

"Was, Madam," said the little attorney, who did the Madam's conveyancing. "Strangely enough, I sold it to-day."

"Who to," she said sharply, in her vexation forgetting her precise grammar.

"To your own man, John Strong. He's going to farm it himself," said the lawyer, enjoying the joke.

To his consternation, the Madam turned and walked out grimly without a word, and not a word did anyone ever hear from her upon the subject. When the man of parchments hurried after her, requesting her consideration of another investment he could recommend, she simply remarked, "Hold your tongue!" and marched away. And the attorney told his clerk that really Madame White was growing more and more arbitrary and peculiar every day. The clerk put his finger to his forehead and nodded, but the lawyer said hurriedly, with a sigh, "God bless us! *no*, man; I wish I had her brains."

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"Joe, I want to go for a long walk this afternoon," said Miss Dorothy, some three weeks after the sale of the farm. "Do you know which is Ainslie's Bush?"

"To be suah, Missie. Did Madam say us could go?"

Dorothy frowned. "Never mind if she did or not. I want to take a parcel, a *heavy* parcel, over there."

"Foh de lan's sake, Miss Dorothy, what's all dat ar!" and Joe laughed delightedly, as Miss Dorothy clasped a huge basket and an equally portly bundle in her arms, saying, "come then, and show me the shortest way."

"Yo' can't nebbber cayah it all yer lone; lemme tek a holt," and Joe put his black paw on the basket, and suddenly let go, exclaiming, "Bress and save us, Miss Dorothy, honey! it is *snakes*!" for a peculiar spitting noise came from the heavy basket.

"Joe! if you won't tell, I'll show you," and upon Joe's calling saints, and angels and other things not so sacred to witness his oath of secrecy, Dorothy drew aside a corner of the cloth from the basket, and showed a motherly white cat contentedly nursing five snowy kittens. "They're five days old to-day, she said, exultantly, and no one knows about them. I *won't* have them drowned, so I'm going to take them to John Strong's home, on the farm back of Ainslie's Bush, if you'll show me the way."

"Goramitey!" ejaculated Joe in bewilderment. Then slowly scanning the flushed and panting girl, he stammered, "Yes, yes, Missie! I'll tek you'm kitties dar suah; dey's not gwine be drowned; John Strong will mind *yoh* kitties." And laying hold confidently of the basket, he remarked, "Quit yoh spittin, yoh 'ornery ole critter, it's only Joe! Come on Missie," and shambled away, grinning widely over this audacious defiance of the Madam, and the embarrassment of big John over his sudden responsibilities. Missie Dorothy took off her farm hat and poised her bundle on her shining, rebellious, wavy hair, and after a rough

walk the pair of rebels arrived at the vine-grown log cottage, on a "side line," beyond the dark recesses of Ainslie's Bush. Dorothy produced a key from her pocket and unlocked the whitewashed door, ushering Joe and the cats into a low, square room, spotlessly clean and sparsely furnished.

"Who lives yer?" said the gaping darkie, depositing his basket of kittens in the centre of the floor, while Miss Dorothy tossed her great bundle on a bench and fanned her heated face with her flapping straw hat.

"Come away, Joe, quick!" said Miss Dorothy, between laughter and tears, as she groped for the keyhole. "Snowball and the kitties live here."

"Yo' does beat all, Missie Dorothy," said Joe with a chuckle. "Dere's some scrumptious wild flowers in dat Ainslie's Bush. Missie like to get some?" So together they loaded themselves with wild violets and new, uncurled ferns, and pure May apple blossoms; only every now and then Dorothy started at the sound of a squirrel in the branches or a bird flitting overhead, and gazed anxiously back to the low cabin where her precious cats were imprisoned. That evening John Strong also strode across Ainslie's Bush from the White Farm, and unlocked the door of the log house. He found the bundle on the bench under the window, the basket of sleeping kittens in the middle of the floor, and the mother cat restlessly roaming about, searching for an exit. His shout of triumph scared her into sudden flight, but when she came back in repentant mother love, she found big John seated beside the kitties, radiant with smiles, and he laughed out of the fulness of his joy and surprise, as the white creature stole noiselessly across the floor. "Come, Snowy, here's the family! And the dear lass *has made up her mind*. I can scarce believe it."

When the night was far spent, John Strong entered for the last time the gates of the White Farm, and stepped quickly past the low windows of the log "quarters," and the dog house, where Bruno's tail whacked an appalling loud welcome on his straw-strewn boudoir floor. Silently John stood beside the kitchen door, where a short ladder leaned against the low eaves, and waited. Dorothy's window was open wide, but for a full hour neither sight nor sound issued therefrom, the ridiculous truth being that Miss Dorothy, after making every preparation for the one great effort of her life, had suddenly been seized with a tremulous horror of her own daring, of what fate held in store for her wicked and rebellious self, and had deliberately undressed herself, said her prayers, and now lay shivering and weeping with guilty fear and agonies of repentance for her faintheartedness. At last she desperately crept to the window, and listening, heard a smothered sigh wafted up from the gloom below. With nervous haste she slipped into her discarded garments, and tying on a long cloak and hat, crept out upon the roof. It was a trying moment, as shoes in hand she peered down into the darkness, ready to scurry back like a rabbit at the first alarm.