

Brer Fox and the White Plums

It happened one morning that Brer Rabbit was going through the woods, and he ran bang into old Brer Fox. Brer Fox took hold of Brer Rabbit and looked at him.

'I feel mighty hungry, Brer Rabbit,' said Brer Fox.

'Huh, Brer Fox,' said Brer Rabbit, trying to wriggle away, 'I don't feel hungry myself because I've just been eating a whole lot of white plums.' And then Brer Rabbit smacked his lips together and licked his mouth as if he could still taste something nice.

'Brer Rabbit, what in the name of goodness are white plums?' said Brer Fox, astonished, 'and how is it I've never seen any?'

'I don't know why you've never seen any,' said Brer Rabbit. 'Some folks see straight, some see crooked, some see one thing and some see another. I saw those white plums, and more than that, I ate

them all up! I ate all that were on one tree, but I expect there are a lot more round about.'

Old Brer Fox's mouth began to water.

'Come on, Brer Rabbit, come on!' he said. 'Show me where those white plums grow!'

Brer Rabbit hung back as if he didn't want to take Brer Fox. Brer Fox dragged him forward. 'Come on, Brer Rabbit, come on!'

But still Brer Rabbit hung back. Then he said, 'Hoo, Brer Fox! You want to get me in the middle of the wood all alone and do something to me. You want to take me out there and scare me.'

Old Brer Fox, he held up his hands and cried, 'I declare to goodness, Brer Rabbit, I wouldn't think of such a thing. Whatever makes you think that? Come on, Brer Rabbit, and let's go and get those white plums.'

'Hoo, Brer Fox, you play so many tricks on folks that I'm afraid to go anywhere alone with you,' said Brer Rabbit.

'I won't scare you or do you any harm, Brer Rabbit,' promised Brer Fox. So they set out for the middle of the woods, and Brer Rabbit brought Brer Fox to a wild walnut tree. The walnuts were as green as could be, but in the bright sunshine they shone pale and white. The tree was loaded down

with unripe nuts. Brer Fox looked astonished.

'Are those white plums?' he said. 'It's funny I didn't know that before.'

Old Brer Rabbit, he scratched himself and said, 'Those are the plums. They may not be as ripe as those I had for my breakfast, but those are white plums as sure as anything. There are red plums, and purple plums, and yellow plums, but these plums are white ones.'

'How can I get them?' said Brer Fox.

'You'll have to do as I did, Brer Fox,' said Brer Rabbit.

'What's that?' asked Brer Fox.

'You'll have to climb up for them, Brer Fox.'

'How can I climb a tree like that?' said Brer Fox, looking up the tall, straight trunk in dismay.

'Oh, grab with your hands, hold tight with your legs and I'll push you behind,' said Brer Rabbit.

Well, Brer Fox began to climb, and Brer Rabbit, he began to push till, sure enough, Brer Fox got to where he could grab up and catch the lowest branch of the tree. He heaved himself up and there he was! He climbed on up, he did, till he came to where he could reach a green walnut. He picked it and put it into his mouth whole. He chewed it hard – and then, bless gracious, if Brer Fox didn't forget all his

manners! The fruit was so bitter and so hard that Brer Fox nearly fell out of the tree.

He shouted 'Ow!' and spat the walnut out of his mouth as if it was poison, and he made such a face that Brer Rabbit had to have a fit of coughing to hide his grins and giggles.

'You'd better come down, Brer Fox, if the white plums aren't ripe,' he shouted up at last. 'Come down and we'll go somewhere else.'

Brer Fox started down the tree, and he got along well enough till he came to the lowest branch again. When he got there he stopped. He didn't see how he was going to get down the long trunk. He had no claws to cling by, like Cousin Wildcat, and he hadn't much leg either, to hold on with.

Brer Rabbit kept on shouting, 'Come on down!' and Brer Fox kept trying to think how to get down.

'Oh, do come on, Brer Fox,' said Brer Rabbit. 'I pushed you up, didn't I, and if I was anywhere near you I'd push you down too! Come on!'

Brer Fox sat clinging to the lowest bough and looked mighty scared. He wasn't used to climbing trees. By and by Brer Rabbit stood a little way off from the tree and said, 'If you'll jump out this way, Brer Fox, I'll catch you.'

Brer Fox looked down and he looked all round,



and he still looked mighty scared. Brer Rabbit came a little bit closer and shouted, 'Hop right down here, Brer Fox, and I'll catch you.'

Well, he kept on like this till by and by Brer Fox

made up his mind to jump into Brer Rabbit's arms – and what's more, Brer Fox meant to get hold of old Brer Rabbit, too, and tell him what he thought of his white plums! But he didn't say that – no, he kept quiet, and just thought of a few things he'd say to old Brer Rabbit.

So Brer Fox jumped straight at Brer Rabbit, but just as he jumped Brer Rabbit hopped out of the way, yelling, 'Ow! Ow! Excuse me, Brer Fox! I trod on a thorn! Excuse me, Brer Fox! I trod on a thorn!'

And old Brer Fox, he hit the ground like a sack of potatoes, and all his breath was knocked out of him. When he got up he counted all his legs and his tail to see if they were still there, and then he sat down and licked himself hard.

As for Brer Rabbit, he was nowhere to be seen; but I guess it will be a long time before Brer Fox goes looking for white plums again!