a tree nearby. Jim moved a little but he didn't wake up. Later Jim said that a ghost had played a trick on him and left his hat on the tree as a sign.

Tom and I walked quickly into town where we could see only three or four lights. Almost everyone was asleep. Near the town was a big river, a mile wide, and very quiet at this time of night. Near the river we found Joe Harper, Ben Rogers, and two or three other boys hiding. We climbed into a small boat and traveled two and a half miles down the river before we stopped the boat and went ashore.

Tom led us to some bushes where he made everyone promise to keep his secret. He pushed aside the bushes and showed us a hole in the hill. We lit our candles and used them to light our way through the hole and into a large cave. Soon we came to a kind of underground room where we stopped.

Tom said, "Now we'll start our club and call it Tom Sawyer's Club. Everyone who wants to join has got to make a promise and write his name in blood."

Everyone was willing to do this. Tom wrote the program on a sheet of paper and read it to us. All the boys had to promise that they would never tell any of the club's secrets. If they did, other members of the club would kill them and would burn their dead bodies. Some boys thought that it would be a good idea to also kill the families of the boys who told club secrets. Tom added this to the promise.

Then Ben Rogers said, "Huck Finn doesn't have a family. How can we let him join the club?"

"Well, he has a father," said Tom Sawyer.

"Yes, he has a father, but you can never find him. A few years ago his father would lay in the road, drunk from too much whiskey, but he hasn't been seen in this town for more than a year."

The boys talked about this problem. They decided that I could not join their club. I became very sad and felt like crying. Then I thought of

a solution to my problem. "Miss Watson can be part of my family. You can kill her if I tell any club secrets."

Everyone agreed to this. I was able to join the club.

Each boy made a small cut in his finger with a pin to get blood to write his name.

"What will we do in our club?" asked Ben Rogers. "Oh, kill people and take their money," said Tom. "Must we always kill people?"

"Oh, certainly. Killing is what they do in all the stories that I read," said Tom. "We have to act just like they do in books. The peo- ple who wrote the books knew the correct way to do things."

When that was decided, Tommy Barnes said that he wanted to go home. We said that we would all go home and meet again the follow- ing week. At that time, we would plan whom we would steal money from and kill.

When I got home, I climbed up onto the porch roof and in through my window. My new clothes were wet and dirty with mud, and I was very tired.