

The Sharecropper's Daughter

by
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Based on the book "From the Farm to Harvard"
by Pearl Chase

EXT. LOUISIANA PLANTATION - 1864 - DAY

SLAVES pick cotton beneath the burning Southern sun. A tall, burly slave, PARK, 34, works ahead of the rest, strong and tireless.

The voice of OLD PEARL CHASE, 62, black, and kindly, narrates.

OLD PEARL (V.O.)

My great grandfather Park was born
in the fields. He lived his life
doing other men's work for nothing.

A stone-faced white OVERSEER rides among the slaves on horseback, shouting insults and commands.

OVERSEER

Move! Move, you good-for-nothin'
apes!

A YOUNG, SICKLY SLAVE coughs and stumbles, dropping his basket of cotton. The overseer rides up and glares down at him.

OVERSEER

You best pick that up, boy, right
quick.

The young slave tries to answer, but only coughs harder. The overseer reaches for his whip.

OVERSEER

What'd you say? You best say it
again, boy. Say it again!

Park, still carrying his own basket, steps between the young slave and the overseer.

PARK

He said he's sorry.

OVERSEER

I didn't ask you, Park.

The young slave catches his breath.

YOUNG SLAVE

I'm sorry.

OVERSEER

Sorry, what?

The young slave looks to Park, who frowns and nods back at him.

YOUNG SLAVE
I'm sorry, sir.

OVERSEER
Well, that's good.

He taps the long knife at his belt.

OVERSEER
That's good, 'cause next time you
fall, you're gonna land right on
this Arkansas toothpick of mine!
Y'clear?

The young slave stifles another cough. Park looks up at the overseer with a firm, stoic glare.

PARK
He's clear, sir.

The overseer shouts, kicks his horse, and rides on. The young slave glares after him and makes a fist, but Park lays a hand on his shoulder and shakes his head.

PARK
'Salright. Just go on living, and
things will change.

YOUNG SLAVE
'Things will change?' You been
livin' here longer than I have.
They ain't changed for you.

Park looks out beyond the field to the road, where a unit of EXHAUSTED CONFEDERATE SOLDIERS trudge southward.

PARK
Not just yet, they ain't.

EXT. LOUISIANA PLANTATION - 1865 - DAY

A UNION CAVALRY REGIMENT rides past the plantation unimpeded, trumpeting proudly as they go. In the field, the Overseer and a few of his HENCHMEN stand on a makeshift scaffold, with all the slaves assembled before them.

The overseer nervously straightens his collar, then raises a hand and calls for silence.