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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Uncle Wiggily And The Cowbird

"Do you think you can help me find my way back home again?" asked the cat of Uncle Wiggily as they awakened the next morning, after having spent the night in the woods by the camp fire.

"Oh, I'm sure I can," answered the rabbit. "As soon as we have our breakfast we'll start off to look for your clothespin house."

Then Uncle Wiggily made up the camp fire again, putting on some more wood, and he boiled the coffee, in a tomato can, and fried some pieces of bacon he had in his valise. The way he cooked them was to take a sharp stick and put a piece of bacon on the end of it, and then he held the bacon up in front of the blaze, where it sizzled away, and got nice and curly and brown, and oh! how good it did smell, and so did the coffee! Oh! it's great to cook over a camp fire when the smoke doesn't get in your eyes and when it doesn't rain.

"Now we must put out the fire," said the rabbit, as he and the cat were ready to go look for the clothespin house.

"Why must we do that, Uncle Wiggily?"

"Oh, so that it will not set fire to the woods, and burn down the nice trees after we are gone. Always put out your camp fire when you leave it," said the rabbit, as he threw water on the blaze, making clouds of steam.

Well, he and the cat traveled on for some time longer together, but somehow or other they couldn't seem to find the place where the cat lived, and the little cat was beginning to be sorry that she had gone camping in the woods.

"Oh, I know I'll never find my home again!" she cried.

"Oh, yes, we will," said the rabbit kindly. "Don't worry." And just then they heard some one else crying, a little, tiny, sobbing voice.

"What's that?" exclaimed the cat. "Perhaps it is one of the skillery-scalery alligator's children."

"No, I do not think so," said the rabbit. "It sounds to me as if some one else were lost in the woods, and I may have to find their home, too. We'll take a look."

So they looked all around, but they couldn't seem to find any one, though the crying was still to be heard.

"That's queer," said the rabbit, "I'll call to them."

So he called as loudly as he could like this:

"Is any one lost? Do you want me to help you find your home?"

"Oh, I'd be very glad to have you help me," said the crying voice, "but I am not lost."

"Then who are you, and what is the matter?" asked the rabbit.

"Oh, I am a robin bird," was the answer, "and I am in this bush over your heads."

"Ha, no wonder we couldn't see you," said the rabbit, as he and the cat looked up, and there, sure enough, was the nice mamma robin bird, and she was crying, as she sat in the bush.

"What is the matter?" asked the rabbit.

"I will tell you," said the robin. "You know there is a bird called the cowbird or cuckoo, and that bird is too lazy to build a nest for itself. So what do you think it does?"

"What?" asked the cat.

"Why it goes around, laying its eggs in the nests of other birds," said the robin. "Then we birds have to hatch out the cowbird's eggs, and when her children come out they are so unpleasant that they shove our little birdies right out of the nest, and eat all the things we mamma birds bring home to our little ones."

"Ha! That is very unpleasant, to say the least," spoke the rabbit.

"And are there any cowbirds in your nest now, Mrs. Robin?"

"Not yet, but there are three of the cowbird's eggs here, and they will soon hatch out."

"Why don't you toss out the cowbird's eggs?" asked the cat. "Then you won't have to hatch them."

"I would," said the robin, "only I am not strong enough, for I have been ill, and my husband is out of work and he is looking for some. So I don't know what to do about it. Oh, dear!" and she cried again.



"Ha! We must see what we can do," said Uncle Wiggily, who always liked to help people who were in trouble. "I think I have a plan."

"What is it?" asked the robin.

"Well, I can't climb up that bush, for my paws are not built for that sort of thing, but the cat can climb very nicely, as she has sharp claws."

"Indeed I can," said the cat, "and I will, and I'll throw out the cowbird's eggs for you, so those bad birds won't bother your little birds."

So Uncle Wiggily gave the cat a boost up the bush, in which the robin's nest was built, and then the cat, with her sharp claws climbed up the rest of the distance all alone very nicely.

"Now show me which are the eggs of the cowbird?" said the kittie-cat to the robin when the nest was reached. So the robin mamma pointed out the eggs with her claw, and then with her foot the cat clawed those cowbird eggs out on the ground where they wouldn't hatch.

"Now, that will be the last of those bad birds," said the cat as she started to climb down to where Uncle Wiggily was waiting for her.

"Yes, indeed, and thank you very much," spoke the robin. "Now, my little ones will have a chance to grow and live."

And just then there was a fluttering and a rustling in the bushes, and the bad cowbird came flying past. And when she saw what had been done, and how her eggs had been tossed out of the robin's nest where they

didn't belong, that cowbird flew at the cat and was going to pick her eyes out.

But Uncle Wiggily took his crutch, and tickled the cowbird so that she sneezed, and had to fly away without doing any harm. And Uncle Wiggily called after her that she ought to be ashamed of herself not to build her own nests. And I guess that cowbird was ashamed, but I'm not sure. Anyhow she came back a little later and gathered up her eggs off the ground, and flew away with them, and what she did with them I'll tell you; oh, just as soon as you like.