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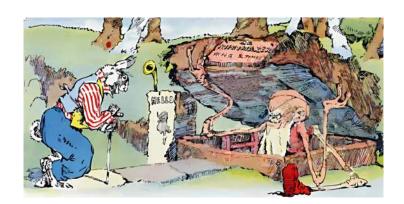
Brer Rabbit: The Big Race (4/11)

One hot summer day, while the little boy was playing near Uncle Remus's cabin, a big, dark cloud appeared in the sky. It brought a strong wind that blew leaves and dust everywhere. Then, with a flash of lightning and a loud crash of thunder, the boy ran straight to Uncle Remus, who was standing in his doorway. "Well, now!" Uncle Remus exclaimed, before the thunder even faded. "That wind and rain remind me of the time when old Brer Rabbit set up a big race to entertain the other animals. It was the funniest race you ever heard of.

"Brer Rabbit went deep into the woods until he found the Rainmaker's house. He knocked on the door, went inside, and asked the Rainmaker if he could set up a race between Brer Dust and Cousin Rain to see which one was the fastest. The Rainmaker

grumbled and fussed, but finally, he agreed. He said if it was anyone but Brer Rabbit asking, he wouldn't have even considered it.

"So they set a day for the race, and then Brer Rabbit went to tell all the animals the news. They didn't know how Brer Rabbit knew about the race, but they all wanted to see it. Brer Rabbit and the Rainmaker planned for the race to happen right down the middle of the big road. When the day came, Brer Rabbit made sure the animals were in their spots—Brer Bear stood at the bend in the road, Brer Wolf a little farther down, and Brer Fox at the crossroads. Brer Coon, Brer Possum, and the others were scattered up and down the road.

"To those waiting, it seemed like time had stopped. Brer Bear growled, Brer Wolf howled, and Brer Possum laughed, but after a while, a cloud appeared in the sky. It wasn't a big cloud, but Brer Rabbit knew Cousin Rain was inside, along with Uncle Wind. The cloud crept closer until it was right over the big road, then it dipped down a bit like it was letting Cousin Rain out for a fair start. Sure enough, Cousin Rain got out, and so did Uncle Wind.

"And then, gentlemen, the race began! Uncle Wind helped them both—he had his bellows with him and he blew it hard! Brer

Dust jumped up from where he was lying and came down the road, swirling and twirling. He hit Brer Bear first, then Brer Wolf, then Brer Fox, and after that, all the other animals, nearly choking them all! Never in your life have you heard such coughing and sneezing, such snorting and wheezing! They all looked like they were painted red with dust. Brer Bear sneezed so hard that he had to lay down in the road, and Brer Dust nearly buried him, and it was the same with the other animals—they got dust in their ears, noses, and eyes.

"And then Cousin Rain came along, chasing Brer Dust, and nearly drowned them all. He left them covered in mud, and they were worse off than before. It took them a long time to get the mud out of their eyes and ears, and when they finally could see a little bit, they noticed that Brer Rabbit, instead of being covered in mud, was as dry as a chip—if not drier!

"That made them so mad that they all took off after him, trying their best to catch him, but if there's one thing Brer Rabbit's got, it's fast feet, and in no time, the other animals couldn't see a trace of him!

All the same, Brer Rabbit hadn't planned on running two races that day."

"But, Uncle Remus," the little boy asked, "who won the race, Brer Dust or Cousin Rain?" The old man shifted in his chair and rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "Well," he answered carefully, "they say that when Cousin Rain couldn't see Brer Dust anymore, he thought he'd won. But he called out, 'Brer Dust, where are you?' And Brer Dust called back, 'You'll have to excuse me; I fell down in the mud and can't run anymore!'"