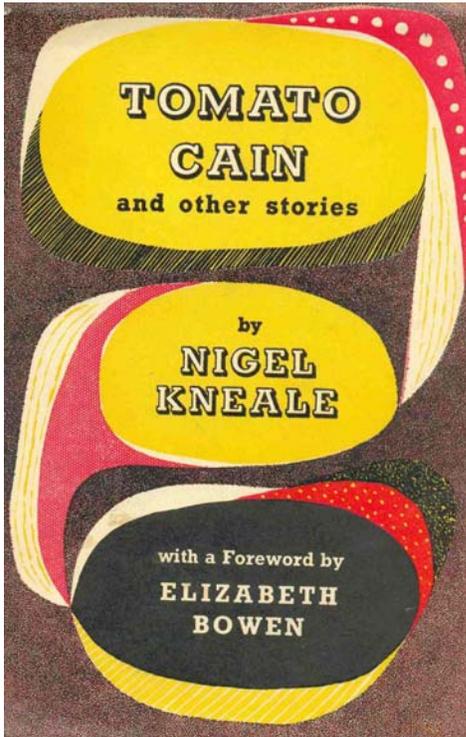


Tootie as ny Kiedyn-Kayt



***Tootie and the Cat Licences
by Nigel Kneale, from his
collection of short stories, "Tomato Cain".***

***Tootie as ny Kiedyn-Kayt
Ilorish Nigel Kneale.
Çhyndaait gys Gaelg ec Brian Stowell.***

I was struck immediately by the number of cats in the village. It was one of the hottest afternoons of the year, and I was carrying most of my clothes, so doubtless they were equally curious about me. Every wall seemed to have a fat tabby spread over it; a gateway would show two or three. They lifted a furry eyelid, or paused to glare over a raised hind leg as I passed; if they moved at all.

Shimmey kayt v'ayns y valley beg çheerey - shen y red woail mee dy çhelleeragh. V'eh

nane jeh fastyrn s'çhoe ny bleeaney, as va mee gymmyrkey yn chooid smoo jeh'n eaddagh aym. Gyn ourys, myr shen, v'ad kiart cho peeikearagh mychione aym. V'eh jeeaghyn dy row kayt breck roauyr goll er sheeyney harrish dy chooilley woalley; va jees ny troor ry akin ayns gagh grinney. Hrog ad farvollee fynneydagh, ny scuirr ad dy vlakey harrish cass yerree troggit myr hie mee shaghey; my v'ad gleashaghey er chor erbee.

The street was almost deserted. By a shallow greenish pool that lay at the roadside, a man was working. A low, fat man, erecting with red-faced energy a narrow signboard. There was no lettering on it yet.

I found the pub a little cooler, and the beer was flat.

Va'n traid bunnys follym. Va dooinney gobbraghey faggys da dubbey thanney as glassoil ec çheu yn raad. Dooinney injil as roauyr, va cur seose boayrd-cowrey coon as eddin ruy echey kyndagh rish e vree. Cha row lettyrys er y voayrd foast.

Hooar mee magh dy row yn thie-lhionney beggan ny s'feayrey, as dy row yn lhune eig.

The only other customer was an old man, as silent and watchful as the cats. Presently, we were drinking. Half-way down the glass he spoke. "The hay is comin' on nice," he said.

"It is indeed," I said. "The countryside looks very healthy round here." I had gone too far. He looked at me coldly. "Fair. Considerin' everythin'."

There was a long pause.

Yn ynrican custymeyr elley, va shen shenn dooinney, cho tostagh as arreydagh as ny kiyt. Lurg tammylt beg, va shin giu. Lieh-raad sheese y ghless, loayr eh.

"Ta'n traagh çheet rish dy mie," dooyrt eh.

"Ta, dy jarroo," dooyrt mee. "Ta'n çheer jeeaghyn feer follan ayns shoh."

Va mee er ngoll ro foddey. Yeeagh eh orrym dy feayr. "Castreycair. Smooinghtyn er dy chooilley nhee."

Va scuirr liauyr ayn.

At last he spoke again. "The turnips now, though, isn't what ye might -" The door opened.

It was the man I had seen working by the duckpond. He seemed annoyed. Close behind him followed a tall lean person with an expressionless face and hair like string. He was arguing: "You know what ye said to me. You promised -"

"Yes, I know!" The little fat man certainly was annoyed. He turned to the bar. "Ye'd better give this character a pint, too," he said, and drinks were put before both. He paid, drank his off without enjoyment, nodded briefly round the room and went off.

Fy yerrey, loayr eh reesht. "Ny napinyn, nish, ny yei, cha nel ad myr yinnagh oo

Va'n dorrys er ny osley.

V'eh yn dooinney va mee er nakin ec y phoyll-thunnag. V'eh jeeaghyn corree. Faggys da, geiyrt er çheu-chooylloo, va peiagh toallee as shang lesh eddin gyn dreagh as folt goll rish streng. V'eh jannoo arganeys: "Shione dhyt ny dooyrt oo rhym. Ren oo gialdyn -"

“She, shione dou!” Son shickyrys, va’n dooinney beg roauyr corree. Hyndaa eh gys y voayrd-coontee. “Bare dhyt cur pynt da’n fer shoh myrgeddin,” dooyrt eh, as hie joughyn er cur roish y jees oc. Deeck eh, diu eh yn jough echey gyn soylley, snog eh dy tappee mygeayrt y çhamyr as hie eh roish.

“Well!” said the old man. “Well!” Ye’d think he hadn’t time to be civil. What ye been doin’ to him, Tootie?”

The blank-faced man swung around. After a moment he smiled like a sheep. “I dunno,” he said; “I dunno,” and reached for his glass again.

“How’s the cat licenses, Tootie?” called the old man.

Tootie turned from his glass so quickly that beer ran down his chin, and swallowed. “Eh? Aw, we - we’re leavin’ that.” He sniggered. “Cats!” he said, and sniggered again. Catching my foreign eye, he blinked and was quiet.

As soon as he went, a few minutes later, I ordered more drinks for myself and the old man. “I noticed you have a - a number of cats in the village,” I suggested.

“Wahll!” dooyrt y shenn dooinney. “Wahll! Yinnagh oo smooïnaghtyn nagh row traä echey dy ve cooyrtoil. C’red v’ou jannoo er, Tootie?”

Ren y dooinney gyn dreagh leaystey mygeayrt. Lurg tullagh ren eh mongey goll rish keyrrey. “Cha s’ayms,” dooyrt eh; “Cha s’ayms,” as heeyn eh magh dy gheddyn y ghless echey reesht.

“Cre’n aght ta ny kiedyn-kayt, Tootie?” dyll y shenn dooinney.

Hyndaa Tootie cho tappee veih’n ghless echey as dy ren y lhune shilley sheese y smeg echey, as ren eh sluggey. “Eh? Aw, ta shin - ta shin faagail shen.” Smooir eh. “Kiyt!” dooyrt eh as smooir eh reesht. Tayrtyrn my hooill yoaarree, veek eh as v’eh ny host.

Cho Leah as hie eh, kuse dy vinnidyn lurg shen, doardee mee tooilley joughyn dou hene as da’n çhenn dooinney. “Hug mee my ner dy vel - dy vel kiyt dy liooar eu sy valley beg çheerey,” hug mee faaue.

But there was no need to make openings. As I caught his eye, I saw it had unfrozen.

“That fella that just went out,” he said, “they call him Tootie Taggart.” He pointed to his forehead. “A touch clicky is poor Tootie. Poor fella! An’ th’ other fella was Dicky-Dan Watterson.” His manner became slightly furtive. “This is a kind of a private story. Ye’ll not let on about it?”

"No," I said. (I have changed the names, anyway.)

Agh row feme er raaghyn-toshee. Myr hayr mee e hooill, honnick mee nagh row ee riojit.

"Y fer shen hie magh eisht," dooyrt eh, "t'ad gra Tootie Taggart rish." Heeyn eh mair er e vaaish. "Ta Tootie boght beggan baanrit. Y fer boght! As y fer elley, va shen Dicky-Dan Kodhere." Haink yn ymmyrkey echey dy ve beggan sleetçhagh. "Shoh sorçh dy skeeal cleagh. Cha jean oo ginsh mychione echey?"

"Cha jeanyim." dooyrt mee. (Ta ny h-enmyn caghlaait aym, ansherbee.)

"I believe I saw - Dicky-Dan at work down the street a little while ago. Putting up a notice."

"Was he? Aw, he - he's a terrible responsible fella is Dicky-Dan. Always worryin' about the village here, an' puttin' things straight. But he's not so bad as he was. Little notices an' things doesn't bother anybody, now; but some while back - a year ago, maybe - Dicky-Dan made a tremendous splutter in the village, in a way. Mind you, he was in the right of it."

"It begun here in this very room.

"There was a big fella they called Gob Kelly to, a big squash-ear Irishman, with an ugly snarl on him, an' the marks of a dozen kinds of fights. It was just as well for the police that there is none of thim hereabouts: he would bust in here when he was passin' through, an' commit all the kinds of wickedness he could screw his mind round to. Insultin' an' fightin' an' desthroyin'. The women wasn' safe either. Faye's daughter - but that one is fit to say anythin': no matter. The thing was: decent men were in dread to come for a single drink at all, in case they would find him choppin' at their throats with half a green bottle. Fearful it was."

"So one night here, when th' Irish fella was gone off screechin' drunk an' they was clearin' up the broken glass, Dicky-Dan Watterson held a meetin'. Fellas was beginnin' for to come back, one by one, peepin' about.

"Ta mee credjal dy vaik mee Dicky-Dan gobbraghey heese y traid tammylt beg er dy henney. Cur seose fogrey."

"Row? Aw, she - she fer currymagh agglagh Dicky-Dan. Boirey car y traa mychione y balley beg çheerey ayns shoh, as karraghey reddyn. Agh cha nel eh cho olk as v'eh. Fograghyn begghey as reddyn, cha nel ad cur yn olk er peiagh erbee, agh tammylt er dy henney - blein er dy henney, foddee

- ren Dicky-Dan musthaa atçhimagh sy valley beg, er aght ennagh. Agh, t'ou toiggal, v'eh slane kiart.

“Dy jarroo, ren eh goaill toshiaght sy çhamyr shoh.

“Va fer mooar ayn v'ad gra Gob Kelly rish, Yernagh mooar lesh cleayshyn broojit as gyrn graney ersyn, as ny cowraghyn jeh dussan sorçh dy chaggey. S'mie da ny meoiryn-shee nagh vel e lheid ry gheddyn ayns shoh: vrishagh eh stiagh ayns shoh tra v'eh goll shaghey, as yinnagh eh dy chooilley cheint dy olkys oddagh eh smooïnaghtyn er. Jannoo faghid as caggey as stroie. Cha row ny mraane sauçhey noadyr. Inneen Fayle - agh oddagh ish gra red erbee: s'cummeey. Shoh yn red: va deiney feeudagh goaill aggle roish çheet son jough erbee, er aggle dy beagh eshyn prowal giarrey ny scoreeeyn oc lesh lieh-voteil ghlass. V'eh agglagh.

“Myr shen, oie dy row ayns shoh, tra va'n fer Yernagh ersooyl as eshyn scooyrit agglagh, as v'ad scughey ersooyl y ghless vrisht, ren Dicky-Dan Kodhere çhaglym y chummal. Va fir goaill toshiaght dy heet erash, nane lurg nane, meekey mygeayrt. ‘

“Now listen here,’ says Dicky-Dan, as big as bull-beef now the coast was clear, ‘somethin’s got to be done about this village. It’s a disgrace to th’Isle of Man,’ he says. ‘Two things - this drunken fella and the cats - is the worst of all. Now, let’s take the first -’

“Well, talkin’ bold about big Kelly was soon gettin’ Dicky-Dan a whole lot of agreement in principle, as they say, but nobody was terribly eager to actually do anythin’.

“All right then,’ he says, ‘we’ll make a start with the cats!’ Now, that’s the way he is, is Dicky-Dan, scramblin’ from one feed to another like Parr’s pig. Augh, an’ terrible vague with it. Terrible vague!

“But the women likes cats,’ says some backslider, ‘an’ another thing: who else would have the knack to catch the mice?’ ‘Aw, there’s too many altogether!’ says Dicky-Dan, louder. ‘The craythurs is runnin’ savage. Oul’ Craine’s widder has upward of two dozen slitherin’ abut the house! An’ the squeals at night is fearful!’

“So, they got to considerin’ how to get shut o’ some o’ the cats. Drownin’ would be slow, for fully-grown fellas, an’ the cruelty man might get wind of it. At last Dicky-Dan had a big idea. ‘Go an’ fetch Tootie Taggart,’ he says. They found poor oul’ Tootie at some caper like fishin’ without bait, an’ brought him along.

“Nish, eaisht-shiu rhym,’ dooyrt Dicky-Dan, daaney erskyn towse as y gae ersooyl, ‘shegin jannoo red ennagh mychione y balley beg shoh. T’eh

cur nearey er Mannin,' as eshyn. 'Daa red - y meshtalagh shoh as ny kiyt - shen ny reddyn smessey jeu ooilley. Nish, gowmayd y chied red -'"

"Wahll, loayrt dy daaney mychione Kelly mooar, va shen geddyn ram coardailys dy gerrid da Dicky-Dan ayns prinsabyl, myr t'ad gra, agh cha row peiagh erbee jeean agglagh dy yannoo red erbee.

"'Mie dy liooar, myr shen,' as eshyn, 'gowmayd toshiaght lesh ny kiyt!' Nish, shen yn aght t'eh, Dicky-Dan, tayrn eh hene voish un foddyr gys foddyr elley goll rish muc Pharr. Augh, as neuvaghtal agglagh ec y traa cheddin. Nevaghtal agglagh!

"'Agh ta ny mraane graihagh er ny kiyt,' dooyrt cooyl-skyrraghtagh ennagh, 'as red elley; quoi elley as y schlei echey dy hayrtyn ny lughee?' 'Aw, ta rouyr jeu ayn, son shickyrys!' as Dicky-Dan, ny stroshey. 'Ta ny cretooryn roie mygeayrt dy keoi. Ayns y thie ec ben-treoghe shenn Chraine, ta ny shlee na daa ghussan jeu skyrraghtyn mygeayrt! As s'at'chimagh ny scraaghyn er yn oie!'

"Myr shen, v'ad smooinghtyn mychione aghtyn dy gheddyn rey rish paart jeh ny kiyt. Veagh baih moal da kiyt vooarey, as foddee dy jinnagh fer y dewilys clashtyn mychione echey. Fy yerrey, va eie mooar ec Dicky-Dan. 'Gow-shiu as cur-shiu lesh Tootie Taggart,' as eshyn. Hooar ad Tootie boght jannoo ommidjys ennagh, goll rish eeastagh gyn bite, as ren ad cur lesh eh.

"Tootie,' says Dicky-Dan, comin' all over serious. 'Y're just the man t' help me.' Tootie just stands dribblin' an' lookin' seventeen diff'rent ways. 'Ye know how dogs has got t' have dog licences on their collars?' says Dicky-Dan. Tootie thinks a bit, an' nods. 'Well,' says Dicky, lookin'dreadful innocent, 'now they're puttin' out a law for cats to have licences too. They've made me th' inspector for this district, an' I want you for t' help me, good man.' He goes over to oul' Tootie, that hadn't the smell of a notion what it was all about, an' gives him a little card he had wrote: 'Licence Inspector Taggart,' or some nonsense. 'Don't show this to a livin' soul,' he says. 'It's secret work. Now this is what ye've got to do: scout round at night with a big sack, an' any cat that hasn't got a collar an' a licence on it, shove him inside.'

"The first thing Tootie says, of course, when he gets it straight is, 'How much wages?' Dicky-Dan was up to that one. 'Well, we're not exactly on a wage,' he says. 'It's an honorary - I mean, ye do it because it makes y'important. Look, I - I'll treat ye to a drink now an' then for th' help ye'll give me - that's a promise! Will it do ye?'

"'Tootie', as Dicky-Dan, çheet dy ve trome-chooishagh. 'Uss jeeragh y fer dy chooney lhiam.' Cha nel Tootie agh shassoo as sheeley as

jeeaghyn rish shiaght raaidyn jeig anchasley. ‘Shione dhyt yn aght shegin cur kiedyn-moddee er coillaryn ny moddee?’ as Dicky-Dan. Ta Tootie smooinghyn beggan as snoggal. ‘Wahll,’ as Dicky, jeeaghyn oney agglagh, ‘nish t’ad cur magh slattys dy nhegin kiedyn ve ec ny kiyt neesht. She mish ta jeant scruteyr yn ard shoh, as ta mee laccal uss dy chooney lhiam, ghooinney mie.’ T’eh goll gys Tootie boght, nagh row fys erbee echey er red erbee v’eh mychione, as t’eh cur da kaart beg as screeut echey er va: ‘Kied y Scruteyr Taggart,’ ny boghtynid ennagh. ‘Ny jeeagh shoh da peiagh erbee,’ t’eh gra. ‘She obbyr follit t’ayn. Nish, shoh yn red shegin dhyt jannoo: scribe mygeayrt er yn oie lesh sack mooar, as kayt erbee nagh vel coillar as kied er echey, spret stiagh eh.’

“Y chided red ta Tootie gra, son shickyrys, tra t’eh toiggal, ta shen, ‘Quoid ta’n fail?’ Dod Dicky-Dan dellal rish shen. ‘Wahll, cha nel shin geddyn fail dy jeeragh,’ t’eh gra. ‘T’eh onnoragh - ta shen dy ghra, t’ou jannoo eh er y fa dy vel eh cur ort dy ve scanshoil. Jeeagh, kionneeym jough dhyt nish as reesht son y cooney ver uss dou - as she gialdin

“Tootie cheered up to hear that, for he never has a halfpenny. Then he says, ‘All right. What’ll we do with th’oul cats?’ Now - Dicky-Dan had never thought as far as that; I tould ye how he is. All he had clear and certain was to chuck the cat-stealin’ on to Tootie Taggart. ‘Oh!’ he says, ‘for the Lord’s sake don’t distract me! We’ll - take thim off some place, set thim adrift on the hills; or sell the skins - just try y’r hand in first, Tootie an’ don’t distract me! We’ll - take thim off some place, set thim adrift on the hills; or sell the skins - just try y’r hand in first, and don’t fuss! Has anybody got a sack?’”

The old man set his fist to another glass of warm beer. “Y’r health!” he said.

“Haink gien mie er Tootie tra cheayll eh shen, er y fa nagh row lhieng echey rieu. Eisht t’eh gra, ‘Mie dy liooar. Cre neemayd lesh ny shenn chiyt?’ Nish - cha row Dicky-Dan rieu er smooinghyn cho foddey as shen; dinsh mee dhyt cre goll rish t’eh. Ooillee va baghtal as shicky echey, va shen dy chur geid ny kiyt da Tootie Taggart. ‘Oh!’ t’eh gra, ‘son graih Yee, ny cur er shaghryn mee! Neemayd - cur lesh ad gys boayl ennagh, lhiggey magh ad er ny crink; er nonney, creck ny crackanyn - cur cheb er hoshiaght, Tootie, as ny jean foostyre! Vel sack ec peiagh erbee?’”

Hug y shenn dooinney yn doarn echey gys gless elley dy lhune blah. “Shoh slaynt!” dooyrt eh.

He wiped his moustache. “Well, by this time Dicky-Dan was in his element. He was feelin’ dreadful wise. ‘We’ll plan against that Kelly fella now,’ he says. ‘I’ve got it all clear in me head. Listen now, all of youse: to-morrow’s pay-night: he’ll be in here an’ raisin’ twenty divils out of every pint - crazy drunk before a man could draw breath. Now one or two of us has got to look in for the sake of things seemin’ usual, but for the rest -’ An’ he began to sort out his big plan.

“About a quarter of a mile up the road ye’ll have seen a dark turn in a little patch of trees? The last few nights Gob Kelly’d headed up through there to sleep it off in the fields. So it was yonder spot that Dicky-Dan Watterson picked on, the next night. He laid a rope across the road with th’other end fast to a tree. An’ there was eight or a dozen other fellas, with handkerchiefs hidin’ their faces. I was there meself - just to watch the fun. Dicky-Dan was postin’ thim like a gen’ral. He had men in every bush, an’ two in the branches above.

Ghlen eh yn farveeal echey. “Wahll, ec y traa shoh va Dicky-Dan sy vagher echey hene. V’eh gennaghtyn creeney agglagh. ‘Neemayd plannal noi’n fer shen Kelly nish,’ t’eh gra. ‘T’eh ooilley cronnal sy chione aym. Nish, eaisht-shiu ooilley: oie ny vairagh, shen oie-faillee: bee eshyn ayns shoh, troggal feed jouyl ass gagh pynt - scooyrit dy bollagh roish my oddys fer tayrn ennal. Nish, shegin da nane ny jees ain cur shilley dy chur er reddyn dy yeeaghyn myr t’ad cliaghtey ve, agh son y chooid elley -’ As ghow eh toshiaght e phlan mooar y reaghey.

“Mysh kerroo veeiley seose y bayr, bee shiu er nakin boayl dorragey ayns kuse veg dy viljyn? Ny h-oieghyn jerrinagh, hie Gob Kelly trooid shen dy chouyral liorish cadley ayns ny magheryn. Myr shen, she yn boayl shid reih Dicky-Dan Kodhere yn oie er giyn. Hug eh tead tessen y bayr, as y kione elley festit gys billey. As va hoght ny dussan fir elley ayn, as bussalyn keiltyn ny h-eddinyn oc. Va mish hene ayn - dy yeeaghyn er y spoyrt, t’ou toiggal. Va Dicky-Dan cur ad ayns ynnyd goll rish shennaleyr. Va deiney currit ayns gagh thammag echey, as jees ayns ny banglaneyn heose.

“Well, for a long time we heard nothin’ but cats carryin’ on down by the houses. Once a fella on a bike came by, an’ rid over the rope; he must’ve scented mischief, ‘cos he went strainin’ up the hill full git, fit to do himself an injury.

“At last there was a madhouse din down there beyond. Gob Kelly makin’ to sing. An’ a splatter of glass when he’d of put his fist through somethin’. Then all was like the tomb again. ‘Augh, he’s gone th’other way,’ whispers somebody after a bit.

“‘Hould y’r hush!’ says Dicky-Dan, ‘an’ listen!’

“So we did. There come a tiny indigestible rumblin’ kind of a noise, an’ it went on and got louder; an’ it was big Kelly singin’ gentle to himself. Everybody got excited. The bushes were fair quiverin’.

“Wahll, rish traa foddey cha geayll shin veg, er lhimmey jeh ny kiyt goll er, heese ec ny thieyn. Keayrt, haink fer er roar, as ren eh gimman harrish y

tead; gyn ourys, ren eh soaral mitçhooraght, er y fa dy jagh eh seose yn ughtagh lesh eab niartal, myr dy jinnagh eh jeeyl dasyn hene.

“Fy yerrey, va musthaa thie baanrit ayn, heese ayns shid. Gob Kelly prowal dy ghoail arrane. As smoash dy ghless tra v’eh er chur y doarn echey trooid red ennagh. Eisht v’eh goll rish y tomman reesht. ‘Augh, t’eh ersooyl er y raad elley,’ ta peiagh ennagh gra myr sannish, lurg tammylt.

“‘Bee-shiu nyn dost!’ ta Dicky-Dan gra, ‘as eaisht-shiu!’

“Shen myr ren shin. Eisht, haink sheean minniagagh va tharmaneagh er aght ennagh, as ren eh goll er, as haink eh dy ve ny sheeane; she Kelly mooar v’ayn, goaill arrane dy meen rish hene. Haink dy chooilley pheigh dy ve greesit. Va ny thammagyn goll er craa dy kiart.

“At last we seen him, ramblin’ an’ sthaagerin’. Every now an’ then he would clutch out at the hedge an’ the singin’ would go down the wrong way. Sometimes he cussed at the things his feet was doin’. But he kept on.

“All of a slap Dicky-Dan hauled on the rope. Big Kelly let out a roar an’ hit the road a dreadful shudder.

“‘Laid him stretched!’ shouts Dicky-Dan. ‘Go for him, boys!’

“There was a terrible commotion. Legs flyin’ an’ screeches, an’ bodies crunchin’ on the road. Even in the state he was in, Kelly was a terror. He took all the bitin’-teeth out of young Kinley; an’ lamed Gell the Slaughter; an’ Corteen’s wife was kept washin’ blood out of his clothes for days after. It was a wonder of a fight. But they clang on like dogs.

“‘Tie his hands tighter,’ says Dicky-Dan, makin’ his voice squeaky, for disguise, ‘an’ stuff his gob!’ Gaggin’ the big fella nearly lost Thomas Gawne two fingers.

“They larruped him a bit more, for the pleasure of it, an’ then little Alfie Mylrea says, ‘What’ll we do with him now?’

t’ayn! Bee shen mie dy liooar?’

“Fy yerrey, honnick shin eh, rouail as loaganey, Nish as reesht, yinnagh eh glackey’n cleigh as veagh yn arraney goll ersooyl cam. Ny keayrtyn, v’eh guee mollaht er ny reddyn va ny cassyn echey jannoo. Agh ren eh goll er oi.

“Dy doaltattym, ren Dicky-Dan tayrn er y tead. Lhig Kelly Mooar buirroogh magh ass as woaill eh noi’n raad lesh craa agglagh.

“Lhieggit sheese as eshyn sheeynt!’ ta Dicky-Dan gyllagh magh. ‘Gow-shiu greim er, ghuillyn!’”

“Va musthaa atçhimagh ayn. Lurgaghyn getlagh as screeaghyn, as kirp scranshal er y vayr. Eer sy stayd echey, va Kelly agglagh. Ghow eh ooilley ny feeacklyn-greimmee magh ass Kinley aeg; as va Gell y Vuitçhoorys jeant baccagh echey; as begin da ben Chorreen niee yn uill ass yn eaddagh echey rish laghyn ny lurg. S’yindyssagh va’n caggey. Agh v’ad lhiantyn rish myr moddee.

“‘Kiangle-shiu ny laueyn echey ny s’çhenney,’ as Dicky-Dan, cur er e chora dy ve graagey, dy cheiltyn dy nee eshyn v’ayn. ‘As pronn y gob echey!’ As adsyn cur gobbane er y fer mooar, ren Thomaase Gawne bunnys coayl daa vair.

“Woaill ad eh beggan ny smoo son taitnys, eisht dooyrt Alfie Mylrea beg, ‘Cre neemayd lesh nish?’”

“It was a queer thing then.

“One by one they went quiet, till they were all glarin’ at Dicky-Dan. ‘It’s the same as y’r big cat idea,’ says Alfie. ‘Ye never have any finish to thim!’”

“There they stood in a bunch, colloquin’ low so Kelly couldn’t hear who they were, an’ himself trussed an’ wrigglin’ on the crown of the road. They hadn’t a ha’porth o’ notion what to do with the fella. ‘Turn him loose anywhere at all, an’ he’ll come back at us,’ says one. ‘It wouldn’t do to throw him in a quarry?’ says another. ‘The police wouldn’t thank ye for the gift of a wild fella like this!’

“They were carryin’ on somethin’ shockin’ at poor oul’ Dicky-Dan when all of a sudden a little low grey thing went whiskin’ through thim. Under Alfie’s Legs.

“Begod, what was that!’ he says.

“A figure come runnin’ up the road. It was Tootie Taggart, pantin’ like a long dog. In his hands was a big sack, houldin’ it before him at th’ end of his hands like a child’s sweetie-bag. An’ at every jump Tootie made, there was a kind of a grizzly squawk out of it.

“When he seen us he nearly dropped dead. ‘Shh! An’ come here!’ says Dicky-Dan.

“Red quaagh eisht.

“Nane lurg nane, haink ad dy ve nyn dost, gys v’ad blakey er Dicky-Dan. ‘T’eh yn un red as yn eie mooar ayd mychione ny kiyt,’ as Alfie. ‘Cha nel oo cur jerrey erbee orroo!’

“V’ad nyn shassoo ayns shen ayns possan, loayrt cho injil as nagh dod Kelly clashtyn quoi v’ad, as eh hene kianlt seose as cassey er baare y vayr. Cha row eie erbee oc noadyr c’red dy yannoo lesh y fer. ‘Lhig da goll seyr boayl erbee, as hig eh erash dy hoie orrin,’ ta fer jeu gra. ‘Cha beagh eh cooie dy cheau eh stiagh ayns quarral?’ ta fer elley gra. ‘Cha jinnagh ny meoiryn-shee cur booise dooin son y gioot jeh fer keoi myr shoh!’

“V’ad gaccan dy agglagh mychione Dicky-Dan boght tra, dy doaltattym, ren red ben lheeah as injil goll trooid oc goll rish y jouyl hene. Fo lurgaghyn Alfie.

“My Yee, c’red va shen!’ dooyrt eh.

“Haink peiagh ennagh rish, roie seose y bayr. She Tootie Taggart v’ayn, pandooch goll rish moddey liauyr. Va sack mooar ayns ny laueyn echey, as greim echey er ec king ny laueyn echey goll rish poagey-miljan ec paitçhey. As dy chooilley lheim va jeant ec Tootie, haink sorçh dy scraagh quaagh ass.

“Tra honnick eh shinyn ren eh bunnys tuittym sheese marroo. ‘Shh! As tar dys shoh!’ as Dicky-Dan.

“‘I’m just chasin’ an oul’ - an oul’ tom-cat,’ says Tootie, when he got over the fright. ‘He hadn’ any collar on, Dicky-Dan. I havn’ foun’ any that has got collars, Dicky-Dan.’

“‘Less o’ the Dicky-Dan!’ says Watterson, with one eye on th’ Irishman. ‘Show me what ye got in the bag.’

“Tootie held on tight. ‘They’ll jump out!’ he says. ‘There’s two grey fellas, an’ a black one, an’ some more that hasn’ got any tails. The no-tail fellas is awful hard to catch.’”

“‘It’ll do!’ says Dicky-Dan. ‘An inspiration’s come!’ His eyes was shinin’ somethin’ shockin’ in the light of the moon. ‘Come on, boys, shove his head in the sack!’

“They had to turn th’ Irishman bottomsides-up an’ edge him in bit by bit, squirmin’ like sin. Then they got the sack pulled along an’ tied it round his chest,

an' stood him up. A wonderful funny creation he looked. With a huge big head, that was bulgin' seventeen diff'rent ways from the commotion of the cats.

“Cha nel mee agh cloh shenn chollagh - shenn chollagh-kayt,’ as Tootie tra v’eh er chouyral veih’n atçhim. ‘Cha row coillar er, Dicky-Dan. Cha nel mee er gheddyn nane as coillar ersyn, Dicky-Dan.’

“‘Ersooyl lesh y Dicky-Dan shen!’ as Kodhere, as un tooill echey er y Yernagh. ‘Jeeagh dou ny t’ayd ayns y phoagey.’

“Chum Tootie greim mie er. ‘Nee ad lheim magh!’ as eshyn. ‘Ta daa fer lheeah ayn, as fer doo, as kuse gyn fammanyn erbee. S’doillee atçhimagh geddyn greim er ny stubbinyn - ’

“‘Nee eh jannoo!’ as Dicky-Dan. ‘Ta ardsmoonaght er jeet rish!’ Va ny sooillyn echey soilshean dy scammyltagh ayns soilshey yn eayst. ‘Er oi lhiu, ghuillyn, sei-y-shiu yn kione echey stiagh sy tack!’

“Begin daue cur yn Yernagh kione y vreimmey syn aer as cur stiagh eh ny veggan as ny veggan, cassey dy debejagh. Eisht hayrn ad er y tack as chiangle ad mygeayrt e chleeau eh, as hug ad eshyn ny hassoo. Crooaght whaagh agglagh v’eh jeeaghyn. Lesh kione gloutagh, va booghey magh ayns shey raaidyn jeig anchasley kyndagh rish anvea ny kiyt.

“Go on now,’ squeaks out Dicky-Dan. ‘Out of it, the whole bad bunch of ye!’ An’ fetches th’ ugly fella a thump to set him on the right road. He went careerin’ away somethin’ desperate, trippin’ and clamberin’. Not a word out of him, of course, with the gag all over his face. But there was no gags on the cats. An’ they was cussin’ him loud an’ clear.

“The fellas laughed till they had to lean on trees!”

The old man smiled.

“Would it surprise ye to know he never come back? Would it now? Well, ‘tread on the divil’s tail an’ he’ll eat ye: laugh at his horns an’ he’ll cry,’ as the man said before now.

“He showed up in one o’ the towns with a face like a junction of the railways. The cats had cleaned most of the red hair off him, too. He wasn’t a quarter of the lady-killer that he’d been. Aw, we’ll see no more of him.

“But by an’ by an’ there was a splutter among the women over the cats that’d gone missin’ - though Tootie stole no more, not havin’ any sack Then one or two of the craythurs began to find their way home.

“An’ I think a foolish dread started to come over Dicky-Dan, now all the glory was gone cold; that the big Irish fella might get wind of who started it all, an’ come howlin’ for his blood.

“None of us ever let on, of course. But the fly in th’ ointment is oul’ Tootie.

“‘Immee-shiu nish,’ ta Dicky-Dan scraaghey. ‘Immee-shiu magh ass, y slane drogh phossan jiu!’ As t’eh bwoalley yn fer graney dy chur eh er y raad kiart. Ersooyl lesh dy debejagh, snapperal as lieh-huittym. Dyn fockle ass, son shickyrys, as y gobbane ooilley harrish yn eddin echey. Agh cha row gobbaneyn erbee er ny kiyt. As v’adsyn guee mollaght er dy niartal as dy cronnal.

“Va ny fir garaghtee gys v’ad eginit lieh-lhie er biljyn!”

Vong y shenn dooinney.

“Jinnagh eh cur yindys ort fys y ve ayd nagh ren eh rieu çheet erash? Jinnagh eh, nish? Wahll, jean sthampey er famman y jouyl as nee eh gee uss: jean craiddey mysh ny eairkyn echey as nee eh keayney,’ myr dooyrt y dooinney roish nish.

“Haink eh rish ayns nane jeh ny baljyn as eddin goll rish goal jeh ny traenyn. Va’n chooid smoo jeh’n folt ruy echey scughit ersooyl ec ny kiyt neesht. Cha row monney jeh myrneen ny mraane faagit aynsyn. Aw, cha jeanmayd fakin eshyn arragh.

“Agh nish as reesht va sparçhal mastey ny mraane kyndagh rish ny kiyt va caillt - agh cha ren Tootie geid tooilley jeu as eshyn gyn sack. Eisht ghow nane ny jees jeh ny cretooryn toshiaght d’eddyn y raad dy valley.

“As ta mee smooïnaghtyn dy row aggle ommidjagh çheet er Dicky-Dan as ooilley’n ghloyr ersooyl; dy jinnagh y fer mooar Yernagh clashtyn quoi hug reddyn fo raad, as dy darragh eh, screeaghey son yn uill echey.

“Son shickyrys, cha dinsh fer erbee jinyn. Agh she shenn Tootie yn ynrican voirey.

These clikky fellas sees as far through a brick wall as anybody. Once Dicky caught him on the way to the dog-licence office with a box of kittens. ‘Leave off that now,’ he says mighty quick. ‘They’re changin’ the law about cats.’

“So often ye’ll see him buyin’ Tootie a drink; with bad grace enough sometimes. But for the sake of keepin’ oul’ times in their proper place.”

As I left the village, I saw Dicky-Dan Watterson again. He was finishing the notice by the duck-pond, drawing a red "R" on "DANGER".

A duck stood in the middle of the drying slime, watching him; the water came half-way up the bird's legs.

But perhaps in winter it was deep

Ta ny bonkany shoh fakin cho foddey trooid boalley-breek as peiagh erbee. Keayrt dy row, hooar Dicky eh er y raad gys offish ny kiedyn-moddee as kishtey dy phishyn echey. 'Jarrod shen nish,' t'eh gra tappee dy liooar. 'T'ad caghlaa yn leigh bentyn rish ny kiyt.'

"Myr shen, nee oo fakin eh as eh kionnaghey jough da Tootie; lesh grayse olk dy liooar ny keayrtyn. Agh cour freayll shenn traaghyn sy voayl cooie daue."

As mish faagail y balley beg çheerey, honnick mee Dicky-Dan Kodhere reesht. V'eh cur kione er y fogrey rish y phoyll-thunnag, tayrn "R" jiarg er "DANGER".

Va thunnag ny shassoo ayns mean y scroig va goll er çhirrymaghey, jeeaghyn er; va'n ushtey çheet lieh-raad seose cassyn yn ushag.

Agh foddee dy row eh down ayns y gheurey.

The end - Y jerrey