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The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

A play

Adapted by **Matthew Francis**

From the novel by **Mark Twain**

Samuel French — London
New York - Toronto - Hollywood



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THE ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN

First presented at the Greenwich Theatre, London, on 6th December 1996, with the following cast:

Huckleberry Finn	Daniel Newman
Jim	Clive Llewellyn

St Petersburg, Missouri

Miss Watson	Lois Baxter
The Widow Douglas	Ruth Arnold
Tom Sawyer	Andrew Muir
Judge Thatcher	Ray Llewellyn
Pap	Nathan Osgood
Pike	Roger Moss
Judith Loftus	Lois Baxter

On the Raft

Preacher	David Killick
Mr Smith	Ray Llewellyn

The Grangerfords and the Shepherdsons

Colonel Grangerford	David Killick
Ma Grangerford	Lois Baxter
Bob Grangerford	Ian Gelder
Tom Grangerford	Nathan Osgood
Sophia Grangerford	Ruth Arnold
Charlotte Grangerford	Roger Moss
Buck Grangerford	Andrew Muir
Harney Shepherdson	Roger Moss

On the Mississippi Again

The King	David Killick
The Duke	Ian Gelder

Wilks and Sherburn

Peter Wilks	Ray Llewellyn
Sherburn	Nathan Osgood
Mary-Jane Wilks	Lois Baxter

Susan Wilks
Judge Bell
Doctor Robinson
Abner Shackelford
Harvey Wilks
William Wilks

Ruth Arnold
Roger Moss
Nathan Osgood
Andrew Muir
Ray Llewellyn
Roger Moss

Other parts played by members of the company

Directed by Matthew Francis
Designed by Russell Craig
Lighting designed by Howard Harrison
Music by Mia Soteriou
Sound designed by Ed Brimley
Choreography by Andrew George
Assistant Director Philip Wilson
University of South Florida placements:
Julian Fletcher, Erica Jensen

Students involved in the original USF workshops were:
Alan Fessenden, Julian Fletcher, D. Christian Gottshall,
Missy Hicks, Erica Jensen, Vince Lasala, Jason Quinn,
Monica Reagan, Jane Robinson, Bridget Roney and
Heather Smith

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CHARACTERS

Huckleberry Finn
Jim
Miss Watson
The Widow Douglas
Tom Sawyer
Judge Thatcher
Pap
Pike
Judith Loftus
Preacher
Mr Smith
Colonel Grangerford
Ma Grangerford
Bob Grangerford
Tom Grangerford
Sophia Grangerford
Charlotte Grangerford
Buck Grangerford
Harney Shepherdson
The King
The Duke
Peter Wilks
Sherburn
Mary-Jane Wilks
Susan Wilks
Judge Bell
Doctor Robinson
Abner Shackleford
Harvey Wilks
William Wilks

Other parts played by members of the Company

The action takes place in various interior and exterior settings

Time — nineteenth century

This adaptation was inspired by a series of workshops
on *Huckleberry Finn* undertaken by Matthew Francis
with students from the Department of Theatre at
The University of South Florida.

PRODUCTION NOTES

DESIGN

It is essential that the story of the play moves along at a good pace. A composite set — on which swift changes of light can suggest new locations — is preferable to a series of sets that take valuable time to position and therefore slow up the action. At Greenwich, many of the props stayed on stage as set-dressing throughout the play — the canoe, assorted cases, chairs, tables, ropes, the pole for the raft, even items of costume. This speeded transitions, suggesting the clutter of memory, and giving an “adventure playground” feel to the production which suits the style of the story.

CAST SIZE

We presented the play with ten actors. There is no reason why this number should not be increased substantially. Actors playing only one or two smaller roles could be an important part of the ensemble. A production with twenty-five or more performers could field a whole crowd of Blackhats at the top of the show, a townful of people to protest at Huck’s abduction by Pap, forestsful of sound effects, a posse of bounty hunters, a big extended family for the Grangerfords and so on.

TONE

Huck’s life on the river is an escape from the tough world on shore. Many of the characters he encounters there have a nightmare quality: Pap (obviously), Pike, Sherburn, and the Preacher. But even Miss Watson, The Duke, The King and Colonel Grangerford can be sinister or frightening as well as flamboyant/eccentric/amusing. Huck and Jim ricochet between these characters — their lives and freedom constantly in danger. At times their encounters with villains, rascals, or madmen are hilariously funny, but the context is often grotesque and the outcome either potentially or actually horrific.

MUSIC

There is an original score for this version of *Huckleberry Finn*. It was composed by Mia Soteriou and is available on DAT or cassette from RACHEL DANIELS at LONDON MANAGEMENT, 2-4 Noel Street, London W1V 3RB (0171 287 9000). Sheet music for the Grangerford song is also available.

Publisher’s note: Arkansas has been spelt phonetically in this Edition.

Other plays by Matthew Francis published by
Samuel French Ltd:

Northanger Abbey
The Prisoner of Zenda
A Tale of Two Cities

This adaptation is dedicated to my godsons
Benjamin Sheinwald
and
Alfie Brown
with love and luck
for the big river.

ACT I

SCENE 1

Night Terrors

A big old-fashioned bed with crisp old-fashioned bedclothes; high off the ground, uncomfortable. There are books on a table and coats hanging on the wall

Huckleberry (Huck) is asleep in the bed but wakes suddenly. The Lights snap up as he wakes. He's startled, we're startled

Huck Tom and me found the money! Where Injun Joe hid it. Under that rock. But I don't want it no more. They can have it. The six thousand dollars. *I don't want it!* Deadwood earnest! They can keep it. Bein' rich ain't what it's cracked up to be. It's just worry and worry and sweat and sweat. I got to wear them blamed clothes that just smothers me ... just *smothers* me ...

Jim comes forward from the shadows. Hushes him. Lies him down again and sings a lullaby to Huck

Jim *(singing)* Hush little baby, don't you cry;
 Down by the river, the morning come by —
 And one of these mornings you're gonna be free,
 Big river run slow, but out to the sea.

Jim slips away

But immediately, the shadows in the room begin to dance and stir. Huck grows restless again

Huck No. Stop it. You leave me alone. *Go away!*

A figure appears from behind the bed: he wears ragged clothes and an old black hat with the top caved in

Blackhat 1(Pap) This is the tale of Huckleberry Finn ...

Huck “wakes” into the dream

Huck What do you want from me? You left us! I ain’t goin’ nowhere with you no more!

Another figure (Blackhat 2) melts up through the floor

Blackhat 2 Huckleberry Finn! Born April 25th 1835!

Huck They said we could keep the money! But you can have it! Tom and me found it in the robbers’ cave — but you can have it!

A third figure (Blackhat 3) comes through the window

Blackhat 3 Born 25th April 1835, and raised in St Petersburg, Missouri.

The three work at untidying the room: pulling at the bedding, and juggling with Huck’s books

Huck Stop it! *Stop it!* I’m about ready to quit. I’ll make a break for it!

He climbs up on to the roof of the bedroom

Another Blackhat (4) is there

Blackhat 4 Raised in St Petersburg — a pauper and a heathen.

Huck Stop that! I didn’t do it! Whatever it was — *I didn’t do it!*

Blackhat 2 Fluttering with rags, sleeping on doorsteps ...

Huck You left me there, you left us all! You didn’t care!

Blackhat 1 But now a rich pup in a rich pup’s bed!

Huck I hate it here! I hate it hate it *hate it!*

Blackhat 1 A rich pup in a rich pup’s bed ...

Blackhat 4 ... but still the son of the town drunkard!

Huck Go away from here. I’m not coming with you. And don’t you make me!

Blackhats The tale of Huckleberry Finn. Born April 25th 1835. Raised in St Petersburg, Missouri. *Son of the town drunkard.*

Blackhat 1 (Pap) drives a knife into the wall of the room

Huck *Pap!*

SCENE 2

Life with the Widow

Miss Watson and the Widow Douglas appear at the door with a lamp. They stand and survey the chaos

The Blackhats freeze, the shadows settle

Miss Watson Huckleberry Finn!

Widow Huckleberry dear!

And the Blackhats are gone

During the following, the Widow and Huck tidy up a little

Miss Watson What is this caterwauling?

Widow You were making such a noise, dear.

Miss Watson And what is this mess?

Huck I wus in a dream.

Miss Watson When you made the mess?

Huck When I made the noise.

Miss Watson Look at these clothes!

Widow And look at the floor!

Miss Watson And look at the bed!

Widow Was it a nightmare?

Miss Watson Can't you sleep a little neater?

Widow It must've been a bad one. You poor dear.

Miss Watson Don't coddle the boy!

Widow I'm not coddling him. Just giving him a little good attention.

Huck I'm all right. I'm just fine.

Widow Now you lie down ——

Miss Watson Screaming out ——

Widow —— and make yourself comfy ——

Miss Watson —— wakin' all the neighbours ...

Widow —— and don't you dream no more.

Huck I thought I saw ... I thought that p'raps ...

Miss Watson Perhaps you thought you saw the devil's ferryman, bringin' his old master into heads full of wickedness and sin.

Huck I thought I saw my Pap.

Widow Perhaps we should say a prayer.

Huck I said my prayers.

Miss Watson Perhaps you did *not*.

Widow Dear Lord ——

Miss Watson Dear Lord ——

Huck Dear Lord ——

Miss Watson You sit up when you say your prayers. You show some respect!

Huck You just told me to lie down!

Miss Watson Dear Lord!

Huck Dear Lord!

Widow Now don't scrunch up like that: sit up straight!

Miss Watson Dear Lord. If I should die tonight, please take my soul and carry it to heaven.

Huck Please tell me, Mrs Douglas, what is heaven?

Miss Watson Huckleberry Finn! What a question to ask!

Widow (*quickly*) It's where the good Lord lives with his angels and all the good souls he has saved from eternal damnation.

Huck And what goes on in this heaven?

Widow Why, singin', and praisin' the Lord, and playin' upon harps ...

Huck And will Miss Watson be goin' there?

Widow Why surely.

Huck Well, I'm not goin' where she's goin' — so I won't try for it!

Miss Watson *Huckleberry Finn, you is the worst and wickedest boy on the face of God's earth!*

Widow You say you're sorry to my sister.

Miss Watson You and me will see each other in the morning, Huckleberry Finn! You and me will have a talk you won't forget.

Huck Will Tom Sawyer go to heaven do you think?

Miss Watson Not by a considerable sight! He's heading for the other place.

Huck Well — I hope I'll be there to see him.

Miss Watson *There!* That's the devil speaking.

Widow How could you, Huckleberry? How could you say such a thing?

Huck Oh, please Miss Douglas — don't cry. I didn't mean you no harm.

Miss Watson Leave the boy alone. I'll deal with him in the morning!

Widow Oh Huckleberry ——

Miss Watson Wicked, wicked boy ——

Widow — what's to become of you ——

Miss Watson — what's to be done with you ——

Widow My poor, poor boy.

Miss Watson — I'll deal with him in the morning.

Miss Watson and the Widow are gone, taking the warm glow of lamplight with them

SCENE 3

Tom Sawyer

Shadows and darkness. Night noises from outside. Moonlight through the window

Huck Well — I should say I wasn't much for sleepin' after all that. So I tried to sit by the window and think of something cheerful. But it weren't no use. The stars were shining, and the leaves rustlin' in the woods, ever so mournful; and I heard an owl away off, who-who in' about somebody that was goin' to die, and the wind was tryin' to whisper something to me, and I couldn't make out what it was, and so it made the cold shivers run over me. I got so downhearted and scared, I did wish I had some company. I heard a twig snap down amongst the trees. Something was stirring.

Tom's Voice Huckleberry ...

Huck (*picking up a stick*) Get away!

Tom's Voice Huckleberry ...

Huck I told you before, I'm not comin' with you ...

Tom's Voice Huckleberry Finn!

Huck Why don't you just go away and stay away!

Tom leaps in through the window, sweeps his hat off and bows elegantly

Tom It's only me.

Huck Tom! Tom Sawyer!

Tom The castle wall was high, but I made good use of the vines and such like.

Huck You scared me half to death!

Tom Put that stick down — you don't look friendly. It's me — *Tom*.

Huck Well, I can see it's you *now*.

Huck } (*together; making their secret sign*) Fox — Wolf — Bear!

Tom }

Tom You seem a little edgy, Huck.

Huck I — I thought you was my Pap.

Tom Oh, Huckleberry —

Huck I guess I bin dreamin' ...

Tom I ain't no ghost —

Huck It seemed like he was here.

Tom The dead don't walk on a night full o' moonshine.

Huck What do you mean — the dead?

Tom Well ain't you heard?

Huck Heard what?

Tom About your father — about your Pap. It was me that found him. I

thought it was a log. But then I pushed at it and saw it was a man. Lying in the water. A dead man. I rode back to town and spread the word, then led the people down to where the body was. I knew it was your Pap. Same size, same clothes, same hair —uncommon long.

Huck (*after a moment*) Did you git a look at his face?

Tom I couldn't make nothin' of the face. It had been in the water so long. It warn't much like a face at all. He was just floating on his back and staring up to heaven.

Huck That weren't my Pap. That weren't a man at all.

Tom Now, Huck. I saw him — arms and legs and head. It weren't no catfish!

Huck It were a woman.

Tom A woman!

Huck I thought you would'a known. A drowned man don't float on his back, but on his face. That were a woman dressed in a man's clothes.

Tom Why Huckleberry Finn, that's a proper thing to know.

Huck So he'll turn up again.

Tom I need that kind o' learning in my gang.

Huck (*immediately interested*) Your gang?

There is a sudden knock at the door

The boys freeze

Who's there?

Jim (*off*) Only me, Honey.

Huck (*to Tom*) It's Jim! He mustn't find you here. It's best. You gotta hide!

Tom Is there a secret panel in the wall, perhaps? Princes go in and out of castles every day through such a thing.

Huck Not that I know.

Jim (*off*) Huck? Huck?

Huck Under the bed!

Tom (*long-suffering*) Well, it's not what they do in books, but I suppose ...

Huck Quick!

Tom Huck! Knock three times when the danger is past.

And Tom disappears from sight under the bed

Huck (*to the audience*) Jim was Miss Watson's slave.

Jim (*off*) Huck! Is you all right?

Huck I had told him Pap was in my mind again ... (*Opening the door*) Jim! What is it?

Jim enters the room

Jim I heard de row. I heard d'ole missus peckin' at you an' I heard her crash de door and pray real loud for very near a half an hour ...

Huck I had a dream I guess ...

Jim Another like de last?

Huck It seemed like Pap was back again.

Jim Come here, Huck. (*Beat*) Your ole father don't know yit what he's a goin' to do. Sometimes he spec he'll keep away, en den agin he spec he'll come. De bes' way is to res' easy and let de ole man take his own way. Dey's two angels hoverin' roun' 'bout him. One of dem is bright and shiny, and d'other one is dark. De bright one gits him to go right a little while, den de dark one sail in an' bust it all up. But you is all right. You goin' to have considerable trouble in your life, and considerable joy. First one jump out at you, and den de oder.

As he says this, Tom rises up from behind him, covered in a sheet from the bed

First one creep up on you, but den de oder throw his arms around you.

Tom obliges with a demonstration

Tom I am de bright angel, Honey! This is your happy day!

Jim Don't hurt me! Don't come near me! I lived a good life: I's goin' to the good place when I die.

Tom chases Jim round the room, then whips off the sheet

Tom Only me, Honey.

Jim Why, may the Lord forgive you, Tom Sawyer. Sneakin' up on me. Who is you to go scarin' a soul like that?

Tom Why, Jim, I is the Prince of Araby, and genies do whatever I might say, and bring me chewin' gum and diamonds.

Jim Don't you mock de oder world! I got a quarter roun' my neck the divil lef' me — tole me it could cure any poor soul, tole me it could fetch down witches if I need dem ...

Tom Then you can join our gang and waltz down witches when we need 'em; and you, Huck, can be my right-hand man, and help us with the dead bodies. We'll need the bravest weapons and the sharpest knives. What have you got, Huck?

Huck The Persian spear that used to be a handle for the Widow's broom ...

Tom (*seeing the knife Pap left in the wall of the room*) But you is better armed than most I see ...

Huck I had a blund'r buss, but Jim borrowed it for a gate post in the yard.

Tom But the knife, Huck. Where did you get the knife?

Huck I ain't got no knife.

Tom Not a silver-handled fella with a rope worked on the pommel and a brace o' notches in the blade?

Huck What are you talkin' about?

Tom Kinda rough. Could be a pirate's. Moose head on the side.

Huck It's my Pap's. What do you know about it, Tom Sawyer? Where you seen that knife? Where you seen it, Tom?

Tom Why it's here. As if you didn't know.

Huck I knew it weren't no dream. I knew that he'd be back!

Jim I'll tell the missus.

Tom No!

Huck No! No. I reckon he had to come some time or other. It's just as you said, Jim.

Jim and Tom vanish. Pap steps out from behind the coats on the wall

Pap!

Pap (*dangerous, absurd*) You think you're a good deal of a big-bug, don't you?

Huck (*carefully*) Maybe I am, maybe I ain't.

Pap (*the bully*) Don't give me none of your lip. You've put on considerable many frills since I been away. I'll take you down a peg before I get done with you. You're educated too, they say — can read and write. You think you're better than your father now, because he can't? I'll take it out of you. Who told you you might meddle with such highfalutin' foolishness, hey? Who told you you could?

Huck The Widow.

Pap I'll learn her how to meddle. And looky here — you drop that school, you hear? Your mother couldn't read — no, and she couldn't write neither, before she died. I can't. None of the family couldn't before they died. (*Picking up a book*) Say — lemme hear you read.

Huck "As for his clothes — just rags, that was all. The boot on one foot was busted, and two of his toes stuck through. His hair was all tangled up like a mat and his face was filthy ..."

Pap (*smashing the book out of Huck's hand*) It's so. You can do it. I'll lay for you, my smarty. And if I catch you about that school, I'll tan you real good. (*He stops, looks at Huck, giggles*) Ain't you a sweet-scented dandy, though? A bed, and bedclothes; and a lookin'-glass; and a piece of carpet on the floor ... and your own father got to sleep with the hogs in the tanyard. I never seen such a son. (*A beat*) They say you're rich. How's that?

Huck They lie. That's how.

Pap Looky here — mind how you talk to me; I'm a-standin' about all I can

stand now — so don't give me no sass. I've been in town two days, and I ain't heard nothing but about you being rich. They say you found gold, boy, hidden in a cave by the river. Ain't you the lucky one ...

Huck I ain't got no money.

Pap It's a lie. Judge Thatcher's got it. And you're goin' to git it for me!

Huck I ain't got no money — I tell you. You ask Judge Thatcher — he'll tell you the same.

Pap I'll make him give it over. You and me — we're goin' to work on that. You're my boy. They can't keep you here. You're my nat'ral son. (*A beat*) That's why I come. To git you. You and me — we goin' to be a family once again.

SCENE 4

Kidnapped!

Music. The Lights shift and change to suggest the violent abduction

Pap grabs Huck and drags him, kicking and struggling, from the room

Huck calls out to Jim, who arrives just too late to save him

The Widow and Miss Watson call after Pap and Huck as they make a journey up and over the set (Others could also call)

Widow (*off*) The father's taken him. My boy. Huckleberry!

Miss Watson (*off*) The devil came for the devil's child!

Widow (*off*) We'll go to court for him.

Pap (*furious*) I'll see you there! The boy's my child. His money's mine by rights. I'll have it yet!

Widow (*off*) The boy was happy here. This was a home for him — the first he'd known: simple and clean ... school in the morning, prayers when he went to bed.

Huck I didn't like that so well neither — havin' to wash and eat on a plate and comb up and go to bed and get up reg'lar.

Judge (*off*) A drunkard! A villain and a drunkard! A monument of rags and dirt. Profane when he's sober, savage when he's drunk!

Miss Watson (*off*) The devil came for the devil's child!

Pap No more school, no more fancy ways. I'll show y'all who Huck Finn's boss is! Keep your distance now!

They have arrived at Pap's cabin in the woods. There is a straw mattress on the floor, a stove, a barrel, some bottles. No window; one door

Huck (*to the audience*) He took me up the river about three miles — and crossed over to a cabin on the Illinois shore, where the timber was so thick, you couldn't find it if you didn't know where it was.

Pap And if they come to git you, well — I know a place that's six or seven mile off — I'll stow you there and they'll hunt till they drop — but they won't find you.

Huck They'll come.

Pap Git down and make some supper. You light the fire. Now it's time for you to work, boy. You bin poisoned by their fancy ways too long.

Huck The law'll come and git me.

Pap The law? You think I give a skunk's hide for the law. Why — here's the law a-standin' ready to take a man's son away from him — a man's own son, which he had all the trouble and all the anxiety and all the expense of raising — What do you say to *that*?

Huck I don't say nothin', sir. I ain't the law. I don't know the law ...

Pap The law takes a man worth six thousand dollars and upards, and jams him into an old trap of a cabin like this, and lets him go round in clothes that ain't fitten for a hog. You call that *gov'ment*?

Huck I don't call it nothin'. The gov'ment don't keep me here.

Pap I tell you what, boy — I may get my money in the end, but the Widow'll go to court for *you*. And folks think that she'll win ...

Huck I won't go back there ...

Pap (*violently*) You can go to blazes. For two cents I'd leave you and this blamed country for good. There was a free nigger in town — from Ohio. He had on the whitest shirt you ever see, and the shiniest hat, and he had a gold watch and a chain, and a silver-headed cane — the awfulest ole gray-headed nabob in the state. They said he was a p'fessor in a college. They said he could *vote*! What is this country a'comin' to? Why ain't this nigger put up at auction and sold? Why? *Why*?

Huck There ain't no slavery in Ohio. He can come and go.

Pap I'll give you come and go. I'll tan your hide. Come here, God dammit. I'm your father — you come here.

Pap stumbles, falls over, hurts himself, screams out

Give me the whiskey, boy, you bring it here. I've got enough for all the drunks in town and one delirium tremens. Give it to me, give it to me!

Huck gives him the whiskey

Pap drinks and drinks

Huck circles him, watching. Pap is now in a state of extreme intoxication. He half sings a song, muttering to himself

Huck (*over this*) I won't stay here no more. I'm leavin' you. If I get through tonight, I'll go tomorrow. I know how. You just lie down. You go to sleep. It's easy. Just lie down. I'll keep as quiet as a mouse. I won't be no bother — just go to sleep, rest up — and then go back to town. I've got a plan Tom Sawyer would be proud of ...

Pap fades into unconsciousness. Huck lies down

SCENE 5

Delirium Tremens

Abruptly, frighteningly, Pap sits up; raving

Huck springs into a corner

Pap Snakes! No — *No* — *Get them off!* — Get them off o' me! — Get off, get off! Snakes ... all over ... on my legs, my poor legs ... snakes crawling over my legs ... I can't shift 'em ... They'll kill me — kill me — kill me ...

Huck There ain't no snakes!

Pap Argh! They're on my face! — bitten, bitten — here — on my cheek — on my cheek! Take him off, take him off, take him off, take him off, take him off *take him off me!* This one — this one on my neck. Please, *please* ... please ...

Huck There ain't no snakes!

Pap Devils — devils — pulling me down — down into hell — deeper than hell — into the snakes ... pulling me down ...

He is suddenly still: horrified, listening

Tramp, tramp, tramp; that's the dead; tramp — tramp — tramp; they're coming after me; but I won't go! Oh they're here! — Don't touch me — don't! Hands off — they're cold — let go — oh, let a poor devil alone!

He whimpers and cries and begs. Then he sees Huck

You. You. The angel of death. I see you now. I'll kill you, kill you dead — then you won't come for me no more. I'll kill *you* — yes — kill the angel of death afore *he kills me!* Kill the angel of death ...

Huck I ain't no angel! It's me! Huckleberry Finn! Keep away. You're drunk and dreamin'.

Pap gives an awful screechy laugh

Pap Damn you, damn you. You're dead. Come here. Don't fly away. I have to kill you, see, so you won't come back for me again. Goddam — my legs — my legs won't move, won't stir. Tired now ... tired out. I'll rest a minute, then I'll kill you ... kill you later ... kill you ...

And he subsides: out cold. From far away — a note of music, a note of hope, of possibility

Huck It came for me. Yesterday — when I was fishin'. A beauty, too: ten foot. Riding high in the water like a duck. Pap was in the shanty still. I swam out to it, climbed in, brought her ashore. It was a *drift canoe*. I hid her good. (*He lies down to sleep*)

A cock crows. Light comes

Pap starts awake

Pap What time is it? Blamed thing ... I gotta go — I'm meetin' the lawyer. He'll get my money for me. You—you clear this place, y'hear? Why don't you do suthin' for a change. I'll lock y'in while I'm away. I know you, boy. Need to lock you in ...

He stumbles out, locking the door

SCENE 6

Escape

Music again, and voices from all over the set. They "remind" Huck about the stages of his plan

He acts it out, taking equipment to the canoe, shooting a pig and so on

Voice The plan, Huckleberry!

Voice You go to work, boy!

Voice The secret plan!

Huck pulls at a piece of the wall, reveals a hole

Voice Take everything!

Voice The whiskey and the bacon ——

Voice The bucket and the tin cup ——

Voice The skillet and the coffee pot ——

Voice The fish lines and the blankets ——

Voice And the gun!

Voice Now put 'em in the boat!

Voice Hurry! It's nearly three o'clock!

Voice Now — take the gun out the back ——

Voice Something'll come along ——

Voice One o' the wild pigs ——

Voice Take care! Don't miss!

The sound of a shot

Voice Nice work, boy!

Voice Hurry, boy, hurry — it's getting on for five!

Voice Go back and get the pig!

Voice Carry him, carry him; don't drag him — lay him on the ground to bleed —

Voice Then drag him down to the river —

Voice Makin' a good trail of blood, so no-one can miss it!

Voice Now — throw him in!

Voice Now — go get the axe, and wipe it with blood ... pull out a bundle of your hair. Stick it to the blood ——

Voice And leave it on the ground!

Voice Now — take the cornmeal — it's in the cabin, by the stove!

Voice Bring it outside!

Voice Trail it away across the grass!

Voice Through the willows east of the cabin ——

Voice Down to the Five Mile lake! It's nearly dark — he'll soon be back!

Voice Now!

All *The canoe!*

Music bursts out here

The Company move round Huck; and lift both him and the canoe into the air

Huck And they'll follow the track of blood to the shore and drag the river for me — And they'll follow the track of meal to the lake to find the robbers that killed me — And they'll hunt the river for my dead carcass — And when they've done — they won't bother no more about Huckleberry Finn! Not Pap, or the Widow, or Miss Watson: And I'll be free. *Free!*

The music swells

SCENE 7

Jackson's Island

Huck I didn't lose no more time. The next minute I was a' spinnin' away soft but quick in the shade of the bank. I came to Jackson's Island, about two mile and a half downstream: big and dark and solid — like a steamboat without any lights. I run the canoe into a deep dent in the bank that I knows about. When I made fast — nobody coulda' seen the canoe from the outside.

The Company set the canoe down and melt away. Huck begins to unload the canoe, and set up camp

Evening on the river. Echoey sounds

Voices from over the water

Voice 1 Hey — aah!

Huck (*startled*) What's that?

Voice 1 Stern oars there! Heave her head to starboard!

Huck (*relieved*) Lumber raft. A mile upstream.

Voice 2 (*singing*) There was a woman in our town,
 In our town did dwell —
 She loved her husband dear — i — lee —
 But another man twice as well ...

The sound of a loud, echoey boom, out on the river

Huck Next evenin' I watched the ferry boat go by. They was firing cannon over the water, tryin' to make my carcass come to the top ——

Another loud boom

'Most everyone was on the boat ...

Voices from the dark are heard across the water

Widow He was like a son ...

Pap And if he's dead — the money comes to me!

Judge I'm mighty interested to hear you say so, Mr Finn ...

Tom Of course — the body will be floatin' face down ...

Miss Watson He goes to a better place — if the good Lord will have him ...

A final “boom”

During the following, Jim enters

Huck I knowed I was all right now. Nobody else would come a-huntin’ after me. But, by and by, I got sort of lonesome, and so I went and set on the bank and listened to the currents washin’ along, and counted the stars and the drift logs and the rafts that came down ... and then I went to bed. There ain’t no better way to put in time when you’re lonesome; you can’t stay so, you soon get over it. And so it was for three nights ...

SCENE 8

Jim

Beat. Then — panic! Huck leaps to his feet

Huck Why, *Jim!*

Jim (*terrified*) Doan hurt me — don’t! I hain’t ever done no harm to a ghos’. I awluz liked dead people, en done all I could for ’em. You go en git in de river agin, where you b’longs, en doan do nuffin to ole Jim, ’at ’uz awluz yo fren’ ...

Huck I ain’t dead, Jim!

Jim Blame you chile — don’t you know nuffin ’tall? You is dead! De bad man killed yourself and threw yo’ body in de river!

Huck Jim — *No!*

Jim An’ all de ladies and gen’l’men go over to see de place you’s killed, an’ de judge say you is killed, and de Widder say you’s killed

Huck Jim — listen!

Jim Dere ain’t no point in goin’ funder! You is dead, Honey. And now I’s talkin’ to a ghos’ and de devil’ll surely come f’ me ...

Huck Jim! *Jim!* I ain’t dead — I’m alive — I escaped — (*in one breath*) I sawed a hole in the wall and found a boat and killed a pig and made a trail o’ blood to the river an’ a trail o’ corn to the lake and I stuck my hair to the blade of the axe and took the cup and the blankets and the bacon and the sugar and the skillet and the fish-lines and the whiskey and the bucket and the gun and I threw the pig in the river and I put the wood back in the hole and I covered my tracks and I put things in the boat and spun the boat downstream and I set up camp here and I made everyone think I was dead and it wuz all my plan and everybody thinks I *am* dead. *Even you!*

Jim (*after a suitable beat*) Why, you *rapscallion*. De Widder goana be dat *mad* wid you.

Huck But that ain't nothin' to what she'll be with you. I'm not afraid of you tellin' folk where I am. How d'you come to be here, Jim?

Jim Maybe I better not tell.

Huck Why?

Jim Well, dey's reasons. But you wouldn't tell on me?

Huck Blamed if I would, Jim!

Jim Well — I b'lieve you, Huck. I — I run off.

Huck (*amazed*) Jim!

Jim (*alarmed*) You said you wouldn't tell!

Huck (*a big moment for Huck*) Well, I did. I did. I said I wouldn't and I'll stick to it. Honest injun I will. People can call me a low-down abolitionist and despise me for keepin' mum — but that don't make no difference. So now — let's know all about it!

Jim Well, you see, it uz dis way. I noticed dey wuz a slave-trader roun' de place considerable, lately, and I begun to git oneasy. Well — de night before you wuz killed — I creeps to de do' pooty late, en I hear dis man talkin' wid de ole missus ...

The light shifts to the Widow's room which "takes over" from the island scene

Widow But you can't sell him! Esther! How would we manage?

Pike But the purchaser is more than generous.

Miss Watson Mr Pike — tell Mrs Douglas the terms.

Pike My client is a conn'oser. He is a master of his trade. This slave ——

Widow His name is *Jim* ...

Pike — this slave is worth eight hundred dollars to him.

Miss Watson Eight hundred dollars, Martha. Think of that.

Widow Who *is* the purchaser?

Pike A gentleman of substance. Noble. Particular. Ask any man in Arkansaw — he'll tell you. Colonel Sherburn has a reputation.

Widow Selling him down the river ... why — he's a piece of us.

Miss Watson Come back tomorrow, Mr Pike — and bring your gold!

The lights focus back to Jim and Huck

Jim I lit out mighty quick, I tell you. I hid by de sho' to wait for ev'rybody to go 'way, an' when it came dark, I tuck out up de river road. I'd made up my mind — a raf' is what I's after. It doan make no track. I saw a piece o' one come roun' de p'int, so I swam out agin de current an' clumb up on her en laid down on de planks. I got cau't in de snags back o' dis island, but brought her roun' an' made her fast. I bin here two days now.

Huck Welcome to the island, Jim! It's real nice here. I wouldn't want to be nowhere else — nor with no-one else neither!

Jim Why, Huck — dat's jus' how I look on it 'n all!

Huck You must be most starved, ain't you?

Jim I reckon I could eat a hoss. I tink I could!

Music

Activity. Hucks lights a fire; Jim catches a huge catfish which both of them struggle to land, before it gets the better of them. They fall back, laughing

The light shifts to the Widow's room which "takes over" again

Pike (*furious*) Gone!

Miss Watson But we've hunted high and low ...

Pike Colonel Sherburn will be most unhappy!

Miss Watson But Jim has never given any trouble. He's the best of servants.

Pike Not the best of slaves. You'll offer a reward.

Miss Watson How much?

Pike Three hundred dollars. We'll set that off against the purchase price.

Miss Watson Where can he be?

Pike He won't git far. I'll track him down. He's big. I'll find that boy.

Miss Watson Don't harm him! Promise me — you'll not harm him!

Pike Harm him? But he's a runaway. A runaway, Miss Watson. Way beyond the law ...

Pike and Miss Watson go

SCENE 9

Snakes Alive

The following evening on the island

Huck I killed a snake this mornin', Jim. Right here — right in our camp! A beauty!

Jim What you do wid it?

Huck (*smiling*) Hidden it.

Jim Where?

Huck Nearby.

Jim *You git rid o' dat ting, you hear me?* Dat is de worse luck — touch a dead snake! Worse still — keep 'n.

Huck But our luck's in! It's here, Jim! We got out.

Jim (*irritated*) Never you mind, Honey, never you mind. And don't you git too peart. Dese tings come round. You kep dat snake, an' dat snake fetch bad luck. I tell you it's a comin'!

Huck I'm sorry, Jim —

Jim I tell you it's a-comin', an' dere ain't no way we kin slide by it!

Huck *Jim* — I'll show you where !

Jim (*getting under his blanket*) I's goan sleep now. In the mornin' — take de ting — an' troe it in de river —

Huck *Jim* — *it's there!*

Jim — an' den us done wid it!

Huck *Under your blanket!*

Jim Ahh! It bit me, Huck — *de blame ting bit me!*

Huck Jim, it's *dead*. It can't bite you —

Jim *Don't you know nuthin'?* De dead snake wife come to find him, an' curl up roun' his body! *She* de one dat bite! Look — *look!* Dere, dere! Huck — kill de ting now — dere on de ground — *dere!*

Huck attacks the snake with a stick. (Production note: if the stick and blanket are set carefully, — a rubber snake can be attached to the end of the stick with magician's wire, then the snake really dances when Huck beats it to death)

Huck My Lord, I'm sorry, Jim, I'm sorry. Look — it's dead — can't bite you again — I'm sorry, Jim. Where'd it git you, Jim?

Jim Here on de heel. Git me da whiskey, Huck — I gotta drink it all — dat'll help it — yer Pap's whiskey, Huck!

Huck Whiskey, whiskey — here Jim — here y'are ... all o' Pap's whiskey...

Jim Oh Lord, oh Lord — dis whiskey — *Hi* — *Ahh* — *Oh oh oh oh* — drink it down and drive de pison out —

Huck I'll go git help. I'll go back to St Pete. Any woman got the remedy in her home. I'll git it for you — Jim — I'll go ...

Jim Dey'll know you, boy, dey'll take you back — *Aieee* — I'll git tro' dis ... oh my Lord, de whiskey, de whiskey ...

Huck I want to go — I want to go — and they won't git me. I got a plan — *I got a plan!* I'll do exactly what Tom Sawyer would've done. *Go in disguise!* He showed me how. I'll steal somethin' from a clothes line! *Jim* — lie back. Lie back an' you'll be fine ... lie back!

Huck races away

SCENE 10

A Reward

A light picks up the figure of Pike, addressing a crowd

Pike Three hundred dollars for the murderin' slave. Three hundred dollars for the slave — alive: I want him alive. He's out there, watchin', waitin'. Whose child will he murder next — your little Jane, your little Johnny? He's still in Jefferson County, gentlemen. Make yourself rich, and our poor children safe. Arrest the slave. And let the ab'litionists take note — a slave will live and die a slave in this state. Scour the country. Jim is the murderer's name. Find him and bring him in. Bring him to *me*!

Lights out on Pike, and straight up on —

SCENE 11

Judith Loftus

A kitchen with a dresser, on it are a pair of spectacles. Judith Loftus is scurrying around, cursing, peering myopically about her. She's a touch crazy: a fairy-tale figure

Judith Where did I put the darn things? Where did I put my eye-glasses? Where the devil are they? Some hobgoblin come in here and dance them out the door! Husband say — keep 'em on a rope around yer neck. I'll put a rope around *his* neck ... bringin' me here.

There is a knock at the door

Come in. *Come in!*

Huck enters, dressed as a girl

Hello — hello, my dear. Don't stand there useless ... come in and sit — *sit down!*

Huck (*hesitantly shrill*) Why thank you!

Judith What's your name?

Huck Sarah Williams.

Judith Well, Sarah Williams — can you see them?

Huck See what?

Judith I got a pile o' mendin' — shirts and pants — and this old coat. I guess I'll have to try without them.

Huck Without what?

Judith (*abruptly*) Whereabouts do you live?

Huck In Hookerville — seven mile below. I've walked — I've run from there —

Judith I might've put my glasses in the dresser there. Will you look, child?

Huck finds the glasses and is about to proffer them, but Judith is off on a different tack

Tell th' honest truth — I hate the place. Nothin' but wind howlin' through, and rats. Rats as free as if they owned the place ... *there!* Look there!

She hurls a stone at a rat but — of course — misses by a mile

Blame creatures! Too damn fast for me. (*A beat*) You find them eye-glasses?

Huck (*a sudden decision*) No.

Judith Too bad. What was you sayin', child?

Huck It's my mother! She's sick — a snake bite. We don't have no remedy, an' I come to tell my Uncle Abner Moore an' see if he can help.

Judith Out on your own? It's not safe, child. A boy was murdered here five days ago.

Huck (*too eagerly*) Oh yes?

Judith You knew him did ya, child?

Huck Well —

Judith A scoundrel by report — a scoundrel and a mischief-maker. Nothin' but a burden to his aunt ...

Huck No!

Judith What's that?

Huck (*covering up*) Who did the murder, then? This aunt?

Judith Some think the boy's father done it ... Will you be a honey and thread this needle for me? My eyes won't let me.

Huck pokes the needle at the thread without much success

Most everybody thought the father first. But then they changed right round and judged it was a runaway who done it — slave named Jim ...

Huck (*recklessly; in his boy's voice*) No! Not him — he's much too —

Judith You knew him, too?

Huck (*caught out, very innocent; in his girl's voice*) No.

Judith Have you thread that needle, child?

Huck (*struggling*) There — no — there — no — there (*as a boy*) Ow! (*as a girl*) ow! — there, that's it.

Judith Why, thank you.

Huck Are they lookin' for the slave?

Judith There's a reward for him — one for old Finn, too. They'll get the slave real soon.

Huck (*alarmed*) Oh? Why?

Judith I noticed smoke on Jackson's Island yesterday. My neighbour tells me no-one lives there. I said to husband — well, might be worth the trouble to go down and give the place a hunt, so husband's goin' over later on tonight, him and two other men ...

Huck (*shaken*) Oh my, *oh my*!

Judith You ill, child? Why, you're shivering. Come here, child — Let me kiss you.

Huck grimaces and ducks away. Judith registers this

There now.

Huck I'm just fine ...

Judith (*after a beat*) Well, be a honey, take a stone and keep an eye out for those pesky rats. I can hardly see 'em.

Huck (*his confidence returning*) Sure thing, ma'am.

He picks up a stone and watches the skirting

Judith What did you say your name was, Honey?

Huck (*not thinking*) Mary — Mary Williams.

Judith Oh, Mary Williams, is it? I thought you said it was Sarah when you first come in.

Huck Sarah? Well — yes — I did. Sarah Mary Williams. My Uncle Abner always calls me Mary. It was his own poor mother's name ——

Suddenly, a rat scuttles by. Huck hurls the stone at it with real boyish brio

(*Boy's voice*) Bullseye! (*Girl's voice*) Bullseye!

Judith (*picking up the rat*) No, that was first rate. I'm very much obliged to you. I'm very much obliged.

She picks up the rat. It squeaks. She bludgeons it against the wall, then throws it in a bin

But, Honey, tell me — what's your real name?

Huck (*nervous*) What, mum?

Judith Now is it Bill, or Tom or Bob — what is it?

Huck Please to don't poke fun at a poor girl ——

Judith I ain't goin' to hurt you — and I ain't goin' to tell on you, nuther. You're a runaway prentice, that's all. It ain't anything. Tell me about it — your secret's safe with me.

Huck (*after a beat; bursting out*) It's no use tryin' to play it any longer. I'll make a clean breast, tell you everything. My father and mother is dead — and the law bound me and my brother to a mean old farmer in the country, thirty miles from here. He treated us bad — whip us and make us sleep in the yard — and so we took our chance, and I stole some of his daughter's clothes and we cleared out, and we bin three nights travellin' from there, and then last night my brother got bit by a snake and I's at my wit's end — and I believe you is my only hope.

Judith Hold on, child; I'll put you up a shot of remedy. There — get back to your little brother — bring him here when he can walk. We'll help you. But what's your real name, Honey?

Huck (*solemnly*) John Peters, mum.

Judith Well, John Peters, you do a girl tolerable poor — though you might fool some men, maybe. First — when you thread a needle, hold the needle still and poke the thread at it, and not the other way. Second — don't flinch so bad when someone makes to kiss you. Third, if you throw a thing, don't throw it like a cow-poke at a fairground. Miss first time.

Huck Yes ma'am.

Judith And can I have my glasses back? I need 'em for my sewin'. Though I can spot a story tall as yours at fifty paces.

A beat. They smile and shake hands

Huck runs

SCENE 12

The Raft

Smith Two hundred dollars for the drunkard Finn. Murderer of his child: infanticide, unnatural monster. Wanted dead or alive. Take no risks, good people: his depravity must threaten all. Finn will pay a dreadful price for murdering his sweet son, Huckleberry. Hunt him down. Arm yourselves well. He shall not, *must* not leave Jefferson County!

The island again

Huck — desperate, out of breath, half in/half out of his dress. Through the next speech, he hurls their possessions onto the raft — gun, blankets, bottles, fishing rod, whatever...

Huck Jim! I got the remedy, I got the remedy! Drink it down, drink it down. You wait there while I load the raft — you take it easy. Three, four days, you'll be just fine. I got to hurry. They're after us. There ain't a minute to lose. I'll load the raft and then I'll help you down. You take it easy.

Jim A boat come by. Men lookin'. I tink some such ting. Mos' o' de truck is on de raf' — I put it dere while you's away ——

Huck grabs the gun, then helps Jim hobble down to the raft

Boxes and bundles are piled at one side. Huck grabs a pole

Push her away, Huck — push her away!

Big river music. The raft spins out to mid-stream. Mist rises from under it. Music to underscore

Huck Each morning — when the first streak o' day began to show, we tied up at an island and hacked off branches to cover up the raft. At night we headed on out to the main channel. We could run between seven and eight hours, with a current that was makin' over four mile an hour. We caught fish and talked and we took a swim now and then to keep off sleepiness. It was kind of solemn, drifting down the big, still river — layin' on our backs, lookin' up at the stars. The fifth night, we passed St Louis, and it was like the whole world lit up.

Sound and lights give us some idea of this

Jim and Huck whoop with delight

SCENE 13

Kings and Frenchmen

Huck I reckon there ain't no king, there ain't no empr'r, there ain't nobody on this earth more happy than me at this moment.

Jim Dat's f' sure, Huck, 'cos kings and empr'rs and such truck — dey only in fairy stories.

Huck No. There is such men. I read about them at the Widow's.

Jim So. (*A beat*) How much do a king git?

Huck Why — they git a thousand dollars a month if they want it; they can have just as much as they want; everything belongs to them.

Jim Ain't dat gay! En what dey got to do, Huck?

Huck They don't do nothin'! They just set around.

Jim Is dat so?

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