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READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Uncle Wiggily And The Fiddler

Howard R. Garis

It was the day after Uncle Wiggily had taken shelter under the pink shell when the hailstones came down, and the old gentleman rabbit was walking along the sandy beach, looking to see what he could see.

"You never can tell when you are going to find your fortune in this world," he said, "and I may come upon mine any moment. So I must be ready for it." Then he went on a little farther, and he felt hungry. "Perhaps there is a bit of cherry pie still in my valise," he said. So he looked, and, sure enough, there was some pie, and he ate it.

It was nearly all gone, and there were only a few crumbs of the pie left, when the old gentleman rabbit heard some one say:

"Oh, how hungry I am! Oh, if I only had something to eat. I wonder where I can find anything?"

Then the rabbit looked down, and there was the slow-crawling snail, looking very hungry indeed.

"Oh, ho! So it's you, is it?" asked the rabbit. "Why, it seems to me you are not very far from the place where I last saw you."

"That is so, I am not," answered the snail. "You see I go very slowly and in a whole day I only moved about as far as an ice-cream cone. I have been looking for something to eat, but I can't find it."

"Oh, I'll gladly give you what I have left," spoke Uncle Wiggily, as he scattered the crumbs of the cherry pie about, and the snail ate them all up.

"I don't s'pose you have seen anything of my fortune, have you?" asked the rabbit, as he wiped his whiskers on a red napkin, and closed up his valise.

"No, I haven't," said the snail. "But I will tell you something I overheard to-day and perhaps that will help you. As I was crawling slowly along I heard two sand fleas talking together. One said to the other that there was going to be a grand dance of all the sand fleas on the beach to-night and that there would be plenty of gold and diamonds at the party. Perhaps if you went to it you might find your fortune--that is, if some one had any gold or diamonds they didn't want."

"That's a good idea," said the rabbit. "I'll be there, and I'm much obliged to you

for telling me. Where do the sand fleas hold their dance?"

"Down on the beach by the wreck of the old sailing ship," answered the snail. "Be there at the hour of midnight, and I hope you will find your fortune."

"I'll be there," said the rabbit. "Oh, I'll be there."

Then the snail crawled away, and Uncle Wiggily hopped along on the sand, but he didn't look for his fortune as he thought he would find it at the fleas' party.

"Since I am going to be up quite late to-night," he said, "I had better take a little sleep now." So he stretched out under some seaweed that he laid over some driftwood for a shady shelter and soon he was fast asleep. Then, after a while, he awakened and ate his supper and soon it was midnight, and he set off toward the place where the wreck of the old ship was on the beach, for there the sand fleas were to have their hop and dance.

As he came near the place, the old gentleman rabbit heard laughter and talking, and he saw tiny lights flitting about. Then he came still nearer, and he saw a most curious sight. All around in the sand were little pieces of wood, set in a circle, and on each piece of wood was a lightning bug. They lighted up the place like small electric lanterns.

There was a large circle of sand, and inside of that was the ballroom where the dance was to take place. It was all decorated with seaweed and moss, and it looked very pretty with lightning bugs scattered here and there in the green drapery like fairy lights.

And then the sand fleas! Oh, there were hundreds of them, and they were hopping all about, sometimes over each other's backs and around corners and through the middle, while some even turned somersaults, and they were having a glorious time.

"I wonder when the dance is going to begin?" thought Uncle Wiggily. "I wish it would soon start, for I see that these fleas have on many diamonds, and they also have lots of gold in their pockets. Perhaps, when they dance they will drop some of the gold and diamonds, and, in case they don't want them, I can pick them up and have them for my fortune."

Then, all of a sudden, some of the fleas began to cry out:

"Where is the music? Why doesn't the music start, so that we can dance?"

And surely enough, there was no music for the party. Then a big gray flea called out:

"Alas, and lack-a-day! We will have no music! I had hired a dozen Katy-Dids and a dozen Katy-Didn'ts to come and play for us, but they have just telephoned that

they can't come, as their legs are stiff. So we can have no dance, as we have no music."

"Oh, how perfectly dreadful!" cried a blue lady flea.

And just then some of the other fleas saw Uncle Wiggily looking in at them from behind the old wrecked ship.

"Perhaps the rabbit can play for us," said some of the fleas. "Can you, Mr. Rabbit?"

"No, I can't," he said, and he felt very sorry for them. "But I will see if I can find some one who can," for Uncle Wiggily was very kind-hearted, and always did what he could to help.



So he strolled down the beach looking for some one to play for the sand fleas. And as he walked along he met a fiddler crab, which is a crab with very long legs. And as soon as he saw that fiddler crab Uncle Wiggily knew that the long-legged creature could make music.

"Will you come and play for the fleas' party?" asked the rabbit. "I will make a fiddle out of my crutch and some seaweed for strings, and you can play it."

"I will," said the fiddler crab, kindly, "but who will play the drum? We need a drum. Who will play it?"

"I would if I had a drum," said the rabbit, bravely.

"I'll be the drum," suddenly cried a voice, and up from the ocean popped a fish called the puff fish or sea robin, and he can make himself look like a blown-up paper bag full of wind. "I'll be the drum and you can make me go 'Boom! Boom!'" said the blow-fish.

"Fine!" cried Uncle Wiggily. "Come on back to the sand fleas' party with me." So the fiddler crab and the drum fish went along. Then the rabbit soon made a fiddle, with seaweed for strings, and the fiddler crab played it with his long legs, making tunes like "Please Buy Me an Ice-Cream Cone and Take Me on the Merry-go-'Round."

And the drum fish puffed himself up like a balloon, and Uncle Wiggily beat him with a soft stick, and there was fine music. Then the sand fleas hopped and danced about until they could hop and dance no more.

But they didn't drop any gold or diamonds, and, when the party was over, the

rabbit was as poor as when it started. But still he didn't mind. Then he went to sleep under a pile of seaweed, while the sea robin and the fiddler crab went home in the ocean.

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