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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Uncle Wiggily In The Bear's Den

Well, here we are again, all ready for a story, I suppose, and I hope you had a nice time at the surprise party. Let me see now, what shall I tell you about? How would you like to hear about the old gentleman rabbit and the toadstool?

Oh, my! I just happened to remember that I promised to write about Uncle Wiggily getting into the bear's den, so of course I'll have to tell about that first, and afterward I'll write the story about the toadstool. I'll tell you this much, however, the toadstool story is very curious, if I do say so myself.

Anyhow, Uncle Wiggily was hopping along one fine morning, following a stormy night, and he was thinking about the swimming lesson he had had a few days before.

"I wonder if I have forgotten how to move my legs, and go skimming through the water?" he said to himself as he set down his valise, and leaned his crutch against a prickly briar bush. "I must practice a little."

And the old gentleman rabbit did practice then and there, going through all the motions of swimming, only he was on dry land, of course. Next he twinkled his nose, like a star on a very hot night, when you drink iced lemonade to keep cool, and then Uncle Wiggily hopped forward once more.

He hadn't gone very far before he noticed a grasshopper moving along so swiftly that the old gentleman rabbit could hardly see the legs go flip-flap. My, but that grasshopper did hippity-hop!

"Hold on there, if you please!" called Uncle Wiggily.

"What is your hurry. Are you late for school?"

"There is no school now," said the grasshopper, as he sat on a daisy flower, "but I am hopping along to get out of danger."

"Danger? What danger is there around here?" asked the rabbit. "Do you see a fox, or anything like that?"

"No, but don't you hear that dreadful noise?" asked the grasshopper. "Listen, and you will hear it. It scared me so that I went away as fast as I could."

So Uncle Wiggily listened, and sure enough he heard, away off in the woods, a voice shouting:

"Help! Help! Help! Oh, won't some one please help me, or I'll be killed!"

"There, did you hear it?" asked the grasshopper, as he shivered and got ready to flit away again, "he said he was going to kill us."

"Oh, no! Nonsense!" exclaimed Uncle Wiggily. "That is some poor animal caught in a trap, and he's afraid of being killed himself. I'm going to see who it is. Perhaps it is a friend of mine."

"Oh, no! Don't you go!" begged the grasshopper. "For it may be the alligator with the skillery-scalery-railery tail."

"Oh, preposterous!" cried Uncle Wiggily, who sometimes used big words when he was excited. "I'm not afraid.

I'm going to help whoever it is, and, perhaps, in that way I may find my fortune."

So the grasshopper, who was very much frightened, flew on, and the rabbit hopped toward where he could hear the voice still calling for help.

And whom do you s'pose it was? Why, the second cousin to Grandfather Prickly Porcupine was caught fast in a trap, and he was calling for help as loudly as he could call.

"Oh, I'm so glad you came along," said the porcupine to Uncle Wiggily. "Please help me to get my leg out of this trap."

"Of course I will," said the rabbit, and with his crutch he pried open the trap, and set free the nice little second cousin to Grandfather Prickly Porcupine.

"Oh, how thankful I am to you," said the porcupine, as he limped away. "If ever I can do you a favor I will."

And, would you believe it? the time was soon to come when that porcupine was to save Uncle Wiggily's life.

Well, the old gentleman rabbit hopped on, looking all over for his fortune, but he couldn't seem to find it anywhere until, all of a sudden, as he was walking along by some big stones, he saw something shining, and picking it up, he found he had a silver twenty-five-cent piece.

"Oh, my goodness me, sakes alive and a piece of cherry pie!" cried the rabbit. "I've found part of my fortune! I'll have good luck now, and perhaps I can find more."

So the rabbit looked all about in among the stones for other money. But he didn't find any, and pretty soon he

came to a place where there was a hole down in between the big rocks.

"Perhaps there is more money down there," said the rabbit. "I'll take a look." He leaned over, and looked down, and then—Oh, how sorry I am that I have to tell it, but I do, all of a sudden Uncle Wiggily fell right down that black hole.



Right down into it he fell, and he landed at the bottom with such a bump that he nearly broke his spectacles. At first it was so dark that he couldn't make out anything, but in a little while he could see something big and black and shaggy coming toward

him, and a grillery-growlery voice called out:

"Who's there? Who dares to come into my den?"

"It is only I," said the rabbit. "I'm Uncle Wiggily Longears, and I came in here by mistake. I was looking for my fortune."

"Ah, ha!" cried the bear, for the shaggy creature with the grillery-growlery voice was a bear. "Ah, ha! That is a different story. I am very glad you dropped in to see me, Mr. Longears. I was just wondering what I'd have for my dinner, and now I know—it is going to be rabbit stew, and you are going to be stewed," and the bear opened the dining-room shutters so he could see to eat the rabbit.

"Oh, how can you be so cruel to me?" asked Uncle Wiggily. "I only came in here by mistake. I found twenty-five cents, and I was looking for more."

"Found twenty-five cents, did you, eh?" cried the bear, savage-like. "Give it to me at once! I lost that, it's my money!"

And he took the twenty-five-cent piece right away from Uncle Wiggily. Then the bear was just going to eat up the nice old gentleman rabbit, and Uncle Wiggily didn't know how to get away, and he was feeling most dreadful, when, all of a sudden, a voice sharply cried: "Here, you let my friend Uncle Wiggily alone," and then some one scrambled down through the top hole of the bear's den.

"Who are you?" asked the shaggy creature with the grillery-growlery voice, and the bear gnashed his teeth. "I'm the second cousin to Grandfather Prickly Porcupine," was the answer, "and I'm going to save my rabbit friend."

And with that the porcupine took out a whole handful of his stickery-ickery quills, like toothpicks, and he stuck them right into the soft and tender nose of that bad bear. And the stickery-ickery quills so tickled the bear and hurt him that he nearly sneezed his head off, and tears came into his eyes.

"Now's our time! Come on, let's get away from here!" cried the porcupine to the rabbit, and up out of the bear's den they scrambled, and got safely away before the bear had finished his sneezing.

"Oh, you saved my life," said Uncle Wiggily to the prickly porcupine, "and I thank you very much." Then they traveled on together, and they had an adventure the next day.