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Uncle Wiggily Goes Chestnutting

Howard R. Garis

"Where are you going this morning, Uncle Wiggily?" asked Johnnie Bushytail of the old gentleman rabbit the day after the Hallowe'en fun.

"Oh, I am going to take a ride and see if I can find any more adventures," said Uncle Wiggily, as he went out in the barn to look and see if his auto had any holes in the rubber tires, or if the what-you-may-call-it had gotten twisted around the whose-this-cantankerum.

"May I go with you?" asked Billie Bushytail, as he followed Uncle Wiggily. "We don't want you to go away from our house so soon. We'd like to have you pay us a nice, long visit."

"Hum, well, I'll think about it," said Uncle Wiggily, slowly, and careful-like. "I'll stay as long as I can. But as for you squirrel boys going for a ride in my auto, why I guess you may come if your mamma will let you. Yes, it's all ready for a spin," he went on, as he saw that the tiddle-taddleum was on straight, and that the wheels had no holes in them.

"Oh, goody! Come on!" cried Billie to Johnnie; so into the house they hurried to ask their mamma, and she said they might go.

A little later, with the squirrel boys sitting in the back part of the auto, away they went, Uncle Wiggily steering here and there and taking care not to run over any puppy-dogs' tails or over any alligators' noses.

"Are you going off in the woods?" asked Johnnie, as he saw the old gentleman rabbit steering toward the tree-forest.

"I think I will," answered Uncle Wiggily. "I want to see Grandfather Goosey Gander, and if we go through the woods that is the shortest way to his house."

"Then, perhaps, we can stop and gather some chestnuts," said Johnnie. "There may be a few left that the other squirrels haven't yet picked up, and I heard papa saying to mamma the other night that we need a whole lot more than we have, so we wouldn't be hungry this winter."

"Oh, yes; let's get chestnuts!" cried Billie.

"All right," answered Uncle Wiggily, smiling, and then he had to turn the auto to one side very quickly, for a fuzzy worm was hurrying along the path, on her way

to the grocery store, and Uncle Wiggily didn't want to run over her, you know.

"Thank you very much for not squashing me flat like a pancake," said the worm, as she wiggled along.

"Oh, pray do not mention such a little thing," said Uncle Wiggily, politely. "I am always glad to do you a favor like that."

Then he turned the handle so some more gasoline would squirt into the fizzle-fozzleum, and away the automobile went faster than ever.

Pretty soon they came to the woods, and Johnnie and Billie began looking about for chestnut trees. Squirrels, you know, can tell a chestnut tree a great way off, and soon Johnnie saw one.

"Stop the auto here, Uncle Wiggily," said Johnnie, "and we'll see if there are any chestnuts left."



So the old gentleman rabbit did this, and, surely enough, there were quite a few of the brown nuts lying on the ground, partly covered with leaves.

"Take a stick and poke around and you'll find more," said Billie to his brother, and pretty soon all three of them, including Uncle Wiggily, were picking up the nuts. Of course, the automobile couldn't pick up any; it just had to stand still there, looking on. I guess you know that, anyhow, but I just thought I'd mention it to make sure.

"Oh, here is another tree over there!" cried Johnnie after a while, as he ran to a large one. "It's got heaps and heaps of chestnuts under it, too. I guess no squirrels or any chipmunks have been here. Oh, we can get lots of nuts to put away for winter!"

So the two squirrel boys filled their pockets with nuts, and so did Uncle Wiggily, and they even put some in the automobile, though, of course, the auto couldn't eat them, but it could carry them away. And then, all of a sudden, Billie cried:

"Oh, I know what let's do! Let's build a little fire and roast some of the chestnuts. They're fine roasted."

"I guess they are," said Uncle Wiggily, "and so we'll cook some, though, as for me, I'd rather have a roast carrot or a bit of baked apple."

"Maybe we can find some apples to bake while we're roasting the chestnuts," said Billie. "We'll look."

They looked all around, and in a field not far from the woods they found an apple

tree and there were some apples on the ground under it. They picked up quite a few and then they got some flat stones and made a place to build a fire.

Uncle Wiggily lighted it, for it isn't good for children to have anything to do with matches, and soon the fire was blazing up very nicely and was quite hot.

"Now put the chestnuts down to roast on the hot stones," said the rabbit gentleman, after a bit, to the two squirrel boys, "and I'll put some apples on a sharp stick and hold them near the blaze to roast. Why, boys! This is as much fun for me as a picnic!" he exclaimed joyfully.

But listen! Something is going to happen. All of a sudden, as they were sitting quietly around the fire and wishing the apples and chestnuts would hurry up and roast, all of a sudden a man came along with a gun. He stood by the fence that went around the field where they had picked up the apples, and that man said, in a grillery-growlery voice:

"Ah, ha! So those squirrels and that rabbit have been taking my apples, eh? I can smell 'em! Sniff! Snoof! Snuff! Well, I'll soon put a stop to that! I'm glad I brought my gun along!"

He was just aiming his gun at poor Uncle Wiggily and also at Johnnie and Billie Bushytail, and the rabbit and the squirrels didn't know what in the world to do, for they were too frightened to run, when, all of a sudden there was a tremendously loud bang-bang in the fire and something flew out of it and hit that man right on the end of his nose.

"Ouch-ouchy!" the man cried.

"Bang!" went something again, and this time it flew over and hit the man on his left ear. Now what do you think of that?

"Ouch! Ouchy!" the man yelled again.

"Bang!" went the noise for the third shot, and this time the man was hit on his other ear.

"Ouch! Ouchy!" he cried again. "They're shooting at me. I'd better run." And run away he did, taking his gun with him, and so Uncle Wiggily and Johnnie and Billie weren't hurt.

"My, that was a narrow escape," said Johnnie. "What was it that made the bang noise, and hit the man?"

"It was the roast chestnuts," said Uncle Wiggily, "I forgot to tell you to make little holes in them before you roasted them or else they would burst. And burst they did, and I'm glad of it, for they scared that man. But I guess we had better be going now, for he may come back."

So they took the apples, which were nicely roasted now, and they took the chestnuts that were left and which hadn't burst, and away they went in the auto and had a fine ride, before going home to bed.

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