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Uncle Wiggily And The Caterpillar

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"Uncle Wiggily! Oh, Uncle Wiggily!" called Alice from Wonderland as she stood one day just outside the hollow stump bungalow where the rabbit gentleman had just finished his breakfast of carrot oatmeal with parsnip sauce sprinkled over the top.

"Do you want to come for another walk with me?" asked Alice as she ran up the bungalow front steps.

"Are you going to have the Gryphon take you to the Mock Turtle again?" the bunny gentleman wanted to know. "If you are, I'll bring my talcum powder gun along this time, to keep away the mosquitoes."

"No. I don't have to see the Gryphon today," replied Wonderland Alice with a laugh. "But the Duchess has sent me to find the Blue Caterpillar."

"The Duchess has sent you to find the Blue Caterpillar?" questioned Uncle Wiggily, wondering if he had heard rightly. "But who is the Duchess?"

"Oh, she's some relation to the Queen of Hearts," Alice answered. "She's in the book with me, the Duchess is. In the book-picture she always has a lot of trimming on her big hat, and she doesn't care whether or not she holds the baby upside down."

"Oh, yes, now I remember," Uncle Wiggily said, laughing as he thought of the baby. "And now about the Blue Caterpillar?"

"Oh, he's a sort of long, fuzzy bug, who sits on a toadstool smoking a pipe," explained Alice. "The Duchess wants him to come and smoke some hams for her."

"Smoke hams!" cried the bunny rabbit. "Why the very idonical idea! I've heard of men smoking tobacco—but hams—"

"Oh, you don't smoke hams in a pipe," said Alice with a laugh. "They take a ham before it is cooked, and hang it up in a cloud of smoke, or blow smoke on it, or do something to it with smoke, so it will dry and keep longer."

"What do they want to keep it for?" asked Uncle Wiggily. "I thought ham was to eat, with eggs."

"Oh, dear!" laughed Alice. "I wish you wouldn't ask me so many questions. You're like the Dormouse, or the Cheshire Cheese Cat or the Hatter. They were always asking the curiosest questions like 'Who threw stones at the cherry tree?' or 'How did the soft egg get inside the hard shell without cracking it?' All things like that. I can't answer them!"

"Very well," said Uncle Wiggily, smiling at Alice. "I'll not ask you any more questions. Come on! We'll go find the Blue Caterpillar."

So off they started, the bunny rabbit gentleman and Wonderland Alice who had a day's vacation from the book with her name on it. Now and then she could slip out of the book covers and go off to have a real adventure with Uncle Wiggily.

The bunny uncle and the little girl with the pretty, flaxen hair had not gone very far over the fields and through the woods before, all of a sudden, as they were walking under some trees, something long and twisty and rubbery, like a big fire hose, reached out and grabbed them.

"Oh, my!" cried Alice, trying to get loose, which she could not do. "A big snake has us!"

"No," said Uncle Wiggily, looking around as best he could, for he, too, was held fast as was Alice. "This isn't a snake."

"What is it?" asked Alice.

"It's a bad circus elephant," said the bunny, "and he has caught us in his trunk. Oh, dear! Please let us go!" he begged the big animal.

"No," sadly answered the circus elephant, for it was indeed he. "I can't let you go, for if I do they will all sit on my back and bite me."

"Who will?" asked Uncle Wiggily, curious like.

"The mosquitoes," was the answer. "You see they have tried in so many ways to catch you, and haven't done it, Uncle Wiggily, that they finally came to me. About a million billion of them swarmed around me, and they said they'd bite me until I had the shivers if I did not help them catch you. So I had to promise that I would, though I did not want to, for I like you, Uncle Wiggily."

"If I hadn't promised, though, the mosquitoes would have bitten me, and though I seem to have a very thick skin I am very tender, not to say ticklish, when it comes to mosquito bites. So I hid here to catch you, and I'll have to hold you until the mosquitoes come to get you. I'm very sorry!" and the elephant wound his rubbery nose of a trunk still more tightly around Uncle Wiggily and Alice.

"Oh, dear!" said Alice. "What shall we do?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," answered the bunny.
"This is quite too bad. If only the Blue Caterpillar—"

"Hush!" exclaimed a fuzzy voice down in the grass near the elephant's left front foot. "Don't say a word. I'll help you," and along came crawling a big Blue Caterpillar, with a folded toadstool umbrella and a long-stemmed pipe on his back.



"That elephant is very ticklish," said the Blue Caterpillar. "Watch me make him squirm. And when he squirms he'll have to uncurl his trunk to scratch himself, and when he does that—"

"We'll get away!" whispered Uncle Wiggily.

"Exactly!" said the Blue Caterpillar. So he crawled up the elephant's leg, and tickled the big animal on its ear.

"Oh, dear!" cried the elephant. "How itchy I am!" and he uncurled his trunk to scratch himself, and then Uncle Wiggily and Alice could run away safely, and the mosquitoes didn't get them after all. Then Alice told the Blue Caterpillar about the Duchess wanting the hams smoked and the crawling creature said he'd attend to it, and puff smoke on them from his pipe.

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