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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Mistress Pussy's Mistake

A very kind gentleman, who lived in a big house which was in the midst of a beautiful park, had a handsome cat of which he was very fond. While he felt sure Pussy was fond of him, he knew very well she would hurt the birds, so he put a pretty ribbon around Pussy's neck, and on it a little silver bell which tinkled whenever she moved and this warned the birds that she was near. Pussy resented this, but pretended she did not care. One day a thrush was singing very sweetly on the bough of a tree which overhung a small lake. Pussy walked along under the tree, and, looking up at the thrush, said: "Madam Thrush, you have a most beautiful voice, and you are a very handsome bird. I do wish I were nearer to you, for I am not so young as I was once, and I cannot hear so well."

The thrush trilled a laugh at Pussy, and said: "Yes, Miss Puss, I can well believe you wish me nearer, but not to see or hear me better, but that you might grasp me."

Pussy pretended not to hear the last remark, but said: "My beautiful Thrush, will you not come down where I can hear you better? I cannot get about as nimbly as I used to when I was young, or I would go to you."

"I cannot sing so well on the ground," replied the thrush. "You can come up here, even if you are not so spry as you were. But tell me, do you not find the bell you wear very trying to your nerves?"

"Oh no," answered sly Pussy. "It is so pretty that I'm glad to wear it, and my master thinks I am so handsome that he likes to see me dressed well. And then he can always find me when he hears the bell. That is why I wear it."

"I understand," answered the thrush, "and we birds are always glad to hear it, too." And she trilled another laugh at Pussy and added, "You are certainly a very handsome creature, Miss Puss."

Pussy all this time had very slowly climbed the tree, for she wanted the thrush to think she was old and slow, but the bird had her bright eyes upon her. When Pussy reached the branch the thrush was on she stopped and seated herself.

"Now, my pretty little friend, do sing to me your loudest song."

She hoped it would be loud enough to drown the tinkle of the bell. The thrush began and was soon singing very sweetly. Pussy took a very cautious step and then remained quiet. The thrush stopped singing and spread her wings.

"Oh, do not stop!" said Puss. "Your song was so soothing I was in a doze; do sing again." And she moved a little closer.

The thrush took a step nearer to the end of the bough and said: "I am glad you like my voice. I will sing again if it pleases you so much."

She began her song, but she kept her eyes on Puss, and as Puss drew nearer she moved closer to the end of the swinging bough.

She had reached a very high note when Puss gave a spring, but the thrush was too quick; she flew out of Pussy's reach, and splash went Pussy into the lake, for she had not noticed that the thrush was moving to the end of the bough, so intent was she on the thought of catching her. Poor Pussy was very wet when she scrambled to the bank of the lake, and the birds were chirping and making a great noise.

"How did you like your bath, Miss Puss?" the thrush called to her. "You should never lay traps for others, for often you fall into them yourself."

