**Tom and the Fence**

A Big Fight

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"Tom! Tom!"

There was no answer.

"Where is that boy? Tom!"

Aunt Polly looked under the bed but she only found a cat.

"Tom!" she cried.

Then she heard a noise behind her.

A small boy ran past and she stopped him with her hand.

"What are you doing, Tom?" she asked.

"Nothing."

"Nothing? Look at your hand and your mouth. I told you not to eat the jam."

"Oh, Aunt Polly, look behind you!"

The old lady looked and Tom ran away.

Aunt Polly was surprised and then she laughed.

"I never learn. Tom always plays tricks on me and I never learn. I love Tom. He's my sister's child – she's dead. But it's not easy to look after him. Tomorrow is Saturday and there's no school. But Tom must work tomorrow. He hates work but he must do it."

Tom lived in the small village of St. Petersburg with his Aunt Polly, his brother Sid and his sister Mary.

The summer evenings were long, and in the evenings Tom liked walking around the village.

One evening he saw a big boy in front of him.

The boy was a stranger.

Tom was surprised because he did not see new people often.

This boy had very nice, expensive clothes.

"He's got shoes, a new shirt and a tie. And it's not Sunday," Tom thought. "My clothes are old and ugly."

Tom looked at him and the big boy looked at Tom.

Tom did not like him. Finally he said, "I can beat you!"

"Why don't you try?" said the boy.

"Well, I can," said Tom.

"No, you can't."

"Yes, I can."

There was silence.

"You're afraid," said the boy.

"I'm not afraid," said Tom.

"Yes, you are."

"No, I'm not."

There was more silence.

Then Tom pushed the boy and the boy pushed Tom.

Soon they were on the ground.

Tom pulled the boy's hair and hit him hard.

They both fought a lot.

The big boy was angry and started crying. "Stop," he said, "Stop!"

"Now, that will teach you something," said Tom.