

TATTY THE GREEK

A Story with an Immoral suitable for all Little Children who have read the
[Kinsey Report](#).

By Helene Mackay, 1969.

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Chapter One

As stories with morals always put the moral at the end, it stands to reason that an immoral should be put at the beginning; and the immoral of this story is that "Virtue on it's own really gets you nowhere: the secret of success in life depends upon being born at the right time, in the right place, and with the right sex - and good looks".

And so it happened that in a very small, very poor hamlet in Greece a very small and very poor cat had a litter of kittens. I regret to say that she hadn't a clue as to who their father was; it hadn't seemed to matter much at the time and there was no question of maintenance anyway; she was a poor Greek village female and her job in life was to work hard for her family

She had five kittens of varying sex and colour. Three of them were dealt with rapidly - and with equal rapidity we will pass that over in grave silence. The fourth had the misfortune early on in its career to meet a large and very hungry dog – and that was that. Our story is about the fifth, which had the good fortune to be born with the necessary requisites for success in life. Firstly, the time was right because just then a rather Stupid English Woman was finding her house over-run by mice, and she needed a cat. Secondly, the sex was right because human females are known to be rather averse to feline females who sometimes kick up a ghastly noise at night - particularly lonely human females who may at times feel like doing the same thing themselves.

And thirdly, while at that stage one could not call Tatty handsome (in fact he was tatty) at least he was the best of the litter and was very well marked and showed promise. And, Dear Children, many upon many a prominent Member of Parliament (and even leaders of nations) have been chosen for even flimsier reasons. But few of them ever made better use of their assets than Tatty the Greek!

Our early years are, we are told, the years of Formation and Education and all those tiresome things such as Good Manners, and Being Nice to People, and Gratitude and Honesty and so forth. Tatty's Education and Formation was not quite like that, but he did learn a tremendous amount in his early kitten hood; such as not spitting and scratching the hand that fed you - till after dinner: the silly clot gave you much more if you rubbed yourself lovingly against her legs, which required less effort anyway. And he learnt a great deal about catching mice; and he learnt that mere size in an opponent (such as the Huge Silly Dog who shared the house) doesn't matter much as long as you take extremely aggressive action first. And he learnt a lot about human beings and their vagaries, and how to be utterly disarming when being so would pay dividends. In fact, he learnt an enormous amount about Dividends of all kinds and this, Dear Children, is always invaluable knowledge.

And so, in due course the mice disappeared from the house of the Stupid Woman; and very, very slowly and quietly, Tatty took over the house. When he grew a little older he would often sit in front of the fire thinking. He had to admit that the food in this house was extremely good and was very comfortable, so really he had done very well for himself; in fact, what more could a cat want?

Poor Tatty! He was too young then to know (re-read Kinsey Report).

Then one day a Cousin arrived from England to stay with the Stupid Woman - and people in England are notoriously simple-minded (if not downright stupid) about: dogs and cats and other animals. She was a removed cousin, twice over, in fact, but no one

seemed to know why or where or by whom, but boy oh boy did she know her onions about cats! And so Tatty learned to leave his bed by the fire and discovered the bliss of a spring mattress and a soft eiderdown. He was really progressing very rapidly indeed. In fact, had he been a human he would undoubtedly have been a ship owner or something of the sort, for he was as rich as a cat can be.

But, as time went on he became very unpopular with the villagers. This was entirely his own fault because it must be admitted that he was getting very much above himself, and he used to put on a lot of cat when strolling through the village. And the village cats felt that there was something grossly unfair about his position. After all, he was just a village cat like themselves, and "Who was his mother anyway?" they used to ask each other.

Now, the village Head Cat was a middle-aged, rather ordinary and simple-minded ginger cat; he had a round and rather stupid-looking face. "I am much, much older than Tatty" he said "and I have seen a good deal of life in my time, but never could I have believed that there could be a house where people often leave good food to their plates! But I have seen it with my own eyes in Tatty's house - end even that Huge Silly Dog often leaves a lot of her dinner! Think if the ghastly waste of it when we spend hours and hours in this cafe just trying to get a bit of bread". And the village cats were horrified and they all muttered "Po-po!" which is Greek for "Good gracious!" and "Fancy that now!" and so on.

Then a time came when Tatty did not understand the odd things that were happening. For instance, he was now given his food in a little cloakroom, which had a tiny door in the window, and he had to learn to jump in and out of the window to get his food. That was simplicity itself - but why? Well, it soon turned out that the stupid woman was going away for a short time and that thus was Tatty going to be fed, so that he could get in and out of the house, but humans could not. And the Removed Cousin sent out packets and packets of "Purrspitz" from England, which Yiorgos the Gardener lovingly doled out every day, with other nice things as well - he, poor soul, having become utterly Anglicised and stupid about animals, through being with the Stupid Woman.

And so Tatty grew and grew and became extremely handsome and sleek; his coat had the most perfect symmetrical markings and he looked very like a small lynx. And when the Stupid Woman returned she fussed over him a lot - and he pretended to love her dearly.

But Tatty was now old enough to know what else a chap could want apart from mere luxury. And he did.

So, when the urge took him he used to go out at all hours through the little window. How clever the Stupid Woman thought she had been over that little window! But of course even a fool of a village cat knew the answer to that - where one cat could get out, another cat could get in. And so the position arose where Tatty would be on his way out to go on the tiles, and Ginger would be on his way in, in search (as always) of food.

Now, they say that love is free - which is a very debatable point in itself; but what is quite certain is that it is very time-consuming, both the search and the enjoyment thereof. Tatty, without a care in the world, had all the time he wanted; not so poor Ginger who had to spend all his time trying to find enough food to keep body and tail together. But Ginger was the one creature in his world that Tatty was really very, very afraid of. Not only was he far larger than Tatty but also he was, naturally, in far better fighting condition than Tatty, who lived too well upon the fat of the land. And, as you will learn, Dear Children (at least, all little boys will) while love may be very, very important, food is no less than Vital!

Alas! What a state of affairs! Now was the night hideous with howls and yowls and spitting and strife! And eventually the Stupid Woman got really cross. "When you have had your dinner you can damn well stay in!" she said to Tatty, "What on earth do you want to go out on a cold night for?" (Stupid Woman had not read Kinsey Report). So she shut the little window, but Tatty would not stay in, and just snaked out earlier. Then one night it rained and rained and was very cold, and not even the little black and white girl along the road seemed quite so attractive to Tatty as his warm and comfortable home. But when he got there the little window was shut! Poor Tatty! He sat down and meowed miserably, to himself. Lo and behold! The little window was immediately opened for him by the Stupid Woman. This was wonderful, and so Tatty tried it again and again - and it worked! No matter what time he came home he only had to meow piteously and the Stupid Woman would get out of bed and let him in.

Well, there, you are, my Dear Children: Tatty the Greek had what it takes. And so one day the Stupid Woman went to her bedroom for a little siesta and found Tatty lying in the middle of the bed, on two layers of very soft mohair rug. He opened his eyes and gazed at her very reflectively for some time. And as she stood there somewhat uncertainly, gazing back at him, he seemed to grow bigger, and Bigger, and BIGGER! She stood there spellbound, and suddenly became aware of the fact that her hair was very untidy, and she was wearing a very old pair of trousers and disreputable gardening shoes. And there he lay - looking her through and through - and she knew exactly what he was thinking.

"It would really be more becoming to my status in life if I were to be waited upon by a smarter looking female. A neat black dress, for example, - or blue? - with a white frilly apron and cap, I think. And if she will not agree... "; And he yawned and closed his eyes, and then stretching out his legs - began kneading the very expensive mohair rug, and flexing his claws.

Chapter Two

Dearest Children, you will be delighted to learn in this chapter that help was at hand and that this was not to be the end of the Stupid Woman. Or perhaps you won't be delighted. Anyway, the Immoral of this chapter is that it is very, very foolish to kill the Idiot Goose that lays the Golden Eggs and even sillier to grow too big for one's boots. And boots play a large part in this story,

As the Stupid Woman stood there in a state of complete terror watching, Tatty grew bigger and Bigger and BIGGER, he really seemed to be in a most unpleasant frame of mind - stretching his forelegs and flexing his claws - and as the Stupid Woman moved slowly backwards and finally backed through the door and closed it gently. She then fell flat to her back, having tripped over something in the passage, When she looked up to see what she had tripped over she promptly burst into tired sobs of joy and relief because she knew she had been saved from a fate worse than Death - that is, becoming a servant to a very arrogant Greek village cat.

Because what she had tripped over was an Enormous Sea Boot, and then a second one; and the boots were on the feet of the Master Mariner, who was her husband, and who had at last returned home to stay and look after his Stupid Wife, of whom he was (for some obscure reason) extremely fond. And there she lay at his feet crying and he couldn't do anything about it because his hands were both full of big bags of Gorgeous Lolly, which he had picked up while sailing all over the world so that he would have enough money to stay at home with his Stupid Wife.

"Goodness me" he boomed "What on earth is the matter, my dear?" "Its quite alright" she replied "it was only Tatty who frightened me". "And who is this Tatty?" demanded the Master Mariner looking extremely fierce and starting to gnash his teeth. And at this the Stupid Woman felt more stupid than ever and bleated out "Its Tatty... the cat... he's in my bedroom and he looked at me and I got frightened because..." but she couldn't possibly explain why she had been frightened because she knew the Master Mariner would never understand that Tatty had been growing bigger and Bigger and BIGGER.

How, it so happened that the Master Mariner was not exactly a lover of cats, odd - but just one of these things; some people are not, and there is nothing one can do about it. "They may even be right," the Stupid Woman thought sorrowfully to herself. But although he had at very violent feelings on the matter, up with one thing the Master Mariner would not put, and that was coming home to find his Stupid Wife reduced to a state of abject terror by a cat! So he dropped all the bags of Lovely Lolly and strode into the bedroom.

Tatty, hearing a commotion in the passage, had jumped onto the floor and gone under the bed, and was waiting for his servant to open the door so that he could see what was going on in his house. When he saw the Enormous Sea Boots he immediately carried out his usual tactics when greeting anyone by springing out from his hiding place and clapping his paws (with claws well out) round their ankles.

Well now, it must have been quite ten minutes later when Tatty picked himself up from the middle of the Compost Heap - rather dizzily - and wondered how to earth he had get there, He had a vague recollection of an Enormous Sea Boot.

Poor Tatty! He didn't know that dark storm clouds were gathering round him fast, for just before this had happened, Ginger and all the rest of the village cats had had a big meeting at the cafe. They had been getting more and more fed-up with Tatty and his airs and graces, and had decided that something must be done about him. So they called this meeting, and a very, very rowdy one it was too, with all of them howling and yowling and spitting at the same time. And then suddenly they all said "Symphony!" but instead of a big orchestra starting up, and more noise than ever, as one might have expected, there was immediately complete silence! Because this was in Greece, Dear Children, where they often do things the wrong way round such as saying "Nay" when they mean "Yes". And this meant that they had all agreed upon the awful tactics they were going to employ is put Tatty in his place. And then they all went away quietly, but with grim purpose in mind.

And this was the beginning of the Cold War or War of Nerves upon poor Tatty - and what a war it was, both inside and outside the house!

So, when he picked himself up from the Compost Heap the first thing he saw was Ginger and a grey cat about three yards from him. They were lying side by side with their paws tucked in under them; their eyes were half closed and they were regarding Tatty with a cold, implacable expression of hatred, Tatty, who had always been terrified of Ginger, didn't like this at all and he wondered what was the dignified and safe way of getting away, Then his tummy reminded him that it was 4 p.m. and therefore Cream Time, so he rose to his feet, gave his face a very brief wash (this is known as "laving face") and then stalked off to the house, Having reached the kitchen he looked around for his maid to serve his cream, but she wasn't there so he meowed impatiently.

In the sitting room the Master Mariner was talking to his Stupid Wife, and when he heard Tatty he boomed, "Why is that damned cat making such a noise?" and so she explained about it being Cream Time. "Cream Time?" he shouted, "what utter nonsense is this? One good, wholesome meal a day is quite enough! What you need around here" he went on, "is discipline! You have been, working too hard, my dear, and things have got a bit out of hand, Now just leave everything to me!" And so Tatty meowed in vain - to his astonishment and indignation nothing happened. By 5.15 p.m. he was starving - and so was the Huge Silly Dog, and they both stood in the kitchen waiting, and wondering what on earth had gone wrong!

On the dot of 5.30 p.m. the Enormous Sea Boots marched into the kitchen and prepared what seemed to him to be two good, wholesome meals, and at precisely 6 p.m. four bells were rung and the Master Mariner put down a large dish and bellowed "Dog!" So the Huge Silly Dog went forward obediently, but Tatty rushed past and got there first - only to be confronted by a Sea Boot, so he retired rapidly. In another moment another dish was put down and the deep voice shouted, "Cat!" It was hardly the way Tatty had been used to having his meals served - and it was hardly what he regarded as Haute Cuisine either, for Tatty had been used to nice raw chicken liver, or delicate fish, or a little minced rump steak and so on - not good, wholesome food! However, he was very hungry and started to eat.

And then he saw Ginger and a black cat just outside the open window, sitting side by side with their paws tucked in under them and their eyes half closed, and a terrible, cold look of hatred on their faces. And suddenly Tatty didn't feel hungry any more, and he slunk away.

Well, and so it went on. Inside his house he was subjected to the strictest discipline (which is always utterly disagreeable); good, wholesome food was served only on the dot of four bells or the Dog Watch. And if he went outside he was immediately confronted by two impassive, antagonistic cats; always Ginger and one other - a grey, or a

black, or a white, or a tabby, or a black and white and so forth. But always two of them, crouching nearby and watching him with half closed, implacable, cold, calculating eyes.

Going out at night was now quite impossible because of the discipline indoors; "If you go out, you stay out! None of this yowling at eight bells or four bells to get in again!" But if he went out and stayed out his footsteps were echoed everywhere he went by two hate-filled, frightening cats - of which one was always, Ginger. He tried meowing piteously outside the Stupid Woman's door - surely she would give him safety and a welcome! But every time, along came the Sea Boots and the deep voice muttering about "Peace in our time" or something of the sort, and Tatty would be left outside in the darkness and these four awful eyes and the silent enemies closing in on him. So Tatty slept in the storeroom, and ate at exactly four bells or the Dog Watch every day - very peasant type of food. And when he needed exercise he went down on to the rocks near the sea - because the cats didn't like the sea and never ventured near it. Tatty didn't like it either, but there at least he was safe and left alone.

But then, later on, the Cold War turned into a war of Aggression and Ginger began to come nearer and nearer - always with that dreadful hatred on his round, stupid, obstinate but implacable face; and finally he even began to come into the house in search of Tatty. This absolutely infuriated the Master Mariner! After all, he may not have been entirely in love with Tatty, but Tatty was his Stupid Wife's cat, and he was damned if he was going to have this horrible Ginger coming into his house and upsetting everybody. But it was no good shouting at him or chasing him with a mop; Ginger retreated rapidly when attacked - just out of reach. And they slowly, inexorably he came back again. In vain were Sea Boots and brushes and even bricks thrown at him: he would sit just out of reach, and he never, never moved while you watched him; but if you blinked your eyes for just a second and then opened them again, Ginger would be nearer and nearer.

Poor Tatty got smaller and smaller and thinner and thinner, and his nerves began to go to pieces completely. He used to go down to the rocks near the sea and sit there trying to work it all out. What had gone wrong? He had been the richest and happiest cat in Greece - and now he was hated and hungry and hunted - also very lonely and frightened. WHY?

Alas, my Dear Children! We never, ever blame ourselves for the evils that fall upon us - and Tatty certainly did not.

Finally there came a day when the Master Mariner was standing out on his front terrace holding up an anemone to see what the speed of the wind was. In case you don't know, Dear Children, this is very scientific and interesting. Anemones are Wind Flowers and they measure the speed of the wind, and there is something called the Blow Forte Scale ('Forte' is French for "strong" I think) and this is very useful because if someone says to you "The wind was Blow Forte 1 today" you know that there was no wind at all (which you would have know anyway if you has been outside); and if they say "The wind today was Blow Forte 12" you know that too because you would never have ventured out of your house - and there's nothing you can do about it anyway. But its terribly scientific and interesting to know the number of the wind force. And it works like this: if, for instance, the petals of the anemone are just nodding and dancing in the light wind, you know its Blow Forte 3 or 4. But if the petals ore all flattened then it must be Blow Forte 5 or 6. And if they are all blown away and brush gently against your face, as they are swept past you know it must be 8 - or even 9.

Anyway, there was the Master Mariner with an anemone when suddenly Tatty shot out of the house past him and tore down the garden, pursued ferociously by Ginger.

The Master Mariner was simply furious and called to the Huge Silly Dog to chase Ginger; but the Huge Silly Dog was remarkably like her owner and often got things wrong and did silly things and so she chased madly after poor Tatty, instead of Ginger, and there they all went, racing down to the sea - Tatty, with Ginger and the Huge Silly Dog after him, and the enraged Master Mariner after the whole lot of them.

This was the end! Nerves broken, weakened in mind and body, in terror and misery and despair, Tatty gave a last yowl of horror and grief and jumped into the sea. Suicide was all that was left to him!

Chapter Three

My Dear Children, you must get your pocket-handkerchiefs (or Kleenex tissues) rapidly because this is a very sad chapter indeed, and everyone in it is utterly miserable.

You see, the Stupid Woman had noticed all that was going on and had begged the Master Mariner for just a little less discipline. She knew she had been very stupid about Tatty (as she always was) and that he needed a lesson, but perhaps just a little more gently, she had pleaded. But the Master Mariner had said "Nonsense, my dear! After all, he actually frightened you! He must learn to be a good, well-behaved cat. You must remember" he went on "that I have had to discipline very unruly and difficult men all my life, and if I could handle wild and often very drunk sailors surely you can rely on me to deal effectively with a badly behaved village cat!" And the Stupid Woman had no answer to that, so what could she do?

But when Tatty shot past, pursued by all the others, she had been sitting in the garden gazing out to sea; and when Tatty leapt into the sea, intent upon suicide, she leapt into the sea after him and grabbed the now very small and wet - but spitting and snarling and scratching little animal and carried him ashore. Tatty there upon gave a wild yowl and shot underneath some very thick, prickly bushes. And there he stayed for endless days and nights.

The Stupid Woman used to go and sit beside the bushes for hours and hours and try to coax him to eat and push in dishes of the most tempting food; but Tatty only ate enough to keep alive, and just crouched there staring out with crazy, wild, demented eyes.

So now everybody was utterly miserable. The Stupid Woman was utterly miserable because of Tatty, and the Huge Silly Dog was utterly miserable because her mistress was, and she refused to eat her food and got thinner and thinner. And the Master Mariner was utterly miserable because his Stupid Wife was, and she was always either sitting down by the bushes near the sea or weeping in the house. So he went to his Querencia and set there thinking.

Now in case you don't know, a "Querencia" is what the Spanish call the place you instinctively go to when you are miserable, or want to think, or when, you are frightened or worried. It may be the corner of a room, or perhaps a certain place, to a hillside, or - if you a Spanish fighting bull, in the arena it's just a certain part of the arena where you feel safest and can stop and think things over.

And so the Master Mariner went to his querencia, which was his compost heap, and he sat there thinking and being miserable. "What" he thought (as Tatty had done) "had gone wrong?" He had sailed round and round the world till he was sick of it, to bring home lots and lots of Lovely Lolly, and his Stupid Wife had been very good all this time and never gone off with someone else, as so many people do when you leave them alone. For a fleeting moment he wondered about that too.... "Now, if she had?"... But he rapidly started thinking of something else.

And while he sat there along came the Huge Silly Dog and she was more miserable than ever because one of her most delicious old bones had been buried about eighteen inches down in the compost heap and she knew there would be absolute hell popping if she tried to dig it up, so she just sat there gazing at the compost with tragic, deep brown eyes.

And then along came Yiorgos the Gardener and he was utterly miserable because he thought the Master Mariner had put far too much manure into the compost, which was very wasteful because Yiorgos had grown things all his life without spending good money on manure just to get things like lettuces with solid hearts when everyone knew it was all "greens" anyway. So he set and gazed at it with sad eyes and kept saying "No good, Meester - no good!"

Even the dreadful Ginger was miserable because there was no Tatty to haunt and therefore none of Tatty's food to eat and so he had to go and stay at the cafe and eat whatever he could get there. And in time Ginger wasted away and died a slow and lingering death from 'Indestargeon', which is that terrible disease so many Happy Mediterranean Packagers suffer from, and its a mixture of indigestion, starvation and mal-nutrition, I warned you that this was a very sad chapter.

And so there they all were, sitting round the compost heap being miserable when the Stupid Woman suddenly rushed out of the house shouting "I've had a brain wave!" and the Master Mariner's heart sank even further because he was a very brave man but the one thing he was terrified of were his Stupid Wife's brain waves - which she had at intervals. They usually cost an awful lot to begin with. But he was, as I have said, a very brave man, so he just enquired pleasantly what it was. "Why" says she, "we must get a Psychiatrist, of course! Poor Tatty is demented and must have psychiatric treatment!". She was actually very proud of knowing that word, and that it came from Greek, because she had read a very good "Tourist Phrase Book" and knew that they have a lovely portmanteau letter called "PSEE" - which is what Tatty always said when he was annoyed.

Well, no use relating all the arguments and discussions that ensued. Very soon after this they packed their suitcases and went to the Big City to find a Psychiatrist. And forgive me, Dear Children, if I just refer to "Psykes" from now on - it's such a long and difficult word to spell out. And when they got to the Big City they went to see the Absolute Top Psyke and put all their problems before him. He was very wise and clever and kind; but he shook his head and said, "I am very sorry but I am afraid I cannot help you. I have spent many, many years studying human beings but I know nothing at all about cats, and cat psychiatry is a very specialised and difficult and advanced study. What you need is a Veterinary Psyke". So they asked him if he could give them the name of a top vet Psyke, but he shook his head again and said, "I am afraid you won't find one in this country. You see, our animals are mostly rather poor and hard working and they lead very busy, normal lives. But in the U.S. of A, there are so many very wealthy dogs and cats and other animals that they have made a great study of their nerves and Psyke troubles. Even amongst human beings" he went on rather sadly, "there is not very much Psyke work to be done here, except amongst those who cannot afford to pay for treatment".

And so they went back home again and went on being miserable until suddenly the Stupid Woman cried, "I've had a brain wave!" We must get a Vet. Psyke free from the U.S. of A.!". But the Master Mariner shook his head and said he was very much afraid they could not afford it. "But" said he, to cheer her up a bit, "we will go through the accounts tonight and see if it would be possible because I will do anything I can to make you happy again, my dear - except to go sailing round and round the world again for a Greek village cat!"

And so they prepared to go through the accounts, and while the Master Mariner collected a set of pencils and India rubbers and a ruler and a lot of very depressing-looking black account books and all that was left of the Lovely Lolly, the Stupid Woman got out a large tray on which she put two glasses and some water and an ice bucket full of ice, and then she got out the bottle of Medicine which they always wisely kept for such emergencies

- because going through accounts is usually a very nerve-wracking and wearing business. And then they went through the accounts and the Stupid Woman gave her husband a list of all she had spent lately, and it was quite meticulous. She had jotted down everything. "Cabbage 1/-, carrots 6d, meat for Dog £3, Bread 1/-, Soap 1/6, Sweets 10/0, Medicine £6, Matches 4d, C.R. £19.10.0". And the Master Mariner nodded his head in approval and only asked, "What is C.R., my dear?" and she said "Oh - that stands for "Can't Remember". And he thought it all very reasonable and felt delighted to have such a thrifty and efficient wife.

But then he added it all up, and counted out all the Lolly; and when he had done so he poured out a large dose of Medicine for both of them and said "My dear - I am terribly sorry - but we just cannot afford to get a Vet Psyke from the U.S. of A." and so then they were very miserable and had to have a lot of Medicine.

It was only after the fourth, or fifth dose of Medicine that the Stupid Woman suddenly cried, "I've had a Brain Wave!" and so the Master Mariner quickly had another dose of Medicine and asked very pleasantly what it was. "Why" says she "its quite obvious! We must write to the President of the U.S. of A. and ask for AID! He must be a very nice, kind man" she went on, "because there are millions and millions of people in the U.S. of A. and they made him their President because they knew he was nice and kind. And he is always sending aid all over the world and I am sure he will send some to us!".

The Master Mariner didn't quite know what to say to that, but it didn't seem to involve, him in much, so he just nodded his head and said it was a good idea.

And so the Stupid Woman get out her very best thick, grey, deckle-edged notepaper which she had bought at Harrods, and wrote a long letter to the President of the U.S. of A.

And then she put a very expensive stamp on it so that it would go by airmail, and gave it to the postman when he came around again - two days later. And he sent it off by donkey to the little village and then it went with the fish-seller on his three-wheel motor thing to the big village, and then it went by motorbike to the Small town and then it went by ferry to the Big

City - and finally off it went in a big aeroplane to the U.S. of A! And arrived there only six weeks after she had posted it.

Chapter Four

Dear Children, just in case you are not very well up in general knowledge, which is highly probable because nowadays it is so fearfully general and frightfully knowledgeable (let alone all the other things one had to learn) I must tell you that the President of the U.S. of A, lives in a White House and a very large one it is too so that it must cost a great deal to paint and labour to keep it white, For all I know it may be whitewash - but I doubt it.

And in this White House there is an Oval room which is the President's Querencia, and its where he sits and thinks, and rules the U.S. of A., and calls people in when he wants to choke them off. Being Oval it must make all the other rooms around it rather an awkward shape, but I expect they have lots of corner cupboards.

And one morning he was sitting in his querencia feeling very miserable and doing a lot of thinking, because the day before he had received a very rude letter from the president of one of the Developing Countries (which had over-developed itself rather too rapidly) and this letter told the President of the U.S. of A. exactly where he could put his aid, because this suddenly developed president didn't want any of it, or any of the people from the U.S. of A. Hardly the way one ought to address a President!

All this had not only hurt the President deeply, but he was in a complete quandary about how to dispose of all the aid he had to get rid of. He just could not think where to send some. And it was while he was sitting there thinking, and being miserable that his secretary brought in the daily letters - and right at the top (to cheer the poor President up) she had put the beautiful grey, expensive envelope from the Stupid Woman! What could have been timelier!

And so the President read it, and then he re-read it more carefully, and then he read it again; and as he read his face gradually brightened up. And then he started to ring bells and press buzzers on those "Inter-Com" things which say "BBBBRRRRGGGGSSSSHHHH" in other people's offices so that they know the Boss wants something, and they have to go and find out what, which saves a terrific amount of time. And so, before you could say "George Washington" in came dozens and dozens of people - all the Secretaries of State for This and That and all their secretaries with notebooks and pencils and glasses of iced water, and they all sat down round the huge table and proceeded to have a Top Line Oval Meeting.

And when they had all sat down the President read aloud to them the letter from the Stupid Woman. When he had finished he looked around at them all and said "Well now Gentlemen! That seems to me to be a most sincere and very reasonable request, and I guess we get cracking to this right away and show these poor people and animals just how we do things here in The U.S. of A!" And he started off by asking his Secretary of State for the Navy to have a small ship (not, say, more than about 10,000 to 15,000 tons) ready to sail for Greece within forty-eight hours.

And then he asked his Secretary of State for Health and his Secretary of State for Agriculture to get together and find four or five of the very Top Vet Psykes who would join the expedition; because of course one would not be enough, for as soon as it became known that Vet Psyke help was available they would be sure to be inundated by hundreds and hundreds of frustrated donkeys and emotionally upset turkeys and thwarted pigs and cows with complexes and so on. And then he got on to the Secretary of State for All Food

Supplies and this was the most difficult job of all, because they had to load the ship with everything that both the Top Vet. Psykes, and their staff, and the sick animals, would want.

It must be lovely to sit at the Oval Table and give orders and ring bells and see people dash to the nearest 'phone and start things happening!

There had, of course, to be all the other people to look after the T.V.P.s apart from the animals' cooks and stewards and doctors and secretaries, and a Personnel Manager for them all. And then they needed cattery maids and kennel maids and stable boys and so forth. And of course they had to have interpreters, and accountants are vitally important in any undertaking, because someone has to know where all the money goes, even if it just goes and no one is very interested in how, but one must have accountants to tell one that it has all gone, and that there is no profit.

So it was quite a large crowd that got to board the little ship, but nothing to the cargo she carried. Because of course, apart from all the feed for the T.V.P.s and all their retinue and the crew and everyone else on board, they had to have the right kind of diet for every kind of animal, and this was very difficult because whereas human beings all eat much the same kind of food, prepared differently (such as Chicken Maryland, and Supreme do Volsille Strasbourgeoise, and Chi Ting Hsi Hung Shih - they are all chicken) all animals eat different food, and a cat certainly doesn't like the sort of food you give to a parrot or a pig.

And so they had to have tons and tons of Donkeydish and Piggy-puffs and Cattedrek, and bales and bales of "Uncle Tom's Converted Hayho", and Creamy-Cow Crisps, and so on - and so on. And as for dogs and cats! They had cases and cases of Liver Balls and Beef Balls and Chicken Balls and Horsemeat Balls - in fact, every kind of balls you can think of. And there was "Aunt Mamie's Chickschock" for poultry, and masses and masses of instant food of all kinds. They do things so well in the U.S. of A, that you use actually run a kennels or a poultry farm or a dairy farm - or even a hotel - without bothering about food at all, so long as you have a very good tin opener, and perhaps a deep-freeze.

And so finally, within 48 hours the ship (which I forgot to tell you was called the "U. S. Hayseed") duly sailed for Greece.

All went well throughout the voyage - but it was just a little unfortunate that just before they got to the island where the Stupid Woman lived they ran into a terrible storm, and it blew and it blew and it blew and the seas got very rough indeed, and all the people on board got dreadfully ill, so that when they finally landed they were all pale green.

This alarmed the local villagers very much, and they were so upset about their being green (because they are very, very kind people) that they gave them lots of ouzo, which is a Greek Medicine, which usually makes people very happy. But to their horror they saw all the poor Psykes changing from green to red and then to purple, and finally to white, and they were so bothered about this that they sent for the local Mayor who was a very wise man, and felt sure they would be alright soon and that it must just be due to the "colour problem" which they kept talking about in the U.S. of A. And he was quite right because next day they were quite better and a normal shade of pink.

And so now their work began. And first of all they took over a very large house and converted it into a hospital, and a very lovely hospital it was too, with cat wards and dog wards and cow wards etc, etc; and a huge shining white kitchen with the very latest electric tin openers. And then they had, of course to find hotel accommodation for all the

staff, and then get the ship unloaded, and what with one thing and another they were very, very busy for several days.

But at last they set forth in search of Tatty, who was still hiding amongst the prickly bushes down by the sea. And so here we are back at poor Tatty again and you will hear what happened to him in the next chapter; but they had to start off by catching him! And this they did with the aid of the helicopter they had on board, and big nets, and lots of sailors to give a hand, and they finally caught poor frightened little Tatty, and a kind T.V.P. gave him an injection, so that he fell into a beautiful sleep and had lovely dreams till he finally woke up in the next chapter.

Chapter Five

Tatty woke up, He opened his eyes and looked around - and then he closed them again because he didn't believe what he saw and was sure he was still dreaming. Then he opened them again a little later, very wide and very suddenly. But he wasn't dreaming! He was lying in a round basket, which seemed to be full of something like foam rubber, covered in white satin. He was still very drowsy so he just said to himself "Rubbish!" And went to sleep again.

Two hours later he woke up again and looked around, and sure enough he was lying in a round basket, on a very soft cushion covered with white satin! At the same time he realised that he was very, very hungry, so he got up, sharpened his claws on the white satin cushion, and looked all round the room. All he could see were white walls, a white marble floor, a very large window which was shut, and a very high ceiling. There was nothing in the room except the round basket, a chair, and a white enamel tray full of "Kleenakit". Never in his life had Tatty seen a room, which was cleaner, or less attractive. Little did he know that because the Stupid Woman had sparked off the whole "Hayseed" expedition, Tatty had been given the best Private Ward in the whole beautiful hospital!

He got out of the basket to stroll over to the tray and in doing so he trod on a little button which was sticking up out of the floor next to the basket, Immediately the door opened, and in glided a most beautiful young woman, all dressed in white from the top of her head to the soles of her feet. And she cooed tenderly and came over to stroke Tatty. Tatty immediately said "PSEE" and dug his claws firmly into her arm, but not for nothing had Esmeralda risen to the position of First Cattery Sister to the absolutely top Vet Psyke in the U.S. of A. She could, when absolutely necessary, say "PSEE" just as well as Tatty. But now she purred at Tatty and asked "How are we today? A little confused and cross perhaps - and possibly a little hungry?" and she rapidly put down a dish of slightly warm cream and silently went out. Well, what could a chap do? He drank it all and then felt sleepy again and he curled up in the basket and went to sleep.

He was woken again early next morning by Esmeralda, who suddenly and silently appeared and she purred at him brightly and put down a small dish of "Cattabrek". This was soon gone and so Tatty (who really was quick-witted) trod on the little button again, and back came Esmeralda who said "Hungry again, are we? But first we have to see our doctor." and she ushered in T. V. P. No 1. who sat down in the chair and gazed at Tatty. Tatty didn't like that much - nor did he like the look of this rather pale, bi-spectacled man. So he growled - which is much worse than saying "PSEE".

"Come, come, my little friend," said the T. V. P., "we must be friends or I won't be able to help you with all your problems. You must have full confidence in me!" Tatty couldn't understand the man at all, as far as he was concerned he had no problems, he just hated ginger cats, Huge Silly Dogs and Sea Boots, and he was hungry and wanted to go home. So he said "PSEE" and glared at the T. V. P., who began his normal opening gambit of "Gaining the Patient's Confidence" and being frightfully pally and soothing.

My Dear Children - half an hour later the poor T. V. P. staggered out and was taken back to his hotel by the hospital ambulance and there the naval Surgeon of the "Hayseed" attended him and gave him a big injection of "Anti-cat" and had his wounds bathed with "Hilton" and "Blisterall" and so forth, and then they gave him tranquilisers and left him to sleep it all off.

Meanwhile, Esmeralda padded into Tatty's Ward quietly with a dish of chicken liver sauté over which she had poured a dose of "Nerve-puss", and she silently drifted out again.

Next day was just the same. Esmeralda appeared at frequent intervals with dishes of delicious food, and at 4.30 p.m. T. V. P. No 2. came to give the patient his daily Psyke treatment, and at 5 p.m. the ambulance took T. V. P. No 2. back to his hotel and they put him to bed while Esmeralda gave Tatty his supper of "Tatto-fish" with a dose of "Nerve-puss".

No 1. had heroically sat up and written his medical report on Tatty. "This little animal" he wrote "is obviously suffering from a grave feeling of insecurity. He has in the past, been pushed roughly to one side by Huge Boots, he has been irritated beyond endurance by a huge beast with inferior intelligence to his own, and his food has been endangered by marauding cats of a vicious nature, He has lacked the full amount of love and care which he needs, and it is now essential that he should have complete quiet (no visitors at all) to get his nervous system restored, and he must be treated with unfailing kindness, patience, and understanding. On no account must he be punished for any acts of aggression - which are to be expected and are entirely normal in such a case". You've got to hand it to the T. V. P. - having written all this he fell back weakly on to his pillows and submitted to another injection of "Anti-cat", and a few other injections - one to boost his heart, a few vitamins, and finally a strong tranquiliser. After which he felt very sore indeed and went to sleep again for several hours.

And so it went on. Tatty soon tore his white satin bed to pieces, but what was the use? - Esmeralda promptly produced another and just purred at him "There, there! A little restless are we today?"

Heavens! How bored he was. If he could have crawled up the walls he would have done so. By the time he had sent T. V. P. No 5, back to his hotel in the ambulance, he began to think of his part in life. It had never been as dreary as this! There was, in the first place, the food problem. Cream, liver, "tittybits", "Hake-nuts", Cattobrek, and so forth. It all tasted very delicious - but there was no real body to it. And his liver was troubling him. He remembered wistfully the rather coarse meals the Master Mariner used to prepare - bread and meat and bones etc. And now and then, there were the heart and lungs and remnants of a wild hare - now that was good, bone-licking cats' food!

Of course, one's attacks on these delicacies had been very firmly controlled by these huge Boots, but - that had been great fun too! Just how far could one get into the kitchen while food was being prepared without being seen? - without a mighty side-kick from those Sea Boots?! What skill one had to use in evading them!

Then he thought about the Stupid Woman. Come to think of it, she hadn't been such a crashing bore as Esmeralda! One could very easily take her for a ride if one lay on one's back and purred, or asked piteously for food - but there were limits, and too sudden an attack with all claws out would soon bring a yell of pain and a shout of "You vicious horrible beast - get out!" Whereas Esmeralda just glided out on such occasions with a murmur of "Feeling a little crotchety today, are we?" and glide back again with some cream and more "Nerve-puss". Made a chap feel sick!

He thought too about a certain corner of a south-facing wall where he used to lie in the sun. How gloriously warm that had been! Not, of course, that he was cold in his centrally heated and air-conditioned Ward, but, neither was he really warm. Nothing

seemed to penetrate his bones -neither heat nor cold; and he suddenly wanted to feel either very, very cold (with wind blowing on his whiskers) or very, very warm.

And so Tatty was miserable and decided to do something about it, which shows how very clever he was, because so many people are miserable and do absolutely nothing about it and just go on being miserable. But Tatty was made of sterner material and he thought it all out very carefully and laid his plans. So, one morning when Esmeralda came in - bright as ever - Tatty was not lying in his basket. He was nowhere to be seen at all! In fact, by the time Esmeralda had got into his room, Tatty was halfway down the corridor outside Ward One; he had been lying in wait for her since the crack of dawn - just behind where the edge of the door would open!

Chapter Six.

We must leave Tatty in the corridor for a time and go and see what has been happening to the Master Mariner and his Stupid Wife. All this time the Master Mariner had been taking the Huge Silly Dog to the hospital every day for Psyke treatment, because she still wasn't eating very well and he loved her a great deal. They had so much in common! Such as the compost heap, and digging in the garden, and chasing out turkeys, and not liking cats much. And so she had a daily session with one off the T.V.P's, at 3.30 p.m. every afternoon (just before Tatty's session). And they gave her a very big welcome because - for one thing - the while project had not been going too well. It seemed that Greek animals didn't want Psyke Aid very much. A dachshund belonging to an A.B. (Ancient Briton) had waddled along for advice, but his trouble was partly physical - over-weight due to over-eating. And there had been several highly-strung donkeys that had been found to be suffering from sexual starvation, owing to having been tethered on very remote hillsides (see Kinsey Report).

And a couple of cows had come along to ask for advice about family planning, and these were really deserving cases but not up the alley of Psykes. Its really very interesting to reflect that if a normally intelligent woman has three or four babies all at once, the press make a huge fuss about it, and people rush forward to offer help, and advice, and even money. But a poor Lady pig is supposed to have at least 14 babies, all at once and to know exactly what to do about them and how to feed them and look after them and bring them up (probably in a very, very small and dreary sty). And if she doesn't do the job perfectly - and possibly lies on one by mistake when the poor dear barely has enough room to turn herself round - they immediately say "She is a bad mother" and probably turn the poor dear into bacon - or lard, if she is too fat.

But the Huge Silly Dog was right up the T. V. P's alley, and she took to Psyke treatment like a duck to water. She would lie on the Psyke's couch for hours and hours on end while they discussed her troubles with her and stroked her head - and of course she simply adored them all and gazed at them with adoring brown eyes. Unfortunately hers was not a very serious case and they finally got a bit bored with her. "This" they said in their Medical Report, "is largely a case of boredom with the diet she is being given, and lack of understanding. She is a female with a tender character and requires a lot of love and attention. As a diet we would recommend constant change, such as Chicken on Mondays (pressure-cooked) followed by a few grapes; on Tuesdays she could be given beef with croutons of fried bread, followed by a little cream cheese, liver on Wednesdays, with rice and perhaps some melon or apple to follow, etc: etc:"

This absolutely shattered the Master Mariner, but he went home and got out all his Stupid Wife's Cookery books, There were dozens and dozens of them and he studied them all very carefully. There was for instance, Mrs Beeton's All About Cookery, of course; and from there they went through an immense range such as "300 Ways with Cold Potatoes" and "Wedded to Cookery" and "Pastry without an Axe" and all about just everything you could think of eating - and quite a few things you wouldn't think of eating. And he did as immense amount of practise in the kitchen and the place was quite lively and jolly, with pots and pans crashing around and clouds of smoke billowing forth.

Meanwhile, the Stupid Woman had been spending most of her days at the local cafe trying to ring up Stimboli (which was where the American Hospital was) to get reports about Tatty, This took a very, very long time because it was what they call a Party Line,

which means that everyone from all the villages down the line join in and they have a sort of telephone party when anything exciting happens, such as Mrs Quintopolous having a baby, or Mr Idiopolous falling off his tractor and breaking his leg. The telephone had only been installed recently so no one was at all blasé about it - they all joined in with the greatest enjoyment and were very jolly indeed.

"Its really an excellent idea" thought the Stupid Woman, as she sat sipping some Medicine and waiting patiently to get through to Stimboli, "because if you have a Telephone Party the people in each room can only hear one person shouting at a time, whereas at a big cocktail party in - say - London, you hear all of them shouting at once." And so she would sit waiting and when she occasionally got through before the Line went off for at lunch, or closed down for the night she would speak to Esmeralda, who would say " Not much change today, Mrs S. W., though I think we are getting a little stronger. We just need absolute rest and quiet - and no visitors!"

And now we will go back to Tatty whom we left halfway down the long corridor outside Ward One. At the end of the corridor he found a gloriously open window and he simply leapt out into the fresh air and found himself on the roof of a porch, from there it was absolute kitten's-play to climb down the vine that grew over the porch, and from there he shot down the drive and out onto the road. Freedom!

Tatty had an excellent sense of direction (and it was a very small island anyway) and so he actually arrived at his home in less time than it would have taken to telephone - less than two days! And the very first thing he saw when he walked up the garden path was two Huge Sea Boots! He was so transported with joy that he went and rubbed himself against them - and to his greet surprise was not sent flying. In fact, the Master Mariner said "Goodness me! Hello Tatty! You must be hungry," and he went off into the kitchen to get some Hare Pate (very delish). Next, Tatty saw the Huge Silly Dog and he was so glad to be home that he didn't even say "PSEE" to her - he just walked past very closely with tail held high.

Ah! And then he saw the Stupid Woman and he just leapt into her lap and purred and purred madly with joy, while she stroked him tenderly, "How could I ever have been miserable in such a house?" he thought.

And now came the halcyon days, lots and lots of love, and lots and lots of delicious, rib-sticking food, and Security! He fairly lapped it up!

And I am afraid that "Lap" is the word. In other words, Tatty turned into a "lap-cat" and became extremely fat and lazy. It's a very odd thing, but somehow security does seem to lead to laziness; and that in its' turn to decadence (see "Roman Empire - Decline and Fall of", ad nauseam). And in due course the mice heard about Tatty's laziness and began to creep back into the house.

Alas, my Dear Children! Its a very sad thing to have to realise (but the sooner you do, the better for you) that there is no such thing as Lasting and Unimpaired Bliss in this Vale of Sorrow, and when everything seems to be absolutely super – that's the time to watch out!

And what happened next was that the Master Mariner began to get just a little bit tired of cooking, and even more tired of treading on mice in the kitchen, and finding that they had chewed up all his letters and papers, but he put up with it very patiently until our day when the Stupid Woman found a mouse in the bath - and that was too much ever for her, and so she had another brain wave and cried triumphantly "I know what we must do!

We must get another cat!" And the Master Mariner didn't say a word - he just gazed very thoughtfully at his Stupid Wife for quite a lone time; and then he went out to his Querencia and sat looking at the compost for a very long time.

When he came back about two hours later, he seemed in a curiously happy mood and was even, singing a well-know sea song to himself as he went to the kitchen to get the dinner for Cat and Dog.

"I must go down to the seas again!" he carolled, as he chopped up some calves' liver, "But I really cannot tell why. For the sea is cold and the sea is wet and I'd rather be warm and dry!" And then, when he had fed the cat and dog, he poured out two large doses of Medicine for himself and his Stupid Wife and sat down to talk to her.

"My dear", he said - suddenly looking fearfully solemn and unhappy, "I am very much afraid I will have to go back to sea again, far a time. Because, you see, we have been spending a lot of Lolly on food lately and the price of Medicine has gone up too!" And the Stupid Woman looked very miserable but she knew only too well that the Master Mariner was always right so she just said, "Well, if you must, I suppose you must. But you won't be away far too long, will you? And where will you go this time?"

And the Master Mariner poured her out another dose of Medicine and said, "Well - as a matter of fact, I thought the U.S. of A. would be a good place - they have so much lovely Lolly there!" So she said she thought that an excellent idea. And then he went on to say, "As a matter of fact, I thought that I ought to give Esmeralda a lift home on the ship. As you know the U.S. of A. is giving up its T. V. P. exercise and leaving the "Hayseed" here with a change over to Top Human Psykes, to look after all their naval personnel, and so they are flying all the T. V. P's home and flying all the T. H. P's back. And poor Esmeralda is so terrified of flying that I thought that it is the least we could for her after all her care and kindness to our dear little Tatty. - Don't you agree?"

And somehow the Stupid Women didn't agree though she didn't quite know why - and, put like that, what could she say?

And so alas! shortly after that the Master Mariner packed his Sea Chest and went off on a donkey to catch a bus to get a car to the ferry and then drive to the Big City to get on a plane to where his ship was waiting for him.

And then the Stupid Woman got one of Tatty's sons (of whom there were a surprising number in the neighbourhood) and the kitten soon got rid of the mice. And then it very, very slowly began to take over the house, and then but I really need not go into all this because we are right back at the beginning again!

The trouble is that people just will not learn - and that is why history is so dreary - everyone just does the same thing over and over and over again!