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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Uncle Wiggily And The Birthday Cake

"To-morrow is my birthday! To-morrow is my birthday! And I'm going to have a cake with ten candles on!" A little girl sang this over and over as she danced around the house one morning.

"Ten candles! And they'll be lighted, and I can blow them out and cut the cake and pass it around; can't I, Mother?" asked the little girl.

"Yes, my dear," Mother answered. "But if you are going to have a birthday cake you must go to the store and get me some flour, sugar and eggs. I did not know I needed them, but I do, if you are to have a cake."

"Oh, of course I want a cake!" said the little girl. "It wouldn't be at all like a birthday without a cake! And ten candles on top, all lighted! Last year I only had nine candles. But now I can have ten! Ten candles! Ten candles on my birthday cake!" sang the happy little girl again and again. "Ten candles! Ten candles!"

"You had better go to the store, instead of singing so much!" laughed her mother. "Sing on your way, if you like. But don't forget the flour, sugar and eggs."

"I'll get them," said the little girl, and off she started, taking a short cut through the woods to reach the store more quickly.

These woods were the same ones in which Uncle Wiggily had built his hollow stump bungalow, and about the same time the little girl started off to get the things for her birthday cake the bunny rabbit gentleman stood on his front porch.

"Where are you going?" asked Nurse Jane Fuzzy Wuzzy, his muskrat lady housekeeper.

"Oh, just to hop through the forest, to look for an adventure," answered Mr. Longears. "I haven't had one since I helped dig the rain-trench about the tent of the camping boys."

"I should think that would be enough to last a long time," spoke Miss Fuzzy Wuzzy.

"Oh, no. I need a new adventure every day!" laughed the bunny, and over the fields and through the woods he hopped.

Now Uncle Wiggily had not gone very far before, all of a sudden, he stepped into a trap. It was a spring trap, set in the woods by some hunter who had covered it with dried leaves so it could not easily be seen. That's the way hunters fool the wild animals.

And, not seeing the trap, Uncle Wiggily hopped right into it.

"Snap!" went the jaws of the trap together, catching the poor bunny gentleman fast by one hind leg.

"Oh, my!" cried Mr. Longears. "I'm caught! But it is fortunate that it is a smooth-jawed trap, and not the kind with sharp teeth. If I could only get my leg loose I'd be all right; except that my paw might be lame and stiff for a few days. I must try to get out!"

Uncle Wiggily tried to pull his paw from the trap, but it was of no use. The spring held the jaws too tightly together. The bunny gentleman twinkled his pink nose as hard as he could, and he even tried to pry apart the trap jaws with his red, white and blue striped rheumatism crutch. But he couldn't.

"Oh, dear!" thought Uncle Wiggily. "I must call for help. Perhaps Neddie Stubtail, the strong boy bear, will hear me. He could easily spring open this trap and set me free."

So the bunny gentleman called as loudly as he could: "Help! Help!"

Of course he talked animal talk, and for this reason the little girl, who was going to have a birthday cake, with ten candles on it, did not know what Uncle Wiggily was saying. She heard him making a noise, though, for she passed the place where the bunny was caught in

the trap, soon after the accident happened.

"I wonder what that funny noise is?" said the little girl, as Uncle Wiggily again called for help. "It sounds like some animal. I wish I understood animal talk!"



Uncle Wiggily wished, with all his heart, that the little girl could hear what he was saying, for he was calling for help. The bunny

understood girl-talk, and he knew what this girl was saying, for she spoke her thoughts out loud.

"But she doesn't know what I want!" said poor Uncle Wiggily to himself. "She is sure to be good and kind, as all girls are, and if I could only get her to come over this way she might take me out of the trap."

The little girl, on her way home from the store, had come to a stop not far from Uncle Wiggily, but she could not see him because he was behind a bush.

"I must make some kind of a noise that she will hear," thought the bunny. Then he thrashed around in the bushes with his crutch, rattling the dried leaves and the green bushes, and the little girl heard this noise.

"Oh, maybe a bird is caught in a big cobweb!" said the little girl. "I'll get it loose—I love the birds!"

Putting down her bundle of flour, sugar and eggs on a flat stump, she made her way through the bushes until she saw where Uncle Wiggily was caught in the trap.



"I wish you would come to my birthday party!"

"Oh, what a funny rabbit!" cried the little girl as she looked at the bunny gentleman all dressed, as he always was when he went to look for an adventure. "He looks

just like a picture on an Easter card!" laughed the little girl. "I wish I had him at my party!"

"Well, I wish she'd take this trap off my paw!" thought Uncle Wiggily, though of course he could say nothing, however much he could hear.

Then the little girl looked down among the leaves and saw where the trap pinched Uncle Wiggily.

"Oh, you poor bunny rabbit!" she cried. "I'll set you loose."

Very gently she pressed her foot on the spring of the trap, to open it. And when the jaws were opened Uncle Wiggily could lift out his paw, which he did. He hopped a little way over the dried leaves, limping a bit, for the pinching trap had pained him. Then, coming to a stop on a smooth, grassy place, the bunny leaned on his red, white and blue striped rheumatism crutch and, taking off his tall silk hat, he made a low and polite bow to the little girl.

"Thank you for having done me a great favor!" said Uncle Wiggily in animal talk. "I wish I could do one for you!"

But of course the little girl could not understand this bunny language, so she only laughed and said:

"Oh, what a dear, funny bunny! With a tall hat and everything! I wish you would come to my birthday party! I'm going to have a cake with ten lighted candles on!"

"Thank you, I'd like to come, but it is out of the question," answered Uncle Wiggily in his own talk. Then, with another low and polite bow, he hopped away.

The little girl picked up the things she had bought at the store and went home.

"You'll never guess what I saw in the woods," she told her mother. "A bunny rabbit, all dressed in a black coat and red trousers, was caught in a trap, and I set him free!"

"Nonsense!" laughed Mother. "Whoever heard of a rabbit like that? You are so excited about your birthday cake that you were dreaming, I think!"

"Oh, no, Mother! I didn't dream!" said the little girl.

"Really I didn't!"

"Well, never mind. Now we'll make your birthday cake," answered Mother.

The birthday cake was mixed and baked in the oven, and on top was spread pink frosting.

"We'll put the candles on to-morrow, when you have your party," Mother told the little girl.

To-morrow came, after a night in which Cora Janet, which was the little girl's name, had dreamed about riding in an airship, with a bunny gentleman dressed up like a soldier. In the afternoon many boys and girls came to Cora Janet's birthday party.

"Oh, how lovely everything is!" exclaimed a little boy, when he was given his second dish of ice cream.

"Wait until you see my birthday cake with ten candles on!" whispered Cora Janet.

When it was almost time to bring on the lighted cake, Mother called Cora Janet out into the kitchen.

"Did you get the candles, Cora?" Mother asked.

"Why, no!" the little girl answered. "I—I thought we had candles!"

"And I thought I told you to get them," Mother went on. "There isn't one in the house! I've looked everywhere. Never mind, perhaps I can borrow some next door. Go back to your friends."

"Oh, I do hope you can get candles!" sighed Cora Janet.

"A birthday cake without candles will hardly be right!"

Mother asked the lady who lived next door, on one side, if she had any candles.

"Not a one, I'm sorry to say," was the answer.

Then Mother asked the lady on the other side.

"Oh, I never use candles," this lady replied, coming out on her back stoop to talk over the fence to Cora Janet's mother. "I'm so sorry!"

"Well, I guess they'll have to eat the cake without any birthday candles on," said Mother. "Cora Janet will be so disappointed, too, as she is such an imaginative child! Just fancy, Mrs. Blake, she came home yesterday, and told about helping out of a trap an old rabbit gentleman, with a tall silk hat!"

"The idea! She must have dreamed it!" said Mrs. Blake.

"No, she didn't dream it! That really happened!" said Uncle Wiggily to himself, who was just then hopping through the fields back of the house where Cora Janet lived. "So this is her home, is it?" went on the bunny gentleman to himself. "And she hasn't any candles for her birthday cake! Too bad!"

Uncle Wiggily had hopped along just in time to hear Cora Janet's mother asking for candles of the neighbors.

"It's so late that all the stores are closed," went on Mrs. Blake, "or I'd go get some candles for Cora."

"Never mind," spoke Mother. "She will have to bear her disappointment as best she can."

"No! That must not be!" said Uncle Wiggily to himself. "I cannot give her real candles, but I can leave on her steps some slivers of the pine tree. They have in them pitch, tar and resin and will burn almost like

candles. When I was a rabbit boy I often lighted these pine-tree candles."

Not far away were the woods, and, hopping across the field in the dusk of the evening, Uncle Wiggily, with his sharp teeth, soon gnawed off some pine-knot splinters from one of the trees. In olden times, when there were no electric or kerosene lamps, children used to study their lessons in front of the fireplaces, by these pine knots.

"These will do for birthday-cake candles," whispered Uncle Wiggily, as he hopped back to Cora Janet's house with a paw full of the pine knots. He put them on the stoop, and then, with his hind paws, he kicked some gravel from the front walk up against the dining-room windows.

"What's that?" asked Cora Janet, as she heard the noise.

"Some bad boys playing tick-tack," said one of the girls at the party. "They're playing tricks because they weren't asked."

"I'll see who it is," spoke Mother.

She went out on the porch. There she saw the pile of pine knot slivers. Having lived in the country when she was a girl, Mother knew that these bits of wood could be used for candles.

"Oh, now I can make the birthday cake blaze most brightly!" exclaimed Mother. Into the house she hurried. She stuck ten pine-knot slivers on the cake, for Uncle Wiggily had left a full dozen, not knowing exactly how old Cora Janet was. Then, when the pine knots were lighted, Mother carried the cake into the room

where the boys and girls were wishing Cora Janet many happy returns for her birthday.

"Oh, where did you get the candles?" asked Cora.

"I guess the rabbit you dreamed you saw must have left them," answered Mother, in fun, of course, for she never thought that really could happen.

"Dream-candles or not, they are lovely!" murmured the little girl.

And everyone at the party said the same thing.

They watched Cora Janet as, one by one, she blew out the pine candles on her birthday cake. And when the last one flickered away, the cake was cut amid the joyous laughter of the boys and girls.

"Well, I'm glad I could do her a favor," said the bunny rabbit to himself, as hidden under the lilac bush, he heard and saw all that went on. "I shall always love Cora Janet!"

And he did.