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Uncle Wiggily And The Butternut Tree

Howard R. Garis

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed Nurse Jane Fuzzy Wuzzy, the muskrat lady housekeeper of Uncle Wiggily Longears, the rabbit, as she looked in the pantry of the hollow stump bungalow one day. "Well, I do declare!"

"What's the matter?" asked Mr. Longears, peeping over the top of his spectacles. "I hope that the chimney hasn't fallen down, or the egg beater run away with the potato masher."

"No, nothing like that," Nurse Jane said. "But we haven't any butter!"

"No butter?" spoke Uncle Wiggily, sort of puzzled like, and abstracted.

"Not a bit of butter for supper," went on Nurse Jane, sadly.

"Ha! That sounds like something from Mother Goose. Not a bit of butter for supper," laughed Uncle Wiggily. "Not a bit of batter-butter for the pitter-patter supper. If Peter Piper picked a pit of peckled pippers—"

"Oh, don't start that!" begged Nurse Jane. "All I need is some supper for butter—no some bupper for batter—oh, dear! I'll never get it straight!" she cried.

"I'll say it for you," said Uncle Wiggily, kindly. "I know what you want—some butter for supper. I'll go get it for you."

"Thank you," Nurse Jane exclaimed, and so the old rabbit gentleman started off over the fields and through the woods for the butter store.

The monkey-doodle gentleman waited on him, and soon Uncle Wiggily was on his way back to the hollow stump bungalow with the butter for supper, and he was thinking how nice the carrot muffins would taste, for Nurse Jane had promised to make some, and Uncle Wiggily was sort of smacking his whiskers and twinkling his nose, when, all at once, he heard some one in the woods calling:

"Uncle Wiggily! Oh, I say, Uncle Wiggily! Can't you stop for a moment and say how-d'-do?"

"Why, of course, I can," answered the bunny, and, looking around the corner of an old log, he saw Grandpa Whackum, the old beaver gentleman, who lived with Toodle and Noodle Flat-tail, the beaver boys.

"Come in and sit down for a minute and rest yourself," invited Grandpa Whackum.

"I will," said Uncle Wiggily. "And I'll leave my butter outside where it will be cool," for Grandpa Whackum lived down in an underground house, where it was so warm, in summer, that butter would melt.

Grandpa Whackum was a beaver, and he was called Whackum because he used to whack his broad, flat tail on the ground, like beating a drum, to warn the other beavers of danger. Beavers, you know, are something like big muskrats, and they like water. Their tails are flat, like a pancake or egg turner.

"Well, how are things with you, and how is Nurse Jane?" asked Grandpa Whackum.

"Oh, everything is fine," said Uncle Wiggily. "Nurse Jane is well. I've just been to the store to get her some butter."

"That's just like you; always doing something for some one," said Grandpa Whackum, pleased like.

Then the two friends talked for some little while longer, until it was almost 6 o'clock, and time for Uncle Wiggily to go.

"I'll take my butter and travel along," he said. But when he went outside, where he had left the pound of butter on a flat stump, it wasn't there.

"Why, this is queer," said the bunny uncle. "I wonder if Nurse Jane could have come along and taken it to the hollow stump bungalow herself?"

"More likely a bad fox took the butter," spoke the old gentleman beaver. "But we can soon tell. I'll look in the dirt around the stump and see whose footprints are there. A fox makes different tracks from a muskrat."

So Grandpa Whackum looked and he said:

"Why, this is queer. I can only see beaver tracks and rabbit tracks near the stump. Only you and I were here and we didn't take anything."

"But where is my butter?" asked Uncle Wiggily.

Just then, off in the woods, near the beaver house, came the sound of laughter and voices cailed:

"Oh, it's my turn now, Toodle."

"Yes, Noodle, and then it's mine. Oh, what fun we are having, aren't we?"

"It's Toodle and Noodle—my two beaver grandsons," said Grandpa Whackum. "I wonder if they could have taken your butter? Come; we'll find out."

They went softly over behind a clump of bushes and there they saw Toodle and Noodle sliding down the slanting log of a tree, that was like a little hill, only there was no snow on it.

"Why, they're coasting!" cried Grandpa Whackum. "And how they can do it without snow I don't see."

"But I see!" said Uncle Wiggily. "Those two little beaver boys have taken my butter that I left outside of your house and with the butter they have greased the slanting log until it is slippery as ice. That's how they slide down—on Nurse Jane's butter."

"Oh, the little rascals!" cried Grandpa Whackum.

"Well, they didn't mean anything wrong," Uncle Wiggily kindly said. Then he called; "Toodle! Noodle! Is any of my butter left?"

"Your butter?" cried Noodle, surprised like.

"Was that your butter?" asked Toodle. "Oh, please forgive us! We thought no one wanted it, and we took it to grease the log so we could slide down. It was as good as sliding down a muddy, slippery bank of mud into the lake."

"We used all your butter," spoke Noodle. "Every bit."

"Oh, dear! That's too bad!" Uncle Wiggily said. "It is now after 6 o'clock and all the stores will be closed. How can I get more?" And he looked at the butter the beaver boys had spread on the tree. It could not be used for bread, as it was all full of bark.

"Oh, how can I get some good butter for Nurse Jane?" asked the bunny uncle sadly.

"Ha! I will give you some," spoke a voice high in the air.

"Who are you?" asked Uncle Wiggily, startled.

"I am the butternut tree," was the answer. "I'll drop some nuts down and all you will have to do will be to crack them, pick out the meats and squeeze out the butter. It is almost as good as that which you buy in the store."

"Good!" cried Uncle Wiggily, "and thank you."

Then the butter tree rattled down some butternuts, which Uncle Wiggily took home, and Nurse Jane said the butter squeezed from them was very good. And Toodle and Noodle were sorry for having taken Uncle Wiggily's other butter to make a slippery tree slide, but they meant no harm.



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