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# Uncle Wiggily And The Sassafras

*Howard R. Garis*

"Uncle Wiggily! Uncle Wiggily! Get up!" called Nurse Jane Fuzzy Wuzzy, the muskrat lady housekeeper, as she stood at the foot of the stairs of the hollow stump bungalow and called up to the rabbit gentleman one morning.

"Hurry down, Mr. Longears," she went on. "This is the last day I am going to bake buckwheat cakes, and if you want some nice hot ones, with maple sugar sauce on, you'd better hurry."

No answer came from the bunny uncle.

"Why, this is strange," said Nurse Jane to herself. "I wonder if anything can have happened to him? Did he have an adventure in the night? Did the bad skillery-scalery alligator, with humps on its tail, carry him off?"

Then she called again:

"Uncle Wiggily! Uncle Wiggily! Aren't you going to get up? Come down to breakfast. Aren't you going to get up and come down?"

"No, Miss Fuzzy Wuzzy," replied the bunny uncle, "not to give you a short answer, I am not going to get up, or come down or eat breakfast or do anything," and Mr. Longears spoke as though his head was hidden under the bed clothes, which it was.

"Oh, Uncle Wiggily, whatever is the matter?" asked Nurse Jane, surprised like and anxious.

"I don't feel at all well," was the answer. "I think I have the epizootic, and I don't want any breakfast."

"Oh, dear!" cried Nurse Jane. "And all the nice cakes I have baked. I know what I'll do," she said to herself. "I'll call in Dr. Possum. Perhaps Uncle Wiggily needs some of the roots and herbs that grow in the woods—wintergreen, slippery elm or something like that. I'll call Dr. Possum."

And when the animal doctor came he looked at the bunny uncle's tongue, felt of his ears, and said:

"Ha! Hum! You have the Spring fever, Uncle Wiggily. What you need is sassafras."

"Nurse Jane has some in the bungalow," spoke Mr. Longears. "Tell her to make me some tea from that."

"No, what is needed is fresh sassafras," said Dr. Possum. "And, what is more, you must go out in the woods and dig it yourself. That will be almost as good for your Spring fever as the sassafras itself. So hop out, and dig some of the roots."

"Oh, dear!" cried Uncle Wiggily, fussy like. "I don't want to. I'd rather stay here in bed."

"But you can't!" cried Dr. Possum in his jolly voice. "Out with you!" and he pulled the bed clothes off the bunny uncle so he had to get up to keep warm.

"Well, I'll just go out and dig a little sassafras root to please him," thought Uncle Wiggily to himself, "and then I'll come back and stay in bed as long as I please. It's all nonsense thinking I have to have fresh root—the old is good enough."

"I do feel quite wretched and lazy like," said Uncle Wiggily to himself, as he limped along on his red, white and blue-striped barber-pole rheumatism crutch, that Nurse Jane had gnawed for him out of a cornstalk. "As soon as I find some sassafras I'll pull up a bit of the root and hurry back home and to bed."

Pretty soon the bunny uncle saw where some of the sassafras roots were growing, with their queer three-pointed leaves, like a mitten, with a place for your finger and thumb.



"Now to pull up the root," said the bunny uncle, as he dug down in the ground a little way with his paws, to get a better hold.

But pulling up sassafras roots is not as easy as it sounds, as you know if you have ever tried it. The roots go away down in the earth, and they are very strong.

Uncle Wiggily pulled and tugged and twisted and turned, but he could break off only little bits of the underground stalk.

"This won't do!" he said to himself. "If I don't get a big root Dr. Possum will, perhaps, send me hack for more. I'll try again."

He got his paws under a nice, big root, and he was straining his back to pull it up, when, all of a sudden, he heard a voice saying:

"How do you do?"

"Oh, hello!" exclaimed the bunny, looking up quickly, and expecting to see some friend of his, like Grandpa Goosey Gander, or Sammie Littletail, the rabbit boy.

But, instead, he saw the bad old fox, who had, so many times, tried to catch the rabbit gentleman.

"Oh!" said Uncle Wiggily, astonished like. And again he said: "Oh!"

"Surprised, are you?" asked the fox, sort of curling his whiskers around his tongue, sarcastic fashion.

"A little—yes," answered Uncle Wiggily. "I didn't expect to see you."

"But I've been expecting you a long time," said the fox, grinning most impolitely. "In fact, I've been waiting for you. Just as soon as you have pulled up that sassafras root you may come with me. I'll take you off to my den, to my dear little foxes Eight, Nine and Ten. Those are their numbers. It's easier to number them than name them."

"Oh, indeed?" asked Uncle Wiggily, as politely as he could, considering everything. "And so you won't take me until I pull this sassafras root?"

"No, I'll wait until you have finished," spoke the fox. "I like you better, anyhow, flavored with sassafras. So pull away."

Uncle Wiggily tried to pull up the root, but he did not pull very hard.

"For," he thought, "as soon as I pull it up then the fox will take me, but if I don't pull it he may not."

"What's the matter? Can't you get that root up?" asked the fox, after a while. "I can't wait all day."

"Then perhaps you will kindly pull it up for me," said the bunny uncle. "I can't seem to do it."

"All right, I will," the fox said. Uncle Wiggily hopped to one side. The fox put his paws under the sassafras root. And he pulled and he pulled and he pulled, and finally, with a double extra strong pull, he pulled up the root. But it came up so suddenly, just as when you break the point off your pencil, that the fox keeled over backward in a peppersault and somersault also.

"Oh, wow!" cried the fox, as he bumped his nose. "What happened?" But Uncle Wiggily did not stay to tell. Away ran the bunny through the woods, as fast as he could go, forgetting all about his Spring fever. He was all over it.

"I thought the sassafras would cure you," said Dr. Possum, when Uncle Wiggily was safely home once more.

"The fox helped some," said the bunny uncle, with a laugh.

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