

Kirsty an da Snarravoe Njuggle

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Da story ahint da play
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By Bruce Eunson

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On an isolated croft in Shetland, faar doon at da end o a lang single-track rodd, a family fae Lerrick is laevin dir ten year aald dowter, Kirsty, wi her Granny fir da holidays...

"She'll be fine," Kirsty's faider whispert, "come on, wir only makkin it waar bi draggin it oot laek dis."

"Whit wis yun?!" Kirsty's Granny screetched. She wis braaly daef noo an hated it when fokk whispert so she couldna hear whit dey wir sayin.

"Think she'll be aarite?" Kirsty's midder said, lookin doon at Kirsty wha wis sittin cross-legged on da floor, clearly no happy wi bein left tae byde wi her Granny fir da holidays.

"Yis! Of coorse she'll be aarite!" Her faider half-shoutit. He wis startin tae git kinda mad. Wi da faider gittin mad, an da midder gittin upset, Kirsty's Granny tow't she better dö somethin tae shaa dem at Kirsty wid be fine bydin wi her fir da nixt twa weeks.

She waakit ower tae da muckle kist in da middle o da sittin room floor an opened da lid, "I hae games in here," she said, takkin oot a thin, broon cairdboard box, "Bairns games," she said, an taen oot a sicond cairdboard box even mair tattered aboot da coarner, "yis, yis, plenty o dem!" Den she took oot a third cairdboard box, da aaldest lookin een o da lot. As she geed tae pass dis hidmost een tae Kirsty da boddam fell oot o it, sendin a variety o black an red Backgammon pieces rollin aboot da floor, alang wi twa dizen blue an yalloo, orange an green, tiddly-winks dat wir in da box inaa.

Kirsty, wha couldna hear whit ony o dem wis sayin, becis she had her headphones in, waatched da pieces skeetin ower da floor an tow't dat it lookit laek da advert fir Sony Bravia TVs whaar thoosands o bouncie-baas git slippit an spill ower da streets o some boannie-lookin city...

Kirsty sat listenin tae her iPod, waatchin as her midder waved at her while her faider stood at da front door clickin his fingers. He ey did dat when he waanted somebody tae move faster. Her midder lookit braaly upset as she geed oot da door, but Kirsty widna smile at her, she juist stared straight ahead, til her Granny cam intae view, hunchin right ower, ithoot bendin her knees, tae pick up da spilt backgammon pieces.

Kirsty's Granny wis sixty-fower year aald. She laid da tree board games in front o Kirsty an said somethin Kirsty didna hear, becis her iPod wis still playin, an she wisna goin tae turn it doon, no while "Teenage Dream" bi Katy Perry wis playin, wan o her maist favourite songs iver.

Da tree board games lookit as aald as her Granny. Kirsty lookit at da names on da sides o dem: 'Backgammon', 'Connect Four' an een caad 'The Fastest Gun'. Da last een got her attention becis it described itsel as bein in "3D".

'Dat musta been wan o Dad's,' Kirsty tow't, an fir a moment she pictured her fokk sittin in da car, drivin back hame, an wished she wis wi dem.

"Teenage Dream" cam tae an end an da openin chords o "Firework" started. Kirsty smiled. She laekit "Teenage Dream" but "Firework" really wis her all-time favourite. It had been her favourite iver since she'd seen da video fir it at her pal Laurie's hoose. Laurie's big sister Nicola had been tae see Katy Perry live in Glasgow. Kirsty an Laurie had made big plans tae spend dhese holidays bydin wi Nicola doon in Glasgow, but baith dir Mams had said it wis oot o da question.

She stood up an waakit ower tae da windoo. She lookit at da flooirs in her Granny's gairden, an tow't dat dey wir actually braaly boannie. She lookit ower da dry-ston daek an up da headdery hill. It lookit braaly bleak wi da grey sky up abun it. Da chorus o da song wis haaf-wy troo, when suddenly da music stopped...

She pulled her iPod oot fae her pocket and saw nithin but a blank screen. She tapped da buttons but it widna come on. "Oh no," she said "Dat's da batteries gone."

Kirsty took her mobile oot her pocket, "Nae signal," she said an sighed.

"Kirsty, whit wid you laek fir supper?" her Granny aksed. But Kirsty didna reply.

"Dis is gonna be so boring," she towntae hersel. "Whit is dir tae dö here? Nithin. Absolutely nithin tae dö an naebody ta spaek tae."

Her Granny cam ower an held up a box o Rice-Crispies in wan haand an a hom-made fruit-loff in da idder. "Whit wid du laek fir supper, Kirsty?"

"*Granny*" Kirsty said, aaful unimpressed-wye, "I dinna aet *supper*."

Kirsty's Granny pursed her lips, "Du'll need somethin lass. Du'll wakken in da night - fantin! - Yis, du *must* hae supper."

"A'm no hungry *Granny*. At hame I juist aet when I waant tae. A'll help mesell laeter."

Kirsty's Granny didna laek dis idea, but didna waant tae fight, no on dir first night.

"I think A'll go see if dir's ony signal up on da tap o da hill, *Granny*."

"Whit's dat?" her *Granny* replied, confused. "I dinna tink you'll geng oot da night darlin, no noo dat it's comin dark."

Kirsty snirled up her faece an waakit awa fae her *Granny*.

"Come noo Kirsty, du's no played aboot dis hills fir mony a year. Du niver kens whit might happen tae dee..."

"*Granny!*" Kirsty said, snappin at her wi frustration, "whit's gayin ta happen tae me aa da wye oot here - dir's naebody aboot, dir's nitheen tae dö; whit's da warst at'll happen?"

"Weel," said Kirsty's *Granny*, waakin ower an pittin her airm gently about her, "A'm juist faert du mibee haes a faa, or losses dee wye, hit's aesily done when du's no wint wi da plaeece..."

"Granny!" Kirsty said in da sam voice as afore, "A'm no gayin ta hae a faa or loss me wye!"

"Du niver kens!" Kirsty's *Granny* said wi concern. "Noo, whit can I makk dee fir supper," tryin ta lead Kirsty in tae da keetchin, stoppin in her stride ta say tae Kirsty, "I can makk waarm milk fir dee ta hae wi cereal!"

Kirsty hed tae smile at her *Granny's* enthusiasm. "O.k. den, *Granny*," she said, an let her lead her intae da keetchin. "But I still think dat dir's nithin fir me ta be faert fae roond here."

"Du niver kens, Kirsty," her *Granny* said fae doon in da pot cupboard, "mony a misanter haes com tae fokk wha dinna kaen whit dey wir döin waanderin about here."

Kirsty held up her haands, "*Granny*, whit could possibly happen tae somebody oot here?!"

Stirrin da milk on da stove Kirsty's *Granny* pulled a faece. "Weel, dir's ey da njuggle tae waatch fir..."

"Da njuggle?" Kirsty said.

"Yis, yis, ey makk sure an waatch fir da njuggle - du wid meet a poor end if you met him on a night laek dis..."

Kirsty wis noo lookin at her *Granny* braaly serious-wye, "Weel...whit is dis njuggle?"

Granny poored da milk ower da Rice-Crispies an laid da bowl doon afore Kirsty, "Da njuggle? Oh, I tow't at I had telt dee aa about him afore?"

"No, *Granny*, niver..."

"Oh, he's laekly no very interestin..."

"No, Granny, he is - tell me about him!"

"Da njuggle? Weel...du finns him loiterin aboot near da waater mill, or a deep burn, or a loch... ..A'm niver seen him mesell, but dem at haes, dey say dat he takks da form o an ordinary Shetland pony...dat is, until du gits apo da back o him, dan he turns intae a njuggle, an he'll run faster as du's iver seen onything run afore, an he'll takk you doon intae da loch, or ower da banks, whitiver he's closest tae... ..he runs sae fast he laeves a strip o blue flame burnin ahint him..."

Kirsty sat lookin at her Granny, da spoon fir her Rice-Crispies haaf-wee atween her mooth an da bowl.

Her Granny continued, "Dat's why I dinna want dee gaein oot on dee ain at night...juist you byde here wi me, whaar I can keep dee safe."

Kirsty turned an lookit oot da window. Could such a thing be oot dere?

Kirsty wis itchin tae git signal again on her mobile phone; if she geed oot da night, wid she come across a njuggle...