

[SCOPE]

Our New Pet

Brandi George

I broke my ankle yesterday. Third time this year. Heck, I didn't even go to the doctor this time. A homemade splint and an Ace bandage costs a whole lot less than a cast, anyhow.

Old MacEntyre down at the Shell station laughs to no end every time I come limping in; he says he ought to become a doctor and take *all* my money, including what I have left after buying gas for the truck and diesel fuel for the old John Deere. Well, that's a laugh. There ain't never money left after that. The missus spends all our money on the garden.

The garden! I nearly forgot. Last week (when I still had two good ankles), my wife had me out in the garden weeding. It's not enough that I do all the plowing and planting, plus tending to the horses. Oh, no, I have to weed the darn garden.

Anyway, I was down on my hands and knees by the sweet potatoes, minding my own and humming some Willie Nelson, when suddenly I saw a rabbit out of the corner of my eye. He was a small little thing, about the size of my hand, and he was just sniffing around in the vegetables. My first instinct was to shoo him off, but I decided that I would wait and see what he was up to, 'specially since he didn't seem to be causing any trouble.

He sniffed a little more and finally looked up at me. He was gray, about the color of a rainy Sunday morning. His ears were floppy, and he had one of them cocked in my direction. Apparently he's heard me shoo away some of his family members and was waiting for me to yell at him.

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I guess it's a good thing I had had a long day and needed an excuse to take a break.

I picked a leaf off the closest potato plant and waved it at the little guy. I really didn't think I'd get much reaction, since this was obviously not a skittish animal. Little did I know he was fully prepared for human interaction. He hopped over to me, sniffed the leaf, then snatched it out of my hand and hopped back over to his original spot.

That critter's response sure did take me by surprise. I mean, how often does a wild rabbit just hop up to a man and take food from him? So, after my shock wore off, I decided to test the little thing and see how long it'd take him to get used to me.

Picture, if you will, a middle-aged, balding farmer crouched on his knees holding out a leaf to a baby rabbit about the size of a baking potato. Pretty funny, huh? Well, that's exactly what this looked like. And that's exactly the moment when my wife and little boy decided to come out and help me in the garden.

Perfect timing. I looked like a crazy man.

So while I'm staring up at the back door, still holding the leaf out in the general direction of the rabbit, the little thing comes up and sits right in front of me! He took the leaf from my hand and started gnawing on it, not even the least bit afraid of me.

My son is only four, so of course he has no problem with running up to a wild animal and playing with it.

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He ran over and scooped the rabbit up, then proceeded to take it right into the house. Presto! Instant house pet.

Things were fine for all of twenty minutes. My wife had started to help me a little, and we were both on our knees in the dirt, yanking on some stubborn weeds, when a scream from the house made us stand up real quick and head for home. Little Jimmy came bolting out the screen door, hollering and causing a real ruckus. But the real peculiar thing was that the rabbit was attached to Jimmy's ear--by its teeth.

I managed to get the bunny off my son's ear and was holding the little feller by the scruff of the neck when Jimmy suddenly stood up on his tippy-toes and bit the thing back! (What goes around comes around is something we say pretty often around our place.)

Well, the rabbit shimmied out of my hand and took off down a row of peas. I just knew we'd never see hide nor hair of it again.

But do you know that rabbit came back? Best stew the missus ever made.

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