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Uncle Wiggily And The Tear Pool

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Uncle Wiggily Longears, the nice rabbit gentleman, was out walking in the woods one day, wondering what sort of an adventure he would have when he saw a little path, leading away from his hollow stump bungalow, and it seemed to go through a part of the forest in which he had never before been.

"I'll take that path and see where it leads," said the bunny gentleman to himself.

So, taking a piece of ribbon grass, which grew near a clump of ferns, he tied his tall silk hat firmly on his head, leaving his ears sticking out of the holes at the top, and tucking under his paw his red, white and blue striped barber pole rheumatism crutch that Nurse Jane Fuzzy Wuzzy, his muskrat lady housekeeper, had gnawed for him out of a cornstalk, away started Uncle Wiggily.

It was a nice warm summer day, and before the old gentleman bunny had gone very far he began to feel thirsty, just as you do when you go on a picnic and eat pickles, only I hope you don't eat too many of them.

"I wonder if there is not a spring of water around here?" thought Uncle Wiggily, and he began to look about under the low branches of the trees and bushes, at the same time listening for the laughing murmur of a brook flowing over green, mossy stones.

Then Uncle Wiggily sniffed with his pink, twinkling nose until it looked like a chicken picking up corn.

"Ah, ha!" cried the bunny uncle, "I smell water!" for you know animals and birds can smell water when they cannot see it, in which they are more gifted than are we.

So Uncle Wiggily sniffed and sniffed, and then, holding his pink, twinkling nose straight in front of him and letting it go on ahead, instead of lagging behind, he followed it until it led him straight to a little pool of water that was sparkling in the sun, while green moss ferns and bushes grew all around.

"Oh, what a fine spring!" cried the bunny, "And how thirsty I am!"

Mr. Longears, which I call him when first I introduce him to any strangers—Mr. Longears was just going to take a long drink from the pool, or spring, when he happened to notice a little piece of white birch bark tied with a bit of grass to a

fern that grew near the water.

"Ha! I wonder if that is a notice not to trespass, or not to fish or hunt, and to keep off the grass, or no admittance except on business or something like that?" thought Uncle Wiggily, as he put on his glasses to see if there was any writing on the birch bark, which animal folk use as we use paper. And there was some writing on the bark. It read:



"Please do not jump in, or drink until I come. Alice from Wonderland."

"Ha! That is strange," thought Uncle Wiggily. "Alice must have been here and put up that sign. But I wonder why she did it? If she knew how warm and thirsty I was she would not make me wait until she came to get a drink. Perhaps it is all a joke, and not her writing at all. One of the bad skillery-scalery alligators or the fuzzy fox may have put up the sign to fool me."

But when the rabbit gentleman took a second look at the birch bark sign he saw that it really was Alice's writing.

"Well, she must have some reason for it," said the bunny, with a sigh. "She dreamed right about two fat boys—Tweedledum and Tweedledee—saving me from the alligators, so she must have some reason for asking me to wait until she comes. But I am very thirsty."

Uncle Wiggily sat down on the green, mossy bank beside the spring of water and looked at it. And it seemed so cool and wet, and he was so thirsty, that it was all he could do to keep from jumping in and having a bath, as well as drinking all he wanted.

The sun grew hotter and more hot, and the rabbit gentleman more and more thirsty, and he didn't know what to do when, all of a sudden, out from the bushes jumped a bad old black bear.

"Ah, ha!" growled the bear. "I am just in time, I see!" and he ran his red tongue over his white teeth as though giving it a trolley ride in a baby carriage.

"In time for what?" asked Uncle Wiggily, casual like and make-believe indifferent.

"In time for lunch," answered the bear. "I was afraid I'd be a little late. I hope I haven't kept you waiting."

"For my lunch?" asked Uncle Wiggily.

"No. For MINE!" and once more the bear smacked his lips hungry like. "I am just

in time, I see."

"Oh, I thought you meant you were just in time to take a drink of this water," said the bunny, pointing at the pool. "If you did, you aren't."

"If I did I aren't? What kind of talk is that?" asked the bear, curious like.

"I mean we can't have a drink until Alice comes—the sign says so," spoke Uncle Wiggily, politely.

"Pooh! I don't believe in signs," snapped the bear. "I'm thirsty and I'm going to have a drink," and with that he took a long one from the woodland pool. And then a funny thing happened.

The bear began to grow smaller and smaller. First he was the size of a dog, then of a cat, then of a kitten, then he shrank to the littleness of a mouse, and next he was like a June bug. Then he became a July bug, next he was no larger than a little black ant, and finally he became a microbe, and Uncle Wiggily couldn't see him at all.

"Well, thank goodness he's gone!" said the bunny. "But what made him so shrinking like I wonder?"

"It was the pool of tears," said a voice behind the bunny, and there stood Alice from Wonderland. "This pool is sour alum water, Uncle Wiggily," she said, "and if you drink it you shrink and shrivel up and blow away. That's why I put up the sign so nothing would happen to you. I knew about the pool, as it's in my story book. And now we can go have some funny adventures."

And away they went over the hills and far away and that bear was never seen again.

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