

How the Fox and Rabbit Became Friends

On a mid-morning, early in the month of June, a rabbit came hopping through a sunny meadow to smell the flowers and visit the butterflies. After smelling and visiting for a good while, he became hot from the sun and decided to explore a nearby shady glen. After taking a drink of water from a pond, the rabbit hopped around the glen. The glen was so shady, with so many fun things to smell, the rabbit didn't notice a magic mirror standing by an oak tree until he hopped right by it and saw his reflection. But his reflection wasn't the only thing he saw in the mirror. A full-grown goblin with sharp fangs and twisted, super-long claws stared back at him from inside the mirror. The rabbit froze in his tracks. He was very afraid because full-grown goblins were very mean and liked to eat rabbits. However, the goblin didn't come out of the mirror; instead, he spoke to the rabbit. "Please, help me," the goblin garbled. "I am trapped in this magic mirror."

The rabbit did not want to help the goblin. He didn't want to talk to him either, so he began to back away, while keeping a close eye on the mirror.

"All you have to do is speak the three magic words written on the mirror frame." The goblin pointed to the bottom of the frame as he said this. "But the words only work if spoken outside of the mirror, so I cannot release myself."

The rabbit paused for a moment because he was slightly interested in the magic words. They were very long and written in cursive.

"Oh, please help me," the goblin pleaded. "The magic mirror was especially designed to trap goblins. I was just walking by, minding my own business," he whined, "and the mirror just sucked me up. I have been in here for six days."

The rabbit did feel sorry for the goblin. Certainly, being caught in a trap was a very bad thing. However, the rabbit was still very wary. "I'm afraid you will eat me if I let you out," he said.

"I promise I won't," answered the goblin, very sincerely. After a hopeful pause, he added, "I won't eat you, but I will thank you kindly for your help. I just want to get out of the mirror and go home to my family."

After thinking everything over, the kindhearted rabbit decided to help the goblin, even though he knew it was risky. The rabbit was glad that he knew how to read well because the magic words, which sounded just like *gobbledygook* (but translated into three foreign languages), were hard to pronounce.

As soon as the rabbit had finished pronouncing the hard words, the goblin stepped from the mirror. With his long toeclaws crunching and scraping around in the leaves under the oak tree, the goblin took a long stretch, reaching high above his head to do so. "That's much better," he sighed. "I was very cramped in there." Smiling a crooked smile at the rabbit, the goblin added, "Now, for a spot of lunch. Rabbit will do very nicely, I think."

"But you promised!" cried the rabbit, once again backing away.

"I can't keep a promise on an empty stomach," said the goblin, "and I haven't eaten for six days."

"But this isn't fair," said the rabbit. "I helped you."

"Too bad," replied the goblin. "I'm hungry." The goblin's stomach rumbled as he said this.

"Wait!" cried the rabbit, as the goblin advanced. "Let us seek another opinion on this matter. You owe me that much, at least."

The goblin did stop advancing because he was interested in what the rabbit was saying. And he did feel a small twinge of guilt (but only very small) about eating the rabbit.

"You did help me," the goblin said thoughtfully, "and I want to be somewhat fair. So...okay. Go south one hundred meters and ask the first thing you meet, whether it's a *who* or a *what* makes no difference, if I should eat you or not."

"Agreed," said the rabbit.

"But no funny business," said the goblin. "You know I can catch you because goblins can easily outrun rabbits."

The rabbit did know this.

"I shall wait for you here," the goblin added. "And no dawdling now because I am very hungry."

The rabbit set off south right away, so as not to dawdle.

At exactly one hundred meters, he came upon a clump of dandelions in a small field, so he sat down to tell the flowers his story and ask their opinion. The dandelions shivered in the breeze as they listened.

When the rabbit finished his story, the largest dandelion said, "What do we care if a goblin eats you? Rabbits should be eaten by goblins because rabbits eat dandelions. This whole field used to be covered with dandelions, and rabbits ate nearly all of them. Our seed parents only survived because they were hidden

behind a rock. I think the goblin should eat you,” the dandelion added firmly, with the rest of the flowers nodding.

Very sad about the opinion of the dandelions, the rabbit slowly hopped back to the glen.

The goblin was waiting patiently by the oak tree; however, the rabbit once more pleaded with the goblin. “It’s not really fair,” he said. “Dandelions don’t like rabbits. And the opinion of a plant isn’t as important as that of a rock or a tree or a skunk. (The rabbit didn’t really want to meet a skunk, but he was grasping at straws by this time and would have settled for a skunk’s opinion, if he had to.)

Even though the goblin was hungry, he saw the rabbit’s point, so he decided to give him one more chance to get another opinion.

This time, as instructed by the goblin, the rabbit traveled one hundred meters east, where he met a snail sitting on a leaf. The rabbit was overjoyed because he had never eaten a snail, and he didn’t think any of his rabbit friends or family had either.

Unfortunately, as it turns out, this particular snail didn’t like rabbits at all. “Once, when I was just a little snail,” he said, “a rabbit came hopping by and knocked me down a hill with his big feet. It was a bumpy fall, and the rabbit didn’t care at all. He just kept on going.”

The rabbit took his time getting back to the glen. He didn’t even care that he was dawdling because he might as well be late for a lunch in which he was to be the main course. About halfway back, the rabbit came upon a fox sitting on a smooth stone. The fox smiled slyly at the rabbit and was very surprised when the rabbit didn’t run from him. After all, having rabbit for lunch was favored by both goblins and foxes.

Oh well, thought the rabbit. *I might just as well be eaten by a fox as by a goblin.*

But the fox had just eaten and he wanted to hear a story, so he asked the rabbit, “What are you doing here, and why aren’t you running from me?”

The rabbit was very happy to delay his return to the goblin in the glen, so he sat down beside the smooth stone and told the fox the whole story of his morning so far.

“Oh my,” said the fox, when the rabbit had finished his tale. “This is very complicated. Let me see if I have this straight. You trapped the goblin, and the mirror came hopping by...”

“No,” interrupted the rabbit. “I was hopping by and found the goblin trapped in the mirror.”

The fox still seemed confused, so the rabbit very slowly told the story again.

“This is so hard to understand,” said the fox. “I just can’t quite wrap my brain around it to keep it all straight. So the goblin hopped by the mirror...”

“No, that’s not it either!” exclaimed the rabbit. The rabbit was very surprised because he had never thought foxes could be quite so slow in their brain functions. But once again, he told the story.

“My poor head is aching,” the fox said, once the rabbit had finished. “I am still so muddled. Perhaps if I see the scene for myself, I will be able to comprehend it all. I will go with you back to the glen.”

This was fine with the rabbit because he knew that he had to go back soon or the goblin would come and find him.

The two made their way to the glen, where the goblin was waiting angrily because the rabbit had taken so long.

After sadly telling the goblin the opinion of the snail, the rabbit once more pleaded with the goblin. “Do you mind terribly if we delay your lunch just long enough to tell this fox our story?”

“Okay,” the goblin grudgingly agreed. “I guess a few minutes’ delay won’t hurt.”

The rabbit spoke very slowly and began to tell every detail of the story. At one point, the goblin became impatient for the rabbit to finish, so he interrupted to tell the last part of the story himself. However, when the goblin finished, the fox seemed just as confused as ever. “Dear me,” he said to the goblin. “This is all so hard to understand. Let me see if I have it right. The mirror was trapped and you hopped to find the rabbit.”

“No, you dimwitted fool!” growled the goblin. He then took a deep breath before explaining everything to the fox again.

“I think I have it now,” said the fox. “The rabbit was trapped in the mirror and you came hopping by...”

“No, *I* was trapped in the mirror!” exclaimed the frustrated goblin.

“Oh, that makes much more sense,” said the fox. “*I* was trapped in the mirror. That’s funny, I don’t remember being trapped in a mirror.”

“You stupid creature!” the goblin shouted. “*I* was trapped in the mirror! *Me! Not you!* Here, let me show you!” With this, the goblin stepped into the magic

mirror. His voice still very loud, the goblin once more told the story up to the point where the rabbit had spoken the magic words to release him.

But the fox was only half listening by now because he was busy polishing the mirror frame with his fluffy tail.

“I think I finally understand,” the fox said when the goblin finished speaking. “You were trapped in the mirror, and the rabbit came hopping by, and you asked him to speak the magic words to release you.”

“Yes, you finally have it,” said the goblin with relief.

“What magic words?” asked the fox, looking at the shiny mirror frame. Indeed, there were no words on the frame, for the fox’s tail had polished them all off.

The goblin could not speak to answer and just stared at the fox in surprise.

As the rabbit and fox were leaving the glen together, the fox suggested, “Let’s go find a snack, maybe some dandelions.”

“Oh, yes let’s!” cried the rabbit.

And that is how the fox and the rabbit became friends.
