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Uncle Wiggily And Higgledee Piggledee

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One day Uncle Wiggily Longears, the nice old gentleman rabbit, was sitting in an easy chair in the hollow-stump house of the Bushytail squirrel family, where he was paying a visit to Johnnie and Billie Bushytail, the two squirrel boys.

There came a knock on the door, but the bunny uncle did not pay much attention to it, as he was sort of taking a little sleep after his dinner of cabbage soup with carrot ice cream on top.

Nurse Jane Fuzzy Wuzzy, the muskrat lady housekeeper, went out in the hall, and when she came back, with her tail all tied up in a pink ribbon, (for she was sweeping) she said:

“Uncle Wiggily, a friend of yours has come to see you.”

“A friend of mine!” cried Uncle Wiggily, awakening so suddenly that his nose stopped twinkling. “I hope it isn’t the bad old fox from the Orange Mountains.”

“No,” answered Nurse Jane with a smile, “it is a lady.”

“A lady?” exclaimed the old rabbit gentleman, getting up quickly, and looking in the glass to see that his ears were not criss-crossed. “Who can it be?”

“It is Mother Goose,” went on Nurse Jane. “She says you were so kind as to help Little Boy Blue the other day, when his horn was frozen, and you thawed it on the warm pie, that perhaps you will now help her. She is in trouble.”

“In trouble, eh?” exclaimed Uncle Wiggily, sort of smoothing down his vest, fastidious like and stylish. “I didn’t know she blew a horn.”

“She doesn’t,” said Nurse Jane. “But I’ll bring her in and she can tell you, herself, what she wants.”

“Oh, Uncle Wiggily!” cried Mother Goose, as she set her broom down in one corner, for she never went out unless she carried it with her. She said she never could tell when she might have to sweep the cobwebs out of the sky. “Oh, Uncle Wiggily, I am in such a lot of trouble!”

“Well, I will be very glad to help you if I can,” said the bunny uncle. “What is it?”

“It’s about Higgledee Piggledee,” answered Mother Goose.

“Higgledee Piggledee!” exclaimed Uncle Wiggily, “why that sounds like——”

“She’s my black hen,” went on Mother Goose. “You know how the verse goes in the book about me and my friends.”

And, taking off her tall peaked hat, which she wore when she rode on the back of the old gander, Mother Goose sang:

“Higgledee Piggledee, my black hen,

She lays eggs for gentlemen.

Sometimes nine and sometimes ten.

Higgledee Piggledee, my black hen.

Gentlemen come every day,

To see what my black hen doth lay.”

“Well,” asked Uncle Wiggily, “what is the trouble? Has Higgledee Piggledee stopped laying? If she has I am afraid I can’t help you, for hens don’t lay many eggs in winter, you know.”

“Oh, it isn’t that!” said Mother Goose, quickly. “Higgledee Piggledee lays as many eggs as ever for gentlemen—sometimes nine and sometimes ten. But the trouble is the gentlemen don’t get them.”

“Don’t they come for them?” asked Uncle Wiggily, sort of puzzled like and wondering.

“Oh, yes, they come every day,” said Mother Goose, “but there are no eggs for them. Some one else is getting the eggs Higgledee Piggledee lays.”

“Do you s’pose she eats them herself?” asked the old rabbit gentleman, in a whisper. “Hens sometimes do, you know.”

“Not Higgledee Piggledee,” quickly spoke Mother Goose. “She is too good to do that. She and I are both worried about the missing eggs, and as you have been so kind I thought perhaps you could help us.”

“I’ll try,” Uncle Wiggily said.

“Then come right along to Higgledee Piggledee’s coop,” invited Mother Goose. “Maybe you can find out where her eggs go to. She lays them in her nest, comes off, once in a while, to get something to eat, but when she goes back to lay more eggs the first ones are gone.”

Uncle Wiggily twinkled his nose, tied his ears in a hard knot, as he always did when he was thinking, and then, putting on his fur coat and taking his rheumatism crutch with him, he went out with Mother Goose.

Uncle Wiggily rode in his airship, made of a clothes-basket, with toy circus balloons on top, and Mother Goose rode on the back of a big gander, who was a brother to Grandfather Goosey Gander. Soon they were at the hen coop where Higgledee Piggledee lived.



“Oh, Uncle Wiggily, I am so glad you came!” cackled the black hen. “Did Mother Goose tell you about the egg trouble?”

“She did, Higgledee Piggledee, and I will see if I can stop it. Now, you go on the nest and lay some eggs and then we will see what happens,” spoke Uncle Wiggily.

So Higgledee Piggledee, the black hen, laid some eggs for gentlemen, and then she went out in the yard to get some corn to eat, just as she always did. And, while she was gone, Uncle Wiggily hid himself in some straw in the hen coop. Pretty soon the old gentleman heard a gnawing, rustling sound and up out of a hole in the ground popped two big rats, with red eyes.

“Did Higgledee Piggledee lay any eggs to-day?” asked one rat, in a whisper.

“Yes,” spoke the other, “she did.”

“Then we will take them,” said the first rat. “Hurray! More eggs for us! No gentlemen will get these eggs because we’ll take them ourselves. Hurray!”

He got down on his back, with his paws sticking up in the air. Then the other rat rolled one of the black hen’s eggs over so the first rat could hold it in among his four legs. Next, the second rat took hold of the first rat’s tail and began pulling him along, egg and all, just as if he were a sled on a slippery hill, the rat sliding on his back over the smooth straw. And the eggs rode on the rat-sled as nicely as you please.

“Ha!” cried Uncle Wiggily, jumping suddenly out of his hiding-place. “So this is where Higgledee Piggledee’s eggs have been going, eh? You rats have been taking them. Scatt! Shoo! Boo! Skedaddle! Scoot!”

And the rats were so scared that they skedaddled away and shooed themselves and did everything else Mr. Longears told them to do, and they took no eggs that day. Then Uncle Wiggily showed Mother Goose the rat hole, and it was stopped up with stones so the rats could not come in the coop again. And ever after that Higgledee Piggledee, the black hen, could lay eggs for gentlemen, sometimes nine and sometimes ten, and there was no more trouble as there had been before Uncle Wiggily caught the rats and made them skedaddle.

So Mother Goose and the black hen thanked Uncle Wiggily very much.

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