

Yes, it's here at last....

SLAP AND TICKLE 5

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Deadline: Monday 11th February.

Sorry for the delay and sorry for the spartan cover (the needles have gone the same way as my sanity). Articles humbly requested for next issue. Price now down to £1/4 issues.

Midcon 1984

I set ~~xxxx~~ off from my Oxford slum around 6pm, all prepared to throw my haggard form to the vagaries of the British public transport system (perhaps 'system' is too strong a word - it implies a modicum of co-ordination and organisation which seems to be sadly lacking from whatever we are lumbered with at the moment). I didn't get out of Oxford Station until gone seven, having missed the train I'd intended to catch after having been forced to queue for a ticket for twenty or so minutes amidst a surging throng of bright young things on their way back to the Home Counties for a weekend in the company of dearest mater and pater. The actual journey was spent nodding politely in the directions of ~~xxxx~~ an acne-faced Chemistry fresher from St. Catherines and a science fiction enthusiast from Magdalen College School who gave ~~xxx~~ a pitiful account of his term-time home that made ~~xxxx~~ Doubleday's comments in ~~xxxx~~ ^{thing} seem like an extract from the prospectus.

By the time I dragged myself into the Angus it was ~~xxx~~ well past nine. This seems the perfect place for a con: a hotel with no in-house or local amenities or attractions, a one-way system that makes escape from the ~~xxxxxxx~~ immediate vicinity impossible for all but the fittest and a bar ~~xxxxxxx~~ with stratospheric prices that ~~xxxxxxx~~ force taking out a new mortgage before each round leaves one with little option but to play games or watch other people play games. It was only a few minutes before I had my first encounter with Pass the Pigs, an incredibly simple game requiring little or, as I play it (or any other game for that matter), no thought. Players take it in turns to toss a pair of small, pink, plastic porkers in the air. Depending on how they land the thrower scores a certain number of points. ~~He may then cease throwing or, if he wishes, elect to throw again.~~ This procedure is followed unless the thrower pigs out (i.e. the pigs, each of which have a spot marked on one of their sides, ~~xx~~ both land on their sides with exactly one displaying its blemish), in which case ~~xxxxxxx~~ the thrower loses all the points scored in that continuous set of throws and has to cease throwing. (More rarely, the pigs may land touching in which case the throwing player loses all his points scored so far in the game as well as having to cease throwing.) The first player to reach 100 points wins. Thus ^{to} the only decisions that the participants are required to fake are when to stop throwing and when to start playing something more interesting.

A few rungs up the intellectual ladder was Executive Decision; not ~~xxxx~~ that I really noticed, instead switching to autopilot after fifteen minutes - mainly to avoid the effects of Dave Thomas' gamesmanship in the form of cheap, foul-smelling cigars which he cunningly puffed into everybody's faces. (at least Doubleday, master of the antisocial, restricts himself to a more odoriferous blend of pipe tobacco). This was an enjoyable and elegantly designed game even if John Wbley did win. It consisted of twelve turns of one buying and one selling round each. In the buying round players may bid for up to six units of raw materials of which there are three sorts (Standard, Fine, Extra Fine). These are written secretly. Players then say how many ^{units} of each type of material they have bid for. The prices of the different units are then adjusted by checking the number that were bid for on a table which operates on ~~xxxxxxx~~ a simple supply and demand principle. Players then buy any units they bid for at the price they bid if that price is higher than the adjusted price. In the selling round the players may attempt to sell any finished products which they can produce from the raw materials they have purchased. There are three types of finished products: A (a unit of which consists of two units of Extra Fine and one of Fine), ~~xxxx~~ B (1EF+1F+1S) and

(1F+2S). Play proceeds much as in the buying round with players offering finished products ~~xx~~ for sale and selling them if the price they specify is below the adjusted market price. As you've no doubt gathered the player with the most cash at the end of the game wins.

Friday night saw the opening rounds of ~~xxxx~~ the quiz. We in the Thing team put up a performance to suit our name and fell at the first fence. Who ~~xx~~ set the questions and how did he manage to set none on ~~xx~~ those few ~~xxx~~ subjects ~~xxxx~~ with which I can claim at least a slight degree of familiarity? Why weren't we asked about revolutionary groups in nineteenth century Russia or the geography of Norway? Things began to quieten down after that with ~~xxxx~~ everybody showing an unmanly reluctance to stay up all night. Even the poker players, devoid of Birks, knocked off early. At 5am, my brain feeling the strain of much Pass the Pigs, I settled down for what little remained of the night under a table in the main suite. All was quiet, except for Doubleday who ~~xxxx~~ sounded like a poorly tuned battle tank charging flat out across the West German landscape as he snored obliviously beneath his characteristically tasteless jacket.

I rose at around 7.30am and my ~~xxxxxxxixxxx~~ aching head reminded me that if one goes to bed at five, one shouldn't get up until at least ~~xxxxxxxixxxx~~ ten. Indeed, whatever time one goes to bed, one shouldn't get up until at least ten - this view ~~xxx~~ may explain why I have only made it to one lecture in ~~xxx~~ eight weeks. ~~xxx~~ Not having a room meant breakfast was out and sitting around for something to happen. This, if my chronology is right (which it usually isn't), took the form of a game of Acquire, my second ever shot at "high adventure in the world of high finance." It is played on an approximately 12x14 grid. Each player has six tiles, each of which is unique and bears a co-ordinate. At the start of his turn a player places one of his tiles on its designated ~~xxxx~~ square on the grid. If this tile is placed ~~xxx~~ adjacent (orthogonally not diagonally) to a lone tile, a new hotel chain is formed. There may be up to seven ~~xxx~~ separate chains on the board at any one time. There are 25 blocks of stock in each chain and the person who founds it receives one free. The value of this stock is dependant upon the length of the chain (any tile placed orthogonally adjacent to any tile already in ~~xx~~ a chain becomes part of that chain) and its name (two of the seven possible chains are cheaper than the rest, and two more expensive). If a player lays a tile so that it would become part of two ~~xx~~ different chains, these two chains merge, the larger absorbing the ~~xxxxxx~~ smaller. The two largest shareholders in the absorbed chain receive majority holders' bonuses (ten times the price of a share for the largest holder, five for the second largest). These two and the other shareholders may then dispose of the stock by either selling it to the bank or swapping it in a ratio of two-for-one ~~xxx~~ with stock in the merging chain or, in expectation of the chain being reformed, keep it. ~~Chains over ten tiles in length cannot be taken over.~~ After placing a tile, players may buy up to three blocks of stock in any chains on the board (that is a total of three blocks, not three in each chain). They then take a replacement for the tile they laid. A player may declare the game over at the end of his turn if all chains on the board are ten or more tiles in length or one chain is 41 tiles or more long. Players then count up ~~xxx~~ their assets ~~xxxx~~ including the value of stock they own. The two largest holders in any chain on the board receive majority holders' bonuses ~~xx~~ as if the chain were being merged. I forgot this last rule which rather cocked up my plans. Doubleday scored, though not as quickly as ⁱⁿ last year's memorable Saturday night game, and won it by a suspiciously slender margin. The afternoon was mostly taken up with Fictionary Dictionary, a hilariously excellent Call My Bluff sort of game that I was pleased to win (even if it wasn't a particularly skilful victory) against stiff (I think rigor mortis had set in in some cases) opposition. I returned to college that evening only to find I'd been invited to (and missed) an orgy in Balliol.

GAMES

(with added GMing errors)

Pzk/S&T Drei (1982GB)

Autumn 1908

David Cutmore has NMRed again and Jim Sadler has conceded the game to Mick Cox.

1. Turkey 2. Italy

Game-end statements (if you wish) next time along with supply centre chart et al.

Pzk/S&T Vierzehn (1983BU)

Autumn 1905

~~Austria (Andy Gibb) A(Mos)-Sev, A(Sil)-Gal, A(Boh)-Tyr, A(Mun)-S~~
A(Boh)-Tyr, F(ADR)-Tri, A(Ser)-Gre

England (Stan Wells) A(StP) st., A(Yor)-Hol, A(Pic)-Par, A(Bel)-Ruh,
A(Ber) S F(Kie), F(Kie) S A(Yor)-Hol, F(BAL) S
A(Ber), F(Wal)-IRI, F(NTH) C A(Yor)-Hol

France (Anarchy) A(Bur), F(ENG), F(GOL), A(Mar), A(Spa) st u/o

Germany (Anarchy) A(Hol) st. u/o

Italy (Tony Mace) F(ION)-Gre, A(Con)-Bul, F(AEG) S A(Con)-Bul,
F(Smy)-Con, A(Ven)-Tri, F(Tus)-Pie, F(Bre) S Eng-
lish F(ENG), A(Ruh)-Kie

Turkey (Anarchy) F(Ank), F(Rum), A(Syr) st. u/o

Retreats: None

Winter 1905:

Austria	Tri	Vie	Bud	Ser	War	Mos	Ø	Sev	<u>Mun</u>										& A(Bud)
England	Lon	Lpl	Edi	Nor	Swe	Den	Kie	StP	<u>Bel</u>	<u>Ber</u>	<u>Par</u>								Build F(Tri)
																			F(Lpl)
France	Mar	P	P	Por	Spa														Bose F(ENG),
																			F(GOL)
Germany	P	Hol																	No change
Italy	Rom	Nap	Ven	Tun	Gre	Bul	Smy	M	<u>Bre</u>	<u>Con</u>									Build F(Rom)
Turkey	Ank	S	Rum																Lose F(Rum)

Game-end proposals: i) 1. England, 2= Austria and Italy; ii) 1= England and Austria, 3. Italy. Abstentions will count against.

Pzk/S&T Sechzehn (Fleet Rome Diplomacy)

Autumn 1903

Austria (Paul Schofield) F(ION) S F(Tri)-ADR, F(Tri)-ADR, A(Ser)-Tri,
~~A(Vie)-S-A(Ser)-Tri, A(Rum)-Gal~~

England (Pete Bates) F(ARI)-Lpl, F(Edi)-Yor*, A(Lon)-Wal

France (Wai Liu) F(ENG)-Lon, A(Wal)-Lpl, A(Pic)-Bre, A(Pie)-Tus,
A(Spa) st.

Germany (Grahame MacLennan) A(Yor)-Edi, F(NTH) S A(Yor)-Edi, F(Den)-
BAL, A(Kie)-Den, A(Bel) sf., A(Mun)-Tyr

Italy (Rowland Goodman) A(Tyr) S Aus frian A(Vie)-Boh, A(Ven)-Tus,
F(ADR)-Ven*, F(MAO)-Bre

Russia (Anarchy) F(Swe), A(Nor), F(BLA), F(Sev), A(Gal) st. u/o

Turkey (Anarchy) F(AEG), F(Ank), A(Bul), A(Con) st u/o

Retreats: English A(Edi) and Italian F(ADR) dead.

Winter 1903:

Austria	Vie Bud Tri Ser Gre <u>Rum</u>	6 Build A(Bud)
England	Lon Lpl Ydy	2 No change
France	Par Mar Bre Spa Por	5 No change
Germany	Ber Kie Mun Hol Den Bel <u>Edi</u>	7 Build A(Kie)
Italy	Rom Nap Ven Tun	4 Build A(Rom)
Russia	StP Mos War Sev Swe Nor Ryd	6 One short
Turkey	Con Smy Ank Bul	4 No change

Press:

England-Germany: Ratfink! But you'll have to fight for every inch - we'll fight you on the beaches...

England-France: As for the Vichy collaborator, you're not welcome here. We have ways of making you lose.

Pzk/S&T Funfzehn (1983ES)

Spring 1904

Austria (Mark Smith) A(Vie)-Boh, A(Tyr) S F(Tri)-Ven, F(Tri)-Ven,
F(Gre)-ION, A(Bud)-Tri, A(Bul)-Rum

England (Anarchy) F(Nor), F(NTH), A(Swe)*, F(SKA) st u/o

France (Thane Duffield) F(Spasc)-MAO, F(Mar)-Spasc, A(Pie) S Italian
A(Ven), A(Bur)-Ruh, A(Pic)-Bel, A(Par)-Bur

Germany (Tony Mace) A(Den)-Swe, F(BAL) S A(Den)-Swe, F(HEL)-Hol,
A(Hol)-Bel, A(Ruh)-Mun

Italy (Marcel Greuter) A(Ven) S French A(Pie)-Tyr, A(Rom) S A(Ven),
F(TYR)-WMS, F(ION)-AEG

Russia (Grahame MacLennan) A(Arm)-Smy, A(Mos)-Liv, A(Rum)-Gal, A(Sev)-
Mos, A(StP) st., F(Ank) st.

Turkey (Anarchy) F(BLA), A(Con) st u/o

Retreats: English A(Swe) dead

Press:

Italy-Austria: Everything so quiet on the western front that there's really no need to diplomate?

Italy-France: What about a holiday on England's west coast?

Italy-A(Pie): You are there only on sufferance, please take that into account, will you!

Italy-Russia: Time has come to start a regular correspondence, don't you think?

Archduke-Frog: I wonder why you didn't write. If you really desire war with the Austrian Empire so much, then so be it.

A(Bur)-A(Hol): We've got to stop not meeting like this.

S&T Anomia (1984??)

Autumn 1901

Austria (Pete Dobuleday) F(Alb)-Gre, A(Vie)-Gal, A(Bud) S Italian
A(Tri)-Ser

England (Pete Bates) A(Yor)-Nor, F(NTH) C A(Yor)-Nor, F(ENG)-Bre

France (Robin ap-Cynan) A(Spa)-Por, F(MAO)-Spasc, A(Pic)-Bre

Germany (Stan Wells) A(Kie)-Hol, A(Ruh) S A(Kie)-Hol, F(Den) st.

Italy (Brian Creese) A(Tri)-Ser, F(ION) S Austrian F(Alb)-Gre, A(Apu) st

Russia (Pete Birks) NMR! A(Gal), A(Mos), F(Sev), F(GOB) st u/o

Turkey (Norman Dyson) A(Bul)-Ser, A(ANk) st., F(Con)-Bulsc

Retreats: None

Winter 1901:

Austria	Vie	Tri	Bud	<u>Gre</u>	4	Builds A(Vie)
England	Lon	Lpl	Edi	<u>Nor</u>	4	Builds F(Lpl)
France	Par	Mar	Ere	<u>Spa</u>	5	Builds F(Bre), A(Par)
Germany	Ber	Mun	Kie	<u>Den</u>	5	Builds F(Kie), A(Mun)
Italy	Rom	Ven	Nap	<u>Ser</u>	4	Builds F(Nap)
Russia	StP	Mos	War	<u>Sev</u>	4	No change
Turkey	Con	Smy	Ank	<u>Bul</u>	4	Builds F(Smy)
Neutral	Tun	Bel	Swe	<u>Rum</u>		

Film Reviews

Well, there are fifty more lines until the bottom of the stencil and I ~~suppose I should make at least a token effort to fill them.~~ Conscientious film ~~xxxxxxx~~ reviewers study their prey fully at least twice, taking ~~xxxxxxx~~ copious notes in the process, and then write their reports in a spirit of seriousness and solemnity wholly inappropriate to such a trivial and unimportant occasion. ~~Sxxx~~ Sensible reviewers (a totally different category as any experienced shirker would immediately deduce) do not, on the other hand, even bother themselves with going to see their subjects, but, ~~after maybe~~ glancing through a more dedicated ~~hack's~~ effort at the same task, waffle on for four or five hundred words ~~xx~~ about some obscure French vintage, Frederic Raphael's latest tedium-filled, pretention-satiated narcotic of a book or whatever is taking everybody's fancy that minute, before, with a peremptory sentence or two, elevating the unseen picture to the pantheon of all-time cinema greats or, alternatively, dismissing it as a worthless, if not pernicious, catastrophe. I have got the worst of both worlds in that I actually ~~xxxxxx~~ ^{went} to the trouble of seeing the films but have waited so long ~~xx~~ before doing anything about reviewing them (i.e. ~~sitt-~~ ~~down in front of this confounded typewriter a few minutes~~ ~~xxx~~ ago) that I have forgotten much of the substance of them - which, given the quality of one, ~~xxxxxxx~~ might be a blessing in its case.

Another Country - Well, they certainly didn't do this sort of thing at my school. They probably didn't do it at yours either unless you happen to be John Piggott, in which case ^{they} likely did it ⁱⁿ less pleasant and far more run-down surroundings. The film opens with an aged and more than usually unhealthy looking Rupert Everett (Everett?) about to be interviewed in his dingy Moscow flat. He then begins to relate a tale of his schooldays that comprises virtually the whole picture: Coming to a frustrated homosexual affair with another pupil, he receives six of the very best (from a future Chancellor of the Exchequer) and is prevented from attaining his expected promotion to Godhood, a God being a top-ranking prefect. The film claims that not only is pederasty an inveterate practice known to most boys, parents and masters in Britain's public schools but also that the notorious Burgess defect- ed for similar reasons as those of the main character (the latter being modelled on the former): the hierarchy's disdain for homosexuality and how ^{if} he couldn't get to the top of that hierarchy (as any ~~xxxx~~ reasonably bright Etonian would expect to) he would screw the whole system. It developed this theme, though no others I could make out, moderately well but struck me in the end as another Brideshead Revisit- ed: a splendidly photographed feature of little plot or substance about a few upper-class young men fanning about, mostly in one of their educational bastions.

The Woman In Red - I've always considered Gene Wilder to be too silly and too American. The same could be said of Mel Brooks but he has enough talent for comedy to make it irrelevant. Simply (and I wouldn't bother looking at it any other way) the plot concerns a happily-married executive who becomes infatuated with an attractive young model he one day spies ~~wxkx~~ dancing Marilyn Monroe-like above an air vent. I found it singularly dull and unfunny.