

Tom, Huck & Twain

by

Joe Fordham

From DARKNESS, a MAN'S VOICE, a gruff Southern drawl:

TWIN
I came in with Halley's comet in
1835.

FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE - TRAVELING THROUGH STARS

TEXT appears, SUPERIMPOSED:

TEXT
The great American writer, Samuel
Langhorne Clemens -- otherwise
known as MARK TWIN -- was born in
Hannibal, Missouri, November 10th,
1835, just as the comet Halley
reached its perihelion in the
skies above our planet.

(pause)

Seventy-five years later, the
comet would return, and Twain's
time on Earth would end.

(pause)

He came and went with the comet.

As TEXT ends, an ENORMOUS BLAZING BALL OF FIRE overtakes
CAMERA, engulfing us in its corona.

WHITE OUT TO:

SKY

with SNOW falling over

EXT. COUNTRY LANE - DAY

A humpback bridge spans a frozen river. Snow-muffled silence,
then a horse-drawn sleigh launches into view. Tarpaulin covered
luggage is piled high behind the driver (TOM) and one small
passenger (SUSY) bundled up against the cold.

EXT. FROZEN FOREST - DAY

The SOUND of the sleigh approaches along a road canopied by
trees. Furtive movement in the undergrowth, and then strange
figures peer out:

Two MEDIEVAL KNIGHTS with swords... an ELIZABETHAN with a
crossbow... three grubby COWBOY DESPERADOES, pistols drawn,
side by side with several INDIAN BRAVES with bows and arrows.

The sleigh comes into view.

Knights and Desperadoes hunker down.

The driver of the sleigh yells on his horses, does not stop as he passes a POLYNESIAN WARRIOR in a tree with a bamboo spear. The Polynesian signals others to advance.

EXT. STORMFIELD - DAY

The sleigh appears out of the forest, heads up a hill towards an imposing Georgian home, stone steps and a colonnade of trees, countryside muted white all around.

SUBTITLE appears:

TWAIN'S HOME 'STORMFIELD,' CONNECTICUT, APRIL, 1910.

A Model-T Ford struggles up the hill towards the home.

The MOTORIST at the wheel of the Ford -- CLARA CLEMENS, in scarf and hat and goggles -- appears not to notice as the horse-drawn sleigh overtakes her vehicle.

INT. LOGGIA - STORMFIELD - DAY

In a tall-windowed gallery overlooking the snowy landscape, ALBERT BIGELOW PAINE -- (49) a spruce little man -- looks up at noise from the hallway. He is seated in an armchair by an open fire, taking notes from a novel.

KATY, the housekeeper, also stops clearing two dinner plates, one untouched.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

A FOOTMAN enters from outside, hauling luggage. The Ford motorist follows, shaking snow from her hat -- CLARA (36), a striking woman, unconcerned at her disheveled hair.

PAINE

Clara! I'm glad you made it.

Paine appears from the Loggia, kisses Clara. Katy hurries past, pulling the footman with her.

CLARA

How is he?

PAINE

Oh... undefeated.

Clara heaves a sigh.

PAINÉ (CONT'D)
He has been frustrated he can't
keep up with his dictation.

CLARA
I became concerned the way he
sounded on the telephone.

PAINÉ
That's just his medication. He
says it makes him dream. Come on
up. He'll be pleased to see you.

CLARA
How are you?

PAINÉ
Me? I'm fine.

BACK TO LOGGIA

As Paine takes Clara upstairs, his NOTEBOOK lies open on his chair beside the novel he was reading.

Paine's notebook page contains the repeated numeral '44,' and sketches of a craggy, frowning face with walrus mustache and a shock of hair.

The novel is "The Mysterious Stranger" by Mark Twain.

A burning log in the fireplace CRACKS.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

COUGHING as a cigar burns to a stub in an ashtray by the window. Books are stacked nearby, with piles of manuscript... a handsome globe... an old brass microscope.

TWAIN -- (76) a pale ghost in his nightshirt, with wild hair and angry agate eyes -- continues coughing, sitting up in bed. Clara patiently waits for him to finish. Paine lingers by the door. Katy clears away a hypodermic. Clara eases Twain back into his pillows, strokes his hair. Katy exits. Paine hesitates, but goes with her.

CLARA
Poor Papa. Is there anything you
need?

Twain takes a pencil and paper, scribbles a note, spidery writing, barely intelligible. Clara reads:

CLARA (CONT'D)
'Bring me... my spectacles, bring
me my... glass pitcher'?

Twain nods, exhausted. Clara looks around for Katy, and kisses her father before starting out.

CLARA (CONT'D)
One minute. I'll be one minute.

Twain takes up his pocket watch as if to time her. Clara views him tenderly and then hurries out.

Twain lays back with a great sigh, like a bag deflating. He stares at the ceiling, starts to cough again and fumbles for a handkerchief on his bedstand.

Among the bedside clutter is a framed photograph of Twain, age 49, standing on a summer verandah surrounded by three pretty girls -- ages 4, 10 and 12 -- and a slender but serious-looking woman ten years Twain's junior -- LIVY.

Twain recovers, looks down at his watch:

The hands have stopped at six thirty-two.

Twain shakes the watch, to no avail. He peers toward his mantle clock, cannot read it. He tosses the watch aside, folds his arms.

All sounds HAVE STOPPED.

Twain looks to the window. A peaceful afternoon is ending outside, the sun low.

Twain grumbles, re-reads his note to Clara, attempts to call out, but only COUGHS again, this time long and hard. He starts to rise, does not have the strength.

TWAIN
Ohhhh... -Hell!

Twain continues to stare helplessly at the ceiling. His eyelids droop, then he hears a LONG, LOW 'GRIBBET.' Twain's eyes open. He looks down towards his feet.

A fat FROG is perched on the blankets. Its eyes blink at Twain: GRIBBET.

Twain SCREAMS at the top of his lungs, kicks the Frog away. It hops off the bed, jumps out of the door.

TWAIN (CONT'D)
Clara! Clara!

Twain throws back the sheets, swings out of bed, stubs his naked toe on a porcelain commode. He YELLS and then hobbles to the door in his nightshirt to HOLLER down the stairs.

INT. UPSTAIRS LANDING - DAY

TWAIN

Clara!

No answer from downstairs. Twain peers over the banister, looks around him. No sign of the Frog.

TWAIN (CONT'D)

Damnation...

Supporting himself against the stair rail, Twain makes his way down, barefoot, one step at a time.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

The hallway is deserted, sunlight slanting in through the fanlight above the front door.

TWAIN

Where is everybody? What is this?
Sardines?

Twain descends the stairs to gaze into the loggia. This room, too, appears deserted. No fire in the grate.

Twain does not enter. A KITTEN scampers out. Twain bends to scoop it up, then looks up at a grandfather clock towering beside him in the hall.

The time has stopped at six thirty-two. Twain goes to open the clock's casing door, but pulls back.

The pendulum is frozen, impossibly defying gravity, at the apex of its swing.

Twain views the clock with suspicion, and then starts at a SHARP CRACK and CLATTER — the sound of billiards.

Twain gapes, and then frowns.

The doorway to the billiards room reveals part of the table inside, across which is bent the MAN from the sleigh, his trench coat and goggles now removed. The Man is only visible a brief moment before he rises and moves out of sight. Another CLICK, then CLATTER as he takes his next shot.

Twain does not move for a long moment, and then walks slowly forward to the billiards room doorway.

INT. BILLIARDS ROOM - DAY

Twain halts in the doorway, still clutching the kitten, apparently unnoticed. The Man shoots again, this time without scoring. He is balding, in his fifties, somewhat overweight, but a snappy dresser in a suit and bolo tie.

MAN

Darn.

Twain's kitten MEOWS. The Man at the table looks up. Twain remains silent, disconcerted.

MAN (CONT'D)

Mr. Twain... Please, excuse me. I
couldn't resist. Best game on
Earth.

The Man grins a huge boyish grin and approaches Twain, extending his hand. Twain offers no response. The kitten jumps out of his arms.

MAN (CONT'D)

You don't recognize me?

Twain yells over his shoulder:

TWAIN

Clara!... Paine!

MAN

Mr. Twain, it's me. Tom. Tom
Sawyer.

Twain fixes his intruder with a hostile glare. A SMALL VOICE makes them turn:

SUSY

Is he coming now, or what?

The passenger from the sleigh -- a sullen, pretty, dark-eyed girl (17) -- has appeared through the French doors to the garden.

MAN/TOM

Not yet, Susy. Wait outside.

The kitten runs out past SUSY. She chases after it.

SUSY

Sour Mash! Come back here!

Twain is clearly shaken by Susy's appearance.

TWAIN

My daughter... Susy... died...

TOM

Of spinal meningitis.

TWAIN

She lost her sight... and her mind... while I was abroad in England.

TOM

Keep your voice down, Mr. Twain, she doesn't like to be reminded. Come. Come with me. We don't have much time.

Twain follows TOM outside, bewildered.

EXT. ITALIAN SUNKEN GARDEN - MIST

It has stopped snowing. Suspended in a MIST, a HOT AIR BALLOON looms huge above the garden, the sleigh from the forest suspended beneath it like a gondola. Susy retrieves her kitten, SOUR MASH, stuffs him into a basket dangling from the gondola on a rope and pulley, and hoists him up.

Twain steps out with Tom, glances up at the balloon, but is unable to take his eyes off Susy.

TWAIN

She is... just as I remember... before her studies at Bryn Mawr.

Tom lowers his voice, so Susy cannot hear.

TOM

Huck's in trouble, Mr. Twain.

TWAIN

Get away from me, you... you fiction!

Tom recoils.

TWAIN

(railing at full bluster)
I reject this! I reject you! I reject the phantoms of a drug-addled mind that has somehow set this feeble septuagenarian tottering on his feet around on a flight of whimsy.

TOM
But, I have a legal writ--

TWAIN
What? Tom Sawyer a lawyer? No! Now
you have gone too far!

Tom reaches into a pocket and pulls out the front page of a newspaper, the 'Hannibal Revue':

MAN-HUNT FOR HUCK FINN!

Mark Twain Estate Appeals

Twain slowly takes the page from Tom.

TOM
If you don't help us save him...

Twain glares at Tom. Tom takes the newspaper back.

TOM (CONT'D)
You'll never see your wife and
family again.

Susy SHRIEKS. An arrow FLASHES PAST and THUNKS into a nearby tree.

TOM (CONT'D)
Oh, no...

From between a row of cypress trees, the INDIANS from the forest have appeared with bows and arrows. MEDIEVAL ARCHERS join them, taking aim at Tom and Twain.

TOM (CONT'D)
Duck!

TWAIN
Duck? I saw a frog a moment ago.

More ARROWS fly by. Tom pulls Twain behind a Grecian urn.

TOM
Other people from your books want
to stop you reaching Huck! They're
holding you responsible!

TWAIN
Responsible for what?

TOM
There's no time to explain. I have
paperwork in the balloon.
(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)
You remember? "Tom Sawyer Abroad"?
Will you help us, Mr. Twain?

Susy climbs a rope ladder to the gondola. TWO WESTERN
DESPERADOES run up and attempt to shake her down.

TWAIN
This is madness. Let me go.

TOM
No, Mr. Twain!

Twain strides out towards the Desperadoes.

TWAIN
You there!

The Desperadoes lower their weapons. Twain continues his
approach, invulnerable, wrath aflame.

TWAIN (CONT'D)
Get off of my damned property!

One YOUNG COWBOY, no more than a teen, takes out a PISTOL.

YOUNG COWBOY
I got 'im.

The YOUNG COWBOY aims at Twain, who halts.

TWAIN
Sid?

The pistol trembles in the Young Cowboy's hand, who looks
petrified, as if holding off a demon. A single SHOT. The Young
Cowboy falls back, the second Desperado rushes to his aid.
Twain looks back at Tom.

Tom lowers a smoking revolver, and runs up to grab Twain.

SUSY
Look out!

The second Desperado seizes Twain's other arm.

DESPERADO
Back off, Sawyer. He's ours now!

A sandbag falls from above and hits the Desperado on the head.
Susy peers down, continues climbing.

Tom wrestles with the Desperado. Twain backs away from the
struggle. He picks up the first Desperado's pistol, uses it to
club the second on the head.

Tom recovers and, with Twain, sees other forest figures advancing up the hill. Twain views the rope ladder, starts to climb. Tom YELLS UP.

TOM
Get us out of here, Susy!

INT. GONDOLA

Susy SLAMS the burner valve full open. Gas jets FLARE.

EXT. ITALIAN SUNKEN GARDEN

Tom FIRES at the forest figures, and then grabs hold of the rope ladder as it rises off the ground.

Twain almost loses his footing as the anchor line snaps taut. A CRY goes up from the forest crowd:

ELIZABETHAN MAN
Aim at the balloon!

Arrows, guns and spears aim up at the balloon.

INT. GONDOLA

Susy CHOPS the anchor rope with a machete.

The anchor line whips free past Tom and Twain, who are clinging for their lives. Spears and arrows fly by, but fall short.

Susy cowers as bullets fray ropes and splinter wood around her. Cries and gunfire grow fainter below, leaving just the roaring gush of burners.

Sour Mash looks out from his basket, MEOWS. Susy scrambles to switch the burner valve to half power, then peers down over the gondola side.

Twain clings to the rope ladder, nightshirt flapping in the breeze, Tom a few rungs behind viewing the scene below.

EXT. STORMFIELD - DUSK

The BALLOON rises like a planet over the house and disappears into the cloudy sky, rope ladder trailing Tom and Twain. It has begun to snow again.

CUT TO:

INT. STORMFIELD - LOGGIA - DUSK

Paine adds another log to the fire in the grate, then returns to his chair. He finds just the novel, his notebook has gone. He looks around. Stops at a sound: TICKING.

The clock on the mantelpiece reads six thirty-three.

CUT TO:

INT. GONDOLA - IN FLIGHT - DUSK/NIGHT

Susy keeps her distance as Twain clambers on board.

He stumbles and then falls into a pile of trunks and luggage. Cooking utensils clatter out. Sour Mash squeals and darts from under him.

Tom climbs up and looks in. Twain yells at the cat.

TWAIN
Get away, infernal creature!

SUSY
It's Sour Mash, Papa!

Tom climbs into the gondola. Twain regains his feet and steadies himself, avoiding Tom's assistance.

TWAIN
I can see it's Sour Mash.

Twain recovers the kitten, inspects it for damage and hands it to his daughter.

SUSY
Thank you, Papa.

Twain meets eyes with Tom.

TWAIN
I can see you're Tom, and I can
see you're Susy.

Tom turns away to straighten trunks and luggage.

TWAIN (CONT'D)
And somehow, for some godforsaken
reason, my own cousin Sid just
pulled a gun on me among a crowd
of costumed fools in the snow.
That was Sid, wasn't it, young
man?

TOM
I think so.

Twain grabs Tom and seizes him by the lapels.

TWAIN
When are you going to start
explaining this to me?

TOM
Don't you want to see your wife
and family again?

TWAIN
My wife is--

Twain sees Susy, lowers his voice.

TWAIN (CONT'D)
My wife is...

TOM
Dead, I know. And I'm a lawyer,
married with five children. Life
goes on, Mr. Twain, even in your
fiction. Your wife is paying me to
fetch you, and then we're taking
you to Huck.

TWAIN
How much is she paying you?

TOM
I'm not cheap. Do you mind?

Twain releases Tom. Tom goes to a leather case. Twain sees Susy
staring at him, but she turns away to tend her kitten.

Tom takes out a parchment scroll, unrolls it at Twain's feet,
pins the corners down with pots and pans. Twain stands looking
down, and then lowers himself to study the intricate design.

TWAIN
One benefit of this fantasia is I
seem to have regained full use of
my limbs, if not my mental
faculties.

The scroll is a map of 'MarkTwainia,' a projection of a craggy
landmass in the shape of a silhouette of Twain, with
indecipherable Da Vinci-esque notations.

TOM
Hand me that lamp, would you?

Twain passes Tom a lamp, which he lights and places near the map. Twain stares closer.

The image on the parchment appears to SMUDGE and EDDY here and then reform. Twain blinks, rubs his eyes. It HAPPENS AGAIN.

TWAIN

This is... disconcerting.

TOM

Don't look at it too long.

Tom peers out at the clouds, frowns. It is darkening to night. Silent LIGHTNING dances, far off.

TWAIN

And where is Huck? No, let me guess.

Twain at last has Tom's attention.

TWAIN (CONT'D)

He was president of Cameroon when an international coup toppled his régime.

Tom regards Twain coldly.

TOM

No one knows where Huck is. He's gone into hiding, since cabling your wife — Here...

Tom reaches into his pocket, pulls out a crumpled TELEGRAM. Twain unfolds it to read:

*Need help. Ergent please.
Send Mr. Twain.
Yors trooly Huck.*

Twain crumples up the telegram, throws it out of the balloon. Tom begins to protest, until Twain smacks aside a saucepan paperweight, causing the map to spring shut.

TWAIN

Tom Sawyer never grew up! Huck Finn never turned to crime! I didn't write a word of this! None of this is me!

TOM

That is what we have to prove.

Twain stands, no longer listening, peers over the gondola. Clouds have darkened all around. He stares at Susy.

TWAIN
Susy. Take me back.

TOM
She can't.

SUSY
I can't, Papa.

TWAIN
No...? Then we'll just have to
land!

Twain grabs the emergency burner control.

TOM
Mr. Twain!

TWAIN
Unhand me, figment!

Twain throws the lever down. The hiss above cuts off. Both Tom and Twain stare up. The burner flame gutters then dies. RAIN blows in. The balloon is sinking fast. They drop out of the mist. Twain looks down.

EXT. GONDOLA - DOWN VIEW - NIGHT

Sheets of rain fall past the gondola into a dizzying bowl of churning storm cloud, a gaping hole far beneath them, the vortex of the maelstrom.

INT. GONDOLA - NIGHT

TOM
Oh, no...

Wind and rain whip Twain's hair, but he is unperturbed as the gondola starts to spin. He smiles warmly at Susy, who is staring at him, petrified. LIGHTNING flashes. The wind still rises.

TWAIN
Oh, yes. I understand exactly. In fact, I am grateful for this respite with my darling little ghost. We'll crash and then I'll wake up, tossed from my bed.

EXT. BALLOON - NIGHT

The balloon twists faster as it is sucked down.

INT. GONDOLA - NIGHT

Clouds and debris twirl faster around them. Wind catches Tom's map and snatches it from his grasp, out into the storm. Twain begins to look uneasy. He holds out a hand for Susy, but she pulls away to shield her kitten. Tom tugs both of them down out of the full blast of the wind.

TOM
This is why we're here!

TWAIN
What?

TOM
Just hang on!

Tom ties Twain and Susy down.

EXT. BALLOON - NIGHT

The balloon is torn asunder. The gondola plummets.

INT. GONDOLA - SPINNING - NIGHT

TOM
Storms! Earthquakes! Tornadoes! --
They've been happening all over
since Huck disappeared!

Tom tugs a sheet from a trunk, lashes it to cleats, then hauls on a rope.

TOM (CONT'D)
And they're blaming it on you!

EXT. BALLOON - NIGHT

Tom's sheet unfurls like a sail and catches the wind. The gondola soars upward with flapping chunks of canvas, an uprooted tree, a galloping horse.

INT. GONDOLA - NIGHT

Twain and Susy look up.

INT. TORNADO - NIGHT

The gondola flies towards a spinning canopy of stars.

EXT. CLOUDSCAPE - NIGHT

A sudden calm. Sundry airborne objects shoot out of a swirling funnel in moonlit banks of clouds. The gondola sails out, and then plummets.

EXT. SKY - OVER COUNTRY LANDSCAPE - NIGHT

The tornado departs across a patchwork quilt of fields. The gondola drops out of the clouds. Its sail becomes a parachute -- which rips.

INT. GONDOLA - FALLING - NIGHT

Twain pokes up his head to look back, then ahead.

EXT. COUNTRY LANDSCAPE - FALLING - NIGHT

Approaching a solitary light in a broad expanse of fields -- a clump of rustic buildings beside a winding stream.

EXT. WATER MILL - COUNTRY LANDSCAPE - DAYBREAK

A thatch-roof mill sits with adjoining granary beside a two-plank bridge across the stream to a mill-house. Lamplight at one window. To the east, a forest, streaks of sunrise in the sky. Early morning bird-song.

The gondola falls and crashes through the granary roof.

Dust explodes from the granary doors and windows, shortly followed by squawking chickens and honking geese.

The mill-house front door opens. The MILLER and his WIFE look out, both in medieval nightclothes, the Miller with an incongruous semiautomatic rifle.

INT. GRANARY - DAYBREAK

First rays of sunlight cut through the dust. Grain gushes from broken shoots and vats beneath a wide hole in the roof. The tip of the gondola protrudes from a giant pile of grain.

Miller, wife and gun appear around the door.

MILLER'S WIFE

Lordy, Daniel. Let me telephone
for help.

MILLER

Prithee, wife. I've all the help I
need.

The Miller releases the safety catch on his gun, then enters.
His wife remains by the door.

Grain sifts from the pile. The Miller halts. His Wife stifles a
scream. The Miller raises his rifle. The grain pile swells. The
Miller's Wife SHRIEKS.

Tom staggers out. The Miller holds his fire. Tom raises his
hands, then Twain emerges, spitting out mouthfuls of grain. He
slips and slumps back on his backside.

TWAIN

God damn it all to Hell!

The Miller cocks his gun, his Wife holds him back.

Sour Mash emerges with Susy from the grain.

CUT TO:

EXT. WATER MILL - DAY

The proud, clanking figure of a KNIGHT ON HORSEBACK crosses the
stream to the mill, a second horse in tow.

The Miller meets the Knight outside the mill-house, his
prisoners bound and gagged. The Miller's Wife has a leash on
Susy and Sour Mash.

CUT TO:

The Knight rides away with Susy, splashing once more through
the stream, leading Tom and Twain perched on his second horse,
tied back-to-back, Tom foremost.

The Miller and his Wife watch the group ride off.

MILLER'S WIFE

I hadst hoped he'd leave the
kitty.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

A saddle-bag squirms beside the Knight, who rides with Susy, leading Tom and Twain on their horse through the trees.

Twain squints to read as they pass a PEASANT seated at a roadside newsstand.

Newspapers and advertising placards declare a headline in the 'Camelot Herald':

WAR WITH FRANCE?!

EXT. CAMELOT - DAY

Tom, Twain, the Knight and Susy ride out of the forest down towards a village in the shadow of a castle, whose stone battlements have been festooned with rusty plumbing, phone lines and industrial chimneys.

EXT. VILLAGE STREETS - DAY

Tom, Twain, the Knight and Susy ride through a medieval market full of STREET PERFORMERS, mangy animals, muddy CHILDREN. Twain looks up. Buildings overhead have been strung with sagging power cables.

INT. CASTLE COURTYARD - DAY

Tom, Twain, Susy and the Knight pass across a drawbridge to enter a broad courtyard bustling with OTHER KNIGHTS and COURTIERES. A young PAGE runs up in a checkered tunic.

PAGE

Sir Lancelot! My Lord! The King requests the presence of all his knights. We are at war again!

Lancelot opens his visor, revealing a dandy, chiseled Adonis.

LANCELOT

War?!

INT. THRONE ROOM - DAY

Huge oak doors open to allow Lancelot, Tom, Twain and Susy through to a crowd around a throne at the far end of the hall.

KING ARTHUR is on the telephone, looking grizzled and somewhat run to seed. A SERF is in attendance, supporting the royal handset.

ARTHUR

Nay, who canst we trust...?
Dinadan, I am called upon... I am
called upon....

Lancelot walks up, smiles sympathetically, and displays his prisoners. Arthur frowns with curiosity, and signals them to wait. GUARDS force Twain to his knees. Twain glares, defiantly, but submits.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Thank you, Dinadan.... Thank you,
Dinadan... God be with thee.
Adieu.

Arthur SIGHS, returns the handset to his Serf.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

My noble Lancelot. Dost thou bring
entertainment to soothe thy
troubled king?

LANCELOT

Nay, Sire. These are devils. From
Morgan's Land by the sound. The
old one likes to rant.

ARTHUR

Devils from Morgan's land...?

Arthur meets eyes with Twain, stands to view him closer.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Or spies? -- Dinadan believes our
troubles in Saxony may have
started from within.

Twain glowers at the king. Arthur circles Tom, ends up facing Susy. She stares back hard as nails. Arthur gently pats her cheek and removes her gag.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Which are you then, my pretty?

Susy bites Arthur's finger. Lancelot and Guards rush to aid their King. Arthur pulls free, waves off his courtiers. Twain scowls.

LANCELOT

(to a guard)
Call the royal physician.

ARTHUR

Tarry, tarry. Your King will live.
(MORE)

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
Torture these two men. See how
much they know.

GUARD #1
My Liege. We are all booked up
'til Tuesday.

ARTHUR
To the dungeons then! Submit the
maid to servitude. God knows we
could do with help. Are we not
entertaining the Duke of Saxony
tonight?

LANCELOT
Aye, my Liege.

ARTHUR
I'll decide her fate once I've
taken cleared my wretched calls.
Lancelot, come.

Arthur exits with Lancelot. Tom removes his gag.

TOM
Your Highness, if I may introduce
myself. Tom Sawyer, attorney at
Law.

Guards pull Tom, Twain and Susy roughly away. One carries
Lancelot's squirming saddle bag.

GUARD #2
Captain. They have a little kitty.

GUARD #1
Cast it to the dogs.

SUSY
No! Sour Mash! Help!

Susy, Tom and Twain are dragged out. Guard #1 shakes Lancelot's
saddle-bag, unlaces it, peers inside. Sour Mash leaps out onto
the guard's face. Other guards all LAUGH. Guard #1 tries to
catch the kitten. Sour Mash darts away.

INT. CASTLE SCULLERY

Laundry and steam. CASTLE MAIDS bustle around preparing stacks
of linen, plates and cutlery. The two guards from the throne
room bring Susy in, and shove her toward the SCULLERY MATRON.

GUARD #2
Employ her. Orders from the King.

GUARD #1
Watch it, she bites.

The Guards exit LAUGHING. The Matron examines Lucy's teeth, and then points her to a huge pile of laundry.

INT. TORTURE CHAMBER

A FRENCH NOBLEMAN is strapped upside down to a steam-driven rack that is stretching out his limbs in four directions. He is begging for his life.

NOBLEMAN
(In French)
Je vous en prie, monsieur! Je ne
sais rien! Non, non, non, non--!

A man's HAND, with a fat CIGAR, cranks a lever control. Steam HISSES. The rack turns. The Nobleman SCREAMS.

INT. CASTLE DUNGEONS

Iron bars CLANG shut on Tom and Twain, with Twain still bound and gagged. They peer out from a bare stone cell as KEYS lock them in. FOOTSTEPS depart then a harsh light pings on overhead. Tom and Twain look up.

A single bare light-bulb hangs from the ceiling.

Twain glares at Tom. Tom removes Twain's gag, and retreats to a corner of the cell.

TWAIN
I take it we are no longer in
Connecticut?

No reply from Tom.

TWAIN (CONT'D)
This appears to be a version of my
novel, "A Connecticut Yankee in
King Arthur's Wretched Court."

TOM
I haven't read it.

TWAIN
Not many have.

TOM
I didn't plan to land here.

Twain turns away, exasperated and squints critically at the light-bulb above them. Tom takes out a pocket watch, listens to it, shakes it.

TWAIN
It's your charter. Elucidate.

TOM
We have to get you out of here
before they find out who you are.
Your wife will be waiting.

TWAIN
How much further trouble do you
think I could create here -- Mr.
Sawyer?

TOM
We're not supposed to interfere.

TWAIN
Interfere? This whole place has
gone to ruin, far beyond my book.
I for one would like to know what
in Hell is going on!

YANKEE VOICE
What's all that noise down there?

More VOICES, indistinct. FOOTSTEPS return. Twain turns from Tom to face out through the bars.

TOM
(beseeching)
Don't, Mr. Twain!

The JAILER, a warty Igor-type, appears and points into the cell. A short, compact figure remains in shadow beyond the bars, in a fancy hat and cape, puffing on a fat CIGAR.

TWAIN
Hank Morgan, I presume?

HANK
Who wants to know?

TWAIN
It's been a long time, Hank.

HANK MORGAN steps into the light, removes his cigar.

HANK
Do I know you?

Twain extends a hand through the bars to shake. Tom backs off, looking sick, one hand on his stomach.

TWAIN
Warwick Castle, 1889.

Hank's mouth slowly opens. He takes Twain's hand in both his own and shakes it, grinning.

HANK
Twain! I don't believe it! Good to see you! Good to see you!

Distant THUNDER. Tom keels over with a crash.

INT. HANK'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Frames of a MEDIEVAL TAPESTRY fill the SCREEN: Hank, the gunsmith, hit over the head at Ye Colt Arms Factory, Connecticut... Hank, waking beneath a tree to meet a knight in armor... Hank, meeting Arthur... Hank, escaping being burnt at the stake... Hank, printing issue one of 'The Camelot Herald'... Hank, being knighted.

Tom is reclining on a four-poster bed, viewing the tapestry around him. Hank leans in with a glass of wine.

HANK
My own vintage. Come, look around.

In the adjoining living room, Twain is smoking a cigar, viewing later parts of the tapestry circling the walls. Tom joins them at a frieze of Hank, festooned with garden produce, leading a cavalry charge.

HANK (CONT'D)
That's me on crusade, selling cucumbers to Arabs. That's when Sandy vamoosed with the kid.

TWAIN
Sandy, your wife?

HANK
Ran off to France. Would you believe it, while I was out there civilizin' worlds. Shoot.

Hank drains his glass, refills it, knocks it back.

TOM
Who's that?

Twain turns to see the frame behind him: Hank shaking hands with a bony, white-haired, bearded WIZARD, a scroll between them, 'Ye Declaration of Interdependence.'

TWAIN
It can't be.

HANK
It is. We patched things up. Ha.
(raises his glass)
Democracy and science.

Hank drinks. Tom is still looking puzzled.

TWAIN
It's Merlin. I... I didn't realize
he was still around. At least--

HANK
I told you he died? Well, I was
wrong -- and it's been Hell on
Earth for me since we signed that
treaty. Ha. His idea. I shoulda
guessed.

Tom stares as Hank drinks, all of this is lost on him. Twain is amused at the tapestry. Hank finishes his glass, offers more to Tom. Tom declines. Hank empties the bottle.

TWAIN
I would very much like to meet Mr.
Merlin.

HANK
Nah, you wouldn't, believe me.
Say, wanna join me in another
vino?

TWAIN
I think I need one now. Thank you.

HANK
That's the spirit!
(yelling)
Clarence! Clarence!

Hank exits, YELLING for his page. Tom joins Twain beneath the frame of Hank and Merlin.

TWAIN
Hank has sent for Susy.
(MORE)

TWAIN (CONT'D)
She's working in the scullery --
Are you feeling any better?

Tom nods.

TOM
Are you?

Twain stares at the tapestry.

TWAIN
I'm... not sure. But if I am to
believe you, if something or
someone is behind this mayhem -- I
think we may have stumbled on our
first potential culprit.

Tom and Twain look up at the tapestry.

In one embroidered frieze, leading army of gun-toting knights
to war, Merlin glares back down.

EXT. CASTLE BATTLEMENTS - DAY

Amongst air vents and chimneys on the castle roof, one bent and
re-patched spire stands alone above the rest, crowned by an
intersecting star and moon.

An air duct feeds into the tower window. SCRABBLING SOUNDS.

INT. TOWER AIR DUCT

Sour Mash clambers from the gloom, stops at a grating.

MERLIN
(echoing)
Blast!

INT. MERLIN'S TOWER - DAY

Sour Mash peers out of a Morgan Enterprises air conditioning
vent.

MERLIN
Why won't it work?

Surrounded by a jumble of electrical and apothecary apparatus,
the haggard wizard MERLIN is at work in the center of the room,
his hair and beard unkempt, his robes stained and scalded with
many potions.

He consults a giant book of notes and wiring diagrams, adjusts a knot of electric cables, then throws a lever starting a noisy steam turbine.

Sour Mash's ears flatten.

Merlin cracks his knuckles, throws a switch. Electrodes connect to a glass tank of thick green liquid, which bubbles and flickers within. Glimmers of a phosphorescent electrical activity appear in the tank. Merlin grabs a microphone, his features lit, demonic, and reads from another book -- a smaller, printed tome, bound in leather.

MERLIN (CONT'D)
I call upon the storms and the
lightnings and all the devils that
be in Hell at his beck and call...

Sour Mash's hackles rise.

The turbine CLATTERS LOUDER. Merlin raises his voice, becoming more impassioned.

MERLIN (CONT'D)
Work, blast you!

A shopkeeper's BELL jangles above the door.

MERLIN (CONT'D)
Blast! Not now! Not now!

INT. TOWER STAIRS - DAY

The Jailer tugs the bell-pull again at the door to Merlin's chamber, oblivious to a large 'Do Not Disturb' sign.

Merlin snatches the door open. The Jailer cowers at Merlin's feet.

MERLIN
Canst thou not read?

JAILER
No, Thire, I am blind.

MERLIN
Out, toad!

Merlin kicks the Jailer. The Jailer SCREAMS, gropes Merlin's leg.

JAILER
Thire, I hath newth of Thir Hank.

Merlin glares, pulls the Jailer to his feet. The Jailer grins, toothless.

MERLIN
Very well, be quick.

The Jailer holds out a hand.

MERLIN (CONT'D)
Bah!

Merlin pulls out a bag of gold, chooses the smallest lump, and presses it into the Jailer's hand. The Jailer tastes the nugget, grins, then sniffs the air.

JAILER
What ith that thmell?

MERLIN
None of thy concern! Out with it now! What news is this of Morgan?

JAILER
Thir Hank hath vithiterth fwom
hith own land. They were brought
to me, but he took them to hith
chamberth. One old, one young.
Both vewy thtwange.

MERLIN
Did the old one have big whiskers
betwixt his nose and mouth?

JAILER
Thire, I am blind.

MERLIN
Bah! Useless! Be gone!

Merlin snatches back his nugget, propels the Jailer out and slams the door.

INT. MERLIN'S TOWER - DAY

Merlin walks back to his experiment and stops. He grabs his staff and cape.

Sour Mash cowers, and then darts away.

INT. CASTLE SCULLERY

Susy struggles to carry a giant basket of folded laundry to a basket, when a MEOW makes her look up.

Sour Mash looks down from an air vent, MEOWS again.

Susy climbs up onto the counter and pries open the vent.

MATRON

Girl!

Susy scrambles into the air vent and is gone before anyone can catch her.

INT. AIR DUCTS

Susy squeezes through the air vent, closely following Sour Mash. FACES appear at the opening. Someone's ARM reaches in. Susy squirms away.

Sour Mash and Susy arrive at a junction where the vent splits off, some going up, others down. Sour Mash MEOWS, chooses a pipe ascending.

SUSY

Where are you going? Sour Mash!

Sour Mash MEOWS again. Susy follows.

EXT. CAMELOT CASTLE - DUSK

The sun is setting, KNIGHTS and COURTIERS still arriving.

INT. ARTHUR'S OFFICE - DUSK

Arthur looks up with Lancelot as his office door bursts in. Merlin enters, closely followed by Arthur's Serf.

MERLIN

Tell this knave to leave!

The Serf stands exasperated, until Arthur nods him to leave. Lancelot rises to leave also. Arthur stops him, sits him down and takes a seat himself.

ARTHUR

Merlin, old friend. What troubles thee today?

MERLIN
Sire, I have come to warn thee.
These visitors of Morgan's-

ARTHUR
Mr. Tom and Mr. Twain?

Merlin GASPS.

MERLIN
Thou canst not trust them, Sire! A
prophecy didst warn me, they are
evil wizards!

ARTHUR
They are friends of Hank's. I have
invited them to dinner. There was
a misunderstanding earlier.

A KNOCK on the door. Arthur's Serf looks in.

SERF
Sire...

ARTHUR
See, Merlin. My court is waiting.
Come with us, meet our guests.

Merlin glowers at Lancelot, gathers up his cloak, then breezes out. Lancelot stands with his King.

LANCELOT
He may have a point. Perhaps we
should not be so open with our
foreign visitors in a time of war?

ARTHUR
I want to meet this Twain.

INT. ANTE-ROOM TO ARTHUR'S OFFICE

Hank and Twain are seated opposite the Secretary's desk. Tom sits apart, reading 'The Camelot Herald.' He looks up. Merlin appears from the corridor to Arthur's office, freezes, seeing Twain, then hurries past, cape flying.

Arthur and Lancelot follow shortly. Hank, Tom and Twain all rise, Twain very close to Arthur.

TWAIN
Where is my daughter?

Arthur looks to Lancelot.

LANCELOT

She hath evaded the scullery
staff, Sire.

HANK

Mr. Twain here's mighty worried.

ARTHUR

The King, as always, last to know.
I am certain my men will find her
Mr. Twain. Until then, allow me to
make amends for my hospitality so
far.

Hank places Arthur's hand in Twain's, shows the King how to shake. Arthur pats Twain on the back. The Secretary opens the door. All exit. Hank pulls Tom along.

INT. MERLIN'S TOWER - NIGHT

Susy's foot kicks out the grating to the air vent in the wall of Merlin's tower, then her head appears.

No-one in the room, just Merlin's experiment, still bubbling.

Sour Mash looks down, MEOWS.

Susy climbs out of the vent, lowers herself down onto a table, drops the last foot. She looks up. Sour Mash will not follow. Susy proceeds alone, jumps off the table and begins to explore.

Sour Mash MEOWS in protest.

Susy looks over at the tank of thick green liquid on the central table.

Sour Mash's ears flatten.

Susy approaches the tank. She taps the glass, tries the lid. Whatever noxious brew it contains is sealed. Susy looks around, sees Merlin's open book of spells, brings a candle close to read.

Sour Mash WAILS.

Susy shushes her cat and looks up from the book. She follows wires extruding from the back of the tank to a steam turbine. She finds the turbine control lever, jams it down. The turbine ROARS to life.

Sour Mash ducks for cover.

Susy returns to the tank. The liquid seethes and FLICKERS within. Susy checks Merlin's book, adjusts the power.

Sour Mash peeps back down.

Susy stares as LIGHTS begin to flicker inside the tank, phosphorescent flashes suggesting activity deep inside. Susy peers closer. Suddenly, there is an ULTRA-BRIGHT FLASH and Susy ducks out of sight. She slowly reappears.

IN THE LIQUID

an indistinct, a darker form is taking shape in the murky depths -- the dark oval of a face, a glimmer of RED EYES like coals in a fire.

Sour Mash WAILS, long and loud.

INT. TOWER STAIRS - NIGHT

Merlin stomps upstairs, halts at A CRASH OF BREAKING GLASSWARE above. A door slams open and then Susy runs past, terrified, almost knocking Merlin off his feet. More SOUNDS OF CHAOS make the wizard look back upstairs.

Sour Mash SCREAMS and runs past, after Susy.

INT. CASTLE BANQUET - NIGHT

An ENTIRE COW is roasting in an open fire. ROYAL DOGS look on expectantly as musicians play to bawdy COURTIERS in the balconies.

Below, feasting is in full swing among a gathering of KNIGHTS IN FULL REGALIA around King Arthur's round table, with a grand FRENCH KNIGHT in attendance. Twain is seated next to Arthur, between the King and Hank, who is regaling the king, fueled by too much wine. Tom picks at his food.

HANK

You see, my liege, where Mister Twain and I come from, it's the Captains of Industry and Science that rule. Not this old warmongering and magic.

ARTHUR

Is that so, Mr. Twain?

Twain starts to reply, but Hank is unstoppable.

HANK

No disrespect, technology and war go hand in hand -- I tell you, there's a plenty to be made in that. Oh, yes! Machines of war. Flying machines. Leave it to old Hank. A few years, we'll have the French eating from our hands. Eh, sir knight? Ha, look at him. He has no idea! Cheers!

Tom is looking ill, until he sees Susy by a doorway, arguing with a SERVING LADY.

TOM

Mr. Twain!

Susy pushes past the serving lady, runs in and throws her arms around Twain.

SUSY

Oh, Papa! The devil came for Sour Mash.

TWAIN

He did what?

TOM

Mr. Twain, let's get out of here while we can.

SUSY

I saw him! In Merlin's tower!

TOM

She's delirious.

TWAIN

Wait -- Who, Susy? Who did you see?

Susy, trembling, terrified, looks to one of several high windows around the hall -- then it happens:

ALL ELECTRIC LIGHTS BLACK OUT.

MUSIC stops. The banquet is reduced to candlelight and the glow from the fireplace. A collective 'ooh' goes up, but quickly peters off.

EXT. VIEW THROUGH CASTLE WINDOW

Framed against the night, Merlin's tower is ablaze from within with GREEN AND FLASHING LIGHTS.

INT. CASTLE BANQUET - NIGHT

TOM
What is that?

TWAIN
Merlin's tower.

EXT. VIEW THROUGH CASTLE WINDOW

A BOLT OF LIGHTNING zaps from Merlin's weather vane down towards the town. Another 'ooh' from Courtiers and Servers -- then LIGHTNING zaps again and this time HITS THE CASTLE.

EXT. CASTLE BATTLEMENTS - NIGHT

Stones and mortar EXPLODE.

INT. CASTLE BANQUET - NIGHT

A courtly lady SCREAMS.

ANOTHER ZAP shatters the window. PANIC all around.

Knights and Servers flee the table. Tom and Susy duck. Arthur pulls Twain clear. Shards of glass rain down.

Hank grabs a flaming scone, runs to a FUSE BOX, pulls all plugs, then jumps up onto the table.

HANK
Follow me!

Guards and Knights grab burning brands from the fireplace and head out after Hank. Tom tries to pull Twain with them, but Twain resists.

In the center of the table, in front of Twain, the JUMPING FROG has appeared -- the same Jumping Frog that Twain chased from his bedroom. The Frog GRIBBETS, leaps away.

TOM
Come on!

Tom leads Twain and Susy out.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

Panic in the streets, villagers running from buildings, as power cables EXPLODE and FIRE jumps house to house.

EXT. MERLIN'S TOWER - NIGHT

Still ABLAZE within, tendrils of CRACKLING ENERGY rise and shoot from the spire, like a giant Tesla coil.

EXT. CASTLE COURTYARD - NIGHT

Tom brings Twain and Susy out to where Hank and his company of Guards and Knights are gathered, staring up at Merlin's Tower.

EXT. MERLIN'S TOWER - NIGHT

With a tremendous SURGE OF POWER, all windows in the tower BLOW OUT.

EXT. CASTLE COURTYARD - NIGHT

Hank, Knights and Guards duck as debris rain down, then all look up again.

The spectacle is over, windows black smoking holes.

Hank reaches inside his jacket, takes out a Colt revolver.

A LOW MOAN from the open doorway to the tower. Steps lead up to darkness. A tattered figure appears, Merlin, hair on end, clothing scorched. He staggers out to face them clutching the book from which he read his incantation.

King Arthur, armed with a lamp and gun, pushes his way through Guards and Knights to Hank.

ARTHUR

Merlin? What in the blazes...?

Merlin points at Twain.

MERLIN

This man! This very mortal man,
defiler of kingdoms, mocker of
gods, procurer of heresy. He is
the embodiment of this
abomination!

He raises the book to display the cover -- a much-battered illustrated first edition:

"A Connecticut Yankee In King Arthur's Court"

By Mark Twain

Tom frowns skeptically.

TWAIN
That's a bit harsh.

A CRASH OF THUNDER and a flash of LIGHT above.

EXT. MERLIN'S TOWER - NIGHT

A fiery BALL OF LIGHT blasts out of the roof of Merlin's tower, illuminating the sky in an infernal green inferno.

EXT. CASTLE DRAWBRIDGE - NIGHT

As more debris rains down in the courtyard, Twain sees the Jumping Frog hop out across the drawbridge.

EXT. CASTLE COURTYARD - NIGHT

Courtiers shielding their eyes to stare up at Merlin's Tower. Merlin waves his book and approaches King Arthur.

MERLIN
Again! Again the demon strikes!
Prithee, Arthur, cast thine eyes
upon the demon's document,
summoned from Morgan's Land.

HANK
Hey, I had nothin' to do with
this.

MERLIN
You are his enabler! It is time to
cast you out! Old magic versus
new!

Tom pulls Twain and Susy aside and beckons them toward the drawbridge. The Jumping Frog sits waiting, and then hops away.

TWAIN
Why are we following that
tarnation toad?

TOM
He's your Jumping Frog.

Twain halts.

TWAIN

I am well acquainted with this amphibian. What is it doing here?

TOM

Come, please, Mr. Twain, we must be out of here while we are still able.

YOUNG MAN

Hi, Tom.

EXT. CASTLE DRAWBRIDGE - NIGHT

Tom spins to see a MYSTERIOUS YOUNG MAN in courtier's clothing has suddenly appeared, leaning back on the low stone wall outside the castle. The Young Man appears to be in his late 20s, but has a gleam of something far more ancient and less innocent in his eyes. He smiles. No sign of the Frog.

YOUNG MAN

Offer you a ride?

They exit onto the drawbridge to see a HORSE-DRAWN HAY WAGON nearby. Susy clings to Twain's arm and hides behind him.

SUSY

It's him!

YOUNG MAN

Susy, won't you introduce me?

TOM

Who him?

TWAIN

Susy, Tom -- go.

Susy drags Tom towards the hay wagon, keeping her distance from the Young Man, who LAUGHS.

YOUNG MAN

They've seen the truth about you, Twain. How you sent them Hank. How you poisoned Camelot. How does it feel to be despised by your creations?

TWAIN

This? This is why he brought me here? To bargain with one of my half-completed manuscripts? Release me from this nightmare.

YOUNG MAN
If you insist.

The Young Man points at Twain's chest.

Twain clutches at his heart, falls to his knees, gasping in pain. Tom rushes to Twain's aid, but Twain waves him off and glares up at the Young Man in anger. He catches his breath, and slowly regains his feet.

TWAIN
(catching his breath)
I refuse -- to be intimidated --
by my own -- outrageous --
misanthropy.

Twain faces his opponent.

The Young Man's EYES GLOW RED.

EXT. CASTLE COURTYARD - NIGHT

Consternation continues as courtiers run back and forth carrying buckets of water to douse flames in Merlin's Tower.

Arthur is seated on the tower steps, where Guards are holding lamps for him to read, as their king leafs through Merlin's book, in disbelief. He flips pages and stops at the satirical illustrations, lampooning the characters:

A wily Hank... a haggard Arthur... a flailing wizard leading a prancing troop of knights and nobles in chains...

With each drawing, Arthur becomes more furious and humiliated. He looks up at Hank, dismayed.

ARTHUR
Seize him.

Guards apprehended Hank.

HANK
Wait! Let me go! Arthur, I can
explain! That's not supposed to be
you! It's not a history book! It's
all a joke! A gag! It's funny!

EXT. CASTLE DRAWBRIDGE - NIGHT

Twain grimaces again in agony, clutching at his heart. The Young Man leans in close.

YOUNG MAN
How's this for progress, old man?

TOM
Mister Twain! Look out!

Merlin has appeared in the courtyard with a group of Knights, setting up a GATLING MACHINE GUN.

MERLIN
Destroy them!

Knights with the Gatling gun accidentally LET LOOSE A ROUND, causing courtiers to dive for cover. Tom ducks, and looks around in confusion. The Young Man has vanished. Susy yells from the wagon.

SUSY
Hurry, Tom!

Tom helps Twain to his feet and hurries with him to the wagon.

Merlin beats the Knights with his staff, and takes control of the Gatling gun.

MERLIN
Infernal machine!

Twain stumbles as he clambers up onto the back of the hay wagon. Susy tries to help. Tom takes the reins.

Merlin struggles to operate the machine gun.

Tom hauls Twain onto the wagon. A MEOW makes Susy turn. She sees Sour Mash in the hay, scoops him up.

Merlin OPENS FIRE, yelling, crazed.

Bullets spray the ground around the wagon as it lurches forward. Twain and Susy tumble back into the hay, Tom yells the horses to advance.

Merlin CONTINUES TO LET RIP like a man possessed. Machine gun fire splinters the drawbridge, throws up dirt, zings off rock, ricochets all along the low stone wall.

EXT. VILLAGE STREETS - NIGHT

The hay wagon careens through streets where villagers are still attempting to douse their burning buildings.

EXT. HAY WAGON - MOVING - NIGHT

Tom yells at the horses, whipping at the reins. In back, Twain holds Susy close. Sour Mash WAILS.

The Mysterious Young Man emerges from the hay.

Susy SCREAMS.

EXT. VILLAGE STREETS - NIGHT

The wagon clatters past a side street, FOUR KNIGHTS ON HORSEBACK race out and give chase. All pull out rifles and OPEN FIRE.

EXT. HAY WAGON - MOVING - NIGHT

Twain and Susy duck as bullets whistle overhead.

YOUNG MAN

You know, "Connecticut Yankee" always was my favorite of all your later books, Twain. Greed and superstition. Aristocracy and hypocrisy. You never had much regard for old Merlin did you? Or poor Hank, come to that. Your so-called Yankee hero.

Twain glowers at the Young Man.

TWAIN

Faster, Tom.

Tom glances back and then snaps the reins.

EXT. VILLAGE STREETS - NIGHT

The wagon takes a turn, hits a rock, goes up on two wheels.

EXT. HAY WAGON - MOVING - NIGHT

YOUNG MAN

Oops!

The Young Man tumbles from the wagon with a pile of hay. The wagon rights itself. Tom YAHOOOS. Susy hugs her father. Twain does not yet look relieved.

EXT. VILLAGE STREETS - NIGHT

Pursuing horses' hooves charge through hay fallen from the wagon that litters the cobbled street. But no sign of the Mysterious Young Man.

EXT. HAY WAGON - MOVING - NIGHT

Sour Mash MEOWS again, and Susy nestles into her father.

The Young Man pops up again from the hay, brushes off his clothes, winks at Twain and Susy, and then pulls out a copy of "Connecticut Yankee."

YOUNG MAN

I suppose an autograph is out of the question?

TWAIN

Leave us.

YOUNG MAN

Only if you join me.

TWAIN

Never.

EXT. VILLAGE STREETS - NIGHT

The Knights gain on the wagon.

The wagon approaches the border of the village where a dilapidated wooden bridge crosses a stream.

EXT. HAY WAGON - MOVING - NIGHT

The Mysterious Young Man views the bridge ahead, the Knights behind.

YOUNG MAN

Oh, well...

He tosses out the copy of "Connecticut Yankee."

YOUNG MAN (CONT'D)

Never did much care for the ending.

The Young Man's EYES GLOW RED. Susy hides her face. Twain holds her close. They are entering a MIST.

VIEWED OVER THE HORSES

the bridge ahead has been SWALLOWED UP BY MIST.

EXT. ROAD TO STREAM - NIGHT

The Knights ride into the MIST.

EXT. HAY WAGON - THROUGH MIST - NIGHT

The Young Man is reduced to just a shadow with two RED GLOWING EYES.

YOUNG MAN

We're not done yet, Twain.

THE EYES WINK OUT, he is gone. Susy looks up at Twain. He hushes her.

TOM

I can't see a thing!

TWAIN

Don't stop!

The hay wagon horses' hooves hit the wooden bridge, followed by the wagon wheels.

Twain holds Susy tight as the wagon JUDDERS, and then the deafening sound of the wheels on wood gives way to softer ground.

EXT. VILLAGE STREAM - NIGHT

The knights spur their horses into the mist. One horse throws its rider. The others do not stop. The lead rider hits the bridge and reins back but horse and rider plunge forward and hit water.

MIST DRIFTS AWAY. The other Knights stop in time. The bridge has been scorched in two.

EXT. HAY WAGON - THROUGH MIST - NIGHT

MIST breaks up to reveal the hay wagon traveling unscathed. Twain looks about him.

EXT. ROUGH COUNTRY ROAD - DAWN

First light is breaking. No sign of Camelot, castle or village behind the hay wagon. A new land, with broad fields all about.

EXT. HAY WAGON - MOVING - DAWN

Sour Mash MEOWS in Susy's arms.

SUSY
Where are we?

TOM
I've no idea.

TWAIN
I do.

Twain climbs forward, takes the reins.

TOM
I'm sorry, for all of this, Mr.
Twain.

TWAIN
We have to get our bearings.

EXT. BARN - DAWN

A BARN sits on a hilltop, framed against the sky. The wagon approaches.

Twain reins the horses to a halt, brakes.

TWAIN
Tom, water the horses.

TOM
You knew him, didn't you? That guy
from Merlin's tower?

Twain surveys the countryside. Tom climbs down and offers to help Susy, but she turns away with Sour Mash.

SUSY
He's a bad man.

TWAIN
Water the horses, Tom.

Tom stands a moment, sighs, unbridles the horses and leads them to the barn.

TOM

We're supposed to be a team, you know.

Tom finds a water pump. A musket barrel levels with his nose. The owner of the musket, TED LYMAN, a goosey-looking teen in a Confederate uniform of the American civil war, circa 1861, draws back the musket bolt with a loud CLICK- CLACK.

Back on the wagon, Twain looks up. Sour Mash jumps out of Susy's arms.

SUSY

Oh, no....

The barn doors burst open to reveal FOUR OTHER YOUNG CONFEDERATES, all armed and aiming muskets. Four more loud CLICK-CLACKS in quick succession. Lyman steps out of the shadows, a pistol to Tom's head.

LYMAN

Reach! G'wan, both you! Reach!

Susy and Twain raise their hands.

LYMAN (CONT'D)

Sergeant Smith! Check for weapons!

SMITH, the largest of the group, steps forward. He motions Twain and Susy off the wagon with his gun, frisks Twain, shrugs at Lyman.

Lyman pushes Tom into Smith's custody, walks out, views Susy, stops in front of Twain, and then walks back to another member of his troop -- a serious young man, reddish hair and agate eyes -- by all appearances a YOUNG TWAIN (25).

A heavy boy, BOWERS, notices the resemblance, and laughs.

BOWERS

Ha! Ole coot looks like Sammy!
Hey, Sam! That your gran'pappy?

YOUNG TWAIN

Ain't my gran'pap.

Tom stares back and forth between them, amazed.

TWAIN

(quietly, to Tom)
"Private History of a Campaign
That Failed." Short story. Before
your time. Don't let Susy see
this.

TOM
Why? What happens?

A sixth boy, ED STEVENS, the lankiest, calls down from the hay loft.

STEVENS
Cap'n Lyman, sir!

LYMAN
What is it, Corporal Stevens?

STEVENS
Union Army, sir! Comin' up the hill!

Looks of terror between the boys.

LYMAN
Everyone inside! Dunlap! Fetch their horses! Round back!

DUNLAP, a runt, runs behind the barn. Lyman points his gun at Twain and Susy, herds them in with Tom.

LYMAN (CONT'D)
Bowers! Git your butt out here!

Bowers, Smith and Young Sam seize the cart, and start to push it inside.

INT. BARN - DAY

Lyman positions Tom, Twain and Susy under Stevens' guard. Tom speaks close to Twain.

TOM
"Campaign That Failed"?

TWAIN
Marion Rangers. Lasted two weeks.
Youthful ignorance of the politics of war.

Susy sees Sour Mash at a window, goes over to join him. Stevens in the loft is too busy looking out to notice.

TOM
Why'd he let us go? That man from Merlin's Tower?

TWAIN
He's not from Merlin's tower.
(MORE)

TWAIN (CONT'D)

And he's not a man. He's from another story. You won't know it.

TOM

Number 44.

Twain frowns.

TWAIN

How'd you know that?

TOM

I don't recall. From research. This is all... a jumble.

TWAIN

More like an overwrought inflation. Merlin never conjured him at Camelot. Hank never turned Camelot to ruin. At least, not to that degree.

TOM

Maybe Merlin wanted to settle score with Hank, after what happened in your book? And now... Wait!

Tom searches in his pockets, takes out PAINE'S NOTEBOOK -- last seen at Stormfield -- flips through the pages and shows one to Twain.

TWAIN

Where did you get this? This is Albert's scrawl. These are private notes between me and my biographer.

TOM

I found it in your house. I knew I'd seen that name! Look:

(reading)

'"Number 44, The Mysterious Stranger," a most neglected, misunderstood creation...' But who was 44, and why's he brought you here?

Twain closes Paine's notebook, hands it back to Tom.

TWAIN

An unfinished work.

Dunlap leads in the horses, the others bring in the wagon.
Lyman pulls shut the doors, blocking out the light.

LYMAN

You two!

Lyman aims his gun at Tom and Twain.

LYMAN (CONT'D)

Over here, an' pipe down!

Smith pulls Tom and Twain over with him to the window where
Lyman, Sour Mash and Susy are staring out.

EXT. BARN - VIEWED THROUGH WINDOW

A UNION SCOUT ON HORSEBACK appears, approaching up the hill.

SMITH (O.S.)

How many?

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

YOUNG TWAIN

One.

Lyman stares at Twain.

TWAIN

Sam's right. That's a Union scout,
but it's just one man, and he
isn't even armed. Let him pass --
Tom, get me out of here.

STEVENS

Too late. He's seen us.

Lyman grabs Twain to prevent him leaving, and then removes the
safety catch on his rifle. He aims out the window.

LYMAN

On my word, men.

EXT. BARN - DAY

The Union Scout slows to view the barn.

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

Bowers WHIMPERS, very low. Dunlap very slowly releases his safety catch. Stevens does the same.

EXT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

The Union Scout dismounts: he is not in uniform, in his early twenties, no visible weapons. He reaches in his coat, takes out a compass.

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

Susy is staring out in disbelief. Tom covers her eyes, sees Twain staring out with his features set grimly.

EXT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

The Scout turns back to his horse, halts, stares down at the dirt. He sees trails leading to the barn.

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

The boys all stare. One trigger finger tenses.

IN QUICK SUCCESSION

The Scout looks up, right at the barn.

Dunlap YELLS: 'Fire!'

Twain HOLLERS: 'No!'

Rifles BLAZE, through timber, glass, through knot holes.

IN SLOW MOTION

The Scout is hit, ONCE in the shoulder, ONCE blowing off his hat. His horse jolts in fright. The Scout reels, head thrown back, seems to hang for an eternity, and then he crashes to the dirt.

BACK TO REAL TIME

Dunlap's mouth hangs open; then he LAUGHS, YAHOOOS.

SMITH

Good. Now wait for the rest.

Susy's eyes are shut. Bowers is crying. Dunlap dances a war dance. The others remain silent, staring out.

EXT. BARN - DAY

The Scout's horse stands nearby. Its owner lies, arms spread, mouth open, chest heaving, white shirt-front splashed with blood.

The barn door opens. Twain steps out with Tom and the boys.

They gather round the dying boy.

The Scout reaches up, lips moving, mumbling unintelligible.

CUT TO:

SCENE REPEATS:

Rifles BLAZE from the barn.

Twain stands with Tom as the Scout is SHOT again, CRASHES back into the dirt. Twain turns to see the boys at the windows in the barn: Stevens, Bowers, Dunlap, Smith Lyman and Young Twain -- whose EYES GLOW RED.

CUT TO:

REPEAT:

Six rifles BLAZE. The Scout falls back. Young Sam FIRES, teeth-gritted. The Scout receives a bullet in the head, crashes to the ground.

CUT TO:

REPEAT:

Twain stands with Tom and the boys, looking down as the last moments of life ebb from the Union Scout.

YOUNG TWAIN

The thought shot through me that I was a murderer, that I had killed a man, a man who had never done me any harm. That was the coldest sensation that ever went through my marrow.

Twain catches his breath and clutches at his chest. He meets eyes with Young Twain, whose EYES BRIEFLY GLIMMER RED.

Tom sees it, too, and steps in between Twain and the younger man.

TOM

No!

The young rangers all stare at Tom in puzzlement, including Young Twain, who appears completely normal now.

LYMAN

What's eatin' tubby?

Tom is almost shaking, staring at Young Twain, who appears very uncomfortable.

TWAIN

My military career was short-lived
by design.

Twain pats Tom's shoulder, and then walks back toward the barn. Tom hears a RUMBLING OF HOOVES, and a DISTANT BUGLE sounding the charge.

TOM

Who's that?

A distant posse of horse-riders is approaching, YANKEE CAVALRY lead by a stout, grand looking UNION GENERAL (60).

TWAIN

You want my cooperation? I suggest
you get us out of here, now.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRY LANDSCAPE - DAY

The rangers continue to stand around the fallen Union Scout as the cavalrymen race toward them up the hill.

Tom and Twain ride away on the back of a large horse, with Susy and Sour Mash perched between them.

Twain glances back.

The Union Cavalrymen are now half a league behind.

TOM

There she is!

Twain turns to squint ahead.

WIDE VIEW

They are heading for a mighty river sparkling in the sun. The river spans a mile from bank to bank and meanders off into the distance as far as the eye can see.

TWAIN

'A whole mile broad, and awful
still and grand.'

TOM

We made it!

In the far distance, a mighty MISSISSIPPI RIVERBOAT is arriving
at a shoreside landing.

EXT. RIVERBOAT LANDING - DAY

Tom, Twain and their pursuers are tiny figures way off. Noise
and bustle on the landing.

Like a vision out of Currier and Ives, STEVEDORES stack cargo
and crated chickens... PASSENGERS wave and look about... a
LONGSHOREMAN yells up into a tree where a GANG OF BAREFOOT BOYS
have perched to point and wave.

TWIN PLUMES OF STEAM

TOOT into the sky above the name-plate 'Grand Turk.'

HUGE PADDLE BLADES

Back-water, churning foam.

FULL SHOT

The vast white majestic bulk of the paddle steamer slowly
wheels in the river.

INT. GRAND TURK - PILOT HOUSE - DAY

A young CUB PILOT sits to the rear of the CAPTAIN, who stands
beside the QUARTERMASTER, as the PILOT (his back to CAMERA)
guides the riverboat into dock.

EXT. RIVERBOAT LANDING - DAY

Tom rides up with Susy, Twain and Sour Mash. Tom bounds down
from the horse, runs for the ticket office, turning out his
pockets.

JEAN

Tom!

JEAN, a prim young woman in her 30s, waves from the crowd
behind the barrier. Tom hurries over to her, and she greets him
with kisses.

TOM
Delivered in one piece. Or near
enough.

Twain struggles down from the horse, tucks Sour Mash under his arm, and then helps Susy down. A passing PORTER stares. Twain hands the Porter the horse's reins, then walks with Susy to join Tom and Jean. He stops before his daughter, tears filling his eyes, and then they embrace.

JEAN
Oh, Papa! I knew you'd come. Mama
is waiting.

The news fills Twain with emotion.

TWAIN
Livy's here?

CUT TO:

Union Cavalry ride up and descend on the Porter. Their General intervenes. The Porter points to the Ticket Office, gaping up in awe at The General.

EXT. GRAND TURK - AT LANDING - DAY

Twain cranes his neck to look ahead as Jean and Tom lead him up the gangway with the shuffling crowd. Susy holds Sour Mash. Tom anxiously looks back from time to time.

HARBOR-MASTER
Aaaall 'boaaaard!

EXT. RIVERBOAT LANDING - DAY

Union cavalry officers cannot break through the crowd at the ticket barrier. The General dismounts, pushes his way through to the Ticket Inspector, presents his ticket.

A grand, engraved, gilt-edged affair:

Board of Passage for ONE PERSON

April 21st, 1910

On Board the Paddle-Steamer

GRAND TURK

Admit the Bearer Only
GENERAL ULYSSES S. GRANT

EXT. GRAND TURK - AT LANDING - DAY

Longshoremen halt before removing the final gangway. General Grant bullies his way on board.

INT. GRAND TURK - CORRIDOR

Jean conducts Tom and Twain down a plush corridor, Susy and Sour Mash bring up the rear. Twain observes the tasseled lampshades, a luxuriant potted palm. He smiles warmly as, above decks, the sound of a STEAM WHISTLE SOUNDS.

Sour Mash leaps from Susy's arms, alarmed by the noise, and darts off around a corner. Susy hangs back from the group. The others do not notice. Susy goes after her cat.

INT. GRAND TURK - FIRST CLASS BEDROOM - DAY

A WHITE LINEN SUIT

is laid out on the bed: immaculate, swallow-tailed, white shirt, pleated pants, waistcoat, white silk tie and pink socks.

Clara is making preparations with her mother, LIVY (58) -- the petite dark-haired woman from Twain's bedside photograph. A knock, and the cabin door opens.

Livy views her bedraggled, night-shirted husband in silent dismay.

TWAIN
Livy, darling.

LIVY
Oh, Youth!

Twain steps in to embrace his wife. She backs away.

LIVY (CONT'D)
You're filthy!

CLARA
And he smells!

TWAIN
(confused)
Clara...?

CLARA
We're all here to help you, Papa.
Everyone from your books.

LIVY
Everyone except Susy. Where is
she?

TOM
You get him ready, I'll go find
her.

JEAN
Be careful, Tom!

Tom hurries out.

TWAIN
Ready me for what? I thought this
was it. We're all together now.

CLARA
You're only halfway, Papa. You're
going to meet some important
people before we get to Hannibal.

TWAIN
Whom?

Livy takes Twain's hand.

LIVY
Your critics, Youth.

EXT. GRAND TURK - UPPER DECK - AT LANDING - DAY

Susy runs out to where PASSENGERS are gathered to wave. She
hears a MEOW, and follows.

STEVEDORE #1
Stand by to cast off!

STEVEDORE #2
Standing by!

INT. GRAND TURK - PILOT HOUSE - DAY

CAPTAIN MORGAN
Take her up to steam.

The Pilot (back to CAMERA) speaks into his hailing tube.

PILOT
Engines up to steam.

INT. GRAND TURK - ENGINE ROOMS

A hell of steam and pipes.

ENGINEER
(into hailing tube)
Aye, sir. Up to steam.
(yells behind him)
Up to steam!

EXT. GRAND TURK - LOWER DECK - AT LANDING - DAY

A PURSER peers down from above, views the huge stationary paddle blades dripping water. He continues on his way. Susy appears on the deck below. She peers up at a MEOW.

Sour Mash is perched, soaking wet, on the outermost blade of the paddle wheel. He MEOWS again, pathetic.

SUSY
What are you doing? Come back
here! We're safe now!

Susy climbs over the guard rail, reaches out. Sour Mash MEOWS, ears flat. Susy sets one foot on a paddle wheel support.

YOUNG MAN
I wouldn't do that!

Susy almost slips, but looks down, petrified.

The Young Man from Camelot, now dressed in the uniform of a riverboat captain, is in a ROWING BOAT below.

SUSY
Get away from me!

YOUNG MAN
They're about to start the
engines. I'll help you save him,
or little Sour Mash will be
smashed.

Sour Mash MEOWS.

SUSY
I don't need your help.

Susy starts out again onto the wheel support. A BELL RINGS. CHEERS rise from the landing. Sour Mash WAILS.

The Young Man vaults from the rowing boat, swings onto the wheel support, scoops Sour Mash from the wheel, and then leaps across grabbing Susy before THE PADDLE WHEEL SPINS.

Water CHURNS behind the Young Man and Susy as they land, spraying them both. Sour Mash SCREECHES, wriggles free, shoots off across the deck. Susy tries to push away from the Young Man, starts to cry.

YOUNG MAN
Hush, child. Don't be afraid.

SUSY
I am not afraid of you!

YOUNG MAN
Then why are you trembling?

Susy stares into the Young Man's face, terrified, confused.

SUSY
Let me go.

YOUNG MAN
I know how hard it's been for you
with your Papa... all this pain
that he's creating.

SUSY
That's not true!

YOUNG MAN
You think I'm behind all this?
Well, he created me... Just as he
created you. There's part of him
in all of us.

Susy weeps again. The Young Man cradles her head against him, hushes her, strokes her hair. Susy sobs. The Young Man kisses her hand. She looks into his eyes.

YOUNG MAN (CONT'D)
Hush.

The Young Man kisses Susy. She slumps unconscious in his arms.

EXT. GRAND TURK - TRAVELING - DAY

The riverboat leaves the landing.

The giant vessel powers up the river, sun glinting off its bow, the churning paddle wheel leaving a thick wake.

EXT. GRAND TURK - FIRST CLASS CORRIDOR

Tom arrives at an intersection in the corridor. Two PASSENGERS pass by. Tom averts his face. A MEOW makes him look up.

Sour Mash stands behind him, MEOWS again, walks off.

Tom goes after the cat.

TOM

Sour Mash! Come back here!

EXT. GRAND TURK - PROMENADE DECK - TRAVELING - DAY

Sour Mash trots out onto deck.

Riverboat passengers, seen clearly for the first time, are a bizarre mix of TWAINITES -- similar to the forest figures in the opening scene:

Most are late-19th and early 20th century AMERICANS, from all walks of life, some EUROPEANS, some NATIVE AMERICANS, POLYNESIANS and oddball groups from ANCIENT MYTH AND FANTASY, including a MAN AND WOMAN in fig leaves, other BIBLICAL TYPES, a few lurking FARM ANIMALS.

One incongruous group chats fervently over drinks at a table. Sour Mash trots by.

BIBLICAL MAN

He must answer the consequences of his actions. It's as simple as that.

PARISIAN INTELLECTUAL

(horrendous accent)

Ah steel sink zee man az free will. Eez not to blame for zee actions of eez children!

BRITISH LADY

What absolute tosh!

Tom halts in a nearby doorway.

PARISIAN INTELLECTUAL

Let zem 'ang zis 'Uckleberry fellow. Tom Zawyeur too, I zay!

Tom hears more Twainites approaching in the corridor behind him.

A NEWSPAPER

the 'Hannibal Revue' with the headline 'Twain To Face His Critics' covers a fat, sleeping BOER WAR SOLDIER. Tom steals the paper and shields himself as he passes the chatting group.

SOUTHERN FLOOZY
You know, ah heard that Mister
Sawyer is on board -- the scamp!

PARISIAN INTELLECTUAL
Zawyeur? Ah speet on heem!

The Parisian spits as Tom passes by.

PARISIAN INTELLECTUAL (CONT'D)
Excusez-moi, monsieur.

Tom continues past, unrecognized

INT. GRAND TURK - SERVICE STAIRCASE - DAY

Sour Mash trots down a flight of stairs. Tom follows, discarding his newspaper disguise. He continues round the corner to a SERVICE DECK.

TOM
Sour Mash! Where's Susy?

Sour Mash leads the way down another flight of steps.

INT. GRAND TURK - LOWER DECKS

Much darker. Grimy bulkheads. Sour Mash waits for Tom, MEOWS. An ominous DEEP BASS RUMBLE, the heartbeat of the boat. They venture on down a narrow corridor.

Tom comes to a door: 'Engine Room - Keep Door Closed.'

Sour Mash MEOWS. Tom scoops up the kitten.

INT. GRAND TURK - ENGINE ROOM

Tom enters with Sour Mash to view a cavernous Hades of dripping pipes and gauges, ENGINE NOISE now very loud.

STOKERS work in steady rhythm, shoveling coal into one of eight boiler furnaces. One uses tongs to open a furnace door where flames consume the coals.

Tom, lit by the glow, stops, staring ahead in shock.

New SHADOWS have sprung up on the wall: one a GIRL, the other HORNED, WITH A FORKED TAIL, pressing the girl back in an embrace. The shadows disappear as the FURNACE DOOR CLANGS SHUT.

Sour Mash MEOWS. Tom continues forward.

BEHIND A GIANT KNOT OF PIPES

Tom steps out, RAISES HIS VOICE.

TOM
Stop right there.

The Young Man in riverboat uniform snaps round at Tom, Susy in his arms, her clothing ripped, one shoulder bare, and still not fully conscious.

YOUNG MAN
Enchanting, isn't she?

The Young Man fingers Susy's throat with a RAZOR TALON.

TOM
I said, stop that.

YOUNG MAN
Yet so like her father in her moments of self-doubt.

TOM
You've no business with her.

YOUNG MAN
And how would you know that?

Sour Mash leaps from Tom's arms. Tom pulls out Paine's notebook.

TOM
I know what you are.

Sour Mash licks one of Susy's dangling feet. Susy wakes from her trance. The Young Man kicks at the cat. Susy falls, hits the deck, still half dazed.

The Young Man and Sour Mash BARE FANGS AT EACH OTHER.

Young Tom grabs Susy, but drops Paine's notebook. The Young Man's EYES GLOW RED, pulls out a long dagger and pins the notebook to the deck.

YOUNG MAN
What you know won't save him.

Paine's notebook BURSTS INTO FLAMES.

TOM
Material evidence. I have a copy--

Tom coughs and chokes, his VOICE BREAKING. His eyes go wide.

YOUNG MAN
Liar.

Tom coughs again, choking, losing his voice. Susy comes to her senses, she pulls away. The Young Man LAUGHS and ENGINE ROOM NOISE GROWS LOUD around them. Susy is terrified.

SUSY
Tom!

Tom sinks to his knees. His hands go to his throat, he SCREAMS LIKE A BOY. STEAM rises around him. He SHRINKS inside his clothes.

Susy backs away in fright. Steam fills the air. The Young Man's EYES GLOW RED through the steam. Susy sees a crowbar nearby, grabs it and swings. The iron rod swooshes through the steam. The Young Man has vanished again.

ENGINE NOISE abates. Steam clears. Where Tom was crouched a moment ago, a skinny boy is now sobbing, lost inside his clothes. YOUNG TOM looks up at Susy, aged twelve.

YOUNG TOM
Look at what he did. Look at what
he did.

CUT TO:

SOUR MASH

leads the way out. Susy follows, helping Young Tom, who is clutching at his pants to keep them from falling off.

SUSY
Papa will fix it.

YOUNG TOM
No, you don't understand. What
I've had to live down since your
father's book -- I'll have to go
through it all again!

Susy helps Tom with his jacket, which is huge around his shoulders. Tom WHIMPERS. Susy takes him out.

AN OLD ENGINEER WITH A PIPE

discovers his missing crowbar, and then sees the Mysterious Young Man picking himself up from out of a pile of coal.

EXT. GRAND TURK - PROMENADE DECK - DAY

Sour Mash runs up from below, Susy follows with Young Tom.

YOUNG TOM
I can't do this!

SUSY
Yes, you can.

Twainites turn to stare. Susy herds Young Tom past.

A burly American Indian HALF-BREED steps out ahead, a huge scar down one cheek, hair tied in a bandanna.

TOM
Oh my gosh! Injun Joe!

Susy places an arm around Young Tom. INJUN JOE, blocks their path, monolithic. Susy looks up to face him.

SUSY
Excuse us.

Injun Joe stands, immobile.

THE MYSTERIOUS YOUNG MAN

appears from the staircase, stops. He straightens his uniform, continues on.

YOUNG MAN
Here he is, folks.

Sour Mash HISSES. The Young Man walks up and addresses the Twainites.

SUSY
Please, no.

YOUNG MAN
The impudent young Mr. Sawyer. Revealed as his true self. But what is that to us? Slugs and snails and puppy dog tails? Or something more prosaic? Why is he protecting Twain?

SUSY
Will you let us go?

INJUN JOE
No. I want to hear this.

Young Tom meets eyes with Joe. A stir in the crowd. Some of the Twainites back away. Tom now faces them. He points at the Young Man.

YOUNG TOM
He's the reason I'm here! He
followed us here stirring up
trouble for poor Mr. Twain! He's
behind all this!

The Young Man laughs and addresses the Twainites. A BALD MAN in a suit and bow tie pushes forward to see.

YOUNG MAN
Ladies and gentlemen, you believe
Tom Sawyer?
(to Injun Joe)
You're not going to let him make a
fool of you again, are you?

A booming VOICE from the back of the crowd:

TICKET INSPECTOR
Tickets, please! Make way! Step
aside there! Thank you, sir.

The Ticket Inspector makes his way through, closely followed by General Grant.

GENERAL GRANT
Tom Sawyer?

YOUNG TOM
General Grant!

The inspector clips passengers' tickets. The Mysterious Young Man begins to look nervous.

The Inspector confronts him.

TICKET INSPECTOR
Crew member, sir?

YOUNG MAN
Not exactly.

YOUNG TOM
No! He's an imposter!

The Young Man steps backward and trips on Sour Mash. The cat SQUEALS. The Young Man falls back against a guard rail, a gate flies open and he disappears overboard. No splash.

TICKET INSPECTOR
Man overboard!

General Grant rushes for a life preserver. All join Tom to stare down at the railing.

VIEWED OVER THE SIDE

River water foams and trails away. No sign of the Young Man.

The Ticket Inspector looks bemused. Sour Mash MEOWS. Susy puts her arms around Young Tom, and hurries him away.

INT. GRAND TURK - FIRST CLASS CABIN - DAY

In pink-stockinged feet, white suit and bow tie, Twain stands cruciform as Clara buttons his vest. Jean fastens his cuff-links. Livy brushes his hair.

A KNOCK at the door. Clara answers it to reveal Susy, Sour Mash, Young Tom and General Grant. The General doffs his hat, and then grins in at Twain.

GENERAL GRANT
Looking splendid, Twain!

TWAIN
General Grant? This is an honor!

GENERAL GRANT
Come to help your case, boy. I owe you!

LIVY
Captain Stormfield was also due, but we've not heard from him yet.

GENERAL GRANT
Mrs. Clemens! I don't believe I've had the pleasure.

The General kisses Livy's hand. Twain's gaze now falls on Young Tom, aged twelve.

TWAIN
What happened to my council for the defense?

YOUNG TOM
(crestfallen)
I lost the notebook.

CLARA
Susy, Tom, you'd better change. You first, Tom. You're the filthiest, as always.

Clara steers Young Tom off towards the bathroom. Livy strokes Susy's hair.

GENERAL GRANT

Indeed. There's not much time. You and I, Clemens, have much to discuss.

JEAN

Just a moment, General -- Susy, didn't you have something for Papa?

Livy takes a small oblong box from an open suitcase on the bed, gives it to Susy. Susy hands it to Twain. Twain opens the box and takes out a GOLD FOUNTAIN PEN.

Twain unscrews the cap, revealing a diamond nib. The barrel has been engraved 'For Papa.'

Twain, visibly moved, rests a hand on Susy's cheek. She starts to cry, then hugs him.

GENERAL GRANT

You've a fine family, Twain. I've no doubt at all we'll have you soon on your way. Let's get to work.

From the bathroom, a SPLASH and Young Tom CRIES OUT.

CLARA

Don't be such a baby!

Through the half-open door, Young Tom is seated, soaked, in the bath tub. Clara drenches him with another bucket load of water.

INT. GRAND TURK - FIRST CLASS CORRIDOR

MOVING WITH

Twain, flanked by Livy and General Grant. Young Tom follows, looking spruce in a little suit, clutching a folio of notes. Susy follows with Sour Mash on a string, then Clara and Jean.

INT. GRAND TURK - LOBBY - DAY

A notice board, 'Tonight's Attraction', has been posted 'By invitation only.'

A steward waits nearby beside ornate doors, engraved 'Ballroom.' Twain and company arrive. Clara shows their tickets. The steward offers the way in.

INT. GRAND TURK - BALLROOM - DAY

Twain enters with the others. The steward holds back all but Twain, allowing him to walk forward.

Aside from a chandelier suspended from the ceiling, there is no sign of festivity. Twainites are seated and standing, filling the room, all viewing Twain.

Twain walks out to the center of the hall.

General Grant and the others take a seat at a table with a TUDOR PRINCE, a STREET URCHIN, a TEENAGE PEASANT GIRL IN ARMOR.

A band platform has been cleared to make way for a tribunal at a table: The Bald Man (from earlier), and a BEARDED MAN, both in late middle-age; one wry ELDER MAN in his sixties; and one stern, silver-haired PORTLY WOMAN.

PORTLY WOMAN

A seat, please, for Mr. Twain.

Twain is surprised to see Paine step up with a chair.

TWAIN

Paine? What are you doing here?

Paine speaks close.

PAINE

Council for the defense.

Paine returns to his table, where the Jumping Frog is also seated, viewing Twain.

PORTLY WOMAN

Mr. Twain. This is a complete assembly of persons from your writing. At least those that could make it.

TWAIN

So it would seem.

PORTLY WOMAN

My colleagues and I are--

TWAIN

I know. You're critics. Is this really necessary? All this pomp and circumstance, I mean. You just want to hear me speak. All of you.

PORTLY WOMAN

This is an official hearing, Mr. Twain. We are here to weigh evidence to determine your culpability to the very serious charges brought against you.

TWAIN

Of what am I accused?

PORTLY WOMAN

You are charged with literary crimes against humanity. The outcome of which will determine your fate in the afterlife, should you chose to pursue one -- Now, will you sit?

Twain considers this, then sits.

TWAIN

Thank you.

PORTLY WOMAN

Thank you.

CUT TO:

The Bald Man standing, reading, deadpan, from a scroll:

BALD MAN

'Nothing exists. All is a dream. God, man, the world, the sun, the moon, the wilderness of stars. A dream, all a dream. They have no existence. Nothing exists save empty space and you.'

(to Twain)

Mr. Clemens? Did you write this?

TWAIN

It is almost recognizable. Yes.

BALD MAN

Will you identify the text, please?

The Bald Man walks forward with the scroll. Twain squints at it, then at the Bald Man.

TWAIN

It's an extract from "The Mysterious Stranger."

BALD MAN

Who appeared to several witnesses
this afternoon on the promenade
deck?

TWAIN

I was taking a bath with my wife
at the time.

GASPS OF DISAPPROVAL and SCATTERED LAUGHTER from the hall.
Clara looks askance at Livy. Livy shakes her head, smiling.

BALD MAN

Mr. Twain, I have testimonies--

TWAIN

Yes, yes, I know. Satan Junior, it
seems, has followed me here.

Murmurs from the crowd.

BALD MAN

From his own story, a little known
tale, which advocates chaos as
your final metaphysic?

YOUNG TOM

Objection!

PORTLY WOMAN

Sustained. Council will refrain
from unsubstantiated intellectual
outbursts.

BALD MAN

Unsubstantiated? Your honor, the
accused has admitted this
character he created is running
rife in his fiction!

YOUNG TOM

Objection!

PORTLY WOMAN

Sustained. Council may not pin
blame willy nilly without concrete
evidence.

BALD MAN

Very well. Mr. Twain, do you
accept responsibility for your own
creations?

Paine and company look on, Susy very glum.

TWAIN
I am what I create.

BALD MAN
Thank you, Mr. Twain.

CUT TO:

The Bearded Man, standing.

BEARDED MAN
I would like to draw the court's
attention to the council for the
defense....

INTERCUT

Paine and company as their names are called out.

BEARDED MAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
The Prince and the Pauper... Miss
Joan of Arc... General Ulysses
Grant... Mr. Twain's biographer,
Mr. Albert Bigelow Paine... Mr.
Twain's wife and daughters.. and,
of course, Mr. Tom Sawyer.

BACK TO SCENE

BEARDED MAN (CONT'D)
A noble group of characters, yet
somewhat outnumbered by the
opposition.

Nodding and MURMURING from the Twainites, some look
introspective.

TWAIN
Since when has self-worth been
decided on a head-count?

BEARDED MAN
Majority rule.

TWAIN
So the Deity is a socialist?

LAUGHTER from General Grant. UPROAR from the Twainites. An
ANGEL stands in outrage.

ANGEL
Blasphemy!

The Matronly Woman BANGS HER GAVEL.

Susy is distraught. Livy shakes her head sadly. Young Tom goes to stand, the General pulls him down.

PORTLY WOMAN

Order in the court! -- And I must warn the accused to curb his wit unless he wishes to be held in contempt.

BEARDED MAN

Mr. Twain, it seems, cannot help but stir up trouble.

TWAIN

If trouble means the truth.

BEARDED MAN

Really, Mr. Twain? Then what truth did you hope to stir up here today?

Twain meets eyes with Young Tom.

TWAIN

Apparently, I am on my way to resolve a situation with Huck Finn, so that I may be with my wife and family again.

BEARDED MAN

And, if you fail?

TWAIN

What do you mean?

BEARDED MAN

You admit you are the mirror of your own creation, yet you have little or no defense. The odds appear to be stacking up against you.

TWAIN

I have every faith in choosing my own destiny.

BEARDED MAN

Mr. Twain, what makes you think you will be allowed that choice?

CUT TO:

The Elder Man strides forward with the Bald Man's scroll. He halts, facing Twain.

ELDER MAN

I have little else to ask you, Mr. Twain. I believe your fiction states your beliefs and moral codes quite clearly, if that is what we are here to ascertain -- Would you care to...?

The Elder Man holds out the scroll to Twain. A pause. Twain accepts the scroll, squints at its text. The Elder Man offers a pair of spectacles, Twain declines.

TWAIN

I have a question.

The Elder Man looks to the Portly Woman.

PORTLY WOMAN

I'll allow it.

TWAIN

If I am considered... guilty, immoral. What happens to my wife and children?

ELDER MAN

That's not for me to say. I'm just a critic.

Twain views the hall, all staring intently. He meets eyes with Livy.

Susy jumps up.

SUSY

No, Papa! Don't read it!

Stewards move in on Susy's table. Young Tom holds Susy back.

PORTLY WOMAN

Miss Clemens, please be seated!

SUSY

You people are trying to trick him! You're twisting all his words!

(to the hall)

He made all of you! You should be here to honor him!

YOUNG TOM

Susy... let him have his say.

Young Tom pulls Susy back into her seat.

Twain stands with the scroll.

TWIN
(to the hall)
This is Satan Junior speaking,
from the end of "The Mysterious
Stranger."

Twain clears his throat, reads:

TWIN (CONT'D)
"And you are not you -- you have
no body, no blood, no bones, you
are but a thought. I myself have
no existence; I am but a dream --
your dream, creature of your
imagination. In a moment you will
have realized this, then you will
banish me from your visions and I
shall dissolve

TWIN (CONT'D)
into the nothingness out of which
you made me....

Twainites stare in horror.

Susy sobs. Young Tom puts an arm around her.

TWIN (CONT'D)
"Nothing exists but you. And you
are but a thought -- a vagrant
thought, a useless thought, a
homeless thought, wandering
forlorn amongst the empty
eternities!"
(then, from memory)
"He vanished, and left me
appalled; for I knew, and
realized, that all he had said was
true."

Silence in the hall.

Susy has her face buried in her hands.

CLARA
Oh, Papa.

Susy bursts into tears. Young Tom looks to Livy. Livy nods.
Young Tom speaks close to General Grant, hands him his folio of
notes, and then takes Susy out.

The Portly Woman takes a drink of water.

PORTLY WOMAN

Thank you, Mr. Twain. If my
learned colleague has finished...?

The Elder Man assents, returns to take his seat.

INT. GRAND TURK - LOBBY

A Steward opens the door to allow Young Tom and Susy out.

PORTLY WOMAN (O.S.)

Council for the defense may
approach the witness.

YOUNG TOM

Let's get you some air.

INT. GRAND TURK - BALLROOM - DAY

General Grant takes the podium with Tom's folio of notes. He reviews the notes -- a chaos of annotated typescript, crossings-out, childish scrawls and press clippings. Pages fall out. Grant closes the folio. Clears his throat.

GENERAL GRANT

Sorry, frog in throat.

The Jumping Frog GRIBBETS from the defense table. Twainites LAUGH. Grant winks at Twain, faces the prosecution.

GENERAL GRANT (CONT'D)

This man saved my life. And I had
a charmed one. Went from runt at
West Point to lead the Union Army
to victory at Cold Harbor,
Petersburg, Appomattox. Accepted
the Republican Party nomination,
and the people's vote, twice, as
President of these United States.
All before I was 50.

TWAIN

Whippersnapper.

GENERAL GRANT

Then, my fortunes turned. Bad
business and confidence tricksters
crippled me. This man befriended
me with his wit and his even
keener sword of wisdom. I was
bankrupt, cancer of the throat.

(MORE)

GENERAL GRANT (CONT'D)
Beat 'em both with a memoir that
he got me to write.

TWAIN
For 20 percent.

More LAUGHTER from the Twainites, but not the prosecution.

PORTLY WOMAN
Of what relevance is this to us?

Grant points his finger at Twain.

GENERAL GRANT
'The greatest man I have ever had
the privilege of knowing
personally. And I have not known a
man with a kinder nature or a
purer character.' His words. His
truth.

EXT. GRAND TURK - PROMENADE DECK - TRAVELING - DAY

Young Tom and Susy walk among the deserted deck chairs.

YOUNG TOM
You mustn't take everything he
says to heart. Your father. He
always speaks his mind. It is not
a failing. General Grant knows
that.

SUSY
Papa is all heart. And they'll
damn him for it.

YOUNG TOM
He loves you, Susy. He loves us
all. Good and bad. That is what
makes him... Twain.

They stop at the guard rail overlooking the bow.

SUSY
You're a sweet one, Tom. You
always have been.

YOUNG TOM
Oh, I don't know about that.

Young Tom sees an abandoned game of shuffle board, goes over to
look more closely, toes a puck around.

Susy watches him for a moment, then looks out ahead.

SUSY
What's that?

Young Tom looks up, returns to the guard rail very quickly.

AHEAD OF THE BOW

Thin coils of smoke are appearing behind an ISLAND up ahead. A BELL RINGS above and the VIEW SWINGS ABOUT to further reveal the white wood-frame steeple of a CHURCH above a small shore-side TOWN.

YOUNG TOM
Well, I'll be.

SUSY
Tom?

YOUNG TOM
That is Jackson's Island! Where I
hid with Huck when Injun Joe was
on our tail! And that—
(he points)
That is Hannibal, Missouri! —
We're here! Yahoo!

Young Tom dances around the game of shuffle board. Susy LAUGHS. He takes her arm and swings her round, then stops. Tom stares back to stern.

SUSY
What is it, Tom?

YOUNG TOM
Oh, no...

VIEWED ASTERN

a side-wheel riverboat is racing toward them at a full head of steam, BLACK SMOKE pouring from it funnels.

EXT. MILE-WIDE RIVER - DAY

Choking SMOKE and EMBERS belch from twin stacks.

Viewed from astern, the side-wheeler closes on the wake of the 'Grand Turk.' A young LEADSMAN calls out, marking river depth with a weighted cable, oblivious to the impending doom.

LEADSMAN
Mark three! Mark three! Quarter-
less-three! Half twain!

JUST AHEAD

RIVERMEN wave from a raft. The side-wheeler bears down on the raft at a steady pace, on collision course.

EXT. GRAND TURK - PROMENADE DECK - TRAVELING - DAY

SUSY

It's going to hit that raft!

A MEOW makes Young Tom and Susy turn. Sour Mash trots up, Clara following with his string.

CLARA

They've called a recess -- What's wrong?

YOUNG TOM

"Life on the Mississippi," Chapter 20 -- or something like it.

SUSY

I can't look!

Susy hides her face. Young Tom and Clara stare in terror.

EXT. MILE-WIDE RIVER - DAY

The Rivermen holler and wave, a few dive off the raft, those remaining SCREAM.

Four stories of decks and mast loom overhead.

LEADSMAN

Quarter twain! Ma-ark twain!
Captain, hard about!

Navigation alarm bells clang, but it is too late. The 'Duke of Orleans' smashes into the raft. Huge paddle wheels shatter men and raft to pulp, churning water, plowing ahead.

INT. GRAND TURK - LOBBY

Twainites file out of the ballroom.

Livy walks out on Twain's arm with Jean and the others. Paine is chatting with the General.

Livy looks into Twain's eyes, Twain squeezes her hand.

YOUNG TOM

Mr. Twain! Mr. Twain!

Tom runs down a staircase, pushing past the throng Twainites heading up. He ducks and dodges frantically, fights his way to Twain.

TWAIN

Easy boy.

YOUNG TOM

Mr. Twain, it's happening again!

(then a whisper)

We've got to get you off this boat!

TWAIN

Nonsense. We've barely even started the council for defense. General Grant has yet to conclude.

Young Tom turns Twain away.

YOUNG TOM

Forget the General! He can't help you now.

(pleading)

Come with me! Just come!

Jean and Livy are looking frightened. Tom drags Twain off. Jean takes her mother with her.

GENERAL GRANT

Clemens?

INT. GRAND TURK - CORRIDOR - DAY

Tom takes Twain past a doorway open to the promenade deck. Twain halts to see a hubbub through a doorway where passengers are gathering at a guard rail to stare and point astern at the disaster on the river.

TWAIN

What's got into them?

TOM

A catastrophe from your days as a steamboat pilot.

Jean and Livy catch up, Tom leads on ahead.

EXT. GRAND TURK - HURRICANE DECK - DAY

On the deck below the pilot house, Clara and Susy, with Sour Mash on his string, are staring out with CAPTAIN MORGAN who uses a spyglass to view the scene on the river. The HELIOGRAPH OPERATOR stands nearby, completing a Morse signal.

HELIOGRAPH OPERATOR
No response, Captain.

CAPTAIN MORGAN
Keep trying.

The Captain sees Young Tom and Twain arrive, and then Jean and Livy.

TWAIN
Good God in heaven! Jim Morgan?

CAPTAIN MORGAN
Sam Clemens.

YOUNG TOM
Of course, you two know each other.

TWAIN
Jim and I were cub pilots with my brother, Henry. What is this, Jim?

CAPTAIN MORGAN
Take a look yourself, Sam.

Twain takes the spyglass, follows Morgan's look astern.

VIEWED THROUGH THE SPYGLASS

The 'Duke' is now much closer, heading right towards them. Glints of CREW now just visible gathered on the decks. The pilot house is dark.

TWAIN
'The Duke of Orleans.'

YOUNG TOM
They're going to ram us before we reach the town.

CAPTAIN MORGAN
She's not answering our heliograph. Your daughter claims she saw them run a raft aground.

YOUNG TOM
It's him again, I tell you!

TWAIN
Where are your lifeboats, Jim?

CAPTAIN MORGAN
'C' deck. Back astern.

TWAIN
Livy, take the girls.

LIVY
But, Youth--

Twain kisses her.

TWAIN
Whatever happens, I will always
love you.

LIVY
As if I ever doubted that.

TWAIN
Put ashore at Jackson's Island.
I'll meet you there.

CLARA/JEAN
Papa--!

Susy grabs hold of her father.

SUSY
I'm not leaving you, Papa!

Twain unwraps Susy's arms, passes her to Livy.

TWAIN
Look after your mother for me.

Livy takes Clara and Jean, hurries off, Susy in tow. Sour Mash
scampers after them.

CAPTAIN MORGAN
What is this, Sam?

TWAIN
Let me at your wheel-house.

CAPTAIN MORGAN
Out of the question. You know
better than I, we have a schedule
to run.

TWAIN
Nonsense! It's just like the old
days, Jim!

Twain heads up towards the pilot house, Young Tom follows. Captain Morgan is left standing with his heliographer, and then goes after them.

INT. GRAND TURK - PILOT HOUSE - DAY

Twain bursts in with Young Tom.

TWAIN

Step aside! I'm taking over!

The Pilot, MR. BROWN, and his Quartermaster turn. Seen clearly for the first time, Brown is a bony, mulish dolt with a broken nose. Captain Morgan enters.

CAPTAIN MORGAN

I'm sorry, Sam. They posted us together -- Mr. Brown, meet--

BROWN

This gentleman's reputation precedes him! Off my bridge, Clemens!

TWAIN

Not until you turn this boat around, Brown, you ignoramus.

BROWN

With the 'Duke of Orleans' on our tail? You must be mad!

TWAIN

No. Just sick of being bullied by a boatload of ghosts.

Twain grabs the helm. Brown wrestles him for the wheel. The Quarter-Master looks to his Captain. Captain Morgan shrugs. The Quarter-Master pulls Twain away from Brown. Young Tom pulls a vintage flare gun from the wall and sees the inscription 'Morgan Enterprises.'

YOUNG TOM

Okay, hold it everyone.

Young Tom holds the flare gun like a pistol.

TWAIN

Ha! Good work, boy! Well done!

Twain shakes free of the Quarter-Master, takes the helm from Brown.

YOUNG TOM

I was going to suggest we send up
a flare.

TWAIN

Sure you were. Nevertheless, now
let us see if a little game of
chicken will even out the odds.

Twain hauls on the helm wheel and starts to hum to himself as the great riverboat swings about. Young Tom continues to use the flare-gun as a pistol and herds the Captain and the Quarter-Master away from the helm, to sit them with the Cub Pilot. Brown glares at Young Tom.

BROWN

Sawyer, you are as corrupt as your
Creator.

YOUNG TOM

So they keep telling me.

EXT. MILE-WIDE RIVER - DAY

THE TURK

slowly curves around to starboard, into the path of

THE DUKE,

which TOOTS, long and low.

THE TURK

Responds by TOOTING TWICE in reply.

EXT. GRAND TURK - PROMENADE DECK - DAY

Twainites at the guard rail hold on to their hats as the riverboat gains speed. Livy and her daughters pass by. Susy lags behind with Sour Mash, glances up at ANOTHER TOOT above.

INT. GRAND TURK - PILOT HOUSE - DAY

Twain releases the steam whistle, and LAUGHS heartily, back in his element, as he straightens the helm.

TWAIN

Take a look now, Jim. Go ahead.
Meet my welcoming committee.

Twain offers back the spyglass. Captain Morgan steps up to a window, uses the spyglass to peer out ahead.

CAPTAIN MORGAN
Great Heavens!

VIEWED THROUGH THE SPYGLASS

the decks of the 'Duke of Orleans' are bristling with Medieval Knights armed with halberds and machine guns.

TWAIN
(into hailing tube)
Full ahead!

BROWN
Full ahead? No!

ENGINEER'S VOICE
(through tube)
Full ahead, aye, aye, Sir!

Bells CLANG.

EXT. GRAND TURK - PROMENADE DECK - DAY

Twainites at the guard rail begin to panic.

EXT. MILE-WIDE RIVER - DAY

The 'Duke' bears down, head-on.

INT. DUKE OF ORLEANS - PILOT HOUSE - DAY

Merlin is at the helm of 'The Duke of Orleans' surrounded by a crew of Arthurian Knights.

The Young Man, in riverboat uniform, stands to the rear, staring fixed ahead. His eyes GLOW RED.

INT/EXT. RIVERBOAT COLLISION - DAY

SLOW MOTION begins:

TWAIN

steers ahead, but frowns.

SUSY

turns, as if reacting to a presence. She is standing with Sour Mash while Livy, Jean and Clara work on lowering a lifeboat. Sour Mash slips away. Susy follows him.

TWAIN

winces with pain and clutches at his chest.

LIVY

sees Susy missing, calls her name but cannot be heard above other Twainites now rushing for the lifeboats.

SUSY

moves through the crowd, as if walking in her sleep. Other passengers are piling into lifeboats.

One group is piling way too many people into one boat, a CITY GENT slips and spills overboard.

TWAIN

is staring now, entranced. The 'Duke of Orleans' a few lengths off and closing. Young Tom addresses him, but his voice echoes, far off.

YOUNG TOM

Mr. Twain...? Mr. Twain...?

Brown grabs Young Tom's flare gun, wrestles him for it. Captain Morgan shoves them both aside, seizes the helm, spins it hard to port. Twain does not resist. Morgan sees Twain's HEART IS GLOWING through his shirt.

TWAIN

My daughter. She's in danger.

Young Tom seizes Twain, drags him out onto the hurricane deck. Captain Morgan regains control of the helm and YELLS into a hailing tube.

SLOW MOTION ends.

CAPTAIN MORGAN

Full to starboard! Give me everything she's got!

The Cub Pilot looks out at the river, and SCREAMS.

EXT. GRAND TURK - HURRICANE DECK - DAY

Young Tom and Twain are knocked off their feet by a TREMENDOUS CRASH.

INT. GRAND TURK - PILOT HOUSE - DAY

Brown and Morgan look astonished as they see, outside the pilot house windows, the 'Duke of Orleans' grinding timbers, hull-to-hull with their riverboat. The 'Duke's' pilot house comes into view with Merlin and the Knights staring back, equally amazed.

EXT. GRAND TURK - HURRICANE DECK - DAY

The Quarter-Master and Cub Pilot flee their positions and run into Young Tom and Twain spread-eagle on the deck. The Cub stops to help Twain stand.

YOUNG TOM

Thank you.

CUB PILOT

Now get safe! She's gonna blow!

EXT. MILE-WIDE RIVER - DAY

The 'Turk' and 'Duke' rotate, locked together side on.

EXT. TURK AND DUKE INTERLOCKED - DAY

KNIGHTS

board the 'Turk,' some vaulting pirate-fashion.

SUSY

stares as one huge Knight lands on the deck before her.

THE CUB PILOT

runs with Young Tom and Twain toward the lower decks. Another loud JUDDERING shakes the boat.

THE DUKE STARBOARD PADDLE-WHEEL

cuts into the 'Turk.'

INT. GRAND TURK - PILOT HOUSE - DAY

Captain Morgan fights to turn the helm away from the 'Duke.'
Brown YELLS into the speaking tube:

BROWN
Give -- me -- more -- steam!

INT. GRAND TURK - ENGINE ROOM

Pistons buck and blur. Pressure gauges tremble.

EXT. TURK AND DUKE INTERLOCKED - DAY

YOUNG TOM, TWAIN AND THE CUB

round the port-side bow. Knights are everywhere, rounding up the Twainites. The Cub runs smack into one Knight, who lifts him off his feet. Young Tom backs Twain up to hide behind a bulkhead.

SUSY

is still wandering, lost amongst the Twainites. A man's hand stops her, lifts up her chin -- The Mysterious Young Man smiles down, then he looks round, searching faces. A DULL RUMBLE shudders through the boat.

EXT. GRAND TURK - BULKHEAD - DAY

Twain slumps to catch his breath. Nearby, he notices WHITE SMOKE seeping from an air vent.

TWAIN
They're burning too much fuel.

Another RUMBLE. The smoke from the vent turns BLACK. Twain grimaces, one hand on his heart.

YOUNG TOM
The Cub was right. We've got to jump. Come on.

TWAIN
No.

YOUNG TOM
Come on, Mr. Twain!

TWAIN
Why didn't you tell me about Susy?
He got to her, didn't he?

YOUNG TOM
But I saved her! She's still your
darling ghost. She'll be safe, I
promise. Here...

Young Tom finds a life preserver, gives it to Twain.

TOM
Wait here.

EXT. GRAND TURK - GUARD RAIL - DAY

Young Tom steals out to a guard rail, unseen by Knights and Twainites. He unhitches a landing gate. Another RUMBLE shakes the deck, followed by a leaden BOOM amidships.

A Knight looks over and sees Young Tom.

KNIGHT
Avast there!

The Mysterious Young Man whips round.

YOUNG MAN
Stop him!

Young Tom darts back for Twain, grabs him up. Both take a running jump overboard before the Knights can reach them.

The Young Man runs to the railing, and bellows.

YOUNG MAN (CONT'D)
Twain!

EXT. MILE-WIDE RIVER - DAY

WIDE VIEW OF THE INTERLOCKED RIVERBOATS

Young Tom and Twain hit the water just as TWO GIANT EXPLOSIONS rip through the decks behind the 'Grand Turk' pilot house.

INT. GRAND TURK - ENGINE ROOM

Two more boilers EXPLODE.

EXT. MILE-WIDE RIVER - DAY

The whole forward third of the 'Grand Turk' is hoisted toward the sky. The chimneys rocket up, spewing smoke and embers.

The 'Duke of Orleans' keels sideways from the blast.

INT. GRAND TURK - PILOT HOUSE - DAY

Brown SCREAMS, engulfed by STEAM AND FIRE.

EXT. MILE-WIDE RIVER - DAY

FIRE billows up from the truncated 'Grand Turk,' followed by deep bass BOOM. The 'Duke of Orleans' answers with a single BLAST herself that tears out her hull and sends her gracefully sinking.

The 'Grand Turk' floats in flames.

CUT TO:

TWAIN SURFACES

With his 'Grand Turk' life-preserver. Young Tom paddles towards him through floating debris.

TWAIN

That's how Henry died... My
younger brother Henry... with
Brown on the 'Pennsylvania'...
"Life on the Mississippi", Chapter
17.

YOUNG TOM

Please, stop talking, Mr. Twain.

Young Tom swims with Twain, striking out for the shore. They pass floating corpses and flailing Twainites. The water is taking on the color of copper with the combined effects of the burning 'Grand Turk' and the sinking sun.

TWAIN

You must... You must excuse my
loquaciousness... But then... I
am... a writer.

Twain SIGHS, leans back, then turns to watch.

THE GRAND TURK

blazes against the sun. The burning riverboat dips and sinks
WITH A BOILING HISS OF STEAM.

BACK TO SCENE

TWAIN (CONT'D)
What was it Livy said...? About
Captain Stormfield...?

YOUNG TOM
Couldn't make it. Who was he?

TWAIN
A joke... A fantasy... A steamboat
pilot sent to heaven.

YOUNG TOM
Oh, yes. I read that. Very funny.

Young Tom continues paddling. Twain regards him with affection,
and then stares up at the sky.

CUT TO:

STARS, COMING OUT OVER

EXT. RIVER BANK - NIGHT

Young Tom helps Twain out of the water onto a muddy beach
beside a row of mooring posts. Twain views the wharf nearby.
DOCKS and WAREHOUSES stand empty, windows broken. The river is
at low ebb, leaving the only vessel, a SINGLE-MAST SKIFF.
Beached and abandoned. A desolate place.

YOUNG TOM
Welcome to Hannibal.

Young Tom walks on into a MIST. Twain hangs his life preserver
on a tree, hears a GRIBBET, and then another, and then another.

A horde of FROGS stare from the reeds. The Jumping Frog hops
out amongst them, goes after Tom. Twain follows.

BACK AT THE WHARF

two more figures appear from the water, caked in mud: The
Mysterious Young Man with Susy in his arms. Susy is
unconscious. The Young Man gently places her on the jetty,
cleans her face. Susy revives, COUGHING water, stares into the
Young Man's face. As he smiles, his EYES GLOW RED.

EXT. HANNIBAL - MAIN STREET - NIGHT

WIND rattles skeletal birches. An untethered shutter BANGS.
MIST blows away, revealing Young Tom and Twain wandering down
Main Street. The wind brings with it the faint sound of a
DIXIELAND PIANO ('High Society Rag').

Young Tom looks back at Twain, points ahead.

The source of the music: 'The Jumping Frog,' a brightly lit but run-down hotel/casino. Twain stands below the sign.

TWAIN
Wouldn't you know it?

Young Tom and Twain peer in the hotel window and then enter.

INT. THE JUMPING FROG - LOBBY - NIGHT

Young Tom and Twain step onto a threadbare rug with a faded JUMPING FROG MOTIF. Twain regards a cobwebbed chandelier. 'High Society' continues to play from another room.

They approaches the reception desk where an OLD WOMAN is slumped behind the desk, either dead or sleeping.

Twain goes to ring a service bell. Young Tom stops him, with dawning recognition.

YOUNG TOM
Becky?

The old woman stirs, opens her eyes, peers over glasses.

YOUNG TOM (CONT'D)
Becky Thatcher?

BECKY
Becky Harper.

YOUNG TOM
You married Joe Harper?

BECKY slowly stands, stares at Twain, and then, for a longer while, very close at Young Tom.

BECKY
Oh... Oh, my -- Joe!

Becky slumps into a faint and drops out of sight. A short, balding man runs out from the back: JOE HARPER.

INT. THE JUMPING FROG - SALOON - NIGHT

The unoccupied PIANOLA plays a more romantic ragtime waltz, (Scott Joplin's 'Bethena').

YOUNG TOM

No, no, I assure you I am a lawyer-- Ah, at least I was. We're looking for Huck Finn, you know old Huck?

Gaming tables are shrouded, stools up on the bar. Twain fills and drinks a glass of bourbon, refills the glass and then returns with it to a chaise lounge where Young Tom and Joe have laid Becky.

JOE

Can't say I does.

Joe takes the glass from Twain, holds it to Becky's lips. She COUGHS, sees Young Tom again, and CRIES OUT in alarm.

BECKY

Who-- who is this... juvenile?

JOE

Hush there, honey. These folks are here to see ol' Huck.

YOUNG TOM

He is here, then? In Hannibal?

JOE

Not for long. They hangin' him tonight.

YOUNG TOM

But... they can't! I mean, there must be some mistake. We're here with an injunction--

JOE

Don't know 'bout no junction. Dirty dawg killed a man.

Young Tom meets eyes with Twain, and then Becky.

BECKY

Huck and old Jim Freeman held up the local bank. Fell out over money. Old Jim died in hospital. They found Huck hid in Dawson's caves. He confessed to everything.

Distant THUNDER. Room lights briefly DIM, then a loud CRACK. Plaster rains down. All look up.

A huge split has appeared in the ceiling.

Young Tom winces, a hand to his stomach.

JOE
Dangdest thing. Been happenin' all
over. You okay, boy?

YOUNG TOM
I... Oh... No, excuse me.

Tom retreats to sit on a dust-sheet-covered chair.

TWAIN
Mr. Harper, let's just get to
business. This young fellow and I,
we need to see old Huck. Right
away if possible.

Joe regards Young Tom and Twain, concerned. More distant
THUNDER, then the SOUND of RAIN begins outside.

EXT. HANNIBAL - MAIN STREET - NIGHT

RAIN continues as Becky comes out onto the porch, wrapped in a
shawl. She watches wistfully as her husband leads Tom and Twain
away from 'The Jumping Frog' under an umbrella.

JOE
Ben Rogers? Some folks say he died
in the war. Now, Tommy Barnes, he
married Becky's pal, Amy Lawrence.

YOUNG TOM
Little Tommy Barnes?!

JOE
They're down Saint Louis way now.
Seven kiddies. Or is it eight?
He's head chef at the Grand. Doin'
pr'ty well. Helped out with m'
place, y'know. Named after that
first story of old Twain's.

TWAIN
We know it well.

They arrive at the SHERIFF'S OFFICE. Joe knocks.

YOUNG TOM
Thanks, Joe.

Joe regards Tom with suspicion, but starts back home.

The door to the sheriff's office opens a crack, and a grizzled
DEPUTY peers out.

YOUNG TOM (CONT'D)
Is the sheriff in?

DEPUTY
Nope. C'mon back t'morrow.

The Deputy starts to close the door. Young Tom jams his foot inside and shoves a legal paper in the Deputy's face.

INT. HANNIBAL - SHERIFF'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The Deputy, dressed in an overcoat and hat over his nightshirt, makes a big deal out of manhandling keys,

unlocking the way for Tom and Twain down a narrow brick corridor that leads to the cells.

DEPUTY
Hey, Finn! Wakey, wakey, y' lousy
good-fer-nuthin!

The Deputy takes a baseball bat from the wall and rattles it between the bars. Inside on the bunk, a pile of rags grumbles and hunches up, betraying life beneath.

TWAIN
The odor would suggest our quest
is at an end.

DEPUTY
Wan' me rough him up some?

YOUNG TOM
No, thank you. Perhaps coffee?

More movement and grumbling from the bed. The Deputy unlocks the cell door, pushes it open, smiles at Twain.

DEPUTY
Bright boy you got there, sir.

Twain steps into the cell. The Deputy grabs Young Tom, hurls him in too, SLAMS and locks the door, sealing Tom and Twain inside.

YOUNG TOM
Hey!

DEPUTY
I'll let you all get re-
acquainted, Mister Twain and Young
Mister Sawyer. Coffee comin' up.

The Deputy exits LAUGHING, swinging his baseball bat and keys.

YOUNG TOM
You can't do this to me! I'm a
lawyer!

Rags move on the bed, and then roll over to reveal a bloated, toothless, unshaven HUCK FINN in at least his 60s.

Young Tom and Twain view Huck in repulsion and dismay.

HUCK
Got any 'baccy?

SUSY
Give it to him, please. He's been
pestering me all night.

Tom and Twain now see Susy seated in the shadows of the adjoining cell.

YOUNG TOM
Susy! What are you doing here?

TWAIN
He's got us all now.

Twain takes out a cigar. It's bent and soggy, but he tosses it to Huck.

HUCK
Got a light?

Twain finds a box of matches in his pocket, throws them. Huck springs out a hand and catches the matchbox with surprising dexterity. He sits up, clenching the cigar in his teeth, opens the matchbox and pours out muddy river water.

YOUNG TOM
Huck Finn?

Huck shrugs, winks at Tom, finds a match in the rim of his battered old straw hat, strikes it on the floor and settles back to smoke.

HUCK
Might be. Who wants to know?

YOUNG TOM
'Right is right, and wrong is
wrong, and a boy ain't go no
business doing wrong when he ain't
ignorant and knows better.'
Remember?

HUCK
Nope.

YOUNG TOM
You spoke that to me a long time
ago. Helping an old friend.

HUCK
That right?

YOUNG TOM
You know it. Joe Harper says you
robbed and murdered him, Huck. You
murdered Jim Freeman?

FOOTSTEPS return. The Deputy arrives with coffee, LAUGHS again.
His eyes GLOW RED.

Huck chokes on his cigar.

Twain frowns, unamused.

The Deputy's LAUGHTER PHASES.

HUCK
Mercy sakes his eyes!

The Deputy's IRISES are twin pools of swirling fire.

A SEMI-TRANSPARENT FORM, the radiant opalescent outline of
another man with RED GLOWING EYES, steps out of the Deputy's
body, leaving the Deputy standing staring, vacant.

Huck SCREAMS, backs up on the bed.

The OUTLINE MAN coalesces into the MYSTERIOUS YOUNG MAN still
grimy from the river. He grins, takes a coffee from the Deputy,
snaps his fingers.

The Deputy slumps forward, dropping his tray.

Huck SCREAMS again.

SUSY
Oh, be quiet, Huck.

YOUNG MAN
Well said, Susy dear.

HUCK
Who is that?

SUSY
He's the Devil.

The Mysterious Young Man smiles.

YOUNG MAN
I have many names.

HUCK
The devil is... American?

YOUNG MAN
I cater for all tastes.

The Young Man strikes a pose with his coffee cup as a BLUE-FACED HINDU DEMON KALI.

Huck SCREAMS.

YOUNG MAN (CONT'D)
Or perhaps...?

Another pose. The DEMON CHANGES into INJUN JOE.

Huck SCREAMS louder.

Another pose. Injun Joe TRANSFORMS into a tall, white-haired black man in dungarees, a knife stuck in his neck: OLD JIM FREEMAN. He grimaces, pours out his coffee.

Huck hides his face.

OLD JIM
Wassa matter, Massah Huck? Ain't
you pleased to see yo' ole pal
Jim?
(Young Man's voice)
Of course, in years to come I'll
be regarded as an offensive racial
stereotype.

TWAIN
Stop this nonsense. Now!

Old Jim LAUGHS and TRANSFORMS into a SECOND TWAIN, who continues to speak with the YOUNG MAN'S VOICE.

TWAIN #2
Well, we'll be going then, Sam.

Susy WINKS OUT OF EXISTENCE, then REAPPEARS in front of Twain #2, who lays his hands on her shoulders.

TWAIN
Nobody is going anywhere with you.

TWAIN #2
You don't expect me to leave here
empty handed, do you? Anyway...
(MORE)

TWAIN #2 (CONT'D)
I know how you and your daughter
never really got along.

TWAIN
Get your hands off her!

THUNDER, and then an TREMOR shakes the cell. Huck WHIMPERS. Tom looks nauseous again.

Twain #2 smiles, TRANSFORMS back into the Young Man, this time in a carpetbagger guise -- velvet cape, top hat, and goatee (as the 'Dauphin' from "Huck Finn"). He bows low.

YOUNG MAN
Your poor servant, Mr. Twain, come
to reveal you to Yourself.

TWAIN
As a callow vapor, come to strike
fear into the heart of the
unsuspecting human race?

YOUNG MAN
Brave words from a man who
believes in Nothing.

TWAIN
If Nothing is all you've got.
Let's stop torturing these
children, shall we? Before I
change my mind.

Quickly, MIST CLOSSES IN.

CUT TO:

INT. HANNIBAL - TOWN HALL - NIGHT

MIST CLEARS revealing TWAIN at a podium beneath a banner 'Mark Twain Tonite!' APPLAUSE begins. TOWNSFOLK are overflowing into aisles, standing at the back. A gang of CHILDREN look in from outside.

ON STAGE

Twain stares mutely, then looks to

IN THE WINGS

Tom stands with Susy beside the Jailer from Camelot, now dressed similar to the Young Man, in carpetbagger guise, as THE DUKE OF BRIDGEWATER (another character from "Huck Finn"). The Young Man steps up, smiling.

APPLAUSE

continues, audience rising to their feet. Children WHISTLE. Twain steps forward to acknowledge the warm welcome. Then he notices:

THROUGH A WINDOW

a FLICKER OF LIGHTNING illuminates dark clouds and rain, revealing the silhouette of a HANGMAN'S SCAFFOLD under construction on top of Holliday's Hill outside town.

BACK TO SCENE

Twain stares out at the hall, clears his throat, takes out a handkerchief. Cigars tumble out. He looks down.

The cigars lie at Twain's feet. He bends down to pick them up. His hands are shaking. THUNDER RUMBLES.

THE AUDIENCE

grows quiet. The SOUND of RAIN continues.

TWAIN

stands. He replaces his handkerchief, and all cigars but one. He considers the cigar, and then the audience.

IN THE WINGS

Young Tom and Susy look on.

TWAIN

lights his cigar, takes a puff, blows smoke.

TWAIN

Huckleberry Finn is a worthless, unwashed ragamuffin, with no more saving graces than a dog that's left for stray.

The sound of RAIN continues as the audience stares.

TWAIN (CONT'D)

I had hoped to find something more redeeming to say, however... I can't claim that he is innocent, or ever was. You know that. And I did not come to preach. Can't abide that.

Outside, LIGHTNING flickers.

TWAIN (CONT'D)
Hang him if you must. He won't die.

TWAIN (CONT'D)
He's a special breed, free of all the pomp and hypocrisy which you and I live and breathe.

THUNDER. Room lights briefly DIM.

TWAIN (CONT'D)
People say I have become a pessimist in my old age. Damn, I am not!

The audience is rapt.

TWAIN (CONT'D)
Damn this. Damn it all!

Another LOUDER CLAP OF THUNDER and then a TREMENDOUS CRACK as THE CEILING splits, raining plaster.

THE AUDIENCE

is showered with dust. SCREAMS as all LIGHTS GO OUT.

IN THE WINGS

Young Tom doubles up in pain. Susy has tears running down her face. The Young Man smiles, but stops. The Jumping Frog hops up.

TWAIN'S FACE

is illuminated from below by an orange glow (the SOUND OF A HEARTBEAT begins). Twain looks down at his chest. Through the fabric of his waistcoat and shirt front, Twain's HEART IS GLOWING AND PULSING. He looks back to the wings.

SUSY

Stares, amazed.

TWAIN

faces the hall, his GLOWING HEART the main source of illumination, pulsing strongly in his chest. He takes steps leading down from the stage.

IN THE WINGS

Young Tom recovers. Susy helps him to his feet. The Young Man steps out from behind the curtain.

YOUNG MAN
(exasperated)
Twain! Get back here!

DUKE OF BRIDGEWATER
Where's he going?

The Jumping Frog GRIBBETS.

TWAIN

walks down the center aisle, HEART GLOWING. Audience members back away, the SOUND of the HEARTBEAT growing louder. Twain heads for the main doors.

ON THE STAGE

the Young Man runs out, followed by the Duke.

YOUNG MAN
Stop that man! He's mine!

Young Tom takes Susy out past the Young Man and the Duke.

EXT. HANNIBAL - TOWN HALL - NIGHT

Twain leaves the town hall, HEART GLOWING (HEARTBEAT SOUND continues). He proceeds along the deserted Main Street, heading out of town. Rain has stopped.

AT THE TOWN HALL

Susy and Young Tom appear at the door to watch Twain go. The Jumping Frog hops out past them.

SUSY
Can you make it?

YOUNG TOM
I must.

They follow Twain.

EXT. HANNIBAL - HIGH VIEW - NIGHT

Twain and his GLOWING HEART take a path up Holliday's Hill.

EXT. HANNIBAL - HOLLIDAY'S HILL - NIGHT

Twain climbs the grassy rise, leaving the town below. He passes CARPENTERS at work on the scaffold.

They all stop work to stare at the old man with the fiery glow.

Twain walks into a MIST until all that is left is his GLOWING HEART, and the SOUND OF HEARTBEAT growing louder.

CUT TO:

EXT. STORMFIELD - DAY

Sunset in Connecticut. Exactly as it was at the time of Twain's departure. Snow is falling.

INT. STORMFIELD - UPSTAIRS LANDING - DAY

Looking down into the lobby, the front door is still standing open onto snow. Twain enters, his heart no longer glowing, makes his way upstairs. VOICES above him are indistinct, and then a TICKING. Twain halts, looks across the hall.

The GRANDFATHER CLOCK keeps time, pendulum swinging, hands ticking past six thirty-three.

Twain continues his ascent, rounds the balustrade, heads toward his bedroom doorway.

INT. STORMFIELD - BEDROOM - DAY

Twain steps into the doorway.

Clara, Paine and Katy are gathered at the bed with DOCTOR QUINTARD, who is bent over the bed attending his patient.

The Doctor checks his patient's pulse and then the irises of each eye. Twain peers over the Doctor's shoulder. Clara is weeping, Paine places an arm around her, waves away a FLY.

The Doctor's hand closes the eyes of the old man in the bed -- Samuel Langhorne Clemens, still dressed in his clean nightshirt, his face now in repose.

A LOUD SOB from Clara. Paine draws her away.

Twain examines the faces of the others in the room. Katy cries into her apron. Doctor Quintard packs away equipment.

VOICE

Hey!

Twain sees the Frog on the table by an open window.

VOICE/THE FROG

It's me, the Jumping Frog.

The Frog GRIBBETS. Twain regards the frog with disapproval, and then turns away.

TWAIN
Get out of here.

THE FROG
Come on, Twain. You made it. Free
at last!

TWAIN
I believe you, now get out.

The Frog GRIBBETS.

THE FROG
Have it your way. You know you got
him beat.

The Frog hops towards the window.

TWAIN
Hold it.

The Frog pauses on the window sill.

THE FROG
What?

TWAIN
Is Susy safe now?

The Frog rolls his eyes as the FLY BUZZES past.

THE FROG
For a while.

TWAIN
What do you mean?

THE FROG
He had power over you as long as
you lived. Susy is also free to
go, but she still believes she's
trapped. Presbyterian Guilt. Your
favorite.

TWAIN
You mean, all I had to do was die?

THE FROG
Not all... Unless that's all you
really want.

TWAIN

Yes. No. I want to be with my wife
and family again.

THE FROG

You still can.

TWAIN

How?

The Frog flicks out his tongue, catches the FLY, chews it and
swallows.

THE FROG

You're the vagrant spirit, you
figure it out -- Been good to know
you, Twain.

The Frog GRIBBETS, jumps out of the window.

TWAIN

Wait!

Twain jumps up to the window but the Frog has gone.

AT THE BED

All the mourners are staring at the corpse. Doctor Quintard
rechecks vital signs, shakes his head.

DOCTOR QUINTARD

Muscle spasm.

Doctor Quintard returns to packing his bag.

AT TWAIN'S WRITING DESK

Twain sits heavily to view stacks of writing, piles of notes,
unanswered correspondence. He glances back toward the bed, and
then out of the window, up at the sky. A moment of thought, and
then he reaches into his inside jacket pocket and takes out

SUSY'S PEN

The beautiful writing instrument is caked in grime. Twain turns
it over in his hands, wipes clean the inscription, 'For Papa.'

TWAIN

takes out his handkerchief, cleans and then uncaps the pen. He
opens a desk drawer, takes out a sheaf of BLANK PAPER, a bottle
of INK, finds a half-full WHISKEY BOTTLE. He drops the bottle
in his wastepaper basket, blows dust from the ink bottle and
fills his pen.

ON THE PAPER

Twain's PEN comes down and SCRATCHES the title:

"Tom, Huck & Twain"

TWAIN

continues writing, generous cursive quickly covering page after page. The SCENE BEGINS TO SPIN. WALLS DISSOLVE AWAY TO MIST until Twain, desk and chair are JUST A BLUR.

CUT TO:

EXT. HANNIBAL - HOLLIDAY'S HILL - NIGHT

TOWNSFOLK have gathered with torches on the hillside, watching as a rope is strung over the scaffold. The Duke of Bridgewater sells peanuts.

The Young Man in carpetbagger guise is seated, reading a 'Hannibal Revue' newspaper with the headline 'GOOD RIDDANCE HUCK.' Susy is seated, glum, beside him. Both look up as a CRY goes up, "Here they come!"

Lights of an rickety Schmidt delivery approach from town.

EXT. HANNIBAL - TRUCK - TRAVELING - NIGHT

Riding in the back of the truck, Huck has been bound, hands behind his back, held between the Deputy and a MINISTER, who reads aloud from a Bible.

The SHERIFF is seated ahead with the DRIVER.

EXT. HANNIBAL - HOLLIDAY'S HILL - NIGHT

Crowd part to allow the truck to approach the scaffold, its engine coughing and spluttering up the gradient. A sharp backfire signals their arrival.

Huck begins to snivel as the deputy helps him down and leads him to the scaffold. The Minister follows, still reading.

ON THE SCAFFOLD

A HANGMAN stands waiting with a black cloth bag and two short lengths of rope. Huck is positioned on the trap-door beneath the noose. The hangman ties one rope around Huck's feet, another around his wrists.

MINISTER
Anything to say, son?

HUCK
I guess.

MINISTER
Make it quick eh?

Huck nods. The Minister signals the Hangman to hold off. Huck shuffles forward.

Townsfolk are attentive, many disapproving. Amongst the crowd, Joe Harper sits beside Becky, who has a firm grip on two small children, each with candy apples.

HUCK
I ain't done much with my life,
'cept writin' that one book -- an'
that done caused a sight more
trouble than all the rest
combined... But I never guessed
I'd end up... swingin' from a
rope...

Huck BURSTS INTO TEARS, his voice breaks into a SOB. The Minister puts a hand on Huck's shoulder.

MINISTER
There, there.

HUCK
I'm tellin' you, I ain't done
nuthin'! Jim, he drove me to it!
-- But it weren't even Jim' -- I
saved his skin so often, jus' like
he saved mine! -- He were the only
frien' I had! -- Why'd I kill him?

An egg flies out of the crowd, hits Huck in the chest. Some Townsfolk LAUGH. Susy glowers.

MINISTER
Enough!

The Minister uses his sleeve to wipe Huck down, and then returns him to the trap-door.

The Hangman shoves a wooden gag in Huck's mouth, places the black bag over his head. Huck begins to WAIL. The deputy holds him tight. The hangman slips the noose over Huck's head.

The Sheriff steps forward with a sheet of paper, while the Minister races through final rites.

Crowd all stare, some crane to see.

SHERIFF

(in a single breath)

By powers vested in me by the
State of Missouri, I declare that
Huckleberry Finn, having been
tried and found guilty of murder
in the first degree, shall now be
hung by the neck until dead, his
remains to be deposited in an
unmarked grave at State decree.
Any person seeing unjust cause in
this matter should speak now....

(brief pause)

'kay, Jake.

The Deputy goes to pull a trap-door lever. The hangman beats him to it, smiles and cranks it back.

BELOW THE SCAFFOLD

The trap-door slams down. Huck's body falls. The rope snaps tight.

CROWD

All stare. Susy buries her face in her hands.

HUCK'S BODY

kicks and jerks like a maggot on a line.

CROWD

watch with mixture of horror and disgust. After a short while, townsfolk start to disperse. The Young Man takes a bag of peanuts, walks off, cracking shells and munching. Susy remains seated, weeping. The Duke of Bridgewater, bedside her, offers her his handkerchief.

ON THE SCAFFOLD

Huck's body hangs limp. The Deputy toes it with his boot, he gives a nod to the Sheriff and the Minister. They start to leave the platform. The Deputy peers down through the trap-door, admiring his work, then he frowns, noticing movement below.

DEPUTY

What the...?

The Hangman pulls a SWORD, his EYES GLOW BLUEY WHITE, and he calls out with TWAIN'S VOICE:

HANGMAN/TWAIN

Ready, Tom?

Young Tom's voice replies from beneath the scaffold:

YOUNG TOM (O.S.)

Ready!

SUSY

Hearing Tom, looks up from her handkerchief.

ON THE SCAFFOLD

the Deputy looks past Huck's corpse to see Young Tom below, seated on the back of a SHIRE HORSE.

DEPUTY

Hey!

THE YOUNG MAN

Turns and sees it too.

YOUNG MAN

No!

ON THE SCAFFOLD

The Hangman grins at the Deputy, HIS EYES STILL GLOWING BLUEY WHITE. He brandishes the sword in a swashbuckling pose, TRANSFORMS into Twain, and then swipes and severs Huck's supporting rope. Huck's body drops onto the horse.

SUSY

Wait for me!

Susy runs to join Tom and Huck on the huge horse.

Twain swings off the scaffold and drops onto the horse with Tom, Susy and Huck. MANUSCRIPT PAGES spill from Twain's shirt, but he bears them no mind.

TWAIN

Go! Go! Go!

The Young Man runs up to see the horse gallop off down the hill with its four passengers.

Other bystanders see it too, Becky and Joe are amazed.

The Young Man tosses down his peanuts, YELLS at the Duke.

YOUNG MAN

Get the truck!

A sheet of manuscript blows into the Young Man's face. He snatches it off to read, picks up other pages.

The Duke of Bridgewater yanks the driver from the truck.

The Young Man grabs the Sheriff, throws him in the back, then jumps up on the running board to SHOUT to the crowd, waving a sheet of Twain's manuscript:

YOUNG MAN (CONT'D)
They're heading for the river!

EXT. HANNIBAL - HIGH VIEW -NIGHT

The shire horse gallops toward town, the scaffold far behind. Lights of the lynching truck start to follow.

EXT. HANNIBAL - MAIN STREET - NIGHT

The shire horse gallops through darkened streets. Susy glances back.

SUSY
Faster, Tom!

THE TRUCK

loaded with townsfolk, SCREECHES into Main Street.

INT. TRUCK - MOVING - NIGHT

The Young Man is beside the Duke at the wheel, reading Twain's manuscript. The Duke LAUGHS and WHOOPS, swerving at high speed. The Young Man grips the wheel.

YOUNG MAN
They're going to get away.

DUKE OF BRIDGEWATER
I'll catch 'em, Your Grathe!

YOUNG MAN
No. Keep driving. I'll cut them off.

The Young Man TURNS INTO A RED SPARK, flies out the window.

EXT. HANNIBAL - RIVER ROAD - NIGHT

The shire horse carries its four passengers THUNDERING through a wooden tunnel bridge and then on down another road.

The tunnel bridge stands empty, the SOUND OF THE TRUCK very faint. Then the SPARK OF LIGHT appears, darts like a firefly through the tunnel and loops off through the trees.

EXT. MILE-WIDE RIVER - JETTY - NIGHT

Young Tom, Susy and Twain ride with Huck's body out of the trees. Tom reins them to a stop.

SUSY

Oh, no...

Young Tom has trouble urging the horse into the clearing where a LOG RAFT has been moored.

A figure is seated on the raft beyond the glow of a flickering camp fire. He is tuning a banjo. Seeing them, he rises and removes a coffee pot from the fire. Fire-light reveals his naked scarlet skin, rat-like tail, and two swept-back horns:

YOUNG MAN / SATAN JR.

Hope you like it black.

EXT. HANNIBAL - RIVER ROAD - NIGHT

The lynch mob's truck ROARS through the tunnel bridge.

EXT. MILE-WIDE RIVER - JETTY - NIGHT

The sound of the truck is far off as Twain dismounts the shire horse. Young Tom helps Susy down, and then begins to struggle with Huck's body.

Satan Jr. smiles with pointed teeth and yellow eyes. He swaps the coffee pot for his banjo.

SATAN JR.

Time to come clean.

TWAIN

Get off my raft.

Twain walks out onto the jetty. Susy calms the horse. Curiously, seeing the Mysterious Stranger in his true form, she is no longer afraid.

SATAN JR.
There's no need to be uncivil, no
that we're on equal terms.

TWAIN
I told you before. No-one's going
anywhere with you.

Satan Jr. strums an out-of-tune chord, sets the banjo aside.

SATAN JR.
Then, I guess we wait.

The sound of the approaching truck grows louder, angry voices now apparent. Twain looks back at the horse, where Susy is watching intently, and Young Tom is sliding Huck's body from the horse.

Satan Jr. sits back, reaches into a bag, takes out a cigarette and lights it using an ember from the fire. He raises an eyebrow toward Twain, reaches back into the bag and retrieves a decanter of Scotch whiskey.

SATAN JR. (CONT'D)
Man of my own heart, Sam.

TWAIN
That's yet to be proved.

SUSY
Careful, Papa.

TWAIN
Be quiet, girl.

Twain steps aboard the raft, sits opposite Satan Jr. Satan Jr. pours.

Seeing the scene on the raft, Young Tom drops Huck. Susy steps toward the raft.

YOUNG TOM
Susy, stop!

Twain beckons to them both.

THE LYNCH MOB'S TRUCK

crashes out of the trees, smashes into one trunk, throwing Townsfolk forward and spilling several off. The Duke of Bridgewater thrusts his head from the truck's window.

DUKE OF BRIDGEWATER
Well, go get them, thwines!

The Townsfolk all hesitate, staring horrified. Huck lies inert between them and the raft, and then DEMATERIALIZES.

ON THE RAFT

Huck's body materializes at Satan Jr.'s feet.

TWAIN
Much obliged.

SATAN JR.
Most welcome.

Susy steps aboard.

TWAIN
Come on, Tom.

Tom unfastens a mooring, hops onto the raft, and uses a pole to shove them off out into the river.

THE LYNCH MOB

Leaps off the truck, run for the jetty. One man runs into the water with a rifle. The Duke of Bridgewater stops him before he can fire.

EXT. MILE-WIDE RIVER - RAFT - NIGHT

Tom sits with Susy looking back. The jetty disappears Behind them with the lights of Hannibal.

Satan Jr. raises his mug to Twain.

SATAN JR.
A toast?

TWAIN
That can wait -- Tom...

Twain empties his mug, hands it to Tom.

TWAIN (CONT'D)
River water.

Tom takes the mug. Twain pulls Huck over, unties the bag covering the corpse's head.

Susy averts her eyes.

Twain pulls off Huck's hood. Huck is very pale, his tongue fat and protruding from his mouth.

Satan Jr. watches, containing a smile.

Tom dips the mug into the river, brings it to Twain. Twain turns Huck's head, pours the water between the corpse's lips.

Susy watches out of the corner of her eye.

Huck remains inert and then COUGHS and sits up to spit. Twain shoves him down, hands the mug to Tom, and then returns to sit at the fire opposite Satan Jr.

Satan Jr. takes another tin mug and hands it to Twain.

SATAN JR.

(impersonating Twain)

'Mississippi river water. Good for steamboating, and good to drink; but worthless for all other purposes, except baptizing.'

TWAIN

(quoting himself)

'A sincere compliment is always grateful to a lady, so long as you don't try to knock her down with it.'

Twain winks at Susy, who assists Young Tom, feeding more water to Huck.

Satan Jr. pulls out Twain's manuscript.

SATAN JR.

Your latest. Impressive. But I couldn't find the final pages.

TWAIN

There are no final pages. Now what about that toast?

Satan Jr. smiles, picks up the whiskey decanter and pours for himself and Twain.

Susy glances at her father nervously as she helps Young Tom with Huck. Huck continues to splutter, already appearing TEN YEARS YOUNGER.

Satan Jr. hands a mug to Twain, raises his own.

SATAN JR.

To popes and politicians.

TWAIN

Deliver us from evil.

Twain downs the drink, wipes his moustache. Satan Jr. nods appreciatively, then downs the drink. He takes up the decanter, refills both mugs.

SATAN JR.

Your turn.

Twain's face is difficult to read — mocking, amused, unblinking, a trace of a frown, a trace of affection. He raises his mug.

TWAIN

To the star of my final
metaphysic.

Susy looks concerned.

SUSY

Papa....

TWAIN

Hush, ghost.

Twain raises his mug. Satan Jr. does the same.

SATAN JR.

I'll drink to that.

Both drink together. This time, Satan Jr. is the first to finish, Twain a moment later. Both grin and set down their mugs. Satan Jr. tops them up.

SATAN JR. (CONT'D)

I have a good one.

TWAIN

Let's hear it.

SATAN JR.

'In God We Trust.'

Twain winces.

TWAIN

I can better that.
(raises his glass)
The Republican party and the
dollar!

SATAN JR.

I'll drink to that!

They LAUGH and drink.

THE RAFT

drifts on down the river, camp fire glowing, smoke trailing behind, as the drinking game continues.

CUT TO:

HUCK

has now rejuvenated to HIS EARLY TWENTIES, losing his big belly and his facial hair, returning to the familiar character from Twain's book. Susy dampens the corner of her dress to clean mud from Huck's face. She glances to her father, exchanges worried looks with Tom.

TWAIN AND SATAN JR.

Both LAUGH UNCONTROLLABLY, both rolling drunk. They pause to catch their breaths. Twain dabs his eyes, reaches for the decanter, finds it empty. More LAUGHTER. Satan Jr. laughs again and falls off his stool.

Satan Jr. remains on his back LAUGHING at the heavens, and lets out a huge sigh. Both Twain and Satan Jr. fall silent. Satan Jr. closes his eyes. A moment of calm. Satan Jr.'s tail twitches. He begins to SNORE.

SUSY AND TOM

exchange looks again, now with more interest.

TWAIN

sways, eyes drooping. He clings to his stool, raises his glass.

TWAIN

(slurring)

'I have no special regard for Satan... but I can at least claim that I have no prejudice against him.'

Twain topples back. Both Susy and Tom rush to his aid. They see him glassy-eyed, but smiling.

SUSY

Oh, Papa, you are incorrigible.

TWAIN

Darling ghost, remember: too much of anything is bad, but too much whiskey... is barely enough.

They help him to sit up.

YOUNG TOM
I'll get more water.

Young Tom throws out the dregs from Twain's mug and uses it to scoop up more river water. Returning to the fire, he steps over Satan Jr., who is out cold.

SUSY
Drink, Papa.

Susy and Young Tom feed water to Twain, who appears to revive.

TWAIN
Well - I guess this is it...

Twain cranes his head to look past Susy's shoulder. Young Tom looks up, too.

EXT. MILE-WIDE RIVER - SKY - NIGHT

A BRIGHT SMUDGE OF LIGHT is tracing across the stars.

EXT. MILE-WIDE RIVER - RAFT - NIGHT

Huck, now restored to the HUCK FINN OF LEGEND, opens his eyes and blinks to view the sky above.

Susy continues to feed river water to Twain. The old man drinks and sputters. Young Tom takes his handkerchief, wipes Twain's mouth.

TWAIN
I think I'd like to stand.

Susy and Young Tom help Twain to his feet. As they do so, Susy's foot bumps the banjo strings, causing a discordant chord to sound. The sound causes Satan Jr. to twitch from his drunken reverie.

EXT. MILE-WIDE RIVER - SKY - NIGHT

The COMET is growing brighter, describing an arc.

EXT. MILE-WIDE RIVER - RAFT - NIGHT

Twain stands, with Susy and Young Tom, all staring up.

TWAIN
It's reaching perihelion.
(MORE)

TWAIN (CONT'D)
Closest point to the sun before it
goes around again.

YOUNG HUCK
No, it ain't.

Huck climbs to his feet.

YOUNG TOM
Huck!

Young Tom and Huck embrace, swing each other around.

YOUNG HUCK
That there's Cap'n Stormfield's
Comet.

SATAN JR.
As always, Huck speaks the truth.

Huck notices Satan Jr. sitting up, and then SCREAMS and jumps
away to hide behind a pile of crates.

Satan Jr. groggily raises himself on one elbow and winces at a
pain in his head.

YOUNG HUCK
He-- He-- He's the one! He knifed
Jim an' came for me! -- Keep him
away from me!

Satan Jr. attempts to stand, and then begins to crawl towards
Huck.

Young Huck SCREAMS again, pulls a knife from his boot.

TWAIN
Put the blade away, Huck.

Satan Jr. gestures at the crates, which all tumble aside and
fall into the river, leaving Young Huck exposed.

SATAN JR.
Wanna wrassle, sonny?

Satan Jr. twists his hand again.

Huck CRIES OUT in pain, crumples to the deck.

SUSY
Do something, Papa!

Twain stands impassive.

Young Tom leaps to Huck's defense, jumps on Satan Jr.'s back. But Satan Jr. leaps up and pins both boys to the deck, holding them in agony.

SATAN JR.
Squirm, you creatures of clay.
They're coming down to take him.
But you two come with me!

Twain looks up at the sky.

EXT. MILE-WIDE RIVER - SKY - NIGHT

The COMET descends towards them.

EXT. MILE-WIDE RIVER - RAFT - NIGHT

Young Tom and Huck BOTH SCREAM as Satan Jr. looms over them, eyes burning red.

Satan Jr. looks back at Twain. DIM LIGHT FROM ABOVE begins to illuminate the raft and the river all around.

Twain stands unmoving.

SATAN JR.
It's you or them, Sam.

The LIGHT ABOVE grows brighter.

EXT. MILE-WIDE RIVER - SKY - NIGHT

The COMET blazes, huge.

EXT. MILE-WIDE RIVER - RAFT - NIGHT

As bright white light above spills down, lighting up the river, Susy clings to Twain.

SUSY
Papa, please, don't let him hurt
them!

As the light increases, Susy is surprised by what she sees on her father's face.

Tears are streaming down Twain's cheeks. He wipes his eyes, smiles sadly, and addresses Satan Jr.

TWAIN
I know that you can't help it.

Satan Jr. snaps away from Young Tom and Huck to face Twain. Both boys fall lifeless.

Satan Jr. glowers, furious, in Twain's face. And then he, too, sees the tears.

SATAN JR.
What did you say?

Twain positions Susy behind him, protectively. Satan Jr. steps closer. Twain does not back down. LIGHT FROM ABOVE is now almost blinding. Satan Jr. trembles with frustration and rage.

TWAIN
You have my sympathy.

Satan Jr. glares a moment longer, and then he falls onto his knees and sobs like a child. Twain rests a hand on Satan Jr.'s shoulder, pats him, consoling. Susy looks out from behind her father. Twain pulls her into a hug.

A voice above CALLS DOWN:

CAPTAIN STORMFIELD
Ship ahoy!

Both Twain and Susy shield their eyes to look up into a CURVED WALL OF SILVER FIRE that obliterates the stars.

EXT. MILE-WIDE RIVER - WIDE VIEW - NIGHT

The comet has parked above the river, spanning shore to shore, dwarfing the raft and lighting up the valley.

EXT. MILE-WIDE RIVER - RAFT - NIGHT

From a tiny window in the comet's belly, a white-bearded CAPTAIN is just visible, hailing down through a megaphone:

CAPTAIN STORMFIELD
What ship is that? -- And whence?
-- And whither?

Twain cups his hands about his mouth CALLS BACK:

TWAIN
Mark Twain. Seventy-five years out
from Hannibal, Missouri, bound...
nowhere in particular. What ship
is that?

CAPTAIN STORMFIELD
 Stormfield's Comet. Sixty billion
 light years out from Heaven.
 Homeward bound -- Twain! How are
 you?

TWAIN
 I am very well! This is a
 surprise!

CAPTAIN STORMFIELD
 I have friends of yours aboard!
 Come on up!

A DISC OF LIGHT begins to descend from the comet.

Twain smiles at Susy. She backs away.

Satan Jr. leaps to his feet.

Twain holds out his hand toward Satan Jr., offering a
 handshake. Satan Jr. ignores Twain's gesture, and instead
 petulantly snatches up his banjo and empty whisky decanter.

SATAN JR.
 You've not heard the last of me,
 Twain.

TWAIN
 Nor you I, old boy.

Satan Jr. TRANSFORMS TO A SPARK, shoots off like an angry bee.

Tom and Huck both wake, as if from a dream.

CUT TO:

EXT. MILE-WIDE RIVER - BELOW THE COMET - NIGHT

Captain Stormfield returns to his window in the belly of the
 comet, Livy joins him, and then Clara, Jean and General Grant.

Twain steps onto the DISC OF LIGHT with Susy, which slowly
 spins and rises.

Tom and Huck both gawp up from the raft. Tom cups his hands to
 his mouth, CALLS UP:

YOUNG TOM
 Mr. Twain!

TWAIN
 What now?!

YOUNG TOM
Will we see you again?

TWAIN
Now, that would make an
interesting story -- "Tom and Huck
in Heaven"!

YOUNG HUCK
Not me, Mr. Twain! -- You leave me
out o' that one !

Twain dismisses them with a wave. Susy blows a farewell kiss
down to Tom.

Huck views Tom anxiously.

HUCK
He were jokin', Tom? He were
jokin', weren't 'e?

Tom grins, grabs Huck by the ears and kisses him exuberantly on
the forehead. Huck looks bemused, until Tom LAUGHS and puts his
arm round Huck's shoulders.

The two old friends look up.

EXT. COMET - NIGHT

Seen through the comet window, Stormfield, Clara, Jean and Livy
welcome Twain and Susy on board. Jean hands Sour Mash to Susy.
Twain and family wave down.

EXT. MILE-WIDE RIVER - NIGHT

DOWN-VIEW, SLOWLY RISING

Tom and Huck wave back, and then diminish with the raft as the
view drops away below, rising with the comet.

EXT. COMET WINDOW - NIGHT

Twain delivers a final salute. As he turns to Livy, the window
re-seals, closing the hole in the fire.

EXT. MILE-WIDE RIVER - NIGHT

The COMET begins to spin, and then suddenly re-ignites, and
streaks up and away into space.

118.

CUT TO:

EXT. STORMFIELD, CONNECTICUT - NIGHT

The house sits on the hilltop in the snow. A COMET streaks
across the stars.

FADE OUT.