

Hot-Foot Hannibal

Charles W. Chesnutt

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"I HATE you and despise you! I wish never to see you or speak to you again!"

"Very well; I will take care that henceforth you have no opportunity to do either."

These words — the first in the passionately vibrant tones of my sister-in-law, and the latter in the deeper and more restrained accents of an angry man — startled me from my nap. I had been dozing in my hammock on the front piazza, behind the honeysuckle vine. I had been faintly aware of a buzz of conversation in the parlor, but had not at all awakened to its import until these sentences fell, or, I might rather say, were hurled upon my ear. I presume the young people had either not seen me lying there, — the Venetian blinds opening from the parlor windows upon the piazza were partly closed on account of the heat, — or else in their excitement they had forgotten my proximity.

I felt somewhat concerned. The young man, I had remarked, was proud, firm, jealous of the point of honor, and, from my observation of him, quite likely to resent to the bitter end what he deemed a slight or an injustice. The girl, I knew, was quite as high-spirited as young Murchison. I feared she was not so just, and hoped she would prove more yielding. I knew that her affections were strong and enduring, but that her temperament was capricious, and her sunniest moods easily overcast by some small cloud of jealousy or pique. I had never imagined, however, that she was capable of such intensity as was revealed by these few words of hers. As I say, I felt concerned. I had learned to like Malcolm Murchison, and had heartily consented to his marriage with my ward; for it was in that capacity that I had stood for a year or two to my wife's younger sister, Mabel. The match thus rudely broken off had promised to be another link binding me to the kindly Southern people among whom I had not long before taken up my residence.

Young Murchison came out of the door, cleared the piazza in two strides without seeming aware of my presence, and went off down the lane at a furious pace. A few moments later Mabel began playing the piano loudly, with a touch that indicated anger and pride and independence and a dash of exultation, as though she were really glad that she had driven away forever the young man whom the day before she had loved with all the ardor of a first passion.

I hoped that time might heal the breach and bring the two young people together again. I told my wife what I had overheard. In return she gave me Mabel's version of the affair.

"I do not see how it can ever be settled," my wife said. "It is something more than a mere lovers' quarrel. It began, it is true, because she found fault with him for going to church with that hateful Branson girl. But before it ended there were things said that no woman of any spirit could stand. I am afraid it is all over between them."

I was sorry to hear this. In spite of the very firm attitude taken by my wife and her sister, I still hoped that the quarrel would be made up within a day or two. Nevertheless, when a week had passed with no word from young Murchison, and with no sign of relenting on Mabel's part, I began to think myself mistaken.

One pleasant afternoon, about ten days after the rupture, old Julius drove the rockaway up to the piazza, and my wife, Mabel, and I took our seats for a drive to a neighbor's vineyard, over on the Lumberton plankroad.

"Which way shall we go," I asked, — "the short road or the long one?"

"I guess we had better take the short road," answered my wife. "We will get there sooner."

"It's a mighty fine drible roun' by de big road, Mis' Annie," observed Julius, "en it doan take much longer to git dere."

"No," said my wife, "I think we will go by the short road. There is a bay tree in blossom near the mineral spring, and I wish to get some of the flowers."

"I 'spec's you'd find some bay trees 'long de big road, ma'am," said Julius.

"But I know about the flowers on the short road, and they are the ones I want."

We drove down the lane to the highway, and soon struck into the short road leading past the mineral spring.

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Our route lay partly through a swamp, and on each side the dark, umbrageous foliage, unbroken by any clearing, lent to the road solemnity, and to the air a refreshing coolness. About half a mile from the house, and about halfway to the mineral spring, we stopped at the tree of which my wife had spoken, and reaching up to the low-hanging boughs I gathered a dozen of the fragrant white flowers. When I resumed my seat in the rockaway, Julius started the mare. She went on for a few rods, until we had reached the edge of a branch crossing the road, when she stopped short.

"Why did you stop, Julius?" I asked.

"I didn', suh," he replied. "'T wuz de mare stop'. G' 'long dere, Lucy! W'at you mean by dis foolis'ness?"

Julius jerked the reins and applied the whip lightly, but the mare did not stir.

"Perhaps you had better get down and lead her," I suggested. "If you get her started, you can cross on the log and keep your feet dry."

Julius alighted, took hold of the bridle, and vainly essayed to make the mare move. She planted her feet with even more evident obstinacy.

"I don't know what to make of this," I said. "I have never known her to balk before. Have you, Julius?"

"No, suh," replied the old man, "I nebber has. It's a cu'ous thing ter me, suh."

"What's the best way to make her go?"

"I 'spec's, suh, dat ef I'd tu'n her roun' she'd go de udder way."

"But we want her to go this way."

"Well, suh, I 'low ef we des set heah fo' er fibe minutes, she'll sta't up by herse'f."

"All right," I rejoined, "it is cooler here than any place I have struck to-day. We'll let her stand for a while, and see what she does."

We had sat in silence for a few minutes, when Julius suddenly ejaculated, "Uh huh! I knows w'y dis mare doan go. It des flash 'cross my reccommemb'ance."

"Why is it, Julius?" I inquired.

"Ca'se she sees Chloe."

"Where is Chloe?" I demanded.

"Chloe's done be'n dead dese fo'ty years er mo'," the old man returned. "Her ha'nt is settin' ober yander on de udder side er de branch, unner dat willer tree, dis blessed minute."

"Why, Julius!" said my wife, "do you see the haunt?"

"No'm," he answered, shaking his head, "I doan see 'er, but de mare sees 'er."

"How do you know?" I inquired.

"Well, suh, dis yer is a gray hoss, en dis yer is a Friday; en a gray hoss kin alluz see a ha'nt w'at walks on Friday."

"Who was Chloe?" said Mabel.

"And why does Chloe's haunt walk?" asked my wife.

"It's all in de tale, ma'am," Julius replied, with a deep sigh. "It's all in de tale."

"Tell us the tale," I said. "Perhaps, by the time you get through, the haunt will go away and the mare will cross."

I was willing to humor the old man's fancy. He had not told us a story for some time; and the dark and solemn swamp around us; the amber-colored stream flowing silently and sluggishly at our feet, like the waters of Lethe; the heavy, aromatic scent of the bays, faintly suggestive of funeral wreaths, — all made the place an ideal one for a ghost story.

"Chloe," Julius began in a subdued tone, "use' ter b'long ter ole Mars' Dugal' McAdoo — my ole marster. She wuz a ladly gal en a smart gal, en ole mis' tuk her up ter de big house, en l'arnt her ter wait on de w'ite folks, 'tel bimeby she come ter be mis's own maid, en 'peared ter 'low she run de house herse'f, ter heah her talk erbout it. I wuz a young boy den, en use' ter wuk about de stables, so I knowed ev'ythin' dat wuz gwine on roun' de plantation.

"Well, one time Mars' Dugal' wanted a house boy, en sont down ter de qua'ters fer hab Jeff en Hannibal come up ter de big house nex' mawnin'. Ole marster en ole mis' look' de two boys ober, en 'sco'sed wid deyse'ves fer a little w'ile, en den Mars' Dugal' sez, sezee: —

"'We laks Hannibal de bes', en we gwine ter keep him. Heah, Hannibal, you'll wuk at de house fum now on.

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En ef you're a good nigger en min's yo' bizness, I'll gib you Chloe fer a wife nex' spring. You other nigger, you Jeff, you kin go back ter de qua'ters. We ain' gwine ter need you.'

"Now Chloe had be'n standin' dere behin' ole mis' dyoin' all er dis yer talk, en Chloe made up her min' fum de ve'y fus' minute she sot eyes on dem two dat she didn' lak dat nigger Hannibal, en wa'n't nebber gwine keer fer 'im, en she wuz des ez sho' dat she lak Jeff, en wuz gwine ter set sto' by 'im, whuther Mars' Dugal' tuk 'im in de big house er no; en so co'se Chloe wuz monst'us sorry w'en ole Mars' Dugal' tuk Hannibal en sont Jeff back. So she slip' roun' de house en waylaid Jeff on de way back ter de qua'ters en tol' 'im not ter be downhea'ted, fer she wuz gwine ter see ef she couldn' fin' some way er 'nuther ter git rid er dat nigger Hannibal, en git Jeff up ter de house in his place.

"De noo house boy kotch on monst'us fas', en it wa'n't no time ha'dly befo' Mars' Dugal' en ole mis' bofe 'mence' ter 'low Hannibal wuz de bes' house boy dey eber had. He wuz peart en soopl', quick ez lightnin', en sha'p ez a razor. But Chloe didn' lak his ways. He wuz so sho' he wuz gwine ter git 'er in de spring, dat he didn' 'pear ter 'low he had ter do any co'tin', en w'en he'd run 'cross Chloe 'bout de house, he'd swell roun' 'er in a biggity way en say:

"Come heah en kiss me, honey. You gwine ter be mine in de spring. You doan 'pear ter be ez fon' er me ez you oughter be.'

"Chloe didn' keer nuffin' fer Hannibal, en hadn' keered nuffin' fer 'im, en she sot des ez much sto' by Jeff ez she did de day she fus' laid eyes on 'im. En de mo' fermilyus dis yer Hannibal got, de mo' Chloe let her min' run on Jeff, en one ebenin' she went down ter de qua'ters en watch', 'tel she got a chance fer ter talk wid 'im by hisse'f. En she tol' Jeff fer ter go down en see ole Aun' Peggy, de cunjuh-'oman down by de Wim'l'ton Road, en ax her fer ter gib 'im sump'n ter he'p git Hannibal out'n de big house, so de w'ite folks 'u'd sen' fer Jeff ag'in. En bein' ez Jeff didn' hab nuffin' ter gib Aun' Peggy, Chloe gun i'm a silber dollah en a silk han'kercher fer ter pay her wid, fer Aun' Peggy nebber lak ter wuk fer nobody fer nuffin'.

"So Jeff slip' off down ter Aun' Peggy's one night, en gun 'er de presents he brung, en tol' er all 'bout 'im en Chloe en Hannibal, en ax 'er ter he'p 'im out. Aun' Peggy tol' 'im she'd wuk 'er roots, en fer 'im ter come back de nex' night, en she'd tell 'im w'at she c'd do fer 'im.

"So de nex' night Jeff went back, en Aun' Peggy gun 'im a baby-doll, wid a body made out'n a piece er co'n-stalk, en wid splinters fer a'ms en legs, en a head made out'n elderberry peth, en two little red peppers fer feet.

"Dis yer baby-doll,' sez she, 'is Hannibal. Dis yer peth head is Hannibal's head, en dese yer pepper feet is Hannibal's feet. You take dis en hide it unner de house, on de sill unner de do', whar Hannibal'll hafter walk ober it ev'y day. En ez long ez Hannibal comes anywhar nigh dis baby-doll, he'll be des lak it is — light-headed en hot-footed; en ef dem two things doan git 'im inter trouble mighty soon, den I'm no cunjuh-'oman. But w'en you git Hannibal out'n de house, en git all thoo wid dis baby-doll, you mus' fetch it back ter me, fer it's monst'us powerful goopher, en is liable ter make mo' trouble ef you leabe it layin' roun'.'

"Well, Jeff tuk de baby-doll, en slip' up ter de big house, en whistle' ter Chloe, en w'en she come out he tol' 'er w'at ole Aun' Peggy had said. En Chloe showed 'im how ter git unner de house, en w'en he had put de cunjuh-doll on de sill he went 'long back ter de qua'ters — en des waited.

"Nex' day, sho' 'nuff, de goopher 'mence' ter wuk. Hannibal sta'ted in de house soon in de mawnin' wid a armful er wood ter make a fier, en he hadn' mo' d'n got 'cross de do'sill befo' his feet begun ter bu'n so dat he drap' de armful er wood on de flo' en woke ole mis' up an hour sooner'n yuzhal, en co'se ole mis' didn' lak dat, en spoke sha'p erbout it.

"W'en dinner-time come, en Hannibal wuz help'n de cook kyar de dinner f'm de kitchen inter de big house, en wuz gittin' close ter de do' what he had ter go in, his feet sta'ted ter bu'n en his head begun ter swim, en he let de big dish er chicken en dumplin's fall right down in de dirt, in de middle er de ya'd, en de w'ite folks had ter make dey dinner dat day off'n col' ham en sweet pertaters.

"De nex' mawnin' he overslep' hisse'f, en got inter mo' trouble. Atter breakfus', Mars' Dugal' sont 'im ober ter Mars' Marrabo Utley's fer ter borry a monkey wrench. He oughter be'n back in ha'f an hour, but he come pokin' home 'bout dinner-time wid a screw-driver stidder a monkey wrench. Mars' Dugal' sont ernudder nigger back wid de screw-driver, en Hannibal didn' git no dinner. 'Long in de atternoon, ole mis' sot Hannibal ter weedin' de flowers in de front gyahden, en Hannibal dug up all de bulbs ole mis' had sont erway fer, en paid a lot er money

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fer, en tuk 'em down ter de hawg-pen by de ba'nya'd, en fed 'em ter de hawgs. W'en ole mis' come out in de cool er de ebenin', en seed w'at Hannibal had done, she wuz mos' crazy, en she wrote a note en sont Hannibal down ter de obserseah wid it.

"But w'at Hannibal got fum de oberseah didn' 'pear ter do no good. Ev'y now en den 'is feet'd 'mence ter torment 'im, en 'is min' 'u'd git all mix' up, en his conduc' kep' gittin' wusser en wusser, 'tel fin'ly de w'ite folks couldn' stan' it no longer, en Mars' Dugal' tuk Hannibal back down ter de qua'ters.

"Mr. Smif,' sez Mars' Dugal' ter de oberseah, 'dis yer nigger has tu'nt out so triflin' yer lately, dat we can't keep 'im at de house no mo', en I's fotch' 'im ter you ter be straighten' up. You's had 'casion ter deal wid 'im once, so he knows w'at ter expect'. You des take 'im in han', en lemme know how he tu'ns out. En w'en de han's comes in fum de fiel' dis ebenin' you kin sen' dat yaller nigger Jeff up ter de house. I'll try 'im, en see ef he's any better'n Hannibal.'

"So Jeff went up ter de big house, en pleas' Mars' Dugal' en ole mis' en de res' er de fambly so well dat dey all got ter lakin' 'im fus'rate, en dey'd 'a' fergot all 'bout Hannibal ef it hadn' be'n fer de bad repo'ts w'at come up fum de qua'ters 'bout 'im fer a mont' er so. Fac' is dat Chloe en Jeff wuz so int'rusted in one ernudder since Jeff be'n up ter de house, dat dey fergot all about takin' de baby-doll back ter Aun' Peggy, en it kep' wukkin fer a w'ile, en makin' Hannibal's feet bu'n mo' er less, 'tel all de folks on de plantation got ter callin' 'im Hot-Foot Hannibal. He kep' gittin' mo' en mo' triflin', 'tel he got de name er bein' de mos' no 'countes' nigger on de plantation, en Mars' Dugal' had ter th'eaten ter sell 'im in de spring; w'en bimeby de goopher quit wukkin', en Hannibal 'mence' ter pick up some en make folks set a little mo' sto' by 'im.

"Now, dis yer Hannibal was a monst'us sma't nigger, en w'en he got rid er dem so' feet his min' kep' runnin' on 'is udder troubles. Heah th'ee er fo' weeks befo' he'd had a' easy job, waitin' on de w'ite folks, libbin off'n de fat er de lan', en promus' de fines' gal on de plantation fer a wife in de spring, en now heah he wuz back in de co'nfiel', wid de oberseah a-cussin' en a r'arin' ef he didn' get a ha'd tas' done; wid nuffin' but co'n bread en bacon en merlasses ter eat; en all de fiel-han's makin' rema'ks, en pokin' fun at 'im ca'se he be'n sont back fum de big house ter de fiel'. En de mo' Hannibal studied 'bout it de mo' madder he got, 'tel he fin'ly swo' he wuz gwine ter git eben wid Jeff en Chloe ef it wuz de las' ac'.

"So Hannibal slipped 'way fum de qua'ters one Sunday en hid in de co'n up close ter de big house, 'tel he see Chloe gwine down de road. He waylaid her, en sezee: —

"Hoddy, Chloe?"

"I ain't got no time fer ter fool wid fiel'-han's,' sez Chloe, tossin' her head; 'W'at you want wid me, Hot-Foot?"

"I wants ter know how you en Jeff is gittin' 'long.'

"I 'lows dat's none er yo' bizness, nigger. I doan see w'at 'casion any common fiel'-han' has got ter mix in wid de 'fairs er folks w'at libs in de big house. But ef it'll do you any good ter know, I mought say dat me en Jeff is gittin' 'long mighty well, en we gwine ter git married in de spring, en you ain' gwine ter be 'vited ter de weddin' nuther.'

"No, no!' sezee, 'I wouldn' 'spec' ter be 'vited ter de weddin', — a common, low-down fiel'-han' lak I is. But I's glad ter heah you en Jeff is gittin' 'long so well. I didn' knowed but w'at he had 'mence' ter be a little ti'ed.'

"Ti'ed er me? Dat's rediklus!' sez Chloe. 'W'y, dat nigger lubs me so I b'liebe he'd go th'oo fier en water fer me. Dat nigger is des wrop' up in me.'

"Uh huh,' sez Hannibal, 'den I reckon is mus' be some udder nigger w'at meets a 'oman down by de crick in de swamp ev'y Sunday ebenin', ter say nuffin' 'bout two er th'ee times a week.'

"Yas, hit is ernudder nigger, en you is a liah w'en you say it wuz Jeff.'

"Mebbe I is a liah, en mebbe I ain' got good eyes. But 'less'n I is a liah, en 'less'n I ain' got good eyes, Jeff is gwine ter meet dat 'oman dis ebenin' long 'bout eight o'clock right down dere by de crick in de swamp 'bout halfway betwix' dis plantation en Mars' Marrabo Utley's.'

"Well, Chloe tol' Hannibal she didn' b'liebe a wud he said, en call' 'im a low-down nigger who wuz tryin' ter slander Jeff 'ca'se he wuz mo' luckier'n he wuz. But all de same, she couldn' keep her min' fum runnin' on w'at Hannibal had said. She 'membered she'd heared one er de niggers say dey wuz a gal ober at Mars' Marrabo Utley's plantation w'at Jeff use' ter go wid some befo' he got 'quainted wid Chloe. Den she 'mence' ter figger back, en sho' 'nuff, dey wuz two er th'ee times in de las' week w'en she'd be'n he'p'n de ladies wid dey dressin' en udder fixin's in de ebenin', en Jeff mought 'a' gone down ter de swamp widout her knowin' 'bout it at all. En den she 'mence' ter

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'member little things w'at she hadn' tuk no notice of befo', en w'at 'u'd make it 'pear lak Jeff had sump'n on his min'.

"Chloe set a monst'us heap er sto' by Jeff, en would 'a' done mos' anythin' fer 'im, so long ez he stuck ter her. But Chloe wuz a mighty jealous 'oman, en w'iles she didn' b'liebe w'at Hannibal said, she seed how it could 'a' be'n so, en she 'termine' fer ter fin' out fer herse'f whuther it wuz so er no.

"Now, Chloe hadn' seed Jeff all day, fer Mars' Dugal' had sont Jeff ober ter his daughter's house, young Mis' Ma'g'ret's, w'at libbed 'bout fo' miles fum Mars' Dugal's, en Jeff wuzn' 'spected home 'tel ebenin'. But des atter supper wuz ober, en w'iles de ladies wuz settin' out on de piazzer, Chloe slip' off fum de house en run down de road, — dis yer same road we come; en w'en she got mos' ter de crick — dis yer same crick right befo' us — she kin' er kip' in de bushes at de side er de road, 'tel fin'ly she seed Jeff settin' on de back on de udder side er de crick, — right under dat ole willer tree droopin' ober de watah yander. En ev'y now en den he'd git up en look up de road to'ds Mars' Marrabo's on de udder side er de swamp.

"Fus' Chloe felt lak she'd go right ober de crick en gib Jeff a piece er her min'. Den she 'lowed she better be sho' befo' she done anythin'. So she helt herse'f in de bes' she could, gittin' madder en madder ev'ry minute, 'tel bimeby she seed a 'oman comin' down de road on de udder side fum to'ds Mars' Marrabo Utley's plantation. En w'en she seed Jeff jump up en run to'ds dat 'oman, en th'ow his a'ms roun' her neck, po' Chloe didn' stop ter see no mo', but des tu'nt roun' en run up ter de house, en rush' up on de piazzer, en up en tol' Mars' Dugal' en ole mis' all 'bout de baby-doll, en all 'bout Jeff gittin' de goopher fum Aun' Peggy, en 'bout w'at de goopher had done ter Hannibal.

"Mars' Dugal' wuz monst'us mad. He didn' let on at fus' lak he b'liebed Chloe, but w'en she tuk en showed 'im whar ter fin' de baby-doll, Mars' Dugal' tu'nt w'ite ez chalk.

"'What debil's wuk is dis?' sezee. 'No wonder de po' nigger's feet eetched. Sump'n got ter be done ter l'arn dat ole witch ter keep her han's off'n my niggers. En ez fer dis yer Jeff, I'm gwine ter do des w'at I promus', so de darkies on dis plantation'll know I means w'at I sez.'

"Fer Mars' Dugal' had warned de han's befo' 'bout foolin' wid cunju'ation; fac', he had los' one er two niggers hisse'f fum dey bein' goophered, en he would 'a' had ole Aun' Peggy whip' long ago, on'y Aun' Peggy wuz a free 'oman, en he wuz 'feard she'd cunjuh him. En w'iles Mars' Dugal' say he didn' b'liebe in cunj'in' en sich, he 'peared ter 'low it wuz bes' ter be on de safe side, en let Aun' Peggy alone.

"So Mars' Dugal' done des ez he say. Ef ole mis' had ple'd fer Jeff he mought 'a' kep' 'im. But ole mis' hadn' got ober losin' dem bulbs yit, en she nebber said a wud. Mars' Dugal' tuk Jeff ter town nex' day en' sol' 'im ter a spekilater, who sta'ted down de ribber wid 'im nex' mawnin' on a steamboat, fer ter take 'im ter Alabama.

"Now, w'en Chloe tol' ole Mars' Dugal' 'bout dis yer baby-doll en dis udder goopher, she hadn' ha'dly 'lowed Mars' Dugal' would sell Jeff down Souf. Howsomeber, she wuz so mad wid Jeff dat she 'suaded herse'f she didn' keer; en so she hilt her head up en went roun' lookin' lak she wuz rale glad 'bout it. But one day she wuz walkin' down de road, w'en who sh'd come 'long but dis yer Hannibal.

"W'en Hannibal seed 'er he bus' out laffin' fittin' fer ter kill: 'Yah, yah, yah! ho, ho, ho! ha, ha, ha! Oh, hol' me, honey, hol' me, er I'll laf myse'f ter def. I ain' nebber laf' so much sence I be'n bawn.'

"'W'at you laffin' at, Hot-Foot?'

"'Yah, yah, yah! W'at I laffin' at? W'y, I's laffin' at myse'f, tooby sho', — laffin' ter think w'at a fine 'oman I made.'

"Chloe tu'nt pale, en her hea't come up in her mouf.

"'W'at you mean, nigger?' sez she, ketchin' holt er a bush by de road fer ter stiddy herse'f. 'W'at you mean by de kin' er 'oman you made?'

"W'at do I mean? I means dat I got squared up wid you fer treatin' me de way you done, en I got eben wid dat yaller nigger Jeff fer cuttin' me out. Now, he's gwine ter know w'at it is ter eat co'n bread en merlasses once mo', en wuk fum daylight ter da'k, en ter hab a oberseah dribin' 'im fum one day's een' ter de udder. I means dat I sont wud ter Jeff dat Sunday dat you wuz gwine ter be ober ter Mars' Marrabo's visitin' dat ebenin', en you want i'm ter meet you down by de crick on de way home en go de rest er de road wid you. En den I put on a frock en a sun-bonnet en fix' myse'f up ter look lak a 'oman; en w'en Jeff seed me comin' he run ter meet me, en you seed 'im, — fer I had be'n watchin' in de bushes befo' en 'skivered you comin' down de road. En now I reckon you en Jeff bofe knows w'at it means ter mess wid a nigger lak me.'

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"Po' Chloe hadn' heared mo' d'n half er de las' part er w'at Hannibal said, but she had heared 'nuff to l'arn dat dis nigger had fooler her en Jeff, en dat po' Jeff hadn' done nuffin', en dat fer lovin' her too much en goin' ter meet her she had cause' 'im ter be sol' erway whar she'd nebber, nebber see 'im no mo'. De sun mought shine by day, de moon by night, de flowers mought bloom, en de mawkin'-birds mought sing, but po' Jeff wuz done los' ter her fereber en fereber.

"Hannibal hadn' mo' d'n finish' w'at he had ter say, w'en Chloe's knees gun 'way unner her, en she fell down in de road, en lay dere half a' hour er so befo' she come to. W'en she did, she crep' up ter de house des ez pale ez a ghos'. En fer a mont' er so she crawled roun' de house, en 'peared ter be so po'ly dat Mars' Dugal' sont fer a doctor; en de doctor kep' on axin' her questions 'tel he foun' she wuz des pinin' erway fer Jeff.

"W'en he tol' Mars' Dugal', Mars' Dugal' lafft, en said he'd fix dat. She could hab de noo house boy fer a husban'. But ole mis' say, no, Chloe ain' dat kinder gal, en dat Mars' Dugal' should buy Jeff back.

"So Mars' Dugal' writ a letter ter dis yer spekilater down ter Wim'l'ton, en tol' ef he ain' done sol' dat nigger Souf w'at he bought fum 'im, he'd lak ter buy 'm back ag'in. Chloe 'mence' ter pick up a little w'en ole mis' tol' her 'bout dis letter. Howsomeber, bimeby Mars' Dugal' got a' answer fum de spekilater, who said he wuz monst'us sorry, but Jeff had fell ove'boa'd er jumped off'n de steamboat on de way ter Wim'l'ton, en got drowned, en co'se he couldn' sell 'im back, much ez he'd lak ter 'bleedge Mars' Dugal'.

"Well, atter Chloe heared dis she pu'tended ter do her wuk, en ole mis' wa'n't much mo' use ter nobody. She put up wid her, en hed de doctor gib her medicine, en let 'er go ter de circus, en all so'ts er things fer ter take her min' off'n her troubles. But dey didn' none un 'em do no good. Chloe got ter slippin' down here in de ebenin' des lak she 'uz comin' ter meet Jeff, en she'd set dere unner dat willer tree on de udder side, en wait fer 'im, night atter night. Bimeby she got so bad de w'ite folks sont her ober ter young Mis' Ma'g'ret's fer ter gib her a change; but she runned erway de fus' night, en w'en dey looked fer 'er nex' mawnin' dey foun' her co'pse layin' in de branch yander, right 'cross fum whar we're settin' now.

"Eber sence den," said Julius in conclusion, "Chloe's ha'nt comes eve'y ebenin' en sets down unner dat willer tree en waits fer Jeff, er e'se walks up en down de road yander, lookin' en lookin', en' [sic] waitin' en waitin', fer her sweethea't w'at ain' nebber, nebber come back ter her no mo'."

There was silence when the old man had finished, and I am sure I saw a tear in my wife's eye, and more than one in Mabel's.

"I think, Julius," said my wife after a moment, "that you may turn the mare around and go by the long road."

The old man obeyed with alacrity, and I noticed no reluctance on the mare's part.

"You are not afraid of Chloe's haunt, are you?" I asked jocularly.

My mood was not responded to, and neither of the ladies smiled.

"Oh no," said Annie, "but I've changed my mind. I prefer the other route."

When we had reached the main road and had proceeded along it for a short distance, we met a cart driven by a young negro, and on the cart were a trunk and a valise. We recognized the man as Malcolm Murchison's servant, and drew up a moment to speak to him.

"Who's going away, Marshall?" I inquired.

"Young Mistah Ma'colm gwine 'way on de boat ter Noo Yo'k dis ebenin', suh, en I'm takin' his things down ter de wharf, suh."

This was news to me, and I heard it with regret. My wife looked sorry, too, and I could see that Mabel was trying hard to hide her concern.

"He's comin' 'long behin', suh, en I 'spec's you'll meet 'im up de road a piece. He's gwine ter walk down ez fur ez Mistah Jim Williams's, en take de buggy fum dere ter town. He 'spec's ter be gone a long time, suh, en say prob'ly he ain' nebber comin' back."

The man drove on. There were a few words exchanged in an undertone between my wife and Mabel, which I did not catch. Then Annie said: "Julius, you may stop the rockaway a moment. There are some trumpet-flowers by the road there that I want. Will you get them for me, John?"

I sprang into the underbrush, and soon returned with a great bunch of scarlet blossoms.

"Where is Mabel?" I asked, noting her absence.

"She has walked on ahead. We shall overtake her in a few minutes."

The carriage had gone only a short distance when my wife discovered that she had dropped her fan.

Hot-Foot Hannibal

"I had it where we were stopping. Julius, will you go back and get it for me?"

Julius got down and went back for the fan. He was an unconscionably long time finding it. After we got started again we had gone only a little way, when we saw Mabel and young Murchison coming toward us. They were walking arm in arm, and their faces were aglow with the light of love.

I do not know whether or not Julius had a previous understanding with Malcolm Murchison by which he was to drive us round by the long road that day, nor do I know exactly what motive influenced the old man's exertions in the matter. He was fond of Mabel, but I was old enough, and knew Julius well enough, to be skeptical of his motives. It is certain that a most excellent understanding existed between him and Murchison after the reconciliation, and that when the young people set up housekeeping over at the old Murchison place Julius had an opportunity to enter their service. For some reason or other, however, he preferred to remain with us. The mare, I might add, was never known to balk again.

Charles W. Chesnutt.