



CHAPTER 31

WHITEFOOT IS HURT



*The hurts that hardest are to bear
Come from those for whom we care.
—Whitefoot.*

Whitefoot was hurt. Yes, sir, Whitefoot was hurt. He was very much hurt. It wasn't a bodily hurt; it was an inside hurt. It was a hurt that made his heart ache. And to make it worse, he couldn't understand it at all. One evening he had been met at the little round doorway by little Mrs. Whitefoot.

"You can't come in," said she.

"Why can't I?" demanded Whitefoot, in the greatest surprise.

"Never mind why. You can't, and that is all there is to it," replied Mrs. Whitefoot.

"You mean I can't ever come in any more?" asked Whitefoot.

"I don't know about that," replied Mrs. Whitefoot, "but you can't come in now, nor for some time. I think the best thing you can do is to go back to your old home in the hollow stub."

Whitefoot stared at little Mrs. Whitefoot quite as if he thought she had gone crazy. Then he lost his temper. "I guess I'll come in if I want to," said he. "This home is quite

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as much my home as it is yours. You have no right to keep me out of it. Just you get out of my way.”

But little Mrs. Whitefoot didn't get out of his way, and do what he would, Whitefoot couldn't get in. You see she quite filled that little round doorway. Finally, he had to give up trying. Three times he came back and each time he found little Mrs. Whitefoot in the doorway. And each time she drove him away. Finally, for lack of any other place to go to, he returned to his old home in the old stub. Once he had thought this the finest home possible, but now somehow it didn't suit him at all. The truth is he missed little Mrs. Whitefoot, and so what had once been a home was now only a place in which to hide and sleep.

Whitefoot's anger did not last long. It was replaced by that hurt feeling. He felt that he must have done something little Mrs. Whitefoot did not like, but though he thought and thought he couldn't remember a single thing. Several times he went back to see if Mrs. Whitefoot felt any differently, but found she didn't. Finally she told him rather sharply to go away and stay away. After that Whitefoot didn't venture over to the new home. He would sometimes sit a short distance away and gaze at it longingly. All the joy had gone out of the beautiful springtime for him. He was quite as unhappy as he had been before he met little Mrs. Whitefoot. You see, he was even more lonely than he had been then. And added to this loneliness was that hurt feeling, which made it ever and ever so much worse. It was very hard to bear.

“If I could understand it, it wouldn't be so bad,” he kept saying over and over again to himself, “but I don't understand it. I don't understand why Mrs. Whitefoot doesn't love me any more.”