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READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Uncle Wiggily And Mother Goose's Help

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There once lived in the woods an old rabbit gentleman named Uncle Wiggily Longears, and in the hollow-stump bungalow where he had his home there also lived Nurse Jane Fuzzy Wuzzy, a muskrat lady housekeeper. Near Uncle Wiggily there were, in hollow trees, or in nests or in burrows under the ground, many animal friends of his—rabbits, squirrels, puppy dogs, pussy cats, frogs, ducks, chickens and others, so that Uncle Wiggily and Nurse Jane were never lonesome.

Often Sammie or Susie Littletail, a small boy and girl rabbit, would hop over to the hollow-stump bungalow, and call:

“Uncle Wiggily! Uncle Wiggily! Can’t you come out and play with us?”

Then the old rabbit gentleman, who was as fond of fun as a kitten, would put on his tall silk hat, take his red, white and blue-striped barber-pole rheumatism crutch, that Nurse Jane had gnawed for him out of a corn-stalk, and he would go out to play with the rabbit children, about whom I have told you in other books.

Or perhaps Johnnie and Billie Bushytail, the squirrel boys, might ask Uncle Wiggily to go after hickory nuts with them, or maybe Lulu, Alice or Jimmie Wibblewobble, the duck children, would want their bunny uncle to see them go swimming.

So, altogether, Uncle Wiggily had a good time in his hollow-stump bungalow which was built in the woods. When he had nothing else to do Mr. Longears would go for a ride in his airship. This was made of a clothes-basket, with toy circus balloons on it to make it rise up above the trees. Or Uncle Wiggily might take a trip in his automobile, which had big bologna sausages on the wheels for tires. And whenever the rabbit gentleman wanted the automobile wheels to go around faster he sprinkled pepper on the sausages.

One day Uncle Wiggily said to Nurse Jane Fuzzy Wuzzy:

“I think I will go for a ride in my airship. Is there anything I can bring from the store for you?”

“Why, you might bring a loaf of bread and a pound of sugar,” answered the muskrat lady.

“Very good,” answered Uncle Wiggily, and then he took some soft cushions out

to put in the clothes-basket part of his airship, so, in case the air popped out of the balloons, and he fell, he would land easy like, and soft.

Soon the rabbit gentleman was sailing off through the air, over the tree tops, his paws in nice, warm red mittens that Nurse Jane had knitted for him. For it was winter, you see, and Uncle Wiggily's paws would have been cold steering his airship, by the baby carriage wheel which guided it, had it not been for the mittens.

It did not take the bunny uncle long to go to the store in his airship, and soon, with the loaf of bread and pound of sugar under the seat, away he started for his hollow-stump bungalow again.

And, as he sailed on and over the tree tops, Uncle Wiggily looked far off, and he saw some black smoke rising in the air.

"Ha! That smoke seems to be near my hollow-stump bungalow," he said to himself. "I guess Nurse Jane is starting a fire in the kitchen stove to get dinner. I must hurry home."

Uncle Wiggily made his airship go faster, and then he saw, coming toward him, a big bird, with large wings.

"Why, that looks just like my old friend, Grandfather Goosey Gander," Uncle Wiggily thought to himself. "I wonder why he is flying so high? He hardly ever goes up so near the clouds."

"And he seems to have some one on his back," spoke Uncle Wiggily out loud this time, sort of talking to the loaf of bread and the pound of sugar. "A lady, too," went on the bunny uncle. "A lady with a tall hat on, something like mine, only hers comes to a point on top. And she has a broom with her. I wonder who it can be?"

And when the big white bird came nearer to the airship Uncle Wiggily saw that it was not Grandfather Goosey Gander at all, but another big gander, almost like his friend, whom he often went to see. And then the bunny uncle saw who it was on the bird's back.

"Why, it's Mother Goose!" cried Uncle Wiggily Longears. "It's Mother Goose! She looks just like her pictures in the book, too."

“Yes, I am Mother Goose,” said the lady who was riding on the back of the big, white gander, spoke Mr. Longears.

“I am glad to meet you, Mother Goose, I have often heard about you. I can see, over the tree tops, that Nurse Jane Fuzzy Wuzzy, my muskrat lady housekeeper, is getting dinner ready. I can tell by the smoke. Will you not ride home with me? I will make my airship go slowly, so as not to get ahead of you and your fine gander-
goose.”



“Alas, Uncle Wiggily,” said Mother Goose, scratching her chin with the end of the broom handle, “I cannot come home to dinner with you much as I would like it. Alas! Alas!”

“Why not?” asked the bunny uncle.

“Because I have bad news for you,” said Mother Goose. “That smoke, which you saw over the tree tops, was not smoke from your chimney as Nurse Jane was getting dinner.”

“What was it then?” asked Uncle Wiggily, and a cold shiver sort of ran up and down between his ears, even if he did have warm, red mittens on his paws. “What was that smoke?”

“The smoke from your burning bungalow,” went on Mother Goose. “It caught fire, when Nurse Jane was getting dinner, and now——”

“Oh! Don’t tell me Nurse Jane is burned!” cried Uncle Wiggily. “Don’t say that!”

“I was not going to,” spoke Mother Goose, kindly. “But I must tell you that your hollow-stump bungalow is burned to the ground. There is nothing left but some ashes,” and she made the gander, on whose back she was riding, fly close alongside of Uncle Wiggily’s airship.

“My nice bungalow burned!” exclaimed the rabbit gentleman. “Well, I am very, very sorry for that. But still it might be worse. Nurse Jane might have been hurt, and that would have been quite too bad. I dare say I can get another bungalow.”

“That is what I came to tell you about,” said Mother Goose. “I was riding past when I saw your Woodland hollow-stump house on fire, and I went down to see if I could help. It was too late to save the bungalow, but I said I would find a place for you and Nurse Jane to stay to-night, or as long as you like, until you can build a new home.”

“That is very kind of you,” said Uncle Wiggily. “I hardly know what to do.”

"I have many friends," went on Mother Goose. "You may have read about them in the book which tells of me. Any of my friends would be glad to have you come and live with them. There is the Old Woman Who Lives in a Shoe, for instance."

"But hasn't she so many children she doesn't know what to do?" asked Uncle Wiggily, as he remembered the story in the book.

"Yes," answered Mother Goose, "she has. I suppose you would not like it there."

"Oh, I like children," said Uncle Wiggily. "But if there are so many that the dear Old Lady doesn't know what to do, she wouldn't know what to do with Nurse Jane and me."

"Well, you might go stay with my friend Old Mother Hubbard," said Mother Goose.

"But if I went there, would not the cupboard be bare?" asked Uncle Wiggily, "and what would Nurse Jane and I do for something to eat?"

"That's so," spoke Mother Goose, as she reached up quite high and brushed a cobweb off the sky with her broom. "That will not do, either. I must see about getting Mother Hubbard and her dog something to eat. You can stay with her later. Oh, I have it!" suddenly cried the lady who was riding on the back of the white gander, "you can go stay with Old King Cole! He's a jolly old soul!"

Uncle Wiggily shook his head.

"Thank you very much, Mother Goose," he said, slowly. "But Old King Cole might send for his fiddlers three, and I do not believe I would like to listen to jolly music to-day when my nice bungalow has just burned down."

"No, perhaps not," agreed Mother Goose. "Well, if you can find no other place to stay to-night come with me. I have a big house, and with me live Little Bo Peep, Little Boy Blue, who is getting to be quite a big chap now, Little Tommie Tucker and Jack Sprat and his wife. Oh, I have many other friends living with me, and surely we can find room for you."

"Thank you," answered Uncle Wiggily. "I will think about it."

Then he flew down in his airship to the place where the hollow-stump bungalow had been, but it was not there now. Mother Goose flew down with her gander after Uncle Wiggily. They saw a pile of blackened and smoking wood, and near it stood Nurse Jane Fuzzy Wuzzy, the muskrat lady, and many other animals who lived in Woodland with Uncle Wiggily.

"Oh, I am so sorry!" cried Nurse Jane. "It is my fault. I was baking a pudding in the oven, Uncle Wiggily. I left it a minute while I ran over to the pen of Mrs. Wibblewobble, the duck lady, to ask her about making a new kind of carrot

sauce for the pudding, and when I came home the pudding had burned, and the bungalow was on fire.”

“Never mind,” spoke Uncle Wiggily, kindly, “as long as you were not burned yourself, Nurse Jane.”

“But where will you sleep to-night?” asked the muskrat lady, sorrowfully.

“Oh,” began Uncle Wiggily, “I guess I can——”

“Come stay with us!” cried Sammie and Susie Littletail, the rabbit children.

“Or with us!” invited Johnnie and Billie Bushytail, the squirrels.

“And why not with us?” asked Nannie and Billie Wagtail, the goat children.

“We’d ask you to come with us,” said Jollie and Jillie Longtail, the mouse children, “only our house is so small.”

Many of Uncle Wiggily’s friends, who had hurried up to see the hollow-stump bungalow burn, while he was at the store, now, in turn, invited him to stay with them.

“I, myself, have asked him to come with me,” said Mother Goose, “or with any of my friends. We all would be glad to have him.”

“It is very kind of you,” said the rabbit gentleman. “And this is what I will do, until I can build me a new bungalow. I will take turns staying at your different hollow-tree homes, your nests or your burrows underground. And I will come and visit you also, Mother Goose, and all of your friends; at least such of them as have room for me.

“Yes, that is what I’ll do. I’ll visit around now that my hollow-stump home is burned. I thank you all. Come, Nurse Jane, we will pay our first visit to Sammie and Susie Littletail, the rabbits.”

And while the other animals hopped, skipped or flew away through the woods, and as Mother Goose sailed off on the back of her gander, to sweep more cobwebs out of the sky, Uncle Wiggily and Nurse Jane went to the Littletail burrow, or underground house.

“Good-bye, Uncle Wiggily!” called Mother Goose. “I’ll see you again, soon, sometime. And if ever you meet with any of my friends, Little Jack Horner, Bo Peep, or the three little pigs, about whom you may have read in my book, be kind to them.”

“I will,” promised Uncle Wiggily.

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