

## DARK LEGACY

(Excerpt)

In her short life, Martina had lived on five plantations, none long enough to have been given a last name. Every master had been mean in one way or another, but Big Bill Vance had been the cruelest. He bought her from Martha Givens, an old woman in North Carolina. He and Miss Martha had negotiated the terms of sale as Martina stood nearby with her hands folded and her eyes fixed on her bare feet. They spoke as if she weren't even there, couldn't hear, or even understand.

Miss Martha sat in her rocking chair on her old rickety porch. Big Bill sat upon his large stallion, not bothering to give Martina even a glance. Miss Martha's property could no longer be considered a farm. After her husband died and her sons went off to seek new lives for themselves, the farm fell into ruin. Now it was just an old house and a patch of parched land surrounded by waist high weeds.

"I want a Christian burial," the old woman demanded. "I got no family, no work, and no use for the girl."

"I got even less use for a girl like this." Big Bill said. Martina was a slim girl of average height. It was obvious by her almond colored complexion and big brown eyes that there was some Caucasian in her lineage but how far back, no one knew. If anyone had ever bothered to talk with the girl, her intelligence would have been obvious for she was quick-witted, observant, and resourceful.

"She's a bit too lean and narrow for the fields and I don't need no more house slaves," Bill said with a smirk.

Miss Martha spit a stream of brown tobacco juice between her decaying teeth. "Come on now Bill. I been knowing you for near twenty years and I know that you know exactly what this girl is good for, now don't you?"

Bill smiled giving credence to the old woman's assumptions. "Hell Bill, you ain't even got to give me the money. Just pay the undertaker in town for my burial. Then you can just take the girl and go."