

Scene 6

(The Mom and Daughter are back on stage in front of the curtain.)

Daughter: This is the part of the story I like the best, Mom.

Mother: Oh, what part is that, honey?

Daughter: This is the turnaround point. It's the part when all seems lost but you know it's not. When the heroine seems down and feels like she can't get up but you know that she will. The turnaround, the point where all books start up the road to the happy ending. I love this part the best.

Mother: Yes, I get it. Of course, our last 4 book club books never really turned around at all.

Daughter: What?

Mother: No, not a single happy ending in any of them. Just more and more bad news and misery and well, tragedy. I guess you'd have to call it that. Quite sad actually.

Daughter: What, you mean the library might close?

Mother: Sure.

Daughter: And Ms. Potter might turn it into a Potter Arcade?

Mother: Yes, that's possible.

Daughter: And sweet Miss Read could lose her job?

Mother: Yeah, I guess she could.

Daughter: Ahhh! That's awful.

Mother: It could be worse, sweet cheeks. I suppose Rebecca could fall down a flight of stairs as well. That happened with our January selection. Or be bitten by a disease carrying mosquito like in our Christmas book.

Daughter: *(Sobbing.)*

Mother: You just cry it out, muffin, while I continue with the story.

(The light shines on the opposite side of the stage where in front of the curtain Rebecca is seated at a library table reading The Adventures of Tom Sawyer.)

Mother: *(Reading from Bookmarks)* Rebecca settled into her favorite seat at her favorite table in her favorite place in the world, the library, and she began to read from her favorite book, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer. And like magic, magic that happened every time Rebecca read a story, the book came to life in her imagination.

(The bed is wheeled from the stage and the curtain opens to a scene from The Adventures of Tom Sawyer. The reading voice now switches to Rebecca who reads the actual words of Mark Twain while the scene is acted out on stage behind her.)

Rebecca: Tom took up his brush and went tranquilly to work. Ben Rogers hove in sight presently, the very boy, of all boys, whose ridicule he had been dreading. Ben's gait was the hop – skip- and- jump – proof enough that his heart was light and his anticipations high. He was eating an apple, and giving long, melodious whoops, at intervals, followed by deep-tone ding – dong – dong, ding – dong – dong, for he was personating a steamboat.

Ben Rogers: Ding – dong – dong! Get out the head-line! Lively now! Ding – dong – dong!

Rebecca: Tom went on whitewashing – paid no attention to the steamboat. Ben stared a moment and then said...

Ben Rogers: Hi-yi! You're up a stump, ain't you?

Rebecca: No answer, Tom surveyed his last touch with the eye of an artist, then he gave his brush another gentle sweep and surveyed the result, as before. Ben ranged up alongside of him, Tom's mouth watered for the apple, but he stuck to his work. Ben said.....

Ben Rogers: Heck, Old Chap, you got to work, hey?

Rebecca: Tom wheeled suddenly and said.....

Tom Sawyer: Why it's you, Ben. I warn't noticing.

Ben Rogers: Say – I'm going in a swimming, I am. Don't you wish you could? But of course you'd druther WORK wouldn't you? Course you would.

Rebecca: Tom contemplated the boy a bit and said.....

Tom Sawyer: What do you call work?

Ben Rogers: Why ain't THAT work?

Rebecca: Tom resumed his whitewashing and added carelessly.....

Tom Sawyer: Well maybe it is and maybe it ain't, all I know is it suits Tom Sawyer.

Ben Rogers: Oh come, now, you don't mean to let on that you LIKE it?

Rebecca: The brush continued to move.

Tom Sawyer: Like it? Well I don't see why I ought'n to like it. Does a boy get a chance to whitewash a fence every day?

Rebecca: That put the thing in a new light. Ben stopped nibbling on his apple. Tom swept his brush daintily back and forth – stepped back to note the effect – added a touch here and there – criticized the effect again – Ben watching every move and getting more and more interested, more and more absorbed. Presently he said.....

Ben Rogers: Say, Tom, let ME whitewash a little.

Rebecca: Tom considered, was about to consent; but he altered his mind.

Tom Sawyer: No – no I reckon it wouldn't hardly do, Ben. You see, Aunt Polly's awful particular about this fence – right here on the street, you know – but if it was the back fence I wouldn't mind and SHE wouldn't. Yes, she's awful particular about this fence; it's got to be done very careful; I reckon there ain't one boy in a thousand, maybe two thousand, that can do it the way it's got to be done.

Ben Rogers: No – is that so? Oh come on, lemme just try it. Only just a little – I'd let YOU, if you was me, Tom.

Tom Sawyer: Ben, I'd like to – honest Injun; but Aunt Polly – well, Jim wanted to do it, but she wouldn't let him; Sid wanted to do it and she wouldn't let Sid. Now don't you see how I'm fixed? If you was to tackle this fence and anything was to happen to it.....

Ben Rogers: Oh, shucks, I'll be just as careful. Now let me try. Say – I'll give you the core of my apple.

Tom Sawyer: Well, here – No, Ben, now don't. I'm afeard.

Ben Rogers: I'll give you ALL of it.

Rebecca: Tom gave up the brush with reluctance in his face, but alacrity in his heart. And while the late steamer Big Missouri worked and sweated in the sun, the retired artist sat on a barrel in the shade close by, dangled his legs, munched his apple, and planned the slaughter of more innocents. There was no lack of material; boys happened along every little while; they came to jeer, but remained to whitewash.

(There are now many kids whitewashing the fence for Tom while he sits on a barrel in the shade.)

Whitewashing the Fence

They sing:

Tom Sawyer is a champion

He lets us do his work

He showed us just how fun it is

Solos:

He also took my shirt

My brass doorknob

My one-eyed cat

And my apple core

All:

If we bring more tomorrow

We'll see his toe that's sore

Whitewashing the fence

Sweating in the summer sun

Whitewashing the fence

Work it sure is fun

Whitewashing the fence

Whitewashing the fence

Tom tried to keep it for himself

Was such a selfish act

But we broke his resistance

Our guile makes us laugh

The painting's fun

The scraping too

The clean up even more

We had to give the poor boy things

To even up the score

Whitewashing the fence

Sweating in the summer sun

Whitewashing the fence

Work it sure is fun

Whitewashing the fence

Whitewashing the fence

Tom:

I was but a melancholy lad

Full of sorrow

None too glad

When came a most liberating thought

What I learnt is this

Ignorance can

Oh this is just so grand

Ignorance can

Be taught

All:

Whitewashing the fence

Sweating in the summer sun

Whitewashing the fence

Work it sure is fun

Whitewashing the fence

Whitewashing the fence

(The curtain closes as Rebecca closes the book. She is alone in front of the curtain.)

Rebecca: Yes! It just might work!