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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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The Easter Rabbit

Shrill and sharp North Wind whistled through the forest where the trees and flowers were patiently awaiting the arrival of My Lady Spring. Jack Frost was delighted. Perched on the topmost branches of the great trees he laughed gleefully. "Ha! ha! ha! Surely Old Father Winter has forgotten that April is almost here," he said. "I will not remind him. They say My Lady Spring who is waiting in Wild-Flower Hollow is growing most impatient!"

"And so am I," whispered Mother Maple to her neighbour Dame Oak. "I've told my babies many pleasant stories about My Lady Spring and her companion Merry Sunshine. I'm afraid I won't be able to keep them in their dark cradles much longer."

"Oh! Try to cradle them a few more days," said Dame Oak. "You remember what trouble that rude fellow Jack Frost made last year. So long as he is here he insists on playing with all the babies of the forest. I do wish Lady Spring would come and tell him to go away." "He'll never as long as his bold brother North Wind is here," sighed Silver Beech.

"Don't worry," said Dame Oak. "I feel sure we won't have to wait much longer. I saw Merry Sunshine dancing near the edge of the forest yesterday. I feel quite hopeful."

"Oh, how happy I will be to hear Thrush's song again," said Silver Beech.

"And the happy children's voices! They haven't been to the forest since nutting season," said Dame Oak. "I'm sure they are longing to come again."

For some time Lady Spring had been waiting in Wild-Flower Hollow near the edge of the forest. Only a few days ago the children had come there to gather flowers.

"Not a bird or blossom anywhere. See how brown and bare that bank is!" said one.

"And Easter is almost here. I wonder why Lady Spring is so late!" said another.

"Maybe she has forgotten us," said a tiny companion.

"I am very disappointed. Last year at this time that bank was blue with violets. Come, let us go home!" And away ran the children.

"I will wait no longer," said Lady Spring. "Come, Merry Sunshine."

Away danced Merry Sunshine and Lady Spring followed in trailing robes of green and white.

Waving her silver wand over the bank of Wild-Flower Hollow she whispered, "Ready, Violets; come, Starry Bluet; my sweet Anemone, come out. Ah, brave Arbutus, I see you were expecting me. Did you think I was

never coming, my dainty Spring Beauty?"

How graceful Lady Spring looked waving her magic wand here and there through the forest. Wherever she stooped and touched the brown earth, fresh grass appeared; when she tapped the great



tree trunks the bare branches above instantly veiled themselves in tender green.

"Sing, Merry Sunshine, dance and sing!" Lady Spring called to her companion.

Merry Sunshine sang a beautiful song. It rang sweetly through forest and echoed far away over the hills to the South where the birds were waiting patiently for the call. How gladly they came! Bluebird and Bobolink, Cardinal and Chickadee, Blackbird and Thrush and Wren, —all the forest birds answered Merry Sunshine's Song of Spring.

"At last my work is done!" said Lady Spring joyously.

"When are the children coming?" asked Dame Oak.

"I will send them a message that I have arrived. Robin Redbreast, will you take a message of Spring to the children? I'm sure they will want to see the lovely blossoms and hear the sweet birds' songs."

"Lady Spring," said Robin, "I'm afraid I can't go today. You see my mate and I are building a soft warm nest in Oak-Tree. We are very late this year."

"I wonder where I can find another messenger."

"I think Red Fox would go for you," answered Robin Redbreast. "See, here he comes now."

"Will you take word to the children that I have come, Reynard?" asked Lady Spring.

"Oh, I would be happy to go, but the people might think I came to steal their chickens. I believe Black Bear would be a better messenger than any of us. I'll run and ask him to go."

But Reynard brought back the answer that Black Bear was afraid he would frighten the children too much.

"Who will be my messenger?," sighed Lady Spring. Robin cocked his head on one side and looked very thoughtful. Then he said, "I believe Bunny Rabbit can go; I saw him hop past but a moment ago. I'll call him." At Robin's whistle Bunny came leaping out of the bushes.

"Bunny Rabbit, I want you to take a message to the children in the city. Please go and tell them Spring has come."

"A message to the city, Lady Spring!" exclaimed Bunny, raising his ears upright. "Please ask me to do anything but that! The dogs might catch me! They bark so fiercely! And naughty boys might chase me! I'm sure I should never come back!" Bunny dropped his voice and looked quickly about in all directions. Lady Spring was puzzled.

"Bunny," said Robin, "would you go at night? You know the dogs and boys go to sleep then and you can hop so softly that I'm sure they would not hear you. Besides, your ears are very sharp."

"Well, perhaps I could go at midnight," said Bunny, thoughtfully. "But how could I take a message to the children without wakening them?"

"Oh, I can manage that," said Lady Spring. "Meet me in Wild-Flower Hollow a little before twelve o'clock. Then I will tell you my plan."

"I will come," said Bunny.

Lady Spring made a beautiful basket out of twigs and leaves and grasses. She lined it with the softest moss. Around the top she placed a garland of wild flowers. And, when the birds knew that she was sending a

message to the children, each one wanted to help her. So they sent lovely little eggs of all colours—greenish blue, brown, white and spotted. How beautiful they looked lying on the bed of moss and flowers flowers. A little before midnight Bunny came to Wild-Flower Hollow.

“I am ready,” said Lady Spring. “See, Bunny, here is a basket. Be careful with these precious eggs. When you come to a house where a little child lives take out a bit of moss and form it into a wee nest like this,” said Lady Spring, weaving quickly a moss nest. “Then put into each one a wild flower and an egg. Leave an egg for each child in the house.”

“Yes, yes, I understand, Lady Spring,” said Bunny. “How pretty the nest is!” And off he hopped.

On Easter morning Merry Sunshine wakened the children early.

“I found this little moss nest on the door-step,” cried one of them. “There is a wild-flower and three coloured eggs in it. How beautiful!”

“An egg for each of us!” said another. “I wonder what it means.”

“I know, I know,” said little brother. “There are Bunny tracks on the path. He must have brought the nest to us.

Perhaps he came to tell us Spring is here.”

“Of course he did!” cried the children, clapping their tiny hands in glee. “Bunny was Spring’s messenger.”



Away to the woods ran the children, crying out, "Spring is here, Spring is here. Bunny Rabbit brought us the message."