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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Brer Rabbit: Brother Bear's Big House (3/11)

"Out of all the animals," Uncle Remus began as the little boy looked at him curiously, "old Brer Bear had the biggest and warmest house. I don't know why or how, but that's just the way it was, as it was told to me. And if I can help it, I'll never deceive you or lead you into any bad habits. Your dad hung around with me for a long time, and if you ask him, he'll tell you I never lied to him while he was paying attention—not if I know myself.



"Well, old Brer Bear had this big house I'm telling you about. If he ever bragged about it, I never heard, but that's what he had—a big house with plenty of room for him and his family. And he didn't have more than he needed, because his



whole family was big and hefty, what folks call naturally plump.

"He had a son named Simmon, and a daughter

named Sue, not to mention his old wife, and they all lived together day after day and night after night. And when one of them went out, they were expected home by mealtime, if not before. They got along just fine, washing their faces and hands in the same washbasin on the back porch and drying on the same towel, just like all happy families do.



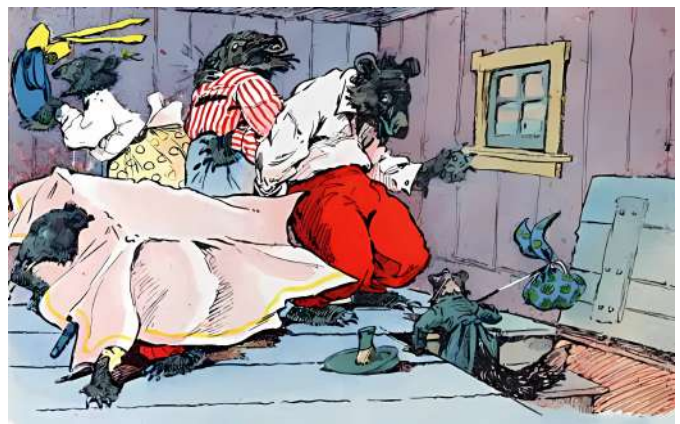
"Well, time went on, and things changed, as you'd expect, and one day there was a loud knocking on Brer Bear's door. Brer Bear hollered out, 'Who's knocking at this time of year, before the corn's planted or the cotton's growing?' The one at the door made a big noise and rattled the hinges. Brer Bear shouted, 'Don't tear down my house! Who are you, and what do you want?' And the answer came, 'I'm one, and therefore not two. If you're more than one, who are you, and what are you doing in there?' Brer Bear replied, 'I'm one, and almost two, but I'd appreciate it if you told me your full family name.' Then the answer came.



"I'm the knocker and the mover both, and if I can't climb over, I'll crawl under if you just give me the word.

Some call me Brer Polecat, and some call me a long

word that's not worth remembering, but I want to move in. It's mighty cold out here, and everyone I meet tells me it's mighty warm in there where you are.' Then old Brer Bear said, 'It's warm enough for those who stay inside, but not nearly as warm for those on the outside. What do you really want?' Brer Polecat replied, 'I want a lot of things I don't get. I'm a mighty good housekeeper, but I notice that not many folks want me to keep house for them.' Brer Bear said, 'I don't have room for a housekeeper; we barely have room to sleep. If you can keep my house on the outside, you're welcome to it.'



"Brer Polecat said, 'You may think you don't have room, but I bet you have as much room as anyone I know. If you let me in just once, I guarantee I'll make all the room I need.'"



Uncle Remus paused to see how the little boy would react. He closed his eyes as if he were tired, but when

he opened them again, he saw a faint smile on the child's face. "It won't hurt you to laugh a little bit, honey. Brer Polecat came into Brer Bear's house, and his breath was so bad that everyone had to get out—and he

stayed and stayed until time itself couldn't chase him away."