



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

How the Race Was Won

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Things had been rather dull in the forest all winter, and when springtime came, Mr. Fox thought it would be great fun to have a race in which all the animals could take part.

"It will be nice, brisk-feeling weather," he told Jack Rabbit and his brother Bennie. "The bushes will not be too thick, and the ground nice and clear of vines, so we can have a good path all the way through."

Bennie and Jack Rabbit said they would join the race, and off went Mr. Fox to call on Mr. Bear.

"You are such a swift runner, Mr. Bear," he said, with his sweetest smile, "that the rest of us will have little show beside you, but it will give us all a chance to see how swift we really are."

Mr. Bear was pleased to have Mr. Fox think he was a fast runner and said he would be glad to join the race and that he would certainly give them all a good start, as he was quite well aware that he was a fast runner.

Mr. Fox smiled to himself as he went along to Mr. Squirrel's house, for he really thought that Mr. Bear was a very clumsy fellow. "Well, let him think so," he said to himself. "It will be all the easier for me to win, with all the others so sure they will finish first in the race."

Mr. Squirrel said he would be glad to join but that he felt he would be taking unfair advantage of the others; he was such a swift-footed animal.

"Oh, that is all right," said Mr. Fox. "We know you will win before we start, but it will be great fun to try to beat you, Mr. Squirrel."

"I shall have an easy time of it," laughed Mr. Fox to himself as he ran along to Billy Possum's house. "I know well enough I can outrun them all."

Billy Possum said he would be delighted to join the race, that he was a pretty swift runner, but if the others were willing to take a chance with him, he would like nothing better.

Mr. Raccoon was glad to join in the race and smiled very broadly when Mr. Fox asked him because he felt it would be so easy to bound past the rest of the runners and win the prize.

"Well, they all seem pretty sure of the prize but the poor Rabbit brothers," said Mr. Fox, "and they really do not stand a bit of chance anyway; they can run and hop pretty fast, but not fast enough to win the race. Well, it is settled before we start that I will get the prize. Now I believe a gold medal would look well around my neck."

Mr. Fox got all the animals to contribute toward the medal, and each one felt sure it would belong to him at the end of the race.

Every morning Jack Rabbit and his brother Bennie hopped and ran through the woods before the day set for the race, and everyone smiled pityingly, for they felt that the Rabbit brothers were sure to come in last.

Jack Rabbit and Bennie Rabbit were very much alike in looks; the only way to tell Bennie from Jack was to look at their hind legs.

Bennie Rabbit had a little white spot on his left hind leg, while Jack was all one color.

Everyone but the Rabbit brothers was at the big tree at the road by the forest before the sun was up on the morning of the race. They were to run from there to the big rock on the other side of the woods, and there, on a bush, was hung the gold medal.

"Where is Jack Rabbit and his brother?" asked someone.

"Here comes one of them now," said Mr. Fox. "I'll have to wait until I see his left hind leg to know which one it is."

"It is Bennie," said Mr. Possum. "I can see the white spot."

"I am sorry to tell you my brother is sick and cannot run with us," said Mr. Rabbit, "and that is why I am late. I had to go for the doctor."

No one paid much attention to Mr. Rabbit; they were all too busy getting a good position to start from.

"Are you all ready?" called out Mr. Fox.

"All ready," came the reply.

"Go!" cried Mr. Fox, at the same time starting off with leaps that sent him ahead of the others.

Oh, how they all ran and leaped and bounded through the woods! Mr. Fox thought he was having an easy time, and so did the others. First, Mr. Bear would



get ahead, and then Mr. Fox and Mr. Squirrel went like a streak of lightning. Mr. Possum and Mr. Coon did pretty well too, but each one was so intent on winning he did not pay attention to the others.

But when they were in sight of the rock, there they saw Bennie Rabbit sitting with the medal around his neck.

Of course, Mr. Fox stopped, and so did the others, and just stared. "How in the world did he do it?" they asked.

"I do not remember seeing him pass me," said Mr. Fox.

"Nor I," said the others, but there was nothing to do. He was there and had the medal, and that was proof he had won it.

They all congratulated Bennie Rabbit, but it was plain they were all disappointed.

A little later in the day, Jack Rabbit said to Bennie, "I don't know how I will ever get off this white paint. I'll have to cut off the hair, I guess, and stay in bed till it grows again."

"It wasn't worth the trouble, anyway," said Bennie. "I cannot eat this gold medal, and Mr. Raccoon said he would give me a nice head of lettuce for it, so I think I'll trade it off."

"I kept so still behind that rock waiting for them to come in sight that I had a cramp in my leg."

"You had an easier time than I did," said Jack. "When I left the others and ran home, Mr. Dog chased me, and I almost lost my life."

"Well, we fooled them, anyway," said Bennie, "and I guess we will not hear any more about fast running for a while."

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