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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Uncle Wiggily In A Boat (14/31)

"Poor rabbit!" exclaimed the little boy in the automobile, as he rubbed Uncle Wiggily's ears. "I wonder if his foot is much hurt, papa?"

"I don't know," answered the man, as he steered the machine down the road. "I'll have the doctor look at it."

"Oh, indeed, it isn't hurt much," spoke up Uncle Wiggily. "The rubber tire was soft, you see. But my rheumatism is much worse on account of running so fast."

"What's this? Well, of all things! This rabbit can talk!" cried the man in surprise.

"Of course he can, papa," said the boy. "Lots of rabbits can talk. Why, there's Sammie and Susie Littletail; they can talk, and maybe this rabbit knows them."

"I'm their uncle," said the old gentleman rabbit, making a bow.

"Oh, then, you must be Uncle Wiggily Longears!" cried the little boy. "Oh, I've always wanted to see you, and now I can!"

"Well, it is very strange to meet you this way," said the man. "Still, I am glad you are not hurt, Uncle Wiggily. And so you are out seeking your fortune," for the rabbit had told them about his travels. "Perhaps you would like to rest at our house for a few days. We can give you a nice room, with a brass bed, and a bath-tub to yourself, and you can have your meals in bed, if you can't come down stairs."

"Oh, I am not used to that kind of a life," said the old gentleman rabbit. "I would rather live out of doors. If you can get me some clean straw to lie on, and once in a while a carrot or a turnip, and a bit of lettuce and some cabbage leaves now and then, I'll be all right. And as soon as my foot is well I'll travel on."

"Oh, what good times we'll have!" cried the little boy.

"Our house is near a lake, and I have a motor boat. And I'll give you a ride in it."

Well, Uncle Wiggily thought that would be nice, and he was rather glad, after all, that he had jumped into the auto. So pretty soon they came to the place where the boy lived. Oh, it was a fine, large house, with lots of grounds, lawns and gardens all around it. And there were several dogs on the place, but the little boy spoke to them all, telling them that the rabbit was his friend Uncle Wiggily, who must not be bitten or barked at on any account.

"Oh, we heard about him from Fido Flip-Flop," said big dog Rover. "We wouldn't hurt Uncle Wiggily for two worlds, and part of another one, and a bag of peanuts." So Uncle Wiggily was given a nice bed of straw in one of the empty dog-houses, and the boy got him some cabbage and lettuce, and the rabbit made himself a sandwich of them, with some bread and butter which he had in his satchel.

Then the rabbit and the dogs talked together, and the rabbit told of his travels, and what had happened to him so far.

"Wonderful! Wonderful!" exclaimed the old dog Rover.

"You should write a book about your fortune."

"I haven't found it yet, but perhaps I may, and then I'll write the book," said Uncle Wiggily, combing out his whiskers.

That night the boy put a soft rag and some salve on the rabbit's sore foot, and he also gave him some liniment for his rheumatism, and in the morning Uncle Wiggily was much better. He and the boy and the dogs had lots of fun playing together on the smooth, green, grassy lawn. They played tag, and hide-and-go-seek, and a new game called "Don't Let the Ragman Take Your Rubber Boots." And the dog Rover pretended he was the ragman.

"Now, then, we'll all go out in my motor boat," said the boy, so he and Uncle Wiggily and the dogs went down to the lake and, surely enough, there was the boat, the nicest one you could wish for. There was a little cabin in it, and seats out on deck, and a little engine that went "choo-choo!" and pushed the boat through the water.



In the boat they all had a fine ride around the lake, which was almost like the one where you go to a Sunday-school picnic, and then it was time for dinner. And, as a special treat, when they got on shore, Uncle Wiggily

was given carrot ice cream, with chopped-up turnips in it. And oh, how good it was to him!

Well, the days passed, and Uncle Wiggily was getting so he could walk along pretty well, for his foot was all cured, and he began to think of going on once more to seek his fortune. And then something happened. One day the boy went out alone in a rowboat to see if he could find any fish. And before he knew it his boat had tipped over, spilling him out into the water, and he couldn't swim. Wasn't that dreadful?

"Oh! Help! Help!" he cried, as the water came up to his chin.

My, but it's awful to be tipped over in a boat! and I and I hope if you can't swim you'll never go out in one alone. And there was that poor boy splashing around in the water, and almost drowned.

"Save me! Save me!" the boy cried. "Oh, save me!"

Well, as it happened, Uncle Wiggily was walking along the shore of the lake just then. He saw the little boy fall out of the boat, and he heard him cry.

"I'll save you if I can!" exclaimed the brave old rabbit.

"Come on, Rover, we'll go out in the motor boat and rescue him."

"Bow-wow! Bow-wow! Sure! Sure!" cried Cover, wagging his tail.

So he and Uncle Wiggily ran down, and jumped into the motor boat. And they knew just how to start the engine and run it, for the boy had showed them.

"Bang-bang!" went the engine. "Whizz-whizz!" went the boat through the water.

"Faster! Faster!" cried Uncle Wiggily, who was steering the boat, while Rover ran the engine. "Go faster!"

So Rover made it go as fast as he could, and then all of a sudden that boy went down under the water, out of sight.

"Oh, he's drowned!" cried Uncle Wiggily sorrowfully. But he wasn't, I'm glad to say. Just then along came Nurse Jane Fuzzy-Wuzzy, the muskrat, swimming. And she dived away down under and helped bring that boy up to the top of the water, and then Uncle Wiggily and Cover grabbed him as the muskrat lifted him up, and they pulled him into the motor boat, and so saved his life. And oh! how thankful he was when he was safe on shore, and he was careful never to fall in the water again.

Now, in case the clothes wringer doesn't squeeze all the juice out of my breakfast orange, I'll tell you in the next story about Uncle Wiggily making a cherry pie.