

## The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

### Chapter 34

#### Summary:

Tom and Huck start thinking over ways of liberating Jim. The first issue is finding the where he is kept captive. Tom makes an intelligent guess based on detective inference and they find his place of captivity. Huck suggests a simple and logical plan for freeing Jim. It includes stealing keys from Uncle Silas at night, releasing Jim and escaping on a raft. Tom is not happy with the simplicity of this method of escape. He says:

‘But it’s too blame’ simple; there ain’t nothing to it. What’s the good of a plan that ain’t no more trouble than that? It’s as mild as goose-milk.’

Tom tells his plan of releasing Jim. Huck could at once discern that it was extravagant and dangerous as well

‘He told me what it was, and I see in a minute it was fifteen of mine for style, and would make Jim just as free a man as mine would, and maybe get us all killed besides. So I was satisfied, and said I would waltz in on it.’

Huck is unable to comprehend why Tom is so willing to help a ‘nigger’ escape from slavery. He states:

Here was a boy that was respectable and well brung up; and had a character to lose; and folks at home that had characters; and he was bright and not leather-headed ; and knowing and not ignorant; and not mean but kind; and yet here he was, without any more pride, or rightness, or feeling, than to stoop to this business, and make himself a shame, before everybody. I *couldn’t* understand it no way at all. It was outrageous.....

Huck tries to dissuade him from going ahead with the plan, but Tom insists on helping to ‘steal the nigger’. Tom’s plans are very elaborate and ‘romantic’. Instead of employing the simple device of removing a board from the window-hole and letting Jim escape, Tom decides they will dig a tunnel as an escape route for him.

#### Critical points:

1. There is a tonal change in the narrative from this chapter onward. From the real life dangerous machinations and intrigues of the two conmen the action turns to humorous and extravagant schemes made by Tom to rescue Jim
2. The exposure of the racist attitude of the American society continues with ironical attempt of Huck to stop Tom, who is ‘respectable’, from performing the ‘shameful’ action of helping a ‘nigger’ escape from slavery. However, Huck is not aware that Jim has already been set free by Miss Watson.

3. Huck's practical suggestions stand in contrast to Tom's complicated and unrealistic plans to rescue Jim. Chapter 3 has already introduced the readers to Tom's inclination to put into action his imaginative ideas, which are based on the prison stories and adventure novels.

## Chapter 35

### Summary:

Tom and Huck start planning an elaborate and complicated escape, based on the prison stories and adventure tales Tom has read. Tom says:

"You got to invent *all* the difficulties. Well, we can't help it; we got to do the best we can with the materials we've got. Anyhow, there's one thing ---there's more honor in getting him out through a lot of difficulties and dangers, where there warn't one of them furnished to you by the people who it was their duty to furnish them, and you had to contrive them all out of your own head."

Tom rejects the simple and practical suggestions made by Huck. He tells Huck:

"You *can* get up the infant-schooliest ways of going at a thing. Why, hain't you ever read any books at all? – Baron Trenck, nor Casanova, nor Benvenuto Chelleeny, nor Henry IV, nor none of them heroes? Who ever heard of getting a prisoner loose in such as an old-maidy way as that?"

Tom's instructions include arranging for a rope ladder, sawing off the leg of Jim's bed, fetching a shirt on which Jim would write a journal (Huck remarks: 'Journal your granny – Jim can't write.'), getting a knife to make a tunnel etc. When Huck comments that it is foolish, Tom replies:

"It don't make no difference how foolish it is, it's the *right* way – and it's the *regular* way, that I ever I heard of, and I've read all the books that gives about these things"

### Critical points:

1. The irony consists in the fact that Jim has been set free by Miss Watson and there is no need for planning the 'escape'. Tom is aware of this, while Jim and Huck have no knowledge of Jim's freedom. They will learn this startling fact at the end of the novel.
2. Tom's romantic extravagant plans not only provide humour but also turn into a caricature of the adventure tales and prison stories and become a satire on them.
3. This chapter throws into relief the contrast between the romantic nature of Tom and the down to earth practical disposition of Huck, and supplies several instances of comedy when Huck exposes the impractical schemes of Tom with his realistic remarks.

4. Tom assumes the role of the leader and though his ideas are very unrealistic yet he succeeds in getting his way. His argument is: "It don't make no difference how foolish it is, it's the *right* way – and it's the *regular* way, that I ever heard of....". This represents in a light hearted manner how deeply ingrained are the written laws, codes of conduct and social habits as representative of the 'correct way of behaviour' that even when they are regressive and impractical, it is very difficult to act in a different way or reject them.

## Chapter 36

### Summary:

Tom decides that the implements and methods used in the prison and escape adventure tales would be followed. Tom and Huck try to dig a tunnel to Jim's cabin using knives, but soon find it very difficult to carry on. On Tom's instructions they decide to use pick-axe and shovel and pretend that these things are knives. They finish digging the tunnel and reach Jim's cabin. Jim is overjoyed to see them. Tom decides that they would smuggle in things like rope ladder in a pie and other small things in uncle Silas's coat pocket or tied to Aunt Sally's apron strings when they visit Jim in his cabin. A shirt would also be given to Jim to write a journal in his blood. We are told:

'Tom was in high spirits. He said it was the best fun he ever had in his life, and the most intellectual; and said if he only could see his way to it we would keep it up all the rest of our lives and leave Jim to our children to get out; for he believed Jim would come to like it better and better the more he got used to it. He said that in that way it could be strung out to as much as eighty year, and would be the best time on record. And he said it would make us all celebrated that had a hand in it.'

## Chapter 37

### Summary:

Huck and Tom start collecting the tools needed for the 'escape' as planned by Tom. They find an old tin wash-pan to bake a pie and collect nails dropping one in Aunt Sally's apron pocket and sticking another one in Uncle Silas's hat because they have heard that they would be visiting Jim in his cabin. Jim is expected to collect the nails stealthily from Aunt Sally's pocket and Uncle Silas's hat. Aunt Sally notices that many articles like Uncle Silas's shirt, candles, brass candlestick, sheet, spoons etc have disappeared. In order to confuse her Huck and Tom continually keep replacing sheets and spoons so that Aunt Sally loses count of how many she has. Since the wash-pan is not adequate for preparing the pie, they steal Uncle Silas's old brass warming-pan for the purpose. They put the rope in the pie and send it along with some plates to Jim through the slave who brings food for him.

## Chapter 38

### Summary:

According to Tom, Jim has to make inscription on the wall of his cabin and also his coat of arms because that is what the prisoners of adventure tales do. Tom designs the coat of arms and prepares the inscriptions which Jim has to print on the wall. Since the walls of the cabin are wooden they decide to bring a grindstone inside the cabin which would function as a rock on which inscription would be carved. Jim goes out of the cabin to help the boys in rolling it inside the cabin. Tom made a few more suggestions such as keeping spiders, snakes and rats in the cabin, playing music to them and trying to tame them , growing a plant and watering them with tears etc.

### Critical points:

1. These chapters continue with Tom's escape plans which become increasingly more farcical.
2. Tom's exuberant imagination and extravagant proposal for escape create a great deal of humour.
3. Ironically, Huck and Jim trust Tom's wisdom and follow him without protest because he is educated and, as Huck has said earlier in chapter 34, he 'was respectable and well brung up'. This is a satire both on the prevalence of class privilege and white privilege in the American society of the time. In other words Tom enjoys a privileged position because he belongs to a privileged class and is a white person.