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HOW HUMPTY DUMPTY CAME TO BE SITTING ON THAT WALL

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We all think we know the story of Humpty Dumpty. We've heard the tale of the Wall and his Great Fall. We know how hard the soldiers tried but just couldn't get Mr. Dumpty back together again.

But that's only the end of the story. He was a very old man the day he tumbled off the wall. His life before that day was much more exciting.

Humpty Dumpty lived in Vumpasland with his parents and four sisters. It was a cheery place ruled by Queen Edith. They were a happy family and Humpty was everyone's favorite. His parents were bakers. Though they didn't have a very popular bakery, they always said, "Someday, Humpty, you will run the bakery and carry on our tradition."

Humpty had other dreams. For a long time, he kept them secret. Then, when he was seventeen, he told his family his plans.

"I'm sorry. I love my family and home, but I don't want to be a baker or live my life in Vumpasland. I want to be a wandering minstrel. I can meet people from other places who will have marvelous stories that I can share with even more people in even more different places. Living in the vast world is my dream."

His father frowned, his sisters screamed and cried and his mother fainted. Then his father sadly smiled and said, "If this is what you truly want, we won't stop you. We love you and want you to be happy." So they began preparing for his trip. It was decided he would leave the day after his nineteenth birthday.

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One day, just after he turned 18, a very sad thing happened. Humpty's father died. His mother stayed in bed and his sisters cried for day and days. The bakery was closed and dust rose in the all the ovens. Without the smell of baking bread, even the air seemed sad.

Humpty knew something had to be done to stop the grieving. He thought and thought and finally decided he would put his dreams aside and reopen the bakery himself. He didn't know if he'd be a very good baker, but he knew he had to try.

That is why he was the most surprised when he began. Humpty was a wonderful baker! He made cakes which seemed to float across your tongue. His candies tasted of fairy sprinkles and moonbeams. His pies were so creamy they made cows proud. The bakery's popularity increased many times. People came from far away. Humpty Dumpty would often talk to these strangers and tell them stories. He quickly became known for his talents as a baker and a talker. Time passed. Humpty's birthday came and went three more times and he hardly noticed because he was so busy.

One day, Humpty received a letter with the Royal Seal. He read it, and then shouted for his family and staff. They rushed to his side afraid something bad had happened.

"My friends," Humpty announced. "We have received a very special cake order. As you know, Prince Mortimer is going to marry Princess Philomina from the Isle of Shelldonia. Queen Edith wants our shop to bake the Royal Wedding Cake!"

Humpty's sisters screamed and cried. His mother fainted.

Humpty was nervous. It was a great honor to be asked to contribute to the wedding of a royal prince. But it was also scary. If the cake wasn't perfect and the royal family not satisfied, Humpty's business would be ruined.

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Humpty set to work. He searched the kingdom until he found the sweetest cow with the creamiest milk. He traveled to all the farms checking each wheat stalk for griding into the smoothest flour. He climbed trees and crawled through bushes to discover the juiciest fruit. Searching for the most golden honey, he sniffed acres of clover.

When he returned, he told his family and his, “You’ll be running the bakery while I am busy. Please don’t disturb me for anything, but emergencies. I know you can do this task.” Then he went into his private kitchen locking the door behind him. He knew he had to create the most original recipe ever invented. He blended and mixed. He tasted and spiced. He hardly slept or ate. After ten days, he emerged. Weary but triumphant, he presented the recipe that would feed the Queen’s wedding guests: Giggleberry Choconut cake with Puffery Marziflan cream icing!

Of course, his sisters screamed and cried and his mother fainted. Then they set to work creating Humpty’s dream. When they were done they stepped back and looked at what they had created.

This was no ordinary cake. It was as big as a carriage. A special wagon had to be built so it could be carried to the castle. It had seven tiers resembling the stairs that climbed the mountain to the Queen’s castle. Each tier featured a different flower that grew in Vumpasland. Each one looked silky and real but was really spun candy whose flavor matched its color. In honor of Princess Philomina’s island homeland, the top layer resembled an enormous open clamshell with likenesses of Prince Mortimer and the Princess sitting atop giant pearls.

The day of the Wedding, Humpty, his family and all of their employees followed the cake wagon to the castle. They took it to The Great Hall, a huge ballroom that had been decorated with thousands of flowers and shells. The cake sat at the end of a row of feast-laden

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tables. When the Queen's party entered the Hall, everyone stepped back. As they passed, the Royal Party admired the banquet emitting many ooohs and ahhs. When they came to the cake, they stopped. The Princess gasped and whispered with awe, "It's glorious!" The Prince and Queen nodded their agreement.

Humpty's sisters swallowed their screams and cries, but his mother still fainted.

All the cooks, florists and decorators were seated at a table at the side of the room. It was a wonderful party. Acrobats spun and flew while musicians played and sang. Everyone ate and laughed enjoying the event; all except Humpty. Because Humpty was so nervous, he couldn't taste the food and didn't really notice the sights and sounds. Finally, the moment arrived. The Prince stepped up to the cake and with the Royal Saber, he cut the top layer's edge. Using the flat of the blade, he lifted off a slice and laid it on the special Wedding Plate. Then using the special Wedding Forks, the bride and groom lifted the cake to their lips.

Humpty held his breath and watched.

Both Prince Mortimer and Princess Philomina's eyes grew wide. Then the Prince stood and exclaimed, "This is the most wonderful cake I've ever tasted!" Everyone cheered! Then the waiters began cutting the rest of the cake and serving all the other guests. After several minutes, the Queen rang her Royal Attention Bell and everyone quieted.

"Who baked us this extraordinary cake?" The Queen gestured toward the last remaining tier.

Humpty stepped forward and introduced himself.

"Mr. Dumpty, you have created a cake that will live in the memories of my family for the rest of our lives. How did you achieve this? What process did you use?"

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Humpty smiled and bowed. He began his tale expressing how his love for Vumpasland and the honor he felt inspired him. Then he told the Queen about his ingredient searches. The Royal Family began chuckling when he told about the kick he received when he tried to get the creamiest milk from a bull. Humpty's explanation of how tasting the different fruits made his tongue become rainbow colored had their Highnesses laughing out loud. Humpty finished with how bees chased him through two fields of clover after he rejected their honey. By this time, the Queen was crying with laughter, Princess Philomina had hiccups and Prince Mortimer was lying on the floor holding his sides. All of the other guests were equally affected.

Then Humpty started singing a song he'd written about the Wedding and its cake. Slowly everyone calmed and, with charmed smiles, sat listening.

After the song was over, Queen Edith stood and announced she was appointing Humpty Vumpasland's official Warmth and Goodwill Wandering Ambassador. She was going to send him traveling through the world telling people about Vumpasland.

Everyone cheered and applauded. Humpty's sisters and mother were so shocked they forgot to cry and faint. Humpty's dreams would come true.

For a very long time, Humpty didn't say a word. He just stood staring at his hands. Then, smiling, he looked at the Queen.

"Your Majesty, you do honor me a second time today. But this honor, I must sadly decline. What you've offered was everything I once dreamed. But now, I am a different person and I have discovered a new talent that I enjoy. I also have many responsibilities and many people need me. That is probably the greatest achievement any person can make."

Everyone gasped. This time his mother didn't faint.

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“Mr. Dumpty, you are the one who honors us,” Queen Edith said, smiling. “We are lucky to have a citizen with your sense of purpose. Thank you. However in gratitude for your contributions today, I shall bestow some favor. I will decide it later. But for now, let the dancing begin!”

And it did.

The next day, Humpty was in the bakery working alone. Suddenly the door opened and Queen Edith entered. She smiled and walked around the shop admiring its edible delights.

“May I help you, Your Majesty?,” Humpty said as he stepped forward.

“I hope so, Mr. Dumpty. Would you please go for a carriage ride with me?”

Of course Humpty agreed. People don't refuse their Queen. The carriage took them to the edge of the Kingdom where the entry gate interrupted the wall. Queen Edith didn't say anything but quietly sat wearing a mysterious smile. Humpty was very puzzled. When they came to the gate, the carriage went through then pulled over and stopped next to it. The wall was lower here and there was a new construction. Someone had built a frame above the wall. It was gold and draped with a burgundy curtain in a way that resembled a stage. There was bunting along the edge of the wall and pillows were draped spread across the top. The Queen turned to Humpty.

“Mr. Dumpty, I have decided what position of honor I wish to bestow on you. While your bakery serves the Kingdom in a most delightful capacity, I hope you will agree to carry out another service. I want to name you Sir Humpty Dumpty, Knight of Welcomes, Ballads and Stories. Your assignment shall be to spend part of your days at the wall bordering the Kingdom greeting each passer-by and visitor. You shall share with them the legends and tales of

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Vumpasland and learn their homelands' legends and tales. You will also share these tales with all the citizens, including myself. Do you agree?"

"Your Highness, it would be my privilege."

"No, Mr. Dumpty, we are the ones who shall receive a privilege; the privilege of laughter from your stories." Then she left.

For the rest of his life, which was a long time, Humpty Dumpty spent his mornings baking. In the afternoons, a Royal Carriage took him to the wall at the edge of the Kingdom. He would sit, stand and dance on the wall talking, laughing and entertaining everyone who came by. He spent many evenings at the Castle regaling Queen Edith with his adventures and they became good friends. Prince Mortimer and Princess Philomina, who became later King and Queen, were frequent visitors and often brought their children. It was a very wonderful life and Humpty Dumpty was very happy and content until the day the curtain closed for the last time. And now you know how Humpty Dumpty came to be sitting on that wall.