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# Dirty Rice

A Novel

By

Dorothy K. Morris

*"Dirty Rice,"* by Dorothy K. Morris. ISBN 978-1-62137-157-1 (softcover), 978-1-62137-158-8 (ebook).

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PREVIOUS BOOKS BY  
**DOROTHY K MORRIS**

In

**THE MOCKINGBIRD HILL SERIES**

**SECRET SINS OF THE MOTHERS**

**COYOTES OF CREEK CROSSING**

**THE EIGHTH EVIL**

**THE TIME IN BETWEEN**

**EACH BOOK IN THE SERIES IS A STAND  
ALONE BOOK; HOWEVER, THEY DO  
FOLLOW CERTAIN CHARACTERS AND  
FAMILIES, WHILE ADDING NEW  
CHARACTERS IN EACH.**

## REVIEWS

### SECRET SINS OF THE MOTHERS

A Reader: "Ms. Morris captures your attention right away in such a fashion you have to keep reading.... Artfully done in taking you from the Civil War era to present times. A story well written....."

"The Pilot, Southern Pines, N.C.: "...This is a pretty fast-paced read with a couple of surprises thrown in along the way."

A Reader: "...I am waiting impatiently for Ms. Morris' next book. Turn off the TV and pick up this book for an entertaining evening."

A Reader: "Pick it up—can't put it down. Ms. Morris captures your attention right away in such a fashion you have to keep reading."

### COYOTES OF CREEK CROSSING

Lawrance M. Bernabo-The Zenith City, Duluth, Minnesota, for Amazon: ...Morris remains a brisk storyteller, focusing on what

her characters say and think to drive her stories. Readers of the first novel might be surprised by the seemingly new direction Morris takes in this second book, but they will not be disappointed by the results.

Al Hansen, Jr., Actor: "Romance, adventure, sorrow, and happiness to the fullest extent that the mind allows, with unabashed shedding of tears."

A Reader: "It is difficult to find a book that stands on its own without excess sex, violence, etc. Coyotes of Creek Crossing is one where all the necessary elements are there..."

## **THE EIGHTH EVIL**

Daniel Jolley - for Amazon, Shelby, North Carolina. "An emotionally rich, evocative work of historical fiction. It only takes a few sentences to figure out that Dorothy K Morris is a natural born storyteller...a fantastic, absorbing read...These are characters—and an author—I want to spend much more time with."

Grady Harp for Amazon: "...Morris is a no nonsense writer. She is committed to

storytelling and has the facility to unravel a huge cast of characters without ever once losing the reader's interest. A compelling read and one that literally dares the reader to put it down before finishing it. The characters Morris paints are indelible in her writing skills - so much so that learning more about the history of Mockingbird Hill from her earlier books becomes a hunger.

Lawrance M. Bernabo - from Amazon, Duluth, Minn. "God throws love down like a gauntlet to the Mockingbird Hill menagerie."  
"...the best book to date in the Mockingbird Hill series. I trust it will be more than a trilogy. Morris adds more ingredients in a recipe for disaster to set up a series of object lessons for her cast of characters in her continuing saga of reconciliation."

A Reader: "...her characters are old friends. Dorothy has such an easy way to hook the reader and seamlessly spins in philosophies on life that are timeless."

## **THE TIME IN BETWEEN**

Al Hansen, Actor: "I find myself living within the pages of Dorothy Morris' novels, sharing the lives of her characters. I've read each of

her novels within this series and look forward to her writings until she crosses the River Jordan. To think that her stories would end brings sadness to my heart.”

A Reader: “...The Time in Between continues in the same tradition as the first three with memorable characters, a driving plot, and plenty of suspense....A wonderful read and highly recommended to one and all.”

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO  
THE GULLAH PEOPLE  
OF THE LOW COUNTRY OF SOUTH  
CAROLINA  
FOR THEIR FORGOTTEN AND  
UNSUNG CONTRIBUTION  
TO THE SUCCESS & WEALTH  
OF THE EARLY CAROLINA  
COLONY

## FOREWORD

When my readers asked for another installment in the Mockingbird Hill series, which stories took place before, during and after the Civil War from 1849 until 1868, nothing came immediately to mind. Since the publication of The Time in Between in 2009, I did not have a theme or plot or question concerning our now familiar characters and where we had left them on our stage. However, the words, Ned's Story, began to rattle around in my brain, and would not go away. The direction was pointing to a story about an earlier time in the history of Mockingbird Hill Plantation. Since the War was about the abolition of slavery, and our familiar character, Ned, had begun as a slave, my curiosity was aroused as to why, when and how it all came about in the Low Country of South Carolina.

One day while browsing through the National Geographic Catalogue I saw beautiful gold earrings made by the Fulani people of West Africa. Something told me to investigate and I began to research West Africa, in particular, the coastal region. As I read, a rush of plot, characters, theme, and

action, came to me. I would write that prequel, but I would begin much farther back than Ned, to the year 1726, an early date in the history of Charles Town, and to tell about the beginning of Mockingbird Hill Plantation.

My research took me to a giant triangle: Sierra Leone and the Island of Baki, West Africa, coastal Carolina and Georgia, and to England. I learned about rice farming both in the coastal regions of West Africa and South Carolina and Georgia. And in the process of reading mountains of research material the title became DIRTY RICE.

As in the previous four novels this book will be about people and not a treatise on the institution of slavery. We all know that, even though chattel slavery has existed for as long as man has lived, it is an evil thing. This story will be about the people who lived through it and their all too human reasons, rationalizations, reactions and suffering. Nor will it be an info novel on the growing of rice in various terrains and circumstances, which is highly technical, and in which the West Africans were master technologists before the Europeans and Colonists totally devastated their culture and distorted the facts of history. Their expertise, knowledge, skill and experience which they and their ancestors had accumulated over hundreds and maybe

thousands of years in the growing of glaberrima rice, became their downfall when Europe and Colonials discovered that South Carolina and Georgia had land that was totally suitable for the same. This story will be about our concepts of character and of personal attitude, not only toward race but toward class levels in society everywhere.

DIRTY RICE becomes the story of every slave, whether quiet or rebellious, and about every slave owner, whether abusive or kind. It is also about those few who were not willing to participate.

Dorothy K Morris  
Kennewick, WA  
As I begin Mid-April, 2012

WGAWEST  
Registration 1599904



# DIRTY RICE

A Novel

By

DOROTHY K MORRIS



With the exception of certain place names and the issues concerning slavery and rice growing in the colonies, this book is entirely fictional and does not intend to represent any person living or dead.





One billion years ago, give or take a few years, there came a great collision of land masses when what is now the West Coast of Africa rammed up against what is now the East Coast of North America. This great collision created one of the highest ranges of mountains, the Appalachians. Over these billion years since, the great mountains have worn down to mere hills.

Five hundred years ago, give or take a few years, there came another great collision between these two continents. This second, however, was not of land masses, but of people and cultures. This collision created a barrier almost as huge as mountains and just as slow to wear down. So much of this barrier was built of greed and ego, for in order to maximize profits, the European colonists not only kidnapped, bought and sold Africans who were experts in rice growing into this new world, but their egos would not allow them to give credit to these West Africans. They took the credit for Europe and the landed planters, and relegated these vastly

superior rice growers to mere chattel laborers and credited them with little intelligence or knowledge of their own.



In the year of our Lord 1726, Reginald Upton did not know about these barriers because the earlier collision had not yet been recognized and the latter one had only begun. Reginald was the overseer at Grenville Plantation, Charles Town Colony, one of several enterprises of The Colonial Shipping, Land and Commerce Company, headquartered in London, England. The only thing on his mind as he stood at the edge of the marsh this late winter evening was how to convince the elder members of The Company to allow him enough workers to man the rice fields so that the plantation could produce the quantity and quality of rice that they expected and demanded.

The sights and smells of the marsh assailed him. The black, rich mud, rank with the dead from thousands of years, filled with season upon season of rotted grasses, salt, fiddler crabs, fish, carcasses of wader birds and other critters—the powerful scent attacked his nostrils. The odor had grown on him these past years that he had been overseer at the plantation, the foremost land

project of The Company. This is where he sometimes rode of an evening when his work stopped for the day. He couldn't say finished, because his work never finished; nor the work of the laborers who toiled in that mud and muck trying to grow rice, avoid snake bites, and survive the deadly fevers that came every summer like the return of the migrating birds.

Stretching for miles along the coast and more miles up the rivers, along creeks and tributaries, this was a land that Mother Nature would jealously guard from the rape of the rice growers' hoes. Containing almost impassable swamps, pocosins of brush and small hardwood, stands of pine, thickets full of saw grass, earth with roots so thick and tough that an ox could not pull a plow through it, overrun with poisonous snakes and poison plants; yet this was the best rice growing land west of Sierra Leone and the Europeans and Colonials were determined, by hook or crook to become rich from it. Reginald knew that on Grenville Plantation, so far, Mother Nature was winning.

Rice! Grow rice! That was the new cry from the elders in The Company in their last letters to him and Lady Agnes Grenville. From their old commercial endeavors of acquiring hides and skins from the Native

Americans and lumber and resins from the pine forests which abounded, for shipment to New England and old England, the goal now was for a change to this more profitable crop and Europe clamored for more of it. The only problem was that up until now, those same elders had not allowed him to buy slaves to work the burgeoning rice plantation. They expected him to do the job with indentured servants from England, or convicts that were now allowed into the Carolina Crown Colony. Mosquitoes and fever, heat, humidity and snakebites mixed with clumsy dwellers from the streets of English cities, who barely knew how to grow turnips and cabbages, made for a bad combination. Attempting to keep up with the plantations that were using slave labor had proved a failure. He had to change their minds. The Company wanted profits. They would have to give him better laborers.

Reginald mounted Tucker, his bay Irish gelding that Lady Agnes had arranged to have shipped to him straight from Ireland, and rode back to the plantation house, leaving the sea birds soaring and the sweet grass swaying on the evening breeze. He handed the reins of the tired gelding to Thomas, the new stable man, to untack, groom, feed and put into his stall for the

night, for Tucker worked as hard as did he. Then he went to his private cabin on the plantation grounds to compose his report to The Company and a personal letter to Sir Joseph Talleigh, Lady Agnes's brother and the finance officer of The Company.

Reginald knew that he had to explain at length their situation, the competition, the hardships borne by the English laborers and the highly technical problems of rice growing, and that the planters who were harvesting enough rice to export, had advised him that he needed slaves from West Africa. These Africans had been growing rice for hundreds of years in just the varieties of coastal and inland terrain that were here in coastal South Carolina. He had to include that planters from Barbados were being offered a certain number of acres for every slave they brought with them, if they would come to South Carolina or Georgia to grow rice. If he could make Sir Joseph to understand and give him the authority and permission to use slaves he could make the place profitable.

Captain Fredrick Talleigh, Master Mariner of The Allegiance, and the nephew of Lady Agnes Grenville, was now visiting his aunt before sailing for London on the morrow and he would take the overseer's report to

The Company along with the letter to Sir Joseph, which Reginald still had to write.

Reginald wrote the letter and report, knowing that he would have to wait for weeks, maybe even months while Captain Talleigh's ship sailed to London, then to Barbados and only then back to Charles Town with the answer. By that time the family would have moved back to town to avoid the perils of life on the river in the heat of summer and another growing season would be in full swing.



On the opposite side of the Atlantic across the Middle Passage, on an island off the west coast of Africa, the sun crept up over the horizon. This day began the same as any other day for Fulani since she had been with the coastal people, the rice growers. The sun came up bright, its warm rays bringing clouds of mist from the rice fields. She was out of the hut early with a multitude of routine chores facing her before she could go with Edriam to gather reeds at the marsh.

Fulani was close to fourteen years old and was a servant member of the village on this island called Baki. No one among the coastal people knew her age for sure because she had been traded to them by a wandering group of Fulu cattle herders for four bags of rice when she was about 10 years old and soon to become a liability. She was worth more to them as a means to barter for rice, which the coastal people grew in plenty and traded up and down the coast. However, to the rice growers she would be valuable because of the tremendous part that their women played in growing and preparing

rice. Because she had come from the Fulu herders, villagers called her The Fulani and soon simply Fulani.

Fulani's mother had died shortly after Fulani was born and as an infant she was cared for by her father's mother. When she was around four or five years old her father had suffered a fall from an unruly young camel and had broken his neck. A girl child with only a grandmother to sustain her, she was a burden to this small group of nomads who spent their time bringing cattle and trade goods from the interior to barter for rice at the coast. And then her grandmother died and Fulani was left alone with no one to care for her. If she had been a boy she would have been taken in hand by the men and taught many things, but girls without families they did not need. She learned to get food by visiting the campfires at mealtime and taking hand outs. On one trip to the coast it was decided that the orphan girl would be better off within a settled village. She was traded for the four sacks of rice.

A young girl child in a strange village, with people who spoke a strange language, she had absolutely no one to love her. She gathered a few words that were necessary for her to survive and then she was given tasks to do. She was a clever child and discovered in a

short time that doing the task as best she could, as soon as she could, brought no punishment. It was that for which she worked ...no punishment. She also learned that someone so weak must align herself with someone strong or powerful or prominent. That is the reason she began to tag around after the chief's favorite daughter, Edriam. They were close to the same age, learning to work in the rice field side by side, doing the easy work of girl children, fetching baskets of young rice stalks and running through the mud to give them to the women, who then would push each of the stalks down into the mud. Punishment came in the form of a box on the head if she allowed the women to run out of seedlings, for that meant wasted time. Sometimes she and Edriam would make a game of it...to see who could deliver the young stalks the quickest. Or they might be given the job of rolling the rice seeds in cow manure to make pellets that would be dried and then scattered over a newly plowed field.

Together at Edriam's grandmother's knee, they learned to weave winnowing baskets for separating the rice hulls from the grains and the old woman took them to the marsh to show them the best reeds and grasses and how to cut them. Slowly and eventually, she became a part of the chief's

household and worked for his four wives and many children, instead of working for everyone in the village. She and Edriam soon were doing women's work in the rice field, for no one, not even the chief's daughter was excused from this endless work. Hearing men and women singing in rhythm while working was a pleasant memory even when every muscle in her back was screaming in pain. She awoke every morning to the rhythmic sound of women and girls pounding or winnowing rice for the day.

Still there had been no one to love her; no one to dry her tears; no one to hold her close at night and comfort her when the animals came sniffing around the huts. She learned to still her own fears. Somehow she knew that she was capable and she believed that something big awaited her.

Living in the household of the village chief as she grew older, she did a variety of chores, whatever they required of her, but most of her time she spent with the women in the rice fields or outside their huts pounding, cleaning and winnowing rice for cooking or for trading. When not required to work with rice, she gathered long grasses from the marsh to weave baskets after her work day and evening meal were finished. Living in servitude in this village was not a troubled

existence for Fulani and language no longer caused a problem. It wasn't long before she could speak a respectable Krio.

She did no more work than any other woman was required to do and all members of the village treated her with kindness. There was often merriment as they worked, with chatter and singing and sometimes at night the men brought out their musical instruments and there was more singing and dancing. They were a happy, prosperous people. When she was old enough to marry, which would be soon, a husband would be chosen for her, but since she would have no dowry and no father to require a bride price, she would have to settle for one of the poorer and less desirable of the young men, or old men, of the village. And she would be considered his servant as well as his wife, as were most of the wives.

This lovely morning Fulani and Edriam had been given a day from the rice field to go to the marsh to gather long grass. Edriam was soon to marry with Ndapi, the handsomest young man from a neighboring village and Fulani hoped that she would be invited to be part of Edriam's household after the marriage; perhaps even, if she were lucky, to be a second wife. They walked the path through the marsh, each carrying large, flat

baskets with handles to fill with marsh grass. Their appearance contrasted starkly, Fulani with her lighter skin tone, her straighter hair and even straighter nose showed her mixed Semitic heritage. Edriam was dark skinned and full bodied. Both wore woven grass hats against the sun and colorful garments. Edriam's arms were adorned with bracelets and in her ears were lovely earrings showing her rank in the village. Fulani wore no jewelry as befitted her servant status.

As they walked they talked of the coming wedding and giggled together in girlish glee as they spoke of things they should not speak of. They forgot Edriam's mother's warning that they should not go to the marsh without lookouts to protect them. This was the area where slave ships came close to shore, anchored out of sight behind the small islands that clustered on the edge of Sierra Leone, and sent jolly boats to shore where the Portuguese sailors kidnapped the natives, even the lookouts, and took them to the ship. Not understanding the value of the coastal women, the sailors preferred capturing strong young men who would be sold at the slave markets in Brazil to work in the cane fields, but they would not turn down a comely maiden or careless wife if they could be captured. The women could either

be used in the fields or in the households of the plantation owners. But while the two happy girls laughed and played and cut the long tough grass, they forgot this warning.

There were two of them. To Edriam and Fulani they appeared as monsters. Bearded faces, caps pulled down over their brows, hairy arms beneath their torn off shirt sleeves and hairy legs below their sailor's britches. The struggle was silent and brief for the girls were no match for the burly men who sprang on them, putting their smelly hands over their mouths to stifle their cries. With strong and hairy arms the men began to drag them away. Edriam attempted to free her hand that held the knife that she had used to cut grass, but her captor saw the movement and before she could cut him, he grabbed her wrist and twisted it, the pain causing the girl to lose her grip on the knife. Silently so as not to draw attention from the villagers the men continued to drag the girls away until they were far enough along the coast that no one from the village could hear the girls if they cried out. With one of the men guarding the girls, the other cut new slender reeds and with these he tied their arms behind their backs. They pushed the girls ahead of them for a short distance close to the shore until they came to their jolly boat, which they had

left tied to a mangrove stump. They forced the girls to wade through the sea water to the boat and then the men picked them up and dumped them into the boat on top of several burlap bags stuffed full. The men boarded quickly, picked up oars and rowed away from the island, out beyond the mangrove stand and out to sea. As they rounded the northern tip of Baki Island, the girls could see a ship at anchor.

It was a rather small, two-masted cargo ship and as the two men rowed closer and closer, the girls could see other white men on the ship, now standing by the railings shouting to the rowers with much jocularly. The rowers called out answers to them in a language which neither girl could understand. There followed much laughter from the ship and from their two captors. When their small boat came alongside the ship a seaman threw a rope ladder over the side. Their captors untied the grass from their bound arms and motioned that they were to climb.

When he saw the golden earrings and bracelets that Edriam wore, her captor grabbed the earrings from her ears, pulled the bracelets from her arms and stuffed them into his pocket before hoisting her up onto the ladder. Fulani thought about diving

overboard, but did not want to leave Edriam. The other sailor, seeing what Fulani might do, caught her arm and held her back until Edriam was on the ship and then she was to climb. The brief time to escape had slipped her by and now her fate was joined with that of Edriam. When the girls had climbed the ladder they stood shivering with fear on the deck. Sailors stared at them making loud comments and louder laughter. They watched and listened without understanding until a door opened and another man came onto the deck. They could easily see that he was angry.

“What is this? You took women from the island? We’re not a slave ship! You were sent out to gather mangrove oysters.”

“Aye, aye, Cap’n. Oysters are in the jolly boat, but these ‘ere two was walking on the beach and nobody to watch ‘em and we thought as ‘ow they’d sell real good in Antiga,” explained one of their captives. “See, ain’t a mark on neither of ‘em and they be young. One is right pretty.”

“You can’t risk taking them back now,” observed the captain. “Like as not the whole village will be looking for them. Find a safe place down in the hold and make sure they have food and water.”

“But Cap’n, sure ‘n we can fine better use for ‘em than they sit down in the ‘old?”

His question was followed by much laughter from the crew. Fulani and Edriam both knew instinctively what was being discussed.

“You will do as I say and you will not attempt to consort with them. Am I understood? Make sure they have something to sleep on or they’ll get bruises from the boards. Now secure that jolly boat and get the oysters aboard and take them to the galley. We set sail for Antigua immediately. I don’t want to be caught in an early storm at sea. With four men dead from fever we are short handed, so you will work round the clock if need be. You all know what happens to any lad who does not follow my orders!”

And they all knew. Their captain was a Scottish Presbyterian from New England and forced them all to have prayers daily. They had watched just weeks ago as one of their own had received a bloody back from disobeying an order. He was still healing in his bunk. This captain kept a tidy ship.

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