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Uncle Wiggily And The Red Squirrel

Howard R. Garis

"Where do you think you will go to look for your fortune to-day, Uncle Wiggily?" asked the little boy with the red trousers the next morning, after the rabbit had stayed all night at the farm house.

"I do not know," said the rabbit gentleman. "Perhaps I had better do some traveling at night. I couldn't find the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, but perhaps there may be a gold, or silver fortune, at the end of a moon-beam. I think I'll try."

"Oh, but don't you get sleepy at night?" asked the little boy's mother as she fried an ice cream cone for Uncle Wiggily's breakfast.

"Well, I could sleep in the day time, and then I would stay awake at night," answered the traveling uncle, blinking his ears.

"Oh, but aren't you afraid of the bogeyman at night?" inquired the boy with the red hair—I mean trousers.

"There are no such things as bogeymen," said Uncle Wiggily, "and if there were any, they would not harm you. I am not a bit afraid in the dark, except that I don't like mosquitoes to bite me. I think I'll travel to-morrow night, and look for gold at the end of the moon-beam."

So he started off that day, and he went only a short distance, for he wanted to find a place to sleep in order that he would be wide awake when it got dark.

Well, he found a nice, soft place under a pile of hay, and there he stretched out to slumber as nicely as if he were in his bed at home. He even snored a little bit, I believe, or else it was Bully Frog croaking one of his songs.

The day passed, and the sun went down, and it got all ready to be night, and still Uncle Wiggily slept on soundly. But all of a sudden he heard voices whispering:

"Now you go that way and I'll go this way, and we'll catch that rabbit and put him in a cage and sell him!"

Well, you can just believe that Uncle Wiggily was frightened when he awakened suddenly and saw two bad boys softly creeping up and making ready to catch him.

"Oh, this is no place for me!" the rabbit cried, and he grabbed up his crutch and his valise and hopped away so fast that the boys couldn't catch him, no matter how fast they could run, even bare-footed.

"Let's throw stones at him!" they cried. And they did, but I'm glad to say that none of them hit Uncle Wiggily. Isn't it queer how mean some boys can be? But perhaps they were never told any better, so we'll forgive them this time.

"Well, it is now night," said the rabbit gentleman as he hopped on through the woods, "so I think I will sit under this tree and wait for the moon to come up. And while I'm waiting I'll eat my supper."

So Uncle Wiggily ate his supper, which the kind farmer lady had put up for him, and then he sat and waited for the moon to rise, and pretty soon he heard a funny noise, calling like this:

"Who? Who? Who-tu-tu-tu."

"Oh, you know who I am all right, Mr. Owl," said the rabbit. "You can see very well at night. You can see me."

"My goodness, if it isn't Uncle Wiggily!" cried the owl in surprise. "What are you doing out so late, I'd like to know?"

"Waiting for a moon-beam, so I can see if there is any gold for my fortune at the end of it," was the answer. "Is the moon coming up over the trees, Mr. Owl?"

"Yes, here it comes," said the owl, "and now I must fly off to the dark woods, for I don't like the light," and he fluttered away.

Then the moon came up, all silver and glorious; shining over the tree tops like a shimmering ball, and soon the moon-beams fell to the ground in slanting rays, but they fell so softly, like feathers, that they did not get hurt at all.

"Well, I guess I'll follow that big one," said the old gentleman rabbit, as he picked out a nice, broad, large, shiny moon-beam. "That must have gold at the end, and, if I find it, my fortune is made." So off he started to follow the moon-beam to where it came to an end.

It seemed to go quite a distance through the dark woods, and Uncle Wiggily traveled on for several hours, and he didn't seem to be any nearer the end by that time than he was at first.

"My land, this is a very long beam," he exclaimed. "It is almost big enough to make a church steeple from. But I'll keep on a little longer, for I'm not a bit sleepy yet."

Well, all of a sudden, just as he was turning the corner around a big stone, the rabbit gentleman heard a funny noise.

It wasn't like any one crying, yet it sounded as if some one was in trouble, for the voice said:

"Oh, dear! I'll never get it big enough, I know I can't! I've combed it and brushed it, and done it up in curl papers to make it fluffy, but still it isn't like theirs. What shall I do?"

"Hum, I wonder who that can be?" thought Uncle Wiggily. "Perhaps it is some little lost child; but no children would be out in the woods at night. I'll take a look."

So he hopped softly over, and peered around the edge of the stone, and what do you think he saw?



Why, there was a nice, little, red squirrel-girl, and she had a comb and a brush, and little looking-glass. And the glass was stuck up on a stump where the moon-beam that Uncle Wiggily was following shone on it and reflected back again. And by the light of the moon-beam the red squirrel was combing and brushing out her tail as hard as she could comb and brush it.

"What are you doing?" asked Uncle Wiggily in surprise.

"Oh, my! How you startled me!" exclaimed the red squirrel. "But I'm glad it's you, Uncle Wiggily. I'm going to a surprise party soon, and I was just trying to make my tail as big as Johnnie or Billie Bushytail's, but I can't do it," she said sadly.

"No, and you never can," said the rabbit. "Their tails are a different kind than yours, for they are gray squirrels and you are a red one. But yours is very nice. Be content to have yours as it is."

"I guess I will," said the red squirrel. "But what are you doing out so late, Uncle Wiggily?"

"Looking for the end of the moon-beam to get my fortune."

"Ha! The moon-beam ends right here," said the red squirrel-girl, pointing to her looking-glass, and, surely enough, there the bright shaft of light ended. "But there is no fortune here, Uncle Wiggily, I am sorry to say," she added.

"I see there isn't," answered the rabbit. "Well, I must travel on again to-morrow, then. But now I will see that you get safely home, for it is getting late."

And, just as he said that, what should happen but that a black, savage, ugly bear

stuck his nose out of the bushes and made a grab for the rabbit. But what do you think the red squirrel did?

She just took her hair brush and with the hard back of it she whacked the bear on the end of his tender-ender nose, and he howled, and turned around to run away, and the squirrel girl tickled him with the comb, and he ran faster than ever, and the bear didn't eat Uncle Wiggily that night.

Then the rabbit stayed at the red squirrel's mamma's house the rest of the evening, and the next day the squirrel went to the surprise party with her tail the regular size it ought to be, and not as big as the Bushytail brothers' tails, and everybody was happy.

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