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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Uncle Wiggly And The Bluebell

Once upon a time, a good many years ago, when—Oh, there I go again! I'm always making mistakes like that, of late. That's a story about a giant that I was thinking of, whereas I meant to tell you one about Uncle Wiggily, and what happened to him.

It was the day after the wasp had nearly stung him, and the old gentleman rabbit was traveling on alone, for the second cousin to Grandfather Prickly Porcupine had to go home, and so he couldn't help Uncle Wiggily hunt for his fortune any longer.

"Now take care of yourself," the porcupine had said to the rabbit, as they bade each other good-by, "and don't let any wasps sting you."

"What should I do, in case I happened to be stung?" asked Uncle Wiggily.

"Put some mud on the place," said the porcupine. "Mud is good for stings."

"I will," said the rabbit, and then he hopped on with his valise and his red-white-and-blue-striped-barber-pole crutch. Uncle Wiggily hoped he would soon find his fortune, for he wanted to get back home and see Sammie and Susie Littletail, and all the other animal friends. So he looked around very carefully for any signs of gold. He also asked all the animals and flowers whom he met if they could tell him where his fortune was.

"No," said a warty-spotted toad, "I can't tell you, but I should think you would dig in the ground for gold."

So Uncle Wiggily dug in the dirt in many places, but no gold did he find.

"Perhaps you can tell me where my fortune is?" he said to a tailor-bird who was sewing some leaves together to make a nest.

"It might be up in the air," said the tailor-bird. "If I were you I should hop up into the air and look for it." Well, Uncle Wiggily hopped up, but you know how it is with rabbits. They're not made to fly, and he couldn't stay up in the air long enough to do any good, so he couldn't find any gold that way.

"Oh, dear! I guess I'll never find my fortune," said the



rabbit sadly-like. Then he saw a little blue flower, shaped just like a bell, hanging on a stem over a small babbling brook of water.

"Ah, there is a bluebell!" said the rabbit. "Perhaps she knows where my fortune is. I'll ask her, for flowers are very wise."

"No, I can't tell you where there is any gold," said the bluebell when Uncle Wiggily had asked her most politely. "All I do is to swing backward and forward here all day long, and I ring my bell and I am happy. I do not need gold."

"I wish I didn't have to have it, but I do. I need it to make my fortune, and then I can go home," said the rabbit.

"Very well," spoke the blue flower, as she rang her bell, oh so sweetly! so that it seemed to the rabbit as if she played a song about the blue skies, and birds singing and fountains spouting upward in the sun while pretty blossoms grew all around. "Go on, Uncle Wiggily, but if you don't find your fortune come back here, and I will sing you to sleep," she added.

"I will," spoke the rabbit, as he hopped away.

Well, pretty soon, not so very long, as he was walking on a path through the woods, Uncle Wiggily heard a voice speaking.

"I can tell you where to find your fortune," said the voice. "I know where there is a big pile of yellow stones, and I think they are gold. Follow me and I will show you."

"But who are you?" asked the rabbit, for he could see no one. "You may be the alligator for all I know."

"Oh, I'm not the alligator," was the answer. "I am a friend of yours, and I like you very much," and the unseen one smacked his lips. "But I can't come out and let you see me, for I dare not go out in the sun as I am afraid of getting too hot," the voice answered, "so I will just creep along through the bushes and I will wiggle my tail, and you can see it moving in the grass, and you can follow that without seeing me, and I will lead you to the pile of yellow stones."

"Very well," answered the rabbit, "though I would much rather see you. But go ahead and I'll follow, for I must find my fortune."

So the old gentleman rabbit saw the grass wiggling and he followed that, and he kept thinking of how rich he would soon be, and how many nice things he would buy for Sammie and Susie Littletail.

But if the rabbit had only known who it was he was following he wouldn't have been so happy, for it was a crawly snake, and that snake was only fooling Uncle Wiggily, and trying to get him off to his den so he could eat him. And that's why he didn't show himself.

On and on the snake wiggled through the grass, shaking his tail, and the poor rabbit followed after him. "Are we nearly to the gold?" asked Uncle Wiggily after a bit.

"Almost," answered the snake, making his voice soft and gentle.

The snake was nearly at his den now, and he was just going to turn around and squeeze the rabbit to death, when all at once a yellow bumblebee that was flying overhead looked down and saw the crawly creature, and the bee knew what the snake was going to do.

"Run away, Uncle Wiggily! Run!" called the bee, "the snake is fooling you!"

Well, Uncle Wiggily didn't wait a second. He jumped right over a briar bush and away he hopped as fast as he could hop, and the snake didn't get him, and, oh, how mad that snake was!

Uncle Wiggily hopped around and around in the woods and the first thing he knew he couldn't find the path, he was so excited. And the more he tried to find it the more he couldn't, until he sat down on a stump and said: "I'm lost. I know I am! Lost in the dark, deep, dismal woods, and night coming on! Oh, what shall I do?"

Well, he was feeling very badly, and was quite frightened, and he didn't know what to do when, all at once he heard a bell ringing. Oh, such a sweet-toned silvery bell. "Ding-dong! Ding-dong!" it went, sounding very clearly through the woods. Then the bell seemed to say:

"Come this way, Uncle Wiggily, come this way. Ding-dong!"

"Oh, that's the bluebell flower!" cried the rabbit. "How glad I am. Now I can follow the ringing sound and get to a nice place to stay for the night."

So he listened carefully, and the blue flower rang her tinkling bell louder than ever, and the rabbit could tell by the sound of it just which way to go, and pretty soon he was out of the woods and right beside the flower that was swinging to and fro in the wind, just like a bell in a church steeple.

"Oh, I'm so glad I could ring and tell you the way back here," said the bluebell. "Now lie down and sleep, and if there is any danger I will tinkle my bell and awaken you."

So Uncle Wiggily stretched out on some soft moss, and went to sleep.