



The Grangerfords

A MAN'S HEAD APPEARED AT A WINDOW AND HE SHOUTED, "WHO are you?"

"It's me—George Jackson."

"What do you want?"

"Nothing, sir. I want to walk past your house, but your dogs won't allow me."

"Why are you outside so late at night?"

"I fell into the river from the deck of that large boat you may have seen. I'm only a boy. I don't intend to harm anyone."

I heard him shout to his wife. "Bring me a light and wake Bob and Tom. Tell them to get their guns." Then to me, he said, "Is there anyone with you?"

"No, sir, nobody."

"George Jackson, do you know the Shepherdsons?"

"No, sir. I never heard of them."

"You may be telling the truth or you may be lying. Step forward slowly. If there's anyone with you, he'll be shot. Slowly, open the door and step into the house."

I was very frightened. I couldn't have moved quickly even if I dared. The dogs were quiet. Not a sound was made by anyone. All I could hear was the beating of my heart. I walked up three steps to the door and heard someone unlocking it. Slowly, I opened the door a little, then a little more.

I heard a man's voice say, "That's far enough. Put your head inside."

I did, but fearing someone would shoot my head. I saw a lighted candle on the floor. Three big men holding guns stood looking at me. The oldest man was perhaps sixty; the two younger men were in their thirties—all of them were handsome, fine-looking people. Then I noticed the sweetest, gray-haired lady, and behind her stood two younger women.

Finally, the oldest man said, "Come in."

As soon as I was inside the house, the old man locked the door with several locks. The younger men kept their guns pointed at me, while we all walked into a large room that had few windows. They looked at my face closely, and then they all said, "He's not a Shepherdson. He looks nothing like any of the Shepherdsons."

The oldest man said that he hoped that I didn't think that they had bad manners, but that they had to be very careful. He asked me to tell them about myself.

The gray-haired woman interrupted him and said, "Saul, the poor boy is completely wet and he's probably hungry. Send someone to awaken Buck and tell him to dress the boy in some of his dry clothes."

When Buck appeared, I could see that he was a boy of about my own age—thirteen or fourteen—though he was bigger than me. He stood in the room looking very sleepy. His mother told him to take me to his room and give me some dry clothes to wear.

After Buck gave me a clean shirt and trousers, he asked, "How long will you stay with us? I want you to live with us. I want you to be my friend."

When we returned to his family, they had a breakfast prepared for me. Buck and his mother and all the men smoked tobacco and talked,

while I ate and talked. They asked me about my life, and I told them that my family was living on a small farm in the State of Arkansas, and that my sister Mary Ann had run away to get married. My brother Bill left to look for her and was never heard from again. My brothers Tom and Mort died, and no one remained in the family but my father and me. He became so sick worrying about the disappearing family, that he, too, died. The farm didn't belong to our family, and I left and started traveling up the river until I fell off the large boat.

They told me that I could live with them—that I could share a bed with Buck. I was happy to hear this. They were a nice family, and the house was beautiful. I had never seen such a fine house before. All of the furniture was of the latest style. I knew that they had spent much money furnishing the house; all of their dishes were of the best quality. They owned many books, too, and fine paintings. All the windows had lovely curtains, and they had a piano in the living room. The two daughters played the piano and sang songs in the evening. That house had everything a person could want, and the food was good, too.