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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Uncle Wiggily And The Fox

Once upon a time, not so very many years ago, there lived an old gentleman rabbit named Uncle Wiggily Longears. He was a nice, quiet sort of a bunny, and he had lots of friends among other rabbits, and squirrels, and ducks, and doggies, and pussy cats, and mice and lambs, and all sorts of animals.

Most especially there was a muskrat lady, named Miss Jane Fuzzy-Wuzzy, who liked Uncle Wiggily very much. She made a crutch for him, when he had the rheumatism. She gnawed it out of a cornstalk for him, and painted it red, white and blue with raspberry jam. Well, Uncle Wiggily was a funny old rabbit gentleman. He was always having adventures--which means things happening to you, such as stubbing your toe, or getting lost or things like that.

I have told you some of his adventures in a book before this one, and also about how he traveled all around looking for his fortune, so he would be rich. But he didn't find it for some time, though many things happened to him.

The last thing that happened, in the book before this one, was that he tore his nice coat, and a good tailor bird kindly mended it for him. And he stayed at her house for some time, bringing up coal, and sweeping the sidewalk, and things like that to be useful; for Uncle Wiggily was very kind.

He used to sleep in a hollow stump, near the nest of the tailor bird, and one night it rained so hard that he had to go to bed and pull the dried leaves up over him to keep warm. All night it rained, and in the morning Uncle Wiggily got up, and he was hoping it had cleared off, so he could travel on and seek his fortune, and get rich. Out of bed hopped Uncle Wiggily. In one corner of the stump was his valise in which he carried his lunch and clean clothes and the like of that.

The day before, a bad wolf had chased Uncle Wiggily, catching him and tearing his coat, so that now the rabbit gentleman was quite stiff and sore. Still he managed to move about. "Oh, dear me!" he exclaimed as he looked out of a hole in the stump, and saw the big rain drops still pattering down, "this is a very poor day for me to find my fortune. Still, I can't stay in on account of the weather, so I will get my breakfast and travel on." He had some carrot and lettuce sandwiches in his valise and he ate these and then looked out to see if the rain had stopped, but it had not, I am sorry to say. "Well," Uncle Wiggily said. "I don't like to get wet, but there is no help for it. I'll start out." Then he happened to think of something. "I know what I'll do!" he exclaimed. "I'll get the largest toadstool I can find, and use it for an umbrella."

Out he ran and soon he had picked a big toadstool that made as fine an umbrella as one could wish. Then, strapping his satchel to his back, where it would be out of the way, the old gentleman rabbit hopped off, holding the toadstool umbrella over his head, and

limping along on his barber-pole crutch. And as he went over the meadows and through the woods he sang this little song, and sometimes when one sings it just at the right time, why it stops raining almost at once. But it has to be sung at the proper time. Anyhow this is the song:

"Splish-splash! Drip-dash!

How the raindrops fall!

When the weather gets too wet,
It isn't nice at all.

"Mr. Rain, oh, please go 'way!

For my feet are wet.

And you're splashing on my nose.

What? You can't stop yet?

"Won't you please be nice to me--

Make your raindrops dry.

I am sure you could do this

If you'd only try.

"Dry raindrops are very nice,

And if they would fall,

We could walk in showers, and

Not get wet at all."

Well, as soon as Uncle Wiggily had sung this song, he looked up quickly from under his toadstool umbrella to see if it had stopped raining, but it hadn't, and he got a drop right in his left eye, which made him sneeze so hard that his spectacles fell off. And they dropped right into a mud puddle.

"Ha, hum!" exclaimed the old gentleman rabbit, "this is a pretty kettle of fish!" Of course, he didn't mean that

there was a kettle of fish in the mud puddle, but that was his manner of talking, because he was so surprised. "A very pretty kettle of fish, indeed!" cried the old gentleman rabbit, "and speaking of fish, I guess I'll have to fish for my spectacles."

So what did he do but use his red-white-and-blue-striped-barber-pole crutch for a fishing pole, and he dipped it down in the mud puddle and in a little while up came his glasses wiggling on the end of the crutch just like an eel.

"That is good luck!" said the rabbit, as he wiped off the mud and water and put on his spectacles, and he was just going to put his toadstool umbrella over his head again when he found out that the rain had stopped and he didn't need it.

Then he left the toadstool hanging on a berry bush by the mud puddle to dry, so that whoever came along next time would have an umbrella all ready for the rain.

"Well, now that the sun is coming out I must be on the watch for my fortune," said the old gentleman rabbit to himself. And he peered first on one side of the road and then on the other, but not a sign of his fortune could he see.

Then, all of a sudden he saw something shining golden yellow in a field close by.

"Ah, that must be a pile of yellow gold!" exclaimed Uncle Wiggily. "Now my fortune is made!" and he hopped over to the field. But alas! and alack-a-day!

Instead of being gold the pile of yellow things were carrots.

"Well, it might be worse!" said the rabbit. "At least I can eat carrots. I wonder if whoever they belong to would mind if I took some?"

"I wouldn't mind a bit!" exclaimed a voice. "Take as many as you like, Uncle Wiggily," and up jumped Mr. Groundhog, who owned the carrots. "Take all you can eat and fill your valise," said Mr. Groundhog.

"Thank you very kindly," replied the rabbit, so he ate several carrots and filled his satchel with more, and then he and Mr.

Groundhog talked about the weather, and things like that, until it was time for Uncle Wiggily to hop on again after his fortune. But he didn't find it, and pretty soon it came on toward night, and the old gentleman rabbit looked for a place to stay while it was dark.



"I think this will do," he said, when he came to a small stone cave. "I'll just crawl in here with my carrots and my crutch," and in he crawled as nicely as a basket of shavings. Pretty soon Uncle Wiggily was fast, fast asleep, and he never thought the least mite about any danger. But danger was close at hand just the same.

Hark! What's that creeping, creeping along under the bushes? Eh? What's that? Why, my goodness me sakes alive and a piece of pie! It's the fuzzy old fox! Yes, as true as I'm telling you, the old red fox had seen Uncle Wiggily go into the cave, and now he was snooping and snipping up to catch him if he could.

"Oh, I'll soon have a fine time!" said the fox in a whisper, smacking his lips. Into the cave he crawled, and in the darkness he happened to knock over Uncle Wiggily's crutch, which was standing in a corner. Quickly the old gentleman rabbit awakened when he heard the noise. Up he jumped and he cried out: "Who's there?"

"I'm the fox," was the answer, "and I came to catch you."

But do you s'pose Uncle Wiggily was afraid? Not a bit of it. He ran to his valise and he took out a pawful of carrots with their sharp points, and before that fox could even sneeze the rabbit threw one carrot at him and hit him on the nose, for Uncle Wiggily could see in the dark. Then he threw another carrot and hit the fox on the ear, and then he threw still another one and he hit him on the two eyes, and that fox was so frightened and surprised that he jumped out of the second-story window of the cave house and sprained his toenail. Then he ran back to his den and didn't bother Uncle Wiggily any more that night, and the rabbit slept in peace and quietness, and dreamed about Santa Claus and ice-cream popcorn balls.