

The Remarkable Adventures of
Terry the Tomcat

By

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A light-hearted tale, about a very unusual cat, in a make-believe world for older children...(and their Mums & Dads)

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Table of Contents

1. Terry runs for his life 4
2. Lurk & Kurk 9
3. Bumbling Billy saves the day.....12
4. Hooray for Hooray16
5. Terry’s time is up23



.....28
6. A Disappearing Trick29
7. Horace meets his match34
8. Romantic Interlude.....39
9. Crankie Frankie.....42
10. Thieves in the forest46
11. A New Leader52
12. Tel’s Toms58
13. Two cunning plans62
14. The Long March68



.....73
15. A Parting of Ways.....74



.....78

1. Terry runs for his life

This is the tale of a remarkable and most unusual tomcat called Terry.

Terry had a special gift that many cats said was unique in the annals of Mogology. In fact Professor Longwhiskers, of whom we shall hear more about later, said as much when he first examined Terry as a young kitten.

But we are getting ahead of ourselves. Terry didn't know he had special gifts when he was born one cold February morning, and if hadn't been for an unfortunate series of events, he may never have known, and may never have met his true destiny.

Our story starts with Terry's dad, who was a bit of a rebel, called Tony.

Tony wasn't what you could call a conventional cat. In fact, long before he married Annie, he was known in polite circles to have some very wild ways. Somehow, he never quite fitted in, and he was always struggling to obey all those silly rules that the Mayor and elders of PMC (Pitsea Mount Catsil) had laid down for the local community.

But although Tony was always getting into trouble with the elders because of his frequent rule breaking, many ordinary cats secretly admired his independent spirit. Even some older members of the community, whilst outwardly showing their disapproval, with their haughty "Tut-tuts" and "Oh such naughtiness!" were secretly happy to tolerate Tony's rebellious nature.

This was because he did things they didn't dare to do, and he always had that irrepressible cheeky grin on his ginger face. At the end of the day, most cats couldn't help smiling, and they couldn't help liking him.

But that was before he broke one of the great laws of The Tabbythia.

The Laws of The Tabbythia weren't silly laws, like those passed by the local Pitsea elders. No, these were serious laws that had been laid down by those wise old founding Moggies, in a distant, bygone age.

The particular law that Tony disobeyed, was one of the most serious, for it was the one that forbade all free cats, who were born in the Catdom of Feralia to marry any cat who had been raised amongst, and lived with humans as a pet.

Such cats were known as “humpets” (shortened from HUMAN’s PETS), and any contact between humpets, and Feralise cats, (as the free cats of Feralia were known), was strictly forbidden.

The law wasn’t there just to interfere and control the course of true love, but was made for very practical and sensible reasons, humpets couldn’t speak Feralise, and they also had great difficulty in looking after themselves, without their human ‘mothers’ and ‘fathers’.

So it was decided that mixed relationships would cause too many problems. If allowed to set up homes, willy-nilly, inside Feralise territory, humpets would create a huge strain, not only on family relationships, but also on Feralia’s struggling social services.

But Tony didn’t care about all that practical stuff, and he didn’t give two hoots for laws of any kind.

He was young, a bit wild and out for a good time.

Annie was a beautiful young black and white humpet who lived with her human family, in Pope’s Crescent, a narrow, leafy lane, only a couple of miles from Cat Hall in the Feralise region of Pitsea Mount.

One hot summer morning, Tony decided adventure out and explore the neighbouring humpet lands, and he hadn’t strayed very far when he found the love of his life – the gorgeous and beguiling Annie, who was frolicking on the lawn of her human owner’s back garden.

At first, Annie assumed that Tony was a humpet from one of the neighbour’s houses, but it soon became apparent that Tony didn’t understand her strange humpet meowing, and when Tony tried to speak – oh my goodness –such a peculiar sounds these Feralise cats seemed to make!

Of course, Annie didn’t understand a word, but in spite of this, she was soon entranced by Tony’s easy charm. The two of them worked out a complicated system of paw language and unconventional meowing, and it wasn’t long before they became inseparable partners during those long summer days.

After a two months courtship, the irrepressible Tony asked Annie to marry him.

In spite of all the laws forbidding such a marriage, Annie was swept off her feet by the handsome, swashbuckling cat, and agreed to the union.

The problem was finding somewhere to get married, but as usual, the ever-resourceful Tony had a solution. During his previous wanderings, Tony had made friends with a rebel ship's tom, Captain Growler, who lived on an old river barge, moored at Pitsea Creek.

Even though Tony was always breaking the laws of Feralia, he wasn't afraid to make use of those very laws when it suited him. So he decided to take advantage of one of Feralia's most ancient statutes – the one that still permitted ship's cats to perform marriage ceremonies; so one cold and windy autumn morning, that gnarled old bruiser, Captain Growler, performed the marriage ceremony for Tony and Annie.

At first, the illegal marriage flourished. Tony and Annie set up their home in the cosy shed at the back of the garden in Pope's Crescent, and the adoring couple spent many happy evenings together.

But it all started to go wrong when Annie's human owners found out she was going to have some baby kittens. They kept her confined to their house, particularly at night and to make matters worse, they discovered that Tony had been living with Annie in the shed.

Once they realised that this huge feral tom was the father of Annie's babies, they did just about everything they could think of to make him go away.

When the humans realised that shouting, screaming and throwing buckets of cold water weren't going to deter Tony, they started throwing stones at him, and in desperation they even set the neighbour's dog onto him.

Poor Tony was finding it very difficult to continue living in Pope's Crescent, and as time went on, the two cats saw less and less of each other. Tony begged Annie to run away with him, to some far away part of Feralia, but she was reluctant to leave the comfort and protection of her human home.

Annie feared what would happen if she went to live in Feralia, for after all she would be an illegal wife, who couldn't speak the language, and she knew she couldn't fend for herself properly.

Eventually, on a cold November evening, Annie delivered her babies— six wonderful little balls of fluff – five females and one tom. Two of Annie’s daughters were ginger, the third was jet black and the fourth was black and white.

At first, the humans thought the fifth kitten was also a girl so she was named Teresa, after a favourite human aunt. Teresa’s colour was tortoiseshell, a mixture of orange with black blotches and a snowy white chest, which would normally mean that the cat was a female. But a careful examination revealed that Annie had indeed given birth to a most unusual kitten – a male tortoiseshell. So TEResa became... TERry.

Three weeks after they were born, the five baby females were taken from Annie and given to other humans to keep as pets. This left Terry alone with his Mum, who was doing her best to bring him up properly, even though she was pining terribly for her beloved Tony, who these days, she hardly ever .

As the weeks went by, Tony was finding it even harder to be with his wife, what with the neighbour’s dog being set on him, and water and stones being thrown at him every time he came near Annie’s house. The best he could do was hang around in the vicinity of Annie’s home and hope for a quick glimpse of her – or maybe even a stolen lick.

Then one late afternoon in February, when the snow was thick on the ground, he was roaming in the fields next to Pope’s Crescent, when he heard the squeal of a kitten, which came from the direction of Annie’s house.

He immediately raced to the garden, and was just in time to see little Terry scampering across the snow on the front lawn, before diving through a hole in the fence and running helter-skelter down the road. Annie and even the humans all gave chase, but the poor terrified mite ran with unbelievable speed and somehow out-paced them all as he disappeared into the distance at the end of Pope’s Crescent.

Annie was distraught, as she had never travelled beyond the end of her road before, and something seemed to prevent her from leaving her familiar territory to follow Terry into the busy High Road. After all, she was a humpet.

No such inhibitions restrained Tony, and he caught the scent of his son rushing across the open grassland on the other side of the High Road, that led up to Pitsea Mount. Tony was sighing with relief that Terry had avoided all the deadly traffic, and he had almost caught up with the kitten, when disaster struck.

As if from nowhere, a huge brown fox suddenly appeared, and with an astonishing turn of speed, he immediately pounced upon Terry and sank his slobbering teeth into Terry's neck. Tony was distraught, and did the only thing a desperate father could do when his son was in danger. He charged straight at the fox and knocked him off balance, which to his utter relief caused the fox to release Terry.

The fox was furious at the loss of his delicious tid-bit and immediately set off in pursuit of Tony. He chased him out across the snowy grassland, which ran along the side of Pitsea Mount, and way out towards Pitsea marshes. Eventually, the two of them disappeared into the ever-darkening gloom of the early winter dusk.

As for little Terry, he went rolling helter-skelter down the hill in a little bundle of fur and snow when at long last, a gorse bush stopped his downward slide, bringing him to a halt in a small heap.

The poor mite was in a very bad state. He was severely winded, his neck was bleeding and one of his front paws was injured, possibly broken. Whenever he tried to get up, the paw gave way underneath him, and he squealed in pain.

The night closed in and Terry lay in the snow - cold, hungry and frightened. He was getting weaker and weaker, and it was becoming increasingly likely that he would not survive the night.

2. *Lurk & Kurk*

Lurk and Kurk, two identical, jet-black Feralise tomcats, were out for an evening's foraging and if cats didn't have such an incredible ability to see in the dark, Terry might never have been spotted.

"I say, Kurk, do you see that orange ball in the snow down there?"

"Lurk, that's not a ball – it's an animal - a kitten if I'm not mistaken."

'What's a kitten doing out at this time of night? He'll catch his death', said Lurk as he approached the motionless Terry.

'Lurk, I don't think he's one of ours. This kitten isn't from Feralia – he's a humpet – look, he's got a humpet collar round its neck,' said Kurk, who was a bit of a know-all.

'We better leave him then,' said Lurk. 'We're not allowed get involved with humpets.'

'We can't leave him. Look Lurk, he's been badly hurt. If we leave him here, he will die.'

'Maybe the humans will come and collect him.'

'No way! He must have run away and got attacked by something – probably by a fox. The humans will never find him, we have to help.'

'What can we do?' asked Lurk.

'We have to take him to the Catspital on Pitsea Mount and see if the nurses can help. He can't walk so we'll have to get a hedger.'

'We can't do that, Kurk, we'll get into trouble – you know hedgers are only for cats who belong to the FHS, (Feralia Health Service).

'No-one will know he's not from Feralia, not if I take his collar off.'

‘But he can’t talk. You know humpets can’t speak Feralise – they have a different language,’ protested Lurk.

‘We’ll have to take a chance on that. Go on Lurk, you run and get the hedger and I’ll stay here and look after him. And I’ll take his humpet collar off.’

The Pitsea Mount district of the Feralia Health Service was in much the same state as in other districts – too many patients and not enough nurses. So it was another two hours before Lurk managed to track down a free hedger to make the short journey from the catspital, to the gorse bush, where poor Terry was lying injured and unconscious.

Kurk was still guarding the nearly frozen kitten, and when Lurk and the hedger arrived, he was nestled close against Terry in a desperate attempt to keep the poor kitten warm.

The hedger consisted of two adult hedgehogs, curled up into perfectly shaped balls, with a long pine tree branch clasped in their sharp teeth. Attached to the branch was a small bed of leaves and twigs, large enough to carry an injured cat, and Lurk and Kurk quickly dragged Terry onto the hedger.

The gallant hedgehogs - such faithful friends of Feralia, dragged their prickly bodies back up the hill, with the two cats taking up position at the rear, helping to push the heavy hedger with their foreheads.

Eventually, the four animals, with their precious cargo, arrived at the catspital entrance on Pitsea Mount, where a husband and wife team, consisting of a very ancient tabby called Mr Bob and a curious looking Siamese female cat named Suzie Woo, immediately took charge. They dragged Terry into the warmth of a small alcove and started licking him all over to try and get his blood circulation going again.

Mr Bob and Suzie Woo were still fussing over Terry when the limping, feared figure of Ben Stumper appeared at the patient’s bedside.

Ben Stumper had three good paws and a small stump where his rear left paw used to be. He was a large, old grey tom with very long fur and a huge silver ruff around his neck. He had been the Chief Medical Cat (CMC), at Pitsea Mount catspital, for as long as anyone could remember, and ran the place with an ‘iron’ claw.

‘What’urr we got ‘ere thahn?’ he asked in his broad old fashioned rural Feralia accent.

‘E’s a poor li’ckle kitten wot’s been savaged by a fox,’ replied Mr Bob, in the more familiar local way of speaking.

‘Who be he? Wurr’s ‘e come from then?’ Ben Stumper asked

‘Gor luv a duck, Chief, we don’ know, does we. E’s been brought in by them there Lurk and Kurk bruvvers. Unconscious ‘e was – nearly dead – poor li’ckle mite!’ said Suzie Woo.

‘E better be Feralise thahn, orr thah’ll be trouble for all concerned.’

‘Feralise? Course e’is, Chief, said Mr. Bob. The bruvvers wouldn’t ‘ave brought ‘im in if ‘e wasn’t Feralise. They knows the rules.’

‘Wahll, soon as ‘e wakes up, I want to be called. We’ll soon see if he speaks our tongue.’

‘And if ‘e don’t sir?’ asked Suzie Woo fearfully.

‘If ‘e don’t, tha’hn it’s back out thar in the snow, to humpet land- wharr’e belongs!’

With that, Ben Stumper limped away, and disappeared into the labyrinth of alcoves and tunnels that made up Pitsea Mount Catspital.

3. Bumbling Billy saves the day

There was quite a crowd around poor Terry when he finally opened his hungry little eyes the following morning. Word had spread quickly that the brothers may have broken the rules and brought a humpet kitten into the village.

Lurk and Kurk were there, fearful of their punishment for breaking the rules.

Then there was Suzie Woo and Mr Bob who had nursed Terry all night long, and had probably saved his life. Ben Stumper had also just arrived, and if that wasn't bad enough, he had brought with him three members of Pitsea Mount Catsil.

Firstly there was Dame Shirley, a very rich and 'haughty-taughty' black and white cat, who had been a member of the Catsil for most of her nine lives. The second Catsil member was Bumbling Billy, a caring old Tabby, who meant well but was generally acknowledged to be rather dim. Last but not least was the Mayor himself, Len Dedyrock, known far and wide as "Red Len", due to his ginger colouring – fur so vivid that it appeared to be almost red.

Terry looked around him in a state of bewilderment. He opened his mouth to speak, but nothing came out. He was so thirsty and tired, that all he could manage was a weak croak.

'Give 'im some milk – quick!' said Mr Bob, as Suzie Woo rushed over with a punnet of fresh milk.

Terry drank thirstily as the crowd inched their way forward, all desperate to hear his first words.

'*HUSS-PUSS, HUSS-PUSS,*' Terry finally said, in a subdued voice.

'Thar! Oi told'e. Oi knew it - E's a humpet! Can't unnerstan' a word 'e's a sayin,' shouted the strident Ben Stumper.

'Wait a minute,' shouted Lurk, the poor thing's only just woken up, and he's very weak. Give him a chance.'

Red Len decided it was time to make his boring voice heard.

‘Yes, yes, we must give him a fair chance, it’s only right and proper, and in accordance with good manners and in keeping with the prevailing circumstances....’

‘Really, really Mr Mayor!’ interrupted Dame Shirley, in her posh, high falutin’ accent. ‘You do go on so, with your political rambling. Let’s hear what the young urchin has to say for himself. Come on young man – speak up – if you can!’

Terry stared at the cats. He didn’t understand what was going on, and didn’t know what he was supposed to do. But something inside him told him that he was in danger if he didn’t try to speak to them.

‘*HUSS-PUSS, MEOW-WOW....*’ He said

There was silence. He tried again.

‘*HUSS-PUSS...*’

They didn’t understand him. Then, from somewhere deep in Terry’s brain, something he didn’t quite understand prompted him to make some new sounds.

‘H..H-Hello, M-my n-name’s T-Terry,’ he stammered in faulting Feralise.

‘Oh!... Ar!...,’ murmured the assembled group of cats.

‘He’s Feralise! I told you!’ shouted Lurk, with some relief, thinking that he would now escape punishment.

‘Not so fast! Not so fast! Said Dame Shirley. I don’t believe he’s Feralise. You heard those strange humpet sounds he was making before.’

‘Then how is it that he can also speak our language?’ asked Kurk.

‘I don’t know, but I want you two cats to tell me exactly where you found him.’

‘And ...er...if he is one of us... if he is one of us’ repeated Red Len, ‘where are his parents...where's his mother and father??’

‘Well – er I don’t know,’ said Lurk.

The two brothers started to look so guilty, and Lurk realised that they wouldn't be able to hide the truth for ever.

'All right, I admit it – he is a humpet – he had a humpet collar on. But we had to rescue him or he would have died.' Lurk admitted in a fearful tone.

'Out with 'im tharn. We cain't 'ave no humpets staying around 'ere,' said Ben Stumper.

'But he spoke Feralise,' pleaded Kurk.

'And he's too weak to go back out there in the snow,' added Lurk.

'Mr Mayor! Use your authority and throw this delinquent humpet out! I demand you do it now it, now!' Said Dame Shirley.

'Well...er...yes I suppose I must. It's the law isn't it? We can't have humpets fraternising with Feralise. It will cause all sorts of terrible problems.'

'Like what?' asked Kurk.

'Well...er... he won't understand all our rules and regulations... and we can't explain them to him, because he can't speak Feralise...'

'But he can,' said Lurk, 'We all heard him speak just now didn't we?'

Bumbling Billy, the dim one, who up to now had kept out of all the discussions, decided that it was time to talk some sense.

'It seems to me that the poor boy is much too weak to be sent out into the cold to fend for himself. Why don't we let him stay here for a few days so that he can recover his health, and then we can send him back to humpet-land – if that's what we all still want to do.'

'What on earth do you mean? Of course he must go – the sooner the better. Eh, eh Mr mayor?' said Dame Shirley.

'Well yes, but Bumbling Billy has a point. It wouldn't be right to send the kitten away while he is so weak and injured. Maybe we can leave it for a couple of days.'

'And,' continued bumbling Billy, 'why don't we send two members of our SCS's (Special Cat Services) out to the frontiers, and try to find out just where this poor

little kitten has come from, and find out what has happened to his mum and Dad. He may be a humpet, but he's still one of God's cats.'

'Yes, yes, I should have thought of that myself. Yes, yes, I will make the necessary arrangements,' echoed Red Len.

'That's all settled then. Now, can we leave the poor li'ckle mite in peace?' said Mr Bob, as he started to usher all the cats away from Terry's bed.

And so it was agreed that Terry the Tomcat would be allowed to stay at the catspital at Pitsea Mount for two more days, while information was gathered about the whereabouts of his parents.

4. Hooray for Hooray

Terry was feeling much better – so much so that he couldn't wait to be allowed out of his leafy bed and back into the wide exciting world that beckoned him beyond the doors of the catspital.

But Mr. Bob and Suzie Woo continued to fuss over him, and wouldn't let him out of their sight, for fear that the disruptive elements in the community might try to take the law into their own hands and evict him from the Catdom.

The news of a possible humpet in their midst had spread far and wide, and the cats of the neighbouring hills and plains of Feralia seemed to be evenly split - between those who wanted Terry out, and those who felt he should stay. However, the main question on every cat's lips was, Could he, or couldn't he speak Feralise? And if he could, then how was that possible?

Apart from a rather strange, gnarled brown old cat called Professor Longwhiskers, the only cats who were allowed to visit Terry during this period, were Lurk and Kurk.

On the second morning, they arrived bright and early, just in time to see Terry tucking into a delicious meal of minced mouse and juicy leg of sparrow.

'Well, he certainly seems a lot better now, doesn't he, Lurk?' said Kurk.

'Oh my goodness yes; and what a delicious meal you're eating my dear boy,' said Lurk.

Terry ignored the visitors and kept on tucking in as though he hadn't had a decent meal in days, which he hadn't.

Kurk observed, 'I don't think he understands us, Lurk.'

More chewing from Terry, and then finally in his young squeaky voice, 'Well, you don't fink I'm gonna speak wiv my mouf' full, do ya?' he said, in almost perfect Feralise, but with a distinctly local dialect.

‘Why, my dear, dear boy! we can understand you, can’t we Lurk?’ said Kurk.

‘We most certainly can, my beloved brother,’ answered Lurk, ‘so maybe you’re Feralise after all.’

‘I’m not sure wot I am, sirs,’ squeaked Terry.

‘Speak some humpet then,’ suggested Kurk.

Terry thought for a minute, and then he opened his little mouth and squeaked, ‘*HUSS-PUSS, MEOW-WOW.*’

‘It’s amazing!’ said Lurk and Kurk together. Although they didn’t understand a word Terry had spoken, the strange hissing sounds bore the unmistakable ring of humpet-speak.

‘How can you speak humpet and Feralise? It’s truly amazing!’

Their puzzlement was interrupted by the arrival of a party of VI C’s. (Very Important Cats). Leading the group were familiar faces, Dame Shirley, and Red Len, the Mayor and Fuzzy Boris The Doris, deputy Mayor. Then Professor Longwhiskers followed them into the ward, and bringing up the rear was Ben Stumper, the feared catspital Chief.

‘Yes...er... well young Terry me lad..’ started Red Len, when as usual, he was interrupted by Dame Shirley.

‘We have come to inform you that The Catsil of Pitsea Mount have held a special meeting, and we have reached a decision on your future.’

Poor Terry looked terrified, as the aggressive Ben Stumper pushed him into the centre of the group, to hear his fate.

‘Well Terry,’ said the Mayor, ‘The Catsil has determined that you are in fact a humpet...’

‘Even though he speaks Feralise?’ shouted Lurk and Kurk almost together.

‘Yes...er well, Professor Longwhiskers, our technical expert, can explain,’ the Mayor answered.

The learned Professor started to lecture the assembled group.

‘Hum... Hum... Yes, unique in the annals of mogology,..this young cat, Terry by name, is a very special being. There has never been a cat before who can speak both tongues.

‘Certainly, there have been illegal inter racial marriages in the past, but the children of such marriages have only ever spoken humpet, and they have always stayed in the humpet world.

‘I have called all my learned colleagues on the feraphone, and no one has ever heard of a multi-lingual cat before. You are truly a one off – yes, yes, most interesting – I shall be writing about you in the next edition of the Mogology monthly.’

‘So, as you are a humpet - all be it a Feralise-speaking humpet - I’m afraid you have to go!’ said Dame Shirley sharply.

‘Go? Go where?’ asked Terry fearfully.

‘Oh my poor boy!’ said Lurk. ‘I suppose you must go back to your humpet family.’

‘Yes... er you must. Well... I mean no...er ... you can’t,’ mumbled Red Len, leaving everyone more confused than ever.

‘What the Mayor is trying to say,’ said Dame Shirley, ‘is that you can’t go back to your humpet family, because they’re not there anymore.’

‘Not there? What do you mean?’ asked Kurk.

‘The two SCS (Special Cat Services) soldiers we sent out have discovered that the human family you were living with have moved, and your mother, a humpet named Annie, has gone with them,’ explained Dame Shirley.

‘Moved?’ asked Terry, ‘Where to?’

‘Yes... er... we don’t know exactly, but we think they moved to the Midlands– a very long way from here. They moved yesterday,’ said Red Len.

‘But what about Terry’s dad? If Terry can speak our tongue his dad must have been Feralise,’ said Lurk.

‘Yes, he was. A very bad and disobedient cat named Tony,’ said Dame Shirley. ‘And he hasn’t been seen since the day that Lurk and Kurk found Terry. We have determined that Tony was undoubtedly killed by the fox who nearly killed Terry.’

‘So what will happen to Terry? He’s Dad is dead and his Mum has moved away,’ asked Kurk.

There was a long silence, as no one wanted to tell them about the terrible decision that the Catsil had made.

Even Dame Shirley seemed unusually reluctant to speak, but finally she said the words that everyone had been dreading.

‘It’s not our problem. Rules are rules and they must be obeyed! He can’t stay here, so we’ll get two SCS (Special Cat Services) soldiers to escort him to the edge of our territory, and then he’s on his own. He’ll have to find a family that will take him in.’

‘But that’s terrible!’ shouted Kurk. ‘What if no one wants him? In this weather, he’ll die, the poor little mite!’

‘You can’t do that!’ added Lurk, ‘It’s not fair. He hasn’t done anything wrong.’

‘I’m afraid the decision is er... final...’ mumbled Red Len

Lurk and Kurk started to move closer to Terry as if to protect him, when the awful silence was broken by the arrival of two more cats. It was Bumbling Billy, the dim one, and with him was a very tall, black and white cat who looked very distinguished.

Despite his upper class airs, the newcomer's appearance was so thin and gaunt, that he looked as though he hadn’t had a decent meal for weeks.

‘Hello everyone, may I introduce you to Henry,’ said Bumbling Billy. “‘Hooray Henry”, to give you his full title.’

The older cats present knew that the term “Hooray” was reserved for very senior cats who held high positions in the central government in London.

‘Just call me Hooray,’ said Hooray Henry with an air of false modesty.

‘Hooray has come all the way from London to tell you what the government has decided to do about Terry,’ explained Bumbling Billy.

‘What do you mean?’ asked Dame Shirley. ‘We’ve already decided.’

‘Ahem!’ said Hooray, in his distinguished high-class voice, ‘I must advise you that we, the Hooray Cats of the central government have the power to overrule decisions made by a local Catsil. We are very grateful to Bumbling Billy here, for bringing this most serious miscarriage of justice to our attention.’

‘You bumbling idiot!’ said Dame Shirley to Bumbling Billy. ‘Why couldn’t you leave these matters to us. We know best.’

Ignoring her outburst, Hooray produced a long tabbi-scroll from his briefcase and started reading the official decree.

‘It is solemnly decreed that Terry the tomcat, son of the Feralise Tony and the humpet Annie, is hereby made a ward of the realm and ordered to remain in Feralia.’

The brothers Lurk and Kurk burst into spontaneous applause, and there was much smiling among the assembled crowd.

The only cat who disapproved of this unexpected news was Dame Shirley, who cried out in anger.

‘This is preposterous! Never in the history of Feralia has such a monstrous decision been made. I protest! I protest!’

But Hooray hadn’t finished reading.

‘And it is further decreed, that the Pitsea Mount Catsil be responsible for the upbringing of the humpet known as Terry the tomcat, and will look after him until he reaches adulthood.’

‘At which time, the said cat, Terry, will be inducted into the SCS, (Special Cat Services), where he will receive special training, so that his unique gift for languages may be properly employed for the benefit of the Catdom.’

‘By order of the government, signed, Prime-Mogster of Feralia, the ‘Orrible S’our Dave Kamikon, Knight of the Pharter.’”

This was an astonishing turn of events and there was a long silence. Dame Shirley appeared to be permanently struck dumb, but eventually Red Len, the Mayor, seemed to gather his thoughts, and spoke to Hooray.

‘Well, this is most irregular, yes, most irregular. But I foresee so many problems with this decree. I think it will never work. Indeed it will never work.’

‘And why is that, Mr Mayor?’ asked Hooray.

‘Well, for a start, we’ll never find anyone to foster a humpet. No one would agree to foster a humpet. And, what then, what then?’ he asked in usual repetitive manner.

‘If Pitsea Catsil cannot carry out its duties as ordered, then we would have to close the Catsil, and we would rule Pitsea directly from London,’ said Hooray Henry with a menacing, Cheshire-cat like leer.

‘But that’s scandalous!’ said Dame Shirley. And all because of some half-breed humpet! It’s scandalous, I tell you!’

‘But all you have to do, dear lady, is find some foster parents.’

‘It’s impossible! Who would want to take a humpet into their own home?’

‘We’d take the poor li’ckle mite, wouldn’t we Suzie?’ said a voice from the back.

‘Who’s that?’ asked Dame Shirley.

‘It’s us, Dime Shully, said Mr. Bob. Me’n Suzie will adop’ ‘im. We luv the poor li’ckle fella.

‘Gor yeah, Dime Shully,’ said Suzie Woo. ‘We sure do luv’im. We can be ‘is foster mum and dad, can’t we?’

‘And who are you?’ asked Dame Shirley with an air of disdain. Your local accents are so bad! Are you sure you are qualified to take on such an important task?’

But of course they were very well qualified. They may be a little rough ‘around the edges’, and not very sophisticated, but their reputation as faithful, caring nurses had spread far and wide. And everyone knew they had hearts of gold.

‘Well... er... then, that’s settled. That’s settled,’ said Red Len, who was relieved to hear that Hooray’s threat to close his Catsil would be dropped if they could find suitable foster parents to take care of Terry.

Poor Terry, the cat at the centre of all this kerfuffle, was becoming more and more bewildered by the sudden whirlwind of events that he had been caught up in.

Even though he only barely understood this strange, Feralise language, he had just about managed to follow what was being discussed.

First of all, he heard that his mother Annie had moved away to goodness knows where, and if that wasn’t bad enough, the next thing he learnt was that his dad was dead.

Then he was going to be thrown out, and then he was ordered to stay. And now he was to have new parents. It really was all too much for him, and his little mind was in a whirl. His paws gave way, and he collapsed on the ground, in a blind funk.

Mr Bob and Suzie Woo had seen enough ill treatment for one day.

‘Oh you poor li’ckle fng!’ Shouted Suzie Woo.

She and Mr, Bob rushed over to the bed and picked up Terry by the scruff of his neck, ran out of the catspital, and down the path to the peace and comfort of their own little home.

And that’s how Terry the tomcat, at the age of three months and three days, came to find himself in a new home and with new parents at Pitsea Mount, in the Catdom of Feralia.

5. *Terry's time is up*

Nearly nine months had passed, and although some of the elders would probably disagree, Terry had put a lot of fun into the mundane lives for those who lived in and around Cat Alley, where he stayed with his new Mum and Dad.

Like his real father before him, Terry was always up to mischief, and he always had a cheeky grin on his black and white face, (not forgetting those ginger blotches).

Poor Mr Bob and Suzie Woo didn't realise what they had let themselves in for when they agreed to adopt Terry, and life for them became a hectic, mad-cap existence. Not a day passed when there wasn't a new crisis involving the irrepressible young tomcat. In just one week alone Terry got himself into enough scrapes to fill a storybook.

On Monday, our little hero was involved in a fight with some of the wimpish kittens of the neighbourhood and had to be given a proper 'talking to'.

On Tuesday he was found stuck thirty feet up a giant oak tree and he had to be rescued.

On Wednesday, he was trapped out on the marshes when he became entangled in a gorse bush and was unable to move without ripping half his fur coat off.

On Thursday, he fell down a disused well, and on Friday he escaped the clutches of a chasing fox by the skin of his teeth.

And on Saturday? – Well on Saturday, Terry went missing, and on Sunday, after the biggest search party Pitsea Catsill had ever mounted had failed to find him, he crawled home under his own steam. The naughty tom had spent the weekend with Captain Growler on an old river barge moored at Pitsea Creek.

Barely a day passed when either Mr Bob or Suzie Woo weren't called home from their work at the catspital to deal with yet another crisis involving the precocious Terry.

But they didn't really mind all this disruption to their well-ordered existence, because they couldn't help loving their wild and naughty young ward. He didn't mean any harm – he was just full of life and high spirits, and he was always cheerful.

He never had a bad word to say about anyone. He even spoke kindly about the 'haughty taughty' Dame Shirley, and the terrifying Ben Stumper, despite the fact that both of them were always trying to get rid of him and have him banished back to humpet-land.

Lurk and Kurk would often come to call, to help with Terry's education, and there was also a weekly session with Bumbling Billy, the only member of the Catsil who was prepared to help.

Bumbling Billy was very well qualified to teach Terry all about the ancient history and rules of Feralia as he was one of the few Pitsea elders who hadn't been educated at the elite academy of Fleaton.

Fleaton was so-called because the young students would spend their entire school years trying to get rid of all the fleas that settled on their young bodies, and as a result, they learnt very little.

In spite of this, an education at Fleaton was absolutely essential for any moggie who wished to make his paw-mark in the catdom of Feralia.

(Amongst Fleaton's most famous students were Hooray Henry from London, the deputy Mayor, Fuzzy Boris, and last but not least the orrrible prime-mogster, S'our Dave Kamikan.)

Lurk taught Terry such things as how to catch birds and mice, and Kurk taught him how to use his feline instincts properly. (For instance, how to find his way home when he was lost.)

Bumbling Billy, (who everyone knew was so dim), related the legends of ancient Feralia, and explained how the great Catdom had originally come into being.

Mr Bob and Suzie Woo also tried to help with Terry's education, but their main job was to love, nurture and especially feed this fast growing kitten.

Loving and nurturing such a loveable cat as Terry was a pleasure, but feeding him did become more and more of a problem as the months passed. Young Terry was rapidly growing into an enormous cat.

His appetite was insatiable, and he never seemed to stop eating. When he was about seven months old, his foster parents had to appeal to the Catsil for help in feeding their ravenous foster son. The Mayor and the deputy Mayor couldn't make up their minds what to do, and Dame Shirley wasn't any help when she simply told them to 'Let the urchin starve!'

Fortunately, by this time Terry was so popular in the general community, that many cats were happy to 'chip in' and help to feed the 'little giant', and so another worrying problem was solved.

As time went on, Terry became more and more of a handful, and as much as everyone loved him, many started to count the days when he would be leaving to take up his place in the SCS (Special Cat Services) training school in London.

It was generally thought that the school would be the 'making of him', and that the strict discipline there would calm his irrepressible nature and turn him into a more respectful young cat.

It was also thought that the college would teach him to take better care of himself, and many yearned for the day when their loveable rascal would finish his training in London and return from his college as a model member of the Pitsea community.

Just two weeks short of his first birthday, and about nine months after he had come to live in Feralia, the expected tabbi-scroll arrived from London, which instructed Terry's foster parents to take him to London the following week to be enrolled into the SCS.

Terry had always known what his future plans were to be, as despite his tender age, he had never forgotten that fateful day when Hooray Henry had come to Pitsea and read out the decree.

But whenever either of his foster parents had tried to talk to him about it, he had remained unusually quiet, and had quickly changed the subject. Now that the time had come, and Mr Bob and Suzie Woo had no choice but to sit Terry down and discuss his future with him.

‘Now then, young Terry me lad, the tabbi-scroll is come from the SCS, and next week we ‘as to take you to London,’ said Mr Bob, when he came home from the Catspital one evening.

‘But Dad, I don’ wanna go. I likes it ‘ere,’ Terry replied. ‘Do I ‘ave to go?’

‘Oh yer poor lickle fing,’ said Suzie Woo. We likes yer to stay ‘ere as well, but yer ‘as ter go luv. It’s all been agreed.’

‘Agreed? Wiv ‘oo?’ asked Terry. ‘I never agreed!’

‘You woz too young to agree my dear boy,’ said Mr Bob. ‘We all agreed for you.’

‘But that’s not fair!’ said Terry.

‘Listen Terry,’ said Mr Bob, ‘If we ‘adn’t agreed, you wooda been cast out of Feralia in the middle of winter, and you wooda probably been a long time dead by now.’

‘But I don’ wanna go. I luvs yer all so much. I’ll miss you so. You’ve both been so good to me,’ said Terry, with tears in his eyes.

‘Oh my poor lickle baby,’ cried Suzie Woo. ‘We’ll miss you too – somefink rotten. Won’t we Mr Bob?’

‘Of course we will. But it won’t be forever. You’ll come back when yer’s finished yer training. This is still yer ‘ome. Always will be, my son.’

And so the discussion went on and on, long into the night, with everyone on the edge of tears, especially when they mentioned that he had to go away.

After that night, nothing more was said about Terry’s imminent departure, and plans were quietly made for Mr Bob to take Terry to London on the following Thursday morning.

Wednesday night quickly arrived, and some of Terry’s closest friends came round for a little farewell party.

Lurk and Kurk were there of course, together with some of the young wimps of the neighbourhood. Very late in the evening, dear old Bumbling Billy arrived to wish

Terry luck, and just as the party was breaking up, who should arrive, but Captain Growler, having travelled all the way from Pitsea Creek.

‘Ah hah me ‘arties!’ C’aint let young Terry ‘ere go off wivout giving ‘im a proper sailors’ farewell, can we now?’

Captain Growler proceeded to dance a sort of cat’s hornpipe, but he must have been tipping the rumbaba, as every time he tried to get up on his hind legs, he only succeeded in falling over, much to the amusement of the assembled moggies.

The party was finally over, and a very quiet Terry settled down in his special corner for some much-needed sleep. Tomorrow was going to be the start of a new life, away from the love and comfort of Pitsea Mount.



Cap'n Growler

6. *A Disappearing Trick*

When Mr. Bob came looking for Terry early the following morning, he wasn't in his usual spot, waiting for his breakfast. At first, Mr Bob wasn't too bothered, as he thought that Terry had probably woken up especially early, due to the excitement of the forthcoming trip. He was probably outside somewhere, saying goodbye to his friends, Mr Bob decided.

But when a thorough search of the neighbourhood did not uncover Terry's whereabouts, the foster parents became increasingly concerned.

'E's vanished off the face of the 'urf!' said Mr Bob.

'Oh my goodness – where d'ya fink 'es got to?' asked Suzie Woo in a high state of distress.

'I dunno, Suzie. Maybe 'E's run off. 'E never did wont ter go to that there school!'

'Oh the poor lickle fing! Wot we gonna do Mr Bob?'

'I'm gonna 'ave ter tell the Catsil, Suzie. Maybe they can send out a search party.'

When it became clear that Terry had really gone, the worried couple reported his disappearance to Red Len who as usual, was completely at a loss to know what to do. Unfortunately, Dame Shirley just happened to turn up when the Mayor had almost decided to mount a full-scale search.

'Mr Mayor – I must protest! This is a waste of Pitsea Catsil's valuable resources. We have done everything the London Government and the 'orrible S'our Dave Kamikon demanded of us. We have fostered that dreadful humpet – against our wishes – and what a nightmare the last nine months have been!

'That cat is a delinquent – just like his father before him. We have done our duty and that's the end of the matter. If the ungrateful little wretch chooses to run away on the very day that he's due to go to London, that just shows what a bad cat he is. We must wash our paws of him!'

'But what will become of 'im?' asked Suzie Woo.

‘That’s not our business,’ replied Dame Shirley in her haughty taughty manner. ‘I suggest, Mr Mayor, that you send a message to that awful cat – what was his name? Hooray Henry – and tell him what’s happened. Then it’s all up to S’our Dave and those awful people in London. It’s out of our hands, thank goodness!’

And so the discussion continued, and even though Red Len wanted to help the despairing foster parents, he allowed himself to be persuaded by the domineering Dame Shirley. And this time, Bumbling Billy, who had gone to visit a sick relative, wasn’t around to save the day.

What on earth had happened to Terry?

Well, if Bumbling Billy had been there, it probably wouldn’t have taken him long to work it out. Even though everyone knew he was pretty dim, he somehow had a habit of being a little bit smarter than most of the other cats on the Catsil, (which wasn’t saying much).

The clue of course was in the guest list. Who had arrived late that previous night when the party was nearly over? Most suspicious! Yes, it was of course, Captain Growler who had a hand in all this.

On the previous occasion when Terry had gone missing, (and had ended up spending the night with the good Captain), he had told Captain Growler that he had made up his mind to run away, and that he was never going to the college in London. So on the evening of the party, the Captain had decided to come and find out what Terry was planning to do.

‘I’m gonna run away, Cap’n,’ Terry had whispered to Captain Growler late that evening.

‘Run away! Now where’s ya goin’ ter run to, me young ‘arty?’

‘I dunno, Cap’n, but I ‘aint going ter London.’

‘Well if yer moind’s set on running away, then yer better come and stay with me for a woil; on that there old barge, up at the creek.’

‘Oh fanks ever so much Cap’n. I’m really grateful,’ said Terry in his usual effusive manner.

‘Now, we’d better make some plans to meet up, when all these ‘ere folk ‘ave gorn ‘ome,’ said the Captain.

Terry had waited for everyone to go home, and when he was sure that his foster parents were fast asleep, he crept out of the house, and raced along the road to the agreed meeting place.

A week later, Terry, (with a much thinner tummy), was starting to sorely miss all the creature comforts that he had enjoyed with his foster parents at their comfy home on Pitsea Mount.

It was mid-November, and Captain Growler’s old barge was very cold and draughty, and the broken old hammock that the Captain had let Terry sleep on had given him paw-ache.

He didn’t really know what to do next. It had been great fun to run away and stay with the Captain for a few days, but the novelty was starting to wear off, and he was feeling rather homesick.

Captain Growler realised that his young shipmate wasn’t happy, and mentioned as much to him one evening when they were tucking into a meagre meal of cold rat.

‘Oim a finkin that you aint very cheerful these days moy young fella. Watsamatter then? Don’ ‘e loike it ‘ere on moy ship then?’

‘Course I does Cap’n – but I can’t spend my life sitting around ‘ere.’

‘What ‘ee wanna do then?’

‘I... I’m not sure Cap’n... but I fink I want to travel around.’

‘Travel around? Travel where?’

‘That’s the problem – I’m not sure. But I wanna go look for someone.’

‘Oh? Who be that then?’

‘My Mum, Cap’n.’

‘Your Mum! She be Suzie Woo back at Pitsea Mount. You don’ have to go find ‘er!

‘No Cap’n. Suzie Woo ain’t my real Mum. My real Mum is a humpet and she used to live in an ‘ouse in a road called Peepers Cressert, or somefink like that. An’ her name is Annie.

‘How come you know all this then?’

‘Bumblin’ Billy told me. But ‘e also told me that she was gone – that’s why I woz allowed to stay in Feralia – coz my real Dad was dead, and my real Mum woz gone.’

‘Wah she go then?’

‘A long, long way Cap’n. Up in the Mill-an’s or somefink like that. How’m I gonna find ‘er Cap’n?’

‘Oi don’t know lad.’

‘Well I have to try – don’ I?’

‘Does ye?’

‘Yes I does. And the only place I can fink of ter go is Peepers Cressert.

‘Why you wanna go there? Annie b’aint there – be she?’

‘No she b’aint Cap’n. But someone might know where she be.’

‘But that place be in humpet -Land. Us Feralise shouldna go thar. It b’aint right.

‘Sides – they all speak a diff’rent lingo.’

‘I knows all that Cap’n. But you forgetting somfink. I can speak humpet. I’m arf humpet meself, ain’t I?’

‘I s’pose ye are, me boy. But I still dunna think ye should go there.’

‘I ‘ave to Cap’n. I must find me Mum.’

‘Well it b’aint no good you pining away around ‘ere thahn. If yer gotta go an’ look for yer Mum, yer betta get some food inside yer belly and be off.

‘Yer don’ mind then Cap’n?’ Terry asked apprehensively, for he didn’t want to upset his only friend in the world.

‘Moind? O’ course Oi don’ moind young fella me lad. Yer no diff’rent to me when Oi woz your age. Got the wanderlust, ‘asn’t yer? You be off now, and don’ forget yer ol’ friend Cap’n Growler is always ‘ere if yer need some help or somewhere ter stay.’

‘Fanks ever so much Cap’n,’ Terry gratefully replied as he tucked into his meal.

There didn’t seem anything more to discuss and the two cats finished their meagre repast in silence. Terry had decided to leave at first light the next morning so he settled down in his broken old uncomfortable hammock, and tried to get some sleep. But sleep wouldn’t come. He was too excited and a little fearful of what tomorrow may bring.

7. Horace meets his match

It must have been nearly dawn when Terry finally dropped off to sleep, only to be woken after a couple of hours later by the sprightly old Captain Growler, wanting to know if Terry had changed his mind and wasn't going after all?

But Terry's mind was set, and although it was a little later than planned, he set off on the long journey back from Pitsea Marshes and around the outskirts of Pitsea Catsil, and then on towards the busy High road that marked the border into humpet- land.

It was nine long months ago since Terry, as a young kitten, had fled across this busy road in the middle of winter, and had almost been killed by a fox.

This time, Terry was very careful how he crossed this dangerous road. In his lessons with Lurk and Kurk, he had learnt about these human machines called cars and lorries, and he knew he could get killed if he wasn't careful. Lurk had also told him that the road where he was born was just on the other side of the High road and was known as Peepers Cressert, (or something like that).

Terry crossed the road without incident and scampered down the first side road that he came across and wondered how he could find out the name of the road.

For although Terry spoke humpet, he certainly couldn't read that ridiculously difficult language known as English. How could he find out where he was? He would have to ask someone.

He hadn't gone very far when he came across the first humpet he had seen since fleeing the area as a kitten. He was a well-groomed young male tabby.

'Hiya Mate!' shouted Terry, 'd'ya knows the way to Peepers Cressert?'

It was so long since Terry had spoken humpet-speak that he had almost forgotten how to speak the language. The tabby cat looked at the huge, strangely coloured and very unkempt Feralise in amazement.

'Huss-puss, who are you? huss-puss, I don't understand a word you are saying, Meow-wow,' the tabby replied in humpet-speak.

Terry realised that he had spoken in the wrong tongue, and searched his overtaxed brain for some words that the tabby would understand. 'It's been so long', he thought, 'how can I remember that silly language?' After a few moments of intense concentration, it slowly started to come back.

'Huss-puss,' said Terry, *'huss-puss, can you please tell me, huss-puss, if I am in Peepers Cressert, Meow-wow?'*

'Huss-puss,' replied the tabby, *'I don't know Peepers Cressert, Meow-wow. This road, huss-puss, is Burns Avenue, Meow-wow.'*

'Huss-puss, but I know it's around here somewhere, huss-puss. Huss-puss, what's the next road along, Meow-wow?'

'Huss-puss, the next road, huss-puss, is Popes Crescent, Meow-wow' answered the tabby.

'Huss-puss, Popes Crescent! That's it! Huss-puss. Peepers Cressert is Popes Crescent! Meow-wow.'

'Huss-puss, if you say so, huss-puss,' agreed the tabby, without much enthusiasm.

'Huss-puss, can you show me the way, huss-puss? I'm looking for my mum, Meow-wow.'

'Huss-puss, yes, I can take you there, huss-puss, we can go through this back garden, Meow-wow.'

The truth was that the tabby was somewhat in fear of this strange giant tomcat, and decided that he had better be as helpful as he could. He certainly didn't want to get into a fight.

So the two cats set off through the back garden of a corner house in Burns Avenue, and through another garden which finally led them into Popes Crescent.

'Huss-puss, what's your name, Meow-wow?' Terry asked his guide.

'Huss-puss, I'm Toby, huss-puss, Tibby the Tabby, Meow-wow.'

‘*Huss-puss*, nice to meet you Tibby the Tabby, *huss-puss*.’ (‘What a crazy language this humpet- speak woz,’ he thought.) *Huss-puss*, Tibby, have you ever heard of a cat called Annie, *huss-puss*? She used to live somewhere in this road, *Meow-wow*?’

‘*Huss-puss*, Annie, *huss-puss*? Oh yes everyone knew Annie, *huss-puss*, she lived here for many years *huss-puss*. She got into trouble with some wild Feralise tom called Tony, *Meow-wow*.’

‘*Huss-puss*, yes he was my Dad, *puss huss*. *Huss-puss*, do you know where she moved to, *Meow-wow*?’

‘*Huss-puss*, somewhere up north I think, *huss-puss*,’ Toby replied.

‘*Huss-puss*, Which was her house, *huss-puss*?’ asked Terry.

‘*Huss-puss*, it’s number thirty-three, down the end, *huss-puss*, but you can’t go down there, *Meow-wow*.’

‘*Huss-puss*, why not, *puss-huss*?’

‘*Huss-puss*, because of Horace The hound, *huss-puss*. That’s why not, *Meow-wow*.’

‘*Huss-puss*, who is Horace The Hound, *Meow-wow*.?’

Tibby the Tabby told Terry about the ferocious and feared dog who lived at the end of Pope’s Crescent. Apparently, Horace The Hound had a particular liking for chasing cats, and any cat who went anywhere near his home was in terrible danger of getting severely injured, or even worse!

Terry wanted to know if any cats lived near Annie’s old home, and learned that there was a cat who actually lived in Annie’s old house, but she hardly ever came out, because of Horace the Hound.

‘*Huss-puss*, I must go and talk to her, *Huss-puss*,’ said Terry.

‘*Huss-puss*, you’ll never make it there without Horace catching you, *Meow-wow*,’ said Toby.

Terry told Toby that he had to try, and he would 'take his chances' with Horace. He hadn't run away from home and deserted his family and friends just to give up when he came up against an unfriendly dog.

After all, how dangerous can one dog be? So after thanking Toby for all his help, Terry continued along Popes Crescent towards number thirty-three, where his real mum used to live.

He reached number thirty-one, and was just beginning to think that Horace must be asleep or out somewhere, when the biggest and most fearsome looking animal he had ever seen suddenly jumped up in front of him in the centre of the road ahead. He had a huge brown body, and slobbering jaws, which revealed two menacing white fangs.

Terry stood transfixed to the spot as Horace The Hound glared at this intruder in his territory. Horace started with his usual low pitch growl, which then turned into an ear-wrenching roar, and a trickle of slobber started dripping from his jaws, slowly turning into a stream.

'What a mouth-watering supper was in prospect', Horace thought to himself.

By rights Terry should have 'turned tail' and run for his life. But in spite of the overwhelming urge to escape, something made him stay and stare right back at this overbearing bully. If he ran, he would never find out where his mum had gone, and he couldn't accept defeat.

As for Horace, well the big brute couldn't understand what was happening. He had never known any animal - especially a cat - who had not run away when he had barked at it. He slowly advanced down the road towards Terry, waiting for the moment when Terry would lose his nerve and run.

But instead of running for his life, Terry bared his own, not inconsiderable teeth, and let out a most frightening and threatening catawail.

Horace stopped in his tracks – this wasn't part of his usual routine. What was this huge cat up to?

Terry continued wailing and spitting, and with a final act of incredible bravado, he suddenly leapt at Horace and sunk his teeth into the dog's hindquarters.

Horace squealed in both shock and pain, and for the first time in his life he had encountered a cat who was prepared to stand up to him. He retreated with great speed back into his owner's garden. Horace had well and truly met his match.

Terry was surprised at himself.

He had no idea that he could be so brave and strong, and when he saw the dog disappear into the garden, he quickly realised that he no longer felt any fear.

He continued along the road to number thirty-three, and walked into the front garden, hoping to find the cat who, according to Tibby the Tabby, was supposed to live there.

8. *Romantic Interlude*

The cat living at number thirty-three was a female tortoise shell called Punkie.

Punkie had been watching the confrontation between Horace and Terry from the front window and quickly ran through her house to the back garden as soon as she saw Terry entering her territory.

Normally Punkie would be most put out if a strange cat came into her garden, but having seen the courageous stand that Terry had made against that bully of a dog, (of whom she was personally terrified), she welcomed the hero to her door with great gusto.

'Huss-puss, come here you brave cat, Huss-puss. Come on through to the back garden, Meow-wow,' she called out in her laborious humpet-speak.

Terry thankfully ran to the back of the house where he was delighted to find the lovely Punkie waiting patiently for him.

They hit it off straight away, and after Punkie had ran out of words to describe his bravery, Terry asked her about his mother, Annie. Punkie told him all that all she knew, which was that Annie had moved out with her human owners many months ago. It was just before Punkie had gone to live there with her owners.

'Huss puss, do you know where Annie moved to, Huss-puss?' Terry asked.

'Huss-puss, she moved to the midlands, Meow-wow,' Punkie told him.

'Huss-puss, but where in the Midlands, huss-puss? Do you know the name of the town, Meow-wow?'

Punkie thought for a long time, before answering, *'Huss-puss, it was such a long time ago Terry, huss-puss. All I remember is the name 'Barn-dell', or was it 'Barn-fell', or maybe 'Barn-bell', Meow-wow.'*

'Huss-puss, is that all you can remember Punkie, huss-puss?'

‘Huss-puss, I’m afraid it is, huss-puss. I know it was ‘Barn’... something, Meow-wow. It’s the best I can do, huss-puss,’ she replied sorrowfully.

Punkie suggested that Terry should stay the night in her back garden, just in case she could remember any more about where Annie had moved to, and as it was now getting dark, Terry decided it would be a good idea. Besides, he was becoming rather fond of this beautiful young cat, and he quite liked the idea of spending more time with her.

They settled down in the back garden shed, (the very one that Tony and Annie had shared all those months ago), and they talked and talked and talked. Eventually, the cats were so exhausted that they both fell into deep dreamless sleeps, with their soft furry bodies nestled closely against each other for warmth.

At dawn, hunger pangs woke Punkie from her dreamless slumber, who then ran indoors to obtain some food from her human owners. After she had eaten her fill, she brought some small rations out to the ravenous Terry, who by now had woken in a state of acute hunger.

As Terry scoffed down the scraps that Punkie gave to him, she proposed that he should stay in Popes Crescent and make his permanent home in the garden shed.

This would make her very happy, as not only would her endless problems with Horace be solved, but she was also becoming rather fond of this outrageously handsome and irrepressible tom-cat from another world.

Terry was tempted, as he didn’t want to leave Punkie at the mercy of the cruel Horace, and he was starting to have strong feelings for this exceptionally pretty humpet.

In the end, he knew he had to go. He had to find his mum, and he would never rest until he had accomplished his quest. He told a tearful Punkie of his decision, but promised faithfully to return one day, after he had found his mum.

But before he left, Terry was resolved to do something about Horace.

So he told Punkie to follow him out to the front of Horace’s house, and called for the slobbering bully to come outside. He wanted Horace to see Punkie next to him, so that the dog would understand that Terry was a close friend of Punkie and that any attack on her would also be an attack on Terry.

After a few minutes Horace duly appeared, and immediately became cowed when he saw the menacing sight of Terry, all fired-up and spitting.

Horace was now a broken pooch, and seemed to have lost his spirit for fighting. No longer would he terrorise the cats of Pope's Crescent, and he slunk away, with his tail between his legs, trying desperately to hide his shame.

Punkie was so grateful to Terry. '*Huss-puss*, oh Terry, you are so brave, how can I ever thank you, *huss-puss*?'

'Huss-puss, don't be silly, it was my pleasure, *Meow-wow*. Besides, *huss-puss*, you have been very kind to me, *Meow-wow*.'

The two cats made their sad farewells, and at last Terry took his leave.

He made his way back up to the end of Popes Crescent, and onto the busy High Road. Now which way should he go, left or right? I wonder which direction is the Mill-an's, he was thinking.

As there was no one to ask, he decided to turn left, and off he set on his long journey to find his mum, who was 'somewhere in the Mill-an's' in a village called 'Barn somefink'.

If he had known that the Midlands was many weeks, possibly months' walk away, and that when he decided to turn left, he was going completely in the wrong direction, he might have decided to stay put and settle for a quiet life with Punkie.

But a quiet life wasn't really in Terry's nature, and if he had given up, there wouldn't have been any story to tell, would there?

9. Crankie Frankie

So Terry set off in the wrong direction, and after two weeks of following the busy road which criss-crossed the border between Feralia and humpet-Land, he eventually reached the sea and could go no further - for the simple reason that the sea was in the way, and he wasn't about to take swimming lessons.

He had been sleeping in deserted gardens and hedgerows, and during his journey to the coast, he had grown skilful at catching the wayward birds and rats that had become his daily food. Occasionally, when passing through back gardens, he had found a few tasty morsels from the food that the humans had thrown away in their rubbish bins.

Terry stared at the vast expanse of water. The sea seemed to go on forever. It bore no resemblance to the pathetic stream that he had had left behind him at Pitsea Creek. He had no idea where he should go next.

He had to find someone who could tell him the way to the Mill-an's, but every time he tried to approach a cat for directions, it would turn tail and run. Terry hadn't realised it, but his enormous size and frightening, unkempt appearance was scaring all the cats away.

He spent days searching in vain for any animal who would talk to him, and just when he despaired of ever speaking to another cat again, he finally came across a wizened old snow-white moggie who had seemed to have no fear of the fierce young tomcat. This was in spite of the cat's great age and frailty; in fact he was so old, he could hardly walk.

His name was Crankie Frankie. He was almost thirty years old, and had probably used up at least eight and three-quarters of his nine lives. But at his great age he wasn't afraid of anyone, not even a gloriously huge and imposing animal like Terry.

Crankie Frankie hadn't seen a specimen like this since he had taken the long journey from the northern parts of Feralia, to settle down and spend his retirement

by the seaside. He somehow knew that Terry would be no danger to an ancient moggie such as himself, and greeted him in the familiar Feralise tongue.

‘You’re not from these parts are you?’

‘No I aint,’ replied Terry, delighted that he had found someone who didn’t run away. ‘I’m Terry. Wot’s your name?’ he asked.

‘Folks know me as Crankie Frankie, and I’m pleased to make your acquaintance, young sir,’ he replied. ‘Now where would you be going on a cold afternoon down on the seafront. Is it a ship you’re after then?’

‘Cor blimey, no way Crankie Frankie. I wanna go to the Mill-an’s.’

‘The Midlands is it?’ Well you’re on the wrong road if that’s where you’re heading.’

‘Yer mean yer actually know the way to the Mill-an’s?’ asked Terry excitedly.

‘Knows the way? Course I knows the way. I knows the way to everywhere – and I’ve been to most places, in my eight and three-quarters, long lives,’ Crankie Frankie replied proudly.

‘Cor that’s great. How far is it then – how long will it take to get there?’

The ancient cat sat thinking about these questions for a very long time. Terry was convinced his new-found ancient friend has dropped off to sleep when finally he said:

‘It’s a very long way, young sir, and it will take you many, many months.’

‘As yer been there?’

‘I told you, I’ve been everywhere. But are you sure you want to go?’ It’s a long and perilous journey these days. There’s so many dangerous roads full of noisy cars, and the Catdom in those parts has become very wild. Not much law and order up there – lots of wild Feralise gangs of cats, who attack innocent travellers.’

‘I ‘as ter go, Crankie Frankie. I’s lookin’ for me Mum. I’ll take my chances wiv these gangs that are up there. Now which is the road to take?’

‘Well, I must say you’re a big and strong cat, so you can probably look after yourself. But even a fine fellow such as you wouldn’t stand much chance against one of those wild gangs - if they decided to go after you - so you must go carefully.’

‘Yeah, but which is the road?’ asked Terry impatiently.

‘Which road? Oh my fine boy, there’s many, many roads between here and the Midlands. What you need to know is the right direction to travel in.’

‘So how will I know that?’

‘It’s easy, I’ll teach you. Now you see the sun going down over there?’

Terry looked up to the sky and saw the sun starting to set on the horizon.

‘Well,’ continued Crankie Frankie, ‘that’s what is known as the ‘West’. Now tomorrow, morning, when the sun comes up, it will be rising from the East.’

‘Goes down in the West, and comes up in the East,’ said Terry. How does that help me know which direction to go in?’

‘The midlands is in the North, which is half way between the East and the West. So as long as the East is on your right and the West is on your left, you’re going the right way.’

‘Sounds a bit complicated,’ complained Terry. ‘Is that the only method to find the right way?’

‘You’ll soon get the hang of it, young sir. Us cats have a sixth sense about these things. It’ll become second nature to you before you know it.’

Terry continued chatting with the ancient animal for a couple of hours, and with his help he managed to get his bearings. Finally he made ready to set off again but this time, in the right direction.

‘Now remember what I told you about the wild gangs. Keep your eyes open, and keep away from the main roads.’

‘I will, fanks a lot Crankie Frankie.’

Crankie Frankie watched Terry walk down the road, away from the sea, and when he was almost out of sight, he suddenly called to him.

‘Terr-ee, Terr-ee, come back!’

Terry immediately thought that something had happened to his new friend, and did an about turn and rushed back to where Crankie Frankie was still standing.

‘I’m sorry young sir, but I can’t let you go up into those dangerous parts without giving you one more piece of advice.’

Terry was feeling a bit exasperated at having been called back for no apparent good reason.

‘Wotsat then?’

‘If you do get into trouble with the gangs, and you can’t escape, then tell them you’re a friend of ‘Tovver the Bovver.’

‘Tovver the Bovver? Who’s he?’ asked a mystified Terry.

‘He used to be a very powerful leader in those parts, and is feared by one and all. Just mention that name and it might save your neck. For no one dare take a chance with a friend of Tovver the Bovver.’

It didn’t make much sense, but Terry promised to remember the name, just in case. And then for the second time that afternoon, he set off to follow his destiny, on the road to the Midlands.

10. Thieves in the forest

After wandering blindly in the wrong direction for the first few weeks of his quest, Terry was now starting to master the art of navigation. He had taken Crankie Frankie's lessons to heart, and had managed to set a straight course in a northerly direction.

There were days when the sun didn't shine, so he was unable to see where it was rising and where it was setting. But even this problem didn't deter him, as when there wasn't any sun, he had learnt to rely on his 'in-built' cat's instincts, and this time they didn't let him down.

His journey took him over some wild and strange countryside. Sometimes he was skipping through the undergrowth of thick woods and forests, and on other occasions he found himself scampering across fields of wheat or corn. But in the main, he travelled along the small lanes and roads that ran near to the wide and dangerous motorways.

He was very careful to avoid the traffic, and apart from coming across some occasional rabbits, squirrels and other small animals that lived in the countryside, he stayed very much alone.

He especially kept out of the way of any cats that occasionally appeared in the distance, as he didn't want any trouble. He had taken Crankie Frankie's warnings to heart.

The days turned to weeks, and the weeks turned to months, and still Terry continued his trek northwards. By now he was a fully-grown cat of unusually enormous dimensions and the need to fend for himself during the long journey north had changed him.

His reflexes were much quicker, and his young, lithe body was rippling with strength and vigour. He could outrun a fox, catch birds and mice at will, and as time went on, he became ever more fearless.

Although he had avoided trouble during the journey so far, it was only a matter of time before something happened in the increasingly wild and uncivilised countryside.

His luck eventually ran out one evening in early summer, when Terry was tucking into the remains of a rat he had caught for his dinner. He was suddenly attacked by two Feralese cats, who had decided that they were going to help themselves to his evening meal.

One of the cats, a thin, wiry black and white tom, jumped at Terry from behind, and as Terry turned to defend himself, a young ginger female scampered in and grabbed the remains of the rat and set off at a run.

Once Terry had realised what they were about, he disengaged himself from the black and white tom and set off in frantic pursuit of the ginger cat who was holding the precious supper in his teeth.

The black and white disappeared into a nearby field as Terry chased the thief into a forest. The ginger cat was obviously a fast runner and Terry realised he would have the run of his life if he was to catch her up.

But he wasn't about to give up, and after about five minutes he sensed that his quarry was tiring. Eventually, she stopped, breathless, in a clearing in the forest and stood still, facing Terry, who by now had caught up.

'Please don't hurt me,' squealed the ginger cat, 'I only wanted a bit of food. I'm so hungry.'

'Then why d'yer not ask for some then?' said Terry. 'Aint anyone ever told you it's wrong ter steal?'

'I'm sorry, sir. Here you can have it back,' she replied.

Terry had a soft heart, especially for pretty young female cats, so he said, 'Aw we can share it together if yer likes.'

'Oh sir you are so kind,' she replied with a friendly purring sound.

Terry started to approach his new found friend in the clearing, when all of a sudden the black and white cat reappeared, but this time he had brought two mates with

him. One was a rather bedraggled and rough looking tabby and the other was an enormous, heavily furred, dirty grey tom with huge sharply pointed teeth.

The female ginger, who moments before had seemed so friendly, ran to join the others, and the four cats started to advance on Terry, snarling and spitting and making the most nerve wrenching caterwauls.

Terry had two choices: forget about his dinner and run for his life; or stay and fight. Which was it to be? Well by now I think we all know how brave and fearless our hero is, and we know he wasn't in the habit of running away from anything or anyone.

'Nah then you fellas. I just want me dinner back an' I'll be on me way. I don' wan' no trouble wiv you geezers.'

The four stared at Terry, and stopped in their tracks. They couldn't believe that a single cat, however big, would have the courage to stand up to four marauding moggies – for that is undoubtedly what they were. The heavily furred grey tom spoke.

'You be on your way, and leave that food for us. We haven't eaten all day, and we need that tasty rat. If you don't leave now you'll be sorry, I'm warning you.'

But before the gang of four could collect their wits, Terry pounced on the black and white, and took a large chunk of fur out of his backside. As the cat squealed in pain, Terry turned his attention to the tabby, and repeated the punishment.

The grey tom now came into the fray, and tried to jump on Terry from behind, but Terry was young and strong, and shook the grey off him with a huge shrug of his enormous back. The grey went flying.

The ginger female, (the original thief), saw the way the battle was going, and immediately retreated with the others. Terry stood proudly over his dinner.

'I told you gents, an' lady, to leave me an' me dinner alone – didn't I then? Nah be gone before I decide to have another taste of your flea-infested fur!'

The four were slowly backing away, and Terry was just starting to congratulate himself on his brave victory, when suddenly, out of the forest, there appeared an entire colony of cats.

There must have been a couple of dozen of the most motley and dirty looking cats Terry had ever laid eyes on. Many of them looked half starved, and some were showing recent signs of battles, with gaping wounds, and limping on injured paws.

The large group quickly surrounded him and he had no means of escape. It looked as though time was up for poor Terry. Was he going to lose one or even more of his precious nine lives, he wondered?

‘Now look ‘ere lads. You can ‘ave my food. I don’ wannit after all. Take it and I’ll be on me way.’

The circle of cats took no notice of Terry’s entreaties, and slowly edged their way closer to their prey.

‘Come on now lads, It’s a fair deal, ain’t it?’ Terry pleaded.

There was no answer. They just inched nearer and nearer.

Then, out of some distant corner of his brain, he remembered what Crankie Frankie had told him. What was that name again?

‘Look lads, you don’ wanna fight wiv me. I’m a friend of Tover, - Tover the Bover.’

The effect was miraculous and probably saved several of his lives. The cats all froze in their tracks, and the furry grey cat, who seemed to be some sort of a leader, said, ‘How do you know Tover the Bover?’

‘E’s my friend ‘e is,’ said Terry uncertainly.

‘Where did you meet him?’ asked the grey tom.

Terry racked his brain for a believable response. ‘I er met ‘im darn sarf, by the seaside, sarf-end they calls it. I met ‘im an’ a frien’ of ‘is – Crankie Frankie – d’yer know im?’ asked Terry desperately.

‘Crankie Frankie?’ repeated the grey cat. ‘I think you better come with us.’

The large group of cats surrounded Terry and led him away into the thickest part of the forest, and along a narrow path to a large copse of trees and bushes, which was obviously home to this disparate band of cats. He had no choice but to go with

them, for as strong and brave as he was, he couldn't hope to survive against so many.

The grey cat went into a small covered hollow of trees and after a few minutes reappeared with another cat, who had great difficulty walking, as both of his back paws were severely damaged. He was an elderly, Siamese looking cat and he had to drag himself along with his two front paws.

'I am Siam Sam,' he said by way of introduction. 'Now what's this about Tover the Bovver? Do you know him?'

'Corse I knows 'im' replied Terry without much conviction.

'What does he look like then?' Asked Siam Sam.

'We'' – er 'e's quite old, an' er big an er sort of ..er.. furry'

'Sort of furry!' shouted Siam Sam, 'What's that supposed to mean? Does anyone know any cat that's not furry?' Siam Sam shouted to the circle of cats, who all started laughing at the most ridiculous question they had ever heard.

'Now then, young stranger. I want the truth – have you ever met Tover the Bovver? If you lie to me, you'll be in more trouble.'

Terry thought he could hardly be in more trouble than he was already, but decided to tell the truth, as it was becoming impossible to keep up the silly pretence of knowing this Tover the Bovver character.

'Well, Siam Sam, I 'as to confess – I aint never met 'im.'

'I thought as much. Now tell me about this other cat that you claim to have met. What was his name? Crankie Frankie?'

'Oh I met 'im true enough,' replied Terry, 'e's the one who taught me all about norf and sarff, and e' told me to mention the name of Tover the Bovver if I ever got into trouble on my way to the mill-ans.'

'Describe him to me,' ordered Siam Som.

'E was snow white in colour, and so old 'e could 'ardly walk. But 'e woz very kind and 'elpful, and tol' me all about the mill-ans an' how to get 'ere.'

The Siamese cat looked long and hard at Terry, before breaking out into a mocking wail.

‘You’re a brave and foolhardy cat, but your heart must be in the right place, otherwise he would never have befriended you. The cat you have just described is Tover The Bovver – our beloved ex leader.’

11. A New Leader

‘Tovver The Bovver was our leader for more than twenty five years. He is so old, that no one can remember a time when he wasn’t in charge, running everything for us. Then one day, about a year ago he disappeared, and we were left leader-less.’

Siam Sam was sitting in his little hollow with Terry, sharing the much fought over rat that Terry had caught earlier in the day. He was telling Terry all about this colony of Feralise cats that had come so close to attacking him.

Siam Sam wasn’t the leader, but he seemed to be treated with respect by the other cats. After he had dropped his bombshell about who Crankie Frankie really was, he had persuaded all the cats to go away and had led Terry into his own quarters to enjoy a private dinner and chat.

‘But Crankie Frankie’s so old. How can he live so long?’

‘We don’t know, it’s a sort of miracle. Last year he must have decided that even he was too old to lead us anymore, and from what you tell me it sounds like he has settled down by the seaside for a hard earned retirement.’

‘Why did ‘e change ‘is name?’ asked Terry.

‘Well the name of Tovver the Bovver is known far and wide, and if the Feralise government in London knew where he was, he’d probably be spending his retirement in gaol.’

‘Why is that? I don’ un’erstand.’

‘It’s a long story Terry. You see we cats up here in Sherwood Forest are rebels from the Catdom of Feralia. Many years ago we refused to accept the laws of the London government.

‘They weren’t fair, and they made us give them half of all the food we caught, just to keep all those fat cats in London in their sleek shiny coats.

'They called it a paw tax. So we broke away, and set up our own little Catdom in the forest, but it's been a bitter struggle.

'Ever since we declared our independence, we've had to keep defending ourselves from government attacks on our territory. They never give up, and are determined to put us all in gaol.

'Tovver the Bovver was a great leader, and we always won our battles with the Feralise troops. He also looked after us and made sure we were all properly fed and looked after. But since he's gone, it's been a disaster.

'No cat has been strong or wise enough to take over the leadership and the rebel Catdom has broken up into several smaller groups. Now the groups all fight each other for food and try to get control of everything,' Siam Sam said sadly in conclusion.

'Is that why all these 'ere cats are wounded and look 'arf staved?' asked Terry.

'Yes, that's right. These are very bad times, and to make matters worse, ever since the new Prime-Mogster, S'our Dave Kamikon, came into power, he has taken advantage of all our squabbling and renewed his attacks on us. Many cats have already been captured and taken to London for punishment. At least the old Prime-mogster, Phoney Flair, used to more or less leave us alone. He was too busy chasing pussies across the desert in far off foreign parts.'

'I 'ate that London Gov'ment, Terry said, 'They tried ter sen' me there to join the SCS (Special Cat Services), but I ran away instead. I don' wanna go to no school in London. That 'S'our Dave is no good.'

'Yes, he's a right sourpuss! So you can understand how we all feel,' said Siam Sam, 'if things don't improve soon, we'll either die of starvation or we'll all get captured and be dragged off to London.

'It sound like a real mess,' said Terry. 'So who's yer leader now?'

'That's the main problem – we don't have one. I tried to be leader for a while, but as you can see I've been badly injured in a great battle we had with another colony, and I can't lead any more. There's a young cocky Persian who wants to take over, but I don't think he's the right one. He's much too rash.'

'So wot yer gonna do?'

‘I think I’ve found our new leader now.’

‘Who’s that then?’

‘It’s you Terry. Anyone who can stand up to four of our most vicious cats and fight them off single-pawed is a very special cat. And you’re so big and strong and brave. You will make a perfect leader.’

‘Me? You must be joking. I can’t stay ‘ere. I’ve gotta find me mum!’ shouted Terry in astonishment.

‘I think you will have to forget those plans for a while. You must stay here and be our leader. It wasn’t just luck when you met Tovver the Bovver. It was your *katty-karma*, as we felines call it.

‘Tovver knew what he was doing when he mentioned his real name to you. He suspected that somehow it would eventually lead you to us, and he knew that we needed you. He is such a wise old moggie.’

‘I’m sorry to disappoint you Siam Sam, but I’m not stayin’ ‘ere to be anyone’s leader.’

‘Oh yes you are Terry. That is unless you want to fight your way out, against more than thirty desperate cats. You would never make it – as strong and brave as you are.

‘Besides, it wouldn’t be forever. Just until we get ourselves sorted out again. We have to stop fighting each other and we must chase S’our Dave’s warriors back to London. Come on, you’ll enjoy it, you know you will.’

Terry considered this proposal, (which was also a threat to his life). It seemed as though he didn’t have much choice, and secretly he was starting to quite like the idea of becoming a leader.

‘Well, if you put it like that, maybe I could try it for a while.’

‘Good boy. Now we have to persuade the colony to accept you.’

‘How are we supposed to do that?’

‘Come on follow me, and I’ll show you.’

They walked slowly back to the clearing, and Siam Sam called all the cats out again, and he told them that at long last they had a new leader.

‘And who may that be?’ asked the longhaired grey tom.

‘It’s Terry from Pitsea. I know he’s a stranger to you and he’s very young, but Tover The Bovver has met him, and sent him to us. Terry is very strong and brave, and like us, he’s on the run from ‘S’our Dave and the London government. He hates them just like we do. I’m sure he’ll make a great leader.’

‘And just who do you think you are, Siam Sam, with your two crippled paws, trying to tell us who our leader should be?’ asked a young cat from the side of the crowd. ‘You’re not our leader anymore.’

‘That’s the cocky young Persian I was telling you about,’ Siam Sam whispered softly to Terry.

‘Well now, Percy Persia,’ said Siam Sam to the Persian. Are you challenging my decision?’

‘Yes I am,’ replied Percy Persia.

‘So do have any other suggestions as to who should be our leader then?’

‘I certainly do.’ replied the cocky cat.

‘And who might that be?’

‘Me, of course. I must be the new leader.’

‘Hear this then, all cats,’ said Siam Sam in a formal tone of voice. ‘We have two cats who want to be our leader. Is there anyone else who wishes their name to be put forward?’

There was silence.

‘What ‘appens now?’ asked Terry. ‘It must be a vote, and that there Percy Persian is so cocky, I’m bound to win aren’t I?’

‘Vote! No, we don’t vote, Terry,’ replied Siam Sam.

‘What then?’

‘It’s a fight! Whoever wins becomes our new leader.’

Terry wasn’t expecting this turn of events, and just as he was considering his likely prospects of winning a fight against the brash young rival, he was viciously attacked from behind by the lightning fast Percy Persia who sank his teeth deep into Terry’s neck.

Terry felt a terrible stab of pain, and the blood started to gush out of a large wound. His head became dizzy, and he almost collapsed from the shock and severity of the sudden attack.

Just as he was about to pass out, something inside gave him an extra surge of energy, and he shook his head so violently, that the Persian was forced to release his grip and was flung violently across the clearing.

The cat lay on the ground and Terry closed in for the kill. He sank his teeth into Percy Persia’s head.

‘Kill me then, kill me. Do it quickly,’ screamed Percy Persia.

Terry released his hold on the fallen animal.

‘No Percy Persia, I won’t kill yer. All this killin’ and fightin’ each other ‘as ter stop. You’ll all be wiped out, or you’ll end up in S’our Dave’s gaols. Come on, up yer get.’

Percy couldn’t believe he was being let off. He gingerly got up off the floor and looked at Terry with a new respect.

‘You’re a very kind cat, and you’ll make a good leader,’ he said. I’ll be pleased to serve under you, Terry.’

‘And I’ll be very pleased to’ave you wiv me, Percy Persia. You’s young and strong – you can be my right paw cat,’ replied Terry, already showing signs of leadership wisdom.

Percy Persia walked over to Terry, and licked the congealed blood of the nasty wound he had inflicted in Terry’s neck.

Terry had turned a bitter enemy into a lifelong friend.

And Terry was going to need all the friends he could find, if he was going to succeed as the rebel colony's new leader.

12. Tel's Toms

It was almost as though Terry had been born to lead. From the very first moment that he was accepted as leader of that dispirited and half-starved colony, things started to change for the better.

The first problem that Terry had to solve was the shortage of food, (for every good general knows that you can't fight on an empty stomach). The lack of food was mainly due to the disorganised way they all went about trying to feed themselves.

Many of the cats were too old, too young or too badly wounded to be able to chase the birds, rats and other small animals in the surrounding countryside. Those that were able to hunt for food had to share their prey with those who weren't able to. This led to most of the cats only getting a tiny meal, maybe once every two or three days, if they were lucky.

Terry organised the young and fit cats into proper hunting parties, and by combining their efforts, they found that they were able to round up a lot more food. He even insisted that the old, young and crippled cats had to help.

Sometimes they were told to chase the quarry in one direction, where the fit young hunters were waiting to pounce. On other occasions, the hunters chased their quarry into traps, where the 'oldies' were able to finish things off.

Within a short space of time, the colony became better fed, looked and felt a lot fitter, and the wounds of recent battles started to heal.

Although Terry didn't want (or need) a complicated system of elders and Catsil members like those he left behind him at Pitsea Mount, he did need a few trusty assistants with whom he could share his leadership duties.

He decided to make Percy Persia his second in command, and then he brought in Siam Sam and two more cats from that original gang who had tried to steal his dinner.

The heavily furred tom, whose name was Greybeard, would prove to be a strong and loyal front-line soldier, and finally there was Maizy, the pretty little ginger

female. Terry realised that Maizy possessed a lot of cunning, which would prove very useful in the coming battles.

Over the following weeks, the five of them supervised the training of the colony into a well-organised fighting force. Once again, Terry insisted on involving everyone in the training sessions. The young, old and crippled were included and were told that they would all have their parts to play.

So when the first serious test of Terry's leadership skills came about, he had a much-improved brigade of cats at his disposal.

It was one evening, some two months after Terry had become the colony's leader that the first attack occurred. They had just settled down for their evening meal, when they heard the warning mewing signal from one of the guards who lay hidden in the forest for just such an eventuality.

The hidden guards had been Maizy's idea, and what a good one it turned out to be. Terry quickly alerted all the cats, and reminded them of the plan they had practised many times.

'Nah then lads, get yerselves into position, but carry on eatin', just as though nuffin is wrong,' he whispered to them.

The marauding gang fell right into the trap, and as they rushed into the clearing to attack the eating cats and steal their food, they were immediately set upon by ten of Terry's fiercest warriors who by this time had jumped out from hiding places in the bushes.

The battle was short but fierce, and within a few minutes, the attackers were pleading for their lives. Some of Terry's fiercest fighters, including Percy Persia and Greybeard wanted to finish them off, but Terry called a halt to the battle.

'Do yer knows any of these 'ere cats, Siam Sam?' Terry asked.

'Why yes, Terry. They used to be part of our own colony, but they broke away when Tovver the Bover disappeared.'

'Who's yer leader?' Terry asked one of the trapped toms.

‘We haven’t got one,’ the defeated cat replied. ‘He got ill a few months ago and died. Please sir, let us go – I promise we won’t bother you any more – we’re just hungry.’

‘Percy Persia, give ‘em some of our grub,’ said Terry.

‘Are you crazy, Terry? Why do you want to do that? Let’s just kill them!’ Percy Persia shouted back in astonishment.

‘No, Percy. There’s gonna be no more killin’. Now, lets feed ‘em, an see if they wants to come back and live wiv us. But they’ll ‘ave to accept me as their leader.’

Which, of course they did, with much pleasure.

The disasters that had befallen the rebel Catdom when Tover the Bover retired, were at long last starting to come to an end. Once Terry had invited the first of the smaller groups back into the fold, it wasn’t long before more small gangs joined them.

Sometimes they joined after a brief skirmish, which was followed by Terry’s offer of peace, provided they threw their lot in with him. On other occasions, there was no fighting at all, as word was out that there was a new fearless and strong leader, and some groups asked to come back of their own accord.

The Catdom became larger and larger, and eventually its domain covered the entire midlands – much the same size as it had been in the old days under Tover the Bover.

Despite his young age, Terry became admired for his wise but firm leadership. Every time that he accepted a new group back, he looked for the strongest amongst that group to join him as one of his assistants, and in that way he ensured total loyalty from every cat.

The leadership group finally grew to a total of twelve deputies who became known as Tel’s Toms, (even though, strictly speaking, Maizy was a female).

During the period when Terry was consolidating his Catdom, there had been some minor incidents with cats from S’our Dave’s government troops, but whenever a fight occurred, they were always defeated and sent scurrying back to the South with their tails between their legs.

So Terry was left more or less in peace to go about his good work, without the need to continually be on guard from attacks by the Feralia troops, who were ruled by the Prime-Mogster, in far away London.

But just when he was beginning to believe that S'our Dave was never going to make a serious attempt to re-take the rebel Catdom, he received word that a huge force of cats were advancing northwards. They were seen following a route close to the northern motorway.

He called his 'Tel's Toms' together and told them that this would be their biggest challenge since the departure of Tovver the Bovver. They had to plan their campaign very well, as this time it looked as though S'our Dave had set the whole might of Feralia against them.

To lose the battle would mean the end of their rebel Catdom – and worse, they would either spend the rest of their lives in some horrible London prison, or suffer death on the battlefield! This was going to be the ultimate test and they had to be ready.

'Their army is much bigger than ours, so how can we possibly hope to beat them?' asked Siam Sam.

'And they are very highly trained,' added greybeard. 'We're bound to be defeated.'

'Yes, there will more of them, and they will be strong fighters. But we can still win if we use our brains,' said Maizy, 'there's more than one way to win a battle, you know.'

Over the months, Terry had become more and more entranced with the vivacious and alluring Maizy. She was so pretty – and so clever! A most unusual combination in a female, he thought. He still hankered after the beautiful Punkie, but she was becoming a distant memory, whereas Maizy was around him every day, working her female whiles.

'Maizy's right,' said Terry forcefully. 'We have to be smarter than them. We must come up with a really clever plan.'

And together, Terry and Maizy devised a cunning plan that they hoped would win them the day.

13. Two cunning plans

It was indeed a cunning plan.

Maizy's idea was to put all the older cats in the front line and make the government forces think they were Terry's best soldiers.

'But they'll get slaughtered!' protested Terry.

'They might get hurt a bit, but as soon as the fighting starts, they can surrender and plead for mercy.'

'Surrender? What good is that going to do?' asked Terry.

'It will make them think they have won, and their guard will be down.'

'I'm starting ter see wot yer mean. And when they fink they've won, out we come from the bushes wiv our best soldiers and attack 'em.'

'You've got it, Terry.'

'It's bit dangerous for all our older cats. Some of 'em will get 'urt – maybe even killed!'

'Terry, we're going to have to make some sacrifices if we are to see off S'our Dave once and for all. It's the only way.'

'I suppose your right Maizy, but I don' like seeing my cats get 'urt.'

'It's for the future of our Catdom, Terry.'

Terry called the rest of Tel's Toms back, and together they worked out all the details. Then they held a meeting of the entire Catdom and told them of the plan.

Everyone was excited as well as very nervous, especially the elders, as they were going to be in the most danger. Bravely, they accepted their role and they all eagerly awaited the day of the battle.

The plan almost worked. In fact it probably would have worked if Terry had been prepared to let all the older cats get maimed or killed. But he was too kind a cat to ever let that happen.

The great army from the South arrived at Sherwood Forest, and as planned, the older cats from the Midlands all lined up against them as though they were the main troops.

It soon became clear that they were outnumbered by about fifty to one, and the powerful London force was not interested in accepting any surrender or in taking any prisoners. Some of Terry's dearest friends were getting hurt badly, and he couldn't stand it any longer.

Instead of remaining hidden until the London army thought they had won, (as was the plan), Terry rallied his forces and called them out for an early, unexpected counter-attack. As they came shrieking out of the surrounding undergrowth, Terry screamed to the elderly cats to run off along a safe path that his troops had cleared for them.

It was a great and terrible battle. Even when he threw all his cats into the fray, he was still outnumbered by S'our Dave's highly trained cats from London. But their whole world was at stake and they fought like cats that had nothing to lose.

The battle raged for hours, and Terry was always in the thick of it, along with Percy Persia, Greybeard and the other brave members of Tel's Toms. Maizy stayed at the edge of the fray, screaming blood-curdling meows of encouragement.

Eventually, Terry's enormous strength started to tell, and he started to pick off the enemy's leaders one by one. He inflicted so many injuries on them that they were forced to limp away in pain and desert their troops.

Once the army had become leaderless, the London troops lost their will to fight, and after six hours of non-stop battle, those that remained of S'our Dave's crack forces disengaged themselves and scurried away in disarray.

The rebels had won the battle of all battles. But the price was high. So many of them were seriously injured, and some, including poor Greybeard, had lost a paw and would never fight again.

It was all over, and Terry knew it would be a very long time before S'our Dave would ever dare to attack them again. As usual Terry was acclaimed as the hero,

for it was certainly the case that without his heroic efforts, they probably would have been defeated.

That night, after they all had a chance to recover, and to have their wounds licked, they had a big celebration with some special food that had been saved for the occasion –tasty fish that had been caught earlier in a nearby stream.

‘Well Maizy, your plan didn’t quite work out as we expected, but we won in the end,’ Terry said adoringly to his new love.

‘If you had stayed hidden a bit longer, it would have been a much easier victory,’ said Maizy.

‘I couldn’t stand by and let all those old cats get hurt any longer.’

‘Terry, your heart is too soft.’

‘Yes Maizy, I suppose it is. And I ‘ave a very soft ‘art fer you Maizy. How about us two getting married?’ he asked adoringly.

Maizy didn’t answer for a long time, but eventually she said, ‘Terry, I’ll marry you, but on one condition.’

‘Wot’s that Maizy?’

‘You have to make me your deputy leader. I must be the second in command.’

‘Aw Maizy. I can’t do that. Percy Persia is my number two.’

‘We can run this Catdom together Terry. With my brains and your bravery we’ll be the leaders for years and years.’

No, Maizy, I can’t do that. It’s not right,’ Terry said sadly, realising that he was not going to be able to marry this beautiful creature after all.

‘It’s your choice Terry, but I think you will come to regret it,’ Maizy said, in a voice with a strange and nasty edge to it, before scampering away into the dark forest night.

The party broke up. Wearily and sadly, Terry made his way to his leader’s bed for some hard-earned sleep.

He couldn't have been sleeping for more than a few minutes, when he was woken by one of the Catdom's young messenger cats mewling and prodding him with his paw.

'Terry, I've been told to wake you. Tel's Toms need to see you urgently – something has happened.'

'Appened? Wot's 'appened?' asked Terry.

'I don't know – I was just told to come and get you.'

Terry rubbed his sleepy eyes and followed the young cat messenger into the forest. After a few minutes he arrived at a clearing where the rest of Tel's Toms were waiting for him.

'Wots 'appened then?' asked Terry.

'We were hoping that you could tell us that,' replied Siam Sam. 'We were all told to meet you here.'

Before Terry could reply, there was a rustle in the surrounding bushes. They had no chance to do anything as they were suddenly surrounded by about fifty of the fiercest looking cats he had ever seen. They were the Red Guards – the pride of S'our Dave's army.

Resistance seemed useless. There were too many of them, and amongst Tel's Toms, there were only about six who could put up a decent fight, now that Greybeard had lost a paw.

Then, an old familiar face appeared from behind the ring of Red Guards. It was a cat Terry hadn't seen for a very long time. He was very tall, black and white, with a thin, hungry-like appearance.

'Ahem, ahem, young Terry. So we meet again,' said Hooray Henry, in his upper class, Fleaton accent.

'It's 'Ooray! You're the one that saved me when I woz a kitten.'

'That's right Terry. And now I've come to arrest you. You and the other leaders of this disgraceful, uncivilised, illegal Catdom.'

‘Arrest us?’ But why...how... where yer gonna take us?’

‘To London of course, silly boy. You’ve all broken one of the most sacred laws of the ancient Tabbythia. You are all going to jail for many years. And once your terrible friends out there discover that they’re leaderless, they’ll soon be begging to re-join S’our Dave’s great Catdom.’

Terry suspected that Hooray was probably right. His colony wouldn’t last long without a strong leader, and as Hooray was arresting all his deputies, there wouldn’t be anyone left to take-over the leadership.

‘So, you’ve won in the end, aint yer, ‘Ooray ‘Enerey?’ said Terry sadly.

‘We always win. Don’t you know that? You can’t beat the ruling classes. We’re all too powerful for silly ignorant tearaways like you and your kind. If you had come to London and joined the SCS, instead of running away, none of this would have happened.’

‘Ooray, can I ask just one favour?’ asked Terry dejectedly.

‘Favour, dear boy? What is it?’ Hooray asked in his irritable manner.

‘Just let Maizy go free. She’s only a young fmg. She’s got ‘er whole life before ‘er. She won’ do yer any ‘arm – will yer Maizy?’ said Terry looking at Maizy, with love still in his eyes.

Maizy tried to avoid Terry’s adoring gaze, as Hooray said,

‘You fool, Terry. Who do you think set this all up?’

Terry looked from Hooray to Maizy, and all of a sudden he had a terrible feeling at the pit of his stomach.

‘It’s not true, is it Maizy? You aint the one ‘oo betrayed us are yer?’

‘As Hooray says, Terry – you’re a fool. You wouldn’t give me what I wanted, so I’ve joined the other side. I’m off to London to join S’our Dave’s government, they’ve promised to make me a Dame of the Farter – and you and your rough band of rebels can rot in jail!’

Terry was distraught. Everything he had fought for over the last few months was in ruins and now his beloved Maizy had betrayed him. Would this terrible day never end?

14. The Long March

Terry and the rest of Tel's Toms were bound with bindweed to prevent them escaping, and they were forced to start on the long march to London.

He had a lot of time to reflect on his highly eventful life, which was now at an end, for surely he would be spending the rest of his years in some dingy cell in London.

He thought back on all the wonderful cats, and some of the not so wonderful cats, that he had met in his short life.

There was Lurk and Kurk, who had rescued him as a tiny kitten, and dear Mr Bob and Suzie Woo who had become his loving foster parents. And kind old Bumbling Billy and the crazy Captain Growler who had given him somewhere to stay when he had first ran away.

He even remembered the indecisive mayor, Red Len, and the haughty Dame Shirley with affection. After all they were all part of his kitten-hood. Would he ever see any of them again?

Then there was dear, sweet Punkie. Maybe he should have married her and set up home in Pitsea. If he'd accepted her proposal none of this would have ever happened. And last but not least, what about Annie, the humpet mother that he had set out to find? He would never find her now. All was lost.

These thoughts and others were going miserably through Terry's head as he joined the long column of Red Guards as they commenced their march to London and jail.

'I'm really sorry that it's turned out like this,' said Terry mournfully to Percy Persia, who was shackled beside him.

'It's not your fault Terry. It's that traitor, Maizy, who has betrayed us,' replied an equally mournful Percy.

The mention of Maizy sent a sharp pain of hurt through Terry's heart, and his mood sunk even lower.

On and on they trudged, through the dark night. With the Red Guards surrounding them, and their paws restricted by the tight bindweed, there was no hope of escape.

At length, after what seemed an eternity, they stopped in a small clearing in the forest, and the Red Guards enjoyed a small meal. There was no food for the prisoners, and they were forced into one corner where they couldn't even sit down due to the bindweed restricting movement in their paws.

After their captors had finished their repast, they lay down for a brief sleep, but for Terry and the others sleep was impossible.

Half an hour must have passed when there was a slight rustle in a bush near Terry. At first, he thought it was a bird or stray rabbit, but then he heard some familiar sounds.

'Huss-puss, Huss-puss!'

Terry looked towards the bush, but couldn't see anything in the black night.

'Huss-puss, Meow-wow.'

'That's humpet-speak', thought Terry. 'How can I be hearing the humpet tongue way out here in the wild forest? I must be imagining it.'

'Huss-puss, can you hear me, Huss-puss?'

'It is humpet-speak', thought Terry. Then very softly, he replied, *'Huss-puss, yes I can hear you, Meow-wow.'*

'Huss-puss, now listen carefully, Huss-puss.'

The mysterious humpet voice told Terry that he was going to push a sharp stone over to him, and that he was to use it to cut the bindweed. Once he was free, he could then free his fellow prisoners.

'Huss-puss, what do we do then, Meow-wow? If we try to run, we will still be overwhelmed, Huss-puss. There's too many of them, Huss-puss.'

'Huss-puss, is this the great rebel leader, Terry The Tomcat, that is speaking to me? Meow-wow? Now listen carefully, Huss-puss.'

The voice told Terry, that as soon as they were free of the bindweed they should all run in the direction of the nearby bush, where help would be at hand.

‘*Huss-puss*, how many of you are there out there, *Meow-wow*?’ Terry asked.

‘*Huss-puss*, never you mind, *Meow-wow*. Just do as I say, *Huss-puss*.’

The sharp stone was slid along the ground towards Terry, and he quickly cut his shackles and told the rest of the group what had happened. Like Terry, they weren’t convinced that they could escape, but decided to go along with it. Anything was better than a life in prison.

Once all eleven were untied, they ran together towards the bush where a huge ginger tom was waiting for them.

‘Come on cats, follow me!’ the large ginger said in Feralise.

‘Where’s the rest of you?’ asked Terry.

‘Don’t worry about that – just follow me, quickly before those Red Guards wake up.’

They didn’t seem to have much choice, but they hadn’t run but a few yards when there was a loud squealing commotion behind them. Maizy and their captors had woken and were in hot pursuit.

This is crazy, Terry was thinking. We’ll never get away, and we’ll probably get badly injured for our efforts. But his proud and gallant heart told him that they had to try. After all, this brave ginger cat was risking his life for a bunch of strangers.

The chasing cats were nearly on them when they reached a huge oak tree. The ginger cat immediately chased up the tree trunk and beckoned for the others to follow.

‘But we’ll be trapped!’ exclaimed Percy Persia.

‘Just do what I say and follow me up the tree!’

Follow they did, high up to the top of the tree, and out onto a long branch. where to everyone’s astonishment, was a sight to behold. There at the end of the branch, bound tightly with bindweed, was the pitiful sight of a terrified Hooray Henry.

The Red Guards were about to follow them up the tree when the ginger cat shouted, ‘One more step and Hooray Henry gets it!’

‘Don’t come nearer, my dear fellows, if you please,’ pleaded Hooray Henry, in his upper class, Fleaton accent.

The Red Guards were in awe of their leader from the London government, and didn’t dare disobey him.

The huge ginger tom told Hooray to order his troops to move away from the tree.

The terrified Hooray passed on the instructions to his snarling cats, and the menacing guards did what they were told.

‘Now tell them to go back further – back into the forest,’ said the ginger tom.

Once again Hooray did as he was told and the menacing guards melted away into the woods.

‘I’ve done as you asked, so let me go free, you wicked ruffian!’ shouted Hooray.

But the ginger cat wasn’t ready to release Hooray yet. Not until they were all a long way from that forest, and out of danger.

The group slowly climbed back down to the ground, and after making sure the way was clear, Terry and his Toms followed the strange ginger and Hooray along a winding track and out into a dark field.

They travelled in silence, for fear of attracting the attention of any Red Guards who might still be in the vicinity. About an hour later, their rescuer brought them all to a halt.

‘This is far enough,’ said the ginger cat, ‘we can let this London toff go now.’

‘Don’t leave me here! I’ll get lost!’

‘That’s your problem. All that soft living in London has taken away your instincts. Go on be off! Just follow that path and you’ll come to the main road. Someone is bound to take pity on such a pathetic creature as you!’

‘You’ll be sorry you all did this,’ said Hooray. ‘Especially you, Terry. S’our Dave’s will never rest until he has put you behind bars. We’ll find you, wherever you try to go.’

With the threat ringing in his enemy's ears, Hooray made off down the path and disappeared into the night.

‘Do yer fink ‘e’ll be alright?’ asked Terry, ever concerned about his fellow creatures, despite Hooray’s threat to his own safety.

‘Of course he will. He’s a pretty smart cat. He’ll survive,’ answered the ginger tom.

‘I don’t know how to thank you,’ said Percy Persia, you were so brave and daring back there. How did you know we were captured?’

‘Oh I’ve been keeping an eye on you all for some time – especially young Terry over here.’

‘But ‘Oo are yer? And why ‘ave yer been watchin’ us?’ asked a puzzled Terry.

‘Terry, don’t you know who I am?’

‘No – I’s never set me eyes on you before.’

‘Oh yes you have, Terry.’ There was a long pause. ‘I am Tony. I’m your Dad.’



Tony

15. A Parting of Ways

‘Do I look dead?’ asked Tony.

‘I woz told that you woz killed by a fox - the one that caught me when I ran away as a kitten. They all tol' me that you rescued me, but the fox chased yer, an' yer woz never seen again. They said yer must've been killed.’

‘I very nearly was, said Tony. The fox did catch me and we had terrible fight, but he gave up in the end and left me nursing my injuries up in the marshes.

I lay there for days and days, but one day a kind squirrel took pity on me and brought me some nuts to eat. I slowly recovered, but it took several months before I was back to normal and well enough to come looking for you and your mother.

‘By that time you were being looked after by Mr Bob and Suzie Woo. And your mother had moved up to the Midlands.

‘Why didn't you come back to the Pitsea Catsil and tell us you were alive?’ asked Terry.

‘Because I decided it was better if everyone thought I was dead. Don't forget, I married a humpet, and that's against the laws of the Tabbythia. Those people from London, Hooray Henry and the like, would've put me gaol. So I thought it would be better if I stayed dead.’

‘But where've yer bin all this time?’

‘Oh I've been pussy footing around— moving from place to place. I don't like to stay in one place too long. I prefer the open road. I even stayed in humpet-land for a while – that's where I learned to speak their stupid tongue’

‘But how did yer find me?’ How come you woz around ‘ere ter rescue us?

‘I've been keeping an eye on you all your life, Terry. Especially after you ran away from Pitsea and went to stay with Captain Growler. I've never been far

away, Terry – just in case you ever needed me. And up to now you haven't. You've done very well for yourself and I'm so proud of you.'

The group found a secluded spot and decided to get some sleep before travelling back to their homes in Sherwood Forest. Terry and Tony settled down together, a little apart from the others, and continued to chat well into the night. After all, they had a lifetime to catch up on.

As dawn broke, Percy Persia came over to rouse Terry, who had only just fallen asleep after a night of talking.

'Come on Terry, we'd better hurry back before everyone starts to wonder what's happened to us.'

'Percy, I ain't going wiv yer.'

'What!' exclaimed Percy. But you must – you're our leader!

'Not any more I ain't. I'm going away wiv my Dad. It's too dangerous for the colony if I stay on as leader. You 'erd wot Hooray said. They'll always be hunting me down. It's better for the rest of yer if I don't stay with you anymore.'

You're a big rebel Catdom now, and now we've won that big battle I think S'our Dave's will leave you in peace for a long time to come. Especially if I'm not there as your leader.'

'But who will be our leader?' asked Siam Sam.

'It's obvious ain't it? Percy Persia will make a great leader – Now 'e's grown up a bit,' added Terry with a chuckle.

Siam Sam and the others could see the sense in what Terry had just told them, and reluctantly they started to make ready for the journey home without their brave and kind leader.

'Terry, I don't know how I'm going to manage without you,' said Percy Persia.

'Corse you'll manage, Percy, just remember everyfing I taught yer,' said Terry with a laugh, trying to hide the sorrow he felt at having to say farewell to this loveable group of comrades.

The group headed off back to Sherwood Forest, and after sadly watching them depart, father and son headed off in the opposite direction.

‘Where’s we going Dad?’

‘We have to find somewhere safe. Until all the fuss over Hooray Henry’s kidnapping dies down a little. You have to disappear for a while, and the best place to do that is in humpet -Land. They’ll never chase us in there.

You speak the lingo, just like me, so we can get by. We’ll pretend to be stray humpets, and we’ll find a kind human who will take us in and feed us. And I know just the place.

Tony led Terry along the highways and byways of the Eastern Midlands, until they eventually reached a pretty little village which had a stream running down it’s centre.

‘Now we have to be careful, as there’s lots of dogs around here, but if we follow the stream down to the end of the village, there’s a lovely little bungalow where I think we might be able to stay for a while.

‘I’m not afraid of any dogs, Dad,’ said Terry.

He recalled the cowardly Horace The Hound, as he followed his Dad alongside the pretty stream that meandered through the picturesque willows and elms.

‘Here we are, young lad, home for a while,’ said Tony, as they entered the front garden of a pretty bungalow.

‘Why d’ya come ‘ere Dad? Wot’s so special about this place?’

‘Because, my son there’s someone special who lives here.’

The front door opened and out ran an elegant black and white female cat, who immediately scampered over to Tony and purred loudly in greeting.

Terry looked at the two cats, who obviously had great affection for each other. His heart suddenly skipped a beat.

‘Dad, where are we? Wot’s this village called?’

‘Barnwell, Terry. This is Barnwell. And this is...’

‘Mum!’ shouted Terry. It’s my mum isn’t it?’

The black and white cat turned her attention to the huge young tortoise shell male who had arrived with her husband.

‘*Huss-puss*, oh Terry, you’re home at last, *Meow-wow!*’

Terry snuggled up to his mother and the two purred so loudly that their throats nearly burst.

So at long last, Terry, Tony and Annie settled down together in the village of Barnwell in the heart of humpet- land. They had so much to catch up on and so many adventures to relate to each other.

Tony and Terry were finally at peace. At long last they had found happiness as a family and they were content. Content, that is – for a while.

For we all know that Tony, Terry’s Dad, had a terrible wanderlust. And as for Terry – well he had to stay hidden for a while, to make sure that S’our Dave and Hooray Henry didn’t find him. But that remarkable young tomcat wasn’t going to stay hidden forever was he?

I think Terry was far too remarkable to settle for a quiet life in Barnwell. Surely it wouldn’t be long before he would start to miss all those strange and wonderful cats out there in Feralia.

He had always promised himself that one day he would go back and visit Mr Bob and Suzie Woo - his second Mum and Dad. Then, of course, was the half-forgotten promise he had made to Punkie.

He had promised her that one day he would return – after he had found his real mum.

Ah... and then there were all those other cats with whom he had shared so many exciting adventures.

I think we will hear more about Terry the Tomcat one day.

Don’t you agree?

THE END

