



H u c k ' s F a t h e r

I CLOSED THE DOOR. I TURNED AROUND, AND THERE HE WAS. I EXPECTED to be frightened of him now, but I wasn't.

Pap was nearly fifty years old. His black hair was long and uncombed and dirty. He had allowed hair to grow on his face, and where his skin showed, the skin was a sickly white. Just looking at the ugly white skin made me feel sick. His clothes?—dirty and torn. His feet showed through large holes in his shoes. His hat was on the floor—an old black hat with a large hole in it.

I stood looking at him. He sat looking back at me. I put my lighted candle down. I noticed that the window was open; that's how he had come into the room.

"Clean clothes. New shoes. You think highly of yourself, don't you?" he **sneered**.

"Maybe I do and maybe I don't," I answered.

"Don't talk to me in that tone. You've changed in many ways since I have been away. I don't like these changes. I heard that you go to school. You think you're better than your father because he can't read and write. Who gave you permission to go to school? Answer me."

“The Widow gave me permission. She told me to go to school.”

“The widow? Who gave the widow permission to tell my son how to live? She’s not part of your family. She has no authority to tell you anything.

“You stop going to school. I’m your father, and I don’t want you to be better educated than I am. I don’t want to find you at that school again. Your mother couldn’t read and she couldn’t write before she died. No members of your family could read or write before they died. And I don’t want you to be better than the other family members. If I see you near the school again, I’ll beat you.”

He sat there looking angry. “I see that you’re now living in a proper house and are wearing fancy clothes. You have a good bed to sleep in while your father sleeps outside on the ground. People tell me that you’re rich.”

“People lie to you.”

“Be careful what you say to me. I’ve been in this town for two days and all the people tell me how rich you are. I heard about your money when I was far away down the river. That’s why I am here. I want your money. I want you to get it for me tomorrow.”

“I don’t have any money.”

“You’re telling a lie. Judge Thatcher has your money. Get the money from him! I want it!”

“I don’t have any money. Please believe me. Ask Judge Thatcher. He’ll tell you that I have no money.”

“I’ll ask him tomorrow. I’ll force him to give me your money. How much money do you have in your pocket?”

“I have only a dollar, and I want it to—”

“I don’t care why you want it. Give it to me now.”

Pap took the dollar and said that he was going into town to buy whiskey. Then he climbed out the open window and onto the porch roof. I heard him jump to the ground.

The next day, Pap was drunk and went to Judge Thatcher’s house. He tried to force the Judge to give him my money, but the Judge refused. Then Pap told Judge Thatcher that he would make the law force him.

The Judge and the Widow went to court and tried to force the law to take me away from Pap and allow me to live with one of them. A new judge, who did not know Pap, had arrived at the court. The new judge said that the court must not separate a child from his father; so the Widow and Judge Thatcher didn't succeed in their plan. Pap would have authority over me, though I continued to live with the Widow.