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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Uncle Wiggily On A Raft

"Well, I think I will be traveling along now," said Uncle Wiggily to the bird family the next morning after he had had the adventure with the rat. "I must have another try at finding my fortune. And, perhaps, since you sang such a nice song for me yesterday, you little birds will sing another as I am leaving."

"Of course they will," said their mamma, so she gave a few trills and chords to start them off, and the birdies sang this:

"Dear old Uncle Wiggily,
We wish that you could stay
And live near our nest always,
To drive the rats away.

"But if you now must leave us,
Then we will wish for you,
That you may have much happiness
Whatever you may do."

"I'm sure that's very nice," said the rabbit, "and now I'll bid you good-bye and travel on."

"But you must take some lunch with you," said the mamma bird, and she gave him some more cherry pie to make up for the piece he had thrown at the rat.

Uncle Wiggily went on and on, and pretty soon he came to a place in the woods where there was a tall tree. And some distance up from the ground there was a hole in this tree trunk.

"Ha, hum!" exclaimed Uncle Wiggily, "perhaps there may be gold in that tree hole. Now if I could only climb up to see, I might find my fortune."

Well, you know how it is with rabbits. They can't climb a tree even as well as a girl can, and, of course, Uncle Wiggily had to remain on the ground.

"If only Johnnie or Billie Bushytail were here now," thought the rabbit, "those squirrel boys could climb the tree for me. But I know what I'll do, I'll tie a stone to a string, and I'll put some molasses on the stone and throw it up into the hole in the tree. Then, if there is any gold there, it may stick to the molasses on the stone, and I can pull some down."

So he did this, and he made the string fast to the stone, and was all ready to throw it up when he happened to remember that he had no molasses.

"How careless of me! What shall I do?" he exclaimed.

And a voice answered:

"I will give you some molasses, Uncle Wiggily."

The old gentleman rabbit looked around, and there was a nice, green grasshopper, and, as she had some molasses with her, she put quite a lot on the stone. Then the rabbit threw it up at the hole in the tree, but a most surprising thing happened.

For, instead of being gold in the hole there were two unpleasant old owls there, and when the molasses-covered stone popped in on them it awakened them from their sleep, for owls sleep in the day time, and fly about at night, you know.

"Who threw that stone?" cried one owl.

"I don't know," answered the other owl, and she gnashed her sharp beak, "but whoever it was I'm going to bite him!"

"Oh, run! Run for your life, Uncle Wiggily!" cried the grasshopper, as the two owls stuck their heads out of the hole in the tree. "Hop away!"

So Uncle Wiggily hopped off, and the grasshopper hopped also, and the two owls flopped down after them. But the savage birds could not see very well in the day time, and one went ker-bunk into a tree, and the other went ker-thump into a briar bush, and they were all tangled up, and so Uncle Wiggily and the grasshopper got safely away.

"Well, I didn't get any fortune that time," said the rabbit sorrowfully as he hopped down a hill. "But perhaps I may find it soon."

The next place he came to was a big river, and, as he stood on the bank and looked across, it seemed to Uncle Wiggily that he could see a big field of gold on the other side.

"I must get over there," he said to himself, "and I am sure I will find my fortune. But how am I going to do it? That river is too wide for me to jump across, and it is too wide for me to swim. If I only had a boat I would be all right."

The old gentleman rabbit looked around for a boat, but none was at hand. Then he happened to think of something that Sammie and Susie Littletail once did.

"That's what I'll do!" exclaimed Uncle Wiggily, "I'll make a raft." So he got some planks and boards and sticks,

and he laid them crossways one upon the other, and tied them together with strong pieces of wild grape vine. Then he had a raft on which he could sit and push himself across the river, almost as well as if he had a rowboat.



"Now, I'll put my valise on board, and hop on myself, and away we'll go!" he cried, and he was very much pleased with the raft that he had made. Into the water he shoved it, and in the middle of the raft he placed his valise. Then he got

on, and shoved off, using his crutch for a pushing pole. Out into the middle of the river went Uncle Wiggily on the raft, and he was having a fine sail. Then all at once he felt hungry, so he stopped pushing the raft, opened his valise and took out a piece of cherry pie.

Well, as true as I'm telling you, just as he was eating it he heard a swirling noise in the water behind him and a savage voice cried out:

"Ha! Now I have you! Give me that piece of cherry pie or I'll upset the raft and you'll get all wet!"

Uncle Wiggily looked around, and there, swimming right up to him was a big, snicky-snooky water rat--a second cousin to the rat that got into Uncle Wiggily's tent the night before.

"Give me that pie!" cried the rat, as she put her claws on the raft. "Give it to me."

"No, indeed, I will not," replied Uncle Wiggily, as politely as one can speak to a rat.

Then the bad creature tried to climb up on the raft, but the rabbit took his crutch and put it down in the water and pushed along on the bottom of the river, sending the raft along very swiftly.

"Oh, I'll get you yet!" cried the rat, as she swam on after the raft. Faster and faster she swam, and faster and faster did Uncle Wiggily push, until he was all tired out, and he felt sure he would be caught and carried away by the bad rat. And then a voice in the air overhead suddenly cried out:

"Take your handkerchief, Uncle Wiggily, and make a sail out of it. Then the wind will blow you along so fast that the rat can't catch you. Make a sail!"

And Uncle Wiggily did so. He stuck the crutch up for a mast on the raft, and then he fastened his largest red handkerchief to the crutch. And the wind caught it, and blew upon that red handkerchief sail and the raft skimmed over the river so fast that the bad rat was left far, far behind, and so couldn't catch the rabbit.

It was the kind mamma bird who had called to the rabbit gentleman to tell him what to do.

And in a little while Uncle Wiggily was safe on the other shore and he hopped off the raft and ran toward the field that looked as if it was filled with gold.