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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Uncle Wiggily And The Slippery Elm

"Where are you going, Uncle Wiggily?" asked Nurse Jane Fuzzy Wuzzy, the muskrat lady housekeeper, as she saw the rabbit gentleman standing on the front steps of his hollow stump bungalow in the woods one morning. "Where are you going?"

"Oh, just for a walk through the forest," spoke the bunny uncle. "It is so nice in the woods, with the flowers coming up, and the leaves getting larger and greener every day, that I just love to walk there."

"Well," said Nurse Jane with a laugh, "if you happen to see a bread-tree in the woods, bring home a loaf for supper."

"I will," promised Uncle Wiggily. "You know, Nurse Jane, there really are trees on which bread fruit grows, though not in this country. But I can get you a loaf of bread at the five and ten cent store, I dare say."

"Do, please," asked the muskrat lady. "And if you see a cocoanut tree you might bring home a coconut cake for supper."

"Oh, my!" laughed the rabbit gentleman. "I'm afraid there are no coconut trees in my woods. I could bring you home a hickory nut cake, perhaps."

"Well, whatever you like," spoke Nurse Jane. "But don't get lost, whatever you do, and if you meet with an adventure I hope it will be a nice one."

"So do I," Uncle Wiggily said, as he hopped off, leaning on his red, white and blue striped rheumatism crutch which Nurse Jane had gnawed for him out of a cornstalk.

The old rabbit gentleman had not gone very far before he met Dr. Possum walking along in the woods, with his satchel of medicine on his tail, for Dr. Possum cured all the ill animals, you know.

"What in the world are you doing, Dr. Possum?" asked Uncle Wiggily, as he saw the animal doctor pulling some bark off a tree. "Are you going to make a canoe, as the Indians used to do?"

"Oh, no," answered Dr. Possum. "This is a slippery elm tree. The underside of the bark, next to the tree, and the tree itself, is very slippery when it is wet. Very slippery indeed."

"Well, I hope you don't slip," said Uncle Wiggily, kindly. "I hope so, too," Dr. Possum said. "But I am taking this slippery elm bark to mix with some of the bitter medicine I have to give Billie Wagtail, the goat boy. When I put some bark from the slippery elm tree in Billie's medicine it will slip down his throat so quickly that he will never know he took it."

"Good!" cried Uncle Wiggily, laughing. Then the bunny uncle went close to the tree, off which Dr. Possum was taking some bark, and felt of it with his paw. The tree

was indeed as slippery as an icy sidewalk slide on Christmas eve.

"My!" exclaimed Mr. Longears. "If I tried to climb up that tree I'd do nothing but slip down."

"That's right," said Dr. Possum. "But I must hurry on now to give Billie Wagtail his medicine."

So Dr. Possum went on his way and Uncle Wiggily hopped along until, pretty soon, he heard a rustling in the bushes, and a voice said:

"But, Squeaky-Eeky dear, I can't find any snow hill for you to ride down on your sled. The snow is all gone, you see. It is Spring now."

"Oh, dear!" cried another voice. "Such a lot of trouble. Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

"Ha! Trouble!" said Uncle Wiggily to himself. "This is where I come in. I must see if I cannot help them."

He looked through the bushes, and there he saw Jillie Longtail, the little girl mouse, and with her was Squeaky-Eeky, the cousin mouse. And Squeaky-Eeky had a small sled with her.



"Why, what's the matter?" asked Uncle Wiggily, for he saw that Squeaky-Eeky had been crying. "What is the matter, little mice?"

"Oh, hello. Uncle Wiggily!" cried Jillie. "I don't know what to do with my little cousin mouse. You see she wants to slide down hill on her Christmas sled, but there isn't any snow on any of the hills now."

"No, that's true, there isn't," said the bunny uncle. "But, Squeaky, why didn't you slide down hill in the Winter, when there was snow?"

"Because, I had the mouse-trap fever, then," answered Squeaky-Eeky, "and I couldn't go out. But now I am all better and I can be out, and oh, dear! I do so much want a ride down hill on my sled. Boo, hoo!"

"Don't cry, Squeaky, dear," said Jillie. "If there is no snow you can't slide down hill, you know."

"But I want to," said the little cousin mouse, unreasonable like.

"But you can't; so please be nice," begged Jillie.

"Oh, dear!" cried Squeaky. "I do so much want to slide down hill on my sled."

"And you shall!" suddenly exclaimed Uncle Wiggily.

"Come with me, Squeaky."

"Why, Uncle Wiggily!" cried Jillie. "How can you give Squeaky a slide down hill when there is no snow? You need a slippery snow hill for sleigh-riding."

"I am not so sure of that," spoke Uncle Wiggily, with a smile. "Let us see."

Off through the woods he hopped, with Jillie and Squeaky following. Pretty soon Uncle Wiggily came to a

big tree that had fallen down, one end being raised up higher than the other, like a hill, slanting.

With his strong paws and his sharp teeth, the rabbit gentleman began peeling the bark off the tree, showing the white wood underneath.

"What are you doing, Uncle Wiggily?" asked Jillie.

"This is a slippery elm tree, and I am making a hill so Squeaky-Eeky can slide down," answered the bunny uncle. "Underneath the bark the trunk of the elm tree is very slippery. Dr. Possum told me so. See how my paw slips!" And indeed it did, sliding down the sloping tree almost as fast as you can eat a lollypop.

Uncle Wiggily took off a lot of bark from the elm tree, making a long, sliding, slippery place.

"Now, try that with your sled, Squeaky-Eeky," said the bunny uncle. And the little cousin mouse did. She put her sled on the slanting tree, sat down and Jillie gave her a little push. Down the slippery elm tree went Squeaky as fast as anything, coming to a stop in a pile of soft leaves.

"Oh, what a lovely slide!" cried Squeaky. "You try it, Jillie." And the little mouse girl did.

"Who would think," she said, "that you could slide down a slippery elm tree? But you can."

Then she and Squeaky took turns sliding down hill, even though there was no snow, and the slippery elm tree didn't mind it a bit, but rather liked it.