



Happy New Year

Beer Cat Scratchings Ten



Of Mice and Mailcoms

After last month's preview, which was cunningly disguised as a party invitation¹, here is the real reason for this title. After nearly a year in which I kept hoping for mailcoms from an expectant, or even literate public out there, I finally received one². Not surprisingly, it is written in the tone of the Beer Cats³, but without the footnotes. Still, the colour felt pens made for an eye catching piece. In the rush to tidy up the flat, I have mislaid it, which means that it will turn up mañana⁴. However, the jist of it was, apart from Simon Amos (the sender) is a Grade A loon, is that there should be more reference to cats. Stay tuned.

It seemed that December was party month, so for all those out there who missed them, here are some completely inaccurate lowlights⁵: Brian and Caroline's Asylum party has become more and more like a mini-con. This year was no exception, with all the trappings of a relly good convention, such as different programme streams⁶, a TWP tea party⁷, except without the

¹So cunning, in fact, that many people din't even realise it. "I've already read this one" (Impossible) and "Why is there only one side?" were two of the less astute remarks.

²Sound of fanfares to be provided in a future version. In the mean time, improvise.

³No, not Meow Meow Purr.

⁴A man once asked a Highland farmer whether there was a Gaelic equivalent for "mañana". The reply was "No, we don't use words for anything that rushed"

⁵Like highlights, only less dramatic.

⁶Discussion groups really, but who's counting

⁷At least, I think it was. Most of the TWPers

tea, a typical all night video programme, except without the videos⁸, and a lively discussion group ranging from particular authors to whether or not Brian should go upstairs to the tea party as a sacrifice⁹. What struck me as different this year was the way noone really wanted to be the first to nod off, and so the sleepers seemed to be outnumbered by those nearly awake.

A party of a different flavour was provided by Hitch. His soirée had food fit for a small army. Simply Sausages had had good business, although the two roast ducks weren't so lucky¹⁰. Apart from arriving early and eating most of the food (those who arrived later found a lot of food had gone into a few mouths), we discovered two ideal ways to break the ice at parties. The first was brought by the clan Mascetti, and consisted of a battery powered green ball. Set it off, and it would happily wander between folk's legs and would nuzzle longingly at their crotch¹¹¹². When bored, the ball would roll drunkenly away across

present went upstairs and discussed adultery. Allison was there, but can't really remember what she told everyone else...

⁸The other feature of an all night video programme — the bodies slumped on the floor that everyone else ignores.

⁹After a few of his infamous puns, sacrificing him on the spot did cross people's minds...

¹⁰"What's for dinner?" "You are!"

¹¹Conventions watch out! More than one person felt that, suitably adorned with mock hamster fur (like mock turtle only smaller), they would make excellent tribbles, which could be surrepticiously left lying around...

¹²This is also the item needed to stop Duracell in their tracks — according to Hugh, even their batteries don't last longer than about ten minutes.

the room, looking for another hapless soul. The other way to break the ice was discovered by Allison. Technically, she was on call, but we figured that the party had too much food to miss. When the pager went off, she attempted to call the woman, except that Hitch is one of these people with only one phone, which happened to be in the room with all the people. In the spirit of all the best Elmer Fudd cartoons, everyone was instructed to "be vewy, vewy quiet". When a room full of people try hard to be quiet, and at the same time are aware of all the others in the room trying desperately to be quiet, you know it's only a matter of time before someone cracks¹³. When the one-sided conversation we were hearing turned to the baby's bowel movements, it was obvious that the time was going to be sooner rather than later. When Allison then asked "What colour is it?", it was like a dam breaking. Several of those present had to run out into the hall and fall down in little hysterical heaps¹⁴...

Proving that insomnia is contagious, a few hardy souls descended on Oliver and Jacky's place for a relaxing evening. So relaxing in fact that many of those present felt right at home¹⁵. So much at home that Oliver tactfully reminded everyone¹⁶ that it was well past 2am, and sometimes sleep was really a good idea. Those who had brought their sleeping bags agreed, and went for the best floor spaces. The rest overcame their inertia, and finally struggled home.

Interlude - their is life between parties

When the round of parties wasn't round, we also

¹³I call this one the Chinese Laughter Torture

¹⁴This is the kind of moment that Buster Keaton would have killed for.

¹⁵Nicely comfortable, I think is the word [that's two words...]

¹⁶By coming downstairs in his dressing gown, like a latter day Arthur Dent

checked out some other forms of entertainment. *Addams Family Values* is a real treat. Although given only mixed reviews by the critics, I suspect that that was mainly because the reviewers felt uncomfortable with the way Middle American Values (and hence the ones that they keep trying to enforce over here) were so thoroughly lambasted. By showing it in such a bad light, you realised that the Addams' point of view isn't so bad after all. Multo Bueno.

Having never been interested in computer games, Allison (and myself) have become real techno-dweebs, playing two wonderful adventure type games¹⁷. The first, MYST, is an exploration / mystery type adventure, where the main premise is to work out what is going on¹⁸, mainly on the island of the same name. This has the kind of graphics that are so realistic, you fell that you are there, and it is so absorbing, that, after leaving Hitch's party, we stayed up playing it, oblivious to time passing, until the wee sma' hours¹⁹. The other, The Journeyman Project, has nearly as good graphics, amazing sound and a plot straight out of Asimov's *End of Eternity*. As a Temporal Security Agent, you have to repair the rips in the fabric of time. This is a hazardous job, which is why we end up getting killed in a multitude oif ways... Just a few more months playing and we might just have cracked it...

Next Issue: what I can remember about our own party.....



¹⁷Oh no! As if being a meejah fan wasn't bad enough, now they admit to being *gamesfans*!

¹⁸Just like life, except that you can't save it and restart when you make a mistake.

¹⁹that's late 'o clock (or early 'o clock if you take the other point of view)