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READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Uncle Wiggily And The Rich Cat

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Once upon a time, there was a very rich cat, but with all she had she was not happy. She owned an automobile and kept a little mouse servant girl to wait on her. And an old gentleman rat did all the heavy work around the house, such as putting out the ashes and cutting the grass.

"Heigh-ho!" sighed the rich cat lady one morning, after she had lapped up some thick, heavy cream, which was left on her doorstep each day. "Heigh-ho! I am so tired!"

"Tired of what?" squeaked the little mouse servant, as she brought a paper napkin for the rich cat to wipe the cream from her whiskers. Even though she was well-off, the cat lady had whiskers, and she was very proud of them.

"Oh, I am tired of sitting around doing nothing!" purred the rich cat.

"Then why not go for a ride in your auto?" asked the poor little mouse servant girl.

"I am tired of that, too," spoke the rich cat. "It is the same old thing every day! Dress and go out. Come back and dress to eat! Dress to go out again! Come back and undress to go to bed and get up in the morning to dress and do it all over again! I—I'd like to have an *adventure*!" mewed the cat lady.

"Oh, mercy! An *adventure*!" squeaked the mouse. "Never!"

"Yes," went on the cat, "a real, exciting adventure. I saw a poor dog the other day—at least he used to be poor, and he is far from rich now. But he looked so well, and so lively, with such strong, white teeth! I heard him telling another dog he had had a most wonderful adventure in the woods with an old rabbit gentleman named Uncle Wiggily. I quite envied that poor dog!"

"Oh, and you so rich!" murmured the mousie girl.

"I don't care!" mewed the wealthy cat lady. "I'd almost be willing to be poor if I could have an adventure. Come, I'll go for a ride in the auto. It will be better than dawdling around the house."

So the cat lady ordered out her auto, with the rat gentleman to drive it, and the little mousie girl to sit beside her on the cushioned seat.



"Where shall I drive to, Lady Cat?" asked the old gentleman rat chauffeur.

"Oh, anywhere—to the woods—the fields—anywhere so that I may have an adventure—I don't care!" mewed the rich cat.

So the rat gentleman drove the auto through the village, and out into the forest. At first the roads were very good, but at last they became bumpy, and the cat lady and mousie girl were much shaken up and jiggled about, not to say joggled.

"Do you want to go on?" asked the rat.

"Oh, yes," answered the cat. "It shakes up my liver, and I seem to be feeling more hungry. Go on, perhaps I shall find an adventure."

The auto lurched and bumped on a little farther and, all of a sudden there was a crash.

"Oh!" screamed the little mousie girl.

"What is the matter?" asked the cat lady, looking through her fancy glasses.

"We have had an accident," answered the gentleman rat. "The auto is broken, and I shall have to go for help."

"Let us go, also," squeaked the mousie girl. "We don't want to stay here in the woods alone."

"*You* may not want to," said the cat with a smile. "But *I* am going to. Run along with Mr. Rat, Miss Mouse, and get help. I'll stay here!"

So the rich cat lady was left alone, sitting in the auto, one wheel of which was broken, while the rat gentleman and mousie girl went to look for a garage where they could get help.

"Perhaps this is the start of an adventure," thought the cat.

A moment later she heard a rustling in the bushes, and out popped a strange dog. Now the rich cat lady knew some rich dogs who wore silver and gold collars,

and were friends of hers. She was not afraid of them. But this was a dog without any collar, though he had on a suit of clothes. And, when the cat lady looked a second time, she saw that it was a boy dog and not a grown man dog.

"Bow! wow!" barked the boy dog. "You're a strange cat! What are you doing in these woods? Hi, Jackie!" howled the dog. "Come help me chase this strange cat up a tree!"

"All right, Peetie! I'm with you!" answered a voice, and out of the bushes came another boy dog. The two dogs rushed at the cat lady.

Now she might not have been afraid of *one* boy dog, but when *two* of them leaped toward her, this was enough to frighten almost any cat! Don't you think so?

"Meaouw! Mew! Mee!" cried the cat, and before she knew it she was climbing a tree. Up she scrabbled, her claws tearing off bits of bark, until she was perched on a limb, high above her auto and the barking dogs down below.

"My goodness me, sakes alive, and a liver cream puff!" said the excited rich cat lady to herself, her heart beating like an alarm clock. "This is dreadful! To think of me, a wealthy cat, being chased up a tree by two poor dogs! What will my friends think?"

Then she looked down at the dogs and said:

"Run away if you please, little puppy boys!"

"No! No!" they barked. "Bow! Wow!"

"You run and tell him," said one puppy to the other. "Tell him there's a strange cat in his woods. I'll stay here at the foot of the tree so she can't get down until you come back with him!"

"I wonder whom they are going to bring back?" thought the rich cat up the tree. And she could not help laughing a little as she thought how strange she must look. "The mouse servant and rat chauffeur will be surprised when they come back and see me here," thought the cat.

One little puppy dog boy ran away, while the other remained on guard at the foot of the tree.

"May I come down?" asked the cat lady.

"No, indeed!" growled the dog, though he did not speak impolitely. "You must stay up there!"

"Dear me!" thought the cat lady. "This is quite an unexpected adventure!"

All of a sudden she saw the puppy at the foot of the tree jump up. At the same

time there was a rustling in the bushes, and along came the other puppy, with an old gentleman rabbit, who wore a tall silk hat, who had a pair of glasses on his pink, twinkling nose and who walked with a red, white and blue striped rheumatism crutch.

"There she is, Uncle Wiggily!" barked a puppy dog. "We saw her in your woods, and chased her up a tree until you could look at her. Maybe she is the Woozie Wolf or the Fuzzy Fox, dressed up like a cat."

"Indeed I am not," said the rich cat lady up the tree. "I am the Rich Mrs. Cat, and my auto has broken. When my mousie servant girl and the rat gentleman who drives my car return, they will tell you I never harm rabbits. But are you Uncle Wiggily Longears?" she asked.

"Yes," answered the bunny, "I am. And I know you, Mrs. Cat. I heard about you from the poor dog. I am very sorry Jackie and Peetie Bow Wow chased you up a tree. They meant no harm."

"I am sure they did not," mewed the cat politely.

"But they are always on the lookout so nothing will happen to me," went on Uncle Wiggily. "I would get up and help you down, only I can't climb a tree."

"Oh, I can easily get down," said the cat lady, and she did, though her rich clothes were rather ruffled. But she had plenty of money to buy more. So don't worry about that.

"Make yourself at home in these woods—the animal folk call them mine," said Uncle Wiggily kindly. "I am sorry you had this trouble. Now I must hop away. I hope your auto will soon be mended. Come, Jackie and Peetie, if you want to help me."

"Where are you going?" asked the rich cat.

"To help a poor cat family," said Uncle Wiggily. "The cat gentleman of the house has been out of work a long time, his wife is ill and he has a number of little kittens. I was on my way to see the family when Jackie came to tell me you were up a tree."

"Well, I'm down the tree now," laughed the rich cat lady. "And will you please let me help this poor family? I have a lot of money—see!" and she showed a purse full of golden leaves which the animal folk use for money. "I can buy them food, and if Mr. Cat wants work, let him take my auto, after it is fixed, and use it for a jitney."

"What!" cried Uncle Wiggily. "Aren't you going to use that fine car any more? All it needs is a new wheel."

"Give it to the poor cat," was the answer. "I am never going to ride in it again. I feel so much better since I came to the woods—and climbed a tree—that I am going to live here for the rest of my life. I'll buy a hollow stump bungalow near you, Uncle Wiggily. I know, now, I am going to be very happy."

"Well, you will make the poor cat family happy, at any rate," said Mr. Longears.

"And to make others happy is to be happy yourself," mewed the rich cat lady.

She went with Uncle Wiggily, Jackie and Peetie to the home of the poor cat family, and when the worried cat gentleman heard that he was to have the auto for a jitney, with which he could make money, he was so glad he almost stood on his head. And his wife and the kitten children were glad also.

When the rat gentleman chauffeur and the mousie servant girl came back, in another auto, to take the rich lady home, she said:

"I am going to stay with Uncle Wiggily. From now on I am going to live in the woods and be happy and poor."

"Oh, my!" squeaked the mousie servant. "Just fancy!"

"I never heard of such a thing," said the rat gentleman. "You had much better come home and live as you did before."

But the cat lady would not change her mind, and she built herself a bungalow near Uncle Wiggily's, and lived there happily forever after.

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