



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Uncle Wiggily's Picnic

Howard R. Garis

"Come on, Uncle Wiggily! Wake up! Wake up!" called Nurse Jane Fuzzy Wuzzy in the hollow stump bungalow one morning. "Come on!"

"What's that? What's the matter? Is the chimney on fire again?" asked the bunny gentleman, and he was so excited that he slid down the banister, instead of hopping along from step to step as he should have done.

"Of course the chimney isn't on fire!" laughed Miss Fuzzy Wuzzy. "But this is the day for the picnic of the animal children, and you promised to go with them to the woods."

"Oh, so I did!" exclaimed Uncle Wiggily, and he put one paw on his pink nose to stop the twinkling, which started as soon as he grew excited over thinking the chimney was on fire. "Well, I'm glad you called me, Nurse Jane. I'll get ready for the picnic at once. What are you going to put up for lunch?"

"Oh, some carrot bread, turnip cookies, lettuce sandwiches and nut cake," answered the muskrat lady.

"That sounds good!" laughed Uncle Wiggily. "I'm very glad I'm going to the picnic!"

"Well, you had better hurry and get ready," remarked Miss Fuzzy Wuzzy. "Here come Jackie and Peetie Bow Wow to see if you aren't soon going to start."

Uncle Wiggily looked from the window of his hollow stump bungalow, and saw the two little puppy dog boys coming along.

Jackie was so excited that he stubbed his paw and fell down twice, while Peetie was so anxious to show Uncle Wiggily what was in the package of lunch the puppies were going to take to the woods, that Peetie fell down three times, and turned a back somersault.

"Uncle Wiggily! Uncle Wiggily! Aren't you coming?" barked Jackie.

"Hurry or it may rain and spoil the picnic," added Peetie.

"Oh, I hope not!" answered the bunny gentleman. "For if there is one thing, more than another, that spoils a picnic, it is rain! Snow isn't so bad, for we don't have picnics when it snows."

"Maybe it won't rain," hopefully spoke Nurse Jane, who was busy putting up lunch for Uncle Wiggily. "There isn't a cloud in the sky!"

And, surely enough, when Uncle Wiggily, Nurse Jane and dozens of animal children started off to the woods for their picnic, the sun shone bravely down from the blue sky and a more lovely day could not have been wished for.

The forest where the bunny gentleman, Nurse Jane and the animal children went for their picnic was a large one, with many trees and bushes. There were dozens of places for the squirrels, rabbits, goats, ducks, dogs, pussy cats and others to play; and when they reached the grove they put their lunches under bushes, on the soft cool, green moss and began to have fun.

"Oh, Uncle Wiggily! Please turn skipping rope for us?" begged Brighteyes, the little guinea pig girl.

"And please come play ball with us!" grunted Curly and Floppy Twistytail, the piggie boys.

"Have a game of marbles with us," teased Billie Wagtail, the goat, and Jacko Kinkytail, the monkey chap.

"I'll play with you all in turn," laughed the bunny gentleman. He was in the midst of having fun, and was just gnawing off a piece of wild grape vine to make a swing for Lulu and Alice Wibblewobble, the ducks, when up came hopping Bully No-Tail, the frog boy. Bully was quite excited.

"What's the matter, Bully?" asked Uncle Wiggily.

"Oh, gur-ump!" croaked Bully. "There is a big crowd of boys and girls over on the other side of the pond. They're having a picnic, too! Ger-ump! Ger-ump!"

"Real boys and girls!" added Bawly, who was Bully's brother. "Hump-bump!"



"Well, that will do no harm!" laughed Uncle Wiggily. "Let the real boys and girls have their picnic. They will not see us, for very few boys and girls know how to use their eyes when they go to the woods. I have often hidden beside a bush close to where a boy passed, and he never saw me. Let the boys and girls have their picnic, and we'll have ours!"

So that's the way it was. Uncle Wiggily and the animal children played tag, and they slid down hill. Perhaps you think they could not do this in summer when there was no snow. But the hills in the forest were covered with long, smooth, brown pine needles, and these layers of needles were so slippery that it was

easy to slide on them.

And then, all of a sudden, just about when it was time to eat lunch, it began to rain! Oh, how hard the drops pelted down! Rain! Rain! Rain!

"Scurry for shelter—all of you!" cried Nurse Jane. "Get out of the rain!"

The animal boys and girls knew how to take care of themselves in a rain storm, even if they had no umbrellas. Most of them had on fur or feathers which water does not harm. And they snuggled down under trees and bushes, finding shelter and dry spots so that, no matter how hard it poured, they did not get very wet.

They hid their lunches under rocks and overhanging trees so nothing was spoiled. And when the rain was over and the sun came out, as it did, the animal picnic went on as before, and when the food was set out on flat stumps for tables, there was enough for everyone, and plenty left over.

Nurse Jane was looking at what remained of the good things to eat when Jackie Bow Wow, who, with Peetie, had been splashing in a mud puddle, came running up wagging his tail.

"Oh, Uncle Wiggily!" barked Jackie. "What you think? Those real children, on the other side of the wood, they had their things to eat out on some stumps for tables, just as we had, and when the rain came, oh! It spoiled everything!"

"They didn't know how to keep their lunches dry," added Peetie. "Now they haven't anything to eat for their picnic, and they are starting home, and some of the little girls are crying."

"That's too bad!" murmured Uncle Wiggily, kindly. "Too bad that the rain had to spoil their picnic! Now we have plenty of things left that children could eat—nuts, apples, some popcorn and pears," for the animal folk had brought all these, and many more, to the woods with them. "We have lots left over."

"We could give them something to eat," spoke Nurse Jane, "but how are we going to get it to them? We can't call them here; and it would never do to let them see us carrying the things to them."

"No," agreed Uncle Wiggily. "But I think I have a plan. We can make some baskets of birch bark. Some of the animal children—such as Jacko and Jumbo Kinkytail, the monkeys, Joie and Tommie Kat, Johnnie and Billie Bushytail, the squirrels—are good tree climbers. Let them climb trees near where the real children are having their picnic, and lower to them, on grape-vine ropes, the food we have left."

"Oh, yes!" mewed Tommie, the kitten boy. "What jolly fun!"

Quickly Nurse Jane began to gather up the food. Uncle Wiggily put it in birch bark

baskets the animal children made and then, with the baskets, fastened to vines, in their paws or claws, the animal boys went through the wood to the place of the other picnic. Uncle Wiggily and the remaining animal children followed.

There the poor, disappointed real children were, looking at their rain-soaked and spoiled lunches. Some of the little girls were crying.

"We might as well go home," grumbled a boy. "Our picnic is no good!"

"Mean old rain!" sighed a girl.

But just then the animal chaps with lunch from Uncle Wiggily's picnic—lunch which had not been rained on—climbed up into trees over the heads of the boys and girls. Not a sound did the animal chaps make. And when the real boys and girls had their backs turned, there were lowered to the stump tables enough good things for a jolly feast—apples, pears, popcorn, nuts and many other goodies.

A little girl happened to turn around and see the birch bark baskets of good things just as the animal boys scurried off through the trees.

"Oh, look!" cried the girl. "The fairies have been here! They have left us some lunch in place of ours that the rain spoiled. Oh, see the fairy lunch!"

And I suppose that is as good a name for it as any, since the boys and girls didn't see Uncle Wiggily's friends lower the baskets from the trees. And the real boys and girls ate the lunch and had a most jolly time, and so did the bunny gentleman and his picnic crowd.

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