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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Uncle Wiggily And The Tame Squirrel

Once upon a time, as Uncle Wiggily Longears, the bunny rabbit gentleman, was hopping through the woods, he heard a rustling in the bushes, and he crouched down to hide himself.

"For," thought the bunny, "this may be the Pipsisewah or the Skeezicks, or even the Woozie Wolf or the Fuzzy Fox. I had better be careful!"

But when Uncle Wiggily looked over the top of the bush, whence the rustling sound had come, all he saw was the tame rabbit, who once had a broken leg. The rabbit, who was now tame, was hopping along the forest path.

"Hello!" called Uncle Wiggily in his most jolly voice, as he twinkled his pink nose upside down, just for a change. "Where are you going, Tame Rabbit? I shall call you that as a new name. I hope you are not going to run away from Donald and Mab, the boy and girl who were so kind to you."

"Indeed I am not running away," answered the Tame Rabbit. "I am just going to the woods to look for some flowers. Don and Mab are going to have a little woodland party this afternoon, and I want to get them some flowers to put on the flat stump which they will use for a table."

"That is very kind of you," Uncle Wiggily said. "I'll help!"

"Wouldn't you like to come to the party?" asked the Tame Rabbit, as he and the bunny gentleman hopped into the forest together. "There will be lots of good things to eat—even ice cream!"

"Thank you, I'd better not come, as some of the boys and girls might not be as thoughtful as Mab and Don," spoke Uncle Wiggily. "Some of them might throw peanut shells at my tall, silk hat; just for fun, you know."

"Well, perhaps they might," admitted the Tame Rabbit. "I don't wear anything but an old cap—nobody tries to knock that off," he added with a laugh. "But can't you just look in at the party, Uncle Wiggily? Just stop for a moment?"

"Yes, I'll do that," promised Mr. Longears. And when he had nibbled, with his teeth, some wild flowers for the Tame Bunny, Uncle Wiggily hopped to his hollow stump bungalow, promising to peek through the bushes at the children's party later in the day.

That afternoon, as he was hopping through the woods, Uncle Wiggily heard the sounds of shouting and laughter.

"That must be the party," thought the bunny gentleman. "I'll skip over and take a look."

In a little moss-covered dingly dell among the trees, Uncle Wiggily saw Don, Mab and many of their little boy and girl friends dancing about a broad, flat stump, which was set like a table. And in the middle was the bunch of flowers, some of which Uncle Wiggily had helped gather.

"Those children are certainly having a good time!" thought Uncle Wiggily, twinkling his pink nose so that it almost turned a somersault. "And the Tame Rabbit, who used to be wild, is enjoying himself, too." The other bunny surely was having fun, hopping here and there almost as if playing tag with the children.

All at once Mab cried:

"Come on now! We'll eat!"

"Hurray!" cried all the boys.

The girls didn't get so excited about it, but I think they were just as glad to eat as were the boys. The children gathered around the stump table, and I wish I could tell you all the good things they had for the woodland party. But I'm not allowed to do this for fear it would make you too hungry.

All I can say is that there was just the most lovely party—things you ever heard of! The Tame Rabbit sat near Don and Mab, eating what they gave him.

"Now we'll crack the nuts and play more games!" called Mab, after a while.

But when she went to pass the nuts she found that they were not cracked, and some of them had very hard shells.

"Oh, Don! Didn't you bring the nut cracker?" asked Mab.

"No, I thought you did," answered her brother.

"And I thought you did!" exclaimed Mab. "Oh, what shall we do?"

"We can crack the nuts with stones on top of the stump," said one boy.

But when they tried this, some of the nuts flew away over in the bushes, without getting cracked at all.

Others hit the girls on the ends of their noses. And some of the children pounded their fingers instead of cracking the nuts.

"Oh, dear!" sighed Mab, as she saw what was going on. "My party will be spoiled, all because we haven't a nut cracker."

The Tame Rabbit heard all this. So did Uncle Wiggily, who was looking on, hidden in the bushes. Both bunnies knew what was said though they couldn't speak boy and girl talk.

"Can't you help the children, Uncle Wiggily?" asked the Tame Rabbit, as he hopped out to the bush where the bunny gentleman was hidden. None of the children saw the two animals talking together.



"How do you mean help them?" asked Mr. Longears.

"By getting them a nut cracker," went on the Tame Rabbit.

"A nut cracker?" exclaimed Uncle Wiggily. "A squirrel is the best nut cracker I know of. Ha! I have it! I'll send one of the Bushytail brothers over here to crack nuts for the children. I think the boys and girls will be kind to him. I'll go get Johnnie or Billie."

Away hopped Uncle Wiggily through the woods, and soon he met Johnnie Bushytail.

"Johnnie, don't you want to come and be a nut cracker for some children?" asked Uncle Wiggily.

"Why, of course!" chattered Johnnie, who was a very tame squirrel. "I love children," he said. "And I suppose I may eat a few of the nuts I crack."

"Oh, surely," answered Uncle Wiggily.

The bunny gentleman led Johnnie back through the woods to the children's party. The boys and girls were still trying to crack the hard nuts, but they could not do it well at all. Johnnie suddenly scrambled out of the bushes and up on the flat stump, and, taking a nut in his paws, he cracked it, by gnawing through the hard shell with his sharp teeth. Then he took out the meat and laid it on a birch-bark plate.

"Oh, look!" exclaimed Don, pointing to the Bushytail chap. "A tame squirrel is cracking the nuts for us! Look!"

"Oh, the dear little thing!" cried Mab. "And see, he's all dressed up like a real boy. Maybe he's a fairy!" she whispered as Johnnie cracked more nuts.

"Pooh! There aren't any fairies!" said Don. "But he sure is helping us!"

Johnnie sat up on the stump, his tail held straight up behind his back, and he cracked nut after nut.

"This is fine!" whispered the Tame Rabbit to Johnnie, the tame squirrel, while Uncle Wiggily, hiding behind a bush, saw and heard it all. "The children will love you for this."

"I'm glad of that," answered Johnnie, in animal talk, which the boys and girls could not hear. Then the tame squirrel cracked many more nuts, eating some himself,

for there were more than enough for all the children at the party.

"Oh, I wonder if we could take this squirrel home with us, as we took the Wild Tame Rabbit?" said the boy, as Johnnie cracked the last nut.

"Try it," suggested Mab to her brother.

But when Donald put out his hand, and tried to catch Johnnie, the squirrel boy just flipped his tail and scampered away.

"Thank you, I'd rather not be caught," chattered Johnnie, though of course Don and Mab did not know what he was saying. Then, when the woodland party was over, the children went home.