**Big Liz**

**A Maryland Ghost Story**

**retold by**

**S.E. Schlosser**

The Master of the plantation was a firm supporter of the Confederate President and had committed to send as much food as he could to the Southern army. Things were going well at first, until the Yankees began attacking the Master's supply lines. The Master suspected a traitor among his slaves, and soon discovered that the Yankee spy was a slave-woman named Big Liz. She was a behemoth of a girl who could pick up two full-grown pigs, one under each arm, and cart them over to the slaughterhouse without assistance. If he confronted her directly and she fought back, she would take him to pieces.

So the Master came up with a different plan to rid himself of the spy. He approached the giant girl and asked her to assist him with a special task. He told her that President Jefferson Davis had entrusted him with a large chest full of gold. To keep it out of Yankee hands, he wanted to bury the chest where it would never be found. The girl's eyes gleamed when she heard this false report. The Master knew she was already planning to betray the existence of the chest to the Yankees.

The Master made Big Liz carry the heavy trunk several miles out into the swamp land and asked her to dig a deep hole for the trunk. He sat at his leisure while she worked and strained for hours against the muddy ground, which kept oozing back into the hole. When the slave girl was completely exhausted, the Master decreed the hole to be large enough for his war chest. Wearily, Big Liz dropped the shovel and pulled the heavy chest down until it lay at her feet. Then she started to climb out of the deep hole. But the Master barred her way, and Big Liz gazed up at him in sudden fear as he loomed over her. "Traitor! Yankee spy!" The Master hissed. "There is only one path open to a traitor."

The Master swung his sword at her, and the sharp edge of the blade cut cleaning through the slave girl's neck. Her head went rolling away into the tall grass as her body toppled across the chest. The Master heaped dirt over the chest and the body of slave girl who had betrayed him. Briefly, he considered finding her head and burying it in the pit with her body, but it was too dark to go wandering in the dangerous marshland, and he knew that scavengers would make short work of the head when they found it.

As the Master walked toward home through the dark swamp, he became aware of a prickling sensation at the back of his neck, as if someone were watching him. The Master walked faster as clouds obscured the light of the moon. The Master's teeth chattered as a breeze cut through him like the sharpened blade of the sword at his side, and his straining ears picked up the sound of footsteps on the path behind him.

The Master was filled with a terrible, superstitious dread of demons and witches and ghosts. He broke out into a panicked run, fleeing up the path as fast as his legs would carry him. To his relief, he saw the lights of his house rise before him, and knew he was home.

As he rounded the back corner of his house, he was confronted by a massive, dirt-encrusted figure that glowed with blue fire. The smell of rotting leaves and marsh grass filled his nostrils as his eyes raced up and up the tall creature, until they rested on the stump of its neck, where a head had resided only an hour before. Then he heard a chuckle from the creature's side, and he saw the phantom's head tucked under her arm.

The Master stumbled backward, gabbling desperately in fear as the ghost placed her head upon the ground with one hand and grabbed the collar of his shirt with the other. The murdered slave girl snapped the Master's neck in two and dropped his dead body to the ground beneath his bedroom window. Then Big Liz gathered up her severed head and vanished into the darkness.

They say that on the anniversary of her death, the ghost of Big Liz still may be seen roaming the swamp lands near her old home. Anyone foolish enough to walk near her grave will be driven away by the phantom, which to this day still defends the place where the Confederate chest is buried.

**You can read more Maryland folktales and ghost stories in** [**Spooky Maryland**](http://americanfolklore.net/spooky-maryland.html) **by S.E. Schlosser.**

**Boo Hag**

**retold by S.E. Schlosser**

**from** [**Spooky North Carolina**](http://americanfolklore.net/folklore/2009/08/spooky_north_carolina.html)

You know how they say some folks are lucky at cards and some are lucky at love? Well, that fit Bobby Hansen to a ‘T’. He was the [best poker](http://americanfolklore.net/folklore/2010/05/boo_hag.html%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) player in the county, but somehow he couldn’t find himself a bride. Oh, he proposed to several girls, and even got accepted by a few. But they always got cold feet a day or two before the wedding, and it was bye-bye Bobby.

After the third time, Bobby was mighty discouraged, and his Pa felt real sore for him. They worked together in the family grocery store, and Bobby would sometimes sit on top of the pickle barrel and tell his Pa all his woes. And his Pa told him to hang in there, because a nice lady was on her way. Neither of them believed it, but it made both of them feel better to hear it said. Well, the day after their latest talk, the old woman who poled her barge through the swamp to deliver milk and eggs to the grocery store had a long talk with Bobby’s Pa. Seems she had this daughter who was hankering after a husband with a good steady [job](http://americanfolklore.net/folklore/2010/05/boo_hag.html), and the old woman thought Bobby would do [the job](http://americanfolklore.net/folklore/2010/05/boo_hag.html) nicely. She suggested they introduce the pair at the next dance, and Bobby’s Pa agreed.

The night of the dance, Bobby’s Pa insisted that his son dress in his best. Bobby was dragging his feet a little, remembering all those women who played him false and not wanting to go, but his Pa dragged him out anyway. Well, the moment Bobby clapped eyes on the dark-eyed, red-lipped girl from the swamp, he was head over heels in love. Her eyes sparkled like the sunlight on the bay. Her skin was as creamy as new milk. Her voice was low and sweet.

The pair cuddled and cooed and waltzed the whole night long, and come sunrise Bobby was all for bringing his new love before the visiting priest who delivered his sermons in the grocery store (since there weren’t no church in that vicinity) and getting married right away. Well the girl was willing to get married, but not by a priest.

“Let’s just go to Beaumont and have the judge marry us,” she said to Bobby, and he was so smitten he agreed, though it would have been quicker and easier to just walk a mile down the road to see the priest.

By the next evening they were wed, and Bobby brought his pretty bride to the nice little cottage he rented just down the road from the family grocery. It had a nice front porch with a swing, a big bedroom on the second floor and a big attic with a window that could be made up into a second guestroom should his new mother-in-law care to visit from her [home](http://americanfolklore.net/folklore/2010/05/boo_hag.html) in the swamp.

After fixing him a nice dinner, Bobby’s new bride sat awhile in the rocking chair near their bed while Bobby yawned and watched her fondly. She cuddled under the blanket and knitted and hummed, and Bobby’s eyes grew heavy. He didn’t wake up until early morning, when his new bride crept into bed all hot and sweaty and fell asleep at once. When he asked her where she’d been, she wouldn’t answer him. Bobby was mighty sore that his bride had snuck out on him on their wedding night, but when she got snappish and her eyes blazed like they did when he questioned her, he grew frightened and backed down.

Life took on an odd pattern for Bobby. During the day, everything was perfect. His wife was sweet and pretty and loving. She kept the house sparkling clean and cooked him wonderful meals. But each night she refused to come to bed after supper. Like their wedding night, she sat up singing and rocking and knitting until he was asleep and did not come to bed til just afore dawn. She was always sweaty and cranky when she came to bed, and went to sleep before Bobby could question her.

Bobby was very confused and upset by this behavior, and finally confided in his Pa one morning after opening up the grocery store. Bobby’s Pa was awful worried. The visiting priest had gone on to his next parish, and there was no one they could consult but the local conjure woman. So he sent Bobby to her with a couple of chickens as a gift.

The conjure woman knew all about hoodoo magic and was an excellent herbalist. Local folks went to her when they were sick, on account of the doctor lived nigh on twenty miles away. When she heard Bobby’s story, she told him to pretend to go to sleep that night and watch what his new bride did. Then he was to come back and tell her everything. Bobby agreed.

The next evening, he pretended to fall asleep while his bride rocked and sang in her chair. Then he followed her up to the attic and watched through the crack in the open door as she sat down at the spinning wheel and spun off her skin, leaving only pulsing red muscles and blue veins. She was a terrifying sight and she sprang through the window and flew away into the night. Bobby ran out to the privy and was sick after he saw her. Who, what was this monster he had married? He was still trembling and in shock when his bride, looking like a normal person again, crept into bed at dawn, and he had trouble behaving normally at breakfast.

As soon as he could get away, Bobby ran to the home of the conjure woman and told her about the spinning wheel and the terrible skinless creature who flew away from his attic. “A boo-hag,” the conjure woman said at once. “You’ve married a boo-hag.”

“What’s a boo-hag?” asked Bobby. “A Boo Hag is a witch and a shape-shifter,” said the conjure woman. “She lures men into her trap and then delivers them to her Boo-Daddy, who eats their flesh and gnaws their bones. And that’s what she’ll do to you if you don’t get rid of her first.”

The conjure woman told Bobby to get himself some blue paint. As soon as the boo-hag left the house that night, he was to spread blue paint on every window frame and every door frame and make sure it was two coats thick. A boo-hag couldn’t fly through a window or door that was painted blue. And if she didn’t get back into her skin before dawn, she would be trapped without it, and be revealed for the monster she was. So he was to leave one tiny window unpainted, and keep it open a sliver so the boo-hag could squeeze through. Then he was to fill up her skin with salt and pepper, which would burn her up from the inside out. And Bobby promised to do exactly as the conjure woman said.

That night, Bobby lingered over his dinner, looking with sad eyes at the pretty woman sitting opposite him. He knew she was really a monster inside, but it was so nice to have a little wife in his home. He hated like anything to see her go. But he didn’t want to get eaten by a Boo-Daddy, and that was his fate if she stayed. So he went up to their bedroom and pretended to fall asleep while she rocked and sang and knitted. Then he followed her quietly upstairs and put salt and pepper into her skin after her ugly red-muscled blue-veined figure had flown out the window to her Boo-Daddy. He spent the rest of the night painting over every door and window frame with blue paint, leaving only one small unpainted window open in the cellar. He nailed it up so that it would open no further than a crack, just as the conjure woman instructed him. Then he hid himself behind a large chest of drawers up in the attic to wait for the boo-hag.

Just before dawn, the boo-hag came flying up to the attic window. As soon as she touched the blue frame, she gave a shriek of pain and rage. Bobby listened as she flew around the house, testing each window and door and howling like a banshee when it burned her skinless hands. Then she found the little window in the cellar, and he heard the thump as she landed beside it, followed by a painful whimpering sound as she squeezed and squeezed herself through the narrow opening, her skinless red muscles and blue veins tearing painfully against the rough wood.

The boo-hag ran up three flights of stairs into the attic and squeezed and squeezed into her skin as fast as she could. She just barely got it on when the first light of dawn shone over the horizon. And that was when the salt and pepper did their work, burning the boo-hags body from the inside out. With a scream of agony, she flung herself out the attic window. The glass shattered everywhere as she tried to fly away, tearing at the skin to get it off. But it was too late. She exploded into tiny pieces right over the swamp, and the alligators had them a mighty feast of cooked boo-hag for breakfast that morning.

So Bobby was once again without a wife. But bachelorhood looked much better to him after that, and he never went looking for a wife again. ‘Course, after he made a pile of money in oil, the girls started chasing him. But that’s another story!

**Brer Fox Catches Old Man Tarrypin**

**A Georgia Folktale**

**retold by**

**S. E. Schlosser**

Well now, [Brer](http://americanfolklore.net/folklore/2010/07/brer_fox_catches_old_man_tarry.html) Rabbit had made [friends](http://americanfolklore.net/folklore/2010/07/brer_fox_catches_old_man_tarry.html) with Old Man Tarrypin, a big turtle that lived in the pond near his house. Brer Rabbit and Old Man Tarrypin liked to pull tricks on Brer Fox, and that rascally fellow got pretty mad about it.

Since he couldn't catch Brer Rabbit nohow, Brer Fox decided that he'd get even with Old Man Tarrypin instead. He started walking beside the pond every day, hoping to find the turtle out of the water.

One morning, as he was taking his daily stroll, Brer Fox saw Old Man Tarrypin sitting right in the center of the road. The old turtle looked hot and bothered about something. He kept shaking his head back and forth and he was panting like he was out of breath.

"Howdy, Brer Tarrypin," said Brer Fox, stopping beside the old turtle. "What's the matter wid you?"

"I was a-strolling in the field beside my pond when the farmer came along and set it on fire," Old Man Tarrypin gasped. "I had to run and run, but that ol' fire was faster than me, so I curled up in my shell while it passed right over me! My shell is hotter than the noon-day sun, and I think I done singed my tail!"

"Let me have a look," said Brer Fox. So Old Man Tarrypin uncurled his tail and poked it out of his shell. Immediately, Brer Fox grabbed him by the tail and swung him right off the ground.

"I gotcha now, Brer Tarrypin," cried Brer Fox. "You ain't gonna bother me no more!"

Well, Old Man Tarrypin begged and begged Brer Fox not to drown him. He'd rather go back into the fire in the field on [account](http://americanfolklore.net/folklore/2010/07/brer_fox_catches_old_man_tarry.html) of he'd kind of gotten used to being burned.

Brer Fox swung the poor old turtle back and forth by his tail, trying to decide what to do. Putting Old Man Tarrypin into the fire was a tempting idea, but then he remembered how the old turtle had curled up into his shell so the fire couldn't touch him. Brer Fox frowned. Fire was no good, then.

Brer Fox decided to drown Old Man Tarrypin instead. He tucked the turtle under his arm and carried him down to the springhouse by the pond.

"Please, oh please don't drown me," Old Man Tarrypin begged.

"I ain't making no promises," Brer Fox retorted. "You've played too many tricks on me, Brer Tarrypin."

Brer Fox thrust him into the water and began bouncing him up and down.

"Oh, I is drowning," shouted Old Man Tarrypin when his head bounced out of the water. "Don't let go of my tail, Brer Fox or I'll be drowned for sure!"

"That's the idea, Brer Tarrypin," Brer Fox [yelled](http://americanfolklore.net/folklore/2010/07/brer_fox_catches_old_man_tarry.html) back and let go of his tail.

Immediately Old Man Tarrypin splashed down and down into the water and thumped onto the mud on the bottom, kerplicky-splat.

That's when Brer Fox remembered that Old Man Tarrypin lived in the pond, and there was never any fear of him drowning, nohow! He could hear him laughing from the bottom of the pond: "I-dare-ya-ta- come-down-'ere".

Brer Fox jumped up and down in fury. Old Man Tarrypin had escaped him!

From the other side of the pond, Brer Bull Frog called out: "Knee-deep! Knee-deep!"

Brer Fox glared at the pond, and then looked back at Brer Bull Frog. "It's only knee-deep?" he asked suspiciously.

"Knee-deep, knee-deep!" Brer Bull Frog said again.

All the little frogs joined in the chorus then. "Better-believe-it! Better-believe-it!"

Well, thought Brer Fox, if it was only knee deep, then he'd have no trouble catching Old Man Tarrypin.

"Wade-in, wade-in!" croaked Brer Bull Frog.

"Knee-deep, knee-deep!" agreed all the little frogs.

Brer Fox didn't much like water, but he really wanted to catch Old Man Tarrypin. He approached the edge of the pond cautiously. From underneath the water, Old Man Tarrypin laughed at him, and his words bubbled up to Brer Fox: "I-dare-ya-ta- come-down-'ere! I-dare-ya-ta- come-down-'ere."

Well. That did it. Brer Fox ran right up to the edge of the pond. Leaning over, he looked into the water and saw another fox staring at him.

"Dat's-your-brother! Dat's-your-brother," Brer Bull Frog told Brer Fox.

Brer Fox was thrilled. He didn't know he had a brother. Now that there were two foxes, catching Old Man Tarrypin would be a cinch! Brer Fox leaned down to shake hands with his new-found brother, and toppled right down into the deep water of the pond.

All of the frogs laughed and laughed at the trick they had played on Brer Fox, and Old Man Tarrypin started swimming up from the bottom of the pond, his red eyes fixed on Brer Fox's tail. Brer Fox knew that the old turtle wanted to pull him down under that water and drown him, so he learned to swim mighty quick! With much splashing and squirming and kicking, Brer Fox made it to the edge of the pond, where he jumped out and ran away as fast as he could, while Brer Bull Frog laughed and the little frogs shouted with glee.

The last thing he heard as he rounded the corner was the voice of Old Man Tarrypin calling: "I-dare-ya-ta- come-down-'ere".

Brer Fox never messed with Old Man Tarrypin again.

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| **You can read more Georgia folktales in** [**Spooky South**](http://americanfolklore.net/spooky-south.html) **by S.E. Schlosser.**  |

**Brer Rabbit Earns a Dollar-A-Minute**

**A Georgia Folktale**

**retold by**

**S.E. Schlosser**

One fine morning, Brer Fox decided to plant him a patch of goober peas. He set to with a will and before you know it, he had raked and hoed out a beautiful patch of ground and he put in a fine planting of peas. It didn't take too long before those goober vines grew tall and long and the peas ripened up good and smart.

Now Brer Rabbit, he'd watched Brer Fox planting the goobers and he told his children and Miz Rabbit where they could find the patch. Soon as those peas were ripe, the little Rabbits and Brer Rabbit would sneak on in and grab up them goobers by the handfuls. It got so bad that when Brer Fox came to the goober patch, he could hardly find a pea to call his own.

Well, Brer Fox, he was plenty mad that he'd worked so hard on those peas only to have them eaten by someone else. He suspected that Brer Rabbit was to blame for this, but the rascally rabbit had covered his tracks so well that Brer Fox couldn't catch him. So Brer Fox came up with a plan. He found a smooth spot in his fence where a cunning rabbit could sneak in, and he set a trap for Brer Rabbit at that spot. He tied a rope to a nearby hickory sapling and bent it nearly double. Then he took the other end of the rope and made a loop knot that he fastened with a trigger right around the hole in the fence. If anybody came through the crack to steal his peas, the knot would tighten around their body, the sapling would spring upright, and they would be left hanging from the tree for everyone to see.

The next morning, Brer Rabbit came a-slipping through the hole in the fence. At once, the trigger sprung, the knot tightened on his forelegs, and the hickory tree snapped upright, quick as you please. Brer Rabbit found himself swung aloft betwixt the heaven and the earth, swinging from the hickory sapling. He couldn't go up and he couldn't go down. He just went back and forth.

Brer Rabbit was in a fix, no mistake. He was trying to come up with some glib explanation for Brer Fox when he heard someone a-rumbling and a-bumbling down the road. It was Brer Bear, looking for a bee-tree so he could get him some honey. As soon as Brer Rabbit saw Brer Bear, he came up with a plan to get himself free.

"Howdy, Brer Bear," he called cheerfully. Brer Bear squinted around here and there, wondering where the voice had come from. Then he looked up and saw Brer Rabbit swinging from the sapling.

"Howdy Brer Rabbit," he rumbled. "How are you this morning?"

"Middling, Brer Bear," Rabbit replied. "Just middling."

Brer Bear was wondering why Brer Rabbit was up in the tree, so he asked him about it. Brer Rabbit grinned and said that he was earning a dollar-a-minute from Brer Fox.

"A dollar-a-minute!" Brer Bear exclaimed. "What for?"

"I'm keeping the crows away from his goober patch," Brer Rabbit explained, and went on to say that Brer Fox was paying a dollar-a-minute to whomever would act as a scarecrow for him.

Well, Brer Bear liked the sound of that. He had a big family to feed, and he could use the money. When Brer Rabbit asked him if he would like to have the job, Brer Bear agreed. Brer Rabbit showed him how to bend the sapling down and remove the knot from his forepaws. When Brer Rabbit was free, Brer Bear climbed into the knot and soon he was hanging aloft betwixt heaven and earth, swing to and from the sapling and growling at the birds to keep them away from the goober patch.

Brer Rabbit laughed and laughed at the sight of Brer Bear up in the sapling. He scampered down the road to Brer Fox's place and told him that his trap was sprung and the goober thief was hanging from the hickory tree. Brer Fox grabbed his walking stick and ran down the road after Brer Rabbit. When he saw Brer Bear hanging there, Brer Fox called him a goober thief. Brer Fox ranted and raved and threatened to hit Brer Bear with his walking stick. He yelled so loud that Brer Bear didn't have time to explain nothing!

Brer Rabbit knew that Brer Bear would be plenty mad at him when he found out he had been tricked, and so he ran down the road and hid in the mud beside the pond, so that only his eyeballs stuck out, making him look like a big old bullfrog. By and by, a very grumpy Brer Bear came lumbering down the road.

"Howdy, Brer Bullfrog," Brer Bear said when he saw Brer Rabbit's eyes sticking out of the mud. "You seen Brer Rabbit anywhere?"

"Brer Rabbit jest ran on down the road," he told the grumpy Brer Bear in a deep croaking voice that sounded just like the voice of a frog. Brer Bear thanked him and trotted down the road, growling fiercely.

When Brer Bear was out of sight, Brer Rabbit jumped out of the mud. He washed himself off in the pond and then scampered home, chuckling to himself at how he'd escaped from Brer Fox and Brer Bear, and already thinking up a new way to get into Brer Fox's goober patch to get him some peas to eat.

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| **You can read more Georgia folktales in** [**Spooky South**](http://americanfolklore.net/spooky-south.html) **by S.E. Schlosser.**  |
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**Brer Rabbit Falls Down the Well**

**A Georgia Folktale**

**retold by**

**S. E. Schlosser**

One day, [Brer](http://americanfolklore.net/folklore/2010/07/brer_rabbit_falls_down_the_wel.html) Rabbit and Brer Fox and Brer Coon and Brer Bear and a lot of other animals decided to work together to plant a garden full of corn for roasting. They started early in the morning and raked and dug and raked some more, breaking up the hard ground so it would be ready for planting. It was a hot day, and Brer Rabbit got tired mighty quick. But he kept toting off the brush and clearing away the debris 'cause he didn't want no one to call him lazy.

Then Brer Rabbit [got an idea](http://americanfolklore.net/folklore/2010/07/brer_rabbit_falls_down_the_wel.html). "Ow!" he shouted as loudly as he could. "I got me a briar in my hand!" He waved a paw and stuck it into his mouth. The other critters told him he'd better pull out the briar and wash his hand afore it got infected. That was just what Brer Rabbit wanted to hear. He hurried off, looking for a shady spot to take a quick nap. A little ways down the road, he found an old well with a couple of buckets hanging inside it, one at the top, and one down at the bottom.

"That looks like a mighty cool place to take a nap," Brer Rabbit said, and hopped right into the bucket.

Well, Brer Rabbit was mighty heavy - much heavier than the bucket full of water laying at the bottom. When he jumped into the empty bucket, it plummeted right down to the bottom of the well. Brer Rabbit hung onto the sides for dear life as the second bucket whipped passed him, splashing water all over him on its way to the top. He had never been so scared in his life.

Brer Rabbit's bucket landed with a smack in the water and bobbed up and down. Brer Rabbit was afraid to move, in case the bucket tipped over and landed him in the water. He lay in the bottom of the bucket and shook and shivered with fright, wondering what would happen next.

Now Brer Fox had been watching Brer Rabbit all morning. He knew right away that Brer Rabbit didn't have a briar in his paw and wondered what that rascal was up to. When Brer Rabbit snuck off, Brer Fox followed him and saw him jump into the bucket and disappear down the well.

Brer Fox was puzzled. Why would Brer Rabbit go into the well? Then he thought: "I [bet](http://americanfolklore.net/folklore/2010/07/brer_rabbit_falls_down_the_wel.html) he has some money hidden away down there and has gone to check up on it." Brer Fox crept up to the well, listening closely to see if he could hear anything. He didn't hear nothing. He peered down into the well, but all was dark and quiet, on [account](http://americanfolklore.net/folklore/2010/07/brer_rabbit_falls_down_the_wel.html) of Brer Rabbit holding so still so the bucket wouldn't tip him into the water.

Finally, Brer Fox shouted down into the well: "Brer Rabbit, what you doing down there?"

Brer Rabbit perked up at once, realizing that this might be his chance to get out of the well.

"I'm a fishing down here, Brer Fox," says he. "I thought I'd surprise everyone with a mess of fresh fish for lunch. There's some real nice fish down here."

"How many fish are there?" asked Brer Fox skeptically, sure that the rascally rabbit was really counting his gold.

"Scores and scores!" cried Brer Rabbit. "Why don't you come on down and help me carry them out?"

Well, that was the invitation Brer Fox was waiting for. He was going to go down into that well and get him some of Brer Rabbit's gold.

"How do I get down there?" asked Brer Fox.

Brer Rabbit grinned. Brer Fox was much heavier than he was. If Brer Fox jumped into the empty bucket at the top, then Brer Rabbit's bucket would go up, and Brer Fox's bucket would go down! So he said: "Jest jump into the bucket, Brer Fox."

Well, Brer Fox jumped into the empty bucket, and down it plummeted into the dark well. He passed Brer Rabbit about halfway down. Brer Rabbit was clinging to the sides of the bucket with all his might 'cause it was moving so fast. "Goodbye Brer Fox," he shouted as he rose. "Like the saying goes, some folks go up, and some go down! You should make it to the bottom all safe and sound."

Brer Rabbit jumped out of the well and ran back to the garden patch to tell the other critters that Brer Fox was down in the well muddying up the waters. Then he danced back to the well and shouted down to Brer Fox: "There's a hunting man coming along to get a drink o' water, Brer Fox. When he hauls you up, you'd best run away as fast as you can!"

Then Brer Rabbit went back to the garden patch. When the thirsty hunter hauled up the bucket full of water, a wet and shaky Brer Fox sprang out and ran away before the hunter could grab for his gun.

An hour later, Brer Fox and Brer Rabbit were both back in the garden, digging and hauling away debris and acting like nothing had happened. Except every once in a while, Brer Fox would look sideways at Brer Rabbit and grin, and the rascally rabbit would start to laugh and laugh 'cause both of them had looked so silly plummeting up and down in that ol' dark well.

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| **You can read more Georgia folktales in** [**Spooky South**](http://americanfolklore.net/spooky-south.html) **by S.E. Schlosser.**  |

**Brer Rabbit Fools Sis Cow**

**A Georgia Folktale**

**retold by**

**S. E. Schlosser**

Now Brer Rabbit was skipping down the road one day heading for his home in the briar patch when he spotted Sis Cow grazing in the field. It was a mighty hot day and Brer Rabbit was thirsty. Some milk would be real fine on such a warm afternoon, but Sis Cow always refused to let Brer Rabbit milk her when he asked. So Brer Rabbit thought up a plan.

"Howdy Sis Cow," said Brer Rabbit, walking up to her in the field.

"Howdy yourself, Brer Rabbit," said Sis Cow. "How are your folks?"

"Fair to middling," said Brer Rabbit. "How is Brer Bull?"

"So-so," replied Sis Cow.

"I'm wondering if you could help me out," Brer Rabbit said to Sis Cow. "I'd like to get some persimmons down out of that tree, but it's too high for me to climb." He pointed over to a nearby persimmon tree.

"I ain't no good at climbing myself," said Sis Cow dubiously.

"I don't need for you to climb," said Brer Rabbit. "Just butt your head against the tree a few times, and the persimmons will all fall down."

Sis Cow considered this a moment, and then she agreed. Sis Cow backed up a bit and ran at the tree with her horns down. BANG! She butted the tree as hard as she could. But the persimmons were still green and none of them fell down. So Sis Cow backed up again and ran at the tree with her horns down. SMACK! She butted the tree as hard as she could. And her large horns got stuck in the tree. She pulled and tugged, but her horns were held fast.

"Help me out, Brer Rabbit," Sis Cow pleaded.

"I can't climb up that high," said Brer Rabbit. "But I'll run and fetch Brer Bull."

So saying, the rascally Brer Rabbit ran home to fetch his Missus and all of the kids. They brought a mighty big pail to the field and they milked the trapped Sis Cow until not a drop of milk was left. Sis Cow was pretty sore at Brer Rabbit. She kept pulling and tugging, but she couldn't get free.

"I'll come back tomorrow for more milk," Brer Rabbit said. "Seeing as you're probably stuck 'til daybreak."

Brer Rabbit and his family left the field with their big pail of milk, leaving Sis Cow trapped in the tree. Well, Sis Cow, she tugged and tugged, trying to free her horns from the tree. It took her near 'til morning, but finally she broke loose. Once she was free, she had a quick graze of the green grass to calm herself down. As she ate, she made a plan to revenge herself on Brer Rabbit for his nasty trick

As soon as it was daybreak, Sis Cow put her head down and stuck her horns back into the holes she had made in the tree, pretending she was still stuck. Now Brer Rabbit had come early to the field and had seen Sis Cow grazing as free as you please, so he knew she was up to something when she put her horns back in the tree. He decided to play along with her game for a while to see what she was up to.

Quick as a wink, Brer Rabbit went back down the road and came clippity-lippity, hippity-hoppity down the road, singing as loud as you please. "How are you feeling this morning, Sis Cow?" asked Brer Rabbit when he reached the field.

"Poorly, Brer Rabbit," said Sis Cow slyly. "I've been stuck here all night. But if you grab my tail, you can help pull me out."

Oh ho, thought Brer Rabbit to himself. She means to trample me. Aloud he said: "I'm a puny ol' man Sis Cow. If I pull your tail, I might get crushed. So this is as close to you as I'm going to get!"

Well, Sis Cow was furious that her plan hadn't work. She pulled her horns out of the tree lickety-split and started chasing that rascally Brer Rabbit down the road.

Brer Rabbit ran as fast as lightning. He reached the Briar Patch well ahead of Sis Cow and threw himself into the brambles. He watched Sis Cow sail passed his hiding spot. Then she stopped because her quarry had disappeared. She looked around, trying to locate him.

Brer Rabbit chuckled to himself. He folded back his long ears, made his eyes extra wide, and then peered out of a shady corner of the Briar Patch, pretending to be Brer Big Eyes. "What are you doing Sis Cow?" he asked in a high-pitched voice quite unlike his own.

"I'm looking for Brer Rabbit, Brer Big Eyes," said Sis Cow, who did not recognize the trickster rabbit in the dim light of dawn.

"He jest ran passed lickety-split," Brer Rabbit lied.

That was all Sis Cow needed to hear. She gave a bellow of rage, lowered her horns, and ran on down the road.

Brer Rabbit, he just laughed and laughed, rolling about among the briars. He had fooled Brer Fox and Brer Buzzard in the past, and now he had fooled Sis Cow. He was a real rascal, no mistake!

Humming happily to himself, Brer Rabbit went home to have a big drink of milk, courtesy of Sis Cow.

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| **You can read more Georgia folktales in** [**Spooky South**](http://americanfolklore.net/spooky-south.html) **by S.E. Schlosser.**  |

**Brer Rabbit and the Tar Baby**

**A Georgia Folktale**

**retold by**

**S.E. Schlosser**

Well now, that rascal [Brer](http://americanfolklore.net/folklore/2010/07/brer_rabbit_meets_a_tar_baby.html) Fox hated Brer Rabbit on [account](http://americanfolklore.net/folklore/2010/07/brer_rabbit_meets_a_tar_baby.html) of he was always cutting capers and bossing everyone around. So Brer Fox decided to capture and kill Brer Rabbit if it was the last thing he ever did! He thought and he thought until he came up with a plan. He would make a tar baby! Brer Fox went and got some tar and he mixed it with some turpentine and he sculpted it into the figure of a cute little baby. Then he stuck a hat on the Tar Baby and sat her in the middle of the road.

Brer Fox hid himself in the bushes near the road and he waited and waited for Brer Rabbit to come along. At long last, he heard someone whistling and chuckling to himself, and he knew that Brer Rabbit was coming up over the hill. As he reached the top, Brer Rabbit spotted the cute little Tar Baby. Brer Rabbit was surprised. He stopped and stared at this strange creature. He had never seen anything like it before!

"Good Morning," said Brer Rabbit, doffing his hat. "Nice [weather](http://americanfolklore.net/folklore/2010/07/brer_rabbit_meets_a_tar_baby.html) we're having."

The Tar Baby said nothing. Brer Fox laid low and grinned an evil grin.

Brer Rabbit tried again. "And how are you feeling this fine day?"

The Tar Baby, she said nothing. Brer Fox grinned an evil grin and lay low in the bushes.

Brer Rabbit frowned. This strange creature was not very polite. It was beginning to make him mad.

"Ahem!" said Brer Rabbit loudly, wondering if the Tar Baby were deaf. "I said 'HOW ARE YOU THIS MORNING?"

The Tar Baby said nothing. Brer Fox curled up into a ball to hide his laugher. His plan was working perfectly!

"Are you deaf or just rude?" demanded Brer Rabbit, losing his temper. "I can't stand folks that are stuck up! You take off that hat and say 'Howdy-do' or I'm going to give you such a lickin'!"

The Tar Baby just sat in the middle of the road looking as cute as a button and saying nothing at all. Brer Fox rolled over and over under the bushes, fit to bust because he didn't dare laugh out loud.

"I'll learn ya!" Brer Rabbit [yelled](http://americanfolklore.net/folklore/2010/07/brer_rabbit_meets_a_tar_baby.html). He took a swing at the cute little Tar Baby and his paw got stuck in the tar.

"Lemme go or I'll hit you again," shouted Brer Rabbit. The Tar Baby, she said nothing.

"Fine! Be that way," said Brer Rabbit, swinging at the Tar Baby with his free paw. Now both his paws were stuck in the tar, and Brer Fox danced with glee behind the bushes.

"I'm gonna kick the stuffin' out of you," Brer Rabbit said and pounced on the Tar Baby with both feet. They sank deep into the Tar Baby. Brer Rabbit was so furious he head-butted the cute little creature until he was completely covered with tar and unable to move.

Brer Fox leapt out of the bushes and strolled over to Brer Rabbit. "Well, well, what have we here?" he asked, grinning an evil grin.

Brer Rabbit gulped. He was stuck fast. He did some fast thinking while Brer Fox rolled about on the road, laughing himself sick over Brer Rabbit's dilemma.

"I've got you this time, Brer Rabbit," said Brer Fox, jumping up and shaking off the dust. "You've sassed me for the very last time. Now I wonder what I should do with you?"

Brer Rabbit's eyes got very large. "Oh please Brer Fox, whatever you do, please don't throw me into the briar patch."

"Maybe I should roast you over a fire and eat you," mused Brer Fox. "No, that's too much trouble. Maybe I'll hang you instead."

"Roast me! Hang me! Do whatever you please," said Brer Rabbit. "Only please, Brer Fox, please don't throw me into the briar patch."

"If I'm going to hang you, I'll need some string," said Brer Fox. "And I don't have any string handy. But the stream's not far away, so maybe I'll drown you instead."

"Drown me! Roast me! Hang me! Do whatever you please," said Brer Rabbit. "Only please, Brer Fox, please don't throw me into the briar patch."

"The briar patch, eh?" said Brer Fox. "What a wonderful idea! You'll be torn into little pieces!"

Grabbing up the tar-covered rabbit, Brer Fox swung him around and around and then flung him head over heels into the briar patch. Brer Rabbit let out such a scream as he fell that all of Brer Fox's fur stood straight up. Brer Rabbit fell into the briar bushes with a crash and a mighty thump. Then there was silence.

Brer Fox cocked one ear toward the briar patch, listening for whimpers of pain. But he heard nothing. Brer Fox cocked the other ear toward the briar patch, listening for Brer Rabbit's death rattle. He heard nothing.

Then Brer Fox heard someone calling his name. He turned around and looked up the hill. Brer Rabbit was sitting on a log combing the tar out of his fur with a wood chip and looking smug.

"I was bred and born in the briar patch, Brer Fox," he called. "Born and bred in the briar patch."

And Brer Rabbit skipped away as merry as a cricket while Brer Fox ground his teeth in rage and went home.

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| **You can read more Georgia folktales in** [**Spooky South**](http://americanfolklore.net/spooky-south.html) **by S.E. Schlosser.**  |

**Wait Until Emmet Comes**

**A West Virgina Ghost Story**

**retold by**

**S. E. Schlosser**

A preacher was riding to one of the churches on his circuit when darkness fell. It was about to storm, and the only house nearby was an old mansion which was reputed to be haunted. The preacher clutched his Bible and said: "The Lawd will take care o' me".

He went into the mansion just as the storm broke. He put his horse into the barn and made his way into the house. The door was unlocked. He went into a large room which contained a [fireplace](http://americanfolklore.net/folklore/2010/07/wait_until_emmet_comes.html) that filled one wall. There was wood laid for a fire. He laid [a match](http://americanfolklore.net/folklore/2010/07/wait_until_emmet_comes.html) to it. Then the preacher sat down to read his Bible.

Gradually, the fire burnt down to a heap of coals as the storm howled around the mansion. The preacher was roused from his reading by a sound. He looked up from his Bible. A very large, black cat was stretching itself. Then it walked to the fire and sat down among the red hot coals. It picked a coal up in its paw and licked it slowly. The cat got up, shook of the ashes, and walked to the foot of the preacher's chair. It fixed blazing yellow eyes upon him, black tail lashing and said quietly: "Wait until Emmet comes".

The preacher jumped from Genesis to Matthew in shock. He had never heard of a cat talking before. Nervously he kept reading his Bible, muttering to himself, "The Lawd will take care o' me."

Two minutes later, another cat came into the room. It was black as midnight, and as large as the biggest dog. It lay down among the red-hot coals, lazily batting them with enormous paws. Then it walked over to the other cat and said: "What shall we do with him?"

The first cat replied: "We should not do anything until Emmet comes".



The two cats, black as midnight, sat watching the preacher, who [read](http://americanfolklore.net/folklore/2010/07/wait_until_emmet_comes.html) through the Gospels at top speed, aware of blazing yellow eyes watching him.

A third cat, big as a tiger, entered the room. It went to the fire full of red-hot coals and rolled among them, chewing them and spitting them out. Then it came to the other two cats facing the preacher in the chair.

"What shall we do with him?" it growled to the others.

"We should not do anything until Emmet comes," the other cats replied together.

The preacher flipped to Revelation, looking furtively around the room. He closed the Bible and stood up.

"Goo'night cats. I is glad of yo' company, but when Emmet comes, you done tell him I been heah and went."

**Never Mind Them Watermelons**

**An Alabama Ghost Story**

**retold by**

**S. E. Schlosser**

[Listen to the story](http://americanfolklore.net/mp3/watermelons.mp3) (4.3 mb download)

Well now, old Sam Gibb, he didn't believe in ghosts. Not one bit. Everyone in town knew the old [log cabin](http://americanfolklore.net/folklore/2010/07/never_mind_them_watermelons.html) back in the woods was haunted, but Sam Gibb just laughed whenever folks talked about it. Finally, the blacksmith dared Sam Gibb to spend the night in the haunted log cabin. If he stayed there until dawn, the blacksmith would [buy](http://americanfolklore.net/folklore/2010/07/never_mind_them_watermelons.html) him a whole cartload of watermelons. Sam was delighted. Watermelon was Sam's absolute favorite fruit. He accepted the dare at once, packed some matches and his pipe, and went right over to the log cabin to spend the night.

Sam went into the old log cabin, started a fire, lit his pipe, and settled into a rickety old chair with yesterday's newspaper. As he was reading, he heard a creaking sound. Looking up, he saw that a gnarled little creature with glowing red eyes had taken the seat beside him. It had a long, forked tail, two horns on its head, claws at the ends of its hands, and sharp teeth that poked right through its large lips.

"There ain't nobody here tonight except you and me," the creature said to old Sam Gibb. It had a voice like the hiss of flames. Sam's heart nearly stopped with fright. He leapt to his feet.

"There ain't going to be nobody here but you in a minute," Sam Gibb told the gnarled creature. He leapt straight for the nearest exit - which happened to be the window - and hi-tailed it down the lane lickety-split. He ran so fast he overtook two rabbits being chased by a coyote. But it wasn't long before he heard the pounding of little hooves, and the gnarled creature with the red eyes caught up with him.

"You're making pretty good speed for an old man," said the creature to old Sam Gibb.

"Oh, I can run much faster than this," Sam Gibb told it. He took off like a bolt of lightning, leaving the gnarled creature in the dust. As he ran passed the smithy, the blacksmith came flying out of the forge to see what was wrong.

"Never mind about them watermelons," Sam Gibb shouted to the blacksmith without breaking his stride.

Old Sam Gibb ran all the way home and hid under his bed for the rest of the night. After that, he was a firm believer in ghosts and spooks, and he refused to go anywhere near the old cabin in the woods.

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| **You can read more Alabama ghost stories in** [**Spooky South**](http://americanfolklore.net/spooky-south.html) **by S.E. Schlosser.**  |

**Sifty Sifty San**

**A Texas Ghost Story
retold by S.E. Schlosser
Excerpted from** [**Spooky Texas**](http://americanfolklore.net/folklore/2010/07/spooky_texas.html)

There was once a beautiful old house right on the edge of a lake, surrounded by woods. But no one would live there because a spirit calling itself Sifty-Sifty-San drove everyone away.
In desperation, the owner of the house went to the big city, looking for a man or woman who would be able to banish the spirit of Sifty-Sifty-San. The first night in town, he came across a man named Sam who had spent much of his life banishing ghosts.
As Sam approached the house he whistled cheerfully to himself; the prospect of a good night’s sleep in a fancy house and a big wad of money in his pocket made Sam a happy man.
Darkness came swiftly, and with it came a sinister hissing sound from the forest. *Sifty-sifty*, the wind whistled in the treetops. *Saaaannnn*, the waves lapping the shore responded. Outside, a huge gust of wind shook the house and howled down the chimney. Sam shivered and threw another log on the fire.
The wind settled down a bit, and Sam could once again hear the tiny sounds of night. *Sifty-sifty*, the little frogs croaked. *Saaannn*, belched the biggest of the bullfrogs. The sound of the waves grew louder. Sam heard a huge thud-thud-thud sound coming from the forest. Sam ran around the house, making sure all the [windows and doors](http://americanfolklore.net/folklore/2011/10/sifty_sifty_san.html) were locked.
He had just settled down by the fire for supper when there came a soft cry from the far side of the lake. The frying pan shook in his grip, and he hastily put it back on the fire and pulled a Bible out of his pack. The cry came again, louder. A strange gust of air blew through the house bringing with it a strange musty smell, like the dust in a graveyard.
Out on the lake, Sam heard a soft voice chanting: “I am Sifty-Sifty-San. I’m here on the lake, but where is the man?” Sam froze in place, and the wind picked up again, howling down the large chimney.
“I am Sifty-Sifty-San,” a sinister voice hissed from the shore of the lake. “I’m here on the shore, but where is the man?” Sam dropped his Bible in his fright. His hands were shaking too much to grip anything, and the [dusty](http://americanfolklore.net/folklore/2011/10/sifty_sifty_san.html), decaying smell coming through the window seemed to dull his thoughts and numb his body.
“I am Sifty-Sifty-San,” a terrible, howling voice called from the front of the house. “I’m here on the porch, but where is the man?” Abandoning food, Bible, bag, and sanity, Sam wrestled desperately with the back window, trying to open it wide enough to climb through. He heard the front doors slam open with a bang, and down the passageway came the thud-thud-thudding of footsteps. Then the [kitchen](http://americanfolklore.net/folklore/2011/10/sifty_sifty_san.html) door slammed inward, and a huge shadow with burning yellow eyes appeared in the frame.
“I am Sifty-Sifty-San,” a horrible, blood-chilling voice bellowed. “I’m here in the house with the trespassing man!”
“No you ain’t, on account of I’m gone,” shouted Sam, springing through the window, glass, wood frame, and all. He hightailed it back to town faster than a jackrabbit.
And that was the last time anybody went near the old house on the lake. If it hasn’t fallen to pieces by now, then Sifty-Sifty-San may be there still.