



Becky Has a Problem

TOM WAS HAPPY AGAIN. HE STARTED WALKING TO SCHOOL, AND SOON saw Becky Thatcher, also going toward the school. Quickly he ran to her and said:

“I am sorry I acted as I did this morning, Becky. I won’t ever be like that again. Please let us be friends.”

The girl stopped and looked into his face. “Go away, Mr. Thomas Sawyer. I will never speak to you again.”

Then she started walking again. Tom was so surprised that he could think of nothing to say. And he was filled with anger. If she were a boy, he knew that he would fight her.

Becky was also full of anger. She was thinking of the pleasure of watching the teacher beat Tom for destroying a page in his book.

She did not know that she would soon have trouble also!

The teacher had a book that he was studying. Every day he would read some pages when he was not busy. Every boy and girl in the school wondered about this book, but none had ever seen its pages. Now, as Becky passed the teacher’s table, she saw the book. She opened it and began to look at it.

Then Tom appeared at the door. Becky hurried to close the book. Her hand caught the page, and suddenly, it was in two pieces. Becky began to weep.

“You are bad, Tom Sawyer, to come and watch me! And now you will tell the teacher, and he will beat me, and what shall I do! I have never been beaten in school. But I know what is going to happen to you. You wait and you will see!” Then, weeping, she ran outside.

Tom said to himself: “What a fool a girl is! What is a beating in school? That is nothing. And I will not tell who opened the book. The teacher will ask who did it. He will call each name. And when he says the right one, he won’t need an answer. He will see the answer in her face.”

School began, and soon Tom’s book was discovered. He said that he had not destroyed the page, but the teacher did not believe him. Tom had his beating. Becky watched, trying to feel happy about this. But she almost stood up to tell the truth about Alfred Temple.

An hour passed. The boys and girls were all busy with their books. The teacher opened his book. Tom looked at Becky. He had seen small and hunted animals in the forest. Now Becky seemed like one of them. He wished that he could help her. But what could he do?

The next moment the teacher stood before the school. Every eye turned away from his. All the boys and girls were afraid of him. He spoke:

“Who did this to my book?”

There was not a sound.

“Benjamin Rogers?”

“No.”

“Joe Harper?”

“No.”

“Amy Lawrence?”

“No.”

“Gracie Miller?”

“No.”

The next name was Becky Thatcher. Tom was shaking from head

to foot. He saw her face, white with fear.

“Rebecca Thatcher, look at me! Did you do this to my book?”

Tom jumped to his feet and shouted, “I did it!”

All looked at him. They could not believe what they had heard.

This was madness.

Tom stepped forward to take his beating. The surprise, the thankfulness, the love shining from Becky’s eyes seemed pay enough for a hundred beatings.