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Uncle Wiggily And The Bad Boy

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Once upon a time there was a bad boy. He lived on the edge of the wood in which Uncle Wiggily Longears, the bunny rabbit gentleman, had built his hollow stump bungalow. The bad boy did not know Uncle Wiggily, but Mr. Longears knew about the bad boy, and so did Nurse Jane Fuzzy Wuzzy, the bunny's muskrat lady housekeeper.

"Don't ever go near that bad boy's house," said Miss Fuzzy Wuzzy one morning, as the rabbit gentleman started out with his red, white and blue striped rheumatism crutch.

"Why not?" asked Uncle Wiggily.

"Because," answered Miss Fuzzy Wuzzy, "that boy will throw stones at you, and maybe hit you on your pink, twinkling nose."

"He can't throw stones now," said Uncle Wiggily. "He can't find any. The ground is covered with snow."

"Then he'll throw snowballs at you," said the muskrat lady housekeeper. "Please keep away from him."

"I'll think about it," promised the bunny gentleman, as he hopped away, with his tall, silk hat on his head.

Now you know why, once upon a time, there was a bad boy. He was bad because he threw stones and snowballs at rabbits and other animals. There were more things bad about him than this, but one is enough for a story.

Uncle Wiggily hopped on and on, across the fields and through the woods, and soon he came to the house of the bad boy. It was a regular house, not a hollow stump bungalow, such as that in which Mr. Longears lived.

"I wonder if there isn't any way of making that bad boy good?" thought the bunny rabbit gentleman. "Bad boys aren't of much use in the world, but good boys, or girls, who put out crumbs for the hungry birds to eat in winter—they are of great use in the world! I wonder if I could make that bad boy good?"

But, no sooner had Uncle Wiggily began to wonder in this fashion, than, all of a sudden, he heard a loud voice shouting:

"Hi! There he is! A rabbit! I'm going to throw a snowball at him!"

Uncle Wiggily looked over his shoulder and saw the bad boy rushing out of his house, followed by another boy.

"Oh, what a nice, funny rabbit!" cried the second boy. "He looks as if he came from a circus—all dressed up!"

"I'll make him turn a somersault if I can whang him with a snowball!" shouted the bad boy, running toward the bunny gentleman.

"Perhaps I had better be going," said Uncle Wiggily, who could understand boy and girl talk, though he could not speak it himself. "I'll wait until some other day about trying to make this boy good."

Mr. Longears started to run, but he had not taken many hops before, all of a sudden, he felt a sharp, thumping pain in his side, and he was almost knocked over by a snowball thrown by the bad boy.

"Hi there! I hit him! I hit him!" howled the bad boy, dancing up and down.

"Yes," sadly said the other chap. "You hit him, but what good did it do?"

"It shows I'm a straight shot!" proudly answered the other. "Maybe I can catch that rabbit now."

He ran over the snow. But though Uncle Wiggily had been knocked down by the ball thrown by the bad boy, the rabbit gentleman managed to get to his feet, and away he hopped on his rheumatism crutch—so fast that the bad boy could not get him.

Then the bad boy and the other chap, who was not so bad, played in the snow, until it was time to go home. Uncle Wiggily hopped to his hollow stump bungalow, but he said nothing to Nurse Jane about the pain in his side.

"If I tell her she won't let me go out to the movies to-night with Grandpa Goosey," thought Mr. Longears.

So, though his side pained him, Uncle Wiggily said never a word, but early that evening he hopped over to Grandpa Goosey's home in the duck pen. And on the way Uncle Wiggily had to pass the house of the bad boy.

"But it is getting dark, and he will not see me," thought the bunny gentleman. "I guess it will be safe."



Now it happened that, just as Uncle Wiggily was hopping under the window of the bad boy's house, the bunny heard a voice inside saying:

"Oh, dear! How my ear aches! Oh, what a pain! Can't you do something to stop it, Mother?"

"If I had some soft cotton I could put a little warm oil on it and that, in your ear, would make it feel better," answered a lady's voice. "But I have no cotton in the house. If you'll wait until I go to the drug store——"

"No! No!" howled the voice of the bad boy. "I don't want you to go to the store and leave me alone! Can't you get some cotton without going to the store?"

"No," answered the mother. "You shouldn't have played out in the cold, and thrown snowballs at the rabbit. You must have gotten some snow in your ear to make it ache!"

"Oh, do something to make it stop!" cried the bad boy. "Oh, why haven't we some cotton?"

Uncle Wiggily, outside under the window, heard all this talk. Now the bunny gentleman knew where to find something like cotton without going to the drug store. Inside each of the big brown buds of the horse-chestnut tree is a little wad of cotton. Mother Nature puts the cotton there to keep the bud warm through the winter, so green leaves will come out in the spring.

Uncle Wiggily looked around and saw, lying on the snow, a branch which the wind had broken from a horse-chestnut tree. Hopping across the newly-fallen spring snow to this branch, Uncle Wiggily gnawed off some of the buds. Breaking these open with his teeth, he took out some of the soft, fluffy cotton.

"I'll just leave this on the bad boy's doorstep," thought the bunny. "I'll tap with my crutch and hop away."

So the bunny gentleman, with the wad of cotton, skipped up the front steps of the house when no one saw him. His paws made funny little marks in the soft snow. Uncle Wiggily put the cotton on the sill, tapped once, twice, three times with his rheumatism crutch, and then hopped away.

"Somebody's at the door!" said the bad boy. "Maybe that's daddy coming home, so he can go to the drug store and get that cotton for my aching ear."

"Maybe," said his mother. "I hope it is."

She opened the door, and when she saw there the bunch of cotton—just what she wanted—you can imagine how surprised she was!

"Why, who could have left it?" asked the bad boy, when his mother told him what had happened. "Who do you s'pose did?"

"I don't know," she answered. "But I saw some rabbit tracks in the snow on our steps."

"Rabbit tracks?" repeated the boy, wonderingly, as his mother softly put some warm cotton and oil in his ear, making the pain almost stop.

"Yes, rabbit tracks," said Mother. "And, if I were you, I'd never throw any more snowballs at rabbits."

The boy (I'll not call him bad any more) put his head down on the pillow of his bed. He could go to sleep now, as the pain in his ear had almost stopped.

"I wonder if that funny rabbit, dressed up like a little old man, could have brought me the cotton?" said the boy.

"I wonder, too," softly spoke Mother with a smile.

"Anyhow, I won't ever throw stones or snowballs at rabbits any more," promised the boy.

"Or cats or dogs, either?" his mother asked.

"Or cats or dogs, either," added the boy.

Then he went to sleep, and Uncle Wiggily, picking the bits of fuzzy horse-chestnut tree cotton off his tall, silk hat, hopped on to Grandpa Goosey's house and went to the movies.

So that's the story of the bunny gentleman and the bad boy, and I hope you liked it. But if the rag doll's go-cart doesn't race with the baby carriage and slip on the banana skin as though it had on roller skates, I'll tell you in the next story about Uncle Wiggily and the good boy.

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