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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Uncle Wiggily and the Shell

Uncle Wiggily was lame the next day after he had been caught under the stone when the wolf nearly got him, and the horseshoe crab had dug him out. You see the stone pressed on his leg that had rheumatism in it, and it hurt the old gentleman rabbit very much.

But he was quite brave, and when he got up in the morning, even though he could hardly limp along, he decided that he would hop down the sandy beach at the seashore and see if he couldn't find his fortune there.

"It is certainly taking me quite a long time to get rich," he said to himself as he slowly moved along over the soft sand, "and perhaps I may never find any diamonds or gold. But no matter, I am enjoying myself, and that is something. Still, I would like to see Sammie and Susie Littletail again."

And when he thought of the two little rabbit children he was a bit sad. Then he decided that would never do, so he cheered himself up by singing a little song that went something like this:

"Don't be sad, Just be glad,
For the sun is shining.
Don't be blue, For it's true
Clouds have silver lining.
Sing and dance, Hop and prance,
Make some one feel jolly,

Go 'way, care, Don't you dare
Make me melancholy."

"Ha, hum! I feel much better after that," said Uncle Wiggily, and he moved his whiskers sideways and up and down, and twinkled his nose, and then he went on looking for his fortune.

Pretty soon he came to a big snail that was crawling slowly along the beach.

"Have you seen any gold?" asked the rabbit.

"No, I am sorry to say I have not," said the snail, slowly and carefully. "But I have not gone very far this morning. I have only traveled about as far as from one orange seed to another, and that is not very far, you know. Perhaps later I may find some gold."

"Then have you seen any diamonds?" asked Uncle Wiggily.

"No, but I saw a dewdrop inside a flower sparkling in the sunshine," said the snail, "and it was brighter than a diamond."

"That is very pretty, but it is not my fortune," said the rabbit. "I must keep on." So on he went, singing his jolly song, and he kept humming it, even when the sun went behind a cloud, and it looked as if it were going to storm. The waves of the ocean grew into big billows, and they dashed up on the beach with a booming, thundering sound.

"I think we are going to have a shower," said the old gentleman rabbit. "I must look about for another toadstool umbrella." So he found one growing in the grass a little distance from the water, and he picked it.

Then, strapping his valise over his shoulder, he hopped ahead, leaning on his crutch.

Pretty soon, not so very long, it began to rain. How the drops did come pelting down, harder and harder, but Uncle Wiggily didn't get wet because of his toadstool umbrella. And then, before you could eat a stick of peppermint candy, something hard hit the old gentleman rabbit on the nose.

"Ha! My umbrella must be leaking!" he cried. Then there came a flash of lightning, and a loud clap of thunder, and something else hit Uncle Wiggily on the end of his nose.

"Oh, I hope I'm not struck by lightning!" he cried. So he looked up, and he saw that his toadstool umbrella was full of holes, and the reason of this was that it was hailing instead of raining. The rain drops had turned into little round chunks of ice, just like white pebbles, and they were pelting down, and had torn the rabbit's umbrella all to pieces.

"Whatever shall I do?" cried Uncle Wiggily, as he tossed aside the toadstool. "That is of no use to me now, and there is no place where I can go to get in out of the rain. Oh, my! How those hailstones hurt!" And indeed they did, for they were as large as bird's eggs now, and they were bouncing down all over, and hitting Uncle Wiggily on his ears and nose and all over.

He tried to hold his crutch over his head, but that did no good, and then he tried to hold up his valise with the cherry pie in it to shelter himself, but that did no good, either.

"Oh, I'll be knocked to pieces by the hailstones!" the rabbit cried. "Where can I go? Oh, if I only had a shell house such as the snail carries on her back, I would be all right."



"Here is a house for you!" cried a little voice, and looking to one side Uncle Wiggily saw his old friend the grasshopper, and that

grasshopper was beneath a big pink shell that was on the beach, with one edge raised up like a shed. "Crawl under the shell, and the hailstone can't hurt you!" went on the hoppergrass. "This pink shell is the best kind of a house."

"Well, I do declare--so it is!" agreed Uncle Wiggily, and he lost no time in crawling under the pink shell which was just the color of baby's cheeks. Then how the hailstones did rattle down on that shell! It was just like peas or dried corn falling into a tin pan. Rattle-te-bang! Rattle-te-bang! went the hailstones, but they couldn't hurt the grasshopper or Uncle Wiggily now, for the chunks of ice hit on the hard shell and burst to pieces. Then, all of a sudden Uncle Wiggily heard some one crying. Oh, it was such a sad, pitiful voice.

"Oh, what shall I do? Where can I go?" wailed the voice.

"Some one needs help," said the rabbit quickly.

"Maybe it's a bear," suggested the hoppergrass.

"Nonsensicalness!" exclaimed the rabbit. "I'm going to look out." So he peered out from under the edge of the big pink shell, and he saw a little baby crab crawling along with a basket of seapeanuts in little bags on one claw.

"Oh, I'm so miserable!" cried the little crab. "I started out to sell peanuts, but the hailstones burst the bags open, and the peanuts came out and they're all wet, and no one will buy wet peanuts. What shall I do?"

"Come right in here," said Uncle Wiggily kindly. "We'll help you." So the little crab crawled beneath the pink shell, where the hailstones couldn't hit him, and when the storm was over the old gentleman rabbit and the grasshopper built a fire, and they dried out the peanuts. Then the grasshopper took some of his molasses and he glued the torn bags together, and Uncle Wiggily put back the dry peanuts in them, and then the little crab went off very happy, indeed, and sold them for a penny a bag.

"Ha! The pink shell did us a great kindness," said the old gentleman rabbit, as he hopped out. "Now I will look once more for my fortune." Then the grasshopper flew away over the sea again and the rabbit went on alone, eating a few peanuts the baby crab had given him.