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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Uncle Wiggily's Swimming Lesson

Uncle Wiggily was so tired and worn out after running for milk for the toad family that he couldn't travel very far that day to seek his fortune. He slept that night in a doghouse, where a kind puppy named Towser lived, and Towser covered the old gentleman rabbit up with leaves and straw and kept watch so that no one would hurt him.

"For I have heard about you from Percival, the old circus dog," said Towser, the next morning when the rabbit awakened, "and I feel quite like a friend to you. Will you gnaw one of my juicy bones?"

"No, thank you," said Uncle Wiggily, "but if I had a bit of carrot I would be very glad."

"Don't say another word!" cried Towser. "I will have it for you in less than two shakes of a crooked stick, or a straight one, either."

So he ran out into the vegetable garden, and, very carefully he dug up a fine yellow carrot, which Uncle Wiggily ate for his breakfast. Then the rabbit rested all that day, and stayed another night with Towser. And Towser invited some of his friends over to call on the rabbit, and they had quite an evening's entertainment. Towser sang a funny song and stood on his tail, and Uncle Wiggily jumped over two chairs and a footstool,

and a dog named Rover stood up on his hind legs and begged, and made believe he was a soldier with a broom for a gun, and did lots of tricks like that. Well, the next day Uncle Wiggily felt well enough to go on with his travels again and so he started off.

"I will go part of the way with you," said Towser, "to see that no harm comes to you."

"Thank you, very much," said the rabbit, and so they set off together, the puppy dog carrying Uncle Wiggily's valise for him.

Pretty soon, not so very long, they came to a pond of water, and as soon as Towser saw it, he cried out:

"Oh, it is such a hot day I think I'll jump in and have a swim. Come on, Uncle Wiggily, have a swim with me."



"Oh, no, I can't swim," said the old gentleman rabbit.

"What! You can't swim?" cried the dog. "Well, every one ought to swim, for when they go on

their vacation if they fall in the water they won't drown if they know how to keep themselves up. Watch me and see how easy it is."

So Towser set the satchel down on the bank and, taking off some of his clothes, into the water he jumped with a big splashy dive. Right down under the water he disappeared.

"Oh, he'll be drowned, sure!" cried Uncle Wiggily, who was much frightened. But, no. In a second up came Towser, shaking the water from his hair and eyes, and then he began swimming around as easily as a chicken can pick up corn.

"Come on in, Uncle Wiggily," he called. "The water is fine."

"Oh, I'm afraid!" said the rabbit.

"Then the first thing to do is to get so you are not afraid of the water," said the dog. "You needn't be. Just see; it will hold you up easily if you go at it right. Just keep your nose out, and don't splutter and splash too much and you can swim. Come in and I will give you a lesson."

So Uncle Wiggily got in the water. At first it took his breath away, but after a bit he got used to it, and he found that he could wade away far out. Then he tried holding his breath and ducking his head away under, and he found that he could do that and not be harmed in the least, and at last he got so he wasn't afraid at all in the water.

"Now for a lesson," said the puppy dog. "You must wade out so that the water is up to your neck, and then you face toward shore, so you won't be frightened. Then you just lean forward, gently and easily, and you kick out with your legs like a frog, and you wave your hands around from in front of you to your sides, and keep on doing that and you'll swim."

"I'll try it," said the rabbit.

So he tried it, but, all of a sudden, he cried out:

"Ouch! Oh, my! Oh, dear me! Oh, hum, suz dud!"

"What's the matter," asked the dog, looking around.

"A fish bit my toe," exclaimed the rabbit.

"Oh, I guess you only hit it on a stone," said Towser.

"Fish are too frightened to bite any one. Come on, strike out and swim as I do."

Then Uncle Wiggily wasn't afraid, and soon he was swimming as nicely as could be. For you know to swim you must first not be a bit afraid of the water, for it can't hurt you. If ever you fall in, don't breathe—just hold your breath as long as you can. Then, pretty soon you'll come up, and if some one doesn't grab you, and you go under again, hold your breath until you come up once more and then some one will surely grab you.

"You must never breathe under water—just hold your breath," said Towser to Uncle Wiggily, and the rabbit did it that way, and soon he could even swim under water.

"Well, I'm much obliged to you," he said to Towser, "but now I must be on my way to seek my fortune."

So he said good-bye to Towser and hopped on. And he hadn't gone very far before a big bear saw him and chased after him.

"Oh, I'll catch you!" cried the bear to the rabbit. Well, I just wish you could have seen Uncle Wiggily run! He ran until he came to a big river, and the bear was right after him.

"Now I have you!" cried the bear. "You can't get across the river."

"Oh, can't I?" asked the rabbit. "Just you watch and see!"

So Uncle Wiggily threw his crutch and valise across the stream, and then into it he jumped, and he swam just as Towser had taught him and he got safely on the other side and so saved his life, for the bear couldn't swim and Uncle Wiggily could. So you see it's a good thing to know how to swim, and I hope all of you, who are big enough, know how to keep up in the water. Well, Uncle Wiggily got across to the other shore, and he looked back and there that bear was raging and tearing around as mad as mad could be, because the rabbit had gotten away from him. But I'm glad of it; aren't you?