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Uncle Wiggily And The Phoebe Birds

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"Well, I don't seem to be finding my fortune very fast," said Uncle Wiggily to himself the next day, as he traveled on, after the lightning bugs had shown him the way out of the woods. "Here I've been tramping around the country for a considerable while, and all I've found was one cent, and that belonged to the chipmunk.

"I wish I could find a little money. Then I would buy some peanuts and sell them, and make more money, and pretty soon I would be rich, and I could go back home and see Sammie and Susie Littletail."

So he walked along, looking very carefully on the ground for money. All he found for some time were only old acorns, and, as he couldn't eat them, they were of no use to him.

"If Johnnie or Billie Bushytail were here now I would give them some," he said. But the squirrels were far away frisking about in the tops.

Now, as true as I'm telling you, a moment after that, just as Uncle Wiggily was going past a big stone, he saw something bright and shining in the leaves.

"Oh, good luck!" he cried. "I've found ten cents, and that will buy two bags of peanuts. Now I'll get rich!"

So he picked up the shining thing, and oh! how disappointed he was, for it was only a round piece of tin, such as they make penny whistles of.

"Oh, dear!" cried Uncle Wiggily. "Fooled again! Well, all I can do is to keep on."

He went on a little farther, until he came to a place where there were a whole lot of prickly briar bushes, with red berries growing on them.

"Oh, ho!" exclaimed the rabbit. "Some of those berries will do for my dinner, as I'm getting hungry. I'll pick a few."

He was just going to pick some of the berries, when he happened to notice a big, red thing, like a red flannel bag, standing wide open near a hole in the bushes. And in front of the red place was a sign, which said:

"Come in, one and all. Everybody welcome."

"It looks very nice in there," thought the rabbit. "Perhaps it is the opening of a

circus tent. I'm going in, for I haven't seen a show in some time. And, maybe, my friend, the elephant, will be in there."

Uncle Wiggily was just going to hop into the funny red opening that had the sign on it, when a little ant came crawling along, carrying a small loaf of bread.

"Hello, Uncle Wiggily," said the ant. "Where are you going?"

"I am going inside this red circus tent," said the rabbit. "Won't you come in with me? I'll buy you a ticket."

"Oh, never go in there—don't you do it!" cried the ant, and she got so excited that she nearly dropped her loaf of bread. "That is not a circus tent; it is only the skillery-scalery-tailery alligator, and he has opened his mouth wide hoping some one will come in, so he can have a meal. Don't go in."

"I won't," said Uncle Wiggily, quickly as he hopped away, and then he took up a stone and tossed it into the red mouth of the scalery-tailery-wailery alligator. The alligator shut his jaws very quickly, thinking he had something good to eat, but he only bit on the stone, and he was so angry that he lashed out with his tail and nearly knocked over a hickory-nut tree.

Then the ant crawled home, and Uncle Wiggily hopped on out of danger and the alligator opened his mouth again, hoping some foolish animal would walk into the trap he had all ready for them.

Well, in a little while after that, as the old gentleman rabbit was going along under the big tree, all of a sudden he heard a voice calling, rather sadly and sweetly:

"Phoebe! Phoebe!"

"My goodness, that must be some little lost girl named Phoebe, and her sister is calling for her," he thought. "I wonder if I could help find her?" For, you know, Uncle Wiggily was just as kind as he could be, and always wanting to help some one.

Then he heard the voice again:

"Phoebe! Phoebe!"

"Where are you?" asked the rabbit. "I'll help you hunt for your sister Phoebe. Where are you, little girl?"

But the voice only called again:

"Phoebe! Phoebe!"



"I guess she can't hear me," said the rabbit. "I'll shout more loudly."

So he cried out at the top of his voice:

"I'll help you find Phoebe. Tell me where you are, and we'll go off together to hunt for her."

But this time the calling voice was farther off, though still the rabbit could hear it saying:

"Phoebe! Phoebe!"

"My goodness me, sakes alive, and a bottle of stove polish! I can't make this out," said Uncle Wiggily. "That little girl is so worried about her lost sister that she doesn't pay any attention to me. But I'll help her just the same."

So he hopped on toward where he heard the voice calling, and pretty soon, believe me, he heard two voices. One cried out:

"Phoebe! Phoebe!"

And the other one called just the same, only a little more slowly, like this:

"Phoe-be! Phoe-be!"

"Now, there are two of her sisters calling for the lost one," said the rabbit. "They must be very much worried about Phoebe. Perhaps a bear has eaten her. That would be dreadful! I must help them!"

So he hopped on through the woods, faster than ever, crying out:

"I'm coming! I'm coming! Old Uncle Wiggily is going to help you find Phoebe."

And then, would you believe me, Uncle Wiggily heard seven voices, all calling at once:

"Phoebe! Phoebe! Phoebe! Phoebe! Phoebe! Phoebe! Phoebe!"

"Oh, now the whole family is after that lost child," said the rabbit. "I had better go for a policeman." And then he happened to look up, and he saw a whole lot of little birds sitting on a tree, and each one was calling:

"Phoebe!" just like that. Really I'm not fooling a bit; honestly.

"Oh my! How surprised I am!" cried the rabbit. "Was that you birds calling for the little lost girl?"

"It was," said the largest bird, "but there isn't any lost girl. You see we are Phoebe birds, and that is the way we always sing. We always say 'Phoebe—Phoebe' over and over again. We didn't mean to fool you. It's only our way of calling."

"Oh, that's all right," said the rabbit. "I don't mind. It was good exercise for me to run after you."

Well, those birds liked Uncle Wiggily so much that they sang their prettiest for him, and asked him to stay to dinner, which he did. And he had chocolate cake with candied carrots on top.

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