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A Naughty Cat

Mary Graham Bonner

Jota had been spoiled, and that was the truth of it. She turned her nose up at fresh milk, tipped over her dish of bacon, and made herself generally disagreeable at every opportunity.

"I have nice warm milk for you today," said the cook one morning. "It's just come in."

But Jota was thinking about the mice she'd heard scampering in the cellar. She scratched when the cook tried to carry her to her bowl, and she snarled, and the cook felt genuinely hurt — not by the scratch, which was small, but by the ingratitude.

Jota went down to the cellar. The mice! She could smell them. She crouched, she sprang — and the first mouse vanished. She tried another. Missed. And another. Missed again.

Jota sat alone in the dark, thoroughly ashamed of herself. She had once been famous for her mouse-catching. Now she couldn't catch a single one. Her reflexes were slow, her timing was gone. She had grown lazy, and lazy had made her useless.

Slowly, she climbed back upstairs. She went to her bowl and drank every drop of the milk she had been so rude about not an hour before.

"Oh, you were thirsty after all," said the cook.

Jota purred and jumped into the cook's lap. She was trying to say: *I know I've been dreadful. Please forgive me.*



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