

BREXER RABBIT

STORIES FROM UNCLE REMUS

by

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adapted by

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with the A. B. Frost Pictures

redrawn for reproduction by Victor Dowling



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Foreword

IT WOULD have been a great loss if the original editions of Uncle Remus and His Stories had been presented in any other form than the one in which they were presented. To Joel Chandler Harris for his careful listening and recording we are forever indebted. And for some adults this original form is the one that has, perhaps, the greatest significance. But for children eager for the content of the story itself and lost in the drama of the situations it seems only right to give them the stories direct as they were told originally, without all the adult reminiscent digressions, comments on Uncle Remus and Miss Sally and Aunt Tempy, and on the idiosyncrasies of childhood.

Therefore we have isolated those stories about Brer Rabbit from *Nights with Uncle Remus* and *Uncle Remus, His Songs and His Sayings* that seem most suitable for young children, and have left the stories to stand alone as they did in the beginning. The dialect has been modified slightly in the actual animal dialogue and more or less taken out of the expository passages. It has been simplified only when absolutely necessary to make the meaning clear to children of all English-speaking countries, to all the children, black and

white, who do not understand in this day the Gulla dialect of Uncle Jack or the local dialects of the Georgia Negro in the days before and just after the Civil War.

All revision has tried to be faithful to the tone and rhythm of the stories and to the desired emphasis of the Negro storyteller behind the story, to the cadence and musical timing of his art. Some words, such as "jugglements," "pollygolic vial," and others that have more vivid meaning than any accepted English equivalent, have been left, believing that children among all people will be the first to share the Negro's delight in them.

So it is that this collection has been made in an attempt to simplify and make clear to a wider and a younger public these folk stories, which are the most rhythmic and vivid contribution to children's literature that America can offer, stories ranking with Hans Andersen's and with Grimm's in vitality and basic soundness. Let the stories then be told for their own sake.

This is not merely an adaptation, it is a work of admiration—admiration for the strength and beauty of the Negro's imagination, and his use of the spoken word which too often has gone unrecorded—a great American literature that has been lost as it was spoken.

And so this work is dedicated to Uncle Remus and to the other storytellers of his race whose stories these are.

MARGARET WISE BROWN

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BREER RABBIT

“The Wonderful Tar-Baby Story”

BRER FOX tried time and time again to catch Brer Rabbit, and he came mighty near catching him, but time and time again Brer Rabbit got



He fixed up a contraption that he called a Tar-Baby

away. Then one day, Brer Fox went to work and got him some tar. He took the tar and he mixed it with some turpentine, and he fixed up a contraption that he called a Tar-Baby. Then he took this here

Tar-Baby and sat her in the big road and then he lay off in the bushes for to see what the news was going to be. And he didn’t have to wait long either, cause by-and-by here came Brer Rabbit pacing down the road—lippity clippity, clippity lippity—just as sassy as a jaybird.

Brer Fox, he lay low.

Brer Rabbit he came prancing along until he spied the Tar-Baby, and then he fetched up on his behind legs like he was astonished.

The Tar-Baby, she sat there, she did; and Brer Fox, he lay low.

“Mawnin’!” sez Brer Rabbit, sezee. “Nice weather dis mawnin’,” sezee.

Tar-Baby ain’t saying nothing, and Brer Fox he lay low.

“How does you’ symptoms seen ter segashuate?” sez Brer Rabbit, sezee.

Brer Fox, he wink his eye slow, and lay low; and the Tar-Baby, she ain’t say nothing.

“How you come on, den? Is you deaf?” sez Brer Rabbit, sezee. “Cause if you is, I can holler louder,” sezee.

Tar-Baby stay still, and Brer Fox, he lay low.

“You’re stuck up, dat’s what you is,” says Brer Rabbit, sezee, “and I’m gwineter cure you, dat’s what I’m gwineter do,” sezee.

Brer Fox, he sort of chuckle in his stomach, he did; but Tar Baby ain’t saying nothing.

"I'm gwinter learn you how to talk to respectable folks if it's de last act," sez Brer Rabbit, sezee. "If you don't take off dat hat and tell me howdy, I'm gwinter bust you wide open," sezee.

Tar-Baby stay still, and Brer Fox, he lay low.

Brer Rabbit keeps on asking him, and the Tar-Baby she keeps on saying nothing, till presently Brer Rabbit draws back with his fists, he did, and blip! he took her a whack on the side of the head. Right there is where he broke his molasses jug. His fist stuck and he couldn't pull it loose. The tar held him.

But Tar-Baby she stay still, and Brer Fox, he lay low.

"Ef you don't let me loose, I'll knock you again," sez Brer Rabbit, sezee, and with that he fetched her a whack with the other hand. And that stuck.

Tar-Baby she ain't say nothing, and Brer Fox, he lay low.

"Turn me loose, fore I kick de natural stuffin' out of you," sez Brer Rabbit, sezee, but the Tar-Baby she ain't saying nothing. She just held on. And then, blip! Brer Rabbit lost the use of his feet the same way.

Brer Fox he lay low.

Then Brer Rabbit squalled out that if the Tar-Baby didn't turn him loose he'd butt her crank-sided. And then he butted and his head got stuck. Then Brer Fox he sauntered forth, looking just as innocent as one of your mother's mockingbirds.

"Howdy, Brer Rabbit," sez Brer Fox, sezee. "You look sort of stuck up dis mawnin'," sezee. And then he rolled on the ground and laughed and laughed until he couldn't laugh any more. "I 'spect you'll take dinner wid me dis time, Brer Rabbit. I've laid in some calmus root and I ain't going to take no excuse," sez Brer Fox, sezee.

When Brer Fox looks at Brer Rabbit again, all mixed up with the Tar-Baby, he feels mighty good, and he rolls on the ground and laughs some more. By and by, he up and sez, sezee, "Well, I 'spect I got you dis time, Brer Rabbit," sezee. "Maybe I ain't, but I 'spect I have. You been runnin' round here sassin' after me a long time, but I 'spect you have come to the end of the row. You been cuttin' up your capers and bouncin' round in dis neighborhood till you come to b'lieve yourself de boss of de whole gang. And den you are always some place when you have no business to be," sez Brer Fox, sezee. "Who asked you to come and strike up an acquaintance wid dis here Tar-Baby? And who stuck you up dar whar you is? Nobody in de round world. You just took and jammed yourself on dat Tar-Baby widout waitin' for any invitation," sez Brer Fox, sezee; "and dar you is and dar you'll stay till I fix up a brush pile and light it on fire, cause I'm gwinter barbecue you dis day, sure," sez Brer Fox, sezee.

Then Brer Rabbit talked mighty humble.

"I don't care what you do wid me, Brer Fox," sezee, "so you don't fling me in dat brier patch. Roast me, Brer Fox," sezee, "but don't fling me in dat brier patch," sezee.



"Dar you is and dar you'll stay"

"It's so much trouble for to kindle a fire," sez Brer Fox, sezee, "dat I 'spect I'll have to hang you," sezee.

"Hang me just as high as you please, Brer Fox," sez Brer Rabbit, sezee, "but for de Lord's sake, don't fling me in dat brier patch," sezee.

"I ain't got no string," sez Brer Fox, sezee, "and now I 'spects I'll have to drown you," sezee.

"Drown me just as deep as you please, Brer Fox,"

sez Brer Rabbit, sezee, "but do-don't fling me in dat brier patch," sezee.

"Dey ain't no water nigh," sez Brer Fox, sezee, "and now I 'spects I'll have to skin you," sezee.

"Skin me, Brer Fox," sez Brer Rabbit, sezee, "snatch out my eyeballs, tear out my hair, tear out my ears by de roots and cut off my legs," sezee, "but, please, Brer Fox, don't fling me in dat brier patch," sezee.

Of course Brer Fox wanted to hurt Brer Rabbit as bad as he could, so he caught him by the behind legs and slung him right in the middle of the brier patch. There was a considerable flutter where Brer Rabbit stuck the bushes, and Brer Fox sort of hung around to see what was going to happen. By-and-by he heard somebody call him, and way up the hill he saw Brer Rabbit sitting cross-legged on a chinkapin log combing the pitch out of his hair with a chip of wood. Then Brer Fox knew that he had been fooled mighty badly. Still Brer Rabbit was pleased to fling back some of his sass, and he hollers out:

"Bred and bawn in de brier patch, Brer Fox—bred and bawn in de brier patch!" and with that he skips out just as lively as a cricket in the embers.