



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Uncle Wiggily and the Watermelon

Howard R. Garis

"Well," asked the slow snail of Uncle Wiggily, as he met the old gentleman rabbit on the beach next day, "did you get any of your fortune at the fleas' party?"

"None at all," answered the old gentleman rabbit. "There was plenty of gold and diamonds to be seen, but the fleas didn't give me any."

"Perhaps they forgot it?" suggested the snail. "Some of the fleas are very forgetful. I once knew one whose mother sent him to the store for a pound of sugar and a quart of milk, and what do you suppose he bought?"

"I don't know," answered the rabbit, curious-like.

"He got a pound of milk and a quart of sugar, and the milk all ran out of the paper bag in which the groceryman put it, and the sugar stuck fast to the milk pail, and they had a dreadful time getting it out. That shows you what a flea will do sometimes. Perhaps if you ask them for your fortune they will give it to you."

"I'll do it the next time I meet one," decided Uncle Wiggily. "But now I must go on and look for myself."

"Wait until I sing a little song for you," said the slow snail, and he hummed this song very, very slowly:

"When I am in a hurry I slowly crawl along,
And when I finish crawling I sing a little song.
For if I hurried too much I'd get there all too soon,
Though some day I am going To climb up to the moon.
And then when I get up there I'll sleep the whole long day,
Or crawl upon the moonbeams, Or jump into the hay."

"Ha! hum!" exclaimed Uncle Wiggily. "That's a very good song, and I'm sure it will help me find my fortune. Now I must say goodbye and travel along."

"If you will wait I'll come with you," spoke the snail. "But then I suppose you are in a hurry, Uncle Wiggily, and I go too slow for you."

"That's it," said the rabbit kindly, and he gave one big hop that carried him twice as far as the snail could travel in a week of Sundays without counting Christmas.

Well, it wasn't very long after this before Uncle Wiggily got to the top of a hill.

When he started to climb up from the bottom he thought perhaps there might be gold at the top, but when he did get to the summit all he found there was a big green thing, with stripes on.

"I wonder what this can be?" thought the rabbit. "It looks like a baseball, and yet it's too large for that, and besides it isn't quite round. And, once more, it's green instead of white, for all baseballs are white. Ha! I know what it is. That must be a football which the boys kick about. I guess I'll kick it. Perhaps there may be gold inside."



So he got ready to kick it, but you know how it is with old gentlemen rabbits who have the rheumatism and have to go about on a crutch. As soon as Uncle Wiggily lifted up one foot--the one that had no rheumatism in it--and when he leaned on his crutch, the crutch suddenly slipped, and down he went ker-flumux ker-flimix all in a heap.

"Well, here's a pretty kettle of fish!" he cried. "I ought never to have tried to kick that green football. I should have waited until it was ripe."

So he sat down on top of the hill, and looked at the ocean tumbling and foaming on the beach below him, and he waited for the green football to get ripe. And, every once in a while he would poke it with his crutch to see if it was getting soft, but it wasn't.

And once, right after he did this, the old gentleman rabbit heard some one cry out:

"My goodness, Uncle Wiggily! What are you doing?"

"Waiting for this green football to get ripe so that I can kick it," was the rabbit's reply.

"Oh, ho! Oh, ha!" laughed the grasshopper for it was that leaping insect who had spoken, "that is not a football, it is a watermelon, and inside it is all red and sweet and juicy. Come, if you can, cut it open, we will have a fine feast. I haven't had any watermelon in some time. Can you cut it?"

"Oh, I can cut it fast enough," declared the rabbit. "Here goes, and I hope it is better looking on the inside than it is on the outside."

So the rabbit took out his knife, with which he usually spread his bread and butter, and he cut a hole in the watermelon. Then Uncle Wiggily and the grasshopper scooped out all the nice, red, juicy part and ate it.

And, would you ever believe it? Something happened right after that. They had no sooner wiped the red watermelon juice off their faces than there was a terrible roaring sound in the bushes, and out jumped a big black bear. Oh, he was going on something frightful, yes, really he was, but don't be frightened, for I won't let him hurt anybody. I'll let him chew on my typewriter first and that will dull his teeth. On the bear came, straight for the watermelon.

"Oh, what can I do?" cried Uncle Wiggily. "That bear will get me, but he won't hurt you, Mr. Grasshopper, as you are so small."

"Don't worry," said the hoppergrass, kindly. "I'll find a way to save you. Quick! Before the bear sees you, hop inside the watermelon," for you see they had eaten up all the inside, and left the melon rind hollow, just like a yellow pumpkin Jack-o'-lantern, at Halloween.

Uncle Wiggily saw that this was the best thing to do, so inside the melon he hopped, and then the grasshopper put back in place the piece they had cut out, and you never would have known but that the melon was a whole, new one, never having been cut and the inside eaten out.

On came the bear, sniffing with his black nose. Then he saw the grasshopper and asked, suspicious-like:

"Is there a rabbit around here?"

"I don't see any," spoke the grasshopper, and he really couldn't see any one but the bear because Uncle Wiggily was inside the melon, you know.

"Well, if there is no rabbit I'll have to eat this watermelon, then," said the bear, "for I am very hungry."

Now the grasshopper knew that if the bear once bit into the melon and opened it, he'd see the rabbit hiding inside. So what did the hoppergrass do but give the melon a shove with his strong hind legs, and down the hill the melon rolled, with the rabbit in it, just as Buddy Pigg, the guinea pig boy, once rolled down hill inside a cabbage.

Faster and faster down the hill rolled the melon, with Uncle Wiggily in it, and then the bear saw one of the rabbit's paws sticking out of a crack.

"Oh, ho! You have fooled me!" cried the bear to the grasshopper. "Now, I'll chase after that melon and get the rabbit, too!"

So the bear started down the hill after the melon, but his foot slipped and he slid down, oh, so fast, that he got to the bottom of the hill first. There he stood waiting for Uncle Wiggily. But a strange thing happened. The melon hit a stone, burst open and out flew the rabbit on a pile of soft sand. But the pieces of the melon hit the bear on his soft and tender nose, and he thought he was surely

killed, and off he ran to the woods howling and growling. So that's how Uncle Wiggily escaped from the bear, for the old gentleman rabbit wasn't hurt a bit for all his tumble.

Then he washed the pieces of melon off his clothes, and traveled on again, with the grasshopper, to seek his fortune.

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