Ririro
READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Uncle Wiggily and the Crab

Howard R. Garis

Uncle Wiggily was talking to the slipper eel he had met earlier.

"You are certainly slippery," said the rabbit, "as slippery as a rubber doormat on a wet day. But look at this thing which I dug up just before the fox jumped for me. I think it is a diamond, and if it is, I will get rich, and I can go home and see my little rabbit grandchildren, Sammie and Susie Littletail." Then he held out to the slippery eel the shining object he had found in the sand.

"Alas! Alas!" sorrowfully exclaimed the eel, as he looked at the shining thing.

"What's the matter; isn't it a diamond?" asked the rabbit.

Then the slippery eel said this in a sing-song voice:

"Alas, alas, 'Tis only glass.
It is no good To eat for food.
It will not do For me or you.
Throw it away; Some other day
Your fortune may Come past your way."

"Ha, I did not know you could make up verses," said the rabbit in surprise.

"I didn't know it, either," answered the eel. "That is the first time I have ever done such a thing," and once more he dug his tail down into the sand, real modest-like and shy.

"Well, if that is only glass, instead of a diamond, I may as well throw it away," said the rabbit.

"Yes," agreed the eel, and with a flip of his tail he sent the glass spinning out into the heaving ocean.

"More bad luck for me," thought the rabbit, but he did not give up, and, bidding goodbye to the slippery eel the rabbit set off down the beach to look for his fortune once more.

By this time it had stopped raining and he didn't need the toadstool umbrella, so he stuck it up in the sand in order that the next person who came along might sit under it and get out of the sun.

Well, Uncle Wiggily went on and on. He saw the children in bathing, and building

sand houses, and he saw the fishermen going out to sea to catch fishes and lobsters, but still he couldn't see anything of his fortune.

Then, pretty soon, in a little while, not so very long, the old gentleman rabbit came to a place on the sand where there was a little white card. And on the card was some writing, which read:

"DIG HERE AND SEE WHAT YOU CAN FIND."

"Ha, hum! I wonder what that means," thought Uncle Wiggily, as he sat down on the sand to rest himself. "I wonder if that can be a trick?" He had been fooled so many times that he made up his mind to be careful now. So he looked all around, but he couldn't see anything that looked like danger.

To be sure, there were some bushes up on the beach, a little way off, but there seemed to be no one in them. And there was no one on the beach near where the rabbit was.

"I guess I'll take a chance and dig," thought Uncle Wiggily. So he laid aside his valise and crutch and began to dig in the sand with a clam-shell. Deeper and deeper he went down until he began to feel something hard.

"Oh, ho!" he exclaimed. "I guess I'm getting close to it. This must be a chest of gold or diamonds that the pirates or robbers buried in the sand years ago. Now, I'll dig it up and I'll be rich. This is a lucky day for me!"

So he dug deeper and still deeper until he had partly uncovered something black and round. He thought sure it was a chest of gold, and he dug faster and faster, until all of a sudden something slipped in the sand and rolled out into the hole Uncle Wiggily had dug, and, before he knew it, he found himself slipping down and there he was, held fast by one paw, under a big black stone. It was a stone he had found under the sand and not a chest of gold at all.

At first he was too surprised to say or do anything, and then, as his foot began to pain him, he cried out:

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear! I'm caught in a trap, and I can't get out!"

"No, indeed, you can't get out!" exclaimed a voice at the edge of the hole, and, looking up, the rabbit saw a big wolf.

"Oh, did you put that card there on the sand, telling me to dig?" asked Uncle Wiggily.

"I did," answered the wolf, showing his teeth in a most impolite grin. "I wanted to catch you under the stone and I did. The stone rolled out of the sand when you had dug down deep enough to loosen it, and now you are fast. I'm going to jump down on you, and tickle you until your ribs ache."

Well, Uncle Wiggily felt pretty bad on hearing this, and he didn't know what to do. The wolf was getting ready to spring down on him, when, all at once the rabbit heard a voice whispering down to him:

"Say, Uncle Wiggily, you just ask that wolf if he is a good jumper. He'll say he is, and then you ask him if he can jump on top of the round stone he sees on the sand near the hole. He'll say he can, for he is very proud, but, instead of jumping on a stone, he'll jump on me, and then I'll stick him with my sharp tail, and he'll run away. Then I'll help you get loose."

"But who are you?" asked the rabbit, somewhat puzzled.

"I am the horseshoe crab," was the answer. "I'm up here on the sand, and I look just like a stone, and I'll pretend I really am one. The wolf can't understand my talk, so it's safe. You just ask him to jump on me."

So Uncle Wiggily looked up at the wolf, and said:

"Mr. Wolf, since you are going to tickle me anyhow, would you mind showing me what a good jumper you are before you do it?"

"Of course not!" said the wolf, who was very proud of his jumping. "I'll jump anywhere you say, and then I'll jump down and get you."

"Very well," said Uncle Wiggily, slow and sad-like, "just jump on that round stone up there on the beach, will you?"

"I will," said the wolf, and he didn't know that what he thought was a stone was only the horseshoe crab waiting to stick him with his sharp tail.

So the bad wolf gave one big jump up into the air, and down on top of the horseshoe crab he came, and the crab just stuck up his sharp pointed tail, and it tickled that wolf in the ribs so very much that the wolf had to laugh whether he wanted to or not, and he laughed so hard that he had a fit, and so he couldn't get the rabbit.

Then the horseshoe crab dug away the sand around the stone, and helped Uncle Wiggily get his leg out, and the rabbit was safe, and he thanked the crab, and hopped away and the wolf didn't get him after all.



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