



Adapted from the Southern USA folk tale by Chip Colquhoun

Illustration by Heather Rose

Brer Bunny has his own title for this story: he calls it “The Day of Great Shame”. Let me tell you why.

But first, I should probably make sure you know who Brer Bunny is. Brer Bunny lived back in the day when animals talked more than humans.

(You might think animals don't talk anymore. That's not entirely true. It's just that, today, humans talk so much that animals couldn't get a word in edgeways – so many

animals don't talk anymore simply because they're out of practice.)

In those days, it was the animals who built the roads, animals who made clothes, and animals who worked the farms.

Except for Brer Bunny. He didn't do any work at all. If he wanted food, he wasn't patient enough to wait for it to grow. Instead, he would go to someone else's farm and take *their* food instead.

Some of the animals would try to catch Bunny. Some even wanted to eat him, just to teach him a lesson.

But Bunny was far too quick for them, and would tease them – saying things like...

“You’ll never catch me, Tortoise – your shell’s too heavy!”

...or...

“You’ll never catch me, Wolf – your ears are too large!”

...or...

“You’ll never catch me, Byson – your fur’s too messy!”

Bunny never thought about what he was saying. He didn’t care that his words made Tortoise, Wolf, Byson, and all the other animals cry. In fact, Bunny didn’t really think or care about anything at all – except for himself.

“After all,” he would say, “the most important person to me is me – and so the only person I need to look after is me, ain’t it!”

Brer Fox knew all of this about

Brer Bunny. Fox had even had a few vegetables stolen from his farm by Bunny – so he was one of those who wanted to teach Bunny a lesson. And, because he was a fox, Brer Fox also liked the idea of *eating* Bunny to teach him a lesson.

And, at the start of this story, Brer Fox had the perfect idea.

He went into his farm shed and began making a bunny out of wood. Then he covered his pretend bunny with a thick, black, sticky goo called tar.

He stood back to admire his work: he’d made a black, sticky bunny.

It looked very realistic – if I hadn’t told you it was a pretend bunny, you might have gone to stroke it. But if you did that, you would soon find that your hand was stuck to the bunny – and you wouldn’t be able to take it back.

Fox was sure he’d made the perfect trap for Brer Bunny.

Then Brer Fox carefully placed the tar bunny in his farm (he wore gloves to make sure he didn't stick to it himself). He put the pretend bunny in a position to look like it was eating some of Fox's vegetables.

Last of all, Fox went home and looked out from his window to see what would happen.

Sure enough, it wasn't long before Brer Bunny came a-hopping along to steal some vegetables from Fox's farm.

At first, Brer Bunny didn't notice the tar bunny; he was too busy sniffing around to find the juiciest turnips to steal.

When Brer Bunny *did* notice the tar bunny, his ears went flat and his eyes went narrow. He puffed out his chest, marched up to the tar bunny, and said,

"Oy! You! Get out of here! This is *my* farm to steal from! Go away!"

The tar bunny didn't move, and didn't say a word.

Brer Bunny frowned. "Hey! I

said 'Oy!' Don't ignore me! What, can't you speak? Well just push off – I don't want you here! I'm stealing these turnips, not you...!"

Still the tar bunny didn't move, and didn't say a word.

Brer Bunny lifted his fist. "Now look 'ere! If you don't get goin', I'm gonna thump yer! I will! I'll thump yer! So go on! Get!"

Still the tar bunny didn't move, and didn't say a word.

Brer Bunny shook his head, and said, "Alright, I warned yer! I'm gonna thump yer! Here...!"

...and Brer Bunny *punched* the tar bunny as hard as he could.

The tar bunny didn't move, and didn't say a word.

And now the tar bunny held Bunny's fist.

Brer Bunny tried to yank his fist back, but the tar bunny wouldn't let go.

Getting even more angry now, Bunny began to shout. "Oy! Let go! You'd better let go of me right

now, or... or... or I'll hit you with me *other* fist!"

Still the tar bunny didn't move, didn't say a word, and didn't let go.

Brer Bunny shook his head, and said, "Alright, I warned yer! Here comes me other fist... *Now!*"

...and Brer Bunny punched the tar bunny as hard as he could with his other fist.

The tar bunny didn't move, didn't say a word, and didn't let go of Bunny's fist.

Either of them.

Brer Bunny tried to yank his fists back – both of them – but the tar bunny wouldn't let go.

Getting increasingly irate now, Bunny began to yell. "Hey! Let go! You'd better let go of me right now, or... or... or I'll *kick* yer! I will! I'll kick yer...!"

Still the tar bunny didn't move, didn't say a word, and didn't let go.

Brer Bunny shook his head, and said, "Alright, I warned yer! I'm gonna kick yer! *Here...!*"

...and Brer Bunny kicked the tar bunny as hard as he could.

The tar bunny didn't move, didn't say a word, and didn't let go of Bunny's fists.

Or his foot.

Brer Bunny tried to yank his fists and his foot back, but the tar bunny *still* wouldn't let go.

Growing incandescent with rage now, Bunny began to screech. "*He-e-ey!* Let go! You'd better let go of me right now, or... or... or I'll kick yer with me *other* foot! I will! I'll *kick* yer with me *other* foot...!"

Still the tar bunny didn't move, didn't say a word, and didn't let go.

Brer Bunny shook his head, and said, "Alright, I warned yer! I'm gonna kick yer with me other foot! *Here...!*"

...and Brer Bunny kicked the tar bunny as hard as he could with his other foot.

The tar bunny didn't move, didn't say a word, and didn't let go of Bunny's fists.

Or his feet.

Brer Bunny hung off the side of the tar bunny, yelling and wriggling and screaming and writhing – but it didn't make any difference. After a few minutes, Bunny got tired of all the shouting and the struggling, and his body went limp.

He realised he'd been caught in a trap.

He realised he'd been thinking of himself so much that he hadn't really been thinking *at all*.

He was full of shame.

And, as he began to cry, he heard the laughter of Brer Fox coming out from his house to fetch him.

"Ha, Brer Bunny!" Fox said. "I've got you now! You're coming with me to my cooking pot; I'm gonna eat me some delicious rabbit stew for dinner tonight!"

Brer Fox peeled Bunny away from the tar bunny (using his gloves again, of course), and set off carrying Bunny to the cooking pot in his kitchen.

Bunny could do nothing but cry. Cry and think. He thought of how he should have done more thinking. If he had been more thoughtful, he wouldn't have tried to scare the tar bunny away. A thoughtful person would have been happy to share.

And if he'd been more thoughtful, he certainly wouldn't have tried to hit or kick the tar bunny. A thoughtful person would never have done that.

Bunny thought and thought about how he wished he'd been more thoughtful. If he'd been more thoughtful, he would be hopping about in that thorny briar patch right now, instead of dangling from Fox's arms...

As Bunny thought and thought about being more thoughtful...

...suddenly, he had a thought.

"Oh, Fox," Bunny said. "Thank you so much."

Fox smiled and said, "You're welcome!"

Then Fox stopped.

Why was Bunny saying “Thank you”?

Fox looked at Bunny and said, “Whaddayer mean ‘Thank you’? I’m gonna *eat yer!*”

Bunny nodded. “I know! Thank you! You’re so kind to me! Anyone who wanted to hurt me would throw me into that thorny briar patch over there – but not you. You’re so kind to me. I’m so happy right now.”

That annoyed Fox a little bit; he had wanted to teach Bunny a lesson, not make him happy. So he said, “Oh, don’t thank me Bunny – I’m gonna hurt yer! I’m gonna cook you so hot you’ll boil!”

Bunny smiled. “Oh, thank you Fox! That’s so kind of you! Being boiled and eaten is so much better than being thrown into that thorny briar patch over there...”

Fox grew increasingly irate. “I don’t think you understand, Bunny. I’m not just gonna boil yer. I’m

gonna take my tweezers and pluck out all the hairs on your body one by one!”

Bunny laughed happily. “Oh *thank you, Fox, thank you!* That’s so incredibly kind of you! Being plucked and boiled and eaten is so much better than being thrown into that thorny briar patch over there...!”

Now Fox was incandescent with rage. “Oh, you’re *happy* are yer? Well I’ll show you! You want to see how kind I want to be to yer? Well how about this: I’m gonna throw you into *that there thorny briar patch...!*”

Bunny looked terrified, and cried, “No! Please, Fox! No! Don’t...”

But it was too late: Fox used all his strength to throw Brer Bunny deep into the thorny briar patch.

Now Fox was satisfied. He grinned and rubbed his hands together.

And then his smile vanished.

Because Bunny hopped out of the briar patch, and began hopping away as fast as ever. Over his shoulder, Bunny called, "Thank you, Fox! Thank you for letting me go...!"

Ever since that day, Brer Bunny has made it a rule to be more thoughtful. You'll be able to find many other stories about Brer Bunny, but you won't find many where he gets angry and punches or kicks. Instead, you'll find him thinking: sometimes to teach lessons to others, and sometimes to *help* others... though sometimes just to get something delicious to eat.

But Bunny will never forget *this* story – the one he calls "The Day of Great Shame".

That is, "The Day of Great Shame... for Fox!"

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