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Inquisitive Mr. Possum

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It was Mr. Owl who gave the wood folk the warning by calling out one night, "To whom it may concern!" At least the wood people knew that was what he meant, but anyone else might have thought he just cried "To whoo! To whoo!"

So when all the animals both great and small had gathered around his tree he told them that in his opinion it was to be a very, very hard winter.

That of course meant that they must begin right away to lay up stores for the cold, snowed-in days, and everyone bestirred himself at once to do this.

Even Mrs. Rabbit, who seldom made much preparation for the winter days, began to do up preserves; all the small bunnies were sent out with their baskets to gather corn and beans and beet tops and all sorts of good things. "If we cannot get them green," said Mrs. Rabbit to her neighbor, Mrs. Squirrel, "we can eat them stewed; but of course we much prefer them in their natural state."

Mrs. Squirrel, to encourage her neighbor in laying up winter stores, gave her a big basketful of walnuts which Mrs. Rabbit pickled, and some say those were the first walnuts ever pickled.

But this story is not about pickled walnuts; it is about the nice preserves that Mrs. Rabbit put up and the accident that befell Mr. Possum.

Everybody that passed Mrs. Rabbit's home for many days found it hard to get by her door, for such spicy, nice-smelling odors as came through the open windows made everyone feel hungry.

Mr. Possum was especially interested when he found that Mrs. Rabbit was, among other things, putting up a great deal of canned corn, and he decided that when it was dark he would just take a peek into her pantry window and see how many cans she had.

Right in front of the window was a tree and one limb hung low enough so that Mr. Possum with a little care could easily swing himself from it and reach the pantry window.

Now this might have been safe enough if the limb had been a good one, but it wasn't, and when Mr. Possum ran along it, before he could even get ready to swing, "crackle, snap," went the limb and down went Mr. Possum into a barrel of whitewash Mrs. Rabbit had ready to use on her little house.



And that was not the worst of it. When he ran home, so scared he didn't remember running at all after it was over, Mrs. Possum didn't know him, but thought he was some terrible white creature come to carry on her children, and slammed the door right in his face.

All night Mr. Possum had to sit outside, the whitewash dripping from his coat, and in the morning, bright and early, all the little Bunnies and Mr. and Mrs. Rabbit, as well, were standing in front of the house, looking at him.

Mrs. Rabbit wanted to know what he meant by carrying off some of her whitewash. "I tracked you right to your own door-yard, so you need not deny it," she said.

Mr. Possum did not try to deny it, for what was the use. He was all covered in the white stuff? But he did try to tell Mr. and Mrs. Rabbit that it was all an accident, that he was just running along the limb and off it broke and he happened to fall into the whitewash.

Mrs. Possum had found out it was her husband by this time, of course, and she came out to say that what Mrs. Rabbit could think they wanted of her whitewash was more than she could tell.

Mrs. Rabbit wiggled her nose and looked very wise. "Well," she said, "if that is true, Mr. Possum, that it was all an accident, why, of course, that is all there is to it; but you must admit that it did look suspicious."

Mr. Possum admitted that it did, and off ran the Rabbit family for home; but it was a long time before Mr. Possum could go abroad again, for the white coat he wore was to be plainly seen in the daytime or at night.

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