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Miss Yahoo Has Her Say
by Kage Baker
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Fictionwise Contemporary
Fantasy

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Where you come from? Out of me, silly. Where I come from? From the field by the lake, on the day the Houyhnhnms came and killed Mama. I tell you about them.

We all swimming, except me. My skin burn red in the sun and hurt, so Mama show me how to put clay on. I all smear up nice and sit in shade. Then screaming start. Look up and see Masters all around the field, tramping stamping on people's heads. Some of the people jump in the water, swim; no good, because Masters on other side too, catch them all. Kill lots, everybody but me and two little boys. Brown Master stamp Mama dead with her head all red and I cry and cry.

So then, Masters tell us in their special talk: _You must obey us or you will die too. _They put nooses around our necks and made us walk away with them. They don't talk to us again. We all crying and screaming but they walk us down to wide land where we see big oat fields with lots of Yahoos working there, cutting down grass, and white Servants watching them. I see lots of Yahoos working hard, different work, and they all going on hands and feet, not standing up!

We come to house and there's little house too, off under some trees, and Masters make us go there and go inside. I never seen house yet then. They tie nooses to wall so we can't get out, and then big brown Master says: _Listen, young Yahoos. We wish to see if you can be improved. You will be fed as rational creatures feed, to see if your savage appetites can be reformed. _What that mean? Means they gave us big bowls milk, and boxes grass and oats. Then they went away.

We drank milk, but grass and oats taste bad. Pretty soon we eat them anyway, because that's all they give us to eat. No roots, no meat, no berries! Days and nights and days and nights, just grass and oats! Make our stomachs sick. Sometimes Masters come look at us and talk in their talk. Big brown Master shakes his head up and down, black and red Masters shake their heads to and fro. We starve. But I learn catch little mousies come in eat the oats, and I climb up to roof bars and catch birds land there. Little

boys get weak, pretty soon they die. I don't die. Master comes and says: _My experiment is not a complete failure. It may be that the male Yahoos are incurably savage in their habits, to the point of being unable to thrive on civilized food; but you females, as ours, are more docile and tractable, and our diet agrees with you. Very well, Yahoo child. We will now see if you can learn rational behavior._

What_ that_ means is, he don't know I catching my own food, so he think he can make me like a Houyhnhnm. I cry and yell. He say: _This is not an auspicious beginning! What do you hope to accomplish by howling like that?_

And I tell him, I mad because he kill my Mama and all the uncles and aunts. He tell me, good thing they died -- they were bad Yahoos who wouldn't work for Masters. I tell him I love my Mama.

He say:_ If you are to become a rational creature, you must learn that this foolish fondness is one of the things that makes you beasts. I felt not the least distress when my own Dam went to her first mother; since death is inevitable, wild behavior on that account is sheerest unreason. And in any case, I did not kill your mother._

What he means is, crying and missing people is stupid Yahoo thing. And I say: But you did kill my Mama, I saw you. He shakes his head. _You are saying the thing which is not, _he says. When Houyhnhnms do something they don't want anybody to know about, see, they call it _The Thing Which Is Not, _and then it just never happen. They think. And he say: _If you say the thing which is not again, you will be sent to work in the sun with the other Yahoos. If, however, you refrain from such talk and speak truth like a Houyhnhnm, I will continue my experiment with you, and you will not be treated like a brute beast. _

So I said I be good, because I _cunning and treacherous. _That mean, not dumb. And after that I live in little house all alone, but every day white Servant name Yhlee come take me out for _Improvement._ That means he try make me more like Houyhnhnm, every day. I can't stand up; must bend over and try walk on hands and feet, just like poor Yahoos working in field. It hurt my hands but Yhlee say I get used to it. And he teach me talk Master talk, and he teach me all about how we Yahoos stupid and bad and how Houyhnhnm good and wise, and that's why they Masters, and we Yahoos must work hard for them.

And he take me to wash every day in the lake, but I can't swim because he make me wear noose. I sad seeing field where everybody die. I sad think of Mama's bones buried in the dirt with bugs crawling on them.

But this funny, listen. When we up there all alone by lake, Yhlee tell me scratch him all over, and smack and kill flies. Flies are _the thing which is not_, see. They bite and itch Houyhnhnms bad, all over, but nobody supposed notice and NEVER EVER scratch bites. So when Yhlee make me scratch him, it _the thing which is not._ When he make me take little stones out of his feet, that _the thing which is not _too. And best _thing which is not _of all is when he make me dig him up Crazyroot, and he eat it and get silly and tell me _Poetry. _That's song-talk about how nice Houyhnhnms are to friends, or how fast they run, or how they better than anybody else. When Crazyroot wears off he take me back down again, and of course I say nothing to anybody because it's all _the thing which is not._

All this time they only giving me grass and oats to eat, so I catching birds and mice too, and soon I figure out how get noose untied and I go out at night get more food. I be careful careful, because Servants watch all time. Sometimes I see other Yahoos sneaking around, but all scared of us and run away. But I don't run away. I always go back little house. I like not working hard and not dirty like other Yahoos.

Yahoos not _Improved_ like me work so hard! Men must pull plows, and sledges to drag old

Masters around. Women must make bowls and pots and fire for Masters, and they must cook oats for old Masters. Everybody must cut poles and branches make houses for Masters, and weave hurdles for walls and dig big holes put posts in. Masters can't do these because they got no hands, but Yhlee says that why Nature made us to do things for them. Sometimes he bring in old Yahoo woman show me how be_ useful_ with my hands. She mad, she mean, but Yhlee not let her hit me, he make her show me how weave things and braid things, and how take flint and smack it just the way make all little sharp cutters and scrapers.

Sometimes Yhlee fall asleep, though, standing up, and old lady make mean faces at me. She say: Stuck up little bitch! Why YOU so special? Why you get to wash and not work in Houses? I tell her, I being _Improved_. _I an _Experiment_. She say, Ha Ha, Master always try that but it never work. Yahoos not Houyhnhnms. You a Yahoo even if they treat you special.

I scared, so I tell her: Not treated special! All I get to eat is oats and grass like Masters! I must sneak out at night get bird and rats and fruit to eat! When I tell her this, she smile, mean smile, and I scared again.

She go back to house and tell Master's Mare about me going out at night for food. Next thing, Yhlee coming out, say I not being _Improved_ any more, Master very _sickened and disappointed at my relapse into brute nature._ That means he giving me to new Master to work in house.

So he did, but you know what? Me escaping at night is _the thing which is not_, because old Master embarrassed anybody know I fool him! So new Master not know I can get out of noose! So first night in new House, I untie and sneak out while Master and family asleep. I sneak real good now, I know how get past Servants, and before light comes I get up to lake where Mama and everybody died.

I want look for Mama's bones, but wild Yahoos up there and they see me and come down, grab me to play Bumpbump. First time anybody does that with me and hurts some, but they not so mean as tame Yahoos and not stink like them either. When they all through they ask where I come from, why I there. I tell them. They help me dig and dig for bones. Pretty soon we find some must be my Mama's, so beautiful, and I wash them and wrap up careful in grass and hide in tree so not lost. They find others, because lots Yahoo die there, and they wash and hide them in tree too so dead Yahoos not be sad.

And I was wild Yahoo after that, and so happy! Eat good things whenever I want, run and play with other Yahoos, never ever must go on hands and feet like Houyhnhnm but standing up! Back hurt no more. I show wild Yahoos how weave and we make houses up trees, where woods too thick for Houyhnhnms to go in catch us. They can't climb trees! Safe and not afraid all time. I make nice place for Mama's bones, put flowers all around.

Sometimes we go down lake to swim, catch fish, be so careful! But Yhlee never there. His bites itch him, ha ha.

Sometimes we go down through trees, branch to branch, never climb down, and watch poor Yahoos work for Masters. Oats are green, then oats turn yellow, then Yahoos must cut down with sharp sticks and carry away to Masters' houses. When fields all empty, Yahoos herded back by Masters and BAD thing happen: all Yahoos told lie down and Masters go along, stamp on heads of ones they don't want. Mostly old Yahoos but sometimes young Yahoos too, sometimes even baby Yahoos. Then ones not killed must carry all dead to big pile and set on fire, and after rake ashes into field so rain wash them in. We cry see this, and at night go down dig for bones. Sometimes Servants chase us, almost catch us.

But wild Yahoos show me how put clay on, smeary, stripy, so if we hide in bushes we hard to see, so we not caught ever, find lots of bones. We happy, and dead Yahoos happy.

Long time happy like this, until new thing, worse thing happen. Lake where bad things happen, always.

I go down for wash, catch fish, swim a long time under the cool water. Then I come up and see big Yahoo on shore, and Servant with him. Yahoo sees me but Servant not. I think, he must be old Master's new _Experiment, _up here wash like I was, but no noose on his neck. I hope he not tell Servant, and I swim away so quiet to find bushes climb out by. But big Yahoo jumps in water, swims to me, pulls me out and tries make Bumpbump. But he puts it in wrong place and it hurts! I yell and yell. Servant comes clapping up and sees, laughs at us HEEhaw Heehaw Heehaw! Big Yahoo pushes me away and yells in Houyhnhnm: _She attacked me! The vile lewd minx assaulted my person!_

That means he tells Servant I Bumpbump HIM, which is silly, and Servant keeps laughing. I very surprised; laughing is _the thing which is not_ for Masters, because they know it make them look dumb. But this only Servant anyhow. Strange Yahoo he so funny-looking, thin white face and little thin nose like flint scraper, and no hair on face, just like me! Soft like me, too, but he man all the same -- big dumb thing hanging down scared now.

I try run away fast, but Servant stop laughing and chase me down -- and he tell big Yahoo help him, and he does! And they catch me and big Yahoo makes noose and puts around my neck. Big Yahoo pulls on bags all over his body, cover up his thing. He ask Servant why catch me, Servant says this bad Yahoo ran away from Master one time. I scared then. They take me down old way like long time ago, and soon we see house and little house where I lived.

They take me in and Servant tells Master all what happen. Everybody there make snorting in their nose, it so funny to them, though nobody Heehaw laugh out loud. Big Yahoo turn all red in face, get mad.

Master say: _This is the second time you have attempted to mate with a Yahoo. Both times, however, you have attempted the act with children -- and one of them male! -- rather than with a female of procreative age! What reason can you give us for such acts of unreason, gentle Yahoo?_ That mean, Master want to know why he play Bumpbump with me and not Yahoo with titties. Big Yahoo get redder still and say: _The Servant is mistaken in what he saw; this young wench made amorous advances to ME, and, when violently rebuffed, turned her posterior to discharge her excrement upon me. It was the same with the boy, as I told you. _ This mean, same lie as before, only dirtier.

Servants think this so funny they pull lips up to show teeth, and even Master turns his head. Then he say: _I think you have said the thing which is not again. See here, Gentle Yahoo, it goes against reason to deny Nature. You are a male, with all the urges a male must feel, and by your account you have gone some years without a mate. This cannot be conducive to peace. I command you to take a mate to provide for your need._

Big Yahoo look at me like he want Bumpbump right there, but then he make all kinds faces and whine and cry to Master that he can't Bumpbump with _hideous_ Yahoos because we so _vile and revolting_ to him. Master just shake his head and say: _Take this female, then. You will observe she is cleaner and younger than most, and I believe you will find her less savage in disposition than most of her race; for she had some training in that regard some years ago. However, you will need to bind her securely. She is cunning and restive, as we know too well._ That mean, he give me to big Yahoo for Bumpbump, tell him tie me up good so I don't get away.

He take me back little House, tie my hands tight with hard rope, and go Bumpbump right way this time. I scared look at his face -- not happy Bumpbump like wild Yahoo but mean, like tame Yahoo.

When he done he go sit other side House. I look around: all nice with fresh straw and place to have fire, and bowls of food. I talk to him in Houyhnhnm: _What kind of Yahoo are you?_

He jump! He say: _Good God, you have the power of speech! _He mean, I talk too.

I tell him I learn from Yhlee. Ask him again what he is and he say: _I am no Yahoo! I am a man, a British subject, and my name is Lemuel Gulliver. _That mean he not Yahoo like me but other thing, and he have name, like Houyhnhnm. I think he lie, but I want not make him mad. _Please untie my hands, _I cry, _They hurt._

He says: _I think not! Simply because you have the ability to converse with me like a rational creature, do not presume to imagine you are less abhorrent to me than the rest of your filthy race. I'll not have you doing me some mischief while I sleep. Nor presume to address me again. _That mean, he not like me and won't let me loose. Then he lie down and sleep. I cry until he wake up and throw stone at me.

Well, so bad time then. All night I tied up, and in morning my hands cold and blue. Servant come in and see, tell Lemuel Gulliver to untie me. My hands hurt so bad I cry. Servant mad, tell Lemuel Gulliver my hands no use like that. Tell him to tie my leg tight to bars, then I can work but not run away. Lemuel Gulliver say: _Do you mean to tell me the hussy has been trained to useful domestic industry?_ That means, he didn't know I make things with my hands. Servant tell him yes. He look more happy at that. He tie me up by leg and go out with Servant. Gone all day. Gone all day every day, but they put another Servant outside door so I not run away.

I think Lemuel Gulliver must be going for his _Improvement_, because by and by he looks and talks like Houyhnhnm more and more. I think he Yahoo who hate all Yahoos, want to be Houyhnhnm all the way. But he only pretend! And he look silly when he walk, with knees up and hands up, prance stamp, and he talk silly with _whhuhuhuh_ voice like Houyhnhnm. I laugh, only he hit me and call me dirty Yahoo. I dirty now, because I can't go out to wash, but he not let me.

He keep making Bumpbump, though, so hard, and soon I bleeding there. I scared, hurt, think I die. Two, three days, bleeding go away. Next month I bleed again, but it go away. After a while I not scared of bleeding.

Lemuel Gulliver bring home stems of grass and tell me weave it into big bag. He bring home dead birds, lots, and tell me pull feathers out; then put all feathers in bag. He takes it and sleeps on it, nice soft bag. I sleep on straw. He bring home little dead animals and cut skins off, make me scrape and soften hides; then make me sew them for bags he wear on himself. I copy them good from his old bags, but he not happy. Always mad.

I wonder when he stop being mad. I think, if I quiet and good, he happy; but he never happy. Maybe because he not Houyhnhnm.

But Lemuel Gulliver try very hard to be Houyhnhnm. Master come to talk with him all time, and he tell Master how he come from England place, and Master tell him how bad it is, and how England Yahoos worse than our kind. Sometimes Master tell him about us Yahoos, and he says lies. He says about killing Yahoos in fields after oats cut, but says other Yahoos do the killing because they _vicious_.

Lemuel Gulliver think about this, then he say: _I wonder, sir, whether I might propose an economical use of the dead brutes? You have perhaps noticed that I have supplied the want of covering for my body with the furs of small beasts. In my country, the skins of larger animals are taken and prepared in such a way as to provide a substance called leather, that hath divers uses both practical and ornamental. The fat of such beasts hath also serviceable qualities when rendered down into tallow. Perhaps the dead Yahoos might be turned to a like utility?_

I didn't know what all that mean, but next day Lemuel Gulliver and Servant bring home dead Yahoo. Lemuel Gulliver untie me and bring me out, tie noose to tree, say: _Take these tools and skin this creature, as you have skinned the others._ That means I have to cut up poor dead Yahoo. I feel bad, but he dead, can't hurt him. Lemuel Gulliver and Servant cut wood in field and make big rack; when I have skin off they take away tools and tie skin to rack and scrape it. I sit by dead Yahoo and cry.

So bad! So bad! Makes me cry now. Too many bad things tell you. But soon Lemuel Gulliver has _factory_ in field where he makes dead Yahoos into _candles_ and _leather_ and _parchment._ He think Houyhnhnms be _impressed_ by his diligence and industry._ That mean he want them think him Houyhnhnm like them. They don't. He try harder, he tell Master about good way to get rid of too many Yahoos by cutting off boys' danglies. He says they do this beasts in England all the time. Master listen and say nothing. I scared what they do girls in England, be very quiet all time. Only good thing is, bleeding every month stops.

Lemuel Gulliver almost not like Yahoo now: sound just like Houyhnhnms when he talk and walk, nod his head like them, shake his hair out of his face like them, look sideways like them. He try not eating with hands, make a mess, get mad. I not laugh though. He mad I get sick in mornings.

Then one day I scraping Yahoo skin outside and Servant come up to me and smell me all over. He see me with this eye, then turn head and see that eye. Then he go trotting off fast, and Lemuel Gulliver busy pouring hot fat into bowl, not notice.

By and by Master comes out with Servant and looks at me. _Gentle Yahoo, _he says to Lemuel Gulliver, _what have you done? This Yahoo female is going to bear young._ That mean he see I have baby soon.

Lemuel Gulliver stare and stare, then say: _It isn't mine! The dirty wench must have coupled with a Yahoo before her capture, or admitted some beast whilst I was out! _That means, he not Bumpbump me. Master shake his head. He say:

_She has been guarded in your absence, Gentle Yahoo, and when I gave her to you she was not yet fertile. There can be no doubt that her condition is your doing. This is most troublesome; it was hoped that her extreme youth, and your penchant for unnatural congress, would prevent conception. _That mean, you DID TOO Bumpbump her, and it bad. Lemuel Gulliver fall on the ground at Master's feet, kiss them, cry.

He say:_ Pardon! Pardon, oh my Master! Never would I give you the slightest cause to reproach me! _That means, don't hurt me. Master prods him with hoof and says: _Do not indulge yourself in such fits of passion. It was I who advised you to satisfy your natural appetites. Unfortunately, my neighbors will hear of this. Greatly as they have disapproved of my keeping a tame Yahoo for my diversion (albeit one nominally more civilized and rational than the common breed) they will positively censure me for allowing one to reproduce. What should we do if a race of such monsters arose, cleverer than those we govern with such effort? What am I to do?_ All that means was, other Masters not want me have baby.

Lemuel Gulliver get up on hands and knees, dropping big tears. He say: _Dear Master, do not imagine that I entertain any foolish fondness for the creature! Say but the word and I'll stifle the wench with my own hands! Then I might be provided with a boy to my purpose, and -- _He mean he kill me! Master snort and stamp his feet. He say: _Gentle Yahoo, you are saying the thing which is not again!_

I hear all this, I take scraper and put it in my mouth, sneaky so they don't see. Lemuel Gulliver look at Master and his face get sneaky too. He say, _I understand you, best and wisest of Masters._

Master says: _Secure the female in your stall and then we will discuss the matter in greater detail,

you and I. _That mean, he going to tell Lemuel Gulliver how to kill me. They send Servant away and Lemuel Gulliver take me into House and tie my leg. He not see I hid scraper! He go out. I spit out scraper and cut, cut, cut at rope so hard!

It comes loose and I go out. Run for hills, big trees. I hear yell, Lemuel Gulliver sees I running, he shout and run. Master run too but quiet. He fast. I not fast now, legs hurt, fat tummy. I run all the way over field and Master run up behind me. I think he catch me soon.

BUT!!! Out from trees come wild Yahoos! They run out, grab me! Two pull me into trees, others yell and throw shit at Master and Lemuel Gulliver. Up and up and up we go, all green leaves, free air, blue sky. Away into big trees. When we safe I so happy, we all play Bumpbump.

I tell wild Yahoos what happen. By and by many Houyhnhnm come under trees looking for me. They talk how Lemuel Gulliver sent away, crying all sad, go back over sea to England. They want kill me so I never have smart baby, but they never catch me, because we go away from there, go up in mountain trees, far far. We find this place by big rocks and falling water. Lots to eat. Safe. Happy.

Then you come out and you so pretty! Little face like flower. You talk so soon and you so smart! Look at pictures you make on stones, look at animals you make in clay. Mama love Baby and never, never let Houyhnhnm get her. But if ever Yahoo come with mean eyes, and nose like scraper blade, Baby must run far and fast and climb highest tree. That Yahoo name Lemuel Gulliver, and he not like us. He never love anything, ever.

Don't be scared! He far away now. Look, uncle Yahoo catch big fish! Let's go see.

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