

STORY XXXI

SUSIE AND THE FAIRY CARROT

SUSIE and Sammie Littletail had gone to the woods for a walk, and to gather some flowers, for they expected company at the underground house, and they wanted it to look pretty. Mr. and Mrs. Bushytail and Billie and Johnnie and Sister Sallie were coming, and Susie and her brother hoped to have a very nice time.

Well, they wandered on, and on, and on, and had gathered quite a number of flowers, when Sammie said:

"Come on, we've got enough; let's go home."

"No," answered Susie, "I want to get some sky-blue-pink flowers. I think they are so pretty."

"I don't," answered her brother, for that color always reminded him of the time he fell in the dye pot, when they were coloring Easter eggs. "I'm going home. Yellow, and red, and blue, and white flowers are good enough. I don't want any fancy colors."

"Well, you go home and I'll come pretty soon," said his sister. So while Sammie turned back, the little rabbit girl kept on. Oh, I don't know how far she went, but it was a good distance, I'm sure, but still she couldn't seem to find that sky-blue-pink flower. She looked everywhere for it, high and low, and even sideways, which is a very good place; but she couldn't find it. And she kept on going, hoping every minute the flower would happen to be behind a stump or under a bush. But no, it wasn't.

And then, all of a sudden, about as quick as you can shut your eyes and open them again, Susie was lost! Yes, lost in those woods all alone. She looked all around, and she didn't know where she was. She'd never been so far away from home before, and, oh, how frightened she was!

But she was a brave little rabbit girl, and she didn't cry, that is, at first. She started to try to find her way back, but the more she tried the more lost she became, until she was all turned around, you know, like when they blindfold you and turn you around three times before they let you try to pin the tail on the cloth donkey at a party. Yes, that's how it was.

Well, then Susie began to cry, and I don't blame her a bit. I think I would do the same myself. Susie sat down and cried. Then she felt

hungry and she looked around for something to eat, and what should she see, right there in the woods, but a carrot.

"Oh!" she cried, "how lucky! Now I shan't be hungry, anyhow." So she picked up the carrot and started to eat it, when all at once that carrot spoke to her. What's that? You don't see how a carrot could speak? Well, it did all the same. You just listen, please, and maybe you'll see how it happened.

"Please don't eat me," the carrot said, in a squeaky voice.

"Why not?" asked Susie, who was very much surprised.

"Because I am a fairy carrot," it went on. Now do you see how it could speak? Well, I guess! "Yes, I am a fairy carrot, Susie, and I can help you. What do you want most?" the fairy carrot asked.

"I want to find my way home," said the little rabbit girl.

"Very well, my dear," went on the vegetable. "Place me on the ground in front of you, stand on your hind legs, wiggle your left ear, and see what happens."

So Susie did this, and would you believe me, for I'm not exaggerating the least bit, that fairy carrot rolled along on the ground in front of Susie.

"Follow, follow, follow me,
And you soon at home will be,"

the carrot said, in a sing-song voice, and it rolled on, still more, and Susie followed.

First the carrot went through a deep, dark part of the woods, but Susie wasn't at all afraid, for she believed in fairies. Then, pretty soon, the carrot came to a great big hole. It was too big to jump over, and too deep to crawl down into, and too wide to run around.

"Oh, dear!" cried Susie, "I don't see how I'm going to get over this." But do you s'pose that carrot was bothered? No, sir; not the least bit. It stretched out, like a piece of rubber, and thrust itself across that hole until it was a regular little bridge, and Susie could walk safely over. Then it became an ordinary fairy carrot again, and rolled on in front of the little rabbit girl showing her just which way to go.

After a while Susie came to a great big lake, one she had never seen before.

"Oh, how shall we get over this?" cried Susie.

"Don't worry," spoke the carrot. Then it turned into a little boat, and Susie got into it, and sailed over that lake as nicely as you please. Then the carrot turned into an ordinary, garden, fairy carrot again, and rolled on, Susie following.

Pretty soon they came to a place where the woods and brush were all on fire.

"Oh, I know we shall never get over that place!" exclaimed Susie, for she was very much afraid of fire, because she had once burned a hole in her apron. Polly Flinders, who sat among the cinders, did the same thing.

"Oh, we'll get over that," promised the carrot. "Just you watch me!" And really truly, it turned into a rainstorm, and sprinkled down on the flames, and put that fire out. Then, just so Susie wouldn't get wet, the carrot turned into an umbrella; and held itself over her, all the rest of the way home.

So Susie got safely back to the burrow, with all the flowers but the sky-blue-pink one, and she was very happy. And maybe her folks weren't glad too! They had begun to worry about her, and Sammie was just going to start off to look for her. So Susie told how the fairy carrot had brought her home, and Uncle Wiggily said:

"Well, there are certainly queer things happening nowadays. I never would have believed it if you hadn't told me."

"But I have told you," said Susie.

"Ah, well, in that case, of course, I believe you, my dear," said the jolly old rabbit gentleman. And he twinkled his pink nose upside down.

Susie was tired after her adventures with the carrot so she went to bed.

"And that's just where I am going," said Uncle Wiggily.

So the rabbit gentleman tucked himself into bed.

But, in the middle of the night, Nurse Jane Fuzzy Wuzzy was awakened by hearing Susie crying.

"What's the matter?" asked the muskrat lady.

"Oh, I'm so tired I can't seem to go to sleep," said Susie. "I keep thinking about the carrot and my adventures and all that."

"I know what will put you to sleep," said kind Nurse Jane. "I will read you about how, once upon a time, Uncle Wiggily hopped away to look for his fortune. He wrote a book about his search for his fortune. But, as I cannot read you all that book, I will read you from it a few of the stories, just as Uncle Wiggily told them to me."

"Oh, that will be lovely," said Susie.

So, if the postage stamp doesn't jump off the letter and chase the police dog down the street, the next story will be one that Nurse Jane read to Susie Littletail.