

Life With The Grants

This story takes place in Virginia in 1920 in the little community of Bone Holler. The Grant family moved into a little, six room shanty. They were tenant farmers for the richest man in Washington County; old man Humphrey Conrad.

Let me tell you a little about each Grant so you can see why I loved living there.

The matriarch of the Grant family was Mammy Maybelle. She was one of the wisest people I have ever known. She was an advocate for education and made sure all her chil'en and grandchil'en could read, write, and do figurin' (they call it Math nowadays). She was a proud woman who taught her child'en and grandchil'en to be respectful of others even when they did not show it to them.

“We live by the Good Book chil'en. Some people don't. We's just got to pray for 'em and move on,” Mammy said on more than one occasion.

Mammy's son, William Robert, was her pride and joy. Everyone called him Billy Bob after his daddy. His daddy had passed away in a mining accident when Billy Bob was just nine years old. Billy Bob had worked hard in school and college and was now a teacher at the Negro High School.

Billy Bob met his wife, Lanella Hodges when they both attended college. Lanella was a beautiful woman. She was quiet until she started to sing. That woman had the voice of an angel.

Now for the chil'en: first was Mary Esther, the athletic one. She played on the local basketball and softball teams. She hoped to earn a sports scholarship so she could attend college

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in two years when she graduated from high school. Second was Daniel Adam. Daniel was a musical genius like his momma. He played piano, guitar, banjo, harmonica, and he could sing, too. He hoped to go to the School for the Arts in Richmond and pursue his music. Third was Joseph Ezekiel. He was the dreamer just like his namesake in the Bible. He read everything he could get his hands on and loved to write. He really wanted to work for a newspaper but he'd have to see if that worked out for him. Fourth was Naomi Ruth. She was the little rebel. She always had an argument to get out of chores. Mammy used to tell her she would either be a lawyer, politician, or convict when she grew up. Then Mammy would throw her head back and laugh one of those chuckles that rolled around in your belly till you had everyone else laughin' along with you. Lastly, there was baby Benjamin Paul. There's not much to tell about him. When he was only two, he got scarlet fever and died. That sure was a sad time at the Grant's.

I have digressed for too long. I wanted to tell you about my life with the Grant family.

My name is Limley Gilbert. I came to live with the Grant family when I was only one year old. That family treated me like one of their own.

The chil'en took me fishin' at Coram's Creek when they would go. They knew how much I loved jumpin' in the creek. But I didn't like takin' a bath when I got home though.

I always got fed good. Mammy made sure of that.

When Mrs. Lanella sang, I did my best to join in to the delight of all the others.

On Sunday, everyone dressed in their finest to go to church. Of course, I tagged along. I didn't know all church services wasn't like theirs until later. They had singin', clappin', a-

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menin', shoutin', praising the Lord, and a powerful sermon from the preacher. Mrs. Lanella told us about a church she attended while she was at college.

"They sang hymns but there was no clappin', shoutin', or praisin' goin' on. The message was nice but not like Preacher Collins' who brought you to your knees," Lanella said.

So glad I got to live with the Grant family. I sure have happy memories of my life with them.

I died when I was eleven years old but that's a pretty good life for a German Shepherd. At least that's what I heard Billy Bob tellin' the chil'en when they buried me beside Coram's Creek.