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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Uncle Wiggily And The Black Crow (3/31)

Let me see, where did I leave off in the last story? Oh! I remember. It was about Uncle Wiggily Longears being up in the top of the tall tree, and the alligator keeping guard down below, ready to eat him.

Well, the old gentleman rabbit was wondering how he could ever escape, and he felt quite badly about it.

"I guess this is the end of my adventures," he said to himself. "It would have been much better had I stayed at home with Sammie and Susie." And as he thought of the two rabbit children he felt still sadder, and very lonely.

"I wonder if Susie could have put anything in my satchel with which to scare an alligator," thought Uncle Wiggily. "I guess I'll look." So he looked, and what should he find but a bottle of toothache drops. Yes, there it was, and wrapped ground it was a little note Susie had written.

"Dear Uncle Wiggily," she said in the note, "if you ever get the toothache on your travels, this will stop it."

"Ha! That is very kind of Susie, I'm sure," said the rabbit, "but I don't see how that is going to make the alligator go away. And, even if he does go, I wonder how I'm to get down out of this tall tree, with my crutch, my valise and my rheumatism?"

Well, just then the alligator got tired of standing on the end of his tail, with his mouth open, and he began crawling around. Then he thought of what a good supper he was going to have of Uncle Wiggily, and that alligator said:

"I guess I'll sharpen my teeth so I can eat him better," and with that the savage and unpleasant creature began to gnaw on a stone, to sharpen his teeth. Then he stood up on the end of his tail once more, under the tree, and opened his mouth as wide as he could.



"Come on now!" he called to Uncle Wiggily. "Jump down and have it over with." "Oh, but I don't want to," objected the rabbit. "You'll have to, whether you want to or not," went on the alligator. "If you don't come down, I'll take my scaly, naily tail, and I'll saw down the tree, and then you'll fall."

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Uncle Wiggily. "What shall I do?" Then he happened to think of the bottle of toothache medicine that he held in his hand, and, taking out the cork, he dropped the bottle, medicine and all, right into the open mouth of the alligator, who was again up on his tail.

And the alligator thought it was Uncle Wiggily falling into his jaws, and he shut them quickly like a steel trap and chewed on that bottle of hot toothache drops before he knew what it was.

Well, you can just imagine what happened. The medicine was as hot as pepper and mustard and vinegar and cloves and horse radish all made into one! My! how it did burn that alligator's mouth.

"Oh my! I'm shot! I'm poisoned! I'm bitten by a mosquito! I'm stabbed! I'm all scrambled up" cried the alligator.

"Water, water, quick! I must have water!"

Then he gave a big jump, and, with his kinkery-scalery tail, he leaped into a big puddle of water, and went away down in under, out of sight, to cool off his mouth.

"Oh, now is my chance! If I could only get down out of the tree!" exclaimed Uncle Wiggily. "But with my rheumatism I'm afraid I'll fall. Oh dear! What shall I do?"

"Don't be afraid, I'll help you!" exclaimed a kind voice, and then the voice went on: "Caw! Caw! Caw!" and Uncle Wiggily, looking up, saw a big black crow perched on a limb over his head.

"Oh, how do you do!" spoke Uncle Wiggily, making a bow as well as he could. "Can you really help me down?"

"Yes," said the crow, "I can. Wait until I get my market basket. I was just going to the grocery, but I'm in no hurry. I'll save you first."

So that crow flew off, and in a moment he came back with a big basket in its bill.

"Hop in!" the black crow called to Uncle Wiggily, "and I'll fly down to the ground with you, and you can run off before the alligator comes out of the water. I saw what you did to him with those toothache drops, and it served him right. Come on, hop in the basket."

So Uncle Wiggily got in the basket, and the crow, taking the handle in his strong beak, flew safely to the ground with him. And that's how the old gentleman rabbit got down out of the tree, just as I told you he would.

So he and the crow walked on some distance through the woods together, after Uncle Wiggily had picked up his crutch and valise, which had fallen out of the basket, and they got safely away before the alligator came out of the water. And wasn't he the provoked old beastie, though, when he saw that his rabbit supper was gone?

"Where are you going?" asked the crow of Uncle Wiggily, after a bit, when they got to a nice big stone, and sat down for a rest.

"I am seeking my fortune," replied the old gentleman rabbit, "and trying to get better of my rheumatism. Dr. Possum told me to travel, and have adventures, and I've had quite a few already."

"Well, I hope you find your fortune and that it turns out to be a very good one," said the kind crow. "But it is coming on night now. Have you any place to stay?"

"No," replied the rabbit, "I haven't. I never thought about that. What shall I do?"

"Oh, don't worry," said the crow. "I'd let you stay in my nest, but it is up a high tree, and you would have trouble climbing in and out. But near my nest-house is an old hollow stump, and you can stay in that very nicely."

"Are there any bears in it?" asked Uncle Wiggily, careful-like.

"Oh, no; not a one. It is very safe."

So the crow showed Uncle Wiggily where the hollow stump was, and he slept there all night, on a soft bed of leaves. And when he awakened in the morning he had breakfast with the crow and once more started off to seek his fortune.

Well, pretty soon, in a short while, not so very long, he came to a little house made of bark, standing in the middle of a deep, dark, dismal woods. And on the door of the house was a sign which read:

"If you want to be surprised, open this door and come in."

"Perhaps I can find my fortune in there, and get rid of the rheumatism," thought Uncle Wiggily, so he hopped forward. And just as he did so he heard a voice calling to him: "Don't go in! Don't go in there, Uncle Wiggily!"

The rabbit looked up, and saw Johnnie Bushytail, the squirrel boy, waving his paws at him. Well, Uncle Wiggily started to jump back away from the door of the little house, but it was too late. Out came a scraggily-raggily claw, which grabbed him, while a voice cried out:

"Ah, ha! Now I have you! Come right in!"

And then, before you could shake a stick at a bad dog, the door was slammed shut and locked, and there Uncle Wiggily was inside the house, and Johnnie Bushytail was crying outside. "That's the end of poor Uncle Wiggily!" said Johnnie. But it wasn't. For I'll not leave the old gentleman rabbit alone in the house with that clawy creature. And in the next story, providing our wash lady doesn't put my new straw hat in the soap suds, and take all the color out of the ribbon, I'll tell you about Uncle Wiggily and Fido Flip-Flop.