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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Uncle Wiggily In A Balloon (12/31)

Well, just as I expected, something happened to my cat named Peter. He didn't fall into the pot of red paint, but he either ran away, or else some one took him. So now I have no cat. But I'll tell you a story about Uncle Wiggily just the same.

The old gentleman rabbit stayed with the monkey for several days, and he was so kind and good to the troublesome boys—Uncle Wiggily was, I mean—and he did such funny tricks for them, that they didn't crawl under the tent any more, and the monkey could do his tricks in peace and quietness.

"Oh, you have been a great help to me," said the monkey to the rabbit, "and I would like you to work for me all Summer. I am now going to travel on to the next town, and if you like you may go with me and keep the boys there from crawling under the tent."

"No, I thank you," replied Uncle Wiggily slowly, as he put some bread and butter, and a piece of pie, into his satchel. "I think I will travel farther on by myself, and seek my fortune."

"Well, I'm sorry to see you go," said the monkey. "And here is fifty cents for your work. I hope you have good luck."

And then Uncle Wiggily started off again, over the fields and through the woods, seeking his fortune, while the monkey got ready to move his show to the next town.

Well, for some time nothing happened to the old gentleman rabbit. He walked on and on, and once he saw a little red ant, trying to drag a piece of cake home for dinner. The cake was so big that the ant was having a dreadful time with it, but Uncle Wiggily took his left ear, and just brushed that cake into the ant's house as easily as anything.

"My, how strong and brave you are," cried the little red ant. "Won't you let me get you a glass of water?"

"I would like it," said the rabbit, "for it is quite warm to-day."

Well, that ant got Uncle Wiggily a glass of water, but you know how it is—an ant's glass is so very small that it only holds as much water as you could put on the point of a pin, and really, I'm not exaggerating a bit, when I say that Uncle Wiggily drank seventeen thousand four hundred and twenty-six and a half ant-glasses of water before he had enough. It took all the ants for a mile around to bring the water to him, but they didn't mind, because they liked him.

Then the old gentleman rabbit traveled on again, and when it came night he slept under a haystack.

"I am sure I'll find my fortune to-day," thought Uncle Wiggily as he got up and brushed the hay seed out of his ears the next morning.

It was a bright, beautiful day, and he hadn't gone very far before he heard some fine music.

"My, there must be a hand-organ around here," he said to himself. "And perhaps there is another monkey. I'll watch out."

So he stood on his hind legs, Uncle Wiggily did, and the music played louder, and all of a sudden the rabbit looked down the road, and there was a nice circus, with the white tents, all covered with flags, and bands playing, and elephants squirting water through their long noses over their backs to wash the dust off. And lions and tigers were roaring, and the horses were running, and the fat lady was drinking pink lemonade, and Oh! it was fine!

"I've got fifty cents, and I guess I'll go to the circus," thought Uncle Wiggily, and he was just entering the big tent when he happened to see a man with a lot of red and green and yellow and pink balloons. Now, you would have thought that man would have been happy, having so many balloons, but he wasn't. He looked very sad, that man did, and he was almost crying.

"Poor man!" thought Uncle Wiggily. "Perhaps he has no money to go in the circus. I'll give him mine. Here is fifty cents, Mr. Man," said the old gentleman rabbit, kindly. "Take it and go see the elephant eat peanuts."

"Oh, that is very good of you," spoke the balloon man, "but I don't want to go to the circus. I want to sell my balloons, but no one will buy them."

"Why not?" asked the rabbit.

"Oh, because there are so many other things to buy," said the man, "red peanuts and lemonade in shells—oh, I've got that wrong, it is red lemonade, isn't it? And peanuts in shells. But no matter. What I need," said the

man, "is to get the people to listen to me—I need to make them look at me, and when they see what fine balloons I have they'll buy some. But there are so many other things to look at that they never look toward me at all."

"Ha! I know the very thing!" cried Uncle Wiggily. "You ought to have some one go up in a balloon. That would surprise the people like anything. They'd be sure to look at that, and they'd all run over here and buy all your balloons."



"Yes, but who can I get to go up in a balloon?" asked the man.

"I will!" cried Uncle Wiggily bravely. "Perhaps I may find my fortune up in the sky, so I'll go in a balloon."

Well, the man thought that was fine. So he made a little basket for the rabbit to sit in, and he fastened the basket to a big red balloon, and then

he took care of the rabbit's valise for him, while Uncle Wiggily got ready to go toward the clouds, taking only his crutch with him.

When the man had everything fixed and when the rabbit was sitting in the basket as easily as in a soft chair at home, the man cried:

"Over here! Over here, everybody! Over here, people! A rabbit is going up in a balloon! A most wonderful sight! Over here!"

And then the man let go of the balloon, and Uncle Wiggily shot right up toward the sky, only, of course, the man had a string fast to the balloon to pull it down again. Up and up went the balloon carrying Uncle Wiggily. Up and up!

And my! how surprised the people were. They rushed over and bought so many balloons that the man couldn't take in the money fast enough. And Uncle Wiggily stayed up there, high in the air, looking for his fortune.

And then, all of a sudden, a bad boy, with a bean shooter, shot at the balloon, and "bang!" it burst, with a big hole in it. Down came Uncle Wiggily, head over heels, bursted balloon, basket, crutch and all.

"Oh, he'll be killed! He'll be killed!" cried all the people.

"No, he'll not! We'll save him!" cried Dickie and Nellie Chip-Chip, the boy and girl sparrow, who happened to be at the circus. "We'll save Uncle Wiggily!"

So up into the air they flew, and before Uncle Wiggily could fall to the ground Dickie and Nellie grabbed the basket in their bills, and, by fluttering their wings, they let it come very gently to earth just like a feather falling, and the rabbit wasn't hurt a bit. But, of course, the balloon was broken.

So that's how Uncle Wiggily went up in a balloon and came down again, but he hadn't yet found his fortune. And now in the next story, if our fire shovel doesn't go out to play in the sand pile, and get its ears full of dirt, I'll tell you about Uncle Wiggily in an automobile.