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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Uncle Wiggily And The Lightning Bug

It was a very warm day, and as Uncle Wiggily walked along, carrying his satchel, and sort of leaning on his crutch, for his rheumatism hurt him a bit, he said:

"It is very hard to have to look for your fortune on a hot day, I wish it was nice and cool, and then I would feel better."

"I can tell you where there is a cool place," said a little yellow bird, as she flew along in the air over the head of the old gentleman rabbit.

"Do you mean in an icehouse?" asked the traveling rabbit as he took off his hat to see if the sun had burned it any.

"No, but of course that is a cold place," said the bird, as she sang a funny little song about a curly-headed dog who hadn't any nose and every time he walked along he stepped upon his toes. "But I don't mean an icehouse," went on the bird, as she turned her head to one side. "However, I know a nice cool place in the woods where you can lie down and have a little sleep. By that time the hot sun will go down behind the clouds, and then you can travel on in comfort."

"I believe that will be a good plan," spoke the rabbit.

"I'll do it. Please show me the way to the cool place."

So the bird flew on ahead, and Uncle Wiggily hopped on behind, and pretty soon he came to a place in the woods where there was a little babbling brook, flowing over mossy green stones, and telling them secrets about the fishes that swam in the cool water. Then there were long, green ferns leaning over, and nodding their heads as they dipped down to take a drink out of the brook. There was also a nice little cave, made of stones, and that was almost as cool as an icehouse.

"Oh, this will be just fine for me!" exclaimed the rabbit, as he hopped inside the stone cave. "I'll go to sleep here."

So he stretched out on a pile of leaves, and the little yellow bird began to sing a sleepy song. This is how it went, to the tune "Lum-tum-tum tiddily-iddily-um:"

"Sleep, Uncle Wiggily, sleep.

Don't open your eyes to peep.

I'll sing you a song,

That's not very long.

It's not sad, so please do not weep."

Well, as true as I'm telling you, before she had sung more than forty-'leven verses the old gentleman rabbit was fast, fast asleep, and, no matter how hot the sun shone down, Uncle Wiggily was nice and cool.

Well, pretty soon, in a little while, a savage, bad hawk-bird flew down from high in the air, where he had seen the little yellow bird sitting on the tree, near the cave, where the rabbit was sleeping. And the hawk made a dash for the yellow bird, and would have eaten her up only the bird flew quickly away and hid in a hollow

stump, and that hawk was so mad that he bit a leaf off a tree and tore it into three pieces—the leaf, I mean, not the tree.

Well, after that the yellow bird didn't dare stay near the cave, for the hawk was on the watch to catch her, and, of course, Uncle Wiggily had no one to awaken him when it was cool enough for him to travel on and seek his fortune.

He slept and he slept, and then he slept a little more, and all of a sudden he awakened and it was nearly night. My! how he did jump up then and rub his eyes with his paws, and he couldn't think, for a minute or so, just where he was.

"Oh, now I remember!" he exclaimed. "I'm in the cave. Oh, dear me! but it's coming on night. The yellow bird must have forgotten to wake me up. I wonder what I shall do?"

So he went out of the cave to look for the bird, but he couldn't find her. The savage hawk was there, however, but when he saw Uncle Wiggily and noted how brave he was, even if he did have the rheumatism, that hawk just gnashed his beak and flew away.

Then it got darker and darker, and poor Uncle Wiggily didn't know what to do, for he didn't know whether or not it would be safe to stay in the cave.

"A bear might come along and eat me," he thought.

"This cave might be a bear's den. I guess I will travel ahead and look for some other place where I can spend the night. But I don't like traveling in the dark."

However, there was no help for it, so the old gentleman rabbit, after eating a lettuce sandwich, took up his satchel, grasped his crutch firmly, and started away. He traveled on through the woods, and it kept getting darker and darker, until at last Uncle Wiggily couldn't see anything in front of him but just blackness.

"Oh, this will never do!" he cried. "I can't go on this way. If I only had a lantern it would be all right."

Then, all at once, he heard a sort of growling noise in the bushes, and then he heard a sniffing-snuffling noise, and pretty soon a voice cried:

"Oh, ha! Oh, hum! I smell fresh rabbit. Now, I will have a good supper!"

"That must be a savage bear or a fox!" cried the rabbit.

"I guess this is the last of me!"

Then he saw two round circles shining in the darkness, two flashing, bright, shining things, and he was more frightened than ever.

"Oh, those are the glaring eyes of the fox or bear!" thought Uncle Wiggily. "I'm done for, sure!"

Then something made a jump for him, out of the bushes, but the rabbit crouched down, and the beast jumped over him. Then, would you ever believe it? those two shining things flew nearer, and instead of being the eyes of a fox or bear they were two, good, kind, lightning bugs, who were flitting about.

"Oh, you'll be a lantern for me, won't you?" cried the rabbit, anxiously. "Will you please light me out of these woods, and keep the savage beasts away?"

"Of course, we will!" cried the two lightning bugs. And they flew closer to the rabbit. Then the savage fox, for he it was who had made a jump for Uncle Wiggily, was so afraid of the sparkling lights, that he ran away and hid in the bushes, fearing he would be burned. Then the two bugs called for all of their friends to come and make the woods light so the old gentleman rabbit could see.

And pretty soon seventeen thousand, four hundred and eighty-three big lightning bugs, and a little baby one besides, came flying along, and the woods were almost as light as day, and Uncle Wiggily could see to hop on. The bugs flew ahead, shining themselves like fairy lanterns, and pretty soon the rabbit came to a nice hollow stump, where he remained all night. And some of the bugs stayed with him to keep the bears and foxes away.

Then, in the morning, after thanking the bugs, the rabbit traveled on again, and he had another adventure.

