

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain

Summary of Chapters 34 and 35:

Tom uncovers the secret of Jim's whereabouts on the Phelps Plantation by observing one of the slaves bringing watermelon, along with other food, to a nearby hut. Since he would not be feeding watermelon to dogs, it follows that someone must be in the hut. The door to the hut is locked, and Uncle Silas holds the key. Sure that the prisoner must be Jim, Huck and Tom begin immediately to make plans to rescue him. Huck's plan is easy. He suggests they steal the key out of Uncle Silas's pants pocket, release Jim, and take off down the river on Huck's raft. Tom criticizes the plan for being "mild as goosemilk." Knowing they will do it Tom's way no matter what Huck proposes, he gives in to Tom's elaborate plans.

Huck is still wondering why a respectable, kind, and intelligent boy like Tom would stoop so low as to steal Jim out of slavery. He tries to stop him, but Tom says he knows what he is doing.

After dark they examine the hut and plan the rescue. Huck suggests several simple and practical methods such as having Jim climb out of a high window or sawing a hole in the cabin the way he had done when he escaped from Pap. Tom, however, holds out for some complicated method that would take twice as long. They finally decide to spend a week digging him out.

When they arrive at the house, Huck simply pulls the latchstring and walks in through the door. This is not romantic enough for Tom, however, who enters by climbing the lightning rods. He finally makes it after three tries and several painful falls.

In the morning they go down to the slave cabins to befriend the dogs so that they will not bark at them while they are digging Jim out. They meet the man who brings food to Jim. He naively invites them to come and see his prisoner. Jim, surprised and happy to see them, blurts out the boys' names. The man asks Huck and Tom whether Jim knows them, but they flatly deny it. They convince him that the witches are causing him to hear things. When they get a chance they whisper the plan of escape to Jim. He squeezes their hands in gratitude and promises to pretend they are strangers from now on.

Tom, disgusted that the plan of escape is too easy, is constantly trying to "invent all the difficulties." He wishes for a watchman to drug, or a dog to give a sleeping mixture to. Though one could easily slip the chain off the bedpost, Tom wants to saw the leg off Jim's bed to remove the chain. He goes so far as to consider amputating Jim's leg to get the chain off.

Instead of picks and shovels, Tom insists on digging him out with case knives because he has read about this in books. He also insists that the escape should take thirty-seven years. They need to hurry though, for when Mr. Phelps hears Jim is not from New Orleans, he will probably advertise him. They decide to "let on" or pretend that they had been at it for thirty-seven years. Huck tries to bring Tom back to practical reality, but Tom accuses him of never "having read any books at all."

Huck borrows a bedsheet from the clothesline for a rope ladder that will be put in a pie and smuggled in for the escape. He also takes a white shirt so Jim can keep a journal on it. He takes three case knives, and Tom suggests making a saw out of one of them. When Huck gingerly suggests borrowing a saw from the smokehouse, Tom is discouraged and gives up on Huck, afraid he will never be able to teach him anything about the way it should really be done. Huck finally obeys his order to get the knives.

Summary of Chapters 36 and 37:

Tom and Huck get right to work digging a tunnel into Jim's cabin with their case knives. After several hours their hands are sore in spite of the fact that they have made little progress. Tom finally admits that his plan will not work, so they change to picks pretending they are case knives. Happy that Tom is finally becoming level-headed, Huck wholeheartedly agrees with the change of plan. They dig a sizable hole and decide to continue the next day. As usual Tom tries to climb up the lightning rod to the second floor. Dead tired and sore, he finally agrees to "let on" that the stairs are lightning rods after a bit of coaxing from Huck.

Between them the boys manage to pilfer a pewter spoon, a brass candlestick, six candles, and three tin plates. The next night when everyone is in bed they finally dig their way into Jim's cabin in two and one-half hours. Happy to see them, Jim wants to cut the chain and clear out immediately, but Tom shows him that it would be highly "unregular." He explains the plan to Jim, telling him that in case of danger the plan could be quickly altered. Tom assures Jim they will, indeed, see that he gets away. They talk about old times, and Jim informs them about the prayers Uncle Silas has with him every day or two. Aunt Sally also stops by often to make sure he is comfortable. This gives Tom the idea of smuggling things to Jim through his aunt and uncle's pockets. Jim must then sneak them out. Despite Huck's objections Tom goes right ahead with his plan.

Aunt Sally begins to notice that things are missing around the house. A big argument ensues between her and Uncle Silas. She rails at him for losing his shirt but finally concedes that the calf probably got the shirt off the line. She is sure the rats got the candles, but the pewter spoon is still a mystery. In the middle of her long diatribe on the need for Uncle Silas to stop up the rat holes, a servant announces a bedsheet is also missing. This is almost more than she can take. In the middle of it all, Uncle Silas reaches into his coat pocket and timidly pulls out the pewter spoon secretly put there by Tom. Eventually she orders all of them out of the house. Later, Tom conjures up a plan to confuse Aunt Sally about the count of the sheets and spoons by alternately taking one out and then sneaking it back so her count is inconsistent. She finally becomes thoroughly confused about the true number of her sheets and spoons.

Tom and Huck decide to bake the rope ladder into a witch pie to satisfy the hunger of the witches who are constantly aggravating Nat, giving him no peace. Nat is, of course, grateful and cooperative. The boys take the rope ladder, made with a torn-up sheet, to the woods. They have enough rope for forty pies, however, so they finally throw most of the rope ladder away. They bring the witch pie to Jim's cabin, and Nat turns his back to ward off the witches. Following directions explicitly, Jim quickly breaks open the pie, hides the rope ladder inside his mattress, and throws out the tin plates after scratching some marks on them.

Summary of Chapters 38 and 39

While Jim and Huck file pens out of candlesticks and a saw out of a case knife, Tom is busy working on the coat of arms for Jim. He comes up with one that is unintelligible, but it does not seem to matter as long as it comes from a book. Huck questions the meaning of such terms as "fess" and "bar sinister," but Tom refuses to answer. Since dungeon walls were always made of stone, Tom suddenly strikes upon the idea that they could chisel both the coat of arms and the mournful inscriptions on one rock. He suggests they use the grindstone down at the mill. Huck and Tom find it too heavy to move to the cabin, however, so they decide to ask Jim to help them. He willingly takes the chain off the bedpost, wraps it around his neck, and slips out through the tunnel the boys have dug. He and Huck easily role the grindstone back to the cabin as Tom "superintends" the whole thing. With a nail for a chisel and an old iron bolt for a hammer, Jim starts to work on the grindstone.

Tom decides every authentic prisoner should have to contend with spiders, snakes, rats, and a flower to water with his tears. Although Tom feels a rattlesnake would mean more "glory" for Jim, he finally decides to "let it go" after Jim threatens to leave if he forces the issue. Reluctantly Jim agrees to garter snakes instead but complains about the "bother" and "trouble" it is to be a prisoner. Tom instructs him to play music to the rats and provides him with an onion to make tears to water his Pitchiola flower. When Jim complains, Tom loses his

patience and reprimands him for not appreciating the fact that he had “more gaudier chances than a prisoner ever had in the world to make a name for himself.” Promising to behave, Jim finally apologizes.

The boys catch fifteen rats and decide to hide them under Aunt Sally’s bed, but a little Phelps boy unknowingly releases them from the cage. The boys find Aunt Sally on top of the bed screaming in fear. Busily catching spiders, bugs, frogs, and caterpillars, Huck and Tom even try for a hornet’s nest but decide to give it up. They catch several dozen garter snakes and hide them in a bag in their bedroom. When they go back upstairs all the snakes have mysteriously disappeared, only to show up later all over the house. Aunt Sally, incensed by the whole ordeal, gives Huck and Tom their just reward by spanking them each time she sees another snake.

Unable to get any rest, Jim complains that the rats and snakes do not all sleep at the same time, keeping him on guard day and night. Each time a rat bites Jim, he writes on his shirt or journal with the fresh blood.

Since there has been no news from the plantation below New Orleans, Uncle Silas thinks he will advertise Jim in the New Orleans and St. Louis papers. The mention of St. Louis hits home to Huck, who realizes that Miss Watson will probably see the ad. Tom, however, must continue to do things by the book. The next item on his agenda is the distribution of anonymous letters warning people about Jim’s escape. Huck dresses up like a servant girl and shoves the first warning under the front door. The next night skull and crossbones are placed on the door, but the third night the note warns that “a desperate gang of cutthroats” will invade the property and steal Jim.

Summary of Chapters 40 and 41

After the last warning note has been sent, Huck and Tom take a picnic lunch and go fishing in the river. They check out the raft to make sure everything is in order. When they arrive home for supper that night, everyone in the house is in a state of frenzy. Worried about the threatening letter, Aunt Sally hustles them up to bed after supper without a word.

At half past eleven the boys get up and begin eating the lunch they had stolen from the cellar cupboard. Noticing the butter is missing, Tom sends Huck back to the cellar to get it while he goes to Jim’s cabin to prepare the scene for the escape. Huck finds the butter and stealthily climbs up the stairs, when suddenly he runs into Aunt Sally. He quickly shoves the bread and butter under his hat. Aunt Sally questions him about his mysterious activities in the cellar, but getting nowhere she sends him into the “setting-room” until she has time to get to the bottom of it. In the room he sees fifteen farmers with guns ready to attack the cutthroats who are coming to steal Jim. The room is hot, and the butter under his hat melts and trickles down his forehead. He lifts his hat, revealing the stolen bread and butter. Relieved that his brain is not “oozing out” from brain fever, Aunt Sally hugs him and lets him go.

He runs to Jim’s cabin and frantically tries to explain that the men are coming, and there is no time to lose. The men fill the dark cabin just as Huck, Tom, and Jim slip out the hole and into the lean-to. Tom finally gives the all clear signal, and the three make a run for it. Tom’s britches catch on a splinter on the top rail of the fence, however, and when he pulls loose, the splinter snaps and makes a noise. Soon gunfire is heard, dogs are released, and the chase is on. The dogs are friendly, however, and the runaways make it to the raft safely. Everyone is happy, but Huck and Jim suddenly notice Tom has been shot in the leg. Tom insists they go on, but Jim refuses to leave before they get a doctor for Tom. Huck goes for the doctor, instructing Jim to hide in the woods when the doctor arrives.

Huck gets the doctor out of bed and tells him a story about Tom kicking his gun in his dreams and shooting himself in the leg. The doctor is a kind old man who agrees to help, but insists on going alone because he feels the canoe is safe for one person only. He becomes suspicious when Huck blurts out that it easily held three. Waiting for the doctor’s return, Huck sleeps on a lumber pile all night. The doctor has not returned by morning, and Huck runs into Uncle Silas in town. Under pressure to explain their absence, he tells Uncle Silas that he and

Sid (Tom) were all over the river last night looking for the runaway slave. Huck claims Sid is at the post office so they wait awhile, but when he does not show up, they go home to Aunt Sally who is overjoyed to see Huck.

The house is still full of people who are eager to overstate the truth about what happened the night before. Mrs. Hotchkiss is worse than the others, claiming the runaway was not in his right mind.

That night Aunt Sally tucks Huck in and asks him not to leave. Seeing her caring nature, he finds it impossible to sneak out this time, but his mind is on Tom and he sleeps restlessly. He slides down the lightning rod several times during the night, but when he sees Aunt Sally waiting up for Tom, he goes back upstairs.

Summary of Chapters 42 and 43

The next morning Uncle Silas looks for Tom in town but comes back discouraged. He hands Aunt Sally a letter from her sister that he had picked up at the post office the day before. She starts to open the letter, but glances out of the window and drops it as she sees Tom being brought in on a mattress. He is followed by the doctor and Jim, who has his hands tied behind his back. Thinking Tom is dead, Aunt Sally runs up to him, but he is delirious and can only mutter something unintelligible. Aunt Sally is happy just to see him alive.

While the others go into the house with Tom, Huck follows the men who take Jim back to his cabin. He hears them cursing Jim and giving him an occasional blow on the head for running away. They threaten to hang him as an example to other runaway slaves. They chain both his legs and hands to a big staple driven into the bottom log of the cabin. He is put on a diet of bread and water, and farmers with guns plan to guard his door at night while bulldogs will be on the watch during the day. In a little while the doctor comes to check on Jim. When he sees his deplorable situation, he asks them not to punish him too severely since Jim demonstrated exemplary behavior while he was with the doctor. He explains that Jim stepped out of hiding when Tom became seriously ill and incoherent, threatening to kill the doctor. Jim offered to help and he did it well. He tells them Jim is worth one thousand dollars and kind treatment too. At this the men soften their approach slightly. Huck hopes they will remove some of the chains and alter his diet but doesn't dare suggest it.

The first chance Huck gets, he slips into the sick room. Bewildered and a bit confused, Tom soon wakes up, asking about the raft and Jim. Huck tells him all is well. Aunt Sally listens in shock as he suddenly blurts out the whole story about their fantastic scheme to free Jim, the runaway slave. Aunt Sally calls him a rascal, threatening to punish him if she catches him meddling with Jim again. Surprised to learn Jim did not escape, Tom orders them to release him immediately because he is not a slave. He tells them that Miss Watson, who died two months ago, "set him free in her will." Puzzled, Huck asks Tom about his motives for planning the escape. Tom tells him he did it for the adventure.

Aunt Polly appears in the doorway and the game of mistaken identities is over. She has come eleven hundred miles to see why Aunt Sally has not answered her letters. Knowing the letters would spell trouble for him, Tom admits intercepting them.

Aunt Polly confirms Jim's freedom and Jim is released. Uncle Silas, Aunt Sally, and Aunt Polly make a fuss over Jim for helping the doctor nurse Tom. Tom gives him forty dollars for being a patient prisoner. Pleased and excited, Jim tells Huck it is his hairy breast that has made him rich again just as he had predicted on Jackson's Island.

Tom suggests that the three of them go for "howling adventures" in Indian territory. When Huck complains that he has no money for such adventures, Tom tells him the six thousand dollars is still there since his father has never been back for it. Jim then reveals the secret about Huck's pap. Hesitantly, he tells him Pap was the dead man in the floating house they were exploring on the river. With no show of emotion, Huck announces his plan to "light out for the territory ahead of the rest." Aunt Sally wants to adopt him and "civilize" him and "he can't stand it." He has been through that before.