

## Chapter II - Mister Woodchuck Captures a Girl

"WELL, I declare!" whispered Twinkle to herself; "how could all that have happened?"

On each side of the door was a little green bench, big enough for two to sit upon, and between the benches was a doorstep of white marble, with a mat lying on it. On one side Twinkle saw an electric door-bell.

While she gazed at this astonishing sight a sound of rapid footsteps was heard, and a large Jack-Rabbit, almost as big as herself, and dressed in a messenger-boy's uniform, ran up to the woodchuck's front door and rang the bell.

Almost at once the door opened inward, and a curious personage stepped out.

Twinkle saw at a glance that it was the woodchuck himself,--but what a big and queer woodchuck it was!

He wore a swallow-tailed coat, with a waistcoat of white satin and fancy knee-breeches, and upon his feet were shoes with silver buckles. On his head was perched a tall silk hat that made him look just as high as Twinkle's father, and in one paw he held a gold-headed cane. Also he wore big spectacles over his eyes, which made him look more dignified than any other woodchuck Twinkle had ever seen.

When this person opened the door and saw the Jack-Rabbit messenger-boy, he cried out:

"Well, what do you mean by ringing my bell so violently? I suppose you're half an hour late, and trying to make me think you're in a hurry."

The Jack-Rabbit took a telegram from its pocket and handed it to the woodchuck without a word in reply. At once the woodchuck tore open the envelope and read the telegram carefully.

"Thank you. There's no answer," he said; and in an instant the Jack-Rabbit had whisked away and was gone.

"Well, well," said the woodchuck, as if to himself, "the foolish farmer has set a trap for me, it seems, and my friends have sent a telegram to warn me. Let's see--where is the thing?"

He soon discovered the trap, and seizing hold of the chain he pulled the peg out of the ground and threw the whole thing far away into the field.

"I must give that farmer a sound scolding," he muttered, "for he's becoming so impudent lately that soon he will think he owns the whole country."

But now his eyes fell upon Twinkle, who lay in the clover staring up at him; and the woodchuck gave a laugh and grabbed her fast by one arm.

"Oh ho!" he exclaimed; "you're spying upon me, are you?"

"I'm just waiting to see you get caught in the trap," said the girl, standing up because the big creature pulled upon her arm. She wasn't much frightened, strange to say, because this woodchuck had a good-humored way about him that gave her confidence.

"You would have to wait a long time for that," he said, with a laugh that was a sort of low chuckle. "Instead of seeing me caught, you've got caught yourself. That's turning the tables, sure enough; isn't it?"

"I suppose it is," said Twinkle, regretfully. "Am I a prisoner?"

"You might call it that; and then, again, you mightn't," answered the woodchuck. "To tell you the truth, I hardly know what to do with you. But come inside, and we'll talk it over. We musn't be seen out here in the fields."

Still holding fast to her arm, the woodchuck led her through the door, which he carefully closed and locked. Then they passed through a kind of hallway, into which opened several handsomely furnished rooms, and out again into a beautiful garden at the back, all filled with flowers and brightly colored plants, and with a pretty fountain playing in the middle. A high stone wall was built around the garden, shutting it off from all the rest of the world.

The woodchuck led his prisoner to a bench beside the fountain, and told her to sit down and make herself comfortable.