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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Uncle Wiggily And The Eel

My, how it did rain! The water just dripped down from the clouds as if it came from a fountain turned wrong side up, and as Uncle Wiggily walked along the seashore beach, with a toadstool held over him for an umbrella he thought he had never seen such a storm.

"But, I can't stay indoors, because it rains," he said to himself as he started out that morning to look for his fortune. "That would never do. A little water can't hurt me, and besides, with this toadstool umbrella, it isn't as bad as it might be."

So he hopped along, leaning on his red-white-and-blue-striped-barber-pole crutch, and with his valise strapped to his back, and holding the toadstool umbrella over his head. And he felt so happy in spite of the rain that he sang a little song.

It went something like this, to the tune of "Hum tum-tum ti tiddle-i-um:"

"I feel so very happy,
No matter if it rains,
For I don't ride on trolley cars,
Nor yet on railroad trains.

"Whenever I feel thirsty,
I take a drink of tea,
Or, if I can't find any,
Why, milk will do for me.

"I haven't found my fortune,

Perhaps I never can,
But I can hop upon the beach,
And beat an old tin pan."

And just then the gentleman rabbit saw an old tin pan lying on the sand, and he went up to it and pounded on it with his crutch. Not hard you understand--not so hard as to hurt it, but enough to make a noise like a drum.

"There, perhaps that will wake the people up," thought the rabbit for the beach was very lonesome in the rainstorm, with no children building sand houses, and no one in bathing. So Uncle Wiggily beat the tin pan again, and made a great racket, and, all of a sudden something glided out from under the pan. It was something long and thin, and it had a long, thin tail.

"Oh, my! It's the bad snake!" cried the rabbit, and he jumped back so quickly that he dropped his toadstool umbrella and the rain came down on the end of his twinkling nose. He was just about to hop away as fast as he could when the long, thin creature, who had been under the tin pan, exclaimed:

"I'm not a snake."

"No? Then tell me what you are?" asked Uncle Wiggily quickly.

"I am a slippery eel," was the answer. "Just see if you can hold me, and that will show you how



slippery I am."

So Uncle Wiggily very politely took hold of the eel by the tail. But, my goodness me, sakes alive and a piece of ice! In an instant that slippery eel had slipped away.

"What did I tell you?" the eel called to the rabbit, as he crawled back toward the tin.

"Well, you are certainly very slippery," said Uncle Wiggily. "I hope I didn't squeeze you too hard."

"Oh, do not mention it," said the eel, politely. "I am used to being squeezed, and that's why I'm so slippery; in order that I may get away easily."

"I hope I didn't wake you up from your sleep under the tin pan," went on the rabbit, who was very kind-hearted.

"Do not mention that, either," said the slippery eel, who was very polite. "It was time I awakened, anyhow. But, since you have been so nice about it, if ever I can do you a favor please let me know." Then he stood up on the end of his thin tail and made a low bow, and slipped into the ocean.

"Ha! That is a curious sort of chap," said Uncle Wiggily as he hopped on. "I should like to meet him again, when I have more time to talk to him. But now I must look for my fortune." So he went on looking along the beach in the rain, but never a bit of his fortune could he find. Now, in a little while, something is going to happen. In fact it's time for it now, so I'll tell you all about it. As Uncle Wiggily was hopping along the beach, where some bushes grew close down to the water, he thought he saw something shining in the sand.

"Perhaps that may be a diamond," he said. "I'll dig it up." So he got a nice pink shell with which to dig, and he set to work, laying aside his toadstool umbrella, and not minding the rain in the least.

Then, all of a sudden, up behind the bushes came sneaking the old fuzzy fox. He had been looking all over for something to eat, but all he could find were hard shell clams, and they were too rough on his teeth, so he couldn't eat them.

"Oh, but there is a soft, delicious morsel!" exclaimed the fox, as he saw Uncle Wiggily digging in the sand, and the fox smacked his lips, and sharpened his teeth on a stone. "Now I will have a good dinner," he added.

So he crept closer and closer to Uncle Wiggily, and the old gentleman rabbit never heard him, for he was busy digging for his fortune.

"Now the thing for me to do," thought the fox, "is to spring out on him before he has a chance to move. And I think I can do it, because his back is toward me, and he can't see."

So the fox got ready to spring right on Uncle Wiggily and maybe carry him off to his den in the woods, and the old gentleman rabbit didn't know a thing about it, but kept on digging for his fortune.

"Here I go!" said the fox to himself, and he crouched down for a spring, just as your kittie does when she plays she is after a mouse. Up into the air leaped the fox, right toward the rabbit. And then, suddenly a voice cried:

"Look out, Uncle Wiggily! Look out!"

The rabbit glanced up, but he was down in the sand hole and he couldn't get out quickly on account of his rheumatism. Right toward him the fox was springing, and then, all at once, the slippery eel--for it was he who had called to the rabbit--the kind eel wiggled up out of the ocean. Up along the beach he crawled quickly, until he was right in front of the rabbit in the hole. Then the eel stretched out like a piece of rope and waited.

And then the fox came down on his four feet, but, instead of landing on Uncle Wiggily he landed right on the slippery eel, and that eel was truly as slippery as a piece of ice. Right out from under him slipped the feet of the old fuzzy fox, and down he fell. Slippery, sloppery, slappery he went, sliding along on the eel until he slid all the way off and plumped into the ocean, where he was nearly drowned, for the water got in his nose and mouth and eyes.

"Now, you can get away, Uncle Wiggily," said the eel, and the rabbit kindly thanked the slippery creature, and grabbed up the shining thing he had dug out of the sand, for he thought it was a diamond. Then the fox slunk away, taking his wet and bushy tail with him, and Uncle Wiggily was safe for that time, anyhow, and the eel wiggled along after the old gentleman rabbit, who thought he had better look for a good place to sleep.