



Night of the Silent Drums: A Narrative of Slave Rebellion on the Virgin Islands

John L. Anderson

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To look at and experience the island of St. John, U.S. Virgin Islands, who would know that such a tranquil place has such a violent history? This is an account of the slave rebellion of 1733-1734, a true story told in fiction form through the eyes of Dr. Cornelius Bodger. Denmark had claimed the island in the early part of the 18th century and dedicated it to the cultivation of crops, most notably sugar. But in 1733, a new breed of slave was brought to work the fields: not a breed born into slavery in Africa, but abducted African royalty instead, a proud race that refused to submit to a life of bondage and toil. Thus it was that a rebellion was fomented by these enslaved African royals and their followers with the intention that the island be converted into their form of government and run under such auspices. For six bloody months, rebels squared off against planters, and a good deal of the island's population perished. Oddly enough, the rebellion didn't end on a bombastic note; it was quietly and in stages put down, and with the deaths of the rebel leaders, the island slowly returned to normalcy. After having read this book, should you visit St. John, you'll probably find it hard to believe that this pretty little island was once hell in paradise.

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