



T o m ' s W o n d e r f u l D r e a m

THAT WAS TOM'S GREAT PLAN—TO RETURN HOME WITH THE OTHER pirates and go to the church to hear people pray for their souls. They had returned across the river in the darkness the night before, and had stayed in the forest until nearly daylight. They had entered the church and finished their sleep there before the people came. Then they appeared at the most important moment.

The next morning Aunt Polly and Mary were very loving toward Tom. He had everything that he wanted to eat. There was much more talk than usual. Aunt Polly spoke:

“We can laugh now, Tom. But you were not very kind to let me suffer. You came across the river to surprise us in the church. Why could you not come across the river to tell me that you were not really dead?”

“Yes, you could have done that, Tom,” said Mary. “I believe that you would have done it, if you had thought of it.”

“Would you, Tom?” said Aunt Polly. Her face was brighter at this thought. “Would you, if you had thought of it? I hope that you love me enough to do it. Did you think of it?”

“Tom is always rushing,” Mary said. “He never thinks.”

“Sid would have thought. And Sid would have come. Tom, some day you will be sorry. You will wish that you had cared more for me. But then it will be too late.”

“I do care for you,” said Tom. “I wish that I had thought. But I dreamed about you.”

“A cat does as much as that. What did you dream?”

“I dreamed that I saw you sitting there by the bed. Sid and Mary were sitting with you. And I dreamed that Joe Harper’s mother was here.”

“Indeed she was, one night. Did you dream any more?”

“Yes. But I can’t remember all of it.”

“Try, Tom. Try to remember.”

“You said that the door must be open because you could feel the wind coming in. You said that was strange. And you told Sid—”

“What did I tell Sid, Tom?”

“You told him—oh, you told him to close the door. And you were talking about me. I remember better now. You said that I was not bad. You said that I was only wild and full of life like a—like any young animal.”

“I never heard anything like this in all my life! And some people say that dreams are never true. Tell me more, Tom.”

“And then you began to weep.”

“Yes, I did. I did.”

“Then Mrs. Harper began to weep. She said that Joe was good, also. And then you told about my giving the Painkiller to the cat. And then there was a lot of talk about finding our bodies, and about praying in the church on Sunday.”

“It is all true!”

“And Mrs. Harper went home. And you prayed for me—and I could see you and hear every word. And you went to bed. And I was very sorry for you. And I had a letter for you. It was on a piece of wood. On the wood were the words, ‘We are not dead—we are away being pirates.’ I kissed you on the lips and went away again.”

“Did you, Tom? Did you?” She took him in her arms.

“It was very kind, but it was only a dream,” said Sid.

“Be quiet, Sid! And Tom, here is a big apple for you. And now, you children, go to school.”

Tom walked slowly and proudly, feeling that all eyes were watching him. Smaller boys followed him, proud to be seen with him. Boys of his own size tried not to show that they knew he had been away. But they did know. They wished that they had sun-browned skin like his. They wished that they were as famous.

Tom decided that he no longer was interested in Becky Thatcher. Being famous was enough pleasure for him. When Becky arrived at school, Tom seemed not to see her. But he saw her playing with other boys and girls. He saw that she often came near him and looked at him.

And he began talking to Amy Lawrence.

Becky tried to go away from him, but her feet would not do as she wished. They carried her near to the group around Tom. She said to one of the girls, “Mary, where were you yesterday? I wanted to tell you about the picnic.”

“Oh, whose picnic?”

“My mother is going to let me have one.”

“I hope that she will let me come.”

“It will be my picnic and I may ask those that I want. I want you and all my friends to come.” She looked at Tom, but he was talking to Amy Lawrence.

Now the others in the group began asking if they could go to the picnic. Soon all had asked except Tom and Amy. Tom turned away.

Becky’s legs were shaking and tears came to her eyes. She would not let the others see her sadness. She went away alone, to think of what to do.

When Tom saw her again, she and a boy named Alfred Temple were sitting together, looking at a book. Now Tom suddenly wanted to stop talking to Amy. He escaped from her and went to look again at Becky and Alfred Temple. And Becky seemed not to see Tom. But she saw him, and she saw that he was suffering, and she was glad.

“That Alfred Temple!” Tom thought. “Alfred Temple and his fine clothes! I will catch you! I will take you and—”

He began hitting the air as if he were fighting with the other boy.

At noon Tom went home. Becky again looked at the book with Alfred, hoping that Tom would see them. But Tom did not appear.

Suddenly she began to weep. She left Alfred and walked away.

Alfred followed, hoping to find some way to make her happy again. But she said: "Go away! I never want to see you again!"

Alfred was quick to understand. Becky had been trying to make Tom suffer. Alfred went into the school. He saw one of Tom's books—and thought how he could hurt Tom. He opened the book to the page they were to study that afternoon. He destroyed the page in a manner that would make it seem that Tom had done it.

Becky, looking in the window, saw him do it. She thought of telling Tom. Then she decided that she would not. She would let the school-teacher beat Tom for what had happened to his book.