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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Uncle Wiggily And The Beetle

One beautiful sunny day, when the wind was blowing through the tree-tops, making music like a church organ many miles away, Uncle Wiggily awakened in the little house which the red monkey had built for him in the deep woods.

"Well, I'm going to make another search for my fortune this morning," he said as he wiggled his whiskers to get the dried leaves out of them, for he had slept on a bed of leaves, you know.

"And I'll go with you," said the red monkey; "Because the last two or three times you went off by yourself you got into trouble."

"Trouble? I should say I did!" exclaimed the old gentleman rabbit.

"There was the time when you fell into the can of molasses, and the hippity-hop toad had to jump up and down with it on his back, until it was made into sticks of candy," said the red monkey.

"True enough," spoke Uncle Wiggily.

"And then there was the time when the skillery-scalery alligator chased you," went on the red monkey, "and the angle worms tied themselves into knots about his legs to stop him. Do you remember that?"

"Indeed I do," said the old gentleman rabbit. "And I will be very glad to have you come along with me and help me. We will start right after breakfast."

So the two friends built a little camp-fire in front of the wooden house in the woods and they cooked some oatmeal and some carrots and turnips, and Uncle Wiggily made a cherry pie with plenty of red juice in it. And the monkey found a bag of peanuts under a chestnut tree and he roasted them for his breakfast. Then they started off.

On and on they went through the woods, over the hills, up one side and down the other, around the corner, where a big gray rock rested on some green moss, and then, all of a sudden, there was a queer noise up in the air. It was like wings fluttering and a voice calling. And the voice said:

"Is the red monkey down there?"

"Oh, my! I wonder who can want you?" said Uncle Wiggily.

"Maybe it's the bear who once climbed up a tree after me," cried the red monkey. "I'm going to hide." So he crawled under a big, broad leaf. Then once more the voice called:

"I want the red monkey!"

"Oh, please Uncle Wiggily, don't let him get me!" begged the shivering and shaking monkey. "Throw a stone at that bear, will you?"

"Ha! Hum!" exclaimed the old gentleman rabbit. "I don't very well see how it can be a bear. Bears don't fly in the air, for they have no wings. I'll take a look."

So he looked up in the air, and there, instead of a bear flying overhead, it was only Dickie Chip-Chip, the little sparrow boy.

"Well, bless me!" cried Uncle Wiggily. "What are you doing up there, Dickie?"

"Oh, I'm making believe I'm a messenger boy," said the sparrow. "I have a telegram for the red monkey."

"Oh, ho! So that's why you wanted me, is it?" asked the long-tailed chap, as he crawled out from under the leaf.

"What is the message about, if you please?"

"Here it is," spoke Dickie, and then from under his wing he took a piece of white cocoanut with writing on it. And no sooner had the red monkey read it than he began to cry.

"What's the matter?" asked Uncle Wiggily.

"Oh, dear!" sobbed the red monkey, "my little brother who works on a hand organ nearly had his tail cut off by getting it twisted around the handle. He is very sick, and I must go home right away. Oh, how sorry I am!" and then the red monkey ate up the piece of cocoanut that had the message written on it.

"You had better go home at once," said Uncle Wiggily.

"But I don't like to leave you," said the red monkey.

"Oh, I will get along all right!" spoke the brave old rabbit gentleman. "Go ahead, and when your brother is well, come back."

"I will," promised the red monkey, as he started for home.

"And I'll fly on ahead to tell them he is coming," said Dickie Chip-Chip. So they both called good-bye to Uncle Wiggily, and hurried away through the woods, while the rabbit gentleman kept on in search of his fortune. And now for the black beetle.

Uncle Wiggily was walking along under a green tree, looking for some gold or diamonds when, all of a sudden something jumped out of the bushes and grabbed his crutch away from him. Then Uncle Wiggily saw that it was a wolf, and the wolf sprang down into a big hole in the ground, taking the crutch with him.



"Now," called the wolf, showing his ugly teeth, "if you want your crutch, Mr. Rabbit, you'll have to come down this hole after it. Come on down."

But Uncle Wiggily knew better than that, for just as surely as he jumped down into that hole the wolf would have eaten him all up. And the rabbit didn't know what to do, for he couldn't walk without his crutch on account of being lame with the rheumatism.

"Oh, this is terrible!" cried the rabbit. "Whatever shall I do? I can't stay in these woods forever."

And just then there was a rustling in the leaves, and out walked a big black, pinching beetle. In front of his head he had two things just like fire tongs, or a crab's claws, with which to pinch.

"What is the trouble?" asked the black beetle politely.

"The wolf, down the hole, has my crutch, and he won't give it to me," said the rabbit.

"Ha! we will very soon fix that," spoke the beetle. "Just tie a string around me, Uncle Wiggily, and lower me down into the hole. Then I'll pick up the crutch in my strong pincers, and you can haul me up again as I hold fast to it."

"But the wolf may get you," said the rabbit.

"I'll fix that wolf," replied the beetle, winking his two little eyes, real jolly-like.

So Uncle Wiggily tied a string around the black insect, and lowered him down into the hole. The wolf saw him coming and cried out:

"Oh! You can't get this crutch, for I'm sitting on it, and I'll bite you."

"Just you watch," spoke the black beetle, winking one eye this time. So he looked down, and, surely enough, the wolf was sitting on the crutch. But the beetle knew a good trick. He swung himself around on the end of the string, which the rabbit held, and, as he got near to the wolf, the beetle suddenly pinched the savage creature on the tail.

"Oh, my! Ouch!" cried the wolf, and he jumped up in a hurry. And that was just what the beetle wanted, for now he could reach the crutch as the wolf was not sitting on it any more. In his strong pincers he took hold of it.

"Pull me up!" called the beetle to the rabbit, and Uncle Wiggily did so, crutch and all, by the string, and they left the wolf down in the hole as angry as a mud pie. So that's how the beetle got back the rabbit's crutch for him, and that's the end of this story.