

## Old Barney Owl

by David Cory

Well, I'm mighty glad the little rabbit lost only the fur tip to his tail. That was bad enough, but he forgot all about it the next morning when the Squirrel Brothers invited him over the 'phone to meet them at the Shady Forest Pond. He spent no time at all getting out his skates, but his mother took two minutes and a half tying a woolen muffler around his neck. She knew, like all wise mothers, that it's lots more fun to skate when one is nice and warm.

When he reached the pond the Squirrel Brothers were already there, skating merrily over the ice.

Busy Beaver in his winter home below could hear them whirring along, cutting fancy figures in the ice, and calling merrily to one another.

After a while, when the little rabbit and the squirrel brothers had grown tired of skating, they ran over to make a call on Old Barney Owl, who lived in the Big Chestnut Tree on a small island, right in the middle of the pond.

Although it was now pretty late in the afternoon, the old gentleman owl was still asleep, and when he opened the door, his eyes winked and blinked, and at first he didn't know them at all. In fact, he shut the door right in their faces. I suppose he thought they had knocked just to wake him up. Perhaps they had, for when the door closed with a bang they all began to laugh.

By and by Featherhead knocked again, and when Old Barney Owl opened it a second time, the naughty little squirrel said:

"Here is a nice fresh egg!"

Goodness me! When the old owl, whose eyes were still very blinky, found out it wasn't an egg, but a snowball, he dropped it on the little squirrel's head, and slammed the door again.

Now, if Featherhead had only gone back to his skating, all would have been well. But he didn't. No, indeed. Instead, he knocked again, and when the old owl opened the door, that naughty squirrel dropped a snowball down his collar. Goodness gracious me! What a scuffle there was all at once, and, just like that! the old owl pulled the little squirrel into his house and closed the door.

Oh, what a scowl had Mr. Owl,  
And Featherhead felt nearly dead.  
He was so scared at what he'd done  
He couldn't move his feet to run.

And, goodness gracious! so would I  
Have felt as if I'd surely die,  
If some big giant from his tree  
Had through his doorway pulled poor me.

From head to toe I'd surely quake,  
And feel my frightened heart would break.  
But now let's turn the page to see  
If ever Featherhead gets free.

## **“HELP! HELP!”**

by David Cory

Little Jack Rabbit threw himself against the door as soon as it closed on Featherhead. But Old Barney Owl had fastened the latch and it wouldn't open. My! What a dreadful scuffling was going on inside.

“Open the door! Open the door!” shouted the little rabbit, pounding on the wooden panels with his strong hind feet. But Old Barney Owl paid no attention. Maybe he had all he could do to hold Featherhead.

By and by it grew very quiet and Twinkle Tail peeped in through the keyhole, but he couldn't see anything.

“Oh, dear me!” cried Little Jack Rabbit. “Perhaps Old Barney Owl has eaten Featherhead!” Poor Twinkle Tail's heart almost stopped beating. Maybe it would have if he had known that the old owl had dragged his little brother squirrel upstairs by the tail.

“Snowballs and eggs! Snowballs and eggs!” muttered Old Barney, shaking Featherhead until his teeth rattled. “You little rascal! You thought I couldn't tell a snowball from an egg, eh?” and he gave the little squirrel another shake.

“Now I'm going to skin you and eat you for supper!”

Oh, dear me! How Featherhead trembled when he heard that.

Just then there came a tremendous crash downstairs, and as the old owl looked over the railing, Twinkle Tail and Little Jack Rabbit broke in the door.

“Help! Help!” shouted Featherhead.

“Rats and mice! Rats and mice!” cried Old Barney Owl, still keeping a tight hold on the little squirrel's tail.

He knew there was going to be trouble, but he wasn't going to let his supper get away from him without a fight, let me tell you. No, siree. Old Barney Owl was too hungry for that. But he changed his mind pretty quickly. Yes, siree. When Little Jack Rabbit let fly his hind feet, thumpty-thump, thumpty-thump! knocking the old owl head over heels, he changed his mind. He let go of Featherhead, and before he could change it again there was nobody in the house except himself.

Gracious me! How the Squirrel Brothers scurried home. And the little rabbit lost no time, either. He went to bed early and in the middle of the night, when Old Barney Owl went “Hooty, toot!” he shivered and pulled the bedclothes up over his head.

“Toot, toot, hoot!”

Old Barney plays his flute.

It sounds so shivery in the dark,

The firefly's tiny gleaming spark,  
Goes out because the firefly  
Is frightened by the old owl's cry.

Sources:

Cory, David. "Help! Help!." *Little Jack Rabbit and the Squirrel Brothers*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap Publishers, 1921. 117 – 120. Electronic.

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