

MOTHER WEST WIND'S ANIMAL FRIENDS

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STRIPED CHIPMUNK FOOLS PETER RABBIT

Peter Rabbit sat at the top of the Crooked Little Path where it starts down the hill. He was sitting there when jolly, round, red Mr. Sun threw his nightcap off and began his daily climb up into the blue, blue sky. He saw Old Mother West Wind hurry down from the Purple Hills and turn her Merry Little Breezes out to play on the Green Meadows.

Peter yawned. The fact is, Peter had been out nearly all night, and now he didn't know just what to do with himself. Presently he saw Striped Chipmunk whisk up on top of an old log. As usual the pockets in Striped Chipmunk's cheeks were stuffed so full that his head looked to be twice as big as it really is, and as usual he seemed to be very busy, very busy indeed. He stopped just long enough to wink one of his saucy black eyes and shout: "Good morning, Peter Rabbit!"

Then he disappeared as suddenly as he had come. A few minutes later he was back on the old log, but this time his cheeks were empty.

"Fine day, Peter Rabbit," said Striped Chipmunk, and whisked out of sight.

Peter Rabbit yawned again. Then he closed his eyes for just a minute. When he opened them there was Striped Chipmunk on the old log just as before, and the pockets in both cheeks were so full that it seemed as if they would burst.

"Nice morning to work, Peter Rabbit," said Striped Chipmunk, in spite of his full cheeks. Then he was gone.

Once more Peter Rabbit closed his eyes, but hardly were they shut when Striped Chipmunk shouted:

"Oh, you Peter Rabbit, been out all night?"

Peter snapped his eyes open just in time to see the funny little tail of Striped Chipmunk vanish over the side of the old log. Peter scratched one of his long ears and yawned again, for Peter was growing more and more sleepy. It was a long yawn, but Peter cut it off right in the middle, for there was Striped Chipmunk back on the old log, and both pockets in his cheeks were stuffed full.

Now Peter Rabbit is as curious as he is lazy, and you know he is very, very lazy. The fact is, Peter Rabbit's curiosity is his greatest fault, and it gets him into a great deal of trouble. It is because of this and the bad, bad habit of meddling in the affairs of other people into which it has led him that Peter Rabbit has such long ears.

For a while Peter watched busy Striped Chipmunk. Then he began to wonder what Striped Chipmunk could be doing. The more he wondered the more he felt that he really must know. The next time Striped Chipmunk appeared on the old log, Peter shouted to him.

"Hi, Striped Chipmunk, what are you so busy about? Why don't you play a little?"

Striped Chipmunk stopped a minute. "I'm building a new house," said he.

"Where?" asked Peter Rabbit.

"That's telling," replied Striped Chipmunk, and whisked out of sight.

Now Peter Rabbit knew where Reddy Fox and Jimmy Skunk and Bobby Coon and Happy Jack Squirrel and Johnny Chuck and Danny Meadow Mouse lived. He knew all the little paths leading to their homes. But he did not know where Striped Chipmunk lived. He never had known. He thought of this as he watched Striped Chipmunk hurrying back and forth. The more he thought of it the more curious he grew. He really must know. Pretty soon along came Jimmy Skunk, looking for some beetles.

"Hello, Jimmy Skunk," said Peter Rabbit.

"Hello, Peter Rabbit," said Jimmy Skunk.

"Do you know where Striped Chipmunk lives?" asked Peter Rabbit.

"No, I don't know where Striped Chipmunk lives, and I don't care; it's none of my business," replied Jimmy Skunk. "Have you seen any beetles this morning?"

Peter Rabbit hadn't seen any beetles, so Jimmy Skunk went on down the Crooked Little Path, still looking for his breakfast.

By and by along came Johnny Chuck.

"Hello, Johnny Chuck!" said Peter Rabbit.

"Hello, yourself!" said Johnny Chuck.

"Do you know where Striped Chipmunk lives?" asked Peter Rabbit.

"No, I don't, for it's none of my business," said Johnny Chuck, and started on down the Crooked Little Path to the Green Meadows.

Then along came Bobby Coon.

"Hello, Bobby Coon!" said Peter Rabbit.

"Hello!" replied Bobby Coon shortly, for he too had been out all night and was very sleepy.

"Do you know where Striped Chipmunk lives?" asked Peter Rabbit.

"Don't know and don't want to; it's none of my business," said Bobby Coon even more shortly than before, and started on for his hollow chestnut tree to sleep the long, bright day away.

Peter Rabbit could stand it no longer. Curiosity had driven away all desire to sleep. He simply had to know where Striped Chipmunk lived.

"I'll just follow Striped Chipmunk and see for myself where he lives," said Peter to himself.

So Peter Rabbit hid behind a tuft of grass close by the old log and sat very, very still. It was a very good place to hide, a very good place. Probably if Peter Rabbit had not been so brimming over with curiosity he would

Have succeeded in escaping the sharp eyes of Striped Chipmunk. But people full of curiosity are forever pricking up their ears to hear things which do not in the least concern them. It was so with Peter Rabbit. He was so afraid that he would miss something that both his long ears were standing up straight, and they came above the grass behind which Peter Rabbit was hiding.

Of course Striped Chipmunk saw them the very instant he jumped up on the old log with both pockets in his cheeks stuffed full. He didn't say a word, but his sharp little eyes twinkled as he jumped off the end of the old log and scurried along under the bushes, for he guessed what Peter Rabbit was hiding for, and though he did not once turn his head he knew that Peter was following him. You see Peter runs with big jumps, lipperty-lipperty-lip, and people who jump must make a noise.

So, though he tried very hard not to make a sound, Peter was in such a hurry to keep Striped Chipmunk in sight that he really made a great deal of noise. The more noise Peter made, the more Striped Chipmunk chuckled to himself.

Presently Striped Chipmunk stopped. Then he sat up very straight and looked this way and looked that way, just as if trying to make sure that no one was watching him. Then he emptied two pocketfuls of shining yellow gravel on to a nice new mound which he was building. Once more he sat up and looked this way and looked that way. Then he scuttled back towards the old log. As he ran Striped Chipmunk chuckled and chuckled to himself, for all the time he had seen Peter Rabbit lying flat down behind a little bush and knew that Peter Rabbit was thinking to himself how smart he had been to find Striped Chipmunk's home when no one else knew where it was.

No sooner was Striped Chipmunk out of sight than up jumped Peter Rabbit. He smiled to himself as he hurried

Over to the shining mound of yellow gravel. You see Peter's curiosity was so great that not once did he think how mean he was to spy on Striped Chipmunk.

"Now," thought Peter, "I know where Striped Chipmunk lives. Jimmy Skunk doesn't know. Johnny Chuck doesn't know. Bobby Coon doesn't know. But I know. Striped Chipmunk may fool all the others, but he can't fool me."

By this time Peter Rabbit had reached the shining mound of yellow gravel. At once he began to hunt for the doorway to Striped Chipmunk's home. But there wasn't any doorway. No, Sir, there wasn't any doorway! Look as he would, Peter Rabbit could not find the least sign of a doorway. He walked 'round and 'round the mound and looked here and looked there, but not the least sign of a door was to be seen. There was nothing but the shining mound of yellow gravel, the green grass, the green bushes and the blue, blue sky, with jolly, round, red Mr. Sun looking down and laughing at him.

Peter Rabbit sat down on Striped Chipmunk's shining mound of yellow gravel and scratched his left ear with his left hindfoot. Then he scratched his right ear with his right hindfoot. It was very perplexing. Indeed, it was so perplexing that Peter quite forgot that Striped Chipmunk would soon be coming back. Suddenly right behind Peter's back Striped Chipmunk spoke.

"How do you like my sand pile, Peter Rabbit? Don't you think it is a pretty nice sand pile?" asked Striped Chipmunk politely. And all the time he was chuckling away to himself.

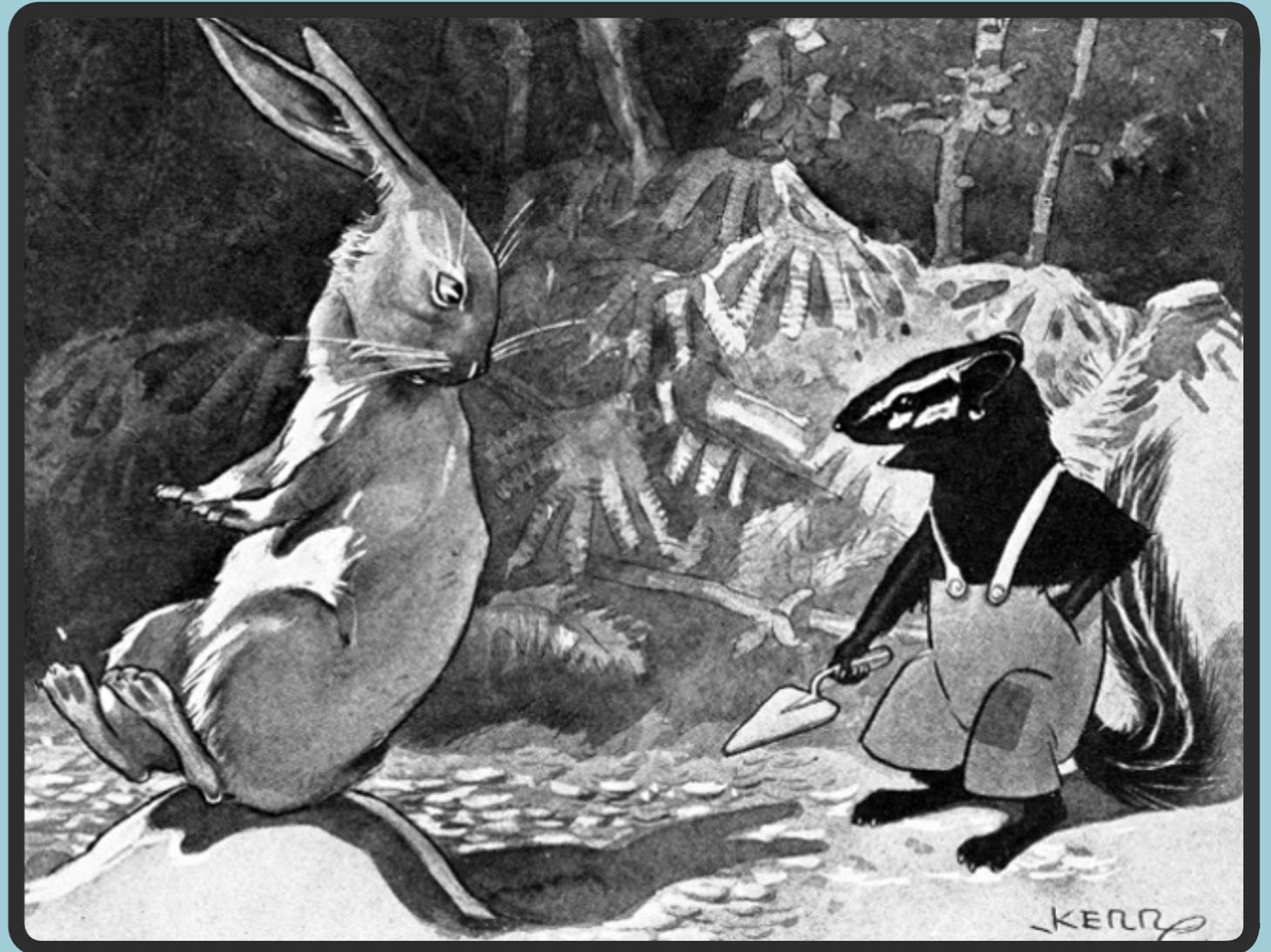
Peter was so surprised that he very nearly fell backward off the shining mound of yellow gravel. For a minute he didn't know what to say. Then he found his tongue.

Peter was so surprised that he nearly fell backward.

"Oh," said Peter Rabbit, apparently in the greatest surprise, "is this your sand pile, Striped Chipmunk? It's a very nice sand pile indeed. Is this where you live?"

Striped Chipmunk shook his head. "No, oh, my, no!" said he. "I wouldn't think of living in such an exposed place! My goodness, no indeed! Everybody knows where this is. I'm building a new home, you know, and of course I don't want the gravel to clutter up my dooryard. So I've brought it all here. Makes a nice sand pile, doesn't it? You are very welcome to sit on my sand pile whenever you feel like it, Peter Rabbit. It's a good place to take a sun bath; I hope you'll come often."

All the time Striped Chipmunk was saying this his sharp little eyes twinkled with mischief and he chuckled softly to himself.



Peter Rabbit was more curious than ever. "Where is your new home, Striped Chipmunk?" he asked.

"Not far from here; come call on me," said Striped Chipmunk.

Then with a jerk of his funny little tail he was gone. It seemed as if the earth must have swallowed him up. Striped Chipmunk can move very quickly, and he had whisked out of sight in the bushes before Peter Rabbit could turn his head to watch him.

Peter looked behind every bush and under every stone, but nowhere could he find Striped Chipmunk or a sign of Striped Chipmunk's home, excepting the shining mound of yellow gravel. At last Peter pushed his inquisitive nose right into the doorway of Bumble the Bee. Now Bumble the Bee happened to be at home, and being very short of temper, he thrust a sharp little needle into the inquisitive nose of Peter Rabbit.

"Oh! oh! oh!" shrieked Peter, clapping both hands to his nose, and started off home as fast as he could go.

And though he didn't know it and doesn't know it to this day, he went right across the doorstep of Striped Chipmunk's home. So Peter still wonders and wonders where Striped Chipmunk lives, and no one can tell him, not even the Merry Little Breezes. You see there is not even a sign of a path leading to his doorway, for Striped Chipmunk never goes or comes twice the same way. His doorway is very small, just large enough for him to squeeze through, and it is so hidden in the grass that often the Merry Little Breezes skip right over it without seeing it.

Every grain of sand and gravel from the fine long halls and snug chambers Striped Chipmunk has built

Underground he has carefully carried in the pockets in his cheeks to the shining mound of yellow gravel found by Peter Rabbit. Not so much as a grain is dropped on his doorstep to let his secret out.

So in and out among the little meadow people skips Striped Chipmunk all the long day, and not one has found out where he lives. But no one really cares excepting Peter Rabbit, who is still curious.

The End



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