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The Fugitive for Mississippi

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Description

This poem pictures an orphan who imitates the desperate recklessness of Huckleberry Finn as he flees his broken past and present life.

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The Fugitive for Mississippi

by Meghan Wells

The lad,
plaid-clad and mud-spattered,
reads Twain, huddled on a bench under the
sputtering porch-light, aching from
raking hay from sunrise to setting,
feeding his grandfather's Holsteins.

An orphan,
glaze-eyed and dip-mouthed.
The boy mutters, "Huckleberry,
Huckleberry..." Juices dribble
to the dimple on his chin. *If
Grandpa wakes to catch me
flipping pages and chewing chaw...*
He shudders.

Tucking the book into bushes by
the porch-step, he plunges into the
woods. Robed in night, Nature groans like
his grandfather after supper, its voice
creaking over the heads of dulled pines,
muted oaks, and damp maples. These trees
crack their branches like the fingers of
ancient patrons, reminiscing centuries.
If only to startle them...

Sucking in moist breaths of moss, lichen, and
clouded North Star, he pounds through
the leaves, scattering them like rustling
spirits in a cemetery, awakening the
katydid with his calloused feet,
yodeling down Little Dipper to drench
the trees, outrunning Orion and
orphanage, sprinting away
from the sunrise, flailing for Mississippi.
If he catches me—