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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Uncle Wiggily Goes Coasting

"Oh, it's stopped snowing! It's stopped snowing! Now we can go coasting; can't we, Mother?"

"And on our new Christmas sleds! Oh, what fun!"

A boy and a girl ran from the window, against which they had been pressing their noses, looking out to see when the white flakes would stop falling from the sky. Now the storm seemed to be over, leaving the ground covered with the sparkling snow crystals.

"Yes, you may go coasting a little while," said Mother.

"But don't stay too late. When Daddy comes to supper you must be home."

"We will!" promised the boy and girl, and, laughing in glee, they ran to get on their boots, their mittens and warm coats.

"I want to go coasting! Take me to slide down hill!" cried Bumps, the little sister of the boy and girl. "I want a sleigh ride."

"Oh, Bumps, you're too little!" objected Sister.

"And she'll fall down and bang herself," added Brother.

In fact the "littlest girl" did fall down so often that she was called "Bumps" as a pet name.

"I won't fall down!" Bumps promised. "I'll be good! Please take me coasting?"

"I think you might take her," said Mother.

"Yes, we will," spoke Sister. "Come on, Bumps!"

"Well, if she falls off the sled when it's going down hill, and she gets bumped, it won't be my fault!" declared Brother.

"I—I'll be good—I won't fall!" promised Bumps. So Mother bundled her up, and out she went to the coasting hill with Brother and Sister, each of whom had a sled.



"I'm not going to give her rides on my sled all the while!" said Brother, half grumbling.

"We'll take turns," more kindly suggested Sister. "Take hold of my hand, Bumps, and don't fall any more times than you can help, dear!"

"No; I won't," answered Bumps. The littlest girl was smiling and happy because she was going

coasting with Sister and Brother. And she made up her mind she would try very, very hard not to fall.

On the other side of the forest, near which was the coasting hill of the children, lived Uncle Wiggily in his hollow stump bungalow. From afar he had often watched the boys and girls sliding down on their sleds, but the bunny gentleman had never gone very close.

"For," he said to himself, "they might, by accident, run over me. And, though I haven't much of a tail to be cut off, I would look queer if anything should happen to my

long ears. I'll keep away from the coasting hill of the boys and girls."

But not far from the bunny's bungalow was another and smaller hill, down which the animal boys and girls coasted. Of course, very few of them had such sleds as you children have, with shiny steel runners, and with the tops painted red, blue, green and gold. In fact, some of the animal boys didn't bother with a sled at all. Take Toodle and Noodle Flat-Tail, the beaver chaps, for instance. They just slid down hill on their broad, flat tails. And as for Johnnie and Billie Bushytail, the squirrels, they sat on their fuzzy tails and scooted down the hill of snow. Others of the animal children sometimes used pieces of wood, an old board or some sticks bound together with strands from a wild grape vine.

And about the time that Sister, Brother and Bumps went coasting, Sammie and Susie Littletail, the rabbits, passed the hollow stump bungalow of Uncle Wiggily Longears. The little bunnies were each pulling a sled made from pieces of birch bark they had gnawed from trees.

"Let's ask Uncle Wiggily to go coasting with us," spoke Susie.

"Oh, yes! Let's!" echoed Sammie. "It'll be lots of fun!"

And Uncle Wiggily was very glad to go coasting. Out of his bungalow he hopped, his pink nose twinkling twice as fast as the shiny star on top of the Christmas tree.

"Dear me, Wiggy!" cried Nurse Jane. "You don't mean to say you're going coasting with your rheumatism!"

"No, I'm going coasting with Sammie and Susie," the laughing bunny answered. "I haven't any rheumatism to go coasting with to-day, I'm glad to tell you." And, surely enough, he didn't need to take his red, white and blue striped crutch.

When Sammie, Susie and Uncle Wiggily reached the coasting hill, they found there many of the animal children.

"Oh, Uncle Wiggily! Ride on my sled!" invited one after another. "Ride on mine! Coast with me!"

"I'll take turns with each one!" promised the bunny gentleman, and so he did, riding with Sammie and Susie first, then with the Bushytail squirrel brothers, next with Lulu, Alice and Jimmie Wibblewobble, the ducks, and so on down to Dottie and Willie Flufftail, the lamb children.

Oh, such fun as Uncle Wiggily had on the animal children's coasting hill. And on the other side of the forest, Sister, Brother and Bumps had their fun, with the real boys and girls.

At last it began to grow dusk, and when Uncle Wiggily was thinking of telling the animal children it was time for them to leave for home, up came rushing Jackie and Peetie Bow Wow, the puppy dog boys.

"Oh, Uncle Wiggily!" barked Jackie. "We were just over to the big hill, where the real boys coast, and we saw ___"

"We saw a little baby girl—that is, almost a baby—in a pile of snow!" finished Peetie, for his brother Jackie was out of breath and couldn't bark any more.

"What's that?" cried Uncle Wiggily. "A real, live little girl in the snow?"

"Right in a snow drift!" barked Jackie. "All alone!"

"Why," said the bunny gentleman, as he thought it over, "she must have been coasting with her brother or sister, and maybe she fell off a sled and went down deep in the snow. And they played so hard they never missed her! But she mustn't be allowed to stay asleep in the snow. She'll freeze!"

"If she's only a little one—almost a baby—couldn't we put her on one of our sleds?" asked Sammie.

"And ride her home," went on Susie.

"If we all pull together we'd be strong enough to pull a real, live girl, if she wasn't too large," quacked Jimmie Wibblewobble, the duck.

"We'll try!" said Uncle Wiggily. "All of you take the grape-vine ropes from your sleds and follow me."

Quickly the animal children did this, taking with them only the large double sled of Neddie Stubtail, the boy bear, which was the largest sled of all. It was low and flat, and Uncle Wiggily thought it would be easy to roll a little girl up on it and pull her along.

Soon Uncle Wiggily and the animal children reached the hill where the real boys and girls had coasted. None of them was there now, all having gone home to their suppers.

"Here she is!" softly barked Jackie, leading the way to a snowbank, at the foot of the hill.

And there, sound asleep in the soft, warm snow was—
Bumps!

Yes, as true as I'm telling you—Bumps!

The little girl had been sliding down with her sister, and had rolled off the sled at the bottom of the hill after about the forty-'leventh coast. And Bumps was so tired, and sleepy, from having been outdoors so long, that, as soon as she rolled from the sled into the snow, she fell asleep! Think of that!

And as Sister wanted to have a race with Brother and some of the other children, she never noticed what happened to Bumps. But there she was—in the snow asleep. Poor little Bumps!

"It will never do to leave her here!" whispered Uncle Wiggily to the animal boys and girls. "Don't awaken her, but roll her over on Neddie's sled, and we'll pull her to her home. I know where she lives. We'll leave her in front of the door, I'll throw a snowball to make a sound like a knock, and then we can run away. Her father and mother will come out and take her in."

So all working together, pushing, pulling, tugging and rolling most gently, the bunny gentleman and the animal boys and girls slid Bumps upon the low sled of the bear boy. Then they fastened the grape-vine ropes to it, and, all taking hold, off they started over the snow toward the village.

It was almost dark, so no one saw the strange procession of Uncle Wiggily and his friends; and the bunny gentleman was glad of this. Right up to the home of Bumps they pulled her, and just as they got the sled in her yard Bumps opened her eyes.

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" she cried when she saw all the animal children, and Uncle Wiggily, too, standing around her.

"I'm in fairyland! Oh, how I love it!"

"Quick, Sammie—Susie—Jackie—Peetie—scoot away!" called Uncle Wiggily in animal talk, and the rabbits, squirrels, guinea pigs, ducks, bears, beavers and others, all hopped away through the soft snow, out of sight. Uncle Wiggily tossed a snowball at the door, making a sound like a knock, and then the bunny gentleman also hopped away, laughing to himself.

He turned back in time to see the door open and Sister, Brother, Daddy and Mother rush out.

"Oh, here's Bumps, now!" cried Brother. "We must have forgotten and left her at the hill."

"Oh, that's what we did!" exclaimed Sister.

"Yes, but how did she get home?" asked Mother. "She never walked, I'm sure!"

"And look at the queer wooden sled!" said Sister.

"Who brought you home, Bumps?" asked Daddy.

"A—a nice bunny man, and some little bunnies, and squirrels, and a little bear boy and some ducks and chickens and little lambs and—and—" But Bumps was out of breath now.

"Oh, she's been asleep and dreamed this!" laughed Brother. "Some man must have found her and put her on this board for a sled, to bring her home."

"Nope!" declared Bumps, "it was a bunny! It was a funny bunny!"

"Bring her in the house!" laughed Mother. "She must have been dreaming!"