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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Uncle Wiggily And The Mud Puddle

Did you ever fall down in a mud puddle? Perhaps this may have happened to you when you were barefooted, with old clothes on, so that it did not much matter whether you splashed them or not.

But that isn't what I mean.

Did you ever fall into a mud puddle when you had on your very best clothes, with white stockings that showed every speck of mud? If anything like that ever happened to you, when you were going to Sunday-school, or to a little afternoon tea party, why, you know how dreadfully unhappy you felt! To say nothing of the pain in your knees!

Well, now for a story of how a little boy named Tommie fell in a mud puddle, and how Uncle Wiggily helped him scrub the mud off his white stockings—off Tommie's white stockings I mean, not Uncle Wiggily's.

Tommie was a little boy who lived in a house on the edge of the wood, near where Uncle Wiggily had built his hollow stump bungalow. No, Tommie wasn't the same little boy who had the toothache. He was quite a different chap.

One day the postman rang the bell at Tommie's house, and gave Tommie a cute little letter.

"Oh, it's for me!" cried Tommie. "Look, Mother! I have a letter!"

"That's nice," said Mother. "Who sent it to you?"

"I'll look and tell you," answered the little boy. The writing in the letter was large and plain, and though Tommie had not been to school very long he could read a little. So he was able to tell that the letter was from a little girl named Alice, who wanted him to come to a party she was going to have one afternoon a few days later.

"Oh, may I go?" Tommie asked his mother.

"Yes," she answered.

"And wear my best clothes?"

"Surely you will put on your best clothes to go to the party," said Mother. "And I hope you have a nice time!" Tommie hoped so, too. But if only he had known what was going to happen! Perhaps it is just as well he did not, for it would have spoiled his fun of thinking about the coming party. And half the fun of nearly everything, you know, is thinking about it beforehand, or afterward.

At last the day came for the tea party Alice was to give at her home, which was a little distance down the street from Tommie's house.

"Oh, how happy I am!" sang Tommie, as he ran about the porch.

But when, after breakfast, it began to rain, Tommie was not so happy. He stood with his nose pressed against the glass of the window until it was pressed quite flat. I mean his nose was flat, for the glass was that way

anyhow, you know. And Tommie watched the rain drops splash down, making little mud puddles in the street.

"Can't I go to Alice's party if it rains?" asked Tommie.

"Well, no, I think not," Mother answered. "But perhaps it will stop raining before it is time for you to go. You don't have to leave here until after lunch."

Tommie turned again to press his nose against the glass, glad that the rain was outside, so that the drops which rolled down the window could not wet his face. And he hoped the clouds would clear away and that the sun would shine before the time for the party.

Now about this same hour Uncle Wiggily Longears, the bunny rabbit gentleman, was also looking out of the window of his hollow stump bungalow in the woods, wondering, just as Tommie wondered, whether the rain would stop.

"But surely you won't go out while it is still raining," said Nurse Jane Fuzzy Wuzzy, the muskrat lady housekeeper.

"No," answered Uncle Wiggily, "my going out is not so needful as all that. I was going to look for an adventure, and I had rather do that in the sunshine than in the rain. I can wait."

And then, almost as suddenly as it had started, the rain stopped.

"Oh, I'm so glad!" sang Tommie, as he danced up and down. "Now I can go to the party!"

"And I can go adventuring," said Uncle Wiggily. Now of course he did not hear Tommie, nor did the little boy hear the bunny. But, all the same, they were to have an adventure together.

Tommie had been ready, for some time, to start down the street to go to the party Alice was giving for her little girl and boy friends. All that Tommie needed, now, was to have his collar and tie put on, and his hair combed again, for it had become rather tossed and twisted topsy-turvy when he pressed his head against the window, watching the rain.

"Be careful of mud puddles!" Tommie's mother called to him, as, all spick and span, he started down the street toward the home of Alice, a block or so distant. "Don't fall in any puddles!"

"I'll be careful," Tommie promised.

And as Uncle Wiggily started out about this same time for his adventure, Nurse Jane called to the bunny:

"Be careful not to get wet on account of your rheumatism."

"I'll be careful," promised Uncle Wiggily, just as Tommie had done.

Now everything would have been all right if Tommie had not stubbed his toe as he was going along the street, about half way to the party. But he did stumble, where one sidewalk stone was raised up higher than another, and, before he could save himself, down in the mud puddle fell poor Tommie! He fell on his hands and knees, and they were both soaked in the muddy water of the puddle on the sidewalk.

Of course it did not so much matter about Tommie's hands. He could easily wash the mud and brown water off them. But it was different with his white stockings. Perhaps I forgot to tell you that Tommie wore white

stockings to the party. But he did, and now the knees of these stockings were all mud!

And as he looked at his mud-soiled stockings, and at his hands, from which water was dripping down on the sides of his legs, Tommie could not help crying.

"I can't go to the party this way!" sobbed Tommie to himself, for he was big enough to go down the street alone, and there were no other children on it just then.

"I can't go to the party this way! But if I go home Mother will make me change my things, and I'll be late, and maybe she won't let me go at all! Oh, dear!"

And in order to keep out of sight of any other boys or girls who might come along, Tommie stepped behind some bushes that grew along the street.



And what was his surprise to see, sitting on a stone, behind this same bush, an old gentleman rabbit, wearing glasses, and with a tall silk

hat on his head. On the ground beside him was a red, white and blue striped crutch, for rheumatism.

But the funniest thing about the rabbit gentleman (who, as you have guessed, was Uncle Wiggily), the funniest thing was that he had a bunch of dried grass in one paw, and he was busy scrubbing some dried spots of mud off his trousers. So busy was Uncle Wiggily doing this that he neither saw nor heard Tommie come behind the bush. And Tommie was so

surprised at seeing Uncle Wiggily that the little boy never said a word.

"Why—why!" thought Tommie, as he saw the bunny take up a pine tree cone, which was like a nutmeg grater, and scrape the dried mud off his trousers, "he must have fallen into a mud puddle just as I did!"

And that is just what had happened to Uncle Wiggily. He had been walking along, thinking of an adventure he might have, when he splashed into a puddle and splattered himself with mud!

But, instead of crying, Uncle Wiggily set about making the best of it—cleaning himself off so he would look nice again, to go in search of an adventure.

"I'll let the mud dry in the sun," said Uncle Wiggily out loud, speaking to himself, with his back partly turned to Tommie. "Then it will easily scrape off."

The sun was so warm, after the rain, that it soon dried the mud on the bunny gentleman's clothes, and with the bunch of grass, and the sharp pine tree cone, he soon had loosened the bits of dirt.

"Now I'm all right again," said Uncle Wiggily out loud. And though of course Tommie did not understand rabbit talk, the little boy could see what Uncle Wiggily had done to help himself after the mud puddle accident.

"I say!" cried Tommie, before he thought, "will you please lend me that pine tree cone clothes brush? I want to clean the mud off my white stockings so I can go to the party!"

Uncle Wiggily looked up in surprise! He had not known, before, that Tommie was there; but the bunny heard what the little boy said. With a low and polite bow of his tall silk hat, Uncle Wiggily tossed the bunch of grass and the pine cone to Tommie. By that time the mud had dried so the little boy could scrape most of it off his stockings.



"I hope you have a nice time at the party," said Uncle Wiggily, in rabbit language, of course. And then, as Tommie scraped the last of the dried mud away, leaving only a few spots on his stockings, the bunny gentleman hopped out of the bush and on his way.

"And I can go to Alice's house without having to run home to change my stockings," thought Tommie. "I wonder who that rabbit was?"

And when Tommie reached the party he found that he was not the only little boy who had fallen in a mud puddle. The same thing had happened to Sammie and Johnnie, two other boys.

"But how did you get your stockings so clean, without going home and changing them?" asked the other boys of Tommie.

"Oh, an old rabbit gentleman, with a tall silk hat and a red, white and blue crutch showed me how to scrape off the dried mud with a pine cone," Tommie answered.

"I cleaned my white stockings as the bunny brushed his clothes."

"Oh, is that a fairy story?" cried the boys and girls at Alice's party.

"Well, he looked like a fairy!" laughed Tommie, who had washed his hands in the bath room at Alice's house, so they were clean for eating cake and ice cream. "And I'm not afraid of mud puddles any more. I know what to do if I fall in one," said Tommie.