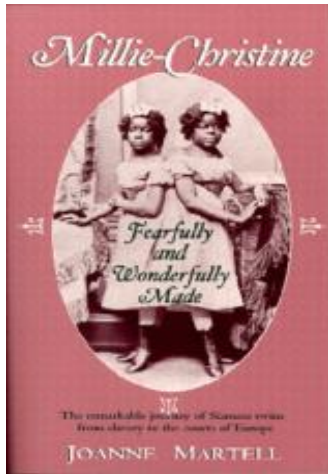

Millie-Christine: Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

by Joanne Martell



About the Book

Born into slavery, joined at the lower spine, stolen from her parents in infancy, exhibited as a curiosity in North America and Europe, stripped naked and examined in every new town, freed from bondage on numerous occasions yet returned to her former circumstances nonetheless, Millie-Christine McKoy lived one of the most complex and difficult childhoods imaginable.

Even more remarkable is the way she turned out. Reunited with her family and brought under caring management, Millie-Christine became one of the most renowned performers of her day. While most African-Americans were kept ignorant in slavery and destitute after the Civil War, she grew fluent in five languages and was an accomplished pianist, singer, and yes, dancer who toured the world and entertained kings and queens.

Loved by most yet ridiculed as a monster by some, Millie-Christine was one of the most amazing people you've never heard of. Her story, told here in full for the first time, has the flavor of the side-show world in which she traveled--a world of giants, midgets, human skeletons, and bearded ladies, freaks with very human souls.

Discussion Guide

1. Why do you think so little is known about Millie-Christine?
2. Millie-Christine seems to have charmed all who took the time to converse with her. How do you think she was able to make people feel so comfortable in her presence?
3. Religion obviously played an important role in Millie-Christine's life. Why do you think she was so religious?

4. The relationship between Millie-Christine's family and the Smith family was very amicable--even loving? Why?
5. After the Civil War, Millie-Christine again went out on tour. Why do you think she was willing to provide for both her family and the Smith family
6. Do you think it was right for the doctors to provide heavy doses of laudanum for Christine when it became apparent that Millie was dying?
7. Although Millie-Christine's body restricted her physically, do you think it liberated her socially?
8. If Millie-Christine were alive today, what sort of life do you think she would lead?

Author Bio

Joanne Martell discovered Millie-Christine upon finding a booklet about her in a library in Whiteville, North Carolina. She has since written an essay, articles, and a short story on Millie-Christine and presented programs on her life. Martell is a graduate of Stanford University. She and her husband live in the North Carolina Sandhills.

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