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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Uncle Wiggily And The Crooked Man

"Heigh-ho! Away I go!" sang Uncle Wiggily Longears, the rabbit gentleman, one day, as he looked in the glass to see if his whiskers were on straight, and his nose twinkling just right.

"What? Away again?" asked Nurse Jane Fuzzy Wuzzy, the muskrat lady housekeeper of the hollow-stump bungalow, as she finished drying the dinner dishes. "You seem to me to go out a great deal, Mr. Longears.

"Far be it from me," she went on, "to say anything about it, but I should think you would get tired of going around so much."

"Oh, no," Uncle Wiggily laughed. "I like it. I have a new adventure nearly every day, and I think it is good for my rheumatism. So, heigh-ho! Away I go!"

Off through the woods went Uncle Wiggily. It would soon be Spring now, and already the pussy willows were just beginning to learn how to mew a little bit, like baby cats.

As the rabbit gentleman went along he saw, lying on the path in front of him, a piece of money. But it was a very queer bit of money, indeed. It was all bent and twisted and crooked, as though a trolley car had stepped on it by mistake, and on one side was a figure six.

“Well, maybe this will bring me good luck,” said Uncle Wiggily. “It doesn’t seem to be good for much else—such crooked money. A six-cent piece, I guess it was once. I’ll just put it in my pocket.”

So he did, and he walked along a little farther, until, coming to a place where a great, big tree had fallen to the ground, Uncle Wiggily heard some one sitting on it saying:

“Oh, dear! I’ve lost it! I can’t find it anywhere, and without it I don’t see how I can do what it says in the Mother Goose book I must do. It’s lost—gone!”

Uncle Wiggily looked and saw, sitting on the fallen tree, a very funny, but nice, old man. And the man was very crooked. He was bent and twisted until there was not a straight place on him, not even his nose, which was wobbled and bent over to one side, and his ears were folded together like pieces of paper.

“Well, well,” said Uncle Wiggily, feeling sorry for so crooked a man, “this is too bad. I wonder what happened to him to make him so bent, and I wonder what he has lost?” for the crooked, twisted man was turning his pockets inside out, and even his pockets were curled around like a corkscrew.

“Oh, such trouble as I am in!” cried the man. “Oh, dear!”

“Ha, trouble! That means here is a chance for me to help,” said the bunny uncle. “Excuse me,” he said, “but who are you, and can I do anything to help you?”

“Ha! Uncle Wiggily Longears! I know you by your pictures!” said the man. “Don’t you know me? I’m in the

book that Mother Goose wrote. It says about me that once

“There was a crooked man,
Who walked a crooked mile,
And found a crooked sixpence
Against a crooked stile.
He bought a crooked cat,
Which caught a crooked mouse,
And they all lived together
In a little crooked house.’

“That’s who I am,” said the man. “But now I’ll never be able to buy the crooked cat to catch the crooked mouse, and live with me forever in my little crooked house.”

“Why not?” asked Uncle Wiggily, sort of wondering like. “Because I lost the crooked sixpence,” said the crooked man. “I found it against the crooked stile all right, after I’d walked the crooked mile. The road did twist and turn like a carpenter’s shaving, so it was crooked all right. And when I came to the stile, which is a pair of steps to get over a fence—a pair on each side—they were so crooked I could hardly get over them. And there was the crooked sixpence. But I must have lost it out of my pocket, for I haven’t it now.”

“Is this it?” asked Uncle Wiggily, as he took the crooked piece of money out of his ear, which he sometimes used as a pocket.

“Oh, that’s just it!” cried the crooked man, in delight.

“How ever did you find it?”

"It was lying on the path in the woods," said the bunny uncle, "and I picked it up. You may have it back."

"Oh, now I am all right!" laughed the crooked man. "I can buy the crooked cat, and it will catch a crooked mouse, and then we'll walk along and find our little, crooked house."

"But please don't let your crooked cat catch my little mice friends, Jollie or Jillie Longtail, or Squeaky-Eeky, the cousin mouse?" begged Uncle Wiggily.

"Oh, indeed not!" promised the crooked man. "My crooked cat will only catch a crooked candy mouse. Perhaps you would like to come with me and see me buy the crooked cat."

"I would," spoke Uncle Wiggily. "I'll come."

The crooked man started off, twisting this way and that as he walked along the crooked mile, and Uncle Wiggily, who was sort of curious and inquisitive, asked:

"What made you get all twisted up this way?"

"Rheumatism," was the crooked man's answer. "But I don't mind now, for I have no pain. In fact, I think it's quite jolly to be crooked and live in a crooked house. It's so different from other people."

"Yes," said Uncle Wiggily, "it is certainly different. But it is nice that you are so happy about it. Some folks would be sad. I'm glad you are jolly."

Pretty soon the two friends came to where crooked cats were sold for crooked money. By this time Uncle Wiggily was so tired, from having to jump back and forth to follow the crooked man walking a crooked mile,



that the bunny uncle thought he would go back to his hollow-stump bungalow and rest.

But the crooked man, after he had bought the crooked cat, still went along with Uncle Wiggily, and it was a good thing he did. For, when Uncle Wiggily was about halfway home, out from

behind a stump a bad old fox jumped at him. Zip! "Ah, ha!" cried the fox. "Now I have you!" And then he saw the crooked man and crooked cat, the fox did, and he rubbed his eyes with his paws, once or twice, and cried out:

"Oh! What does this mean? I must be asleep and dreaming, for never can there really be such strange, crooked things in this world as that crooked man and cat. I must be dreaming, and pretty soon I'll wake up in my den. I'll just lie quietly and not move, or I might have a worse dream."

And, thinking it was all a dream, the fox lay down in the woods to sleep, and so he didn't get Uncle Wiggily after all, thanks to the crooked man and cat. The bunny uncle hurried away from the sleeping fox, and the twisted chap, with the doubled-up cat, soon reached their own crooked house, where they lived happily for many crooked years, catching crooked candy mousies that cried crooked candy tears.