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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Uncle Wiggily And The Lantern (19/31)

After Uncle Wiggily had taken Jennie Chipmunk home, so that the bear couldn't get her, as I told you about in the story before this one, the old gentleman rabbit walked on over the fields and through the woods, seeking his fortune. He looked everywhere for it; down in hollow stumps, behind big stones, and even in an old well, but you may be sure he didn't jump down any more wells. No, I guess not!

"Ha! Here is a little brook!" exclaimed Uncle Wiggily, after a while, as he came to a small stream of water flowing over green, mossy stones, with a nice gurgling sound like an ice cream soda, "perhaps I may find my fortune here."

But he looked and he looked in the water without seeing anything but a goldfish.

"I might sell the goldfish for money," thought the fortune-hunting rabbit, "but it wouldn't be kind to take him out of the brook, so I won't. I'll look a little farther, on the other side."

Then, taking up his crutch and his valise, Uncle Wiggily gave a big jump, and leaped safely across the water. Then, once more, he traveled on. Pretty soon he came to a place where there was a tree, and on one branch of this tree there hung a funny round ball, that looked

as if it was made of gray-colored paper. And there was a funny buzzing sound coming from it.

"Ha! Do you see that?" asked a big, fat hop-toad, as he suddenly bobbed up out of the grass. It was the same toad who had made the rabbit jump down in the leaf-covered well. "Do you see that?" asked the toad.

"Well, if you want to find your fortune, take a stick and hit that ball."

"Indeed I will not!" cried the old gentleman rabbit. "I know you and your tricks! That is a hornets' nest, and if I struck it they would fly out, and sting me. Oh, no! You can't catch me again. Now you go away, or I'll tell a policeman dog to arrest you."

So the toad knew it was of no use to try to fool Uncle Wiggily again, and he hopped away, scratching his warty back on a sharp stone.

Well, the old gentleman rabbit traveled on and on, and when it came night he wondered where he was going to stay, for he hadn't yet found his fortune and the weather looked as if it was going to rain. Then, all of a sudden, he heard voices calling like this:

"Come on, Nannie, you've got to blind your eyes now, and I'll go hide."

"All right, Billie," was the answer. "And after that we'll get Uncle Butter to tell us a story."

"I guess I know who those children are," thought Uncle Wiggily, though he had not yet seen them. "That's Billie and Nannie Goat talking," and surely enough it was, and, most unexpectedly the rabbit had come right up to the house where they lived, on the edge of the woods.

Well, you can just imagine how glad Billie and Nannie were to see Uncle Wiggily.

They danced all around him, and held him by the paws, and kissed him between his long ears, and Billie carried his satchel for him.

"Oh, we're so glad you are here!" they cried. "Mamma! Papa! Uncle Butter! Here is Uncle Wiggily!"

Well, the whole goat family was glad to see the rabbit-traveler, and after supper he told them of his adventures, and how he was out seeking his fortune. And Billie and Nannie told what they had been doing, and Nannie showed how she could cut things out of paper, like the children do in the kindergarten class in school. She could make little houses, with smoke coming out of the chimney, and paper lanterns, and boxes, and, oh! ever so many things. The lanterns she made were especially fine, just like Chinese ones.

Then it came time to go to bed, and in the night a very strange thing happened, and I'm going to tell you all about it.

Along about 12 o'clock, when all was still and quiet, and when the little mice were beginning to think it was time for them to creep, creep out of their holes, and hunt for bread and cheese; about this time there sounded a noise down at the front door of the goat-house.

"Ha! What is that?" asked Mrs. Goat.

"I guess it was the cats," said Mr. Goat, getting ready to go to sleep again.

"No, I'm sure it was a burglar-fox!" said the lady goat.

"Please get up and look."

Well, of course, Mr. Goat had to do so, after his wife asked him like that. So he poked his head out of the upstairs window, over the front door, and he called out: "Who is down there?"

"I'm a burglar-fox!" was the answer. "I'm coming to rob you."



"Oh, my!" cried Mrs. Goat, when she heard that. "Get a gun, and shoot him, Mr. Goat."

And at that Billie and Nannie began to cry, for they were afraid of burglars, and Uncle Butter got up, and began looking for a whistle, with which to call a policeman dog, but

he couldn't find it.

Then the burglar-fox started in breaking down the door, so that he could get in, and still Mr. Goat couldn't find his gun.

"Oh, we'll all be killed!" cried Mrs. Goat. "Oh, if some one would only help us!"

"Ha! I will help you!" cried Uncle Wiggily jumping out of bed. "I'll scare that fox so that he'll run away."

"But I can't find my gun," said Mr. Goat.

"No matter," answered the brave rabbit. "I can scare him with a paper lantern such as Nannie can make.

Quick, Nannie, make me a big paper lantern."

Well, the little goat girl stopped crying then, and she got her paper, and her scissors, and the paste pot, and she began to make a paper lantern, as big as a water pail. Uncle Wiggily and Billie helped her. And all the while the burglar-fox was banging on the door, and crying out:

"Let me in! Let me in!"

"Quick! is the lantern ready?" Asked Uncle Wiggily, jumping around in a circle like "Ring Around the Rosie."

"Here it is," said Nannie. So the rabbit gentleman took it, all nicely made as it was, and inside of it he put a hot, blazing candle. And the lantern was so big that the candle didn't burn the sides of the paper.

Then Uncle Wiggily tied the lantern to a string, and he lowered it right down out of the window; down in front of the burglar-fox, and the hot candle in the lantern burned the fox's nose, and he thought it was a policeman climbing down out of a tree to catch him, and before you could count forty-'leven the bad burglar-fox ran away, and so he didn't rob the goats after all. And, oh! how thankful Nannie and Billie and their papa and mamma were to Uncle Wiggily.

Now, in case the little boy next door doesn't take our clothes line, to make a swing for his puppy dog, I'll tell you about Uncle Wiggily and the paper house in the following story.