

THE RECONSTRUCTION OF HUCK FINN  
(OVER MARK TWAIN'S DEAD BODY!)

NOTE: taking a page from *The Wizard of Oz*, the screenplay asks several actors to double up, playing a role both in Allie's world and in her vision. Finn & Huck Finn, Tommy & Tom Sawyer, Mr. Simon & Simon Legree, and Mr. Ellison & Jim are all dual roles.

FADE IN:

**EXT. LOWER ARKANSAS WOODS-NIGHT**

It's the climactic escape at the end of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

A bright moon looks down on three figures on the run.

Dogs bark in chase, and lanterns flicker in the darkness.

SOUTHERN MAN (O.S.)

Here they are! They've broke for  
the river! After 'em, boys!

The three figures make it to the water. They get in a canoe.

JIM, a black man in his 30s, is the terrified, confused, and breathless stereotype of a slave on the run.

HUCK FINN is a 14-year-old in town clothes that don't quite fit; he seems jittery as he takes everything in, but for a moment the moonlight captures his blank expression.

And then comes TOM SAWYER, 14, a bit more refined, excited by the adventure he's devised--near giddy even. But his gunshot wound keeps him from total euphoria.

**EXT. ON THE RIVER-NIGHT**

Jim brings the canoe aside their raft, tucked away under some branches on a small island.

HUCK

Now, old Jim, you're a free man  
again, and I bet you won't ever be  
a slave no more.

JIM

En a mighty good job it was too,  
Huck--

Tom groans in pain. Turning around in the canoe, Jim sees Tom about to pass out, blood on his hands.

TOM

I got a bullet in my leg.

JIM

Help me get 'im in the wigwam,  
Huck.

In the wigwam, by the light of the candle, Jim and Huck trade concerned glances. Tom moans, mumbling nonsense.

TOM

Man the sweeps and set her loose!  
Boys, we done it elegant!--'deed we  
did.

**EXT. HUCK AND JIM'S RAFT-CONTINUOUS**

Huck and Jim come outside. Jim looks upriver.

HUCK

Say it, Jim.

JIM

Well, den, dis is de way it look to  
me, Huck. Ef it wuz *him* dat 'uz  
bein' sot free, en one er de boys  
wuz to git shot, would he say, 'Go  
on en save me, nemmine 'bout a  
doctor f'r to save dis one?' Is dat  
like mars Tom Sawyer? Would He say  
dat? You bet he wouldn't! *Well* den--  
is *Jim* gwyne to say it? No, sah--I  
doan' budge a step out'n dis place,  
'dout a *doctor*; not ef it's forty  
year!

Huck is overwhelmed with affection and admiration for Jim.

HUCK (V.O.)

I knowed he was white inside...

ALLIE (O.S.)

Ahhhhh!!!!!!

**CUT TO:**

**INT. ALLIE'S BEDROOM-DAY**

ALLIE CHESNUTT, 17, enraged, looks at the cover of *Huck Finn* and then throws it across the room.

Posters of Gertrude Stein, Hermione, Angela Davis, and others adorn the walls. As well as a poster that declares, "Well-behaved women seldom make history."

Allie is white. Clearly.

She has black hair and dark eyes. But she's surely white.

ALLIE

"I knowed he was white inside"?!?!?  
What kind of horseshit is that?!

The theme song from *Shaft* begins playing. As she packs up her books, Allie pulls back her hair, and sings along.

ALLIE (CONT'D)

Frickin' Mark Twain . . . *Who is  
the man that would risk his neck  
for his fellow man? . . . Can ya  
dig it?*

**INT. KITCHEN-CONTINUOUS**

MRS. CHESNUTT, 45, fills her travel mug with coffee. She's dressed for work at a non-profit and checking her iphone.

FINN, 14, Allie's little brother, eats his Lucky Charms and reads the box.

Morning Edition plays in the background.

NPR

Protests continued in Baltimore  
last night after the death of  
Freddie Gray, the man who went into  
a coma while in police custody...

Allie enters and slams the book down on the counter.

ALLIE

Do you know what Mark Twain just  
did?!

MRS. CHESNUTT

Did you finish your Rotary Club  
essay?

Allie considers lying. Continues on.

ALLIE

He just made white the only way to  
be good. White!

She holds up her arm and points to her skin.

ALLIE (CONT'D)

This is the only way to be good.

MRS. CHESNUTT

That means you didn't.