

Brer Rabbit Earns a Dollar-A-Minute

retold by
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One fine morning, Brer Fox decided to plant him a patch of goober peas. He set to with a will and before you know it, he had raked and hoed out a beautiful patch of ground and he put in a fine planting of peas. It didn't take too long before those goober vines grew tall and long and the peas ripened up good and smart.

Now Brer Rabbit, he'd watched Brer Fox planting the goobers and he told his children and Miz Rabbit where they could find the patch. Soon as those peas were ripe, the little Rabbits and Brer Rabbit would sneak on in and grab up them goobers by the handfuls. It got so bad that when Brer Fox came to the goober patch, he could hardly find a pea to call his own.

Well, Brer Fox, he was plenty mad that he'd worked so hard on those peas only to have them eaten by someone else. He suspected that Brer Rabbit was to blame for this, but the rascally rabbit had covered his tracks so well that Brer Fox couldn't catch him. So Brer Fox came up with a plan. He found a smooth spot in his fence where a cunning rabbit could sneak in, and he set a trap for Brer Rabbit at that spot. He tied a rope to a nearby hickory sapling and bent it nearly double. Then he took the other end of the rope and made a loop knot that he fastened with a trigger right around the hole in the fence. If anybody came through the crack to steal his peas, the knot would tighten around their body, the sapling would spring upright, and they would be left hanging from the tree for everyone to see.

The next morning, Brer Rabbit came a-slipping through the hole in the fence. At once, the trigger sprung, the knot tightened on his forelegs, and the hickory tree snapped upright, quick as you please. Brer Rabbit found himself swung aloft betwixt the heaven and the earth, swinging from the hickory sapling. He couldn't go up and he couldn't go down. He just went back and forth. Brer Rabbit was in a fix, no mistake. He was trying to come up with some glib explanation for Brer Fox when he heard someone a-rumbling and a-bumbling down the road. It was Brer Bear, looking for a bee-tree so he could get him some honey. As soon as Brer Rabbit saw Brer Bear, he came up with a plan to get himself free.

"Howdy, Brer Bear," he called cheerfully. Brer Bear squinted around here and there, wondering where the voice had come from. Then he looked up and saw Brer Rabbit swinging from the sapling.

"Howdy Brer Rabbit," he rumbled. "How are you this morning?"

"Middling, Brer Bear," Rabbit replied. "Just middling."

Brer Bear was wondering why Brer Rabbit was up in the tree, so he asked him about it. Brer Rabbit grinned and said that he was earning a dollar-a-minute from Brer Fox.

"A dollar-a-minute!" Brer Bear exclaimed. "What for?"

"I'm keeping the crows away from his goober patch," Brer Rabbit explained, and went on to say that Brer Fox was paying a dollar-a-minute to whomever would act as a scarecrow for him.

Well, Brer Bear liked the sound of that. He had a big family to feed, and he could use the money.

When Brer Rabbit asked him if he would like to have the job, Brer Bear agreed. Brer Rabbit showed him how to bend the sapling down and remove the knot from his forepaws. When Brer Rabbit was free, Brer Bear climbed into the knot and soon he was hanging aloft betwixt heaven and earth, swing to and from the sapling and growling at the birds to keep them away from the goober patch.

Brer Rabbit laughed and laughed at the sight of Brer Bear up in the sapling. He scampered down the road to Brer Fox's place and told him that his trap was sprung and the goober thief was hanging from the hickory tree. Brer Fox grabbed his walking stick and ran down the road after Brer Rabbit. When he saw Brer Bear hanging there, Brer Fox called him a goober thief. Brer Fox ranted and raved and threatened to hit Brer Bear with his walking stick. He yelled so loud that Brer Bear didn't have time to explain nothing!

Brer Rabbit knew that Brer Bear would be plenty mad at him when he found out he had been tricked, and so he ran down the road and hid in the mud beside the pond, so that only his eyeballs stuck out, making him look like a big old bullfrog. By and by, a very grumpy Brer Bear came lumbering down the road.

"Howdy, Brer Bullfrog," Brer Bear said when he saw Brer Rabbit's eyes sticking out of the mud.

"You seen Brer Rabbit anywhere?"

"Brer Rabbit jest ran on down the road," he told the grumpy Brer Bear in a deep croaking voice that sounded just like the voice of a frog. Brer Bear thanked him and trotted down the road, growling fiercely.

When Brer Bear was out of sight, Brer Rabbit jumped out of the mud. He washed himself off in the pond and then scampered home, chuckling to himself at how he'd escaped from Brer Fox and Brer Bear, and already thinking up a new way to get into Brer Fox's goober patch to get him some peas to eat.