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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Uncle Wiggily Goes Fishing (2/31)

At first, after he found himself shut up in the bear's dark closet, where we left him in the story before this, poor Uncle Wiggily didn't know what to think. He just sat there, on the edge of a chair, and he tried to look around, and see something, but it was too black, so he couldn't.

"Perhaps this is only a joke," thought the old gentleman rabbit, "though I never knew a black bear to joke before. But perhaps it is. I'll ask him."

So Uncle Wiggily called out:

"Is this a joke, Mr. Bear?"

"Not a bit of it!" was the growling answer. "You'll soon see what's going to happen to you! I'm getting the fire ready now."

"Getting the fire ready for what; the adventure, or for my fortune?" asked the rabbit, for he still hoped the bear was only joking with him.

"Ready to cook you!" was the reply. "That's what the fire is for!" and the bear gnashed his teeth together something terrible, and, with his sharp claws, he clawed big splinters off the stump, and with them he started the fire in the stove, with the splinters, I mean, not his claws.

The blazing fire made it a little brighter in the hollow stump, which was the black bear's den, and Uncle Wiggily could look out of a crack in the door, and see what a savage fellow the shaggy bear was. You see, that bear just hid in the stump, waiting for helpless animals to come along, and then he'd trick them into jumping down inside of it, and there wasn't a word of truth about him having sore eyes, or about him having to wear dark spectacles, either.

"Oh, my! I guess this is the end of my adventures," thought the rabbit. "I should have been more careful. Well, I wish I could see Sammie and Susie before he eats me, but I'm afraid I can't. I shouldn't have jumped down here."

But as Uncle Wiggily happened to think of Sammie Littletail, the boy rabbit, he also thought of something else. And this was that Sammie had put something in the old gentleman rabbit's valise that morning, before his uncle had started off.

"If you ever get into trouble, Uncle Wiggily," Sammie had said, "this may come in useful for you." Uncle Wiggily didn't look at the time to see what it was that his nephew put in the valise, but he made up his mind he would do so now. So he opened his satchel, and there, among other things, was a long piece of thin, but strong rope. And pinned to it was a note which read: "Dear Uncle Wiggily. This is good to help you get out of a window, in case of fire."

"My goodness!" exclaimed Uncle Wiggily, "that's fine. There the bear is making a fire to cook me, and with

this rope I can get away from it. Now if there's only a window in this closet I'm all right."

So he looked, and sure enough there was a window.

And with his crutch Uncle Wiggily raised it. Then he threw out his satchel, and he tied the rope to a hook on the window sill, and, being a strong old gentleman, he crawled out of the window, and slid down the cord. And Uncle Wiggily got out just as the bear opened the closet door to grab him, and put him in the pot, and when the savage black creature saw his fine rabbit dinner getting away he was as angry as anything, really he was.

"Here! Come back here!" cried the bear, but of course Uncle Wiggily knew better than to come back. He slid down the rope to the ground, and then he cut off as much of the rope as he could, and put it in his pocket, for he didn't know when he might need it again. Then, catching up his valise, he ran on and on, before the bear could get to him.

It was still quite a dark place in which Uncle Wiggily was, for you see he was underground, down by the roots of the stump. But he looked ahead and he saw a little glimmer of light, and then he knew he could get out.

Limping on his crutch, and carrying his valise, he went on and on, and pretty soon he came out of a dark cave and found himself on the bank of a nice little brook, that was running over mossy, green stones.

"Ha! This is better than being in a bear's den!"

exclaimed the old gentleman rabbit. "My, I was so frightened that I forgot about my rheumatism hurting

me. That was an adventure all right, and Sammie was a good boy to think of that strong cord. Now what shall I do next?"

Well, Uncle Wiggily sat down on the bank of the brook, and he looked in the water. Then he happened to see a fish jump up to catch a bug, so he said to himself:

"I guess I will go fishing, just for fun. But if I do happen to catch any fish I'll put them right back in the water again. For I don't need any fish, as I have some lettuce and cabbage sandwiches, and some peanut-butter cakes, that Susie's mamma put up in a cracker-box for me."



Well, Uncle Wiggily looked in his valise, to make sure his lunch was safe, and then, taking a bent pin from under his vest, he fastened it to a part of the string Sammie had given him. Then he fastened the string to a pole, and he was ready to fish, but he needed

something to make the fishes bite—that is, bite the pinhook, not bite him, you know.

"Oh, I guess they'll like a bit of sweet cracker," Uncle Wiggily thought; so he put some on the end of the pinhook, and threw it toward the water.

It fell in with a splash, and made a lot of little circles, like ring-around the rosies, and the rabbit sat there looking at them, sort of nodding, and half asleep and wondering what adventure would happen to him next,

and where he would stay that night. All of a sudden he felt something tugging at the hook and line.

"Oh, I've got a fish! I've got a fish!" he cried, as he lifted up the pole. Up out of the water with a sizzling rush flew the string and the sweet cracker bait, and the next minute out leaped the big, savage alligator that had escaped from a circus.

"Oh, ho! So you tried to catch me, eh?" the alligator shouted at Uncle Wiggily.

"No—no, if you please," said the rabbit. "I was after fish."

"And I'm after you!" cried the alligator, and, scrambling up the bank, he made a jump for Uncle Wiggily, and with one sweep of his kinky, scaly tail he flopped and he threw the old gentleman rabbit and his crutch and valise right up into a big tree that grew near the brook.

"There you'll stay until I get ready to eat you!" exclaimed the alligator, as he stood up on the end of his tail under the tree, and opened his mouth as wide as he could so that if Uncle Wiggily fell down he'd fall into it, just like down a funnel, you know.

Well, the poor gentleman rabbit clung to the topmost tree branch, wondering how in the world he was going to escape from the alligator. Oh, it was a dreadful position to be in!

But please don't worry or stay awake over it, for I'll find a way to get him down safely. And in the story after this, if the milkman doesn't leave us sour cream for our lemonade, I'll tell you about Uncle Wiggily and the black crow.