

## Party Time

Dylan was lying dozing in the sun; a small yellow butterfly was fluttering nearby and flew towards a thick green bush next to Dylan's left paw, which was where his sack holding three cream buns in it was. A fly danced above Dylan's nose and his large paw swatted the fly away.

Dylan yawned and stretched his paws, he pulled a bun from his sack and took a huge bite and some cream dribbled down his chin. It was really hot and Dylan noticed that there was some sweat on his paws. Dylan looked round; he was still a little sleepy. He could see the yappy dog's house and the metal tracks. He thought he could see Peter in a tree and he looked around further towards his own house. Ted was in her tree and Old Ma Ricketts and Fritz were asleep in their garden.

It had been over a year since Dylan had moved to Dalesgate and he shivered when he remembered the first time he came here. It was cold, snowing, he was hungry and he had had a sore paw.

Dylan scratched his head and thought a little more and thought about his grandfather and his old friends Angela and Luggy. He could smell the fish like it was yesterday. He smiled to himself; he had been so happy with his grandfather and he had learnt so much from all of them. A little tear fell from his eyes when he thought about his grandfather dying and he could remember how scared he was when he lived with that nasty woman, the one who broke his paw.

He smiled again when he thought how he had first met Ted. She looked so fearsome with her large claws and teeth. If Ted hadn't allowed him to stay he might have passed on. Ted had felt sorry for him and decided to look after him and he had moved into Ted's house where she had kept him warm and well fed. He now had a new man and woman who Dylan loved and cared for.

Ted had introduced him to many new friends; Peter, Oily Joe, Hamish, George, Annie, Fritz, Theresa and of course Covy. Dylan chuckled when he thought about the games of football that he had played with Peter. Dylan had got a lot better at football and he really enjoyed it.

Hamish and George had made him some lovely food, cakes, pies, flans, soup and pasties, Dylan licked his chops. Then of course there were the adventures that they had had, saving Fritz from the river and the time Dylan got stuck down a hole. Dylan was frightened at the time but he now thought it was quite funny being stuck in the hole.

Dylan looked at the ground not that far away from where he was sitting now and he remembered the first time he met, or rather heard, Old Ma Ricketts. He could still hear the noise of her cries. She had been bitten and hit by the bullies. Dylan thought that Old Ma Ricketts might have passed on after she had been beaten by the bullies, but she hadn't. Ted had once said that she was a tough old boot.

Old Ma Ricketts now lived with Ted and Dylan. Dylan had grown to love her even though she sometimes bossed him about. Dylan remembered when he first met Fritz, he was always getting lost and it became Dylan's job to help him find home again, but since Fritz had met Old Ma Ricketts, Fritz had become like a young cat again. He never got lost, he cleaned himself a lot and he danced with Old Ma Ricketts. Fritz had shown all the other cats how good he was at tracking and how brave he was.

Dylan thought about Covy. She had been badly treated by some people and she only had one good eye and she was often unwell. She was looked after by her woman who was very kind to her. Dylan had become Covy's friend and he would sing and dance for her and Covy would make him buns. Dylan would take Covy out for walks and they would sit and chat. Dylan was really pleased that Covy was feeling a lot better. She still had to see the man Garry, the veterinarian, and Old Ma Ricketts had made brews and put leaves on Covy's sore eye. Old Ma Ricketts had told Dylan that Covy was feeling better because of her brews.

Dylan looked round the field again and thought about the battle with the bullies. The bullies had beaten up Old Ma Ricketts, had bitten Webster's tail and bullied and ruled Webster's cats. Dylan thought about Oily Joe and his volunteers and all the traps that they had made and of course Hamish and George's rock cakes. He shuddered again when he thought of Ted fighting with Wilbur Branch and how Ted was covered with blood. Fritz ended the fight by hitting Wilbur Branch with Old Ma Ricketts's frying pan. The bullies were well beaten and had gone. Dylan was still a little ashamed that he had been so scared and didn't fight. The other cats were so kind to him and no cat had laughed or shouted at him about his lack of bravery.

Some of the cats that were injured fighting against the bullies still hadn't fully recovered. Peter still had a sore mouth and he sometimes found it hard to swallow. Theresé had been bitten on her stump and sometimes she couldn't sit down. Ted had part of her ear missing but didn't seem to be bothered at all by it. Little Evie still limped a little after a bully had trodden on her paw but a veterinarian called Big Jim was fixing it.

Oily Joe had recovered very well but he had been away for about a month. He was having a holiday and then he was picking up some parts. Oily Joe was due back sometime today and Ted had arranged a surprise party for him in the shed with the green door.

Dylan then stood up and stretched a little. He collected his sack and ambled along the fence towards the house of the yappy dog. He wandered down towards the metal tracks. It was really hot so he sat in a bush to cool down for a little while. After finishing another bun, he wandered along the metal tracks.

There was a swishing noise in the air and Peter jumped down from a tree,

"How are you doing my friend?" he cried.

"I am great thanks, it's really hot," replied Dylan.

"It sure is," said Peter. He smiled, showing the gap where his two teeth once lived.

"A bit hot for football" said Dylan.

"Oh, it's never too hot to play football. Will you be coming over for a game later? You can play in goal," said Peter.

"I hope I can but I think I have got to help Ted get the shed ready for Oily Joe's party," answered Dylan.

"There's nothing like a good party," grinned Peter. "Hamish and George haven't been seen for days. They have been so busy cooking. I have missed Oily Joe."

"Me too," replied Dylan.

Annie slowly wandered out from behind a yellow bush; she swayed from side to side.

"How are you Annie?" cried Peter.

"Phew, it is so hot," she said. "I think I have got sunstroke." Annie's nose was a little red and she sat down. She waved to Dylan.

"Are you making any sausage rolls for Oily Joe's party?" asked Dylan.

Annie nodded and a big grin appeared on Dylan's face. "I had better head off home," said Annie, "to make my sausage rolls."

Annie started ambling off. A dog then ran past chasing a stick for its master. It was panting, hot and sweaty; it picked up the stick and ran back towards its master. Dylan, Peter and Annie chuckled.

"Dogs are really daft," said Peter "chasing sticks in this weather."

"Who is coming to the party?" asked Annie.

"Everyone!" shouted Peter, "and even Webster is bringing his friends who live near where the bullies were."

"I'd best make a lot of sausage rolls then!" said Annie. With that she disappeared through a bush. Dylan and Peter waved goodbye to each other and Dylan headed back for home.

When Dylan arrived in the garden, Old Ma Ricketts and Fritz were sitting in the shade chatting. They both smiled at Dylan, showing their gums. Fritz had the fur on his head parted down the middle.

“Hot isn’t it son?” said Fritz.

“It sure is,” replied Dylan.

“Want some water?” asked Fritz.

“Yes please,” Dylan replied.

“It’s good news that Oily Joe is coming back, isn’t it?” said Fritz.

Dylan finished slurping his water, “Yep, I wonder what he has been up to,” he replied.

“Will you be singing a song tonight?” cackled Old Ma Ricketts.

“I am not sure yet,” smiled Dylan.

“Oh, go on,” chipped in Fritz “Oily Joe would like that.”

“I shall try and write a new song. Is Ted still up in her tree?” said Dylan.

Before Fritz could answer, “Pssst, pssst, come up my tree” a voice said. Dylan scampered up the tree.

“Are you having a nice day?” asked Ted.

“Yes Ted but it is really hot,” said Dylan.

“It is. I cannot remember it being as hot as this. Our man says it’s something called global warming,” Ted replied.

“What does that mean?” said Dylan puzzled.

“I am not sure,” replied Ted, “I suppose it means it’s hot.” Ted smiled at Dylan. Dylan smiled back.

“Do you fancy another drink?” Dylan had a sip of Ted’s water. “I thought we would discuss the plan for Oily Joe’s party.”

“I am looking forward to it,” said Dylan.

“I think we all are,” replied Ted.

Ted went on, “Well, I think Oily Joe is arriving in a few hours so we best give him some time to unload his tools and check on his garage. So Peter will collect Oily Joe once he has done that and I have already done some work on the shed and Fritz said that he and Old Ma Ricketts will finish cleaning the shed for us.”

“Who is bringing food?” asked Dylan.

Ted thought for a moment. “Well Hamish and George have been baking for the past few days and Theresé will no doubt be making her biscuits.”

“Annie is making some sausage rolls too,” chipped in Dylan, “and I think Covy is making some buns.”

Ted went on, “Webster and his friends will be bringing some food also. I am going to bring some pilchards.”

“I have some prawns,” added Dylan.

“Well, we will have a feast fit for a king,” Ted went on.

“Perhaps the others will bring more food,” said Dylan “we don’t want to be short of food.”

Ted chuckled, “I am sure we won’t be.” Then added, “Now are you going to do a song for Oily Joe?”

“I think I will,” replied Dylan.

“Well, you had best get on with it,” said Ted.

Dylan scampered down the tree. He thought about going to see Covy but decided it was best to write his song first. He went into his house, grabbing one or two biscuits. He sat on his chair and started singing. His man looked at him and smiled. His woman came down the stairs asking what the noise was. His man shook his head and continued watching the telly thingy. There was something on TV called ‘snooker.’ Dylan thought it looked interesting but thought it better to carry on with his song. His woman tickled Dylan’s tummy and said something to the man about Dylan being in pain. Dylan purred and licked his woman’s hand. His man had a drink and suggested to his woman that they have a stroll to the pub. His woman quickly got up and they both left.

It didn't take long for Dylan to finish his song and he went back out into the garden. Old Ma Ricketts and Fritz were gone.

"They're over at the shed!" cried Ted, "You finished your song?"

"I have. I think I will give Old Ma Ricketts and Fritz a paw," said Dylan.

"Good lad!" shouted Ted after Dylan ambled off towards the shed.

Old Ma Ricketts was singing a song. She had a very high voice and Dylan could hardly make out what it was she was singing, but it sounded something about raindrops landing on her head. Fritz was whistling and putting down some straw.

"Can you help me fix this table, son?" asked Fritz.

"Sure," replied Dylan. "Isn't Old Ma Ricketts a lovely singer Dylan?"

"Well, erm, she's different," replied Dylan scratching his head. "Different but lovely." Fritz smiled again.

Dylan and Fritz fixed the table and Dylan helped put more straw on the ground, then he helped Old Ma Ricketts clean some bowls.

"How's your song?" asked Fritz.

"It's all done," said Dylan.

"I am looking forward to hearing it," cackled Old Ma Ricketts, "Perhaps I could join in?" She smiled and carried on singing about raindrops. Dylan shook his head and smiled at Fritz.

After finishing his work, Dylan headed off to see Covy. He scampered across the metal tracks. He went towards Peter's house.

"Is that you, Dylan?" cried Peter.

"Yes, it's me," replied Dylan.

"Fancy a game of football?" said Peter.

"I am off to see Covy," said Dylan.

"Aw, come on just a little game," Peter teased. Dylan climbed onto Peter's fence and jumped into Peter's garden.

"Shall we practice dribbling?" Peter cried.

"It's a bit hot," moaned Dylan. "Aw, go on then."

"Okay then!" said Peter and fetched his ball.

Peter and Dylan did some dribbling and then practised some tackling. Peter was beating Dylan but not as easily as he was able to do a year ago. Dylan went in goal and Peter took some penalties. Dylan managed to save one when he fell to his left and the ball hit his paw. Dylan was tired and there was sweat coming from his paws. They were having a little drink when Basil arrived. He put down his sack and Dylan could see something wriggling in it. Basil played football with them and Dylan noticed that he only kicked with his left paw. After Basil had scored four goals, Dylan decided to leave.

"Bye Dylan!" cried Peter.

"See you both tonight!" shouted Dylan. He looked back and Basil was lying in a heap on the ground grinning widely.

"You sent me the wrong way!" Basil cried.

Dylan climbed the fence and headed off to see Covy. He met Annie, who was complaining to a young cat called Veronica that she had sunburn.

"How are the sausage rolls?" asked Dylan.

"They're in the oven," replied Annie. Dylan licked her nose to try and cool it down.

"That's nice," she said. "Do you think Old Ma Ricketts will make a brew for my nose?" she asked.

"I am sure she will," said Dylan. Annie headed off home to check on her sausage rolls.

Dylan eventually arrived at Covy's garden. Covy and her woman were sitting in the garden and Covy was playing with a ping-pong ball.

"Hello, it's the dancing cat," said the woman. Covy smiled at Dylan and Dylan did a little jig. Dylan gave Covy a lick and started playing with the ping-pong ball with Covy and her woman. The woman went indoors to have a drink.

"How are you feeling?" asked Dylan.

"I am feeling very well," replied Covy. She smiled again and her little teeth shined in the sun. "I think Old Ma Ricketts and the man Garry have fixed my eye, it's not sore anymore and I don't have sore heads."

"That is great news. Are you making buns for tonight?" added Dylan.

"No," replied Covy. Dylan looked disappointed.

Covy grinned, "Don't worry," she said, "I am making jam doughnuts instead."

Dylan licked his lips and Covy's woman brought him and Covy out a drink. Dylan had a few licks. He sniffed the air; there was a strange smell. He noticed Covy's nose was twitching.

Dylan sniffed again and he realised that the smell was coming from him. "Oh, oh," he said, "I am sorry, I was running around playing football and I forgot to wash."

"It's a hot day," added Covy. Dylan had a wash and Covy helped by licking his ears. They heard some mumbling. Dylan climbed onto the fence. It was Callinicos; he was walking past mumbling to himself. Dylan couldn't understand what he was saying.

"Are you coming tonight?" shouted Dylan.

Callinicos looked around. "Yes, I hope so," he mumbled, "but I have some things to do first," and with that Callinicos ambled off. Dylan jumped back into Covy's garden.

"It was Callinicos," Dylan said to Covy.

"Ah," she said.

"Oh by the way, I have done a song for Oily Joe," said Dylan.

"Oh, can I hear it, can I hear it," said Covy excitedly.

"You will have to wait till tonight," answered Dylan smiling.

"Will you collect me?" asked Covy.

"Of course I will and I will even carry your jam doughnuts!" laughed Dylan.

"Good. How many cats are coming?" she added.

"Lots, lots," said Dylan.

"Well I'd better make lots of doughnuts," Covy said. Dylan smiled again and Dylan and Covy licked each other again. Covy went to see if her doughnuts were alright and Dylan ran off home.

When Dylan arrived in the garden, Old Ma Ricketts was having a wash. She was still singing that song about raindrops! Dylan tried to cover his ears with his paws. Dylan went up Ted's tree. Ted was in her tree trying to have a sleep.

"Oh dear," she said, "Old Ma Ricketts' singing sounds like a ferret getting strangled!"

"Should we tell her to stop?" asked Dylan.

"No, no we just have to put up with it," said Ted. "Anyway, she seems to be very happy. Do you want some biscuits?" Dylan nodded and Ted gave him some biscuits. Ted and Dylan then decided to head indoors and try and have a little nap. They scampered down the tree.

"Are you all right, Old Ma Ricketts?" said a grinning Ted.

"I am tip top," she replied "Tip top." She then started singing something about tulips being in Amsterdam. It seemed to have the same tune as the raindrops song. Ted and Dylan went indoors; their man and woman were still out and they both had a little nap.

When Dylan awoke Old Ma Ricketts was no longer singing. She was sitting in Ted's chair cleaning her ears. "Ah, Dylan, you are awake. Ted has gone over to the shed to fix the music. Fritzzy should be coming

soon. You best have a wash and go and collect Covy; the party should be starting soon.” Dylan had a good wash and Old Ma Ricketts helped him clean his ears. There was a tap at the window. Dylan looked up; it was Fritz. Old Ma Ricketts called “Fritzy, Fritzy!” and she climbed onto the window. She opened the window and hopped out. Dylan climbed out the window too. Fritz looked remarkably handsome; there was not a trace of fur out of place.

“Hello Dylan, you looking forward to the party?” said Fritz.

“I am, Fritz, I am,” replied Dylan. Fritz and Old Ma Ricketts had a dance in the garden and started chuckling at each other.

“Oh Dylan, are you going to collect Covy now?” suggested Fritz.

“Yes I am,” replied Dylan.

“Can you collect Annie as well? She told me that she has so many sausage rolls that she cannot carry them and she doesn’t want to hurt her back,” laughed Fritz.

“Blimey, how many sausage rolls has she made?” Dylan laughed.

“A whole sack full I think,” replied Fitz.

“Oh yummy,” said Dylan.

“Now son, remember that the sausage rolls are for everyone so you cannot eat more than three!” commented Fritz.

“Okay Fritz, I will try to remember that” Dylan nodded. Fritz smiled.

“Right, we’re off,” Fritz announced.

“Oh, Old Ma Ricketts?” Dylan said.

“What is it, Dylan?” Old Ma Ricketts replied.

“Annie wants you to make a brew for her burnt nose,” Dylan stated.

“I will sort her out tomorrow,” said Old Ma Ricketts.

Dylan headed off to collect Covy. At the metal tracks, he met Theresé, Little Evie, Jenny and Basil. Basil was chuckling and had some pieces of pizza on his whiskers.

“How’s your stump?” asked Dylan.

“It’s a lot better,” Theresé replied, “It won’t affect my dancing.” She smiled at Dylan and Little Evie giggled. Dylan waved goodbye to them and as he was about to cross the metal tracks he heard a noise from a group of cats. Dylan looked across his field and it was Webster and his friends. Webster waved to Dylan and shouted hello. Dylan went over to meet Webster and his friends. There were six friends; there was a big black cat, two ginger cats, a tortoiseshell cat, a brown cat and a white cat that had a black eye and a black tip on her tail. They all hugged and licked Dylan.

After the battle with the bullies, Webster went back to live with his old friends but he visited often and played with Peter. Webster would sometimes share a bun or a sardine with Dylan. Webster and his group waved goodbye to Dylan and headed off to the shed. Dylan scampered towards Covy’s house.

He climbed onto Covy’s fence and Covy was looking out from her window. Dylan waved at her and Covy waved back. Covy’s woman opened the door. “Come in, dancing cat.” Dylan went into Covy’s house. Covy’s fur was shining and she smelled lovely. She had her little sack. Her woman put some jam doughnuts into the sack. Dylan sniffed; he didn’t know what smelled better, Covy or the doughnuts!

Dylan licked Covy, “You smell really nice.”

Covy smiled, “And you smell a lot better!” Covy’s woman gave Dylan the sack of doughnuts, he licked Covy and she patted Dylan on the head. Dylan took Covy’s paw and they headed off.

“Oh, I forgot,” said Dylan.

“What is it?” Covy asked.

“Do you mind if we get Annie; she has made so many sausage rolls she cannot carry them?” Covy nodded and when they arrived at Annie’s house she was waiting in her garden and her sack was full of sausage rolls.

“Hello you two,” she smiled.

“Hi Annie,” Dylan and Covy replied. “My, your sack looks heavy.” Annie smiled. They went into Annie’s garden, Dylan put Annie’s sack on his back; it was as heavy as it looked. Annie opened her gate and Covy, Annie and Dylan headed off towards Oily Joe’s party.

They passed Peter’s house but Peter was not at home. He must be off to fetch Oily Joe, thought Dylan. They came towards the metal tracks and Dylan had a little rest. A dog was barking in the distance. Dylan was tired and hungry and Annie suggested that he have a couple of sausage rolls. Covy agreed and they sat down. Dylan had three sausage rolls and Annie and Covy had one each. When they headed off again Dylan felt a lot better.

Although it was getting late it was still hot. As they came towards Dylan’s house, they could hear music coming from the shed. Dylan listened but the music was in a strange language that he couldn’t understand. Dylan looked at Covy and Annie and they looked puzzled. As they came closer to the shed, they could hear cats whooping and stamping their paws. When they went into the shed, Dylan could see all the cats. Webster was dancing with Theresé. Webster’s friends were having some food. Fritz and Old Ma Ricketts were sitting eating and chatting. A little cat called Sooty was being sick in the corner. Dylan took the sacks off her and held Covy’s paw. He looked for Ted who was chatting to Peter, Oily Joe and another female cat. Oily Joe looked at Dylan and cried, “Dylan, my friend!” and Oily Joe ran towards Dylan. Dylan cried “Oily!” and they licked each other.

“How was your holiday?” asked Dylan.

“Great,” said Oily Joe, “and I was able to get parts for the garage as well. Oh, I have someone here for you to meet.” Oily Joe waved his paw and the female cat came forward and Ted and Peter came with her.

“Alright, Dylan?” said Ted. Peter smiled and collected Annie and Covy’s sacks and he took them to the food table.

“This is my niece Hoda,” announced Oily Joe. “She has come to stay with me and help at the garage.” Dylan looked at Hoda; she was a fine looking cat. She was brown with a white belly and tail. She had all her teeth and long whiskers. She looked big and strong.

“Hoda is from a country that is far away,” Oily Joe said.

Hoda spoke, “I am from France.” She spoke in a strange way and Dylan couldn’t fully understand her.

“Where’s France?” he said.

“Far away,” she answered. “Please forgive my accent.”

Ted quickly answered, “No, that’s fine, none of us can speak your language.” Hoda smiled at Ted.

“And this must be your friend Covy,” said Hoda. Hoda shook Covy’s paw and smiled at her. Covy smiled back. Peter came back and said, “Hoda has brought some of her music.”

“What sort is it?” enquired Dylan.

“Johnny Hallyday,” Hoda replied. “Peter tells me you play football,”

We do play football, but I am not very good,” Dylan replied.

“Oh, that doesn’t matter,” said Hoda, “do you mind if I come and play as well? I love football.”

“Of course you can. What team do you support?” asked Peter.

“Well, I support the best team in France, En Avant de Guingamp,” Hoda said.

“Who?” said Dylan.

“The best team in France, En avant de Guingamp,” she repeated. Dylan tried to repeat what Hoda had said, but it sounded like geen geep. Hoda laughed.

Hamish and George shouted, "Dylan, Covy, have some food!" Dylan, Covy, Hoda, Oily Joe, Ted and Peter went to have some food. Dylan had a bun, some flan, two sausage rolls, a biscuit and two pilchards. They sat down and ate the food. Basil shouted, "This Johnny Hallyday ain't too bad to dance to!" He carried on dancing with Jenny.

Old Ma Ricketts and Fritz came over to join them. "Aw, how are you all?" asked Fritz.

"We are all well," replied Dylan. "Are you two enjoying Oily Joe's party?"

"We are indeed," Fritz replied. Oily Joe licked Fritz.

"Who is your friend?" asked Old Ma Ricketts.

"This is my niece, Hoda. She is from France," said Oily Joe. Hoda smiled at Old Ma Ricketts.

"Et tu bien?" answered Old Ma Ricketts. Ted looked at Peter, who looked at Dylan, who looked at Covy, who looked at Fritz!

"Qui je suis bien merci," replied Hoda. Fritz looked at Covy, who looked at Dylan, who looked at Peter, who looked at Ted.

"What are you saying?" Ted said to Old Ma Ricketts.

"Ah, I can also speak some French," she chuckled.

"How did you learn that, my dear?" enquired Fritz.

"Ah, Fritz, when I wasn't called Old Ma Ricketts and was called Esmeralda Clarissa Ricketts, we had a French cat to stay and I learned some French," confessed Old Ma Ricketts.

"Ooh," replied everyone together.

Hoda said, "You speak French very well."

"Merci" replied Old Ma Ricketts, who smiled, showing her gums.

"I think we had better speak English for the other cats to understand us," Hoda said. Old Ma Ricketts nodded. Dylan's jaw dropped in amazement at Old Ma Ricketts.

"Dance, anyone?" suggested Peter.

"Ah, not that Deep Purple stuff," cackled Old Ma Ricketts. "Can we play some proper music, like Maxy Bygraves?"

"Okay," replied Peter, who went off to the music machine. They then started dancing to Maxy Bygraves, some of the younger cats sat down shaking their heads but Fritz and Old Ma Ricketts, Ted and Peter, Dylan and Covy, Oily Joe and Hoda and Annie and Theresé and Basil and Jenny danced. Webster and his friends eventually joined in. Fritz and Old Ma Ricketts seemed very happy.

"Does any cat want more food?" shouted Hamish and George, who started bringing plates of food to the cats.

When the music stopped, Ted shouted, "Can I have your attention please?" The cats quietened down. Ted cleared her throat. She went on, "Now we're having this party to welcome Oily Joe back." There were cries of "Nice to see you Oily," and "Good to have you back." "Oily Joe has brought his niece Hoda from France. Hoda is going to be staying with Oily Joe. I want to welcome Hoda as well," finished Ted.

There were a few cries of "Welcome Hoda" and "Nice to meet you." Hoda bowed a little and smiled at all the cats.

"Now I want to hand you over to Dylan, who has written a little song for Oily Joe. Dylan, take it away," said Ted.

"Come on Dylan, give us a song," cried Webster. Dylan stood up and he cleared his throat:

*Oily Joe, Oily Joe we missed you  
You have been away and gone far  
Now you're here*

*And it's clear  
Oily Joe, Oily Joe we missed you.  
You missed some football  
You missed some food  
But having you back  
Makes us feel good.  
Oily Joe, Oily Joe now you're back  
You have been on holiday  
You are a friend  
To the end*

Oily Joe, Oily Joe have something from the sack.  
“Sing!” cried Ted.

*You have missed some football ... and all the cats joined in  
You have missed some food  
But having you back  
Makes us feel good.*

The cats sung the last verse again and even Hoda joined in. Oily Joe was smiling broadly and when the song finished, he hugged Dylan.

“Let’s finish the food!” cried Ted. All the cats had a good scoff. They then started dancing again, this time to Therese’s favourite, Bleeding Hearts. The cats were jiggling around, then Peter played some Deep Purple and the cats were dancing and shaking their heads. After all the dancing, Dylan was very tired and he sat beside Covy.

“I have really enjoyed myself,” she said to Dylan, and she licked his head. Dylan held Covy’s paw. Old Ma Ricketts came over and told everyone she was bushed. Fritz was panting and he had a little drink. Oily Joe was shaking every cat by the paw and thanking them for coming. Ted was chatting to Hoda and Webster and Peter. The four of them came over to Dylan’s group, “We have had an idea!” cried Peter excitedly.

“What’s that?” asked Dylan.

“Well,” said Ted. “We are going to have a game of football against Webster’s cats.”

“Oh,” said Dylan, “but we don’t have a team.”

“Well, we’re going to make one,” said Ted.

Dylan nodded, “When are we going to play?”

“In two week’s time,” said Webster chipping in.

“Yee hah!” cried Peter, “A proper game.”

“Oh, ahh!” said Annie.

“What is it Annie?” said Old Ma Ricketts.

“I have been sick and my tummy’s sore,” moaned Annie.

“Ah, too much food,” added Old Ma Ricketts. Annie was crying a little and Old Ma Ricketts rubbed her tummy.

“Ah, is that better my dear?” asked Old Ma Ricketts. “Now, it’s best you head off home and have a nice sleep. Dylan...” squawked Old Ma Ricketts, “time for you to take Annie home. Covy looks a little tired as well.”

Dylan got up; he was a bit unsteady on his paws but escorted them willingly.

“Oh, okay, Old Ma Ricketts,” he said.

“Now, my dear you come and see me about your snout tomorrow,” said Old Ma Ricketts.

“I will,” said Annie. Dylan went and collected Annie and Covy’s sacks.

Dylan, Annie and Covy waved goodbye to everyone. Oily Joe came over and gave Covy and Dylan a hug.

“Training tomorrow!” cried Hoda.

“Ermm, the training?” said Dylan.

“Yes indeed!” cried Ted.

Hamish and George came over. “Here’s some pilchards for your trip,” said Hamish, “For your trip,” said George.

The party was carrying on with some cats still dancing but most of them were sitting chatting and polishing off the rest of the food.

Dylan and Covy headed off with Annie, who was looking a little peaky. They went very slowly as Annie was sickly and it was still hot. They came to the metal tracks. Dylan sniffed the air; he signed for Annie and Covy to stop. “What is it?” whispered Covy.

“I think I smelt a dog,” said Dylan.

“Ooh,” said Annie, “what are we going to do?”

“Just wait for a bit,” said Dylan. Dylan sniffed the air again and looked towards the field. He saw a pair of eyes looking towards him. Yep, a dog, he thought. Dylan wasn’t sure what to do. He looked at Covy and Annie. They both looked as scared as he felt. He looked towards the dog again and the eyes were coming towards him and then it started to growl. Dylan gulped and thought of running away or climbing a tree, but he looked back at Covy and Annie who were holding onto each other whimpering. Dylan gulped a little and spat, he puffed himself up the way his grandfather and Fritz had shown him. The dog barked and started running towards Dylan. Dylan’s tail stood up. He then picked up a stone and threw it towards the dog. It hit the dog on the ear. The dog stopped and Dylan ran towards the dog growling and roaring.

“Hoi dog!” Dylan heard a shout. It was Ted, “come and catch me!” Ted threw another stone at the dog. The dog turned and went growling towards Ted. Ted shouted Peter but Peter didn’t appear and the dog ran towards Ted.

“Run Dylan, take Covy and Annie home,” instructed Ted.

Dylan thought for a moment. He remembered how in the past he had let Ted down by not being brave. Dylan gulped again. No, he thought, I am not leaving Ted. Dylan shouted, “No Ted, I am not running!” Dylan ran towards the dog. Dylan started roaring again and the dog turned to look at him. Ted stopped running.

Suddenly there was a whistle and the dog stopped. The whistle came again. The dog looked towards the whistle and ran towards Ted, then Dylan. The dog was licking its chops.

“Allez, allez!” came a cry. It was Hoda and she ran towards the dog. “Charge!” shouted Ted. Ted, Hoda and Dylan ran towards the dog. Dylan could now see that it was a large dog. The dog turned its head around. Hoda whistled again and the dog looked confused. Dylan threw another stone, which missed the dog. Hoda picked up a stone and kicked it with her paw. It whacked the dog. The dog cried, looked at Hoda then it ran off; it ran towards the house of the yappy dog. Hoda was still shouting. Ted, Dylan and Hoda met at the centre of the field. They looked towards the fence as the dog jumped over it and then ran faster until he was out of sight.

“Well!” cried Ted, “that sorted that out.” Hoda was still growling. Dylan was a little out of puff. “Thanks for your help Hoda,” said Ted.

“No problem,” she replied.

“Where did you learn to whistle like that?” said Ted amazed.

“Well us French cats know a thing or two about chasing dogs,” Hoda smiled.

“Dylan?” said Ted.

“Yes Ted,” Dylan responded.

“You were very brave,” said Ted.

Dylan thought for a moment and then said quietly, “I didn’t want to let you down again.”

“Good lad,” replied a smiling Ted. “Dylan, you best go and see to Covy and Annie, we can chat later.”

Dylan ran towards Covy and Annie and Hoda and Ted ambled back to the green shed.

“Are you all right, Dylan?” cried Covy.

“I am fine,” he replied. Annie was still looking a little scared and her tail was still between her legs.

“Dylan, why did you try and frighten the dog?” asked Covy. “You could have been killed.” There was a little tear in Covy’s eye.

“I couldn’t let Ted down again.” Dylan noticed that he was shaking. He was still afraid. He then added, “and I didn’t want the dog to hurt you or Annie.” Covy and Annie licked Dylan.

“Come on, I best take you home.” They crossed the metal tracks. Annie was looking a little better. They passed Peter’s house and then crossed the road towards Annie’s house. They licked Annie goodbye and gave her the sack. Annie went indoors and Covy and Dylan went to Covy’s house. They sat in Covy’s garden and they ate the pilchards that Hamish and George had given Dylan.

“Dylan?” Covy said.

“What is it?” Dylan replied.

“That thing with the dog was very brave,” said Covy. “I never thought that you would ever be able to do that.”

“Neither did I,” replied Dylan. “I think I am still shaking too.” Covy licked Dylan again. Dylan held her paw. Dylan looked at the window and Covy’s woman was there.

“Hello, dancing cat!” she shouted. Dylan stood up and did a circle dance. Covy was smiling and Covy’s woman laughed. “I best go in,” said Covy. Dylan licked Covy again and Covy headed back towards her door. “Okay Dylan?”

“Yes,” smiled Dylan.

“I loved your song for Oily Joe,” Covy said. Dylan grinned. He then scampered off home. He came to the metal tracks, sniffed the air and there was no smell to worry about. Dylan then scampered towards the green shed. When he arrived there Ted, Old Ma Ricketts and Fritz were finishing tidying up as all the other cats had gone home.

“I hear that you have been a hero,” said Fritz.

“Well, not really, I was scared but Ted and Hoda were there,” replied Dylan.

“Yes, I know,” said Fritz, “but you did your bit. I am proud of you son,” Fritz smiled at Dylan.

“I don’t know why I did it,” said Dylan looking puzzled.

“It must be love,” cackled Old Ma Ricketts. She then started squealing that song about raindrops again.

“Time we went!” said Ted his eyes looking upwards.

“Ted?” said Fritz.

“What is it, Fritz?” answered Ted.

“Do you mind if I go out on patrol?” said Fritz.

“There’s no need for you to,” said Ted.

“Well, if there’s a dog about, I would sleep better if I know it’s gone. I wouldn’t want it to get Old Ma Ricketts,” Fritz stated.

“Well if you’re sure. Do you want me to go with you?” Ted said.

“No, that’s fine.” Ted started singing a song called; It Must Be Love and she scampered home. Dylan scampered after her.

Ted and Dylan got into their house; their man and woman were still out. They both had a drink. Ted settled into her chair and Dylan into his chair.

“Oh, Dylan?” Ted said.

“What, Ted?” Dylan replied.

Ted smiled and said “Well done.” She then fell asleep. Dylan was really tired and he felt good, he then fell asleep too.

## Practice makes perfect

“Up, up, up, faster, faster, Dylan!” cried Hoda.

This was Dylan’s first training session. It was very hot and seven cats were out training for the game against Webster’s cats. Dylan, Ted, Peter, Hoda, Theresé, Jenny and Basil were training. Dylan had arrived at training late after he had slept in. Old Ma Ricketts had to poke him in the guts to get him up and he had to run to Peter’s house. When he climbed the fence, he was just in time to watch Hoda showing all the cats how to play “proper” football. Hoda kicked the ball onto her head and it bounced on her head ten times, then she headed the ball high up in the air, after that she flicked the ball even higher with her back paws. She then passed the ball from her right front paw to her left front paw. Her left paw then kicked it up in the air and it landed on her tail and kept the ball up with her left paw. Her tail spun and so did the ball. With her tail she flicked the ball up in the air and Hoda caught it.

“Is that okay?” she said. There was silence, ending with the sound of Peter’s jaw dropping.

“I think that’s fine,” gasped Ted. Theresé started clapping and all the cats joined in. Peter seemed to have trouble with his jaw as it stayed dropped.

“Well, I think we have our trainer,” announced Ted. “Would you like to train us?”

“Oui, sorry I mean yes,” said Hoda.

So Dylan now found himself jumping up and down with Hoda telling him to jump higher. “Right, stop!” she shouted, “Now do press ups.” Hoda showed all the cats what to do and every cat copied her. Dylan could only manage three, Basil did five and, Jenny six. Theresé, Ted and Peter were still going when Hoda told them to stop. “Right, has every cat warmed up?” Dylan was just a blob of sweat and hoped that they would be finishing soon.

“Right, dribbling,” announced Hoda. “How many balls do we have?”

“Just the two,” answered Peter.

“Well we best get some more,” said Hoda. Jenny cried that she had another one and she scurried off to get it. Hoda and Ted started dribbling and so did Peter and Theresé. Dylan and Basil had a little rest. When Jenny returned with her ball, Dylan and Basil had to dribble whilst the other cats watched them. Hoda then told all the cats to have a drink. Dylan sat down and asked Ted, “How often do we have to do this?”

“I don’t know; Hoda is in charge of the training,” said Ted.

“Every cat, Oily Joe has given me time off work to play.” Oily Joe then appeared; he was covered in oil but had a large grin on his face. “I see Hoda has got you all training. Oh, Dylan you don’t look very well,” Oily added. Dylan was feeling a little sick and as he looked up, the sun was beating down and he had another drink.

“Right, get up every cat!” cried Hoda. She then got all the cats in a circle and they had to pass the ball to another cat shouting their name. If you missed a pass you had to do three press-ups. Dylan ended up doing six press-ups. Hoda whistled, “Right, that’s us for the day; see you tomorrow.”

Hamish and George arrived, “Cake any cat?” they cried.

“Yes please,” grinned Dylan.

“You can only have the one!” shouted Hoda as she patted Dylan’s belly. Oily Joe took three pieces. Ted signalled to Dylan that he wanted a chat in her tree. Peter and Hoda carried on practising. Theresé and Jenny went home; Basil lay on the ground claiming that he couldn’t move.

After waving goodbye, Ted and Dylan scampered back to the garden where Old Ma Ricketts was sitting singing. She peered at Ted, "Fritz has gone out on patrol and I have been practicing my singing, Ted."

"Very good, we are off up my tree," Ted said as she scampered up her tree. Dylan tried running up the tree but only got halfway up before he fell off landing on a bush. He had another go and Ted grabbed him and pulled him into the den. Ted looked through her spyglass, "Ah there's Fritz, and he's at the small hill near the fence." Dylan had a look through the spyglass and he saw Fritz. He moved the spyglass and looked at the yappy dog that was fetching things for its owner and he could see a train coming. He fiddled with the spyglass again and he could see Annie ambling towards the metal tracks.

"Did you enjoy the training?" asked Ted.

"It was very hard," replied Dylan, "my paws are so sore."

"Yes, it seems Hoda loves her football," said Ted.

"Will we have to go every day?" asked Dylan.

"Of course we will, it's fun isn't it?" Ted added.

Dylan wasn't so sure if it really was fun. Eating a pilchard or writing a song was fun but jumping up and down in the sun wasn't.

"I wanted to chat about that dog last night," said Ted. Dylan's ears waggled as he listened. "I don't want to scare any cat but I haven't seen that dog before and it was very angry."

"Ohh yes," said Dylan.

"Some dogs get angry, like some cats do and it was a big dog so I think we should have more patrols, just to keep an eye out," stated Ted.

"Okay Ted," nodded Dylan.

Ted looked through her spyglass, "It looks as if Fritz has the same idea."

Dylan looked through the spyglass and he could see Fritz. Fritz was looking out to where the dog went and he was sharpening his claws and sniffing the air, Dylan put the spyglass down. He looked at the garden and Annie had arrived in the garden. Old Ma Ricketts was putting a leaf on her sore nose.

"Hello Annie!" shouted Dylan. Annie looked up and Ted popped her head out of the tree.

"Hello Annie," said Ted.

"Hello Ted, hello Dylan," she replied.

Ted scampered down from the tree and Dylan followed her but his paws were still a little sore and he landed in the garden with a thud.

"Now my dear, hold that leaf on your snout," Old Ma Ricketts told Annie.

"It's very hot again, isn't it?" said Annie.

"It is," replied Ted.

"Oh, Dylan your fur is all wet!" cried Annie.

"Ah, it's okay," said Ted, "Dylan has been training."

"What's training?" she asked. Ted explained to Annie what training was and how Hoda was making them run around and jump. "Oh, can I watch?" she said, "I like watching football."

"Of course you can," Ted told her. Dylan sat down.

"Ah you do look knackered," said Old Ma Ricketts.

"What's that mean?" asked Dylan.

"Tired," she replied.

"You stay there Dylan, I will fetch us some food. Would you like some, Annie?" Ted asked.

"Yes please," Annie replied.

"No need to ask you, Old Ma Ricketts," said Ted.

She cackled a bit and smiled at Ted. Dylan was about to doze off when Ted brought the food, it was sardines and bread. Dylan enjoyed his lunch; he was about to have a third sardine when Ted reminded him that he was in training. So he only had two sardines and three pieces of bread.

Ted made a little sack of food for Fritz. "Would you like to take this to Fritz?" asked Ted.

"I will," said Dylan.

"And once he has had it, tell him to come back," added Ted.

"Do you want me to stay on the hill for a bit?" asked Dylan.

"That would be good," said Ted. Dylan collected the sardines and bread and took them to Fritz.

"Ah thank you son," Fritz took the food "that's very kind of you."

Dylan sat down beside Fritz. Fritz offered Dylan a sardine and Dylan was about to take one, but he remembered that he was in training. "No thanks," he said.

Fritz looked surprised and carried on scoffing his food. Fritz then got up and had a little stretch. He then looked at Dylan and spoke. "It's a bit worrying about that dog, isn't it?" he said.

"It is," replied Dylan. "Ted thinks so as well and she is going to have more patrols."

"Ah, that's good," said Fritz. "I will do as many patrols as Ted wants." Fritz started licking his lips and playing with his claws. He went on, "Most dogs are okay, sometimes they will chase us and we can run off or climb a tree or we can fight them, and most dogs are daft. But there is the odd dog that is bad and wants to attack cats. Old cats, small cats or sickly cats and they cannot run away." Dylan was listening carefully and he waggled his ears. "There was a bad dog that came here many years ago and it took two cats till I chased it away. So we have to be careful, son. If that dog tries to take Old Ma Ricketts, then I will have to sort it out."

"Do you think that it will come during the day?" asked Dylan.

"I don't think so," continued Fritz "but we can't be too careful. Anyway I will talk to Ted about it and help Ted with patrols."

"Fritz, why don't you go and talk to Ted and I will sit on the hill for a while and be a look out for if the dog comes?" Dylan said.

"Thanks son," said Fritz then headed off to talk to Ted.

Dylan sat on the hill looking out to see if he could see the dog but there was no dog around. Dylan waited at the hill. The sun was beating down on his head so he had a little drink and a paddle in the stream. He climbed back up the hill yawning.

"Wake up, wake up sleepy head." Ted, Fritz, Old Ma Ricketts and Annie were there.

"Sorry Ted, I just closed my eyes," said Dylan.

"It is okay," said Fritz.

"I have had a chat with Fritz about the dog and we are going to talk to the other cats, so that we can keep a watch and we all know to be careful, so we are heading off to chat with Peter. Are you coming?" said Ted.

"Of course," replied Dylan. They headed off to Peter's house; they stopped at the metal tracks watching a little family of squirrels and then ran to Peter's.

Ted took Peter aside to tell him what they had talked about.

"Well, if you think we need more patrols you can count on me," he nodded.

They decided to ask all the other cats to meet in Peter's garden that night. Peter agreed to tell Hoda and Oily Joe about the meeting and Dylan had to tell Covy, Theresé and Jenny. The cats then went off to tell their cats about the meeting. Dylan ran and found Theresé and Jenny chatting in Theresé's garden. Dylan told them about the meeting and they both agreed to come. He then ran off to Covy's garden. Covy was playing with her woman. Dylan jumped onto the fence, jumped into the garden and he did a little dance for Covy and her woman. Covy's woman went indoors and Dylan chatted to Covy.

“We’re having a meeting tonight in Peter’s garden about the dog,” said Dylan.

“Okay,” replied Covy “are you all worried”?

“I am not sure, but I think it’s best to be careful,” said Dylan. Covy nodded her head.

“Well I think if Ted and Fritz are a little worried, then we should listen to them,” added Covy.

Dylan and Covy played with a ping-pong ball in the garden. Covy’s woman brought them a little food, it was meat and biscuits. Dylan forgot about his training and scooped the lot. He licked Covy in the eye and she licked Dylan on the ear. Dylan did a little circle dance and he headed for home. He saw Basil heading off to the woods with his sack. Dylan went to the metal tracks, sniffed the air – he could smell a rabbit but there were no smells to worry about. He then scampered off as fast as he could to his garden. No cat was at home so he had a little drink, another yawn and then a snooze.

When he woke up Ted was playing in the garden with their woman and a cloth mouse, and their woman was really enjoying it. Dylan had a little stretch and then joined in. His woman then tickled him on the belly and Dylan purred loudly. Old Ma Ricketts ambled out into the garden and joined in the cloth mouse game. She started singing again and Ted covered her ears and Dylan and Ted potted into their house. Their woman stayed in the garden with Old Ma Ricketts.

Ted sat on her chair and Dylan sat on the floor; their man was out.

“Well, that’s the meeting organised,” said Ted. She went on, “I don’t want to worry the other cats too much, I just want them to look out and be careful.”

Dylan nodded his head and said, “Well I don’t mind doing more patrols, Ted.”

“I knew that I could count on you,” smiled Ted. They both then had a little nap. When Dylan got up Ted was having some biscuits. They went into the garden. Old Ma Ricketts was snoring in Dylan’s old den and Fritz was lying beside her.

“You okay, Fritz?” said Ted. Fritz awoke quickly.

“I am great, Ted, when’s the meeting?” he said.

“Soon,” replied Ted. “Dylan is heading off to collect Covy and Annie.” Old Ma Ricketts was still snoring. Fritz tapped her on the paw and she awoke.

“Ah Fritz,” she yawned. She licked Fritz on the head and Fritz held her paw.

“It’s just about time to go to the meeting my dear,” smiled Fritz.

“Ah,” she groaned, “Perhaps Dylan could fetch me some food.” Dylan scampered off and brought Old Ma Ricketts some biscuits and cream, which he mashed together with his paw. Old Ma Ricketts scoffed the lot and then burped.

Dylan scurried off to collect Covy and Annie. He squeezed through the bush and came into her garden. Covy was waving at the window. Covy’s woman opened the door and smiled at Dylan and invited him in. Dylan did a little jig and the woman clapped. “Come on in, dancing cat,” she said. Covy jumped down from the window and she licked Dylan’s head. Dylan licked Covy’s ear.

“I have made some buns,” said Covy.

“Oh lovely,” smiled Dylan. He held Covy’s paw and they went to Annie’s house. Annie was sitting in her garden. Dylan climbed onto her fence. Annie said hello and got up. Her nose looked a lot better.

“How are you feeling?” asked Dylan.

“I am fine,” said Annie. “Old Ma Ricketts said my nose will be better in a few days,” she smiled.

“Are you worried about the dog?” asked Covy.

“Just a little,” replied Annie, “but Ted seems to know what she is doing.” Covy, Annie and Dylan walked towards Peter’s house. They met Tex and Berti on the way there.

“Imagine you chasing a dog,” said Berti, who was laughing.

Tex giggled a little, “Dylan a hero, imagine that,” chortled Tex.

They came to Peter's house; all the cats were there, except Oily Joe, who Hoda told them every cat had a job on, but he would be along later. Dylan put Covy's sack down. Hamish and George had made a fish pie and some of the cats were sampling it.

Ted clapped her paws and all the cats looked at her. "I want to thank you all for coming. Most of you know why I have called this gathering." Callinicos adjusted his spectacles and Berti coughed. "Last night there was a strange fierce dog in the area and I wanted to talk about what we should do," commenced Ted.

"Can't be that fierce," Berti quipped, "if Dylan chased it off." Some of the cats chuckled. Fritz stared at Berti as if he wanted to eat him. Berti turned away and the cats stopped chuckling.

"It took three of us!" cried Hoda, "and it was a very fierce dog."

"Hah," snapped Tex. "What do you know about fierce dogs?" Hoda looked angry but didn't say anything.

"Hoi, you, big mouth, don't speak to my niece like that!" It was Oily Joe who had arrived.

"Sorry Joe," mumbled Tex.

"Settle down now," said Ted. "Anyway I think we should keep an eye out for it, have extra patrols and if any small cats want to go out, a larger cat should go out with you."

"How long do you think we should do this for?" asked Toby.

"Maybe just for a few days till we make sure it's gone," nodded Ted.

"We will go on patrol until we find it," added Fritz. Some of the cats mumbled a bit.

"Ted!" shouted Berti. "We're all busy." Some cats cried "Here, here!"

"And it's very hot as well," quipped one cat. Fritz put his paw up and Ted nodded to him to speak.

Fritz cleared his throat, "Well, I am a bit older than most of you. Some of us know that dogs are daft and sometimes we let them chase us or they are happy chasing sticks or fetching balls and the dogs that live here are happy and they don't really bother us. But years ago a bad dog came and took one of the young cats; we never saw it again. If a bad dog comes here we should be careful," finished Fritz. Little Evie gulped.

"Thanks for that Fritz, so can I have some volunteers for extra patrols for the next three days, and if we don't see the dog up to then we can go back to normal," said Ted. Theresé was the first to volunteer, then Jenny, Peter, Hoda and Fritz. Hamish put his paw up; he poked George who put his paw up too. "Count me in!" cried Oily Joe.

"That's ten including me and Dylan. Who wants a cat to come with them when they go out?" Little Evie, Covy, Annie and Toby put their paws up. "Well, if no cat has anything to say, that's us done. Can the volunteers wait up then we can sort out the patrols."

Hoda put her paw up, "Can I remind every cat about training tomorrow?" Evie and Toby said they would come. Hamish put his paw up, "There's some fish pie left." Before George could chip in, the cats started scoffing the pie. Dylan was too slow to get some. Dylan saw Hoda move towards Tex, she waved her claw in the air and pinned Tex against the shed. Tex looked scared and Hoda winked at him and laughed.

"What did you say to him?" asked Ted.

"I told him to come to training tomorrow," grinned Hoda.

"What did he say?" asked Dylan.

"Oh, he is coming," said Hoda smiling.

Ted sat with the volunteers. Ted, Fritz and Dylan would patrol their territory. Ted would also help Jenny and Theresé patrol the football pitches. Oily Joe and Hoda would patrol behind their garage and Hamish and George and Peter would patrol by the river. It was agreed that Dylan would go with Covy when she was going out. Ted would go with Annie, Peter would go out with Evie and Theresé would go out with Toby.

“Well, if that’s us all sorted,” said Fritz.

“Sorry I was late,” said Oily Joe.

“That’s okay,” said Ted. “I know you are busy.” Oily Joe signalled for Ted and Dylan to have a chat with him. They sat down together.

“What is it, Oily?” asked Ted.

“Can you keep an eye on Hoda, make sure she is okay?” Ted nodded and Oily Joe went on, “She had a bit of a hard time and I can’t say anymore. I have given her some time off work to do the football.”

“You can count on us,” said Dylan.

“I know I can,” said Oily Joe, who shook paws with Ted and Dylan.

Dylan looked around and Old Ma Ricketts and Hoda were chatting in French.

Ma Ricketts cackled and then started singing the song about raindrops again. Hoda was singing the same tune but doing the words in French.

“Come on girls,” cackled Old Ma Ricketts and she called Covy and Annie over and they all started singing the raindrops song. They finished that then did the tulips song. The four of them started waving their paws. Fritz was smiling. “It’s good to see Old Ma Ricketts so happy.” She heard him and cried, “I am tip top, Fritz, tip top.” Dylan had one of Covy’s buns. All the cats that hadn’t volunteered had gone home.

“Did you manage to have any fish pie?” asked Hamish.

“Fish pie?” repeated George.

“I never managed to get any,” said Dylan sadly.

“Well we kept you some,” grinned Hamish and George, but their grins weren’t as large as Dylan’s smile.

“It’s lovely,” said Dylan, licking his lips.

“It is fun being a volunteer,” said Hamish, “we have never done it before.”

“Done it before,” added George.

Hoda then joined them, “Ah, you boys not coming to the training?”

Ah, thought Hamish and said, “We don’t like getting our paws muddy.”

“Or our collars,” added George.

“Come on boys, we need lads like you for the team,” smiled Hoda.

Hamish had a little scratch. “Well I suppose we could give it a go.”

“Give it a go,” added George.

“Great, well come tomorrow,” said Hoda. Hamish and George nodded their heads.

“Oi,” squeaked Old Ma Ricketts. The cats turned round. “Why don’t we have a sing song night thingy?”

“What’s that?” asked Peter.

“Well,” said Old Ma Ricketts, smacking her lips. “We have a night singing songs, doing rhymes, telling jokes; every cat can have a turn.”

“Ah, that sounds good,” said Ted.

“Well I am going to organise the catty girls,” smiled Old Ma Ricketts.

“Who’s them?” asked Dylan.

“Well that’s me, Hoda, Annie and Covy,” smiled Old Ma Ricketts.

“Good idea,” nodded Peter, “I could show cats how to keep the ball up.”

“We could perhaps have the sing song some time after the football game,” added Hoda.

“Leave it to me and old Fritz,” cackled Old Ma Ricketts.

Covy tugged Dylan’s paw, “I think it’s time for me to go home now, it’s getting late.” Ted and Annie would come with them. They waved goodbye to the other cats and ambled off towards Annie’s house. After they dropped Annie off, Ted and Dylan took Covy home. They went through the hole in Covy’s hedge. Covy’s woman was looking out of the window. Dylan did a little dance and the woman laughed.

Covy licked Dylan and then Ted. Ted and Dylan licked Covy and she went into her house. Dylan shouted "See you tomorrow."

Ted and Dylan ambled home. Ted spoke, "I am glad we have got some volunteers."

"It's a shame that every cat didn't volunteer," added Dylan. Ted just shook her head and muttered something that Dylan could not hear. They went out on patrol. They both sniffed the air but there were no strange smells. They walked along the fence where they met Fritz.

"Thought I would go out on patrol," said Fritz. "Old Ma Ricketts is off to her bed."

"We thought we would go on patrol as well," replied Ted.

"Well three cats are better than none," laughed Fritz. They finished off the patrol and Fritz asked if he could sleep in Dylan's old den. Ted agreed and they went back to the garden. Fritz made himself comfortable and Dylan got him some biscuits. Ted went into the house to play with the man and woman for a while.

"I am glad we have got the volunteers organised," said Fritz.

"Yes," nodded Dylan, "hopefully the dog won't come back," he added.

"Well we can't be too careful. Are you looking forward to training tomorrow, son?" asked Fritz.

"Yes, but it is hard work," said Dylan.

"Is your paw still good?" Fritz asked.

"Yes," replied Dylan "I get no pain at all; that man Gary did a good job."

Fritz patted Dylan on the head and said, "Old Ma Ricketts is looking forward to this sing song thingy. Will you be doing a song?"

"I think so," replied Dylan.

"Good, son," said Fritz.

"Will you do anything?" asked Dylan

"Oh, you will have to wait and see," said Fritz winking. "Anyway, I best get me kip son, see you in the morning." Fritz patted Dylan again on the head and Dylan licked Fritz's face.

Dylan went into the house. He had three biscuits. Old Ma Ricketts was upstairs sleeping with their man and woman. Ted was listening to music and was tapping her paw. It was that Marillion again. Dylan didn't really like it but he was now getting used to it and he found that his paw was tapping as well. Dylan climbed onto his chair. "Ted?" he said.

"What is it Dylan?" said Ted.

"I wonder what has happened to Hoda?" said Dylan.

"I don't know," replied Ted, "but if she wants to tell us, she will." Dylan nodded.

"It must be hard for her, moving to another country," Dylan said thoughtfully.

"Ah, Oily Joe will look after her and we will help him," added Ted. "I like her anyway and she's good at football." Dylan smiled. "And remember don't tell any cat what Oily Joe told us."

"I won't," said Dylan. Dylan then fell asleep to a song about a season ending.