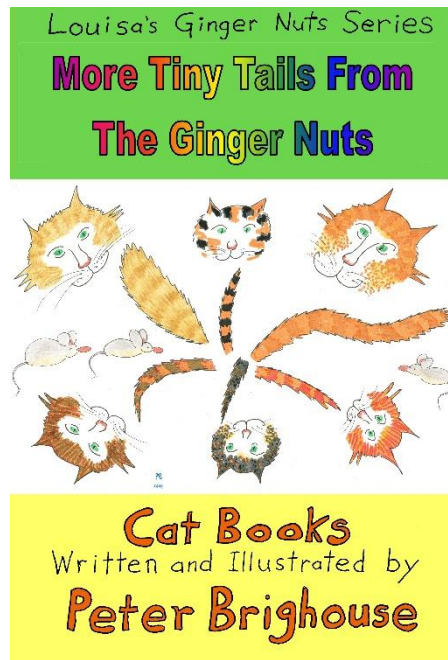




Moppet, Tigger, Simpkin and The Bullpuss

present ...

Tall tales / tails of the Ginger Nuts, illustrated cat stories for children and adults of all ages

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Guinea Pig Gang

Pawfull of Cat Tales

Ribby's Exercise Class

Mungojerrie and the Vacuum Cleaner Robots

Introduction

Over the 2011/12 festive season, in the media overview of developments in gadget technology, there was word about clever things called, believe it or not, NaviBot, iRoomBa and Neato to name just a few. Reading more about them on a website that shall not be named and particularly the customer reviews and comments, made me guffaw laughing and immediately the following sprang to mind



It was an early winter's day in Fallowfield, with a cold nip in the air and Old Master, having retired recently, was taking advantage of a gap in the morning chores to relax in his favourite armchair and pretend to read the newspaper. His flat cap had fallen to one side of his forehead.

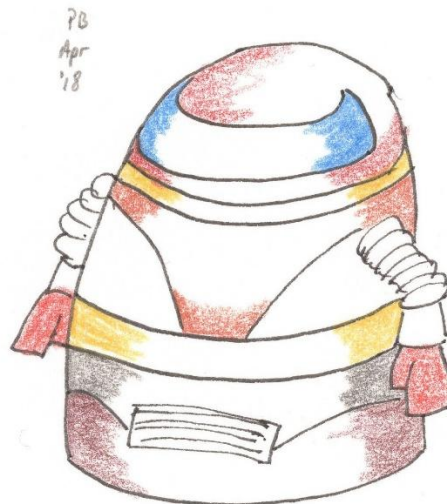


Old Mistress came briskly back into the room.

"Erm!" she intoned, "I thought stay-at-home husbands were supposed to take a greater share of the domestic assignments and there's plenty of vacuuming to be done!"

Old Master started and retrieved his cap which had fallen to the floor.

"In the paper," he explained, "there's details of the technological advances made with vacuum cleaning robots which have come down considerably in price."



"Oh yes!" replied Old Mistress, "but can they get cat hairs out of corners and climb the stairs?"

Mungojerrie, who had been reclining on his part of the plant shelf that warmed up delightfully in the morning sun and benefitted from being over the lounge radiator, sat up and made a mental note to discuss this talk of vacuum cleaners with Tabitha Twitchit.

Just before the elevenes meagre allocation of cat biscuits (PussyPaws Finest) Tabitha returned from the garden and shook herself to disperse the icy water droplets picked up from investigating rodent sanctuaries among the shrubs and low bushes.



“Mecerrm! Mungo,” she said, “you’re shirking your duties, stretched out on your shelf, so I think you should allocate half of your elevenes to me.”

Mungo looked askance. “Do you remember that tale of the Bullpuss ‘A Twin For Mr Fluffy’?” he asked.



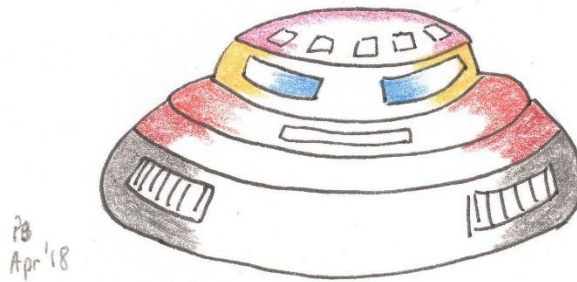
"Brrrrrp, yes," she replied, "where Tigtoes and Squimps examine the clear container on the newly bought vacuum cleaner and there are so many pale ginger cat furs that they think it has sucked up the Bullpuss."



"That's right," agreed Mungo, "and our people are once again talking about humming, whirring machines that seemingly have minds of their own. I get so worried by them, they make my whiskers vibrate and one has to take such special care of a magnificent tail like mine."

"Mewp, yes," said Tabitha, "you generally have to leave the house whenever there's vacuuming being done. Why don't you stand your ground like I do? I only move when it's time to de-fluff my basket!"

Later when their Young Master had returned from school, the Ginger Nuts were interested to hear further details of the proposed acquisition.



SNAFFLEBOT

"Ah yes," said Mark, "I read reviews of a SnaffleBot on that rainforest site. The recommendation is not to actually dispense with your conventional cleaner, which will be needed just occasionally for thorough cleansing. The technology is advancing fast and the prices are coming down. There's an AyeJimBot for Scottish people and a JumBot for large jobs, particularly if you have to clean up after an elephant."



"I think you're making some of this up!" suggested Old Mistress.



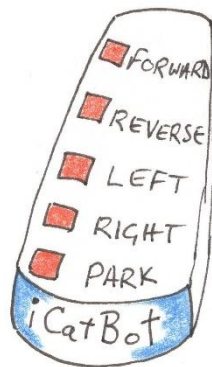
“Perhaps we should look for an iCatBot model?” chipped in Old Master.

“Don’t you start as well!” said Old Mistress.

Nevertheless, a few days later, a delivery man called with a large box which was soon unpacked by Old Master and Old Mistress and the packing materials tidied away into the cellar. Old Mistress sat down to read the instructions and Old Master began fiddling with the assembly.

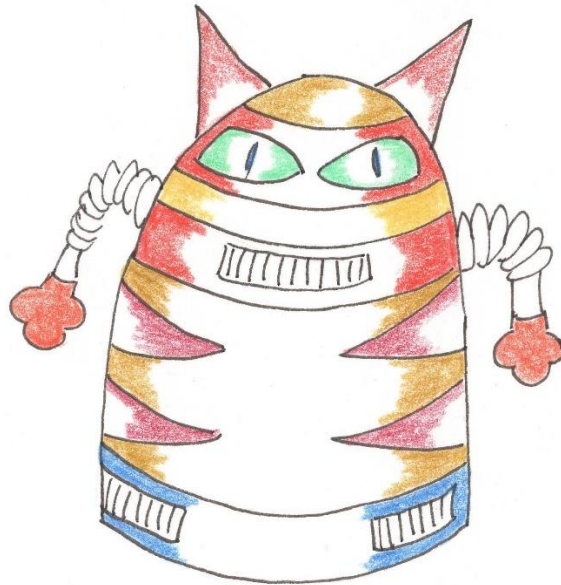
“It needs an area for its docking station which needs to be near a power plug,” explained Old Mistress, “so that requires some planning since it will scare the Pookies if it’s too near their feeding station.”

“As well as a remote control, it appears to have a voice activation mode too,” said Old Master, “together with its intelligent automatic program.”



“I see you weren’t actually joking about an iCatBot model,” said Old Mistress, peeping over her spectacles.

“Well it mentioned extra efficiency on cat hairs,” replied Old Master.

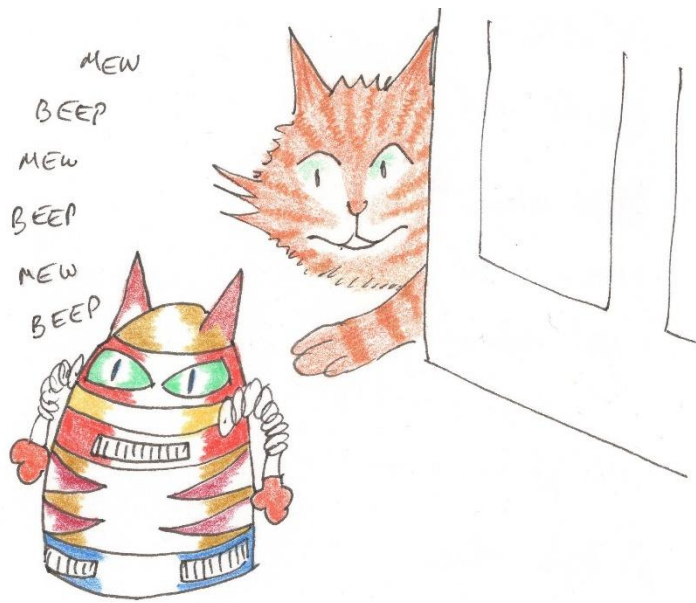


iCatBot was rather a smart looking machine, finished in dull orange, with ginger and brown stripes. A flat-topped dome completed the assembly and two soft plastic pointed ears finished things off and really made the painted cat-face look alive.

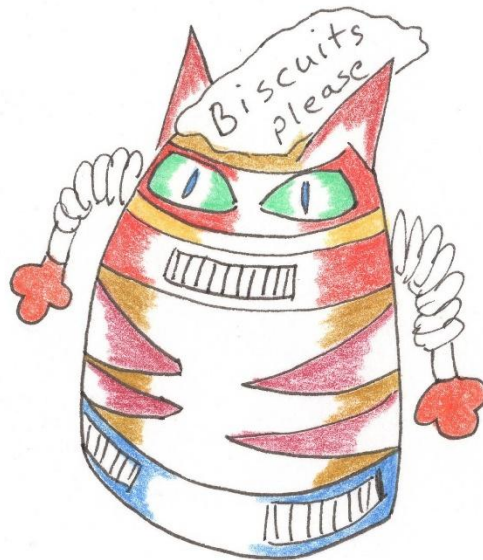
Old Mistress found a good place for its docking station and the machine was left charging, awaiting approval by Young Master.

When he returned in time for dinner, he was rather impressed with the whole ensemble and quite quickly understood the principles. He soon had iCatBot trundling up and down, brushing gently against chairs and furniture, where it turned slightly to one side and having located a clear area, set off again confidently in a new direction. A pleasant humming, whirring noise came from it and the oak floors soon looked spick and span.

This continued for a while until suddenly iCatBot made a bee-line back towards its docking station. Mungojerrie, who had been peeping round the door to see what was going on, was amused to hear it make an electronic cat mewing sound as it headed for the charging area.

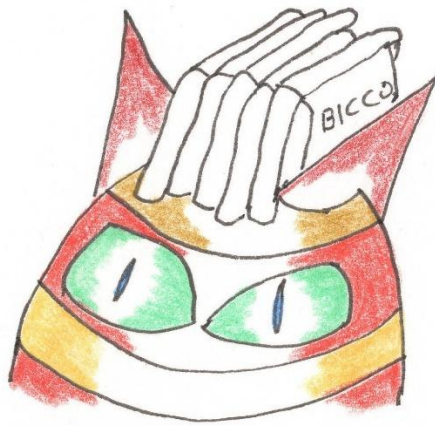


Later that evening, Old Master who was attending to the kitchen chores, found that iCatBot was closing in behind him. Stuck to the flat top with Blotack was a piece of paper which read “a plate of biscuits would be nice”. He recognised Young Master’s hand-writing and looking up, saw him grinning and waving the remote control from the end of the lounge.



Old Master selected several different biscuits from the tin and having placed them on a small, but heavy plate, carefully wedged it against iCatBot’s cat ears.

“Initiate the return journey!” he called.



Young Master was very pleased when he controlled a successful delivery alongside his chair.

The next day, everybody was out and Mungojerrie was enjoying the peace and quiet, whilst stretched out on his back on the rug which was directly in a rare patch of winter sunshine.

He was so deeply asleep that he failed to hear the small electronic chirrup that iCatBot made as it decided to leave its docking area and start vacuuming patrol. Tabitha, though, recognised its quiet humming sound and came downstairs to plan some fun and games. As iCatBot glided smoothly past her, she hopped on board and hooked her claws neatly into its ears.



She gave an excited “mewp” of appreciation and to her amazement found that it immediately turned to the left. By holding on tightly she found she stayed in place whilst iCatBot brushed up against an obstacle, stopped and reversed off again at an angle and having proved that her “mewps” really did turn it left, she experimented with other sounds and confirmed that “Brrrrrp” turned the machine to the right.



Excellent, she thought and now where's that lazy Mungojerrie?

Her step-brother, oblivious, was still slumbering on his rug.

Tabitha directed iCatBot towards him and suddenly started shouting "Cat-terminate! Cat-terminate!" in her best imitation of a mechanical robot, or whoever the doctor or vet had ordered.

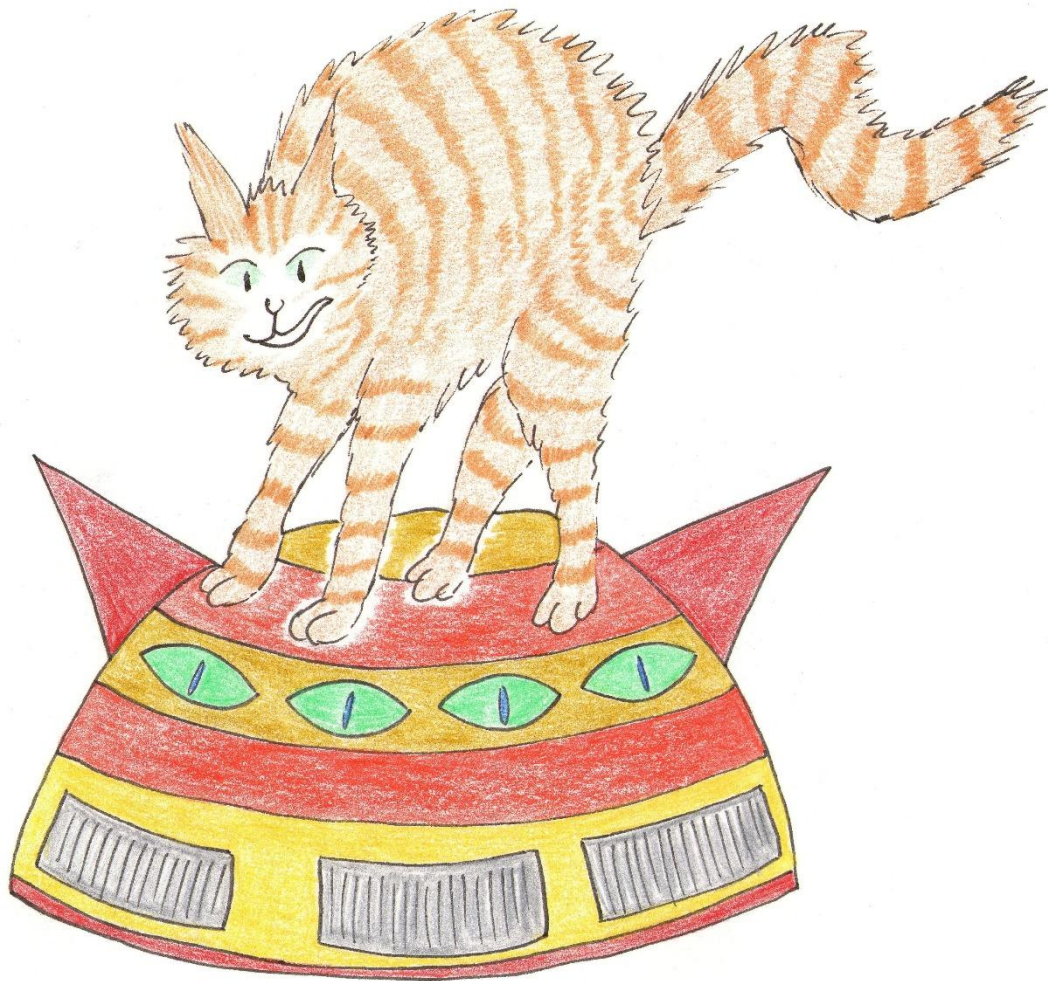


Mungojerrie, terrified, sprang to his feet and looked wildly about him. There, towering over him, was the imposing figure of iCatBot with iTabBot on top in control.

He was even more dismayed when Tabitha steered it over to the feeding area and employed a nozzle feature to suck up his left over biscuits!



A few days later a second large boxed container arrived which proved to contain a similar robotic vacuum cleaner, whose name was iMiaowBot. The family could never work out whether, firstly, this was advanced marketing techniques sending another model for approval or secondly whether Old Master had inadvertently ordered two from the RainForest site or thirdly, and which was more plausible, that Mungojerrie had skipped across a touch sensitive area of the computer and pawed an "Order Now" button to provide himself with an answer to Tabitha Twitchit's ploys.



Author's note: there is a fascinating episode of the US comedy series "Parks and Recreation" which has a similar skit featuring DJRoomBa - available on YouTube.

Tabitha and Mrs Vulpo

It was a fine late spring morning in Fallowfield and the herbaceous perennials, so coveted by Old Mistress, were full of healthy shoots, just ready for Old Master to start propagation.



Tabitha Twitchit, always the brave adventurous Ginger Nut, ventured out into the garden to do the rounds. She put her nose up in the air and sniffed the delightful aromas, early Azaleas, a hint of Bluebell, a waft of Daphne and mirrawacow, a whiff of fox!

She spotted the vixen, bedded down in Kaius's Old Mistress's herb garden and seemingly fast asleep.



"Macah," she thought to herself, "there's that old vixen, Mrs Vulpo, whose husband caused so much trouble for Mungojerrie; I'll sneak up and check her alertness levels."

Using all her mouse tracking skills, she slid through the hedge and trod noiselessly towards the sleeping animal. Ever so slowly, nearer and nearer she crept, but the vixen didn't stir. The smell of fox grew rather overpowering and Tabitha coughed discreetly into the back of her paw. Suddenly the vixen's ears pricked up and she opened her eyes to look swiftly around.



"Ruffoh, it's you, Miss Twitchit," she sighed, "I didn't hear you approaching, so tired, my four cubs are exhausting me!"

"Miarow! Yes," replied Tabs, "I thought you looked rather run-down and bedraggled."

"Have you seen what's left of my tail? It's the mange, I just hope the cubs don't catch it. Vulpo's is even worse. It's what makes him so fractious."

"Is that why he attacked our Mungo?"



"Yes, he was very upset that day and thought your large step-brother was another fox; especially with his magnificent plume of a ginger tail; he was jealous and not thinking straight."

"Mungo has hardly ventured out since he was pounced upon, although I believe he defended himself in admirable cat fashion and caused a few scratch marks around Vulpo's snout."

"Vulpo promises to behave himself," continued the vixen, "and we shall have a DISCUSSION if he doesn't."



"Our people have mentioned the logistics of soil trays in the cellar; they say it's all very well with new cats, young kittens or poorly elderly ones, but not for wimpish pookies who refuse to spend more than a minute flying through the garden."

"It will be good to see him again, out and about like a proper Ginger Nut. My cubs have been asking for him and wish to chase his long fluffy tail."



"How is everything going with the cubs' training?" asked Tabitha.

"Well, at my age I never thought I'd have four cubs again. It seems so long ago when your Squimps rescued me from the wild winter near Garrigill and brought me down to suburbia to meet Vulpo.

The cubs are a real paw-full, very bouncy, full of beans -you know the ones that come with the spicy kebab takeaways from nearer to Fallowfield village."



"I prefer my Pussypaws pouches actually," said Tabs, "and my Old Master complained recently about fox caches in the compost bins. He mentioned half a grey squirrel, a chicken carcass and a Henclucky Fried Weasel carton!"



"Ruffoh! I'm so sorry. It's in our fox nature. We never know where our next square meal is to come from, so it's best to cache any surpluses and your people's compost areas are so soft and easy to dig in!"



"Our people were most amused a while ago when The Bullpuss brought in half a cooked chicken through the cat flap and took it over to his tray to eat! A mixture of domesticity and surviving by living rough in the gardens when he was abandoned as a large kitten!"



"Ruffah, Vulpo wondered where that morsel had gone! In his younger days he reckons he was a great help to Bullpuss in teaching him to survive before your people agreed to take him in for domesticity alongside Tigtoes and Squimps."



"Miaow, yes, Bullpuss often refers to the debt he owes Vulpo. That's one of the reasons our Squimps wanted to help you, when he found you injured all that time ago."

"Did you know?" continued the vixen, "that Vulpo is the only other person who knows Bullpuss' original name?"



"Macow! Really?" said Tabitha, "we never knew he had one!"

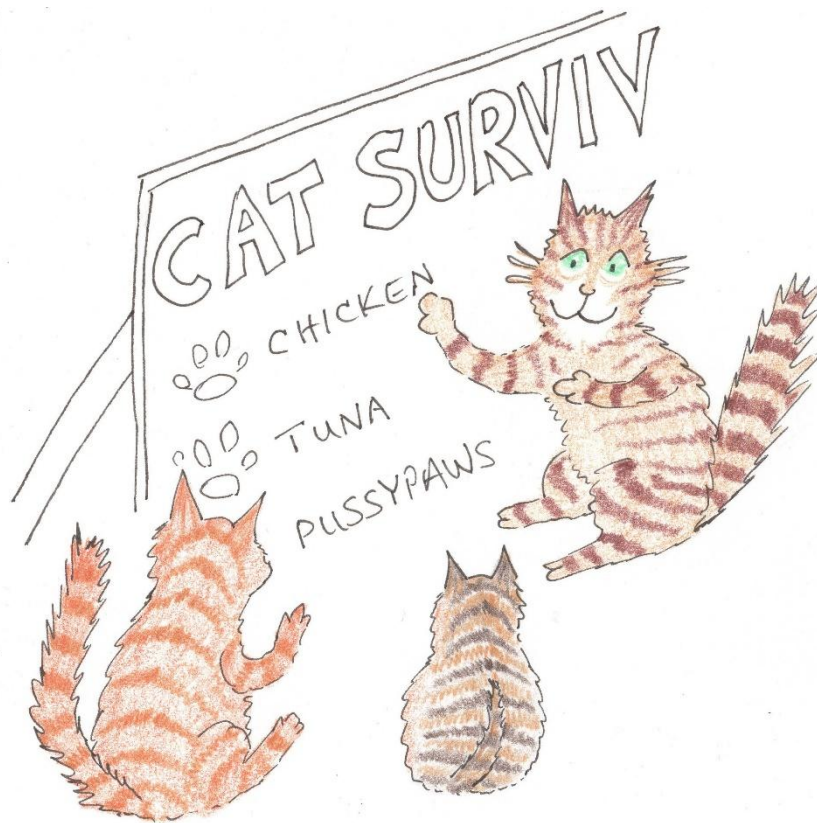
"Ruff, ruff, he refuses to tell even me. Bullpuss had been suddenly abandoned by his negligent people and found himself, an adolescent tom-cat, with little idea of how to fend for himself and with what turned out to be quite a difficult winter fast approaching. Bullpuss had no fear of Vulpo and started following him around, chatting all the time.



Vulpo found he could teach him some canine team-work, working together, Bullpuss flushing out the rodents and grey squirrels in the direction of Vulpo who perfected his pounce and dispatch technique. Then they'd share the spoils. That's how Vulpo is so smart at catching squirrels – he waits for them to leave the trees and bushes and reveals himself when the only means of escape is over the wide bowling green at the club. Over the open a fox is twice as fast as a squirrel! It's quite amusing if the people are rolling those funny black things around. We often have jack-squirrel for tea!"



"Sounds delicious," smiled Tabitha, "it's not a feline nature thing to work together as a pack, so it's interesting to hear how Bullpuss was able to adapt. He's certainly a wonderful source of advice and experience to Mungo and myself."



"Ruffo, a lot of Vulpo's training regime for the cubs, is geared towards teamwork although us foxes are not as good at it as our wolf cousins. Vulpo's always been an urban fox and with my experience of the Cumbrian hillsides we have lots of tales to assist the cubs' upbringing."



Mrs Vulpo turned at the sound of another fox approaching. "Ruffah, here's my daughter from last year; have you met Suzanne Emilia?"



Tabitha was quite impressed at the appearance of the young female, who had finely brushed fur with delicate highlights of russet and gold.

"She's been such a help to me with the young cubs," explained Mrs Vulpo, "and in return she learns how to be ready to bring up cubs for herself."

"Miaow, so Suzanne Emilia is the cubs sister, rather than an aunt?" inquired Tabitha.

"Ruff, ruff, that's right, although a younger aunt would be just as useful. It's just another of our vulpine evolutionary advantages."

The young female smiled shyly at Tabitha, who couldn't help wishing there was a little less foxiness in the number of teeth exposed.



"Why do you have two names?" she asked.

"Ruffah, because on my father's wider travels towards the fast main roads, he often sees handsome green, red and yellow lorries that appear to have two names too, and he managed to memorise the lettering on one of the most frequently seen ones, driven by someone called Eddie."



"Ruffoh, we must go," said Mrs Vulpo as she saw a tumble of cubs returning. "Here's Vulpo back from the cubs' latest lesson.

Suddenly Tabitha was surrounded by foxes. "I hope Bullpuss is watching from the window," she thought, "I may need rescuing!"

Vulpo held up a large paw to quieten the cubs who all appeared to be squinting at Tabitha through their blue eyes. He walked stiffly and majestically over to Tabitha, who was almost overpowered by the smell of fox.



PB
04/18

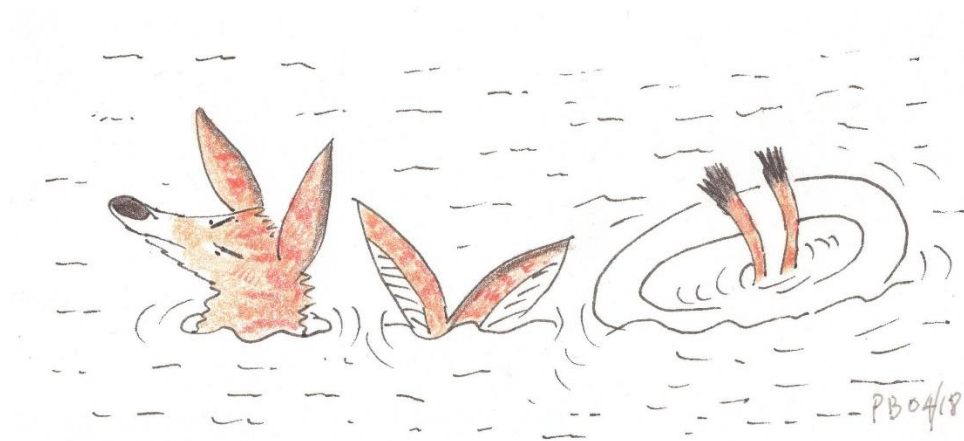


"Ruffoh, would you please apologise to your dear step-brother, Mungojerrie," he rumbled in his deep, gruff voice, "I was feeling most unwell on the day of the pouncing attack and not thinking straight. If he feels brave enough to return to, what is, in fact, his own garden, my latest cubs would be honoured to be introduced and are looking forward to admiring his magnificent tail plume, of which we are most envious."



Tabitha agreed to pass on this most admirable of apologies.

"Ruffah, I wondered," continued Vulpo, with his head on one side, "if you could ask your people to refrain from the hosepipe treatment under your summerhouse. We shall be leaving the den soon and I'm sure they don't want rising damp in the timbers!"



Tabitha pressed paws with all the foxes and everyone said good-bye.

Back in the house she found Mungojerrie still fast asleep on Old Mistress' favourite chair.



Peter
Brighouse
Sept '16

Bullpuss and Tigtoes came down from their afternoon sleeps on the best beds and listened to Tabitha's excited relating of all the fox news.



"Macow!" Bullpuss sighed, "that Vulpo is nearly as old as me and he's certainly survived longer in the wilds than most urban foxes. His resilience and strengths are much to be admired. I'm just worried to hear about his troubles with the mange."

"Mirrawacow, it's interesting to hear how fox life in the wilds of the urban jungle differs so considerably from our own," replied Tabitha. "Pampered pets should always be thankful when we find ourselves with a good family."

"Miaowka powka," smiled Bullpuss, "I just wish those cubs wouldn't jump on Old Master's newly trimmed hedges – it ruins his attempts at topiary."



"By the way Bullpuss, I believe you have an original name, which only Vulpo knows?"

"Miah, secrets, special secrets," grinned Bullpuss, "please don't ask, because I shall refuse to tell you."

"A feline embarrassment?" suggested Tabitha.



"Miaow, yes," said Bullpuss, "and before you and Mungo start guessing, it's nothing along the lines of Cattapuss, Coochy Kitten, Toreau chat and especially not Bustopher Jones in white spats!"

Just then Mungojerrie popped his head round the door. "Is it Rumpelcatskin?" he laughed.



Feline Mastermind

Picture the scene: Bullpuss Magnusson, quizmaster, firing off the questions.

"Our first contestant, Mr Tigger, did extremely well with his specialized subject, and obtained full marks for his extensive knowledge of feline nutrition; here he is again to answer questions on General Knowledge.



"What is the name of the Portuguese colony on the edge of China," asked Bullpuss.

"Macau," said Tigger.

"Correct! Can you name an Amazonian parrot?" said Bullpuss.

"Macaw," said Tigger.

"Correct! And the name of the Speaker in the House of Commons," said Bullpuss.

"Bercow," said Tigger.

"Correct! What does a Scotsman say when he's offered a beverage," said Bullpuss.



"Macay," said Tigger.

"Correct! And the name of those highland cattle?" said Bullpuss.

"Macow," said Tigger.



"Correct! What is the name of the latest Porsche?" asked Bullpuss.

"Macan," said Tigger.

"Correct! What do you say when someone treads upon your tail?" asked Bullpuss.



"Macouch!" said Tigger.

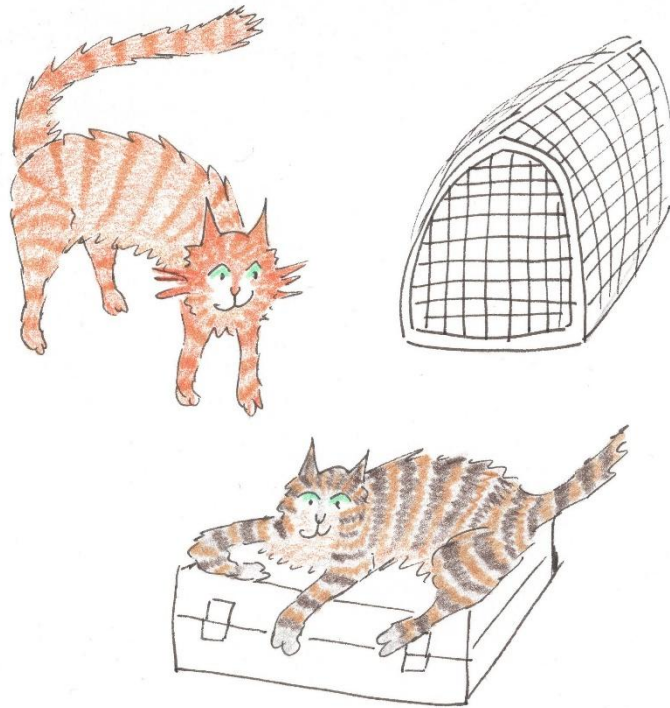
"Correct! And your final question, what do you say when it's time for tea?" asked Bullpuss.

"Mirrawacow!" said Tigger.



Tabitha – Mouse Ventura

It was the end of a working week in November for Old Master and Old Mistress, when Mungojerrie came in from a quick dash round the damp, gloomy garden to find one of the cat baskets in evidence and Tabitha packing her own suitcase.



“Brrrrrp, what’s happening? What’s all this?” he exclaimed, “Are you going to the vets, Tabitha?”

“Meow, no,” she replied, “I’m on a mission. Our people are taking me up to Auntie Liz’s who has a serious mouse problem. I shall spend the weekend there and return next week when my mission is complete.”

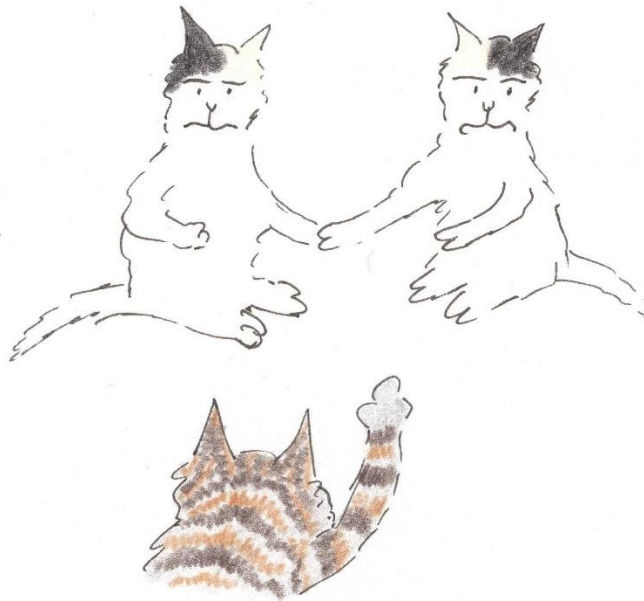
“Miaoha!” said Mungo, “Kaius was saying how there wasn’t a mouse for 100 metres in any direction!”

Tabitha unfurled her long pointed claws, breathed on the back of them and rubbed them on her front.



"Hence my mission!" she smiled.

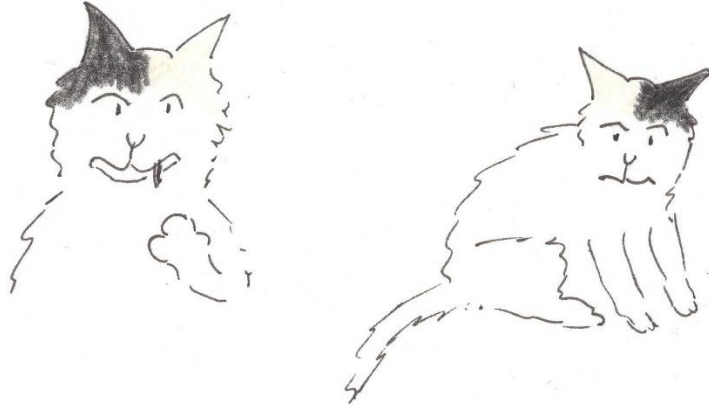
The journey didn't take too long and Tabitha was welcomed by Auntie Liz and Uncle John and introduced to their own two cats, Buster and Fluff, who had failed miserably in controlling the local mice.



Young Master was pleased to see his Aunt and Uncle who explained that so far they had been unable to find out how the mice were getting into the kitchen and behind the cabinets.

Tabitha was keen to interview Buster and Fluff to find out how things had got out of paw.

Seemingly Buster had a slightly sore canine tooth which made it difficult to gain a normal cat-grip upon the mouse's neck and Fluff had once sustained a nasty bite from a rat and she wasn't sure that these mice couldn't nip her painfully too.



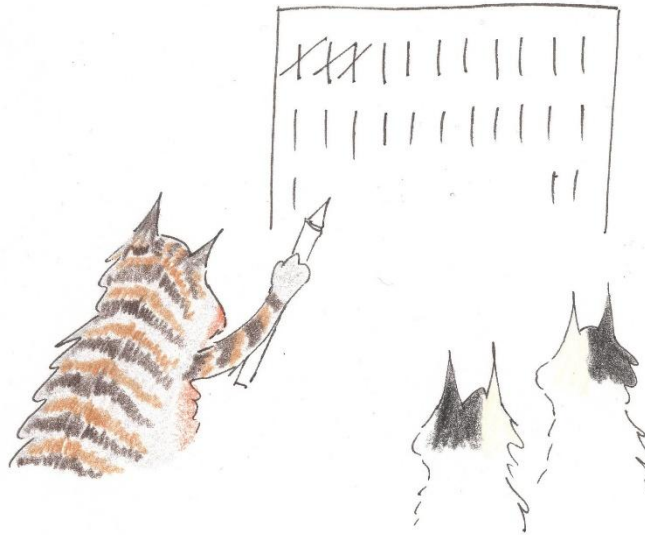
Briefly, their confidence had been rocked and the mice were having a field day!

That night once all was quiet, Tabitha settled down to wait on the kitchen counter. Suddenly there was the sound of mouse-like giggling and a series of squeaks, followed by the appearance of three young mice, the advance party, who scurried out on to the kitchen floor, carrying biscuit crumbs and with flour powder marks along their snouts.



Quick as a flash, Tabitha pounced and with barely a scuffle, three little necks were broken and the corpses lined up by the kitchen bin.

"Three down, 917 to go!" she said, brushing some flour from her coat.



Buster and Fluff had watched in amazement at her dexterity and felt a tiny frisson of confidence returning.

All went quiet again for a while and Tabitha settled on the kitchen rug just beside the first mice.

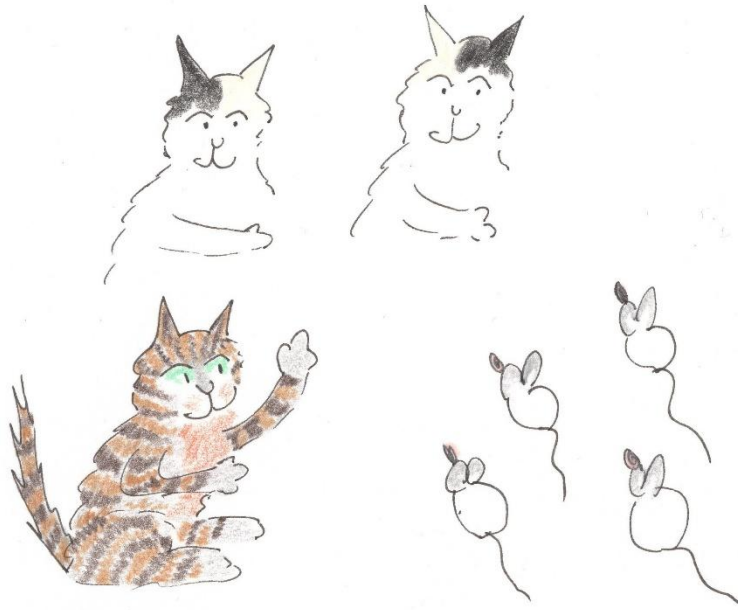
Then from a distance could be heard a strange song, a mouse cantata as the main party advanced. A large grandfather mouse appeared leading a long line of compatriots, all singing "Dooply, dooply, dooply, do. Dooply, dooply, dooply diedo. Tiddley, widdley, widdley woo. Tiddley, widdley wooops, who are you?" as they came face to face with the grinning Tabitha.



"They call me Mouse Ventura" answered Tabitha.

"Well, you look like another stupid grey stripy pussycat to me!" the Grandfather mouse replied cheekily.

Tabitha turned slightly and revealed the line of mouse bodies with her paw.

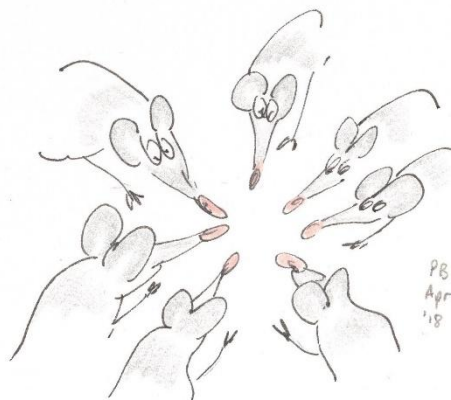


"Ah! I guess you were right the first time," the mouse looked worried.

"I have been called in to coach my fine friends over here, whom I believe you know?" and she called Buster and Fluff forward who both seemed to have grown a little in stature. "We've completed the first lesson and there are lots to follow unless we come to a speedy agreement."

"OK, Pussycat, what's the deal?" said the mouse.

"We agree that you stay in the barns and the fields and we don't chase you. We agree that if you come in the house, then we chase you. Dispatch will be sudden, quick and merciful. You show us the hole you're using to gain admittance and you don't fiddle with the wet cement that my Young Master's Uncle John will use to block the hole. Is it a deal?"



The mouse turned to his friends, a rapid squeaking discussion followed, then with a shouted “we agree” over his shoulder, they turned and scampered, squealing in their highest voices back from whence they came.

The commotion woke Auntie Liz, who came to see what all the noise was about.

“Bonsoir, Tante Lisa!” smiled Tabitha, “Eh maintenant, cherchez la souris!”



Pigeon Panache

"Macow, braathers!" exclaimed Squimps one morning, "you know the wood pigeon nest in Kaius' Old Mistress' maple tree?"



Well I was asleep on the bench nearby, just in case a squab fell out and needed rescuing, you understand Tigtoes, when I heard Mr and Mrs Wood Pigeon discussing the succulent fruits on our front garden Fuchsia tree."



"Miaow, yes, those ones that squash and make your paws messy," said Bullpuss.

"Miawell," continued Squimps, "Mrs W P said 'Cooo, I do like those juicy fruits you've been fetching recently Mr W P, they're so good for the squabs, but why does it take you so long to fill the sack up?'

'Cooo, brrr, brrr,' said Mr W P, 'it's a long arduous journey Mrs W P but I'm quite happy to do it for you and the little 'uns. I flies up and over this nearby high roof, then I goes for ages towards the early morning sun, my sight almost blinded by the light.



Then I follows the huge winding river whilst carefully avoiding those noisesome Canada Geese. I brushes my toes against the harsh tips of the tallest trees you've ever seen and there below me, in a secret glade, is the finest Fuchsia bush, holding the tastiest red berries, and the exact nourishment for a fine feathered bird such as yourself Mrs W P.



I fills my sack up and sets off on the long return journey.'



'Cooo, you are a one, Mr W P,' says Mrs W P'."

Squimps finished his story and sat back, smiling.

"Meee, brrrp, but the Fuchsia tree he raids is only in our front garden," pointed out Bullpuss.

"Miaow exactly!" retorted Tigtoes, "he fills his little sack, hangs it up on a twig and nips off to The Dovecote



or The Wheatsheaf And Pigeon with his pals!"



Hi Tech Cats

"Brrrp, friends, guess what I've got?" remarked Bullpuss as he struggled in through the cat flap with a paw full of rather strange objects.

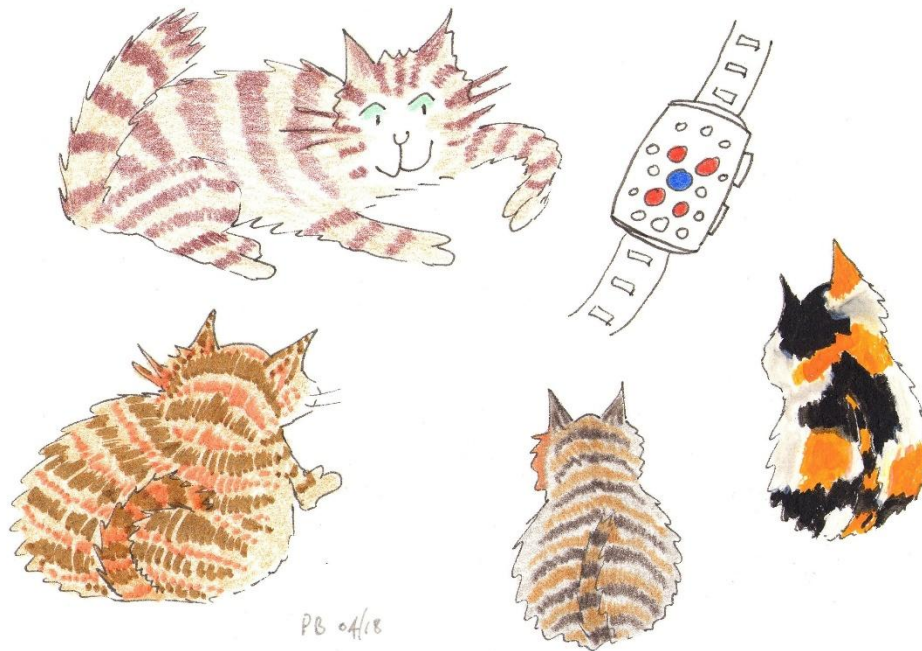


Mungojerrie hurried over to see, "mow, mow, they don't look edible, which is unusual for you Bullpuss."

Tigtoes joined the discussion, "mirrawacow, small shiny stuff with little pictures, Bullpuss, and straps and fasteners to put them on somewhere."

Squimps, Tabitha and the old furry Mopprag ambled over to hear the explanations.

Bullpuss sat back, looking pleased with himself.



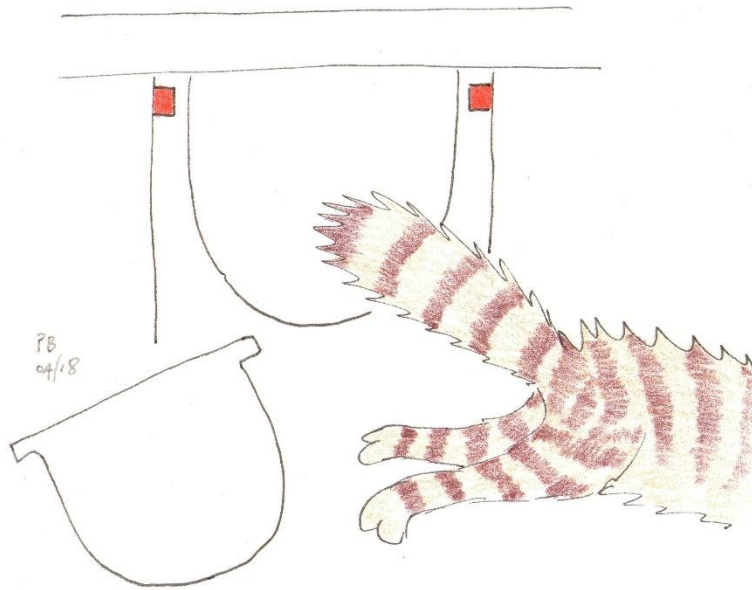
"Meeoup, you know that house on the next road, that the old lady lived in, where those builder type fellows did a lot of hard work. And our Young Master said they were doing a great job. Well it's clean, spacious and freshly painted everywhere inside and three black and white cats live there with the new family."

"New kits on the block!" laughed Mungo.



Squimps poked Bullpuss with his paw, "miaowp, and how did you manage to get inside, Bullpuss? You old cat burglar, you!"

"Brrrrp, there's a problem with their cat flap," replied Bullpuss, "or at least, there is now, after I ran through it!"



"Meoup, Mopprag and I have seen some new black and white cats sneaking about," said Tabitha, "we wondered where they came from."

"Brrrp, they're quite friendly, after I'd introduced myself," continued Bullpuss, "they'd left some food on their plates, a gourmet version of Pussypaws, so I helped them clear up and gave them an introduction to the neighbourhood."

"Mew, mew, what are their names?" asked Mopprag.

"Brrrp, well after my own unique and magnificent name, they're the weirdest ones I've ever heard," replied Bullpuss.

"Macow, go on," said Tigtoes, "I'm all ears."

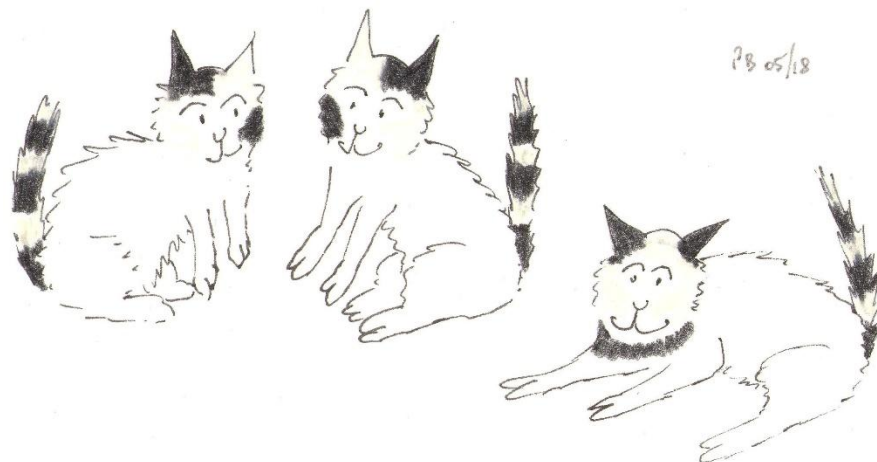


"Brrrp, you must know firstly that their home has very little in it, just electronic gadgets and screens and buttons and lights. No books, very few chairs, no clutter, no mess, clean shiny surfaces everywhere. Most unwelcoming!"

"And their names?" prompted Squimps.

"There's a brother and sister pair. He's called Pickleodeon and she's called GPUssy. Then their older friend is called Tom Tom Cat."

"Mew, mew, most unusual!" said Mungo.



"Brrrrp, I had a good miaow with Tom Tom Cat," continued Bullpuss, "he's a fine fellow, he's lent me all this stuff. His people have been fastening belts and collars to all three Pooks and it's proving quite tiresome. Too heavy to cart round with you all day. So they've pulled everything off and allowed me to bring them over to show you lot."

"Merwow, how do they work?" asked Tabitha, sniffing at the three shiny objects and gently poking them.

"Pickleodeon wears this one under his chin. It's a cat cam, a sort of camera thing which records everything he looks at. Then GPuSsy has this small device attached to her collar which records wherever she is, so her people can find out how far she travels in her new range."

"Macow, this last one looks like a wristwatch," suggested Tabitha, pushing it from one paw to another.



"Brrrp, it's an Apple," replied Bullpuss.



"Mirrawacow," interrupted Tigtoes, "apples are red, green and round and our humans like to eat them!"

"It's an Apple Watch," continued Bullpuss, "and you wear it on your tail like this." He twisted round and having pulled his bushy tail up in front of him, fastened the watch round it.

"Mew, mew, whilst you're sat like that Bullpuss," admonished the Mopprag, "you might as well have a good wash!"



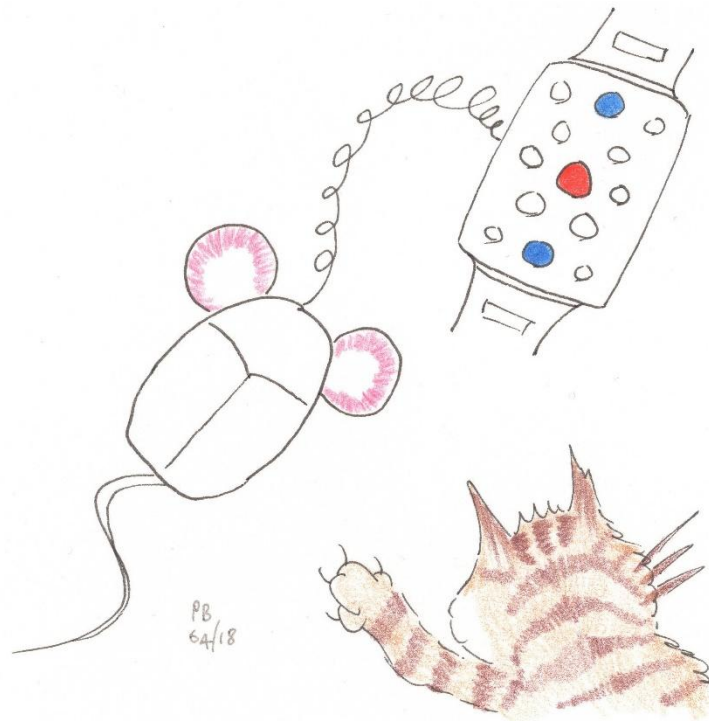
Tabitha giggled. "He's got bits in his tail again, hasn't he Mopprag?"

Bullpuss ignored the jibes and showed Squimps the funny little pictures on the face of the watch. "Tom Tom Cat explained what he knew. You just gently press a paw on a small picture. Do have a go Squimps."

Squimps leaned forward and pressed a paw carefully on the tiny screen. The device sprang into life and bleeped an electronic version of a cat squeak.



"Mow, mow, it's not that easy with a furry paw," said Squimps, "I wonder if it would be easier with a mouse attached?"



"It's full of cat apps, seemingly," said Bullpuss, "this one tells you where you are." He poked at an icon and a tiny voice said, "You are in the Ginger Nuts domain".

"That's us," said Mungojerrie, coming over to press an icon which showed a full plate of Pussypaws.

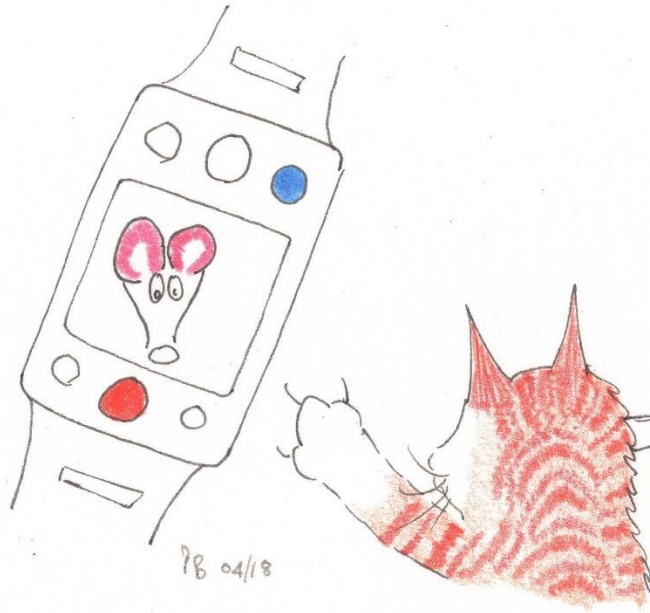


"Merwow, the Meal Scheduler," laughed Bullpuss, smacking his lips as the device intoned, "You have several meals scheduled for today. The next one is in two hours thirty three minutes time."

"Mow, goody," said Tabitha, "can you alter it, so the next meal appears in just thirty three minutes time?"

"You try one, Tigtoes," suggested Bullpuss.

Tigtoes chose an icon with a picture of a rat on it.



"That's the rodent detector," said Bullpuss. The device emitted some high pitched mouse like squeaks, before announcing, "There's a new mouse family in the hedge between Kaius's house and the Ginger Nuts domain and a large grand-daddy rat has just scurried from Tom Tom Cat's territory toward the Ginger Nuts summerhouse".

"Merwow, we're off!" shouted Mungo as he pushed Tabitha in the race to the cat flap.



Mopprag slid the screen's pictures to one side and a fresh set appeared.

One little picture lit up and a voice somewhat similar to old HedgeDog's said, "You have one new message."



"Miahah, that's the text message service," said Bullpuss, "Old HedgeDog must be connected."

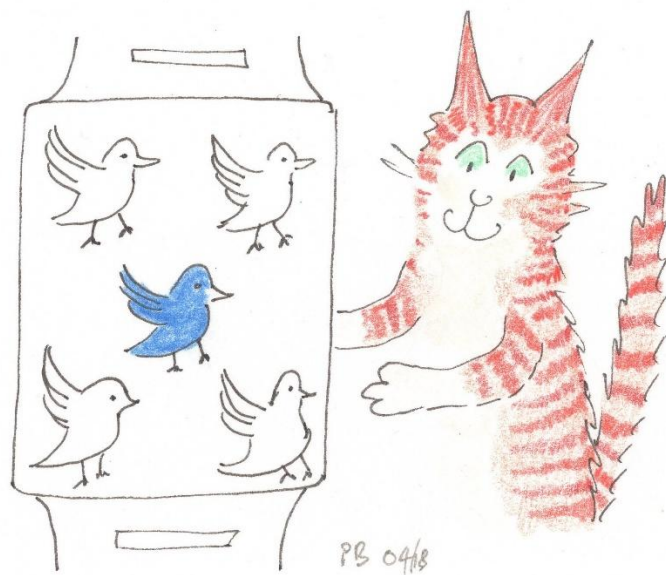
"Macow, what does he say, what does he say?" shouted Tigtoes, always pleased to hear from his old friend.



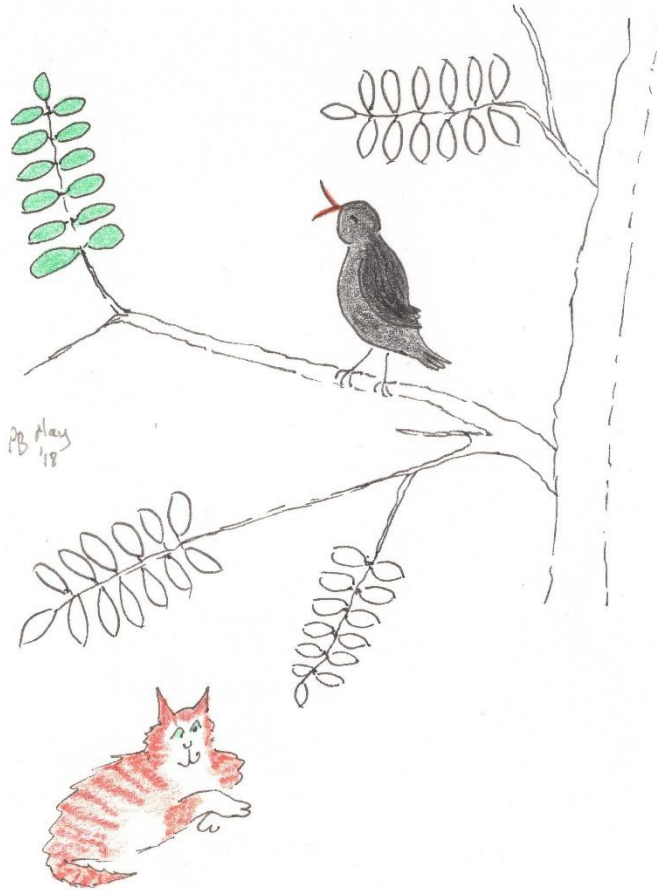
Mopprag pressed the READ MESSAGE button which announced, "for my latest take-away delicacies, check on Tweeter, not just for the birds."

"Where's the Tweeter icon?" asked the excited Tigtoes.

"Miawow, it's the one with the pretty picture of a birdie on it," said Mopprag.



Tigtoes pressed the Tweeter icon and a screen opened up with different pictures of garden birds. He dabbed at the Great Tit picture and the watch made a warning note exactly like the bird. His eyes lit up as he pawed the Blackbird picture and the tuneful song brought back many happy memories of resting underneath the Rowan tree whilst the blackbird claimed his territory for the whole world to hear.



There was a tiny icon on one corner with a likeness of HedgeDog showing, which, when pressed showed a menu of his latest snacks.



When the last choice was selected, HedgeDog's voice said, "that's for my French customers."

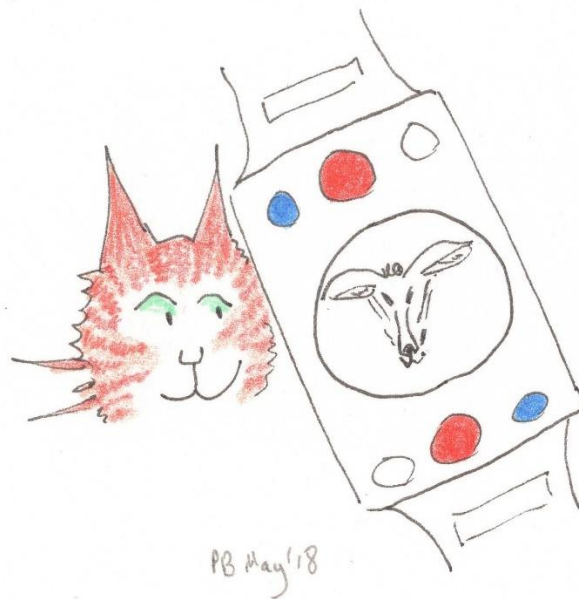
Squimps examined one of the later main menu screens. He selected one with a picture of a Vet. A concerned medical voice said, "your next check up appointment is in one week's time."



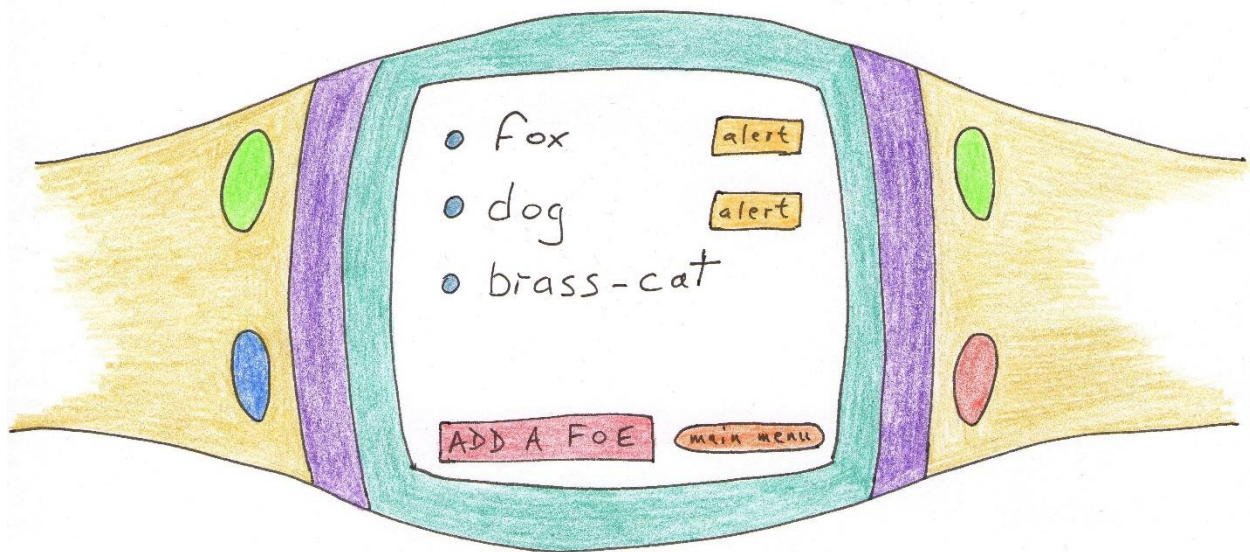
"Mawow," said Squimps, "I thought it might be that."

Bullpuss leaned over and held the icon until it could be deleted. "Brrrrp, that's enough of that one", he said.

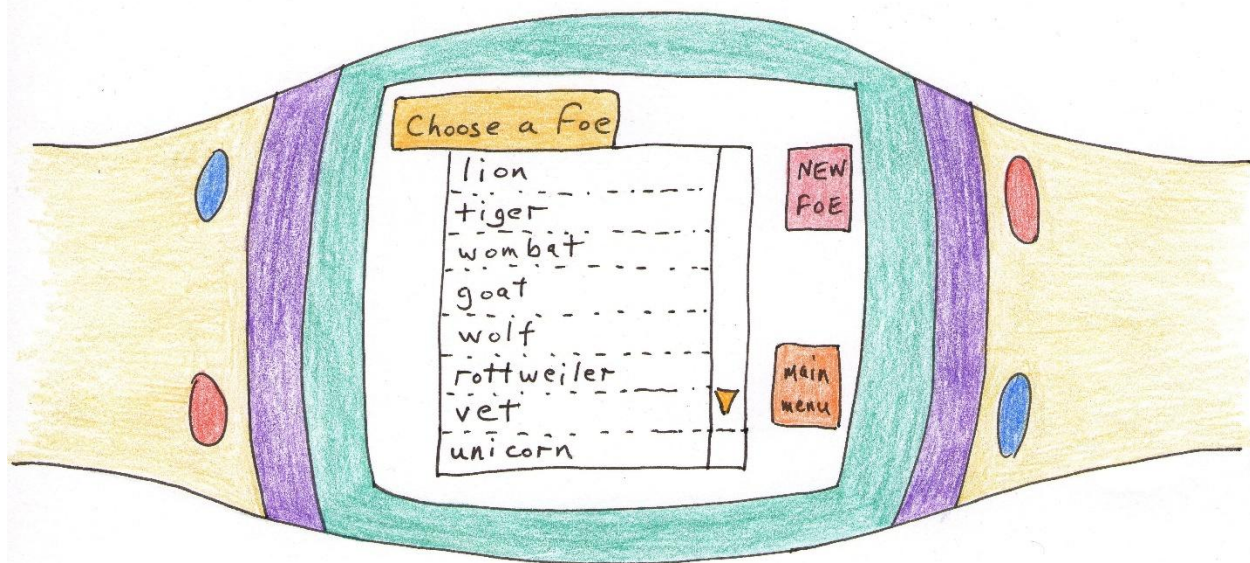
Tigtoes looked closely at another small picture. "This one shows a fox," he said, "let's see what happens."



The screen opened up to show a list of adversaries.



Squimps chose the ADD A FOE line, which gave a drop-down list of different animals, which included lions, tigers, wombats, goats and wolves.

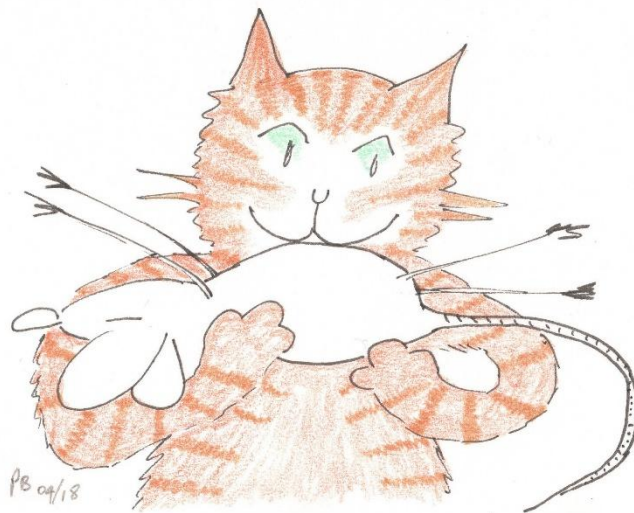


Now while concentrating on the little screen, no-one had heard Mungojerrie come back in through the cat flap, dragging an enormous deceased rat. He came in behind Squimps, who was just making the mistake of scoffing, "I've never seen a lion round here."



Mungojerrie couldn't resist doing a rather good impersonation of a lion's roar. Squimps in particular, almost jumped out of his fur suit, and the Mopprag pressed a paw to her chest whilst she scolded Mungo for scaring everyone.

Mungo grinned. "Who wants to share a fat rat?" he offered, "Tabbo's bringing the mice catch in shortly."



"Brrrrp, splendid," said Bullpuss, "a fine afternoon snack."

Shortly, Tabitha came in with her own contribution to the feast.



"Meeoup, that device is really marvellous," she exclaimed, "the mice were exactly where it said they would be. Can our family get us some of these Apple Watch things?"

After the snack, the Ginger Nuts continued examining the screen's apps.

Mungo pressed an icon which took him to CatBook.



"Miaha hah," he said, "Old Master has put us all on here and we just need to link up with our new friends Tom Tom Cat, GPuSsy and PickleOdeon to be able to exchange cat information on the latest neighbourhood news."

Another icon was a CatNav which was set up to allow Tom Tom Cat to return home. Tigtoes pressed a button and the device informed him to "turn to the left in the Ginger nuts domain, go through the gap in the fence, across the next garden, hop up and over the wall of the garden that reaches down to the road, take care crossing the road, there can be large coaches, and enter your own front garden."

"Brrrp, that would be quite interesting," said Bullpuss, "if one of us took a bus journey. I've still got that puss-pass."



Another app was a straightforward one for opening your cat flap in advance of your arrival at the door. Squimps reckoned that this would allow a nonchalant approach suitable for a cat of sophistication such as himself, whereas Tigtoes thought that it would prevent a recurrence of the squashed noses situation.

The final app that they found was called Catsy and this revealed a whole new world where cultured felines could browse shelves and cabinets of purchasable cat stuff. Mopprag and Tabitha showed lots of interest in the possibilities and before they were asked how they intended to pay, they had chosen matching sets of bootees and handsome capes to keep the worse of the winter weather from ruining their fur.



Shortly it was time for Bullpuss to return the shiny objects to Tom Tom Cat and his friends and Squimps summed up their amusing afternoon.

"Mew mew, I think that if you must tell your friends it's time for tea, use CatBook, whereas, if you want to promote a new brand of Pussypaws, use Tweeter."



Tabitha's Mouse Creche

"Miamacow, where's Tabitha this morning?" asked Bullpuss.



"Miaroop! She's in the garden running her mouse crèche," answered Mungojerrie from the comfort of his favourite blue velvet chair.



"Macow, how does that work?" asked Tigtoes, walking into the room.

"It's quite amusing," replied Mungojerrie who began to explain.



Seemingly Tabitha had devised a sneaky feline plan. She had made the local mice families aware that she was happy to supervise their youngsters in her mouse crèche. This enabled the parents to conduct their mouse affairs without the encumbrance of a large family in tow. The parents could stock up on essential mouse supplies and return later to collect their broods.

She had organised a series of games and educational activities which culminated in her favourite which was called 'What time is it, Miss Tabitha?' The young mice were sent to collect the clocks from dandelion flower heads, of which there was a constant supply from the neighbouring garden.



Tabbo would face the hedge and pretend to hide her eyes with one paw, whilst holding the first dandelion clock in the other. The crowd of young mice would line up in a row behind her and creep

softly forward on mice tippy-toes, whilst Tabbo blew gently at the clock. The mice would suddenly stop and one would shout out, "What time is it, Miss Tabitha?"

Initially Tabitha would reply in an off-pawed manner, 'It's 2 o'clock, or 3 o'clock or suchlike,' and the whole sequence would begin again, with the mice getting closer and closer to her tail.

Mungo paused in his tale and Squimps who had been listening avidly, excitedly spoke up.

"Mow mow, I know what happens next, please can I tell the tale Mungo?"

Mungo graciously waved an affirmative paw and Squimps continued.

"When the dandelion clock is all blown away, the silly little mice don't seem to notice that Tabitha is left holding a stump, and invariably when the mice next ask 'What time is it, Miss Tabitha?' she turns and leaps upon them, with a loud miaow of 'It's cat snack time!'"



Everyone laughed and Bullpuss said, "I imagine it's a careful balance between not having enough baby mice to send home to their parents and the adult's ability to count!"

"Mirrawacow, it's natural selection in action!" said Squimps.



A visit to the pleasant Shropshire village of Quatt inspired the possibilities for amusing rhymes.

The fat cats of Quatt know just where it's at,
They can tell you a tail or two,
Of sardines and sild,
And chicken and chilled
Little pieces of ham, which they chew,
So there's no need to moan,
When their owners aren't home,
They know, just what they must do,
To sort out the nibbles,
There's no need to quibble,
The mat squatting Quatt Cats say mew.

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