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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Uncle Wiggily And The Chicken-pox

One day Charlie and Arabella Chick, the little rooster and hen children of Mrs. Cluck-Cluck, the hen lady, came fluttering over to Uncle Wiggily's hollow stump bungalow.

"Oh, Uncle Wiggily!" cackled Arabella. "What you think has happened?"

"Well, I hardly am able to guess," answered the bunny gentleman. "I do hope, though, that your coop isn't on fire. You seem much excited, my dears!"

"Well, I guess you'd be excited, too, if a boy threw stones at you!" crowed Charlie. "Wouldn't you?"

"Indeed I would," admitted Uncle Wiggily. "Once a boy did stone me and I didn't like it at all."

"We don't like it either," cawed Arabella.

"Isn't there some way you can stop that boy from throwing sticks and stones at us?" Charlie wanted to know.

"Tell me about it," suggested Uncle Wiggily.

"Well, it's this way," began Arabella. "This boy lives on the other side of the Big Forest. Sometimes Charlie and I go over there to pick up beechnuts and other good things to eat, and every time that boy sees us he pegs things at us! Wouldn't you call him a bad boy, Uncle Wiggily?"

"Most surely I would," answered the rabbit gentleman. "But why does he do it? You don't crow over him; do you, Charlie?"

"No, indeed," answered the rooster boy. "I only crow to warn Arabella when I see that fellow coming, to tell her to run and hide under a bush."

"And I don't pick him, or scratch gravel at him or anything like that," cackled the little hen girl. "I wish he'd let us alone, Uncle Wiggily."

"We came over to see if you could think up a way to make him stop," crowed Charlie. "Can you?"

"Hum! I'll try," promised the bunny gentleman, twinkling his pink nose like the frosting on top of an orange shortcake. "Suppose we go look for this boy," went on Uncle Wiggily. "So I'll know him when I see him."

"I can show you his house," offered Charlie. "But we'll have to be careful. For if he sees us he'll peg things at us."

"Let us hope not," murmured Uncle Wiggily.

But it was a vain hope, as they say in fairy books. For after Uncle Wiggily, Charlie and Arabella had gone to the other side of a forest, there, all of a sudden, they saw the boy.

"Hi! There are those funny dressed-up chickens!" shouted the boy, who had red hair, and a face full of freckles. "And there's a rabbit with them, all dressed up in a tall silk hat! Oh, my! What style! I'm going to see if I can knock his hat off with a stone! I'm going to peg rocks at 'em!"

"See! What did I tell you?" cackled Arabella, who could understand boy-talk, as could also Charlie and Uncle Wiggily.

"Bang!" bounced a stone on Uncle Wiggily's tall silk hat, sending it spinning through the air.

"Ha! Ha!" laughed the boy, as he picked up another stone. "I'm a good shot, I am!"

"I should call that rather a bad shot—for my hat," remarked Uncle Wiggily, as he picked up his silk hat and hopped toward the bushes. "Come on, Arabella and Charlie!" called the bunny gentleman. "This boy is acting just as you said he did. I must think up some way of teaching him a lesson!"

The little hen girl and rooster boy scooted under the bushes, and only just in time, for the boy threw many more stones, and one struck Charlie on the comb. Not the comb that he used to make his feathers smooth, but the red comb on his head—one of his ornaments; his tail feathers being others.

"Hi, fellows! Come on chase the funny chickens and the dressed-up rabbit!" cried the boy. But though some of his chums ran up, as he called, with sticks and stones, Uncle Wiggily, with Charlie and Arabella, managed to hide away from the thoughtless lads. For they were thoughtless. They didn't think that stones hurt animals.

"Yes, I certainly must teach that boy a lesson," said Uncle Wiggily.

"I—I wish he'd catch the chicken-pox!" crowed Charlie.

"Or maybe the roosterpox! Then he'd have to stay in and couldn't chase us!"

"I wouldn't care if he had the mumps and toothache at the same time!" cackled Arabella.

For several days Uncle Wiggily watched for a chance to teach the thoughtless boy a lesson, and at last it came. The bunny gentleman was out hopping in the woods one morning when he met Charlie and Arabella fluttering

along the forest path.



The boy was asleep
under a tree——

"Oh, Uncle Wiggily!" said Arabella in a cackling whisper. "That boy is asleep now, on a bed of moss under a tree.

He's sleeping hard, too, for Charlie and I went close to him and he didn't awaken. Maybe you can do something to him now."

"Maybe I can," said Uncle Wiggily. "I'll go see!"

He hopped through the woods with the chicken children, and soon came to where the boy was asleep under a tree. It was a pine tree, with sticky gum oozing from the trunk and branches. And as soon as the bunny gentleman saw this gum he whispered:

"I have an idea! I'll teach this boy a lesson."

"How?" asked Charlie.

"I'll make him think he has the chicken-pox, or something worse," answered the bunny, with a silent laugh.

"Goodie!" cackled Arabella.

"Ha! Ha!" crowed Charlie.

"Quiet now, chicken children," whispered Uncle Wiggily. "Each of you pull me out a few loose feathers."



Charlie and Arabella did this. Then the bunny uncle took some of the soft gum from the pine tree, and put spots of it on the face and hands of the sleeping boy. Though he stirred a little, the boy did not awaken.

When the boy was well spotted with the sticky gum, Uncle Wiggily took the chicken feathers that Charlie and Arabella had plucked, and fastened these feathers on the boy's face and hands in the gum.

"Oh, how funny he looks!" softly cackled Arabella.

"Hush!" cautioned Uncle Wiggily, putting his paw on his pink, twinkling nose. "Let him sleep!"

Drawing back into the bushes, Uncle Wiggily, Charlie and Arabella waited for the boy to awaken, which he did pretty soon. He turned over, sat up and stretched. Then he looked at his hands, and saw chicken feathers stuck on them.

"Oh! Oh!" cried the boy. "What has happened to me?" He jumped to his feet and caught sight of himself in a spring of water that was like a looking glass.

"Oh! Oh!" cried the boy again. "This is terrible! Oh, my face!"

Home he ran through the woods, while Charlie and Arabella laughed to see him go.

"Oh, Mother! Mother! Look at me!" cried the boy. "I'm all feathers! I must have the chicken-pox!"

"Goodness me, sakes alive and a basket of eggs!" exclaimed the boy's mother. "You must have gone to sleep in a hen's nest! But you haven't the chicken-pox! The chicken-pox is spots like the measles, but you are covered with feathers!"

"But how did I get this way?" asked the boy, as he pulled off some of the feathers. "I wasn't like it when I went to sleep in the woods."

"Maybe a fairy did it," spoke his little sister, who believed in them.

"Pooh! There aren't any fairies!" sneered the boy. "I guess it was that hen and rooster I stoned."

"Did you do that?" asked his mother. "Did you?"

"A— a little!" stammered the boy.

"Well, it isn't any wonder you're this way, then," Mother said. "And, for all I know, you may get the real chicken-pox!"

And, as true as I'm telling you that boy did! But he was not made very ill, for some reason or other. Perhaps because he had to be washed so clean, to get off the sticky pine gum and the feathers, the chicken-pox didn't go in very deeply.

At any rate, when the boy was all well again, he threw no more stones at Charlie or Arabella.

"You cured him, Uncle Wiggily!" crowed the rooster boy.