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Uncle Wiggily And The Magic Bottles

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Uncle Wiggily Longears, the rabbit gentleman, was hopping along through the woods one morning after having eaten breakfast in his hollow stump bungalow, when, just as he reached a nice, grassy place, near a spring of water, he saw the little flaxen-haired girl, Alice from Wonderland, coming toward him.

"Oh, I'm so glad to see you!" cried Alice. "You are just in time to win the first prize."

She handed the gentleman rabbit a little bottle, filled with what seemed to be water, and stoppered with a blue cork.

"First prize for what?" asked Uncle Wiggily.

"For getting here early," answered Alice. "And you also get second prize, too," and she handed him another bottle, stoppered with a red cork.

"Why do I get second prize?" asked the bunny.

"For not being late," answered Alice with a smile. "It is very simple. First prize for being early, second prize for not being late."



"Hum!" said Uncle Wiggily, sort of scratching his pink, twinkling nose, thoughtful like. "It's much the same thing, it seems to me."

"Not at all," said Alice, quickly. "The prizes are very different. Those bottles are magical. They are filled with water from the pool of tears. If you drink a few drops from the one with the blue cork you will grow very small. And if you take some of the water from the red-stoppered bottle you will grow very large. Be careful of your prizes."

"I will," promised Uncle Wiggily. "Are there any others coming?" he asked, looking about through the trees.

"Any others coming where?" inquired Alice.

"Here. I mean, might they have gotten prizes, too?"

"No, only you," said the flaxen-haired girl. "You were the only one expected."

"But," spoke the puzzled bunny rabbit, "if I was the only one expected, what was the use of giving prizes? No one else could have gotten here ahead of me; could they?"

"Please don't ask me," begged Alice. "All I know is that it's one of the riddles like those the March Hare asks, such as 'What makes the mirror look crooked at you?' The answer is it doesn't if you don't. In this case you get the prizes because there is no one else to give them to. So take them and have an adventure. I have to go see what the Duchess wants."

With that Alice faded away like the Cheshire Cat, beginning at her head and ending up at her feet, the last things to go being the buttons on her shoes.

"Well," said Uncle Wiggily to himself, "I have two prizes, it seems, of magic bottles. I wonder what I am to do with them?"

He looked at the red and blue corked bottles, holding one in each paw, and he was wondering whether it would be best to grow small or large, when, all at once, he felt himself caught from behind by a pair of big claws, and, looking over his shoulder, as best he could, Uncle Wiggily saw that he was held fast by a big alligator; a skillery-scalery chap with a double-jointed tail that he could swing back and forth like a pantry door.

"Ah, ha! I have you!" gurgled the 'gator.

"Yes, I see you have!" said Uncle Wiggily, sadly.

"You thought you and Father William would fool me by standing on your heads so I couldn't tickle your feet," went on the 'gator, as I call him for short. "But I got down out of the tree, and here I am. I have you now and you can't get away from me!"

Indeed it did seem so, for he held Uncle Wiggily very tight and fast in his claws.

"What are you going to do with me?" asked the rabbit.

"Take you home to my den, and my dear little foxes, Eight, Nine and Ten," said the alligator.

"Foxes!" cried Uncle Wiggily. "Have you foxes?"

"I have!" answered the alligator. "I am keeping them until their father gets back from a hunting trip, and they are very hungry. Their father is the fox who went out 'in a hungry plight, and he begged of the moon to give him light, for he'd many miles to go that night, before he could reach his den-O.'"

"Oh, now I remember," said Uncle Wiggily. "It's in Mother Goose."

"Yes, and so is the rest of it," went on the alligator. "'At last the fox reached

home to his den, and his dear little foxes, Eight, Nine, Ten.' Those are their names, though they sound like numbers," said the 'gator. "I'll soon introduce you to them. Come along!"

Now Uncle Wiggily did not like this at all. He wanted to get away from the alligator, but he did not know how he could do it. At last he thought of the magical bottles Alice had given him.

"Ah, ha!" thought Uncle Wiggily. "I'll give the alligator a drink from the blue-corked one, and we'll see what happens." So Uncle Wiggily slyly said to the 'gator:

"Before you take me off to your den, would you not like a drink from this bottle to refresh you?"

"Yes, I would," said the skillery-scalery creature, not at all politely. "I was going to take some anyhow whether you asked me or not."

With that he took the blue-corked bottle from the paw of the bunny rabbit gentleman, pulled out the stopper with his teeth and drank a few drops.

And, no sooner had he done that, than the alligator began to shrink. First he became as small as a dog, then as little as a cat, then as tiny as a kitten, then no larger than a bird and finally he was no bigger than a baby angle worm. And when the alligator became that size Uncle Wiggily was not afraid and easily got away from him, taking the two magic bottles.

"Oh, dear!" cried the 'gator in a baby angle worm voice, which was about as loud as the head of a pin. "How foolish I was to drink from the magic bottle and grow small."

But it served him right, I think, and the bunny uncle was safe.

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