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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Uncle Wiggily And The Croquet Ball

"Why in the world are you taking those bottles with you?" asked Nurse Jane Fuzzy Wuzzy, the muskrat lady housekeeper, as she saw Uncle Wiggily, the bunny rabbit gentleman, hopping off the front porch of his hollow stump bungalow one morning.

"These are the prizes which Alice from Wonderland gave me," answered Mr. Longears, as he looked at the blue and red corked bottles. "The red one makes things grow larger and the blue one makes them smaller. I am going to take them with me as I go looking for an adventure today, as there is no telling when I might need them. I did yesterday, when the alligator caught me. I gave him a drink from the blue bottle and he shrunk until he was no larger than a baby angle worm." The rabbit gentleman had not gone very far, twinkling his pink nose as he hopped, before, all of a sudden, he came to a place where a big stone grew out of the ground, and near it he heard a voice, saying:

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

"Ha! That sounds like trouble!" exclaimed the bunny.

"Who are you and what is the matter?" he asked, kindly.

"Oh, I am a Lady Bug," was the answer, "and I am so small that I either get lost all the while, or all the

other animals and bugs in the forest step on me. Oh, I wish I were larger so I could be more easily seen!"

"Indeed, you are rather hard to see," said Uncle Wiggily, and he had to look twice through his glasses before he could notice the Lady Bug. At the first look he only half saw her, but the second time he saw her fully.

"I'd like to be about as large as a June Beetle," said the Lady Bug. "But I don't s'pose I ever shall be."

"Oh, yes you will!" cried jolly Uncle Wiggily.

"I will! How?" asked the Lady Bug, eagerly.

"I have here some water in a magic bottle," said the bunny. "I'll give you a few drops of it, and it will make you grow larger." So he took some water from the red-corked flask, and let the Lady Bug sip it. Instantly she grew as large as a turkey.

"Oh, now I'm too big," she said.

"I see you are," said Uncle Wiggily.

"I'll have to give you some from the other bottle and make you grow smaller." So he did, but he must have given a little too much, for the Lady Bug suddenly grew as small as the point of a baby pin.

"Oh, this is worse and worse," she said sadly.

"I know it!" agreed Uncle Wiggily. "Wait, I'll give you a little of both kinds," and he did, so the Lady Bug grew to the size of a small potato, which was just right, so she would not get lost or stepped on.

After the Lady Bug had thanked him, Uncle Wiggily, with his two magical bottles, hopped on through the woods. He had not gone very far before he saw Alice of

Wonderland and the Queen of Hearts playing croquet on a grassy place.

"Come on, Uncle Wiggily!" called Alice. "You're just in time for the game."



"Fine!" said the bunny uncle, taking a mallet and round wooden ball which the Queen handed him.

"Three strikes and you go out!" warned the Queen.

"What does she mean?" asked Uncle Wiggily of Alice. "This isn't

baseball."

"She means," explained the little flaxen-haired girl, "that if you miss striking the croquet ball three times with your mallet you have to go out and bring in some ice cream."

"Oh, I shan't mind that," the bunny rabbit said. "In fact, I shall rather like it. Now, what do I do—?"

"Play ball!" suddenly cried the Queen of Hearts, and she struck with her mallet the croquet ball near her such a hard blow that it sailed through the air and hit Uncle Wiggily in the coat tails. And then something cracked.

All at once the croquet ball began growing larger! Bigger and bigger it grew, like a snowball which you roll in the yard, and then it began to roll after Uncle Wiggily. Down the croquet ground the big wooden ball chased after him, rolling closer and closer.

"Oh, my!" cried the Queen of Hearts, "What have I done?"

"The ball cracked the magical red stoppered bottle that was in my coat tail pocket!" cried Uncle Wiggily over his shoulder, as he ran. "Some of the magic, big-growing water spilled on the ball, and now it has turned into a giant! Oh, it will crush me!"

And, really, it did seem as though the big croquet ball would, for now it was as large as a house and still growing, so strong was the water in the magical bottle that had been broken.

Larger and larger grew the croquet ball, and faster and faster it rolled after Uncle Wiggily. It was almost on his heels now, and the bunny gentleman was running so fast that his tall silk hat flew off.

"Oh, what shall I do?" he cried.

Alice thought for a minute, then she called:

"Quick, Uncle Wiggily. Take out the blue-corked bottle and sprinkle some of that water on the croquet ball! Hurry now!"

Uncle Wiggily did. As he ran he turned and threw back over his shoulder some of the blue bottle water on the big rolling croquet ball. And, all at once, just as the alligator had done, the croquet ball shrank and shrank until it was no larger than a boy's marble, and then it couldn't hurt Uncle Wiggily even if it did roll on him. But it is a good thing he had that bottle of shrinking water with him; isn't it?