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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Uncle Wiggily And Mr. Pop-goes

"Uncle Wiggily," said Mrs. Littletail, the rabbit lady, one morning, as she came in the dining-room where Mr. Longears was reading the cabbage leaf paper after breakfast, "Uncle Wiggily, I don't like you to go out in such a storm as this, but I do need some things from the store, and I have no one to send."

"Why, I'll be only too glad to go," cried the bunny uncle, who was spending a few days visiting the Littletail family in their underground burrow-house. "It isn't snowing very hard," and he looked out through the window, which was up a little way above ground to make the burrow light. "What do you want, Mrs. Littletail?" he asked.

"Oh, I want a loaf of bread and some sugar," said the bunny mother of Sammie and Susie Littletail.

"And you shall certainly have what you want!" cried Uncle Wiggily, as he got ready to go to the store. Soon he was on his way, wearing his fur coat, and hopping along on his corn-stalk rheumatism crutch, while his pink nose was twinkling in the frosty air like a red lantern on the back of an automobile.

"A loaf of home-made bread and three and a half pounds of granulated sugar," said Uncle Wiggily to the monkey-doodle gentleman who kept the grocery store. "And the best that you have, if you please, as it's for Mrs. Littletail."

"You shall certainly have the best!" cried the monkey-doodle gentleman, with a jolly laugh. And while he was wrapping up the things for Uncle Wiggily to carry home, all at once there sounded in the store a loud: "Pop!"

"My! What's that?" asked Uncle Wiggily, surprised like and excited. "I heard a bang like a gun. Are there any hunter-men, with their dogs about? If there are I must be careful."

"No, that wasn't a gun," said the monkey-doodle gentleman. "That was only one of the toy balloons in my window. I had some left over from last year, so I blew them up and put them in my window to make it look pretty. Now and then one of them bursts." And just then, surely enough, "Pop! Bang!" went another toy balloon, bursting and shriveling all up.

Uncle Wiggily looked in the front window of the store and saw some blown-up balloons that had not burst.

"I'll take two of those," he said to the monkey-doodle gentleman. "Sammie and Susie Littletail will like to play with them."

"Better take two or three," said the monkey-doodle gentleman. "I'll let you have them cheap, as they are old balloons, and they will burst easily."

So he let the air out of four balloons and gave them to Uncle Wiggily to take home to the bunny children.

The rabbit gentleman started off through the snow-storm toward the underground house, but he had not gone very far before, just as he was coming out from behind a big stump, he heard voices talking.

"Now, I'll tell you how we can get those rabbits," Uncle Wiggily heard one voice say. "I'll crawl down in the burrow, and as soon as they see me they'll be scared and run out—Uncle Wiggily, Mrs. Littletail, the two children, Nurse Jane Fuzzy Wuzzy and all. Then you can grab them, Mr. Bigtail! I am glad I happened to meet you!"

"Ah, ha!" thought Uncle Wiggily. "Mr. Bigtail! I ought to know that name. It's the fox, and he and some one else seem to be after us rabbits. But I thought the fox promised to be good and let me alone. He must have changed his mind."

Uncle Wiggily peeked cautiously around the stump, taking care to make no noise, and there he saw a fox and another animal talking. And the rabbit gentleman



saw that it was not the fox who had promised to be good, but another one, of the same name, who was bad.

"Yes, I'll go down the hole and drive out the rabbits and you can grab them," said the queer animal.

"That's good," growled the fox, "but to whom have I the honor of speaking?" That was his way of asking the name of the other animal, you see.

"Oh, I'm called Mr. Pop-Goes," said the other.

"Mr. Pop-Goes! What a queer name," said the fox, and all the while Uncle Wiggily was listening with his big ears, and wondering what it all meant.

"Oh, Pop-Goes isn't all my name," said the queer animal.

"Don't you know the story in the book? The monkey chased the cobbler's wife all around the steeple. That's the way the money goes, Pop! goes the weasel. I'm Mr. Pop-Goes, the weasel, you see. I'm 'specially good at chasing rabbits."

"Oh, I see!" barked Mr. Bigtail, the fox. "Well, I'll be glad if you can help me get those rabbits. I've been over to that Uncle Wiggily's hollow-stump bungalow, but he isn't around."

"No, he's visiting the Littletail rabbits," said Mr. Pop-Goes, the weasel. "But we'll drive him out."

Then Uncle Wiggily felt very badly, indeed, for he knew that a weasel is the worst animal a rabbit can have after him. Weasels are very fond of rabbits. They love them so much they want to eat them, and Uncle Wiggily did not want to be eaten, even by Mr. Pop-Goes.

"Oh, dear!" he thought. "What can I do to scare away the bad fox and Mr. Pop-Goes, the weasel? Oh, dear!"

Then he thought of the toy balloons, that made a noise like a gun when they were blown up and burst. "The very thing!" thought the rabbit gentleman.

Carefully, as he hid behind the stump, Uncle Wiggily took out one of the toy balloons. Carefully he blew it up, bigger and bigger and bigger, until, all at once:

“Bang!” exploded the toy balloon, even making Uncle Wiggily jump. And as for the fox and Mr. Pop-Goes, the weasel, why they were so kerslostrated (if you will kindly excuse me for using such a word) that they turned a somersault, jumped up in the air, came down, turned a peppersault, and started to run.

“Did you hear that noise?” asked the weasel. “That was a pop, and whenever I hear a pop I have to go! And I’m going fast!”

“So am I!” barked the fox. “That was a hunter with a gun after us, I guess. We’ll get those rabbits some other time.”

“Maybe you will, and maybe not!” laughed Uncle Wiggily, as he hurried on to the burrow with the bread, sugar and the rest of the toy balloons, with which Sammie and Susie had lots of fun.