

MILDRED D. TAYLOR



Let the Circle Be Unbroken

Sequel to
Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry



Burnsberg

1

“Ain’t that Wordell?”

Papa and the boys peered out into the deepening shadows as a slight figure slipped from the dense forest on our right and across the defile to the hardness of the red road and vanished into the trees on the other side. My eldest brother, Stacey, sat beside Papa on the wagon seat; Christopher-John and Little Man were in the back of the wagon with me.

“Could’ve been, Cassie,” Papa said, slapping the reins lightly across the mule’s back, urging him on, for the November light was slowly failing and we had one more stop to make before we went home. Already we had passed the Morgan place, or at least what used to be the Morgan place

but which was now government land like so many other farms taken for taxes by the state of Mississippi in the four years since 1930. We had passed as well the Great Faith school and church grounds with its semicircle of five fragile looking, weather-beaten buildings on skinny brick feet. Now we were approaching the Granger plantation, which sprawled southward, northward, and westward for some 6,000 acres, almost ten square miles. Up ahead the Silas Lanier house, standing unpainted and gray in the midst of the drying cotton stalks, marked the beginning of it. Past the Laniers were the Mason Shorters, and across from them, tucked behind a growth of untrimmed bushes and second-growth trees, were the Page Ellises and their aunt, Mrs. Lee Annie Lees.

At the rutted, narrow trail leading to the Ellises Papa pulled up short on Jack's reins, turning the wagon inward. Going up the trail, we entered a clearing where two tenant shacks, one belonging to the Ellises and the other to Mrs. Lee Annie and her grandson, Wordell, stood catercorner to each other. Sitting barefoot on the porch of the Ellis house were two of the Ellis boys, Son-Boy and Don Lee. With them were Little Willie Wiggins, one of Stacey's best friends and a fellow eighth grader, and his brother Maynard.

"How y'all young folks doing?" Papa asked as we stepped down from the wagon. Papa was a tall, pecan-brown-skinned man with both a reputation and a bearing that commanded respect; all four boys stood to greet him.

"Jus' fine, Mr. Logan," they answered. "How you?"

"Doin' right well." Papa shook hands with each of the boys as if they were men and looked around. "Where's everybody?"

Son-Boy nodded toward the backyard. "Mama and Papa, they's 'round back. Aunt Lee Annie too. They tendin' to that ole mule of ours. Down with the colic again."

"They's 'fraid he ain't gon' make it this time," put in Don Lee, the younger of the two.

"That's a shame," said Papa. "Guess I'll just go on back and see if there's anything I can do."

"Yes, sir."

We watched Papa go between the two houses toward the barn, then settled on the porch. "How long y'all been here?" Stacey asked of Little Willie, beside him on the steps. "We jus' stopped by y'all's house and your mama said you and Maynard and Clarice had done gone up to the Averys."

Little Willie nodded. "Mama had some milk and preserves and stuff she wanted 'em to have. We was on our way back home, but Clarice claimed she jus' had to stop by here a minute and see Thelma."

"Shoot! The way ole Thelma talk," said Son-Boy of his older sister, "y'all be lucky to get 'way from here 'fore night-fall."

"I tell ya, Stacey, women!" sighed Little Willie. "Talkin' 'bout a minute and here it been a good half hour already."

"Ain't that the way," Stacey said, like he knew what the way was.

"Aw, man, you don't know nothin' yet. Jus' wait till Casie there get older."

"Now jus' how my name get into this?" I demanded from the porch rail. "I'm jus' sitting here minding my own business, ain't done nothin'!"

Little Willie slid a sly glance my way. "But you will."

I scowled down at him. "And jus' what I'm gonna do?"

"Jus' wait. You'll find out."

"Boy—"

"How was everybody at the Averys?" said Stacey, cutting me off, an irritating habit he had recently picked up.

Little Willie leaned back on the steps, his elbows support-

“A profoundly affecting novel.”

—Publishers Weekly

For the Logan family, it is a frightening and turbulent time. First, their friend, T.J., must go on trial for murder—and confront an all-white jury. Then Cousin Suzella tries to pass for white, with humiliating consequences. And when Cassie’s neighbor, Mrs. Lee Annie, stands up for her right to vote, she and her family are driven from their home. Other neighbors are destroyed and shattered by the greed of landowners. But through it all, Cassie and the Logans stand together and stand proud—proving that courage, love, and understanding can defy even the deepest prejudice.

“Powerful . . . readers will be moved by the intense drama.”
—*School Library Journal*

“The Logans’ story will strengthen and satisfy all who read it.”
—*The Christian Science Monitor*

Winner of the Coretta Scott King Award

An ALA Best Book for Young Adults

**An NCSS-CBC Notable Children’s Book in the Field of
Social Studies**

Nominated for the National Book Award

Cover illustration copyright © Max Ginsburg, 1991

Cover design by Rebecca Laughlin



A PUFFIN BOOK

Ages 10 and up

U.S.A. \$7.99
CAN. \$10.99

0-14-034892-1



UPC



VISIT US AT www.penguin.com