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Uncle Wiggily And The Sunfish

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Uncle Wiggily slept that night—I mean the night after he had helped Mrs. Wren build her nest—he slept in an old under-ground house that another rabbit must have made some time before. It was nicely lined with leaves, and the fortune-hunting bunny slept very nice and warm there.

When the sun was up, shining very brightly, and most beautifully, Uncle Wiggily arose, shook his ears to get the dust out of them, and threw the dried-leaf blankets off him.

"Ah, ha! I must be up and doing," he cried. "Perhaps I shall find my fortune to-day."

Well, no sooner had he crawled out of the burrow than he heard a most beautiful song. It was one Mrs. Wren was singing, and it went "tra-la-la tra-la-la! tum-tee-tee-tum-tum-tee-tee!" too pretty for anything. And then, afterward, there was a sort of an echo like "cheep-cheep cheep-cheep!"

"Why, you must be very happy this morning, Mrs. Wren!" called Uncle Wiggily to her as she sat in her new nest which the rabbit had made for her on the mossy stump.

"I am," she answered, "very happy. What do you think happened in the night?"

"I can't guess," he answered. "A burglar crow didn't come and steal your eggs, I hope!"

"Oh, nothing sad or bad like that," she answered. "But something very nice. Just hop up here and look."

So Uncle Wiggily hopped up on the stump, and Mrs. Wren got off her nest, and there, on the bottom, in among some egg-shells, were a lot of tiny, weeny little birdies, about as big as a spool of silk thread or even smaller.

"Why, where in the world did they come from?" asked the old gentleman rabbit, rubbing his eyes.

"Out of the eggs to be sure," answered Mrs. Wren. "And I do declare, the last of my family is hatched now. There is little Wiggily out of the shell at last. I think I'll name him after you, as he never could keep still when he was being hatched. Now I must take out all the broken shells so the birdies won't cut themselves on

them." And she began to throw them out with her bill, just as the mother hen does, and then one of the new little birdies called out:

"Cheep-cheep-chip-chip!"

"Yes, I know you're hungry," answered their mamma, who understood their bird talk. "Well, I'll fly away and get you something to eat just as soon as your papa comes home to stay in the house. You know Mr. Wren went away last night to see about getting a new position in a feather pillow factory," said Mrs. Wren to Uncle Wiggily, "and he doesn't yet know about the birdies. I hope he'll come back soon, as they are very hungry, and I don't like to leave them alone to go shopping."

"Oh, I'll stay and take care of them for you while you go to the store," said the old gentleman rabbit, kindly.

"That will do very well," said Mrs. Wren. So she put on her bonnet and shawl and took her market basket and off she flew to the store, while Uncle Wiggily stayed with the new birdies, and they snuggled down under his warm fur, and were as cozy as in their own mother's feathers.

Well, Mrs. Wren was gone some time, as the store was crowded and she couldn't get waited on right away, and Uncle Wiggily stayed with the birdies. And they got hungrier and hungrier, and they cried real hard. Yes, indeed, as hard as some babies.

"Hum! I don't know what to do," said the old gentleman rabbit. "I can't feed them. I guess I'll sing to them." So he sang this song:

"Hush, birdies, hush,
Please don't cry;
Mamma'll be back
By and by.

"Nestle down close
Under my fur,
I'm not your mother, but
I'm helping her."

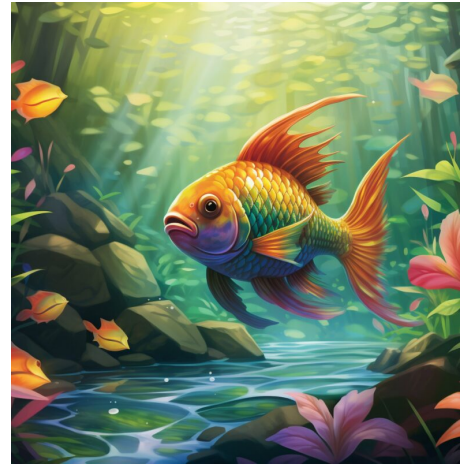
But this didn't seem to satisfy the birdies and they cried "cheep-cheep" harder than ever.

"Oh, dear! I believe I must get them something to eat," said Uncle Wiggily. So he covered them all up warmly with the feathers that lined the nest, and then he hopped down and went limping around on his crutch to find them something to eat.

Pretty soon he came to a little brook, and as he looked down into it he saw something shining, all gold and red and green and blue and yellow.

"Why, I do declare, if here isn't the end of the rainbow!" exclaimed the old gentleman rabbit, as he saw all the pretty colors.

He rubbed his eyes with his paw, to make sure he wasn't dreaming, but the colors were surely enough there, down under water.



"No wonder the giant couldn't find the pot of gold, it was down in the water," spoke the rabbit. "But I'll get it, and then my fortune will be made. Oh, how glad I am!"

Well, Uncle Wiggily reached his paw down and made a grab for the red and green and gold and yellow thing, but to his surprise, instead of lifting up a pot of gold, he lifted up a squirming, wiggling sunfish.

"Oh, my!" exclaimed the rabbit in surprise.

"I should say yes! Two Oh mys and another one!" gasped the fish. "Oh, please put me back in the water again. The air out on land is too strong for me. I can't breathe. Please, Uncle Wiggily, put me back."

"I thought you were a pot of gold," said the rabbit, sadly. "I'm always getting fooled. But never mind. I'll put you in the water."

"What are you doing here?" asked the fish, as he slid into the water again and sneezed three times.

"Just at present I am taking care of Mrs. Wren's new little birdies," said the rabbit. "She has gone to the store for something for them to eat, but they are so hungry they can't wait."

"Oh, that is easily fixed," said the sunfish. "Since you were so kind to me I'll tell you what to do. Get them a few little worms, and some small flower seeds, and feed them. Then the birdies will go to sleep."

So Uncle Wiggily did this, and as soon as the birds had their hungry little mouths filled, sound to sleep they went. And in a little while Mrs. Wren came back from the store with her basket filled, and Mr. Wren flew home to say that he had a nice position in a feather factory, and how he did admire his birdies! He hugged and kissed them like anything.

Then the two wrens both thanked Uncle Wiggily for taking care of their children, and the rabbit said good-by and hopped on again to seek his fortune.

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