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Uncle Wiggily and the Starfish

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Let me see, where did we leave off? Oh, I remember, it was where the red monkey jumped up on the elephant's back and tickled him with an ice-cream cone, wasn't it? No, I beg your pardon, I'm wrong. I promised to tell you about the old gentleman rabbit and the starfish. So if you're all ready, and are sitting comfortably, I'll begin.

It was the day after Uncle Wiggily had gotten away from the toggle-taggle fish that walked, and the little clam had pinched the bad creature on his tail. Uncle Wiggily was hopping along the sand at the seashore beach, and he was looking all around for his fortune of gold or diamonds, he didn't care much which it was, so long as he got rich and could go back home.

"I wonder what has happened to the grasshopper?" said the rabbit, for he hadn't seen the jumping insect that morning.

"Here I am," exclaimed the little chap, and with a hop he landed down beside Uncle Wiggily on the sand.

"Where have you been?" asked the rabbit. "I was beginning to think that you had left me."

"Not yet, but I am going to soon," replied the grasshopper. "You see, there is going to be a big jumping race back where I live and the hopper who jumps the farthest will get a bag of popcorn. And, as I think I will go back home to jump, I came to say goodbye. Afterward, I will come here again and help you to look for your fortune."

Well, Uncle Wiggily felt a little sad to have his friend, the hoppergrass, go away. So they shook legs with each other, the grasshopper gave a big spring and a jump and away over the sea he sailed to take part in the hopping races at his home.

"Well, now, I wonder what will happen to me today?" thought Uncle Wiggily as he walked along the beach, looked down at the sand and listened to the waves washing up on the shore. "Perhaps I may find a bag of diamonds," he said.

And just then, if you'll believe me, he looked ahead and there, on the sand, was something that looked like a black bag, with a long, thin handle on it with which to carry it.

"Oh, ho!" exclaimed the rabbit, "I believe that is my fortune." He hopped forward, intending to pick it up, when, all of a sudden, the thing like a bag moved slowly along.

"Hum! That's strange," said the rabbit, "I never heard of a bag that could move. I must see what this is." So he went up a little closer and he saw that it wasn't a bag at all. It was a creature with a long sharp tail like an ice pick, or a black lead pencil, and it was crawling along, but the funny part of it was that Uncle Wiggily couldn't see any legs on which the animal walked.

"Stranger and still more strange!" exclaimed Uncle Wiggily; "what can that be?"

"If you please, I am a horseshoe crab," said a voice from under the black shell, "and if you lift me up you can see my legs."

"How shall I lift you up, Mr. Horseshoe Crab?"

"By my long tail, like an ice pick," was the answer, and when the rabbit did this, underneath a shell that was shaped somewhat like the hoof of a horse, he saw the legs of the crab. They were all covered up when the crab walked, so no one could step on his toes.

"That is very fine," said the rabbit. "Perhaps you can tell me where to find my fortune."

"I'm sorry, but I can't," said the horseshoe crab, and then he crawled on again, very slowly, and Uncle Wiggily hopped forward looking for the bag of diamonds, or gold.

Well, in a little while it got quite warm on the sandy beach, and the old gentleman rabbit felt sleepy. He yawned and he twinkled his nose like two stars on a frosty night, and then he said:

"Oh, me! Oh, my! I think I'll lie down and take a little nap on the sands." So he took some sticks and stuck them up in the beach, and over them he put some seaweed to make a shady shelter, and down under this he stretched himself out, very nice and comfortable.

Well, the first thing you know Uncle Wiggily was fast asleep. And now listen and see what happened to him. All of a sudden, up from the ocean, on her thin, kinky legs came a big sea spider, a creature something like a crab. She shot forward her big, bulgy eyes, and she saw the rabbit under the seaweed shelter.

"Ah, ha!" cried the sea spider to herself, "here is where I have a good rabbit dinner."

Slowly and softly she went on until she was quite close to the old gentleman rabbit, and Uncle Wiggily never awakened. Then the sea spider began to weave

a web around the rabbit, just as a land spider weaves a web around a fly that gets into her trap. Strand after strand of the cobwebs did the sea spider throw around the sleeping rabbit, until Uncle Wiggily was as tightly fast as if he had been tied with ropes.

"Now, I'll bite him and that will be the end of him," said the sea spider, and she was just going to do this when, all of a sudden, some of the cobweb blew down and tickled Uncle Wiggily on the end of his twinkling nose, and he woke up.

"Ha! What's this?" he exclaimed, and then he found that he could not move, for he was fast in the web. "What does this mean?" he asked.

"It means that I have you!" cried the sea spider, wiggling her legs like a trolley car.

"Oh, please let me go," begged the rabbit.

"Never! Never! Never!" exclaimed the spider. Then Uncle Wiggily tried, and he tried, and he tried again, but he couldn't get loose from the web.

"Oh, will no one help me?" cried the rabbit. And just then, if you'll believe me, the waves washed something up on the sand, close to where the sea spider had Uncle Wiggily fast. And that something was a curious little fish, shaped like a star. In fact, it was a starfish with five sharp points to it. And that starfish heard Uncle Wiggily calling.

"I'll help you, Mr. Rabbit!" kindly exclaimed the fish.

"Now, you get right away from here," cried the sea spider, for well she knew that the sharp-pointed starfish could cut her cobweb in a second. "Keep away or I'll bite you!" the spider said.

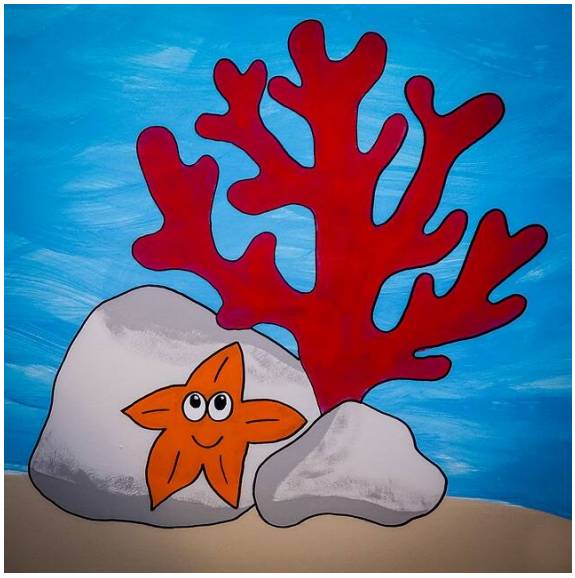
"Oh, you can't scare me!" shouted the starfish. "I'm not afraid of you, and I'm going to help Uncle Wiggily." So the starfish began to roll over and over on the sand like a pinwheel, a hoop, or a wheel that has no rim, and only spokes to it. Bumpity-bump on its five points went the starfish, until it was close to Uncle Wiggily.

Then right into the sea spider's cobweb rolled the sharp-pointed starfish until, with his points, he had cut the web all to pieces and set Uncle Wiggily free, as easily as you can eat bread and jam on Saturday afternoon.

"Now you get away from here!" cried the starfish to the spider, and he threw sand at her until the crawly creature was glad enough to go back into the ocean where she belonged. And the old gentleman rabbit thanked the fish very much, and gave him a piece of lemon pie, because he was all out of the cherry kind.

"Now, I must hurry on to seek my fortune," said Uncle Wiggily, for the day was

cooler now. So on he hopped, and he had another adventure.



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