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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Uncle Wiggily And The Tarts

"Where are you going, Uncle Wiggily?" asked Nurse Jane Fuzzy Wuzzy, the muskrat lady, as she saw the rabbit gentleman starting out of the hollow-stump bungalow one morning.

"Oh, just for a walk, over the fields and through the woods," he answered. "This is the Spring of the year, now, you know, since the four-and-twenty blackbirds jumped out of Old King Cole's pie, and I want to see if the grass and flowers have begun to spring up."

"I think it is a little early for them," spoke Nurse Jane.

"Well, I'll go for a walk, anyhow," said Uncle Wiggily.

So the bunny uncle hopped on and on, sometimes leaning on his red, white and blue-striped barber-pole rheumatism crutch, that Nurse Jane had gnawed for him out of a corn-stalk, and again he would carry it under his paw.

Pretty soon Uncle Wiggily came to the palace where Old King Cole lived. He was thinking of going inside, and perhaps playing a game of checkers, as he used to do with Grandfather Goosey Gander, when, all at once, the bunny uncle saw a lady looking at him from the kitchen window.

The lady had on a silk dress, all spangled over with red hearts, like a valentine. And on her head was a cap, and that had blue hearts on, so she looked very pretty indeed.

"How do you do?" asked the lady of Uncle Wiggily.

"Very well," he answered. "And how are you?"

"Oh, not well at all," was the answer, and the lady sighed sadly. "Oh, there is so much trouble here!"

"Trouble? Trouble?" asked Uncle Wiggily. "Why, then I came to just the right place."

"How is that?" asked the lady, sort of surprised like.

"Because I always try to help trouble, or those who are in it. Let me see now, I don't believe I have the pleasure of knowing you," and Uncle Wiggily sort of made his nose twinkle inquisitive like.

"Oh, you must have heard about me," said the lady, with

a smile. "I'm in Mother Goose's book, you know. Listen to this:

"The Queen of Hearts, she made some tarts,
All on a summer's day.

The Jack of Hearts, he took those tarts,
And with them ran away.'

"I am the Queen of Hearts," said the lady, bowing politely.



"Pleased to meet you," spoke Uncle Wiggily, also with a low bow. "So that is the trouble,

eh? The Jack of Hearts has taken the tarts away?"

"Well, no, not exactly," answered the Heart Queen. "You see, I haven't yet made the tarts. But, when I do, I

suppose the Jack will take them, and then there'll be trouble, for Old King Cole specially wants them."

"Why haven't you yet made them?" asked the bunny uncle. "If it says in the Mother Goose book that you must make the tarts, why don't you make them?"

"Because, in the first place," answered the Queen of Hearts, sort of shivering like, "this isn't a Summer day. And, in the second place, I don't know how to make the tarts—that's the trouble."

"Well, that is easily mended," spoke the bunny uncle. "I can't make a Summer day out of a Spring one, but I can show you how to make tarts."

"Oh, can you—and will you?" asked the Queen of Hearts, clapping her hands in delight.

"I can and will," said Uncle Wiggily, kindly. "I have often watched Nurse Jane Fuzzy Wuzzy, my muskrat lady bungalow-keeper, make them, so I ought to know how."

"Tell me," said the Queen, "and we'll do it."

"You take flour and water and milk and sugar and a yeast cake and spices and make a pie crust," said the bunny uncle. "Then you bake it in the oven after you have cut it out in little round pieces, some with three holes in, and some just plain."

"Oh, how lovely that sounds!" cried the Queen, clapping her hands again. "I have all the things you need. Let's make the tarts."

"And when the crust is baked in the oven," went on Mr. Longears, "you take out two pieces of tarts, put jam in between them, press them together, and—there you are."

"Lovelier and more lovely!" cried the Queen. "Oh, I am so glad you happened to come along. Now we'll begin." So she and Uncle Wiggily mixed up the sugar and spice, and other things nice, making the pie crust, out of which they cut round, flat pieces, some with three holes in, and some plain.

"Oh, what lovely tarts they'll be!" laughed the Queen.

"Isn't it a shame that the Jack of Hearts must take them away?"

"Well, if it's that way in the Mother Goose book, it can't be helped," said Uncle Wiggily. "But when he takes these tarts we'll make some more."

So the tarts were made and set aside to cool.

"Now we'll hide behind the kitchen door," said the Queen of Hearts, "and watch the Jack as he comes in to get them. I hope he doesn't take them all."

"Maybe he won't," said Uncle Wiggily.

Pretty soon, as the bunny gentleman and the Queen of Hearts were hiding, into the kitchen came the Jack of Hearts. He was a funny chap, with little candy hearts all over his clothes and cap.

"Ah, ha!" said the Jack, smacking his lips. "This is tart day. Here is where I have a fine feast! I'll get the tarts of the Queen of Hearts."

Laughing to himself, the Jack went up to the shelf where the tarts were cooling. He lifted one down, and took a big bite from it, saying:

"I'll taste them before I take them away."

But, no sooner had he tasted it than the Jack of Hearts he dropped that tart and, all excited like, he cried:

"Oh me! Oh my! Oh ice water and lemonade! Oh, how my mouth burns! I don't want any of those tarts! Oh, no," and away he ran, not taking one.

"Why, that's queer," said the queen. "He should have taken those hearts. That's the way it is in the book." The bunny uncle looked at the tarts he and the Queen had made. He took a little taste of one, and then Uncle Wiggily said:

"No wonder the Jack didn't want them. By mistake we have put red pepper in the tarts instead of red raspberry jam! They're as hot as a stove. Oh dear!"

"Never mind," said the Queen, sweetly. "We'll make some more tarts, and this time we'll do it right and put in the jam. Anyhow I'm glad, for now the Jack won't want to take the new tarts I make." And the Jack did not. He had had enough.