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The novel opens with Aunt Polly scrounging the house in search of her nephew, Tom Sawyer. She finds him in the closet, discovers that his hands are covered with jam, and prepares to give him a whipping. Tom cries out theatrically. "Look behind you!" and when Aunt Polly turns, Tom escapes over the fence. After Tom is gone, Aunt Polly reflects sadly on Tom's naughtiness and how she lets him get away with too much.

Tom comes home at supper-time. Tom's mother has a final talk with him about his adventures. During supper, Aunt Polly makes Tom a special hot cake with currants and raisins and they are eaten in the yard. Tom and the new arrival eat all the cake together and eventually choose the newcomers all the way home.

When he returns home in the evening, Tom finds Aunt Polly waiting for him. She notices his dirtied clothes and resolves to make him work the next day, a Saturday, as punishment.

On Saturday morning, Aunt Polly sends Tom out to whiterush the fence. Jim passes by, and Tom tries to get him to do some of the whitewashing in return for a "white alley," a kind of Rabble. Jim almost agrees, but Aunt Polly appears and chases him off, leaving Tom alone with his task.
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