

Chapter V - Mr. Woodchuck Argues the Question

"REALLY," Mister Woodchuck said to his wife, "you should be more considerate of the little human's feelings. She is quite intelligent and tame, for one of her kind, and has a tender heart, I am sure."

"I don't see anything intelligent about her," said the girl woodchuck.

"I guess I've been to school as much as you have," said Twinkle.

"School! Why, what's that?"

"Don't you know what school is?" cried Twinkle, much amused.

"We don't have school here," said Mister Woodchuck, as if proud of the fact.

"Don't you know any geography?" asked the child.

"We haven't any use for it," said Mister Woodchuck; "for we never get far from home, and don't care a rap what state bounds Florida on the south. We don't travel much, and studying geography would be time wasted."

"But don't you study arithmetic?" she asked; "don't you know how to do sums?"

"Why should we?" he returned. "The thing that bothers you humans most, and that's money, is not used by us woodchucks. So we don't need to figure and do sums."

"I don't see how you get along without money," said Twinkle, wonderingly. "You must have to buy all your fine clothes."

"You know very well that woodchucks don't wear clothes, under ordinary circumstances," Mister Woodchuck replied. "It's only because you are dreaming that you see us dressed in this way."

"Perhaps that's true," said Twinkle. "But don't talk to me about not being intelligent, or not knowing things. If you haven't any schools it's certain I know more than your whole family put together!"

"About some things, perhaps," acknowledged Mister Woodchuck. "But tell me: do you know which kind of red clover is the best to eat?"

"No," she said.

"Or how to dig a hole in the ground to live in, with different rooms and passages, so that it slants up hill and the rain won't come in and drown you?"

"No," said Twinkle.

"And could you tell, on the second day of February (which is woodchuck day, you know), whether it's going to be warm weather, or cold, during the next six weeks?"

"I don't believe I could," replied the girl.

"Then," said Mister Woodchuck, "there are some things that we know that you don't; and although a woodchuck might not be of much account in one of your schoolrooms, you must forgive me for saying that I think you'd make a mighty poor woodchuck."

"I think so, too!" said Twinkle, laughing.

"And now, little human," he resumed, after looking at his watch, "it's nearly time for you to wake up; so if we intend to punish you for all the misery your people has inflicted on the woodchucks, we won't have a minute to spare."

"Don't be in a hurry," said Twinkle. "I can wait."

"She's trying to get out of it," exclaimed Mrs. Woodchuck, scornfully. "Don't you let her, Leander."

"Certainly not, my dear," he replied; "but I haven't decided how to punish her."

"Take her to Judge Stoneyheart," said Mrs. Woodchuck. "He will know what to do with her."