

THE TAIL OF TWO BAD CATS



BY MARION MCCUNE

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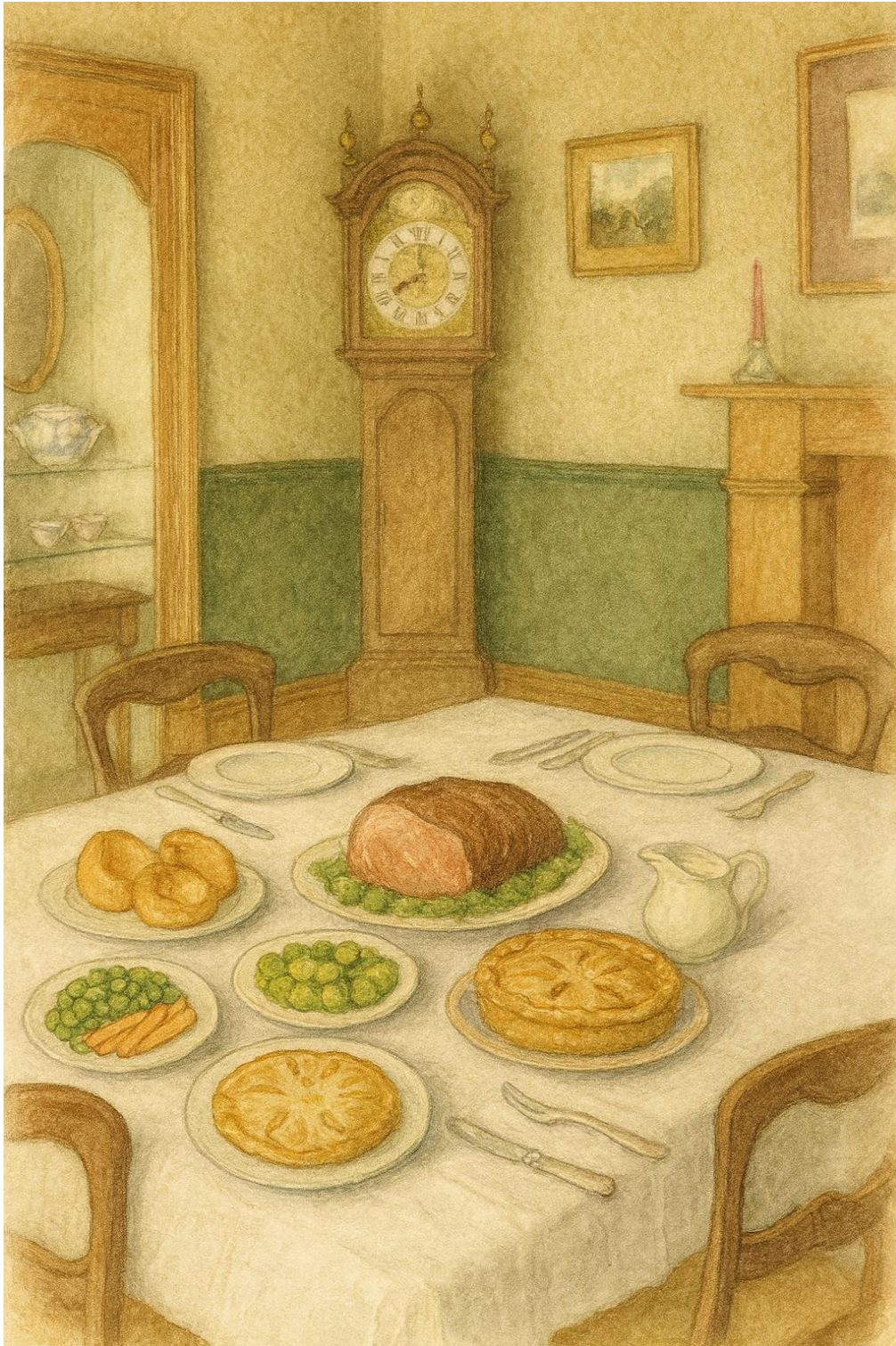


ONCE upon a time there was a very beautiful house. It was honey coloured sandstone with white windows; it had red velvet curtains, and an impressive front door with a brass knocker. On its pointed roof were many chimneys and pinnacles.



It belonged to three humans called Rory, Maz and Roddy. Roddy lived in the basement and did very little apart from complain. Rory lived upstairs and did something no one else understood which nonetheless made a lot of money. Maz lived on the ground floor and did all the real work, including a lot of cooking.

NONE of her food came ready made, it never arrived sealed in a plastic packet for microwaving, and it certainly didn't contain a lot of ingredients from "100 fun things a boy can do with a chemistry set".



ONE morning, Rory, Maz and Roddy had gone out for a drive in the car. In fact they had gone to the tip in St Andrews because this was the only place the car ever went apart from the airport.

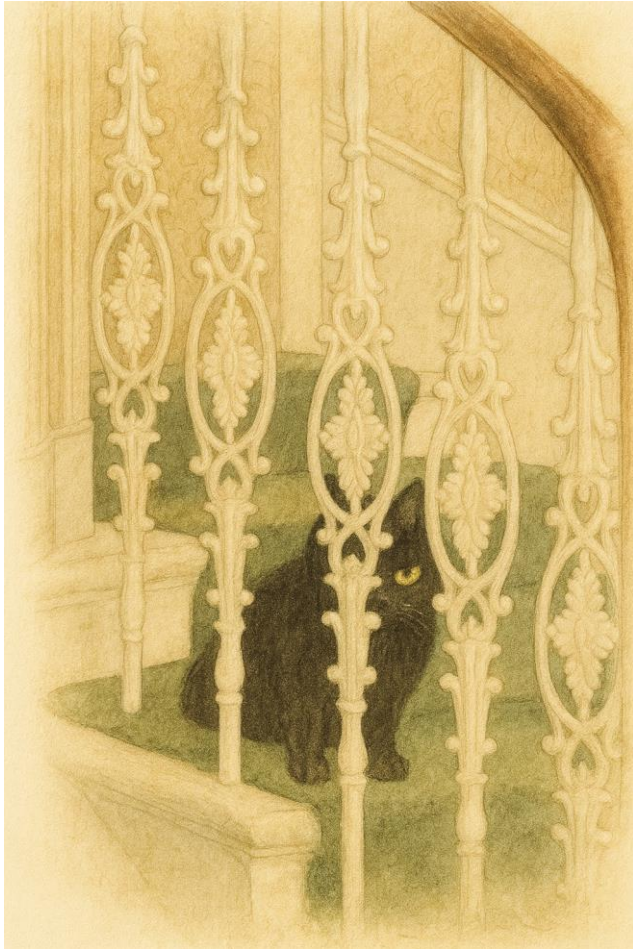
Later Rory's sister who was a strict vegetarian was coming for a visit, and a meal had been laid on the table in her honour, but at the moment there were no humans in the house and it was very quiet. Presently, however, there was a bumping noise from the back door where there was a flap.

Saphy poked her nose through for a moment and then came all the way in.

Saphy was a cat.



A minute afterwards, Amber her sister put her head round the bannisters, and seeing there was no one around, she ventured out on to the hall rug.



Amber was also a cat.

THE cats had not had much of a chance to inspect the new house since it had been done up.

First of all they peeped into the dining room. Then they meowed with joy. Such a lovely dinner had been laid out on the table. There were silver knives and forks and six chairs with upholstered seats – all so convenient for pushing off and scratching.



Amongst the usual unpalatable human food, there were a number of items of interest to cats. There was a plate laid out with strips of ham, and another of chicken pieces, a large cheese, and last but not least, a fruit tart which, whilst not interesting in itself, was topped with a mound of delicious whipped cream. There was no butter (much to Amber's disappointment), but a square box of something mysterious called "Vegan Spread".

AMBER jumped up to taste the chicken. It was steaming slightly and looked plump and juicy enough, but somehow didn't smell very tasty. She licked the side of the plate cautiously. "This tastes funny. I think it's off. You have a try Saphy".



"Yuck", said Saphy and convulsively pushed the plate away. It rolled off the table and landed face down on the carpet. "Leave it alone" Amber said "Let's try some ham". She bit into a luscious pink slice, but it just disintegrated into slime in her mouth. "What is this horrid stuff!" she exclaimed – coughing up the small amount she had swallowed in an extravagant stream across the damask table cloth.

The cream on the tart was no better; it tasted disgusting and had an odd greasy texture.

THEN there was no end to the rage and disappointment of Saphy and Amber. They hid the vegan spread in the aspidistra and pushed the ham behind the grandfather clock. The chicken they deposited on the vestibule rug where the humans would see it as soon as they came in “It looks like vomit anyway”, Saphy said “So they should be used to that”.



THE cats ran round the house creating mayhem as they went. In the drawing room they pushed the William Morris cushions onto the floor.



IN the kitchen they tried to find some real food, but they couldn't open the fridge, so instead they emptied all the canisters marked Tea – Coffee – Sugar on the counters trying to find cat food. They were disappointed when instead they found them to contain tea, coffee and sugar.



THEN those cats went upstairs to do all the mischief they could – especially Saphy. First they went into Maz’s bedroom. She had a feather pillow of which she was particularly fond.

Saphy leapt on it and began pulling all its feathers out. They gently settled in clouds all over the new velvet carpet.



Amber perched on a rose coloured ladies’ chair and watched the scene with a feeling of growing apprehension; age and wisdom were starting to tell her in what passes with cats for a conscience, that these actions were going to have their consequences.

BUT Saphy moved to the next room regardless, and there, remembering a fun experience she hadn't had for a while, she peed copiously on Rory's recliner chair.



Becoming more uneasy by the moment, Amber began to peruse possible distant destinations in a copy of Bradshaws.

SUDDENLY there was a noise from outside and the cats hurriedly sprang on the windowsill. Coming up the drive was certain retribution in the form of angry householders.



MAZ said “I will immediately call a policeman”.



THE stern officer sentenced the cats to a stiff punishment.



They were condemned to twenty-four hours in the coal hole on dried food and water. This was reduced on appeal to twenty-four minutes.

SO that is the story of the Two Bad Cats, but they were not so naughty after all. They acquired three very generous presents in the garden, and upon Christmas Eve, they stuffed them into the stockings hung on each bed.



THE END

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