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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Uncle Wiggily Starts Off (1/31)

Uncle Wiggily Longears, the nice old gentleman rabbit, hopped out of bed one morning and started to go to the window, to see if the sun was shining. But, no sooner had he stepped on the floor, than he cried out: "Oh! Ouch! Oh, dear me and a potato pancake! Oh, I believe I stepped on a tack! Sammie Littletail must have left it there! How careless of him!"

You see this was the same Uncle Wiggily, of whom I have told you in the Bedtime Books—the very same Uncle Wiggily. He was an Uncle to Sammie and Susie Littletail, the rabbit children, and also to Billie and Johnnie Bushytail, the squirrel boys, and to Alice and Lulu and Jimmie Wibblewobble, the duck children, and I have written for you, books about all those characters. Now I thought I would write something just about Uncle Wiggily himself, though of course I'll tell you what all his nephews and nieces did, too.

Well, when Uncle Wiggily felt that sharp pain, he stood still for a moment, and wondered what could have happened.

"Yes, I'm almost sure it was a tack," he said. "I must pick it up so no one else will step on it."

So Uncle Wiggily looked on the floor, but there was no tack there, only some crumbs from a sugar cookie that Susie Littletail had been eating the night before, when her uncle had told her a go-to-sleep story.

"Oh, I know what it was; it must have been my rheumatism that gave me the pain!" said the old gentleman rabbit as he looked for his red, white and blue crutch, striped like a barber pole. He found it under the bed, and then he managed to limp to the window. Surely enough, the sun was shining.

"I'll certainly have to do something about this rheumatism," said Uncle Wiggily as he carefully shaved himself by looking in the glass. "I guess I'll see Dr. Possum."

So after breakfast, when Sammie and Susie had gone to school, Dr. Possum was telephoned for, and he called to see Uncle Wiggily.

"Ha! Hum!" exclaimed the doctor, looking very wise. "You have the rheumatism very bad, Mr. Longears."

"Why, I knew that before you came," said the old gentleman rabbit, blinking his eyes. "What I want is something to cure it."

"Ha! Hum!" said Dr. Possum, again looking very wise. "I think you need a change of air. You must travel about. Go on a journey, get out and see strange birds, and pick the pretty flowers. You don't get exercise enough."

"Exercise enough!" cried Uncle Wiggily. "Why, my goodness me sakes alive and a bunch of lilacs! Don't I play checkers almost every night with Grandfather Goosey Gander?"

"That is not enough," said the doctor, "you must travel here and there, and see things."

"Very well," said Uncle Wiggily, "then I will travel. I'll pack my valise at once, and I'll go off and seek my

fortune, and maybe, on the way, I can lose this rheumatism."

So the next day Uncle Wiggily started out with his crutch, and his valise packed full of clean clothes, and something in it to eat.

"Oh, we are very sorry to have you go, dear uncle," said Susie Littletail, "but we hope you'll come back good and strong."

"Thank you," said Uncle Wiggily, as he kissed the two rabbit children and their mamma, and shook hands with Papa Littletail. Then off the old gentleman bunny hopped with his crutch.

Well, he went along for quite a distance, over the hills, and down the road, and through the woods, and, as the



sun got higher and warmer, his rheumatism felt better."I do believe Dr. Possum was right!" said Uncle Wiggily. "Traveling is just the thing for me," and he felt so very jolly that he whistled a little tune about a peanut wagon, which roasted lemonade, and boiled and frizzled Easter eggs that Mrs. Cluk-Cluk laid.

"Ha! Where are you going?" suddenly asked a voice, as Uncle Wiggily finished the tune.

"I'm going to seek my fortune," replied Uncle Wiggily.

"Who are you?"

"Oh, I'm a friend of yours," said the voice, and Uncle Wiggily looked all around, but he couldn't discover any one.

"But where are you?" the puzzled old gentleman rabbit wanted to know. "I can't see you."

"No, and for a very good reason," answered the voice.

"You see I have very weak eyes, and if I came out in the sun, without my smoked glasses on, I might get blind. So I have to hide down in this hollow stump."

"Then put on your glasses and come out where I can see you," invited the old gentleman rabbit, and all the while he was trying to remember where he had heard that voice before. At first he thought it might be Grandfather Goosey Gander, or Uncle Butter, the goat, yet it didn't sound like either of them.

"I have sent my glasses to the store to be fixed, so I can't wear them and come out," went on the voice. "But if you are seeking your fortune I know the very place where you can find it."

"Where?" asked Uncle Wiggily, eagerly.

"Right down in this hollow stump," was the reply.

"There are all kinds of fortunes here, and you may take any kind you like Mr. Longears."

"Ha! That is very nice," thought the rabbit. "I have not had to travel far before finding my fortune. I wonder if there is a cure for rheumatism in that stump, too?" So he asked about it.

"Of course, your rheumatism can be cured in here," came the quick answer. "In fact, I guarantee to cure any disease—measles, chicken-pox, mumps and even

toothache. So if you have any friends you want cured send them to me."

"I wish I could find out who you were," spoke the rabbit. "I seem to know your voice, but I can't think of your name."

"Oh, you'll know me as soon as you see me," said the voice. "Just hop down inside this hollow stump, and your fortune is as good as made, and your rheumatism will soon be gone. Hop right down."

Well, Uncle Wiggily didn't like the looks of the black hole down inside the stump, and he peered into it to see what he could see, but it was so black that all he could make out was something like a lump of coal.

"Well, Dr. Possum said I needed to have a change of scene, and some adventures," said the rabbit, "so I guess I'll chance it. I'll go down, and perhaps I may find my fortune."

Then, carefully holding his crutch and his satchel, Uncle Wiggily hopped down inside the stump. He felt something soft, and furry, and fuzzy, pressing close to him, and at first he thought he had bumped into Dottie or Willie Lambkin.

But then, all of a sudden, a harsh voice cried out:

"Ha! Now I have you! I was just wishing some one would come along with my dinner, and you did! Get in there, and see if you can find your fortune, Uncle Wiggily!" And with that what should happen but that big, black bear, who had been hiding in the stump, pushed Uncle Wiggily into a dark closet, and locked the door! And there the poor rabbit was, and the bear was getting ready to eat him up.

But don't worry, I'll find a way to get him out, and in case we have ice cream pancakes for supper I'll tell you, in the next story, how Uncle Wiggily got out of the bear's den, and how he went fishing—I mean Uncle Wiggily went fishing, not the bear.