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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Uncle Wiggily and the Lobster

"Where are you going to stay tonight, Uncle Wiggily?" asked the grasshopper of the old gentleman rabbit, after the wave had rolled up and washed away the crab that had hold of the bunny's tail, I told you about last, you remember. "Are you going to stay at the seashore?" asked the grasshopper, as he looked at his left hind leg and blinked his two eyes, sort of thoughtful-like.

"Oh, yes, I like it here very much," said Uncle Wiggily, "and I'm going to stay, but as true as I live I don't know where I can sleep tonight."

"Couldn't you build a sand castle, such as we see the children making?" asked the grasshopper.

"Oh, no, for in the night it might fall down on me, and the sand would get in my ears. Or a big wave might roll up on the shore and wash me out to sea. Oh, dear, isn't it a puzzle what to do when you are seeking your fortune?"

"Oh, don't feel so badly over it," begged the grasshopper. "We will look around and see what we can find."

"Where are you going to stay, Mr. Grasshopper?" asked the rabbit.

"Who, me? Oh, I am going to crawl under a leaf and sing myself to sleep as I always do; but for you, a leaf is hardly large enough."

"Not unless it was a palm-leaf fan," spoke the old gentleman rabbit. "But come on, we will look around." So they hopped up and down the beach where the ocean waves were rolling along with a booming noise. All the children had gone in by this time, as it was getting dark and rather lonesome. Uncle Wiggily and the grasshopper looked, and they looked, and they looked still more, but they could find no place for the rabbit to stay. At last the old gentleman rabbit said: "Well, Mr. Grasshopper, you had better get along and look for the leaf under which you are going to sleep, or else it will get so dark that you can't find your way." "But what will you do, Uncle Wiggily? I don't like to leave you all alone."

"Oh, if it comes to the worst I can sleep out here on the sands, but I don't like to do it, as the dampness will make my rheumatism worse. But it can't be helped." Well, the grasshopper didn't want to go away and leave his friend, the rabbit, all alone, but Uncle Wiggily finally persuaded him that it would be best, so the little creature hopped off and found a nice leaf. Then he curled up on the underside of it, where, in case it rained, he would not get wet, and he sang himself to sleep.

Well, now, I must tell you what happened to Uncle Wiggily.

At first he was quite lonesome, as he walked along the beach looking for a place to sleep, but then he looked up at the stars shining in the sky above him, and he saw the moon just coming up from behind the clouds,

and it was shining on the ocean waves, making them look like silver, and it wasn't quite so dark then.

"I guess I will be all right," said Uncle Wiggily, bravely.

"I'm not going to be afraid, for I don't believe the alligator, or fox, or bear, will come here. But I do wish I had some place where I could go in out of the dampness."

Then he suddenly thought of something.

"I know what I'll do!" he exclaimed, as he came to a pile of driftwood on the beach. "I'll make me a house of this wood, and put some seaweed on top for the roof, and in that I'll sleep as nicely as if I were at home."

Well, it didn't take Uncle Wiggily long to do this, and soon he had built as fine a little wood-and-seaweed house as heart could wish. Then he crawled inside with his crutch and his valise, and ate a small piece of cherry pie, and stretched out on some soft seaweed for his bed. In a little while he was fast, fast asleep.

Ha! But what is this funny animal crawling up along the sand with his big claws like a pair of shears which the tinsmith or the plumber uses? Eh? What's that? Why, as true as I live it's a big lobster that crawled up out of the ocean to see what he could find to eat.

Oh, Uncle Wiggily had better look out now, I tell you; hadn't he? But the poor old gentleman rabbit is still fast asleep.

The big lobster stuck out his bulgy eyes, and he moved them this way and that way, and he even looked over his shoulder with them, and then he saw the little house which the rabbit had made.

"Ha! I must see what is in that!" the lobster exclaimed and he crawled toward it. "Perhaps it is something good to eat, and I am very hungry," he said.

So the lobster looked in through the little window which Uncle Wiggily had made, and he saw the rabbit fast asleep.

"Oh, ho! Now for a good meal!" cried the lobster. Then he took one big claw and he softly pulled away some of the boards which Uncle Wiggily had used to make his house. That left a hole, and through this hole the lobster stuck his other claw, and he caught hold of the rabbit by his two ears.

"Oh! who has me? Who is it? What are you doing? Oh, my poor ears! Let go! Please let go!"

That is how Uncle Wiggily cried as he suddenly awakened.

"No, I will not!" exclaimed the lobster in a sort of a boiled-egg voice. "I'm going to crawl off with you to the bottom of the ocean!"

"Then this is the last of me and my fortune," thought the rabbit. "I might as say goodbye."

So the lobster pulled the rabbit right out of the wood-and-seaweed house, holding him by the two long ears, and he started down the sandy beach with him toward the rolling, tumbling ocean. Uncle Wiggily tried to get away, but he couldn't.

Well, if you'll believe me, the big lobster nearly had the rabbit in the rolling, tumbling waves of the surf, when suddenly a flashing lantern showed glimmeringly over the sand, and a voice exclaimed:

"Shiver my timbers! If the big lobster hasn't caught a rabbit. Oh, ho! And he's trying to drown him. That will never do. I will save him."

Uncle Wiggily looked up and he saw a big man, who was out taking a walk along the beach with a lantern to see if anybody needed to be saved. And before that lobster could drag the rabbit into the water that life guard just reached over and took the lobster up by his back,

where the crawly creature couldn't pinch, and the lobster was so frightened that he let go of Uncle Wiggily's ears at once.

"Now, hop away, Mr. Rabbit," said the life guard, kindly, and you may be sure that Uncle Wiggily didn't waste any time hopping. "I'll attend to this lobster," went on the big man, and then the rabbit hopped back to his wood-and-seaweed house, where he slept in peace and quietness the rest of the night. And, as for the lobster, the man put him in a pot

and boiled him until he was as red as your coral necklace, or your pink necktie, and that was the end of the lobster.

