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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Uncle Wiggily And The Red Ants (27/31)

When Uncle Wiggily got to where Grandfather Goosey Gander was waiting for him, under the shady tree, the old gentleman duck jumped up and cried out:

"Oh, how glad I am to see you! I've just been wishing you would hurry back with those ice cream cones. My! I never knew the weather to be so warm at this time of the year. Oh, won't they taste most delicious—those cones!"

You see he didn't yet know what the bear had done—eaten all the ice cream out of the cones, as I told you in the other story.

"Oh, dear!" cried the rabbit. "How sorry I am to have to disappoint you, Grandfather, but there is no ice cream!"

"No ice cream!" cried the alligator—oh, dear me! I mean the duck. "No ice cream?"

"Not a bit," said Uncle Wiggily, and then he told about what the savage bear-creature had done, and also how he had used the cones to tickle him.

"Well, that's too bad," said Grandfather Goosey, "but here, I'll give you money to buy more cones with," and he put his hand in his pocket, but lo and behold! he had lost all his money.

"Never mind, perhaps I have some pennies," said the rabbit; so he looked, but, oh, dear me, suz-dud and the mustard pot! All of Uncle Wiggily's money was gone, too. "Well, I guess we can't get any ice cream cones this week," said the old gentleman duck. "We'll have to drink water."

"Oh, no you won't," said a buzzing voice. "I'll get you each an ice cream cone, because you have always been so kind—both of you." And with that out from the bushes flew a big, sweet, honey bee, with a load of honey.

"Have you got any ice cream cones, Mr. Bee?" asked the rabbit.

"No, but I have sweet honey, and if I go down to the ice cream cone store, and give the man some of my honey he'll give me three cones, and there'll be one for you and one for me and—"

"One for Sister Sallie!" interrupted Grandfather Goosey. "I wish she was here now."

"She could have a cone if she was here," said the honey bee, "as I could get four. But, as long as she is not, the extra cone will go to you, Grandpa. Now, come on, and I'll take my honey to the ice-cream-cone-man." So they went with him and on the way the bee sung a funny little song like this:

"I buzz, buzz, buzz

All day long.

I make my honey

Good and strong.

I fly about

To every flower
And sometimes stay
'Most half an hour.'

Uncle Wiggily didn't know whether or not the bee was really in earnest about what he said, but, surely enough, when they got to the ice cream store, the man took the bee's honey, and handed out four ice cream cones, each larger than the first ones. Two were for the duck as he was so fond of them.

"Oh, let's eat them here, so that if the bear meets us he can't take them away," suggested Grandfather Goosey, and they did. Then the bee flew home to his hive, and Uncle Wiggily and the old gentleman duck found a nice place to sleep under a haystack.

In the morning Grandfather Goosey said he thought he had better go back home, as he had traveled enough. He wanted the rabbit to come with him, but Uncle Wiggily said:

"No, I have not yet found my fortune, and until I do I will keep on traveling." So he kept on, and the duck went home. Well, it was about two days after that when, along toward evening, as Uncle Wiggily was walking down the road, he saw a real big house standing beside a lake. Oh, it was a very big house, about as big as a mountain, and the chimney on it was so tall as almost to reach the sky.



"Hum! I wonder who lives there?" said Uncle Wiggily.
"Perhaps I can find my fortune in that house."

"Oh, no; never go there!" cried a voice down on the ground, and, looking toward his toes, Uncle Wiggily saw a little red ant.

"Ah, ha! Why shouldn't I go up to the big house, little red ant?" asked the rabbit.

"Because a monstrous giant lives there," was the answer, "and he could eat you up at one mouthful. So stay away."

"I guess I will," said the rabbit. "But I wonder where I can sleep to-night. I guess I'll go—"

"Oh, look out! Look out!" cried another red ant. "There is the giant coming now."

Uncle Wiggily looked, and he saw something like a big tree moving, and that was the giant. Then he felt the ground trembling as if a railroad train was rumbling past, and he heard a noise like thunder, and that was the giant walking and speaking:

"I smell rabbits! I smell rabbits!" cried the giant. "I must have them for supper!" Then he came on straight to where Uncle Wiggily was, but he hadn't yet seen him.

"Oh, what shall I do? What shall I do?" cried the bunny. "Let me hide behind that stone." He made a jump for a rock, taking his valise and crutch with him, but the first red ant said:

"It is no good hiding there, Uncle Wiggily, for the giant can see you."

"Oh, what shall I do?" he asked again, trembling with fear.

"I know!" cried the second little red ant. "Let's all bring grains of sand, and cover Uncle Wiggily up, leaving just a little hole for his nose, so he can breathe. Then the giant won't see him. It will be like down at the seashore, when they cover people on the beach up with the sand."

"Oh, it will take many grains of sand to cover the rabbit," said the first red ant, but still they were not discouraged. The first two ants called their brothers and sisters, and aunts, and uncles, and papas, and mammas, and cousins, and nephews, and forty-second granduncles. Soon there were twenty-two million four hundred and sixty-seven thousand, eight hundred and ninety-one ants, and a little baby ant, who counted as a half a one, and he carried baby grains of dirt.

Then each big ant took up a grain of sand, and then they all hurried up, and put them on Uncle Wiggily, who stretched out in the grass. Now all those ants together could carry lots of sand, you see, and soon the rabbit was completely buried from sight, all but the tip of his nose, so he could breathe, and when the giant came rumbling, stumbling by, he couldn't see the bunny, and so he didn't eat him. And, of course, the giant didn't eat the ants, either for he didn't like them.

"Hum! I thought I smelled a rabbit, but I guess I was mistaken," said the giant, grumbling and growling, as he tramped around.

And that's how Uncle Wiggily was saved, and pretty soon, if there isn't any sand in my rice pudding, I'll tell you about Uncle Wiggily and the bad giant.