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Uncle Wiggily And The Sky-cracker

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Let me see, I think I promised to tell you a story about Uncle Wiggily and the skyrocket, didn't I? Or was it to be about a firecracker, seeing that it soon may be the Fourth of July? What's that—a firecracker—no? A skyrocket? Oh, I'm all puzzled up about it, so I guess I'll make it a sky-cracker, a sort of half-firecracker and half-skyrocket, and that will do.

Well, after Uncle Wiggily had gotten the little yellow bird, that looked like gold, out from the string-trap in the tree, the old gentleman rabbit spent two nights visiting a second cousin of Grandfather Prickly Porcupine, who lived in the woods. Then Uncle Wiggily got up one morning, dressed himself very carefully, combed out his whiskers, and said:

"Well, I'm off again to seek my fortune."

"It's too bad you can't seem able to find it," said the second cousin to Grandfather Prickly Porcupine, "but perhaps you will have good luck to-day. Only you want to be very careful."

"Why?" asked the old gentleman rabbit.

"Well, because you know it will soon be the Fourth of July, and some boys may tie a firecracker or a skyrocket to your tail," said the porcupine.

"Ha! Ha!" laughed Uncle Wiggily. "They will have a hard time doing that, for my tail is so short that the boys would burn their fingers if they tried to tie a firecracker to it."

"Then look out that they don't fasten a skyrocket to your long ears," said the second cousin to Grandfather Prickly Porcupine, as he wrapped up some lettuce and carrot sandwiches for Uncle Wiggily to take with him.

The old gentleman rabbit said he would watch out, and away he started, going up hill and down hill with his barber-pole crutch as easily as if he was being wheeled in a baby carriage.

"Well, I don't seem to find any fortune," he said to himself as he walked along, and, just as he said that he saw something sparkling in the grass beside the path in the woods. "What's that?" he cried. "Perhaps it is a diamond. If it is I can sell it and get rich." Then he happened to think what the second cousin of Grandfather

Prickly Porcupine had told him about Fourth of July coming, and Uncle Wiggily said:

"Ha! I had better be careful. Perhaps that sparkling thing is a spark on a firecracker. Ah, ha!"

So he looked more carefully, and the bright object sparkled more and more, and it didn't seem to be fire, so the old gentleman rabbit went up close, and what do you suppose it was?

Why, it was a great big dewdrop, right in the middle of a purple violet, that was growing underneath a shady fern. Oh, how beautiful it was in the sunlight, and Uncle Wiggily was glad he had looked at it. And pretty soon, as he was still looking, a big, buzzing bumble bee buzzed along and stopped to take a sip of the dewdrop.

"Ha! That is a regular violet ice cream soda for me!" said the bee to Uncle Wiggily. And just as he was taking another drink a big, ugly snake made a spring and tried to eat the bee, but Uncle Wiggily hit the snake with his crutch and the snake crawled away very much surprised.

"Thank you very much," said the bee to the rabbit. "You saved my life, and if ever I can do you a favor I will," and with that he buzzed away.

Well, pretty soon, not so very long, in a little while, Uncle Wiggily came to a place in the woods where there were a whole lot of packages done up in paper lying on the ground. And there was a tent near them, and it looked as if people lived in the white tent, only no one was there just then.

"I guess I'd better keep away," thought the old gentleman rabbit, "or they may catch me." And just then he saw something like a long, straight stick, standing up against a tree. "Ha, that will be a good stick to take along to chase the bears away with," he thought. "I think no one wants it, so I'll take it."

Well, he walked up and took hold of it in his paws, but, mind you, he didn't notice that on one end of the stick was a piece of powder string, like the string of a firecracker, sticking down, and this string was burning. No, the poor old gentleman, rabbit never noticed that at all. He started to take the stick away with him when, all of a sudden, something dreadful happened.

With a whizz and a rush and a roar that stick shot into the air, carrying Uncle Wiggily with it, just like a balloon, for he hadn't time to let go of it.



Up and up he went, with a roar and a swoop, and just then he saw a whole lot of boys rushing out of the woods toward the white tent. And one boy cried:

"Oh, fellows, look! A rabbit has hold of our sky-cracker and it's on fire and has gone off and taken him with it! Oh the poor rabbit! Because when the sky-cracker gets high enough in the air the firecracker part of it will go off with a bang, and he'll be killed. Oh, how sorry I am. The hot sun must have set fire to the powder string."

You see those boys had come out in the woods to have their Fourth of July, where the noise wouldn't make any one's head ache.

Well, Uncle Wiggily went on, up and up, with the sky-cracker, and he felt very much afraid for he had heard what the boys said.

"Oh, this is the end of me!" he cried, as he held fast to the sky-cracker. "I'll never live to find my fortune now. When this thing explodes, I'll be dashed to the ground and killed."

The sky-cracker was whizzing and roaring, and black smoke was pouring out of one end, and Uncle Wiggily thought of all his friends whom he feared he would never see again, when all of a sudden along came flying the buzzing bumble bee, high in the air. He was much surprised to see Uncle Wiggily skimming along on the tail of a sky-cracker.

"Oh, can't you save me?" cried the rabbit.

"Indeed I will, if I can," said the bee, "because you were so kind to me. You are too heavy, or I would fly down to earth with you myself, but I'll do the next best thing. I'll fly off and get Dickie and Nellie Chip-Chip, the sparrow children, and they'll come with a big basket and catch you so you won't fall."

No sooner said than done. Off flew the bee. Quickly he found Dickie and Nellie and told them the danger Uncle Wiggily was in.

"Quick," called Dickie to Nellie. "We must save him."

Off they flew like the wind, carrying a grocery basket between them. Right under Uncle Wiggily they flew, and just as the sky-cracker was going to burst with a "slam-bang!" the old gentleman rabbit let go, and into the basket he safely fell

and the sparrow children flew to earth with him. Then the sky-cracker burst all to pieces for Fourth of July, but Uncle Wiggily wasn't on it to be hurt, I'm glad to say.

He spent the Fourth visiting the Bumble bee's family, and had ice cream and cake and lemonade for supper, and at night he heard the band play, and he gave Nellie and Dickie ten cents for ice cream sodas, and that's all to this story.

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