

Clog-Dance for a Dead Farce

by Nigel Kneale

If I ever come on a copy of O, Frabjous Night still flaunting itself as a Comedy in Three Acts, it will be flushed away immediately. Once, in desperate moments, I used to dream of scattering it upon stormy seas, or burning it, page by page, but both these methods smack of drama, with which it had nothing to do.

Daunse Braag Vaidjagh son Cloie-ommidjys Marroo

chyndaaít liorish Brian Stowell

My yioym dy bragh coip jeh *O, Oie Farskeelagh* as eh foast taishbyney eh hene dy daaney myr Cloie Aitt ayns Tree Aghtyn, bee eh er ny scughey ersooyl sy phremmee dy çhelleeragh. Keayrt dy row, as mish debejagh, va mee cliaghtey dreamal dy skeaylin eh sy cheayn dorrinagh, er nonney loshtin eh, duillag lurg duillag, agh, ny saaseyn shoh, ny neesht, t'ad cur faaue jeh drama, red nagh vel bentyn rish noadyr. *It was one of those shapeless attempts that are not comedy or farce because the author understands neither. Things without a naturally funny line, that make their actor-victims work like fiends to warm the corpse, and their audience-victims hate the seats they sit on. How this particular inanity achieved a West End showing will remain a secret: the hands that pulled the strings are probably stilled for ever, and the author's suffering name has changed obloquy for oblivion. Possibly the thing is still performed occasionally by a broken and despairing repertory company, but this is how it died in the outer world.*

V'eh nane jeh ny eabbaghyn shen nagh vel ny chloie-aitt er nonney ny chloie-ommidjys, er yn oyr nagh vel yn ughtar toiggal y jees oc. Reddyn fegooish un linney ta aitt dy dooghyssagh, ta cur er ny dreihghyn ta cloie d'obbraghey myr y jouyl dy hiow yn corp marroo, as ta cur er ny dreihghyn ta jeeaghyn dy chur feoh da ny soiagyn t'ad nyn soie er. Yn agh haink lesh y fardail shoh dy ve ry akin ayns Lunnin Heear, nee shen tannaghtyn follit: ny laueyn hayrn ny strengyn, s'cosoylagh dy vel ad marroo son dy bragh, as ennym yn ughtar treih, t'eh er chaghlaa caartrey son neuimraa. Foddee dy vel y red foast goll er cur roish y theay nish as reesht liorish stoyr-chompanaght ta brisht as meehreishteilagh, agh shoh yn agh hooar eh baase sy teihll mooie.

"I've lost Kangaroo!" old Arnie said when I got into the dressing-room at seven o'clock. "He's gone! I can't find him." Kangaroo was the name he gave his mascot: it was made of coloured pipe-cleaners and wool, and it had always looked to me like some sort of dry fly. I helped him to search the waste basket and things, but it was no good. "Fell off his hook and the cleaners got him, probably," I said. "They wouldn't know what he was."

"Ta mee er choayl Kangaroo!" dooyrt shenn Arnie tra hie mee stiagh sy çhamyr-choamree ec shiaght er y chlag. "T'eh ersooyl! Cha noddym feddyn eh." She Kangaroo va'n ennym hug eh er y tonnoge echey: v'ee jeant ass glenneyderyn-piob

as ollan, as v'ee kinjagh jeeaghyn dooys myr sorçh dy whaillag hirrym. Chooïn mee lesh dy hirrey'n vastag-orçh as reddy'n elley, agh v'eh fardailagh. "Huitt eh veih'n chroagane echey as v'eh goit ec ny glennyderyn, s'cosoylagh," dooyrt mee. "Cha beagh fys oc c'red v'eh."

Arnold was cut up. "Doesn't matter how it seemed to happen, boy," he said. "There's more in it. He's gone, and it's an opening night. First time since I've had him." The opening night of our last week, he meant. We were the tour version, doing the provinces with the usual weaker and cheaper cast: the London show had folded up some weeks before.

Va Arnie trimshagh. "S'cummey'n aght v'eh jeeaghyn dy haghyrt, ghuilley," dooyrt eh. "Ta ny smoo na shen ayn. T'eh ersooyl as she yn chied oie vees ayn. Y chied cheayrt neayr's v'eh aym." Y chied oie jeh'n çhiaghtin s'jerree ain, v'eh çheet er. She yn lhiaggan-turrys v'ain, goll mygeayrt y çheer çheumooie jeh'n phreeu-valley lesh y skimmee smoo faase as sloo deyr myr dy cliaghtagh: va show Lunnin er n'oll fo kuse dy hiaghteeyn roish shen.

"Never listen to people who say mascots don't mean anything." Arnold had given up the search and was rubbing grease-paint on his bald head. "Keep your fingers crossed to-night, boy. Bang it out at them and take no chances." "Okay," I said. I'd never gone in for mascots, but I believe in ghosts. "Ah! I'll plug the broken door-bell business at the start. Aah!" he said, colouring his neck. He always smothered himself in grease-paint: it was a point of pride. None of that mask-and-white-neck stuff for him.

"Ny jean geaishtagh dy bragh rish sleih ta gra dy vel sonnogeyn jeh beggan scansh." Va'n ronsey currit seose ec Arnold as v'eh rubbey daah-smarree er e chione meayl. "Cum dty vairyn crossit noght, ghuilley. Cur eh dauesyn dy niartal as gow kiarail." "Mie dy liooar," dooyrt mee. Cha row mee rieu currit da sonnogeyn, agh ta mee credjal ayns scaanjoonyn. "Ah! Y stoo ta bentyn rish y chlageen-dorrysh, neeym shen y yannoo dy trome ec y toshiaght. Aah!" dooyrt eh, as eh daahghey'n mwannal echey. V'eh cliaghtey plooghey eh hene lesh daah-smarree: she cooish-voyrn v'ayn. Veg jeh'n stoo shen cour far-eddin as mwannal bane dasyn.

Most theatre people are failures. I don't mean they starve: they get along, just as clerks and taxidermists and boilermakers do: but they aim higher and drop shorter. There are lots of sorts of failures; even successful ones, financially. But chiefly they make two classes: the self-deluders and the realists. The first kind never know they're bad: they inhabit part of the same cuckoo world as the geniuses, only it's the slum area. The realists, though, know the worst. They know they won't enter the promised land, but they go right on, full of technique and guts and sometimes liquor. In spite of the mascot stuff, old Arnie was a realist. He had a key part in this opera. Heavy Low Comedian. It wasn't a lead, but he was essential to such plot as there was, and had some of the best "business" - after he had invented it himself. I was a juvenile; which shows how long ago it was.

Ta'n chooid smoo dy leih thie-cloie er vailleil. Cha nel mee gra dy vel ad goll neeu: t'ad goll er oi, jeeragh casley rish cleree as pronneydereyn-sheh as jantee-choirrey:

agh t'ad jeeraghey ny syrjey as tuittym ny s'girrey. Shimmey sorçh d'ailleil t'ayn; eer sorçhyn speeideilagh, dy h-argidoil. Agh son y chooid smoo ta daa phossan jeant oc: adsyn ta molley ad hene, as ny rieugheeyn. Y chied phossan, cha nel rieuu fys oc dy vel ad olk: t'ad cummal ayns aynr jeh'n teihll fanseeagh cheddin as ny ardcheeallee, agh she yn aynr-slummey t'ayn. Agh ny rieugheeyn, shione dauesyn yn irriney agglagh. Shione daue nagh jed ad stiagh sy çheer ghiallit, agh t'ad goll er oi dy jeeragh, lane dy cheirdeeaght as dunnallys as liggar, ny cheayrtyn. Ga dy row yn stoo shen jeant ec shenn Arnie mychione y tonnoge, she rieughee v'ayn. Va aynr scanshoil echey sy chloie-kiaullee shoh. Fer aitt Injil as Trome. Cha nee ard-ayn v'ayn, agh v'eh femoil son linney-skeeal erbee v'ayn, as va paart jeh'n "dellal" share echey - lurg da v'er chroo eh dasyn hene. Va mish m'aeglagh, ta jeeaghyn cre cho foddey er dy henney v'eh.

Kangaroo's warning was soon borne out. When I got down to the stage for "beginners", I heard excited voices and a sort of moaning. It was the stage manager. Our own S.M., who toured with us, a thin, jumpy type; he was all wrong for the job. Just now he was sitting on a prop bed in a terrible state.

Haink bree raaue Kangaroo rish dy Leah. Tra hie mee gys ardane ny "toshiaghteyryn", cheayll mee coraaghyn greesit as sorçh dy hoghal. She yn reireyder-ardane v'ayn. Y reireyder-ardane ain hene, ren goll mygeayrt er turraysyn marin, fer shang as imneagh; dy jeeragh y fer aggairagh son y startey. Nish v'eh ny hoie ayns stayd agglagh er lhiabbee-chloie.

"She's a devil," he said to me. "Oh, my God! She's the one that ought to be put away. My God! Having to hide like a rat in a trap!" I knew that he was divorced. Now it turned out there was a man outside with a judgement summons for unpaid alimony. The stage doorkeeper had been primed to tell the tale about the show being on, but the man said he would wait. The doorkeeper had to give him a chair.

"She jouyl ish," dooyrt eh rhym. "Oh, my Yee! She ish lhisagh goll er cur stiagh ayns thie-baanrit. My Yee! As mish eginit keiltyn mee hene casley rish roddan ayns ribbey!" Va fys aym dy row e phoosey er jeet gys jerrey. Nish v'eh er jeet magh dy row dooinney çheu-mooie as symney echey son argid scarrey-poosee nagh row eeckit. V'eh er ve inshit da'n dorryser-ardane d'insh skeeal mychione y show as eh fo raad, agh dooyrt y dooinney dy jinnagh eh fuirraghtyn. Begin da'n dorryser caair y chur da.

"And she's earning money!" the S.M. whined. "Nearly as much as I am! This'll finish me, I can't let them take me!" We tried to persuade him to go and accept the writ, but he wasn't having any. He was so sure he was being arrested, he just sat and pitied himself. It was bad. The two assistant stage managers would be upset too. A young girl fresh from drama school - I looked round, but I couldn't see her anywhere - and an unsavoury long-haired lad who never seemed to do anything.

"As t'ee cosney argid!" ren y reireyder-ardane caayney. "Bunnys wheesh as mish! Nee shoh stroie mee, cha noddym lhiggey daue mish y ghoaill seose!" Phrow shin cleayney eshyn dy ghoill as goaill rish y screeuyn-leigh, agh cha jinnagh eh shen. V'eh cho shicky dy row eh goll er goaill seose as nagh ren eh agh soie ayns shen as eh

goaill çhymmeysyn hene. V'eh olk. Veagh anvea er y daa reireyder-ardane-coonee neesht. Inneen aeg v'er jeet dy jeeragh veih scoill-drama - yeeagh mee mygeayrt, agh cha dod mee ish y akin boayl erbee - as guilley eajee lesh folt liauyr nagh row rieu jannoo red erbee, v'eh jeeaghyn.

Old Arnie appeared, looking a bit off form. "Let's get started," he said. "Where's Miss Lane?" The stage manager came partially to life. "She's off," he said. "What!"

Haink Shenn Arnie rish as eh jeeaghyn beggan moal. "Gowmayd toshiaght," dooyrt eh. "C'raad ta Inney Lane?" Ren y reireyder-ardane couyral beggan. "Cha nel ee ayn", dooyrt eh. "C'red!"

"Sprained ankle on the stairs as she came in. Dolly's going on for her." Dolly was the missing assistant S.M. She under-studied as well. Arnie caught my eye. "Poor kid!" said somebody. We all pitied an understudy in that play. The thing had become so loaded with gags and comic business, it was like having to stand in for a member of a familiar acrobat team. "Thank heaven it's a straightish part," Arnie said, as she appeared. "Good luck, Dolly! We're all behind you, remember. We'll see you through." The usual remarks on these occasions.

"Lheanee ish abane er ny greeishyn as ee çheet stiagh. Gowe Dolly yn ynnyd eck." Va Dolly yn reireyder-ardane-coonee assaarah. V'ee ny cloieder-ynnyd myrgeddin. Hug Arnie shillee bieu stiagh ayns my hooillyn. "Doodie voght!" dooyrt peiagh ennagh. Ghaw shin ooillee erreeish er cloieder-ynnyd sy chloie shen. Va'n cloie er jeet dy ve cho laadit lesh spotçhyn as stoo aitt as dy row eh goll rish goaill yn ynnyd jeh oltey jeh skimmee-skibbyltagh cadjin. "Booise da Jee nagh vel eh ny ayn cast," dooyrt Arnie, myr haink ee rish. "Aigh vie, Dolly! Coonee dy vel shin ooillee dy dty phohlldal. Neemayd cooney lhiat." Ny raaghyn cadjin son lheid y taghyrt.

Everyone wished her luck and said things about it being her big chance. She didn't seem to mind. She was either without nerves or half-paralysed with fright. "Now for heaven's sake let's go!" said Arnie.

Ren dy chooillee pheigh gwee aigh vie urree, as dooyrt ad reddyn mychione y caa moor v'eck. V'eh jeeaghyn nagh row ee boirit. Eder v'ee fegooish nearagyn, ny v'ee lieh-neulheiltagh liorish aggle. "Nish, son graih Yee, hooi roin!" dooyrt Arnie.

I came on quite near the beginning. After a few lines I lay back in a chair and pretended to go to sleep, which is an excellent position for studying the audience if you're so inclined. Surprisingly, there were few empty seats. But something was odd. You hear a lot about how audiences vary. They do. The weather; or the news; or the proportion of kids; or local conditions; or the varying quality of the show itself; all these affect them. This lot seemed to be mostly women: old women. They sat in rigid silence.

Haink mee er yn ardane leah dy liooar lurg y toshiaght. Lurg kuse dy linnaghyn, lhi mee shear ayns caair, as lhi mee er dy row mee my chadley, ta ny stayd er baghtal cour jannoo studeyrys er y lught-jeeaghyn, my s'mie lhiat y lheid. Cha row monney soiagyn follym ayn as hug shen yindys orrym. Agh va red quaagh ennagh ayn. T'ou clastyn ram mychione yn agh ta lughtyn-jeeaghyn goll er caghlau. S'feer shen. Yn emshyr; er nonney, ny naughtyn; er nonney, quoid paitçhey t'ayn; er nonney, yn

foaynoo ynnydagh; er nonney, quallid chaglaaee yn show hene; ta ooilley jeu shoh bentyn roo. V'eh jeeaghyn dy row yn lught shoh nyn mraane son y chooid smoo: shenn vraane. V'ad nyn soie ayns tosid neulhoobagh.

When I came off I whispered to Arnie, "Sticky house."

Tra haink mee jeh, dooyrt mee rish Arnie myr sannish, "Lught-jeeaghyn condaaigagh."

"Suffragettes!" he said. The vote business had been settled a long before this, of course; he used the word for description. "I'll do my damnedest with the door-bell." It would be hard to describe Arnie's business with the broken door-bell. He had invented and perfected it during the run, at a place where the script became sheer calamity. It was a little masterpiece of timing and agile mime. He made me laugh whenever I saw it from the side, and I'd seen it a good many times. The audiences loved it. Most of them broke into a spontaneous round of applause. But not to-night.

"Suffragaidyn!" dooyrt eh. Va cooish ny voteyn er ny reaghey foddey roish shen, son shickrys; ren eh ymmyd jeh'n ockle myr coontey. "Neeym my chooid share lesh y chlageen-dorrysh." Veagh eh doillee dy chur coontey jeh'n aght va Arnie dellal rish y chlageen-dorrysh brisht. V'eh er chroo yn aght shoh as er vondaghey eh as shinyn troailt mygeayrt lesh y chloie, ec boayl sy script raad va'n script slane agglagh. She ard-obbyr v'ayn bentyn rish jannoo reddyn ec y tra cooie as jannoo arrish dy skibbylt. Hug eh orrym garaghtee traa erbee honnick mee eh veih'n çheu, as shimmy keayrt honnick mee eh. Va ny lughtyn-jeeaghyn graihagh er. Woail y chooid smoo jeu nyn massyn jeh nyn yioin hene. Agh cha nee nocht.

Once I thought I heard somebody titter, but it may have been boots squeaking.

Otherwise, dead silence. I went on immediately after this. Arnie was insulted and furious at his stuff falling flat for the first time: it showed in the undercurrent in his voice, and the joyless way he was banging the stuff over. That's fatal. I tried to help him back into a good humour by being relaxed myself. He just made drooling-idiot faces each time his back was turned to them. It got worse and worse: not a flicker of response from that audience. We weren't as unfunny as all that, in spite of the play.

Keayrt ennagh, smooinee mee dy cheayll mee dy ren peiagh ennagh smooiroil, agh foddee dy row shen bootsyn jeestyrnee. Er lhimmey jeh shen, slane tosid. Haink mee er yn ardane dy jeeragh lurg shoh. Va faghid jeant er Arnie as v'eh jymmoosagh dy row yn stoo echey er vailleil son y chied cheayrt: va shen ry chlashtyn sy chora echey, heese, as syn aght v'eh ceau ny focklyn magh gyn boggey erbee. Ta shen arkysagh. Phrow mee dy chooney lesh dy heet gys gien mie reesht liorish lhaggaghey mee hene. Cha ren eh agh arrish er toot sheeley gagh keayrt va'n dreeym echey er ny hyndaa roo. Haink eh dy ve ny smessey as ny smessey: Cha daink aa-veaghey erbee veih'n lught-jeeaghyn shen. Cha row shin cho neu-aitt as shen, dyn y wooise da'n chloie.

Little Dolly came on. She was a pretty girl, excellent figure; but I saw the look her eyes held. It was fear all right. She got started. Several lines were fine. Then her voice went faint. She didn't know it, of course; she was seeing only the lines. On and on she

went. Weaker and weaker. I could hardly hear her from the other side of the stage. I put in a move, and whispered to her as I went across to make it a bit louder.

Haink Dolly veg er yn ardane. She inneen waagh v'ayn, lesh corp braew; agh honnick mee yn aght va ny sooillyn eck jeeaghyn. She aggle v'ayn kiart dy liooar. Ghow ee toshiaght. Va kuse dy linnaghyn feer vie. Eisht, haink e coraa dy ve faase. Cha row fys eck er, son shickyrys; cha row ee fakin agh ny linnaghyn. Hie ee er oi as er oi. Ny smoo faase as ny smoo faase. V'eh doillee dou clashtyn ee veih cheu elley yn ardane. Darree mee mee hene, as loayr mee ree myr sannish as mish goll harrish dy chur er dy ve beggan stroshey.

She tried, kept it up for a few lines; then it died again. Somebody out front started to cough. I was wondering wildly about jumping in ahead of cue, as a last resort, when Arnie spoke. He barked out, in character, "Speak up, my girl! Speak up!" And then he turned a look of loathing on the audience and said distinctly, and quite slowly, in his own voice, "Not that it'll make a bloody bit of difference!" There was a gasp of horrified amazement: their first reaction of the evening. Arnie had turned his back on them. It was useless after that. We and the house were sworn enemies.

Phrow ee as v'eh mie dy liooar son shiartanse dy linnaghyn; eisht hooar eh baase reesht. Ghow peiagh ennagh sy lught-jeeaghyn toshiaght dy chassaghtee. Va mee gindys dy debejagh mychione lheim stiagh roish y leeid, myr y couyr s'jerree, tra loayr Arnie. Raip eh magh, myr peiagh sy chloie, "Loayr magh, m'inneen! Loayr magh!" As eisht yeeagh eh lesh feoh ayns e hooillyn er y lught-jeeaghyn, as dooyrt eh dy baghtal, as moal dy liooar, sy choraa echey hene, "Agh cha jean eh veg d'anchaslys mollaghtagh!" Va scred d'ard-yindys scoaghit ry chlashtyn: y chied aa-woalley oc y fastyr shen. Va Arnie er hyndaa dy chur e ghreem roo. V'eh fardailagh lurg shen. Va shinyn as y lught-jeeaghyn nyn noidyn firrinagh.

At the interval I found poor Dolly in hysterics. She had thought Arnie meant her acting was so bad that it would make no difference if she spoke loudly, and that she had told the audience so. She deserved rows of medals for carrying on with the scene, thinking that. Arnie apologised and kissed her, and said she was wonderful, and explained how his hate of the audience had made him lose control, and how much he respected her self-possession. They steadied her with a brandy.

Ec y vrishey hie mee gys Dolly voght as ee drogh-ghuillagh. V'ee er smooineaghtyn dy heill Arnie dy row ee cloie cho olk nagh beagh anchaslys erbee jeant dy loayragh ee er ard, as dy row shen inshit echey da'n lught-jeeaghyn. V'ee toilliu ram boynyn son goll er oi lesh y reayrt as ee smooineaghtyn shen. Ren Arnie e leshtal jee as phaag eh ee, as dooyrt eh dy row ee yindyssagh, as hoilshree eh magh yn aght v'eh cur feoh da'n lught-jeeaghyn v'er chur er dy choayl smaght ersyn hene, as cre wheesh as v'eh cur arrym da'n chiuney eck. Chiunee ad ee lesh brandee.

One of the girls was looking through a split in the curtain. "They're coming back for more," she reported. "Must be curiosity."

Va nane jeh ny inneenyn jeeaghyn trooid scoltey sy churtan. "T'ad cheet erash son tooilley cloie," hug ee fys. "Peeikearys, gyn ourys."

"Been getting broken bottles in the bar, more likely!" someone else said.

"V'ad geddyn boteilyn brisht sy çhamyr-iu, s'cosoylagh!" dooyrt peiagh ennagh elley. *Act Two was quite short: too short to build any suspense, as normal second acts do. Our author had known every point to miss. The audience sat like jugs. It was uncanny, creepy, to act before them. As if they weren't there at all. Even the coughs and little rustlings and the murmur that fills ever theatre had gone now. They were hating us.*

Va Aght Jees giare dy liooar: ro ghiare dy hroggal anshickyrys erbee, myr ta'n nah aght cliaghtey jannoo. Va fys er ve ec yn ughtar ain er gagh red scanshoil dy aagail magh. Va'n lught-jeeaghyn nyn soie gollrish podjalyn. V'eh quaagh as neuheiltagh dy ve cloie roue. Myr dy beagh ad assaarahg dy bollagh. Eer ny cassaghtyn as y moostrey feagh as y tallagh ta lhieeney gagh thie-cloie, v'ad ersooyl nish. V'ad cur feoh dooin.

Little Dolly had improved. She was audible and forging along, not letting herself dry. Once she cut a page or two of script, but nobody was sorry to see it go. "Let's get it over!" Arnie said at the second interval. "My God, they scare me now. Must be something in the water."

Va Dolly er jeet dy ve ny share. V'ee so-chlashtyn as goll er oi dy mie, gyn lowal jee hene çheet dy ve gyn bree. Keayrt ennagh lheim ee harrish duillag ny ghaa dy script, agh cha row peiagh erbee jeant trimshagh kyndagh rish shen. "Faagmayd çheeu-heear jin eh!" dooyrt Arnie ec y nah vrishey. "My Yee, t'ad cur aggle orrym nish. Va red ennagh syn ushtey, gyn ourys."

This interval was a busy one for the stage crew, unfamiliar as they were with our scenery. A set had to be rigged, a double one. It consisted of a small scene, "Francesca's bedroom," which was hauled up into the flies during a short screen-drop, to reveal a larger exterior scene, "Outside the Château." To complete this, a huge built-up centrepiece had to be wheeled into place at the back, representing the entrance to the Château. A stone doorway, with windows above. We reached this scene change, and Francesca's bedroom sailed aloft.

She brishey tarroogh v'ayn da skimmee yn ardane, as adsyn neuchliaghtit rish y reayrtys ain. Begin set y chur seose, fer dooble. She shilley beg v'ayn, "Shamyr-lhiabbagh Francesca," hie er tayrn seose ass shilley tra va reayrtys elley heese, va soilshaghey reayrtys smoo çheu-mooie enmyssit "Çheu-mooie jeh'n Château." Dy chooilleeney shoh, begin ard-reayrtys mooar y wheeyllaghey stiagh ayns ynnyd ec e chooyl, va shassoo son yn entreilys gys y Château. Dorrys-cloaie as uinnagyn erskyn shen. Raink shin y caghlaa-shilley as detlee shamyr-lhiabbagh Francesca seose. *Our nerves were wearing thin. It was like one of those dreams where you're trying to make a frantic escape in something about as fast as a steamroller, or where your fingers stick to things you've thrown away.*

Va greain voght çheet orrin. V'eh casley rish nane jeh ny dreamalyn shen as oo prowal dy debejagh dy scapail ayns red ennagh ta goll cho tappee as rolleyder-bree, er nonney ta dty vairynt lhiantyn rish reddynt ta ceaut ersooyl ayd.

The curtain rose. "Outside the Château." This was the big action scene. After a few fatuous misunderstandings, the characters crept about spying on each other.

Gendarmes were called in, and nearly everybody managed to get arrested. An alleged dénouement followed in a short separate scene: "The same. Next morning." Dirree yn curtan. "Çheu-mooie jeh'n Château." Va shoh yn shilley-jantys mooar. Lurg neuhoiggalys ommidjagh ny ghaa, snaue ny karracteyryn mygeayrt as ad jannoo speeikearys er y cheilley. Hug ad fys er gendarmeyn, as haink eh lesh bunnys gagh peiagh dy ve goit seose ec meoiryn-shee. Haink feaysley lhiassit y chloie rish lurg shen ayns shilley scarrit giare: "Y red cheddin. Y moghrey er giyn."

Just before I went on, the stage manager said to me, "I can't stand this! It'll kill my mother!" The man was a wreck. I wondered what his mother had to do with it, and he said, "He's still out there! Waiting!" I'd forgotten the process server.

Dy jeeragh roish my jagh mee er yn ardane, dooyrt y reireyder-ardane rhym, "Cha noddym jannoo lesh shoh! Marree eh my voir!" Va'n dooinney stroit. Ren mee gindys cre'n aght va'n voir echey bentyn rish, as dooyrt eh, "T'eh mooie ayns shen foastagh! Fuirraghtyn!" Va mee er nyarood y tendeilagh-symney.

On stage, Arnie sidled up. He murmured, "Like a morgue. Someone dropped a pin at the back of the gallery five minutes ago, and the echoes haven't died yet!" The cast were hustling to get it over. The gendarmes - three burly supers - hurried in from the side, and up the two steps in the Château entrance at the back.

Er yn ardane, snaue Arnie gys my lhiattee. Ren eh tallagh, "Gollrish marroolann. Lhig peiagh ennagh da freeney tuitym ec cooyl y lout queig minnid er henney, as cha nel ny mectullagh er n'oll magh ass foastagh!" Va ny cloiederyn siyragey dy chur jerrey er. Ny gendarmeyn - tree offishearyn mooarey - hiyree ad stiagh veih'n çheu as seose y daa ghreeish syn entreilys gys y Château ec y chooyl.

"No! No! Here I am! Help!" Dolly, as Francesca, was dragged out of a side door by Arnie and one of the girls. This was the cue for the gendarmes to come rushing back from the Château. They always came in a lump, sticking in the doorway because it was supposed to be funny.

"Cha nee! Cha nee! Shoh mish! Cooïn lhiam!" Va Dolly, myr Francesca, goll er tayrn magh ass dorrys lhiattagh liorish Arnie as nane jeh ny doodeeyn. Va shoh yn leeid da ny gendarmeyn dy hiyragey erash veih'n Château. Haink ad kinjagh çhionn ry cheilley, as v'ad goit sy dorrys er y fa dy row sleih sheiltyn dy row shen aitt.

Out they came, jammed together according to plan, disentangled, ran down the two steps. Then I noticed the last of them hesitate and half turn back. I saw what he saw. The Château was moving! Very slowly, like a drunken duchess, the whole thing was tilting, tipping majestically over on to its face. The last gendarme spluttered and grabbed at his colleagues. Then we were all running to grab it. The thing was a light structure of canvas and wood, and not really dangerous.

Magh lhiu, as ad jingit ry cheilley rere y plan. Ren ad neufee ad hene, as roie ad sheese y daa ghreeish. Eisht hug mee my ner dy ren y fer s'jerree lieh-scuirr as lieh-hyndaa erash. Honnick mee ny honnick eshyn. Va'n Château gleashaghey! Feer voal, gollrish bendiuc scooyrit, va'n slane red cleayney, cleayney dy staydoil, harrish er yn oaie echey. Ren y gendarme s'jerree spooyteraght as ghow eh greim er ny co-

obbreeyn echey. Eisht va shin ooilley roie dy ghoail greim er y Château. V'eh ny red eddym, as eh jeant ass carmeish as fuygh, as, dy firrinagh, cha row eh gaueagh. *We got the crackling montrosity as it neared the ground, straining to support it. Myself and two of the gendarmes, that is. The third had his head stuck in a split in the canvas where it had hit him. The laths bent. The Château flopped most of its length on the stage. In the gap it left, surprised and stricken like insects under a lifted stone, stood the stage manager and three scene-shifters. I saw old Arnie too, bending as if he was holding something down. Behind them were ropes, ladders, prop plants. And the back wall.*

Hooar shin greim er y veisht frappagh tra v'ee çheet faggys da'n thaloo, as shinyn jannoo nyn gooid share dy chummal seose ee. Mish hene as jees jeh ny gendarmyn, ta shen dy ghra. Va kione y trass fer goit ayns scoltey sy charmeish raad va'n fer shen bwoallit eck. Va ny lattyn er nyn lhoobey. Ren y chooid smoo jeh'n Château flapperagh er yn ardane. Va'n reireyder-ardane as tree scugheyderyn-shilley nyn shassoo sy vaarney va faagit, as yindys orroo, gollrish shey-chassee fo clagh v'er ny troggal. Honnick mee shenn Arnie myrgeddin, as eh croymmey sheese myr dy beagh eh cummal red ennagh heese. Va teaddyn, aaraghyn as far-lussyn cooyl oc. As y boalley cooyl.

There was a strange noise. A swelling terrible roar that drowned the anguished mutterings of the gendarmes and the whispers in the wings. The audience was laughing. A harsh, derisive bellow that they had been saving up all the evening. They might have known this would happen.

Va sheean quaagh ayn. Buirroogh agglagh va mooadaghey, ren baih cabbaragh angaaishit ny gendarmyn as ny sannishyn ayns ny binn. Va'n lucht-jeeaghyn garaghtee. Garveig gharroo as gannidagh, v'ad er ve tashtey ooilley'n fastyr. S'cosoylagh dy row fys er ve oc dy jinnagh shoh taghyrt.

I couldn't turn round. The laugh went on without slackening while we heaved at the bulging framework. The third gendarme had untangled himself and was pushing too. As it rose, stage-hands pulled from behind. The Château was in place again, a bit crooked, and with part of the stone fabric flapping where the gendarme's head had burst it. Why the curtain hadn't been dropped as soon as the accident happened, I couldn't think. But it hadn't, and we could only struggle on.

Cha dod mee çhyndaa mygeayrt. Hie yn garaghtee er oi gyn leodaghey, as shinyn seiyy noi'n chrauelagh bolgagh. Va'n trass gendarme er heyrey eh hene as va eshyn seiyy neesht. Tra v'eh goll er troggal, va guillyn-ardane seiyy veih'n chooyl. Va'n Château syn ynnyd chiart reesht as eh beggan cam, as paart jeh'n ayn va jeant dy yeeaghyn gollrish clagh goll er craa raad v'eh scoltit ec kione y gendarme. Cha dod mee toiggal cre'n fa nagh ren ad lhiggey da'n churtan tuittym cho Leah's va'n drogh-haghyrt ayn. Agh cha ren ad, as cha dod shin agh gleck er oi.

"I'll stay and watch it," whispered one of the gendarmes. He stood by the doorway, trying to look busy, while the rest of us moved down-stage. Of course, he was spotted. The audience's howl gained fresh strength. I tried to beckon him unobtrusively and he came forward. They yelled even louder. Suddenly, whatever we

did, they laughed: but at us, not at the characters we were playing. Other members of the cast were on stage now, bawling out their lines. Cues were lost in that appalling row out front.

"Tanneeym as freillym rick er," dooyrt nane jeh ny gendarmeyn myr sannish. Hass eh ec y dorrys as eh prowal dy yeeaghyn tarroogh, choud's va shinyn goll gys oaie yn ardane. Son shickyrys, v'eh er ny chronnaghey. Va gull y lught-jeeaghyn er ny niartaghey foastagh. Phrow mee eh y smeidey dy neuheiyagh as haink eh er oi. Screeagh ad eer ny stroshey. Dy doaltattym, cre erbee ren shin, ren ad gearey: agh ren ad gearey orrin, cha nee er ny karracteyryn va shin cloie. Va cloiederyn elley er yn ardane nish as ad gyllagh magh nyn linnaghyn. Va leedyn goll er coayl sy vusthaa atchimagh shen mooie ayns shid.

I slid out. "Take it down!" I said. Nobody seemed to be in charge. "It's no use - we can't hold them now!" The S.M. was on the point of collapse. Of course it was his fault the Château hadn't been properly braced. His brains were outside with the process server.

Skirr mee magh. "Gow sheese eh!" dooyrt mee. Cha row eh jeeaghyn dy row smaght ec peiagh erbee. "T'eh fardailagh - cha nodmayd cummal ad nish!" Va'n reireyder-ardane er çhee goll fo. Gyn ourys, ersyn hene va'n loght nagh row yn Château er ny niartaghey dy kiart. Va ny inçhyn echey çheu-mooie marish y tendeilagh-symney.

"The old chap's hurt!" he said. "His back. I've sent for a doctor. What d'you think-?"

"Ta'n shenn dooinney lhottit!" dooyrt eh. "Y dreeym echey. Ta mee er chur fys er fer-lhee. C'red t'ou smooïnaghtyn - ?"

"Get the curtain down!" I said. He did. The safety.

"Sheese lesh y churtan!" dooyrt mee. Shen myr ren eh. Y curtan-sauçhys.

I could still hear that blanketed, half-hysterical laughter as I went to find Arnie. They had laid him on the prop bed. Apparently one of the loose steel braces had sprung round and hit him between the shoulders as he tried to grab the falling Château.

Dod mee foast clashtyn y garaghtee shen va lieh-vooghit as lieh-cheoi as mish goll d'eddyn Arnie. V'ad er chur eh ny lhie er y far-lhiabbee. V'eh jeeaghyn dy row fer jeh ny çhionneyderyn lag jeant ass staillin er lheim mygeayrt as er woalley eh eddyr ny geayltyn echey as eshyn prowal dy ghoail greim er y Château va tuittym.

He was deathly white and evidently thought he was done for. "They packed us up," he said. "They got us in the end. Tell somebody to play the King, very loudly." The S.M. managed to put the record on and it shook the nonsense out of them. There was peace after that.

Va daah yn vaaish er, as v'eh cronnal dy smooinee eh dy row eh er raad y vaaish.

"Hug ad sthap orrin," dooyrt eh. "Va shin goit oc sy jerrey. Insh da peiagh ennagh dy chloie Yee Saue yn Ree feer ard." Haink eh lesh y reireyder-ardane y kereneen y chloie as chrie eh yn boghtynid magh assdaue. Va shee ayn lurg shen.

"Is the doctor on his way?" I asked. Arnie opened his eyes. "I am dead, Horatio," he said, and lifted one hand an inch or two. "Report me...and my cause aright to the unsatisfied." I wouldn't have thought Hamlet had been one of his parts, but you never know.

"Vel y fer-lhee çheet?" vrie mee. Doshil Arnie e hooillyn. "Ta mee marroo, Horatio," dooyrt eh. as hrog eh un laue trooid oarlagh ny ghaa. "Insh my-my-chione... as my chooish dauesyn nagh vel jeant booiaagh." Cha beigns er smooïnaghtyn dy beagh Hamlet er ve nane jeh ny paartyn echey, agh cha nhione dhyt dy bragh.

The girls were sniffing, what with the fiasco on the stage, and now this. The S.M. was chewing his fingers, blaming himself desperately. Arnie lay still. The grease-paint had been wiped off his face, but it still made his neck look ghoulishly healthy. The cast were all round him, hardly moving. "It's as he would wish," a voice near me breathed.

Va ny doodeeyn stronneragh kyndagh rish y vrock er yn ardane as nish y taghyrt shoh. Va'n reireyder-ardane caigney ny mairyn echey as eh cur y foill ersyn hene dy debejagh. Va Arnie ny lhie dy feagh. Va'n daah-smarree er ny scughey ersooyl veih'n eddin echey, agh v'eh foast cur er e wannal dy yeeaghyn slayntoil atçhimagh. Va ny cloiederyn ooilley mygeayrt echey as ad gyn gleashaghey, bunnys. "T'eh dy jeeragh myr veagh eh gearree," lhig coraa va faggys dou magh myr ennal.

Old Arnie was making a beautiful finish. He was just going into Hamlet's dying words about the rest being silence, when the doctor came. We almost resented the intrusion. He got his coat off and spoiled the whole thing. In two minutes he had poor Arnold sitting up and telling him where it hurt most. The old lad had chipped a bit off his spine, it turned out, but he was as fit as a flea by the pantomime season, and went on for years after that.

Va shenn Arnie jannoo jerrey aalin. V'eh er çhee gra focklyn s'jerree Hamlet tra haink y fer-lhee rish. Va shin bunnys jymmoosagh rish y vrishey stiagh. Chur eh cooat Arnie jeh, as vill eh yn slane cooish. Ayns daa vinnid, va Arnold boght currit ny hoie echey as v'eh ginsh da raad v'eh smoo gonnagh. Va minniag er ny scolbey jeh craue-drommey yn çhenn ghuilley, hooar ad magh, agh v'eh lane aarloo son imbagh ny gienseraghyn, as v'eh goll dy niartal son bleeantyn lurg shen.

People trailed upstairs to remove make-up. Later we found the S.M. had stolen the doctor's hat and coat, and, with a prop bag to complete the disguise, had walked past the writ-server. So far as I know, he got clean away. Occasionally I still get a reminder. I run into one of the cast now and then, though we don't talk about it. But where other people have nightmares about falling from heights, I get a vast craggy wall dropping on me, millions of tons of it, all crawling with gendarmes. And I hear that audience laugh.

Ny veggan as ny veggan, hie sleih seose ny greeishyn dy gheddyn rey rish jeshaghey. Ny s'anmagh, hooar shin magh dy row yn reireyder-ardane er gheid edd as cooat y fer-lhee. As, lesh far-phoagey dy chur kione er y farchoamrey, v'eh er hooyl shaghey shirveishagh y screeuyn-leigh. Choud's ta fys aym, scape eh dy bollagh. Ny cheayrtyn, t'eh foast goll er cur sy chooinaghtyn aym. Nish as reesht, ta mee çheet quail fer jeh ny cloiederyn, ga nagh vel shin loayrt my-e-chione. Agh tra ta tromlhie mychione tuittym veih boayl ard çheet er sleih elley, ta boalley creggagh as gloutagh tuittym orrym, millioonyn dy hunnaghyn jeh, as gendarmeyn snaue harrish gagh ayn jeh. As ta mee clashtyn y lught-jeeaghyn shen as ad garaghtee.

Y Jerrey