

Behemoth



Now I told some of y'all about Pa, and how he taught me to hunt. It's true he was about the best hunter there ever was. We never had much money, but as long as there was powder and lead, Pa could put meat in the pot, but this story ain't got nothing to do with huntin'; it's about farmin'.

Some people ain't never satisfied, and Ma (you know how women folk can get), she started naggin' that she, "wanted vegetables". I don't know what all the ruckus was about. We had taters with most every meal, and taters is vegetables ain't they? They shore ain't meat.

Anyway, Pa wanted to be a dutiful husband and take good care of his beloved. So, he decided to take up sod bustin'. Pa had never done much farming, but he'd seen it done and he figured he could find a way to pull it off. So, he went to town for seed.

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When he asked for the seed, the storekeeper pointed out a few issues that might cause problems. First, Pa's land hadn't been cleared; there were still some big old trees in the way, and Pa didn't have a horse or ox to help pull them out. Second, Pa didn't have a plow, and even if he did, he still didn't have no work animal to pull it. Finally, even if he did have the animals and the plow, it was already time to plant and there wasn't time to do the work. Well, Pa thought about it for a couple of minutes and then smiled and said he reckoned that he'd still take the seed. He'd just trust providence to show him what to do with it.

On the way home, he saw a bee, and that gave him an idea. He followed that bee and sure enough, it led him to a honey tree. He went to the house and picked up a bucket. Then he went back to the bee tree to fill it up. Pa put that bucket of honey on the steps of the storage shed and got some real strong rope from inside. Next, he put that rope around all trees he wanted to pull out, tying them all together. He took the seed that was in little bags and tied those bags up in the trees. Finally, he got his old muzzle loadin' rifle and headed up the mountain.

On the mountain lived a giant of a bear named Behemoth. He stood about 18 feet high and was six feet wide at the shoulders; his arms and legs were big as tree trunks and twice as strong. Hunters steered clear of old Behemoth, but that day Pa was lookin' for him. And instead of loading the shootin' iron with a

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lead ball, he used rock salt. He didn't want to kill the critter; he just wanted to make him good and mad.

He scoured that mountain 'till he found old Behemoth and peppered his backside good with rock salt. He stood out in the open for a bit just to make sure the bear had seen him and then he took off. And it weren't a moment too soon. The bear was runnin' after him with murder in his eyes.

Somehow Pa kept ahead of him all the way down the mountain. As he ran past the porch he picked up that bucket of honey without even breaking stride and then ran toward the field. He ducked under the strong rope that tied the trees together and kept going. Well, it weren't two seconds later that that massive bear hit the rope, but nothing was going to slow him down. As he kept chasing Pa he uprooted every tree and drug them all behind him. When he uprooted the trees, the bags of seed burst open and the seed was thrown into the air. By the time the seed settled to the ground the bear had drug the uprooted trees through the field and their roots had plowed it purty as a picture. At the edge of the field the bear found the only thing that could make it stop chasing Pa – a bucket of honey. Bears have an awful short memory, and by the time he had licked that bucket clean he couldn't remember why he'd come down the mountain, or his backside was so sore. So, he just sort of ambled back home.

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That day my Pa earned quite a reputation as the only sodbuster to ever clear, plow, and plant his field in less than two minutes.