



## The Revenge of Hannah Kemhuff

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The speaker is the apprentice of Tante Rosie, a Voodoo practitioner consulted by Hannah Kemhuff, a sick, elderly African American woman who desires revenge. Her family was lost because help was refused them during the Depression when they were starving. Because the family seemed too well dressed, having been given some hand-me-downs, a woman would not give them the meager food that was being handed out to the hungry. The woman who turned the family away is now wealthy and self-satisfied, attended by her servant. Tante Rosie offers to help Hannah Kemhuff and prepares to go through the Voodoo ritual, which involves the collection of such objects as fingernails and hair clippings. Her apprentice, the narrator, goes to visit the woman who had caused the disaster, Sarah Marie Holley, and makes her purpose of collecting the physical materials for the ritual clear. Hannah Kemhuff dies of her illness, and Sarah Marie Holley, trying to avoid the Voodoo threat, dies shortly afterward, basically of a wasting illness brought on by terror.

Voodoo brings Hannah her revenge through natural rather than supernatural means. This story creates suspense as to whether its conclusion will affirm a belief in Voodoo, but it does not have the depth of character or sense of community evident in many of the other stories that appear in the collection *In Love and Trouble*. Its main interest is that, in preparing for the story and researching Voodoo, Walker found the works of Zora Neale Hurston, which opened new doors for her. The story is dedicated to the memory of Hurston.

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