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READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Uncle Wiggily And The Jack Horse

Howard R. Garis

"Well, where are you going to-day, Uncle Wiggily?" asked Nurse Jane Fuzzy, the muskrat lady housekeeper, as she saw the rabbit gentleman putting on his tall silk hat, and taking his red, white and blue-striped rheumatism crutch down off the mantel.

"I am going over to see Nannie and Billy Wagtail, the goat children," answered the bunny uncle. "I have not seen them in a long while."

"But they'll be at school," said Nurse Jane.

"I'll wait until they come home, then," said Uncle Wiggily. "And while I'm waiting I'll talk to Uncle Butter, the nice old gentleman goat."

So off started Uncle Wiggily over the fields and through the woods.

Pretty soon he came to the house where the family of Wagtail goats lived. They were given that name because they wagged their little short tails so very fast, sometimes up and down, and again sideways.

"Why, how do you do, Uncle Wiggily?" asked Mrs. Wagtail, as she opened the door for the rabbit gentleman. "Come and sit down."

"Thank you," he answered. "I called to see Nannie and Billie. But I suppose they are at school."

"Yes, they are studying their lessons."

"Well, I'll come in then, and talk to Uncle Butter, for I suppose you are busy."

"Yes, I am, but not too busy to talk to you, Mr. Longears," said the goat lady. "Uncle Butter is away, pasting up some circus posters on the billboard, and I wish he'd come back, for I want him to go to the store for me."

"Couldn't I go?" asked Uncle Wiggily, politely. "I have nothing special to do, and I often go to the store for Nurse Jane. I'd like to go for you."

"Very well, you may," said Mrs. Wagtail. "I want for supper some papers off a tomato can, and a few more off a can of corn, and here is a basket to put them in. And you might bring a bit of brown paper, so I can make soup of it."

"I will," said Uncle Wiggily, starting off with the basket on his paw. Goats, you

know, like the papers that come off cans, as the papers have sweet paste on them. And they also like brown grocery paper itself, for it has straw in it, and goats like straw. Of course, goats eat other things besides paper, though.

Uncle Wiggily was going carefully along, for there was ice and snow on the ground, and it was slippery, and he did not want to fall. Soon he was at the paper store, where he bought what Mrs. Wagtail wanted.

And on the way back to the goat lady's house something happened to the old rabbit gentleman. As he stepped over a big icicle he put his foot down on a slippery snowball some little animal chap had left on the path, and, all of a sudden, bango! down went Uncle Wiggily, basket of paper, rheumatism crutch and all.

"Ouch!" cried the rabbit gentleman, "I fear something is broken," for he heard a cracking sound as he fell.

He looked at his paws and legs and felt of his big ears. They seemed all right. Then he looked at the basket of paper. That was crumpled up, but not broken, and the bunny uncle's tall silk hat, while it had a few dents in, was not smashed.

"Oh, dear! It's my rheumatism crutch," cried Uncle Wiggily. "It's broken in two, and how am I ever going to walk without it this slippery day I don't see. Oh, my goodness me sakes alive and some bang-bang tooth powder!"

Carefully the rabbit gentleman arose, but as he had no red, white and blue-striped crutch to lean on, he nearly fell again.

"I guess I'd better stay sitting down," thought Uncle Wiggily. "Perhaps some one may come along, and I can ask them to get Nurse Jane to gnaw for me another rheumatism crutch out of a corn-stalk. I'll wait here until help comes."

Uncle Wiggily waited quite a while, but no one passed by.

"It will soon be time for Billie and Nannie Wagtail to pass by on their way from school," thought the bunny uncle. "I could send them for another crutch, I suppose."

So he waited a little longer, and then, as no one came, he tried to walk with his broken crutch. But he could not. Then Uncle Wiggily cried:

"Help! Help! Help!" but still no one came. "Oh, dear!" said the rabbit gentleman, "if only Mother Goose would fly past, riding on the back of her gander, she might take me home." He looked up, but Mother Goose was not sweeping cobwebs out of the sky that day, so he did not see her.

Then, all of a sudden, as the rabbit gentleman sat there, wondering how he was going to walk on the slippery ice and snow without his crutch to help him, he

heard a jolly voice singing:

“Ride a Jack horse to Banbury Cross,

To see an old lady jump on a white horse.

With rings on her fingers and bells on her toes,

She shall have music wherever she goes.”

And with that along through the woods came riding a nice, old lady on a rocking-horse. And on the side of the rocking-horse was painted in red ink the name:

JACK

“Why, hello, Uncle Wiggily!” called the nice old lady, shaking her toes and making the bells jingle a pretty tune. “What is the matter with you?” she asked.

“Oh, I am in such trouble,” replied the bunny uncle. “I fell down on a slippery snowball, and broke my crutch. Without it I cannot walk, and I want to take these papers to Mrs. Wagtail, the goat lady, to eat.”

“Ha! If that is all your trouble I can soon fix matters!” cried the jolly old lady. “Here, get up beside me on my Jack horse, and I’ll ride you to Mrs. Wagtail’s, and then take you home to your hollow-stump bungalow.”

“Oh, will you? How kind!” said Uncle Wiggily. “Thank you! But have you the time?”

“Lots of time,” laughed the old lady. “It doesn’t really matter when I get to Banbury Cross. Come on!”

Uncle Wiggily got up on the back of the Jack horse, behind the old lady. She tinkled the rings on her fingers and jingled the bells on her toes, and so, of course, she’ll have music wherever she goes.

“Just as the Mother Goose books says,” spoke the bunny uncle. “Oh, I’m glad you came along.”

“So am I,” said the nice old lady. Then she took Uncle Wiggily to the Wagtail house, where he left the basket of papers, and next he rode on the Jack horse to his bungalow, and, after the bunny uncle had thanked the old lady, she, herself, rode on to Banbury Cross, to see another old lady jump on a white horse. And very nicely she did it too, let me tell you.



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