

Brer Rabbit Gets a Riding-Horse

Brer Rabbit stayed in his house till the tar from the tar-baby rubbed off his fur, but it wasn't many days before he was galloping up and down the place the same as ever, and perhaps a little cheekier than before.

Well, the tale about how Brer Rabbit got stuck in the tar-baby soon got round, and everyone laughed to hear it. Miss Meadows and the girls, who were great friends of Brer Rabbit, heard the tale too – and when Brer Rabbit paid them a visit, Miss Meadows asked him about it, and the girls began to giggle.

But Brer Rabbit sat up just as cool as a cucumber, and let them giggle.

By and by he crossed his legs and winked his eye slowly. Then he said:

'Ladies, Brer Fox was my daddy's riding-horse for thirty years; maybe more, but thirty years

anyhow!' Then he bowed politely, put on his hat, and marched off as stiff and straight as a walking-stick.

Well, the next day Brer Fox went calling on Miss Meadows and the girls, and as soon as he began to laugh about Brer Rabbit being stuck up in the tar-baby, Miss Meadows told him what Brer Rabbit had said.

'Brer Rabbit says you were his daddy's riding-horse for thirty years,' she said. 'Well, well, fancy you being ridden by a rabbit, Brer Fox!'

Brer Fox snapped his jaws and looked mighty angry to hear such a thing. He stood up to go, and said:

'Ladies, just wait till I get hold of Brer Rabbit! I'll make him chew up his words, sure enough!' And with that off Brer Fox marched.

And when he got to the main road he shook the dew off his tail and made straight for Brer Rabbit's house. When he got there, Brer Rabbit was expecting him, and the door was shut fast.

Brer Fox knocked - blim, blam! Nobody answered. Brer Fox knocked again - blim, blam! Still nobody answered. Then he knocked a third time - blim, blam!

Brer Rabbit called out in a mighty weak voice:

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'Is that you, Brer Fox? I want you to run and fetch the doctor. The dish of parsley I ate this morning is making me feel bad. Do, please, Brer Fox, ran quickly!' said Brer Rabbit.

'I've come for you,' said Brer Fox. 'There's going to be a party up at Miss Meadows'. All the girls will be there, and I promised that I'd fetch you. The girls said it wouldn't be a proper party unless you were there, and they made me fetch you.'

'I'm too sick to come,' said Brer Rabbit.

'You're all right!' said Brer Fox. 'A party will put you right, Brer Rabbit. It's what you're needing.'

'I'm not needing anything,' said Brer Rabbit in a weak voice. 'You just go away, Brer Fox. You make me feel worse.'

'You're bound to feel bad if you go and shut yourself up on a fine day like this,' said Brer Fox. 'Come along with me, and smell what a fine day it is.'

'The day smells all right,' said Brer Rabbit. 'It's you that doesn't smell so good to me, Brer Fox.'

'The girls will be mighty sorry if I go back without you,' said Brer Fox.

'I can't walk, I'm so weak,' said Brer Rabbit.

'Well, I'll carry you,' said Brer Fox.

'How?' said Brer Rabbit.

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'In my arms,' said Brer Fox.

'You'll drop me,' said Brer Rabbit.

'I won't,' said Brer Fox.

'Well,' said Brer Rabbit, after a bit, 'I'll come with you if you'll carry me on your back, Brer Fox.'

'That's all right with me,' said Brer Fox at once.

'Come on, Brer Rabbit, or the party will be over.'

'I can't ride on your back unless I have a saddle to sit on,' said Brer Rabbit. 'I'd be slipping off all the time.'

'I'll get you a saddle,' said Brer Fox.

'It's no good me sitting in a saddle unless I've some reins to hold on by,' said Brer Rabbit.

'Well, I'll get a bridle,' said Brer Fox.

'I won't ride you unless you wear blinkers,' said Brer Rabbit. 'If you don't wear blinkers, Brer Fox, you'll be shying at the tree-stumps along the road, and I'll fall off.'

'I'll get some blinkers,' said Brer Fox.

'You get all those things and I'll go to the party,' said Brer Rabbit.

'Now, see here, Brer Rabbit,' said Brer Fox, 'I'll just carry you to the lane outside Miss Meadows' house, but you must get down and walk the rest of the way.'

'That suits me all right,' said Brer Rabbit, and

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then Brer Fox ran to fetch the saddle, the reins, and the blinkers.

Now Brer Rabbit knew quite well that Brer Fox meant to take him to Miss Meadows' and make him tell them it wasn't true that Brer Fox had been his daddy's riding-horse, and he made up his mind to trick Brer Fox. By the time he had combed his hair and twisted up his whiskers along came Brer Fox with the saddle and bridle on, looking as smart as a circus pony. He trotted up to the door and stood pawing the ground and champing the bit in his mouth like a proper horse. Brer Rabbit got on his back and they ambled off.

Brer Fox couldn't see him behind him, because he was wearing blinkers over his eyes, but by and by he felt Brer Rabbit lift up one of his feet.

'What are you doing, Brer Rabbit?' he said.

'Just pulling up my sock, Brer Fox, just pulling up my sock,' said Brer Rabbit.

By and by Brer Rabbit lifted up the other foot.

'What are you doing now, Brer Rabbit?' said Brer Fox.

'Just scratching my toe, Brer Fox, just scratching my toe,' said Brer Rabbit.

But all the time, gracious goodness, Brer Rabbit was putting on sharp spurs, and when they got

close to Miss Meadows', where Brer Rabbit should have got off, Brer Rabbit slapped the spurs into Brer Fox's skin, and my word, didn't Brer Fox gallop along! Every time he slowed down, Brer Rabbit just stuck those spurs into him again, and Brer Fox let out a yell and galloped on at top speed.

When they got to the house, Miss Meadows and the girls were sitting outside on the verandah, and instead of stopping at the gate, Brer Rabbit rode right through it, and up to the horse-rack. He jumped off Brer Fox, threw the reins over the horse-rack, and ambled into the house grinning all over his face.

He shook hands with everyone, and sat down to smoke a big cigar. Then he took the cigar out of his mouth, puffed out a cloud of smoke, and said:

'Ladies, didn't I tell you Brer Fox was the riding-horse for our family? He's not so fast now as he was, but I dare say he'll get better after I've ridden him for a month or two!'

And then Brer Rabbit grinned, and the girls giggled, and Miss Meadows said what a fine pony Brer Fox was. Brer Fox was hitched tightly to the horse-rack and couldn't loose himself.

'You just wait till you ride me home, Brer Rabbit!' said Brer Fox, gritting his teeth. 'You just wait!'

Brer Rabbit is in a Hole

Well, you remember that old Brer Rabbit had ridden Brer Fox up to Miss Meadows' house, saddle and bridle and all, and hitched him to the post there. Everyone laughed and talked and sang and then at last the time came to go home.

'Well, it's time I was a-going,' said Brer Rabbit. 'My horse will be pawing the ground to bits, soon, if I don't go out to him. Good-bye, Miss Meadows, good-bye, girls, and thanks for a wonderful party. It was real kind of Brer Fox to fetch me along!'

Brer Rabbit went to the horse-rack, where Brer Fox was tied, walking as though he owned the whole world. He jumped on to Brer Fox's back and rode off, waving his hat to the girls.

Brer Fox didn't say anything at all. He just tore off and kept his mouth shut, and Brer Rabbit sort of felt there was trouble coming. So he held on to

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the reins tightly and waited to see what old Brer Fox was going to do.

Brer Fox ambled on till he got into the long lane, out of sight of Miss Meadows' house, and then he just went wild! He ripped and he roared, he snorted and cavorted, he reared and he bucked!

He was trying to fling Brer Rabbit off his back. But he might just as well have tried to fling off his own shadow. Every time he humped himself up, Brer Rabbit slapped the spurs into him, and there they went, up and down, up and down! Brer Fox fairly tore up the ground, and he jumped so high and he jumped so fast that he nearly snatched his own tail off!

They kept on like this, till by and by Brer Fox lay down on the ground and rolled over. This sort of unsettled Brer Rabbit, and he fell off – but by the time Brer Fox was up on his feet again, Brer Rabbit was rushing through the wood faster than a racehorse!

Brer Fox set out after him, and he went so fast that he caught him up, and Brer Rabbit only just had time to get into a hollow tree. The hole he shot in by was too small for Brer Fox, and he had to lie down and rest and get his breath again.

Well, while Brer Fox was lying there, all out of

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breath, Brer Buzzard came flapping along, and saw Brer Fox stretched out on the ground. Brer Buzzard flew down beside him and looked at him. Then he shook his wings sadly, put his head on one side and said:

‘Brer Fox is dead, and I’m so sorry.’

‘No, I’m not dead,’ said Brer Fox. ‘I’ve got old Brer Rabbit shut up in here, in this hollow tree, and I’m going to get him this time, if it takes till Christmas!’

Then, after some more talking, Brer Fox made a bargain with Brer Buzzard, and Brer Buzzard promised to watch the hole and keep Brer Rabbit there whilst Brer Fox went to fetch his axe. So Brer Fox galloped off, and Brer Buzzard took up his stand by the hole.

By and by, when everything was still, Brer Rabbit sort of scrambled round close to the hole and shouted out:

‘Brer Fox! Oh, Brer Fox!’

Brer Fox had gone, and nobody said anything. Then Brer Rabbit squealed out as if he were mad.

‘You needn’t talk unless you want to, Brer Fox,’ he said. ‘I know you’re there, and I don’t care if you are! I just want to tell you that I wish old Brer Turkey Buzzard was here!’

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Then Brer Buzzard tried to talk like Brer Fox. 'What do you want with Brer Buzzard?' he said.

'Oh, nothing in particular, except that there's the fattest grey squirrel in here that ever I saw,' said Brer Rabbit, 'and if Brer Turkey Buzzard was around he'd be mighty glad to get him!'

'How could Brer Buzzard get him?' said Brer Buzzard.

'Well, there's a little hole round on the other side of the tree,' said Brer Rabbit, 'and if Brer Buzzard was here so that he could stand just there, I'd drive out that squirrel to him.'

'Drive him out,' said Brer Buzzard, hopping round to the other side of the tree, 'drive him out, and I'll see that Brer Buzzard gets him!'

Then Brer Rabbit kicked up such a noise, just as if he were really driving out a squirrel, and when he heard old Brer Buzzard going round the tree to get the squirrel, Brer Rabbit dashed out of the hole and raced for home!

Well, when Brer Buzzard saw Brer Rabbit rushing off, he felt mighty lonesome, but he had promised Brer Fox that he'd stay, and he thought he would hang round and see what Brer Fox would say when he found Brer Rabbit was gone. He didn't have to wait long, because by and by

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Brer Fox came galloping through the woods with his axe on his shoulder.

'How's Brer Rabbit getting on, Brer Buzzard?' said Brer Fox.

'Oh, he's in there,' said Brer Buzzard. 'He's mighty still, though. I expect he's taking a nap.'

'Then I'm just in time to wake him up,' said Brer Fox. And with that he threw off his coat and grabbed his axe. He brought it down on the tree-trunk – pow! And every time he struck the tree with the axe – pow! – Brer Buzzard did a little dance and shouted out:

'Oh, he's in there, Brer Fox. He's in there, sure enough!'

And every time a chip flew off, Brer Buzzard would jump and dodge and shout, 'He's in there, Brer Fox. I just heard him. He's in there, sure enough!'

And Brer Fox, he lammed away at that hollow tree, till by and by, after he had almost cut the tree through he stopped to get his breath – and he saw Brer Buzzard laughing at him behind his back. And straight away, Brer Fox knew something was up. But Brer Buzzard, he kept on shouting:

'He's in there, Brer Fox. He's in there! I've just seen him!'

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Then Brer Fox pretended that he was peeping into the tree, and he said: 'Come here, Brer Buzzard, and see if this is Brer Rabbit's foot hanging down!' And Brer Buzzard came stepping up and stuck

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his head in at the hole; and no sooner had he done that, than Brer Fox grabbed him. Brer Buzzard scrambled round and flapped his wings, but it was no use. Brer Fox had got him fast.

Then Brer Buzzard squealed out loudly, 'You let me alone, Brer Fox. Turn me loose! Brer Rabbit will get out! You've nearly cut the tree through. A few more cuts and you'll have Brer Rabbit!'

'I'm nearer to you, Brer Buzzard, than I'll be to Brer Rabbit today!' said Brer Fox. 'What did you trick me for?'

'Let me alone, Brer Fox,' said Brer Buzzard. 'My old woman's waiting for me. Brer Rabbit's in there!'

'There's a bunch of his fur on that blackberry bush,' said Brer Fox. 'That's the way he went, Brer Buzzard.'

Then Brer Buzzard told Brer Fox all about it. 'And Brer Rabbit's the greatest rascal that ever lived!' he said.

'That's neither here nor there, Brer Buzzard,' said Brer Fox. 'I left you to watch this hole and I left Brer Rabbit in there. I come back and I find you at the hole and Brer Rabbit gone. I'm going to make you pay for it. I'm going to fling you on a wood-pile and burn you up!'

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'If you fling me on the fire, Brer Fox, I'll fly away!' said Brer Buzzard.

'Well, then, I'll settle you right now!' said Brer Fox, and he grabbed Brer Buzzard by the tail to dash him to the ground – but it was just about the time of year when the tail feathers of buzzards drop out, and Brer Buzzard sailed up into the air like a balloon, leaving a few feathers in Brer Fox's hand!

'You've given me a good start, Brer Fox!' shouted Brer Buzzard, and Brer Fox had to sit there and watch him fly out of sight!

Poor Sis Cow!

After Brer Rabbit had escaped out of the hollow tree, he went skipping along home, just as saucy as a jay-bird. He went galloping along, he did, but he felt mighty tired out and stiff in his joints, and he was dying for something to drink.

By and by, when he was almost home, he spied old Miss Cow feeding in a field, and he thought he'd see if she would give him a drink. Brer Rabbit had a feeling that Miss Cow wouldn't give him any milk at all because she had said no often enough, even when Brer Rabbit's old woman was sick. But never mind - Brer Rabbit was going to try again!

He danced up to the fence and called out loudly to Miss Cow:

'Howdy, Sis Cow!'

'Why, howdy, Brer Rabbit!' said Miss Cow.

'How are you these days?' said Brer Rabbit.

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'Oh, so-so, just so-so,' said Miss Cow. 'How's yourself, Brer Rabbit?'

'Oh, I'm just so-so myself, Sis Cow,' said Brer Rabbit. 'Not too bad but not too grand either!'

'How are your folks?' said Miss Cow.

'Just middling, Sis Cow,' said Brer Rabbit. 'How's Brer Bull getting on?'

'Bellowing as usual,' said Miss Cow.

Then Brer Rabbit looked at a tree near by. 'There are some mighty nice apples up this tree, Sis Cow,' said Brer Rabbit, 'and I'd like mighty well to have some!'

'How are you going to get them?' asked Miss Cow.

'Well, I thought I might ask you to butt your head against the tree and shake some down for me,' said Brer Rabbit.

Well, Miss Cow thought she might as well do it as not, so she marched up to the apple-tree. She hit it a rap with her horns - blam!

But those apples were as green as grass, and not one dropped off the tree! Then Miss Cow butted the tree again - blim! Not an apple dropped. Then Miss Cow backed away a little, took a run, and knocked the apple-tree hard - blip! No apples dropped, not even a tiny one.

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Then Miss Cow backed off a little further, hoisted her tail over her back, and ran at the tree again – kerblam! And she came so fast, and she came so hard that one of her horns went right into the trunk, and there she was, stuck fast! She couldn't go forwards and she couldn't go backwards.

This was exactly what Brer Rabbit was waiting for, and he no sooner saw old Miss Cow all stuck up than he began to grin and rub his hands in joy.

'Come and help me out, Brer Rabbit,' said Miss Cow.

'I can't climb, Sis Cow,' said Brer Rabbit, 'but I'll run and tell Brer Bull to help you.'

And with that Brer Rabbit set out for his home, and it wasn't long before he came back again with his old woman and all his children – and every single one of his family was carrying a pail! The big ones had big pails and the little ones had little pails.

They all surrounded Miss Cow, and they milked her till she hadn't a drop of milk left. The big ones got their pails full, and the little ones got their pails full too. When they had got enough Brer Rabbit said:

'I wish you mighty well, Sis Cow. I'm afraid you'll have to camp out all night, but it doesn't

look like rain, so maybe you'll be all right.'

Then off he went home, he and all his family carrying their pails so as not to spill a drop.

Well, Miss Cow, she stood there, she did, and tried to think how to get loose. She pulled and she jerked at her horn, but it was jammed too tightly in the tree to come out. But at last, when she jerked it mighty hard, just before day, she got it loose.

She grazed round in the field a bit, for she was hungry. Old Miss Cow thought that Brer Rabbit would soon be hopping along that way to see how she was getting on, and she thought she would lay a trap for him.

'I'll stick my horn back into the hole just before Brer Rabbit comes along,' thought Miss Cow. 'Then he'll think I'm still stuck fast, and he'll come up to me - and won't I kick out at him and won't I chase



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him round the field and stick my horn into him! I'll teach you to trick old Sis Cow, Brer Rabbit, so I will!

Well, just about sunrise what did old Miss Cow do but march up to the apple-tree and stick her horn back into the hole, just as she had planned. But she didn't do it quite soon enough! Brer Rabbit had come hopping quietly along, and he was in a corner of the field, watching her.

Brer Rabbit was surprised to see Sis Cow loose – and even more surprised to see her sticking her horn back into the tree!

'Heyo !' he said to himself. 'What's all this going on? Just wait a minute, and I'll find out!'

He crept out of the field and went back down the road a little way. By and by he came along – lippitty-clippitty-lippitty-clippitty – galloping down the main road.

'Morning, Sis Cow,' said Brer Rabbit. 'How do you feel this morning?'

'Poorly, Brer Rabbit, poorly,' said Miss Cow. 'I haven't had any rest all night. I can't get my horn out of the tree. But if you'll come and catch hold of my tail, Brer Rabbit, I reckon maybe I can get my horn out!'

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Then Brer Rabbit came a little closer, but he didn't come *too* close!

'I think I'm near enough, Sis Cow,' said Brer Rabbit. 'I'm a mighty little man, and if I come any nearer you might trample on me. You do the pulling out, Sis Cow, and I'll do the shouting!'

Then Miss Cow pulled out her horn in a rage and tore after Brer Rabbit. Down the road they went, Brer Rabbit with his ears laid back, and Miss Cow with her head down and her tail up. Brer Rabbit ran fast and by and by he darted into a brier-patch. By the time Miss Cow came along he had his head sticking out, and his eyes looked as big as saucers.

'Heyo, Sis Cow!' said Brer Rabbit, not looking a bit like himself. 'Where are you going?'

'Hallo, Brer Big-Eyes,' said Miss Cow. 'Have you seen Brer Rabbit go by?'

'He's just this minute passed,' said Brer Rabbit, 'and he looked mighty sick, Sis Cow.'

When she heard that, Miss Cow tore off down the road as if the dogs were after her – and Brer Rabbit, he just lay down there in the brier-patch and rolled and laughed till his sides hurt him. He simply *had* to laugh. Fox after him, Buzzard after him, Cow after him – and they hadn't caught him yet!

Mr Lion's Soup

Once Mr Lion put on his tall hat, reached for his stick, and set out to have his dinner at Brer Possum's Hotel. He felt hungry, and he made up his mind to have a really good dinner.

'I'll have oxtail soup!' said Mr Lion to himself, as he walked along, swishing off the daisy-heads with his stick, which was very wrong of him. 'Yes, oxtail soup, rich and thick and tasty. Aha!'

He reached Brer Possum's Hotel and went up the steps. As soon as the hall-porter saw him he rushed to greet him, for Mr Lion was a very honoured customer. If people didn't pay attention to him, he got very angry, so the waiters flocked round him, and Brer Possum himself helped him off with his coat.

'Give me the best table,' said Mr Lion in his growly voice. So they gave him the best table, and he sat down, tucking his tail neatly under the chair.

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'What will you have to eat, Mr Lion, sir?' asked Brer Possum, beckoning to Brer Hare, Brer Raccoon, and Brer Hedgehog, all waiters.

'Bring me some oxtail soup,' said Mr Lion in a very commanding sort of voice.

Brer Possum flew to tell the cook to make some oxtail soup. Very soon it was ready. It was poured into a silver tureen, and taken to Mr Lion's table. He sniffed at it as it was poured into his soup-plate.

'It smells good,' he said.

'It *is* good,' said Brer Hare, the waiter, waiting for Mr Lion to begin tasting it. But Mr Lion didn't. He sat there, and didn't taste it at all.

'What's the matter, Mr Lion?' asked Brer Hare, seeing a frown beginning to come on Mr Lion's great forehead.

'I can't eat this soup,' said Mr Lion.

'Oh, sir!' said Brer Hare, alarmed. 'I hope it's good! Is it too hot?'

'I don't know,' said Mr Lion. 'I can't eat it.'

Brer Hare flew to get Brer Raccoon, and took him over to Mr Lion's table. Brer Raccoon bowed anxiously before the great Mr Lion.

'What is the matter, sir?' he asked.

'I can't eat this *soup*!' said Mr Lion.

'Has it too much pepper in it?' asked Brer

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Raccoon anxiously. 'The cook does sometimes use the pepper-pot too much.'

'I don't know,' said Mr Lion. 'All I know is that I can't eat my soup!'

Brer Raccoon flew to get Brer Hedgehog. 'He says he can't eat his soup,' said Brer Raccoon, nodding his head backwards towards Mr Lion. 'What are we to do?'

'I'd better go and see if it's got too much onion in,' said Brer Hedgehog, dropping his napkin in his hurry, and tripping over his prickles. 'He doesn't like onion.'

So he scampered to Mr Lion's table and bowed low. 'Mr Lion, sir,' he said, 'I'm sorry to hear about this. Has your soup got too much onion in?'

'I don't know,' said Mr Lion, in a rage. 'I tell you I can't eat my soup!'

'Well, I'll fetch Brer Possum,' said poor Brer Hedgehog, in a panic, and he shot off to get the master of the hotel. Brer Possum was horrified to hear that Mr Lion couldn't eat his soup, and he hurried at once to his table.

'I'm sorry the soup is not to your liking,' he said. 'Do tell me what is wrong, Mr Lion. You didn't find a fly in it, I hope, or a caterpillar?'

'No,' growled Mr Lion, looking fiercer than ever.

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MR LION'S SOUP

'Well, has it too much salt in it?' asked Brer Possum, shivering with fear, for he knew Mr Lion's habits when he was displeased.

'I don't know,' said Mr Lion. 'All I say is – I can't – eat – my – SOUP!'

'Well, sir, I'll fetch the cook who made it,' said Brer Possum, trembling. 'It was Brer Raccoon's old woman who made it. Just wait a minute and I'll get her.'

In a few moments Brer Raccoon's wife came shuffling along, looking very scared indeed, twisting up the corners of her apron, and looking ready to cry, for she was very much afraid of Mr Lion.

'Good morning, sir,' she said, dropping a curtsy. 'I hear you can't eat the soup I made.'

'No, I can't possibly,' said Mr Lion gloomily.

'But, sir, it's made of the very best ox-tail that ever was,' said Brer Raccoon's old woman eagerly. 'And I didn't put much onion into it, and only a little pepper and salt, and it was nice and hot when it left my kitchen.'

'All the same, I can't eat it,' said Mr Lion, still more gloomily.

'Well, let me take it away and bring you another kind,' said Mrs Raccoon, and she stretched out her paw to take the plate. But Mr Lion shouted at her

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so loudly, and showed his teeth so fiercely, that she backed away in alarm.

'Leave my soup!' shouted Mr Lion. 'I want to eat it, but I can't. I HAVEN'T GOT A SPOON!'

Well, well, well! Just to think of that! Brer Raccoon got him a spoon, and Brer Hedgehog gave him one, and Brer Possum and Brer Hare did too. They were all so pleased to find that nothing was really wrong with the soup. As for silly old Mr Lion, he only had himself to blame if the soup was cold!

Oh, Brer Rabbit!

One day, after Brer Fox had been doing all he could to catch Brer Rabbit, and Brer Rabbit had been doing all he could to stop him, Brer Fox said to himself that he'd play a trick on Brer Rabbit.

And no sooner had he said the words than Brer Rabbit came lolloping up the road looking as plump and as fat as a blackbird in spring.

'Half a minute, Brer Rabbit!' said Brer Fox.

'Can't stop, Brer Fox,' said Brer Rabbit, going a bit faster.

'I want to have a talk with you, Brer Rabbit,' said Brer Fox.

'All right, Brer Fox but you'd better shout to me from where you are. I'm not coming any nearer,' said Brer Rabbit.

'I saw Brer Bear yesterday,' said Brer Fox, 'and he said he was shocked because you and I don't

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make friends and live in peace, and I told him that I'd see about it.'

Then Brer Rabbit scratched one of his ears with his hind foot sort of doubtfully, and said, 'Right you are, Brer Fox. Suppose you drop round tomorrow and take dinner with me. We don't have anything fancy at our house, but I expect my old woman and the children can scramble round and get something to fill you up.'

'Fine!' said Brer Fox.

'Then I'll see you tomorrow,' said Brer Rabbit.

Next day Brer Rabbit and old Miss Rabbit got up early, before day, and got some cabbages and corn and sparrow-grass, and fixed up a splendid dinner.

By and by one of the little rabbits, playing out in the backyard, came running in, shouting, 'Oh, Ma! Oh, Ma! I saw Mr Fox a-coming!'

And then Brer Rabbit, he took his children by their ears and made them sit down, and then he and Miss Rabbit waited about for Brer Fox. And they kept on waiting, but Brer Fox didn't come.

After a while Brer Rabbit went to the door and peeped out – and what do you think he saw? Why, sticking out from behind the corner was the tip-end of Brer Fox's tail!

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'So Brer Fox is a-hiding there, ready to jump out on us!' said Brer Rabbit, with a grin. He shot indoors and sat down. He put his paws behind his ears and began to sing:

*'I won't go out this morning,
I don't like getting shocks,
'Cos where you see a tail,
You're sure to find a fox!'*

Then Brer Rabbit and old Miss Rabbit and all the little rabbits grinned at one another and ate up the dinner as fast as they could.

Next day Brer Fox sent Brer Mink to say that he was sorry he hadn't come to dinner the day before, but he was too ill to come, and please would Brer Rabbit come and take dinner with him! Brer Rabbit said yes, he would.

So by and by, when the sun was high in the sky, Brer Rabbit brushed his fur well, and wandered off down to Brer Fox's house. When he got there he heard somebody groaning, and he peeped in at the door and there he saw Brer Fox sitting up in a rocking-chair all wrapped up in flannel, and looking mighty weak.

Brer Rabbit looked all round, but he didn't see

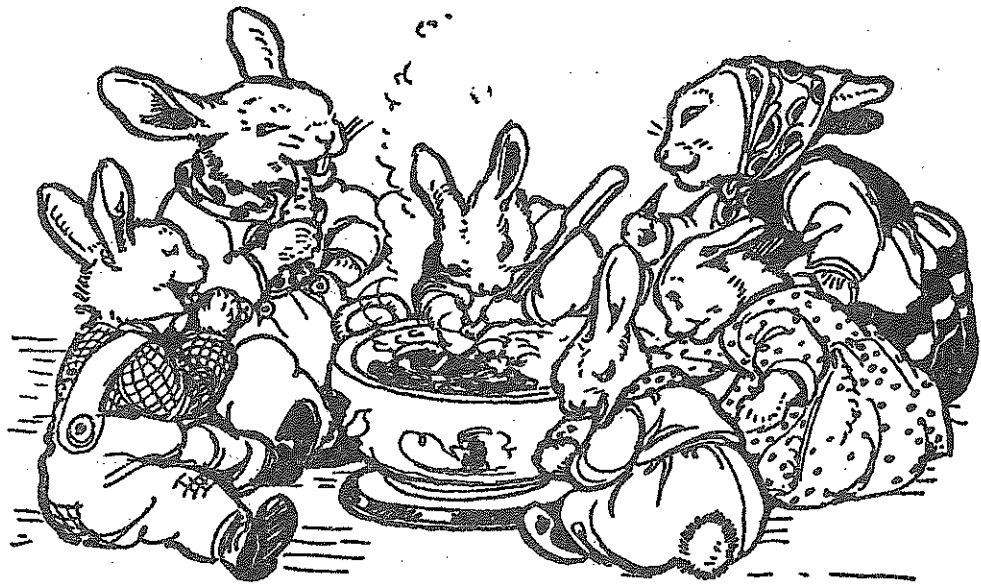
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any dinner. The dish-pan was on the table, and close by was a large carving knife.

'Looks as if you're going to have chicken for dinner, Brer Fox,' said Brer Rabbit.

'Yes, Brer Rabbit, all nice and fresh and tender,' said Brer Fox.

Then Brer Rabbit pulled at his whiskers and said, 'You haven't got any calamus root, have you, Brer Fox? You know I just simply can't eat chicken unless it's seasoned with calamus root.'



And with that Brer Rabbit shot out of the door and dodged into some bushes. He sat there, hidden, waiting and watching to see what Brer Fox would do.

He hadn't watched very long before he saw

OH, BRER RABBIT!

Brer Fox fling off his flannel and creep out of the house, ready to pounce on Brer Rabbit when he came back.

'So that's his little game!' grinned Brer Rabbit to himself. He sat a little longer, and then he shouted loudly:

'Oh, Brer Fox! I'll just put the calamus root out here on this tree-stump! You'd better come and get it whilst it's fresh!'

And then Brer Rabbit galloped off home. So Brer Fox didn't catch him after all – and he's not going to either!

Brer Rabbit Lays in his Winter Stores

Now one time the winter set in very early, and the creatures couldn't seem to find enough to eat. Brer Fox got as thin as a broom handle, and Brer Rabbit was just a bag of bones.

One day they met in the road and began to talk.

'Bad times, Brer Rabbit, bad times,' said Brer Fox.

'You've nothing to grumble at, Brer Fox,' said Brer Rabbit. 'You've got a horse and cart, and I've got nothing except my old wheelbarrow!'

'What's the use of a horse and cart?' said Brer Fox. 'You just tell me that, Brer Rabbit - what's the use of a horse and cart when you've got nothing to carry in it? Why, I used to go to the town and bring back my cart full of food - but now the horse is lazing in the field and the cart is lying idle in the shed.'

'That's bad,' said Brer Rabbit. 'Why don't you sell your horse and cart, Brer Fox, and buy food

BRER RABBIT LAYS IN HIS WINTER STORES

with the money? I'm surprised that a clever man like you hasn't thought of that before.'

Well, Brer Fox thought it over and he reckoned it was a mighty good idea. Having a horse and cart wouldn't help him if he was dying of hunger!

'Well,' said Brer Fox, 'that's a good idea, Brer Rabbit - but if I go to town and sell my horse and cart to buy food, I'll have no cart to bring it home in and no horse to pull it! So I'd be no better off than before!'

'Well, Brer Fox,' said Brer Rabbit, 'I don't mind giving you a hand over this. I'll lend you my wheelbarrow to bring your shopping home in. We can put the wheelbarrow in the cart when we set out, and after you've sold your horse and cart, you can buy food with the money and put it into my barrow. We can take turns in wheeling it home!'

'That's mighty good of you, Brer Rabbit,' said Brer Fox. 'I'll do that. Meet me at the corner of the road tomorrow morning and we'll set off for town.'

So the next morning the two of them set off in the cart. Brer Fox clucked to his horse and they galloped into the town. Pretty soon Brer Fox had sold the horse and cart and had money to jingle in his pockets.

My, the food he bought! It just made old Brer

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Rabbit's mouth water, so it did! A sack of rice, a sack of corn, a sack of coffee, a sack of turnips – it was a wonder it all went into the barrow!

'You take a turn at wheeling the barrow first,

BRER RABBIT LAYS IN HIS WINTER STORES

Brer Rabbit,' said Brer Fox. 'My arms ache from driving the horse.'

Brer Rabbit lifted the handles of the barrow. My, but it was heavy! Brer Rabbit puffed and panted and Brer Fox grinned to see him. Brer Fox walked fast and Brer Rabbit couldn't keep up with him. He did his best, but Brer Fox always seemed to manage to keep so far ahead that Brer Rabbit couldn't shout loudly enough to him to make him hear.

Well, at last Brer Rabbit's arms were aching so much that he had to put the barrow down.

'Heyo, Brer Fox!' he yelled. 'You come along back here! It's your turn now!'

Brer Fox went skipping along in front and didn't so much as turn his head.

'Brer Fox! BRER FOX! You come along back here!' yelled Brer Rabbit. 'I'm not going to wheel your food all the way home. You give me my share for helping you, and I'll take it and go.'

Brer Fox heard that all right. He turned round and grinned at Brer Rabbit.

'The food's mine!' he shouted. 'I may give you a handful of rice, Brer Rabbit, but that's all you'll get! Aha! Some one else can play tricks, as well as you!'

Brer Rabbit thought mighty hard, he did. Then he shouted to Brer Fox.

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'All right, Brer Fox. Just give me my handful of rice and I'll be off. But you might pop into Brer Bear's house just over there and ask him for a little bag to put my rice in. I can't carry it in my paws very well.'

So Brer Fox, grinning to himself and feeling mighty pleased with things, bopped along to Brer Bear's house and borrowed the smallest bag he could.

Now as soon as Brer Fox was out of sight, Brer Rabbit took hold of the sack of rice and pulled it out of the barrow. He hid it under a bush, but before he left it there he put his hand in at the top and got a handful of rice grains out. He ran back to the barrow and then set off in the opposite direction, dropping the rice as he went. Then back he went to the barrow again and sat down by it, pretending to cry.

By and by Brer Fox came back with a small bag, and when he got there he saw Brer Rabbit crying. My, but he was boo-hooing!

'In the name of goodness, Brer Rabbit, what's the matter?' said Brer Fox.

'Matter enough, matter enough!' said Brer Rabbit. 'I wish you'd stayed here instead of going off, Brer Fox.'

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'What's up then, Brer Rabbit?'

'Oh, a man came, Brer Fox, and stole your lovely bag of rice!' sobbed Brer Rabbit. 'I ran after him but he went too fast for me.'

'Which way did he go, Brer Rabbit?'

'There's the way he went, Brer Fox, there's where he dropped the rice out of the sack as he ran. If you're quick, Brer Fox, you'll catch him!'

Brer Fox dropped the bag he carried and tore off, hoping to catch the man that Brer Rabbit spoke of. He was hardly out of sight when Brer Rabbit caught hold of the bag of coffee and carried that away to the bush and hid it too. He put his hand into the top of the sack, took out some coffee beans, ran back to the barrow, and then set off in the other direction, dropping the beans as he went. It looked just as if some one had run there with a sack, dropping beans out of it as he ran!

After a while, back came Brer Fox, a-puffing and a-panting. He hadn't seen any man at all. Brer Rabbit shouted to him.

'You haven't come a minute too soon, Brer Fox! While you were gone another man came and carried off the coffee. See, that's the way he went, Brer Fox, and if you're quick, you'll catch him!'

Well, Brer Fox set off again as fast as he could,

and he ran and ran, but he didn't see any man at all. Whilst he was gone Brer Rabbit carried off the sack of corn, and sprinkled some grains in the opposite direction again. Then Brer Fox came back, shouting that he hadn't seen anyone – and Brer Rabbit yelled to him to say that another man had been and had carried off the corn.

Well, this suddenly seemed mighty strange to Brer Fox – all these men coming by that way, in a lonely place, and stealing out of his barrow. He wondered if maybe Brer Rabbit was up to one of his tricks, so when he ran off, pretending to chase the man again, he didn't go very far, but turned round and crept back to see what Brer Rabbit was doing.

And he was just in time to see Brer Rabbit pulling at the sack of turnips in his barrow! Well, Brer Fox was mighty tired with running hither and thither and backwards and forwards, but he felt so mad when he saw what Brer Rabbit was up to that he dashed up to him and shouted at him.

'What are you going to do with that sack of turnips?' he yelled.

Brer Rabbit put the sack down and looked very upset. He looked at Brer Fox as if he felt mighty sorry for folks who asked such foolish questions. He shook his head, he did, and said:

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'Well, well, well! Who'd have thought Brer Fox would have come yelling at me like this, when any one would guess I was just a-carrying it off to save for him, so's no man could steal it?'

But this sort of talk didn't deceive Brer Fox, and he snarled so fiercely that Brer Rabbit thought it would be better to run – and run he did, with Brer Fox at his tail, between the trees. And at last Brer Rabbit came to a hollow tree and in he went!

Well, old Brer Buzzard was a-sailing round in the air, and Brer Fox called to him.

'Just you watch this hole for me, Brer Buzzard,' said Brer Fox. 'I'm a-going to fetch some fire to smoke old Brer Rabbit out!'

Well, Brer Fox set off, and Brer Buzzard settled down beside the hole – and after a bit Brer Rabbit sang out, 'I've got the better of you, Brer Buzzard! I surely have!'

'How's that, Brer Rabbit?' said Brer Buzzard.

'Because I can see you and you can't see me!' said Brer Rabbit, in his most cheeky voice.

With that Brer Buzzard stuck his head in the hole of the tree and looked up to see Brer Rabbit, and no sooner did he do this than Brer Rabbit flung a handful of sand down into his eyes.

Poor Brer Buzzard! He blinked and he winked

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but he couldn't get the sand out – so down to the stream he flew to wash his eyes. And whilst he was gone Brer Rabbit came down out of the hollow tree, and raced back to the barrow.

It wasn't long before he had taken the sacks of corn, rice, and coffee out from under the bush where he had hidden them, popped them into the barrow with the sack of turnips, and trundled away merrily to his home.

And my, didn't Brer Fox shake his fist when he passed by Brer Rabbit's house the next day and smelt fried rice cakes and fresh coffee! Ah, it's no use trying to trick Brer Rabbit!