

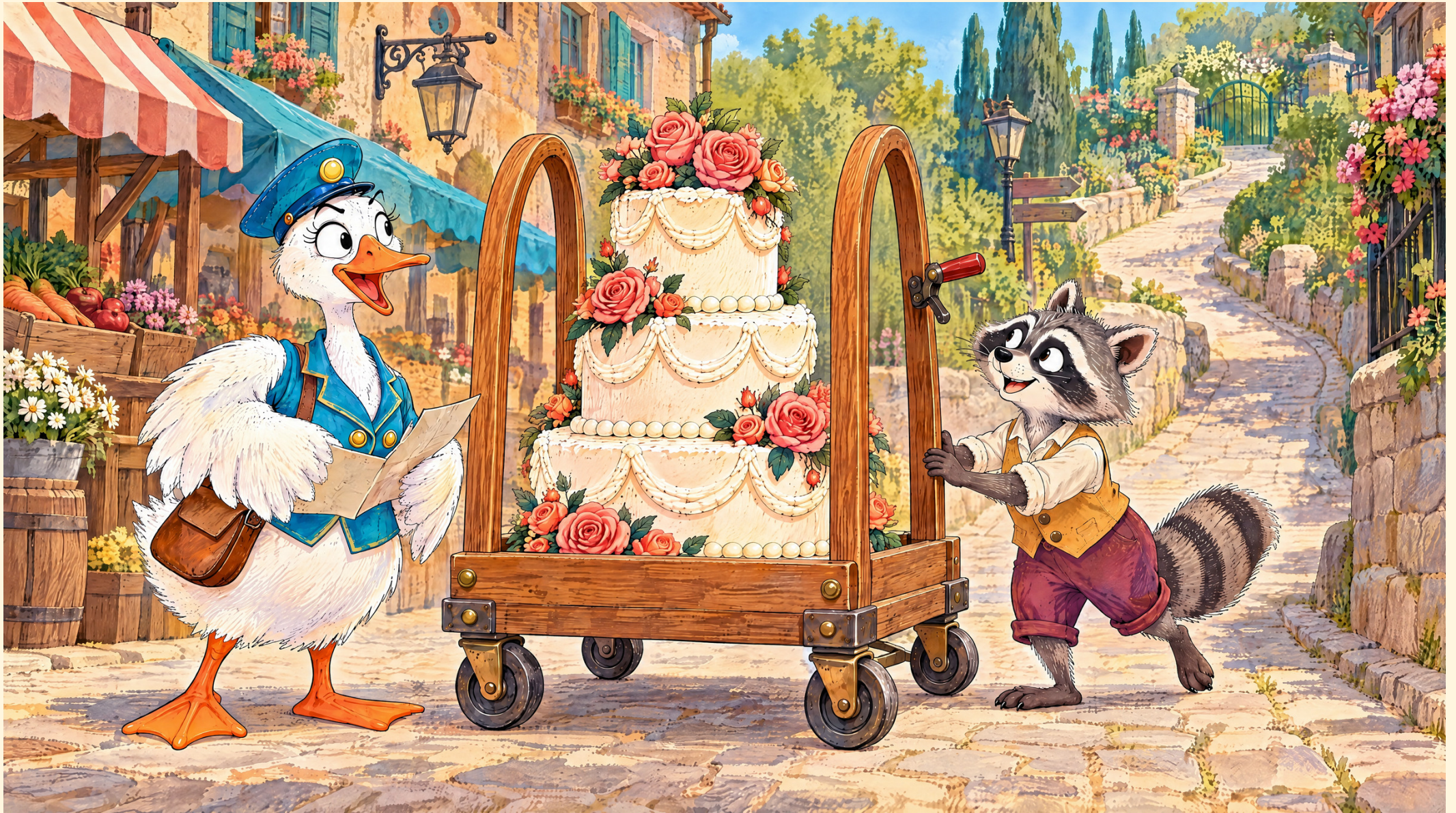


The Great Birthday Cake Getaway

Goose & Co.

By J. Ladis and Haley Dell

Little Story Magic



For Bear's birthday, Raccoon had baked a cake taller than Goose. It stood on a wide tray, inside the rails of a low, four-wheeled trolley. Bear's garden was up the little lane beyond the market. "I'll bring it round. You fetch the candles."



Raccoon checked the brake. Goose tied three balloons to the handle. As she turned to open the gate, a balloon string caught the brake lever. Click. The trolley began to roll. “Just a moment!” The cake did not wait.



Down Market Lane it went. Goose grabbed the handle, but her feet skidded behind her. At the laundry, the trolley swept beneath a hanging sheet. For three dreadful seconds, the cake disappeared. Then the sheet slid off. Every icing rose was still in place. “A cake wearing a bedsheet. Of course.”



The trolley bumped a basket outside the hat shop. Hats flew everywhere. One landed on Goose. Two landed on the shopkeeper. A small green bonnet settled neatly between the cake's topmost roses. "Mind the cake!" The hat seller ran after her. So did the laundry keeper, carrying the sheet.



Raccoon came round the fountain carrying a candle box. Past him sailed the cake, the bonnet, Goose and half the market. Ahead, the road forked. The wide road sloped farther down. The little lane climbed toward Bear's gate. "Up the lane!" "That is where I was going!"



Goose could not pull the heavy trolley round alone. “Help at the handles! Now, all together—TURN!” The hat seller took one side. The laundry keeper took the other. They steered into the little lane, and the uphill cobbles slowed the wheels. Raccoon raced ahead to open Bear’s gate.



Goose pressed down the brake. The trolley stopped beside Bear's picnic table with one soft bump. Not a rose had fallen. Bear looked at the cake. He looked at the enormous crowd. "You brought everybody!" "They were coming this way."



Raccoon added the candles. Bear wore the green bonnet. The laundry keeper spread the rescued sheet over the grass, and everybody sat down for cake. Goose stayed on the trolley's brake, balancing a very large slice. "Would you like a chair?" "I found an excellent one. Nobody move it."

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