

Document contributed by Lise Winer, 2018.

Weekly [Trinidad] Guardian, 8 December 1930, p. 6

CREOLE PUNCH

“The Giant Croton”

By Philamina de Maraval

If a did eat souse¹, pig foot an cucumber a might a did say it was a nite mare dat mek me dream so. A dream a was talking to a fairy god moda wen a did sleep in Speyside, Tobago in one a dem tapia ouse² by de sea. Da night was de fust time a use a wave fo me pilla. A lay down wid me foot pon de shore, an me head ova de sea. Dem big roarin waves bin bussin all a de time. Dey would rush to de ouse like a lion, but wen they get near dey would cool down like a lamb. All night a hear dem bussin under de ouse. Tobago is really wonderfull, even de sea got a good mind. A must tell you bout de dream. De fairy godmoda tek me back to Trinidad to No. 18 Tragarete Road³, an she show me dis giant croton tree. Dis tree is growin in concrete an stones. She say dat hundred years ago, wen Tragarete Road was de sea beach, a crook kill he slave and put he jumby to watch a canista full a gold, an de gold was jus a yellow as dem croton leaves. She say “Come, Mena, le we dig.” An so we dig till we buss open de canista. Me dear a nearly faint wen a see all a de gold. A say “Godmoda, is wa we go do wid all a dis money.” She say dat de money is fo help out de colony in she troubles. So a beg she fo one a de leaves. She say “Tek one,” and while a was holding dat

¹ *souse*. A dish made of pickled pig feet, cucumbers, onions, etc.

² *tapia ouse*. Tapia house, an old style of house made of sticks covered with mud (wattle and daub)

³ *Tragarete Road*. A main street through Port of Spain, bordering the Lapeyrouse Cemetery.

leave in me han, it spring roots right in me flesh. She say dat de leaves will grow any way, because it got slave blood in it. Well wen she tell me about blood, a gi a scream an wake right up, because de only ting was a does use wid blood, is black puddon⁴. But anybody wa can stan blood an jumby story, can go to de address, an dey will see de tree, as big and as powaful as a guava tree, but it will tek two able big tarabred greave diggers, two new pickaxes, and a punchin⁵ a rum fo tackle da giant croton tree.

⁴ *Black puddon*. Black pudding or blood sausage.

⁵ *Punchin*. Puncheon, a large barrel or cask.

English Version

If I had eaten souse — pig foot and cucumber — I might have said it was a nightmare that made me dream so. I dreamt I was talking to a fairy godmother when I slept in Speyside, Tobago in one of those tapia houses by the sea. That night was the first time I used a wave for my pillow. I lay down with my feet upon the shore, and my head over the sea. Those big roaring waves were breaking all the time. They would rush to the house like a lion, but when they got near they would cool down like a lamb. All night I heard them breaking under the house. Tobago is really wonderful, even the sea has a favourable attitude. I must tell you about the dream. The fairy godmother took me back to Trinidad to No. 18 Tragarete Road, and she showed me this giant croton tree. This tree is growing in concrete and stones. She said that a hundred years ago, when Tragarete Road was the sea beach, a crook killed his slave and put his ghost to watch a canister full of gold, and the gold was just as yellow as those croton leaves. She said “Come, Mena, let's dig.” And so we dug till we broke open the canister. My dear I nearly fainted when I saw all of the gold. I said “Godmother, what are we going to do with all of this money?” She said that the money was to help out the colony in her troubles. So I begged her for one of the leaves. She said “Take one,” and while I was holding that leaf in my hand, it sprang roots right in my flesh. She said that the leaves would grow anyway, because it had slave blood in it. Well when she told me about blood, I gave a scream and woke right up, because the only thing I use with blood, is black pudding. But anybody who can stand blood and ghost stories, can go to the address, and they will see the tree, as big and as powerful as a guava tree, but it will take two able big thoroughbred grave diggers, two new pickaxes, and a puncheon of rum to tackle that giant croton tree.