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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Uncle Wiggily And The Baker

It was still raining in Woodland, where the animal folk lived. All around the hollow-stump bungalow, where Nurse Jane Fuzzy Wuzzy, the muskrat lady, kept house for Uncle Wiggily Longears, the rabbit gentleman, there were puddles of water; little lakes and rivers, too.

"I think it is getting colder," said Uncle Wiggily, as he came in from having been up to the Orange Mountain, to get a dozen of lemons so Nurse Jane could bake a cherry pie.

"If it gets colder, perhaps it will stop raining," Miss Fuzzy Wuzzy remarked, "and goodness knows we have had enough of water."

"Yes, a little snow for a change would seem nice," spoke the bunny uncle, looking out of the window at the rain-drops still splashing down.

"Was it raining on the Orange Mountain?" Nurse Jane wanted to know.

"Yes, just as hard as it is down here in the valley. But the water runs off the sides of the mountain, so there are not so many puddles to step in, as I stepped in one the other day, and got my foot caught in a tree root, when the butcher, in his rub-a-dub-dub tub, cut me loose."

"That was quite an adventure," said Nurse Jane. "You haven't seen the other friends of Mother Goose—the baker and the candlestick maker—have you?"

"No," Uncle Wiggily answered. "But I understand that the butcher's two friends, the baker and the candlestick maker, are having a race with him, each one in a tub. They may sail along any day now. I guess I'll go out and look for them."

"What! In all this rain?" cried Nurse Jane, in surprise.

"You'll catch cold in your rheumatism, I'm sure."

"Oh, no, I'll wrap up well in my rubber coat, and put on my rubber boots as I did before," said the bunny uncle, making his nose twinkle like a gold tooth in the wax doll.

Off started the old rabbit gentleman, carrying a big umbrella so that too many rain-drops would not get on his tall silk hat. He walked along through the woods, down from the trees of which the rain-drops dripped. There were many puddles, but Uncle Wiggily kept as much out of them as he could.

"It is getting quite some colder," he said to himself, as he put one paw in his pocket to warm it—warm his paw, I mean, not his pocket, for that was warm already. "I wouldn't be surprised to see it snow."

And, in a little while, a few flakes of snow did begin to fall, dodging their way in between the rain-drops, and sort of playing tag with one another.

"How pretty the flakes look," said Uncle Wiggily, coming to a stop to watch them. "I think I'll sit down a minute and look at them." He found a fallen log, which, being under a Christmas tree, was not as wet as it might otherwise have been, and down Uncle Wiggily sat on that.

More snowflakes fell, and they looked so pretty that Uncle Wiggily stayed longer than he meant to, sitting on the log. It kept on getting colder and colder, and finally the bunny uncle said:

“Well, I mustn’t sit here any longer. I’ll get up and go back to my nice, warm, cozy hollow-stump bungalow. Yes, I’ll get up and—”



But Uncle Wiggily did not get up. He couldn’t! He had frozen fast to the log, which had some water on it. The cold air had made the water freeze, and Uncle Wiggily was held as fast there as if he

had sat down in sticky fly paper—even more tightly, I believe.

“Oh, dear!” he cried. “This is quite too bad! In fact, it is terrible. What shall I do!”

He tried to get up, but he could not, and he did not want to take off his rubber coat, and so free himself, for fear he might catch cold without his coat.

“Oh, dear! I don’t know what to do!” cried Uncle Wiggily.

“Help! Help! Will no one help me to get loose?”

Then, through the woods he suddenly heard a rub-a-dub-dub drumming sound.

“Ha! I wonder if that can be my friend, the butcher?” thought the bunny uncle. But when he looked he saw a baker coming along, dressed in a spotless white apron and cap. The baker had a loaf of bread in his hand, and

with a large spoon he was pushing himself along in his tub through the puddles of water, which had not yet solidly frozen over, though there were chunks of ice in them. And the baker was singing:

"Rub-a-dub-dub, three men in a tub;
The butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker;
But I am the one with the hot baked potato."

Then the baker, seeing Uncle Wiggily sitting on the log, called to the bunny uncle as he stopped his tub boat:

"Would you like to buy a loaf of bread?" asked the baker.

"Well, yes, I might, for I heard Nurse Jane say we needed some," answered the bunny uncle.

"Then please come and get it," said the baker. "For I am riding a boat-tub race with the butcher and the candlestick maker, and I don't want to stop. They might get in ahead of me. You see, we are doing a little different from what it says in the Mother Goose book," went on the baker, shaking some rain-drops off his white cap. "We each have a tub to ourselves."

"I see," said Uncle Wiggily. "I heard about it. In fact, I met the butcher sailing along in his tub the other day."

"Oh, did you? Then I must hurry," cried the baker, "or he will win the race. Come and get your loaf of bread and I'll paddle along."

"I can't come and get it," said Uncle Wiggily. "I am sorry, but I really can't."

"Why not?" asked the baker.

"Because I am frozen fast to this log," said the bunny uncle, "and I really can't get up, much as I would like to."

I was calling for help, and, when you came along, I hoped——”

“Ha! Say no more!” cried the baker, in a jolly voice. “Of course I’ll help you. Never mind about the race. I’ll get you loose!”

“How?” asked Uncle Wiggily.

“I’ll show you!” cried the baker. He stopped his tub, which had started off by itself, put on his rubbers, and stepped out into a little puddle. In his hands he carried the hot loaf of bread, and the hot baked potato. Putting these down on the log, one on each side of Uncle Wiggily, the heat of them soon melted the ice, and the rabbit gentleman was unfrozen, and could get up and go on his way as well as ever.

“Oh, thank you!” he called to the baker. “Thank you!”

“You are welcome,” was the answer, “and take the hot bread and potato with you,” and with that the baker jumped back in his tub and went on sailing, hoping to catch up to the butcher.