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READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Uncle Wiggily's Fourth of July

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"You must be extra careful tomorrow, Uncle Wiggily," said Nurse Jane Fuzzy Wuzzy to the bunny rabbit gentleman one morning, as he stood on the steps of his hollow stump bungalow.

"Why be careful tomorrow, more than on any other day in the year?" asked Mr. Longears. "Is it going to rain or snow?"

"Whoever heard of snow on the Fourth of July?" inquired the muskrat lady housekeeper, as she fastened a fluffy brush to the end of her tail, for she was going in the house to dust the furniture.

"Oh, so tomorrow is the Fourth of July!" exclaimed the bunny. "I had forgotten all about it. Yes, indeed, I must be careful! I am living near the real children and some of them might think it fun to explode a torpedo under my pink, twinkling nose, or try to fasten a fire-cracker to my little tail."

"That's what I was thinking of," went on Nurse Jane. For Uncle Wiggily's bungalow, while still in the woods, was near to the homes of some boys and girls. And though only one boy, so far, had been bad to the bunny (and this boy soon turned good), there was no telling what might happen.

So as Uncle Wiggily hopped along the forest path, he took care not to get too far away from the bushes, behind and under which he could hide. For sometimes boys and girls came to the forest, and once a Kite Boy was lost, and the bunny helped him find his way home, you may remember.

"Hello, Uncle Wiggily!" suddenly called a voice, and Mr. Longears quickly jumped around, thinking it might be a real boy or girl. But it was only Neddie Stubtail, the little boy bear.

"I've been buying my fire-crackers," said Neddie to his uncle, the bunny. "I'm going to have lots of fun Fourth of July," and he showed Mr. Longears a bundle of dry sticks, painted red, white and blue like the bunny's rheumatism crutch.

You must know that in Animal Land the boys and girls have the same sort of fun you children do on holidays, but in a different manner. Instead of real fire-crackers, that have to be set off with a match, or piece of punk, with sparks that, perhaps, burn you, the animal children get some dried sticks. These they break, with loud, cracking sounds, but without any fire. And they have lots of fun. After

the sticks are broken they can be put in the stove to boil the tea kettle.

"Did you get your sister, Beckie, any Fourth of July things?" asked Uncle Wiggily of the boy bear.

"Oh, yes, I got her some little stick crackers," answered Neddie.

"That's good!" spoke Mr. Longears. Then he went on through the woods, meeting Toddle and Noodle Flat-Tail the beaver boys, Joie, Tommie and Kittie Kat the kittens, Nannie and Billie Wagtail the goats, and many other animal boys and girls. All of them called:

"Hello, Uncle Wiggily! Happy Fourth of July!"

And the bunny answered back:

"Thank you! I wish you the same!"

Thus hopping through the woods, meeting the animal children, and learning of the fun they were to have next day, the bunny rabbit gentleman at length came to the end of the forest. A little farther on were the houses and homes of real boys and girls, some of whom had been helped by Mr. Longears.

"I think this is as far as I had better go, seeing it's so close to the Fourth of July," thought Uncle Wiggily. "If the real children are anything like those of my animal friends who live in the woods, they'll be shooting off their crackers and torpedoes ahead of time."

And, just as he said that, Uncle Wiggily heard a loud:

"Bang! Bang!"

The bunny jumped to one side, and hid under the broad leaf of a burdock plant. Then he laughed.

"I thought that was a hunter-man's gun," whispered Uncle Wiggily. "But I guess it was some boy setting off a fire-cracker. I need not have been afraid."

He was just going to hop along a little farther, before turning back to his hollow stump bungalow when, all at once he saw a hammock swinging between two trees near the edge of the wood.

In the hammock lay a boy with a thin, pale face, and beside him sat a nurse, gently pulling on a rope that caused the little nest-like swinging bed to sway to and fro.

"Oh ho!" thought Uncle Wiggily. "A sick boy! I'm sorry for him! He won't be able to run around and have fun on Fourth of July as Jackie and Peetie Bow Wow will."

And then the bunny heard the boy in the hammock speaking. And, being able, as

he was of late, to understand the talk of real persons, Uncle Wiggily heard the boy say:

"Do you think I'll ever be able to run around again, and have fun, and shoot off fire-crackers?"

"Of course you will," the nurse answered cheerfully.

"But I can't have any fire-crackers now, can I?" asked the boy, timidly, as though knowing what the answer would be.

"No, Buddie! You are not quite well enough," the nurse gently replied. "No fire-crackers for you!"

"How about torpedoes?"

"You couldn't have those, either, I'm afraid," and the nurse smiled as she leaned over to give the boy a drink of orange juice.

"Oh, dear!" sighed the boy in the hammock, just like that. "Oh, dear!"



Uncle Wiggily felt very sorry for him.

"I wish I could do something," thought the bunny gentleman. "This boy won't have much fun on the Fourth of July—not even as much fun as Curly and Floppy Twistytail, the piggie chaps, will have throwing corncobs against a tin pan and making believe they are skyrockets."

"Oh, dear!" again sighed the boy in the hammock. "Oh, dear!"

"What's the matter now?" asked his nurse.

"I don't suppose I could even have a Roman candle, or a pinwheel, could I?" the boy asked.

"Oh, indeed no!" laughed the nurse. "What a funny chap you are!"

But the boy didn't feel very funny.

Uncle Wiggily twinkled his pink nose. Then he put his tall, silk hat firmly on his head and, tucking under his paw his red, white and blue striped rheumatism crutch, off through the woods hopped the bunny uncle.

"I'm going to get some Fourth of July for that boy," said Mr. Longears. "He simply must have some."

Uncle Wiggily spent some time hopping here and there through the woods, and early the next morning, when the real boys and girls were shooting off real fire-crackers and torpedoes, and when the animal lads and lassies were cracking

sticks and making torpedoes from broad, green leaves, Mr. Longears hopped to where the boy was, once more, swinging in his hammock.

The boy's head was turned to one side, and he was looking at some of his friends, over in the vacant lots, setting off fire-crackers. Uncle Wiggily, when the nurse wasn't looking, tossed into the hammock, from the bush behind which the bunny was hidden, a bundle of green things. They fell near the boy's hands.

Hardly knowing what he was doing the sick lad pinched one of the green things between his fingers.

"Pop!" it went.

"What's that?" cried the nurse. "It sounded like a fire-cracker."

The boy pinched another green leaf-like ball between his fingers.

"Pop!" sounded again, as the ball burst.

"Why," cried the nurse. "That's like a torpedo! What have you there, Buddie?"

"I don't know," the boy answered. "But these round, green balls, that burst and pop when I squeeze them, fell into my hammock. There's a lot of 'em! I can pinch them and make a noise for Fourth of July."

"So you can!" exclaimed the nurse, pinching one herself, and jumping when it went "Pop!"

"And they won't hurt me, will they?" asked the boy.

"No," answered the nurse, "they won't hurt you at all. They must have fallen off this tree, but I never knew, before, that such things as green fire-crackers grew on trees!"

"Ha! Ha!" laughed Uncle Wiggily to himself, hidden under a bush. "She doesn't know I brought the puff balls to the boy."

For that is what the bunny had done. In the woods he had found the green puff balls, inside which were the seeds of the plant. Later on, in the fall, the puff balls would be dry, and would crackle when you touched them, opening to scatter the seeds. But now, being green, and filled with air, they burst with a Fourth of July noise when squeezed.

"Oh, now I can have some fun!" laughed the sick boy, as he cracked one puff ball after another. "Hurrah! Now I'm celebrating Fourth of July!"

And he was. Uncle Wiggily had helped him, and the bunny gentleman had brought enough puff balls to last all day.

"Pop! Pop!" That is how they sounded as the boy pinched them in his hammock.

Some were large, like big fire-crackers, and others were small, like little torpedoes.

"Oh, what a lovely Fourth of July!" sighed the boy, when evening came to put the sun to bed, and the nurse wheeled the boy into the house.

And then, when it grew dark, Uncle Wiggily called together ten thousand firefly-lightning bugs, and they flittered and fluttered about the porch, on which the boy had been taken after dinner. The fireflies made pinwheels of themselves, they went up like skyrockets, they leaped about in bunches like the balls from Roman candles and finally, when it was time to go to bed, they took hold of each others' legs and, clinging together, spelled out: Goodnight!

"Oh, it's just like real fireworks!" cried the happy boy.

"I'm glad he liked it!" said Uncle Wiggily, as he hopped home to his hollow stump bungalow.

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