

Flyin West

Miss Leah: When they sold my first baby boy off of the place, I felt like I couldn't breathe for three days. After that, I could breathe a little better, but my breasts were so full of milk they leak out onto the front of my dress. Overseer kept telling me he was going to have to see if a Negro milk was really chocolate like they said it was, so I had to stay away from him till my milk stopped running. And one day I saw James and they told him they had sold the baby, but he already knew. He had 20 been sold off our place by that time. Never saw any of them. When he told me that, I decided he was gonna at least lay eyes on at least one of his babies came through me. So next time they put us together I told him that I was going to be sure this time he got to see his child before Colonel Harrison sold it. But I couldn't. Not that one or the one after or the one after the ones after that. James never saw their faces. Until we got free. Then he couldn't look at him long enough. That was a man who loved his children. Hug em and kiss em and take him everywhere he goes. I think when he saw the fever take all five of them, one by one like that, racing each other to heaven, it just broke him down. He'd waited so long to have his sons and then he was losing them all again. He was like a crazy man just before he died. So I buried him next to his children and I closed the door on that little piece of house we had and I started walking west. If I had wings, I'd set out flyin west. I needed to be someplace big enough for all my sons and all my ghost grandbabies to roam around. Big enough for me to think about all that sweetness they had stole from me and James and just holler about it as loud as I wanted to holler.