



gEnteel

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On the one hand these have been quiet times, with nothing much happening, while on the other hand I didn't get around to get anything much accomplished, due to being kept busy as well as being kept waiting ... one wonders whether this is like the life of a gentleman of days gone by.*

I've been kept relatively unproductive by the usual involvement in de production of *Holland SF*, which had some unexpected delays (waiting for approval to use a cover illustration, waiting for the mailing list to send out the envelopes) where I couldn't do much, but could see the work coming, as soon as the delays were over. That wasn't inviting to start some new project, and I'm afraid I didn't feel like writing anything new, not even a long overdue Dapper contribution with comments on what you all wrote about. Of course when the long wait was over, there was work to do, and you find me with no contrib at all now. Well, feeling like that wouldn't do, I finally started typing† to deliver 'something' to go here...



After the warm spring we had a cool start of summer, not to mention wet (although there are places worse off) so I haven't been cycling all that much. There were quite a few good days, of course (hence these pictures), but I so hate to have to cycle back from work in the rain... In fact I simply tend to go by car to work when it seems like it might rain sometime in the course of the day, so there are days with a sunny morning and a sunny evening



that would be lovely to cycle along the river to and from work, but some threatening clouds (usually visible in various forecasts or www.buienradar.nl 'buienradar') have me smoulder in a hot car. You'd think I'd learn to be sensible about this and acquire some rain gear to live up to the image of the lonely cyclist battling with the wind and all that. People say it's healthy... But no, I'll probably just stick with my lazy ways of avoiding these harsh conditions.

Then again, there was no way to miss the downpour that overflowed the overflow near my parking spot (I did keep dry feet though...)



* I've just found www.hoorspelbommel.nl where you can enjoy some of the radioplays featuring Toonder's 'a gentleman of class' Bommel – translators among you may have a better translation of "een heer van stand" ©

† When does typing devolve into rambling, or is it the other way around – does anyone know?

At work it's fairly quiet as well. We're in between deliveries of new computers (about 50 or so every three months, we're just now waiting ... hm, more waiting ... for the next batch to arrive) and while the students are mostly off, we're cleaning up the PC labs (amazing what messes you sometimes find while doing a bit of vacuuming and polishing and reapplying stickers; even when food and drink isn't really allowed there, we found a computer completely glued to the table by means of what smelled like cappuccino...) and doing the various jobs that the university staff feels we have loads of time for now they're on holiday.



Did I mention the boss has sent us on a Microsoft course since February? With the upcoming reorganisation (again, yes) in mind, it was deemed necessary for the support staff to acquire some measurable knowledge in case we had to go looking for a job elsewhere or at the very least to be able to easily establish our qualifications when the various faculty support groups are going to be merged into a shared service centre. Since most of my department felt MCSE* would be a fine goal. Anyhow, much to my annoyance, I'm now sacrificing half a day each week to spend at a training institute (the other half day that is probably necessary I just scrounge together during off hours reading the course documentation to sort of keep up with the others). Somehow, I'm not good material for such a course. Of course, people at the training centre weren't all that surprised; it seems many IT people are rather stubborn about following prescribed procedures, and I have to admit that up to now they're right in that I'd pass without too much problems. (I do tend to get irritated about things that seem illogical, or worse, errors that show up in the course material.) Oh well, it keeps a person busy ... although it also keeps a person away from work at a department that's already somewhat understaffed, compared to previous years – so some work simply isn't done, or done as well as it might be (e.g. we have an unmanned student helpdesk now, requiring the students to come up one floor to the staff helpdesk, as we don't have enough people around most of the time to open both helpdesk locations).

Beside all these tedious things, there's also time to relax, of course. Despite the relative price advantages of internet I enjoy the trips to Amsterdam (usually visiting the SF Pub [aka restaurant] there and taking half a day off to get there in time I also have time left to wander around the city) to acquire some books to enjoy. Even the *Holland SF* meeting in Mechelen (where our new editor in chief, Roelof Goudriaan, lives) was enhanced by a trip to a comics store to get me some of those as well.

Some fairly recently read material:

Interworld – Neil Gaiman

nice juvenile parallel world SF adventure

The Lies of Locke Lamore – Scott Lynch

wonderful Fantasy adventure, sort of runaway thieves guild with Saintish style

Memory – Lois McMaster Bujold

a Miles Vorkosigan story, need I say more? sort of anguished adventure SF (I also picked *Mirror Dance* from my 'unread' box, set earlier in the same series)

Sea-Kings of Mars – Leigh Brackett

wonderful old SF, now probably deemed Fantasy

Jerusalem Fire – R.M. Meluch

SF adventure again

Red Lightning – John Varley

more of same, but like a Heinlein juvenile

Glasshouse – Charles Stross

modern SF adventure, runaway virtuality

Fragile Things – Neil Gaiman

diverse Fantasy stories for those who like Gaiman

Aan de oevers van de nacht – Tais Teng

Fantasy where the Dutch Golden Age hasn't ended (beginning of the Hans d'Ancy cycle – this being mostly a re-read of the revised and expanded book)

The Monstrous Memoirs of a Mighty McFearless – Ahmet Zappa

interesting juvenile Horror (great title too)

Hauteville House – Duval, Gioux, Quet, Beau

alternate history/steampunk graphic novels (I have the first two albums) featuring secret agents with ingenious machines including a 19th century air force *and more)

The Eyre Affair, Lost in a Good Book – Jasper Fforde

late but not too late – I already heard a lot about these books featuring literary detective Friday Next (where fictional reality gets a whole new meaning...)

So you can see I shouldn't complain all that much about life, the universe, and everything; I enjoy things as it goes, even when I often feel some things should have been accomplished already (like getting my apartment organised). No worries,

Jan van't Ent

* A Microsoft Certified Software Engineer, me? I don't really think so. By now I managed to pass the first module, although I still don't know how, even when that's 'just' implementing and supporting WindowsXP that I've been sort of ~~page 2~~ the last couple of years, and I've mostly forgotten the issues discussed in the course already...