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cottage on the edge of the wood, which was about halfway between our house and the Outlaw's den, when I saw the old woman who lived there going home with a bundle of sticks on her back. I often saw her in our wood gathering sticks, and we always spoke to each other; so I put the bone down safely at the foot of a tree, and went to shake hands with her. She patted and stroked me very pleasantly—she had nice large hands, and has yet, for that matter—and then she said, “Eh, Jock my dear, where are you going so late in the evening? You don't need to go so far from home to hide that fine bone?”

Of course I could not possibly make her understand that I had not been able to get off sooner because I could not find Snowball, or that I was not going to hide the bone at all; so I just shook hands again, and was going to trot on, when she said, “I'd be glad of a dog like you, Jock, or even of a cat, for company: the evenings seem long when a body's all alone.”

I really was obliged to go, but I felt like barking all the way: here was the poor Outlaw Cat's chance, and she *should* take it. Happily, I found her at home, and she looked so thin and miserable that it was easy to introduce the subject; but first I gave her the bone, which she took with tears of gratitude, for she said that raw things had begun to disagree with her, and she did not know what she should do. This made a capital opening for my suggestion, and I improved it so well that by the time she had finished the bone she had actually consented to go back with me