

The Adventures of the Mr Mets Episode 3: “Dr Methven’s Secret Assignment”.

It was yet another fine day in Happy Met Land.

In one of the server rooms, IT gurus Mr Cunningham and Mr Blanchonnet were working together to upgrade the computer network and were now testing a vital piece of software.

Elsewhere in Happy Met Land, Mr Reynolds was hard at work on his computer. He had recently received the Happy Met Land Award for Awesomeness for his excellent work in forging links with Happy Met Lands in other parts of the world. This morning, he had struck up an agreement to exchange teaching knowledge with an institution in China. However, he soon noted that Timetabling had scheduled his nine o’clock lecture in the Synoptic Lab to be followed by a ten o’clock lecture somewhere near Shanghai.

Meanwhile, in the coffee area, Dr Ambaum, Dr Gray and Dr Van Leeuwen were being told the epic story of Dr Methven’s latest storm-chasing adventure. He was just getting to the part where he was flying the Met Office’s FAAM aircraft into the centre of the storm, and the story was evolving in a way that it only could when being told by Dr Methven.

“I was flying over the Bristol Channel,” said Dr Methven. “I was cruising along at a height of 1,527 metres above mean sea level with a 20-degree pitch to the right. There was turbulence. But alas, I had no time to calculate the Reynolds number. Wow, I thought, looking out of the side window. Weston-Super-Mare.”

“This story is stupid,” said Dr Gray. “Get to the part with the sting jet!”

“Can we talk about my book instead?” said Dr Ambaum. “It’s far more interesting. It’s got entropy in and everything.”

“No,” said Dr Shonk. “Let’s talk about my book instead. It’s available right now for pre-order from Amazon for only £9.99. Not one single mention of entropy.”

“Impertinence!” said Dr Ambaum.

Suddenly, there was a fanfare. “Look,” said Dr Methven. “It’s the King! And it looks as if he has an announcement to make!”

The King walked regally into the coffee room. “All hail, King Simon,” chanted the Happy Met Landers in unison. “Great chieftain of Happy Met Land, Leader of Not-So-Happy Ag Land, Moderately Distant ESSC Land and Ruler of the Mathematical Kingdoms of Chandler and Wilde. What news do you bring?”

King Simon smiled. “I bring the people of this kingdom great news. Let it be known that, as of last week, we are officially rich!”

“Hurrah!” shouted the Happy Met Landers in unison.

“No longer shall we go to purchase a chocolate bar and have do make do with Alpen and rotten bananas!” shouted King Simon.

“No longer shall we give seminars in the lecture theatre only to find that someone has run off with the pointing stick! No longer shall we live with a light sculpture in our central stairwell that hasn’t been working for over a year! Happy Met Landers... this is the beginning of a new era for Happy Met Land! ...OK, I feel better now.”

“So, does this mean that we will be building a new wing to Happy Met Land?” said Dr Ambaum excitedly. “That way, we can all live together happily ever after without fear of exile.”

King Simon guffawed loudly. “Oh, no no no no no,” he said. “We have far more important things to spend our riches on. First, we will obtain chocolate, pointing sticks and repair the light sculpture. Then, we will spend as much money as is necessary to fund Professor Harrison’s development of an edible, tomato-flavoured radiosonde. And with the rest... we will bring in the most eminent scientists the world has!”

The Happy Met Landers stood in stunned silence.

“Hurrah for the edible tomato-flavoured radiosonde!” said Professor Harrison, sheepishly.

“Dr Methven,” said King Simon, “I hereby give you an important mission. Fly off in your plane and bring the eminent scientists listed on this piece of paper to Happy Met Land. But it’s a top secret mission. Do not show the paper to anyone. When the mission is over, you must eat it.”

“Right, so fly off with the orders, and eat the plane,” said Dr Methven.

“But where are you planning on putting these eminent scientists?” asked Dr Ambaum nervously.

King Simon smiled. “Mr Gill is dealing with that as we speak. Mwah-ha-ha-ha-hah!”

Meanwhile, in the David Grimes Synoptic Lab, Mr Gill was informing even more staff that there was no longer space for them in Happy Met Land. However, in the interests of breaking it to them gently, he was starting with a mandatory Health and Safety briefing.

“Now, as you know,” continued Mr Gill, “this Department isn’t big enough for all of us. You’ll be pleased to hear that I am staying. The five of you – Professor Shine, Professor Highwood, Professor Illingworth, Dr Charlton-Perez and Professor Hogan – have been shortlisted for... exile.”

“But where are we going?” said Professor Hogan.

“You will be transported directly to a distant place called Sugarland,” said Mr Gill. “Normally, the journey would be a dangerous one. Upon leaving Happy Met Land, you would straight away be faced with the Mighty Swamp. If you safely cross it, which, let’s face it, is unlikely, you would then have to cross the Lake of Botulism by the oh-so-slippery Bridge of Broken Faces. Beyond that lies a dangerous path with dragons living on either side – although they may just be rogue undergraduates. Only by passing all of these hazards could you reach Sugarland on foot.”

“So, I take it we can’t go by foot,” said Professor Highwood.

“Are you mad? That would involve opening a door and putting on shoes, and you need to do a five-page risk assessment before you’re allowed to either of those. No, we have a far safer method of transporting you to Sugarland,” said Mr Gill. “Here it is. Statistically, far safer. Zero percent of all the people transported have suffered injury.”

“Zero percent of how many people?” said Professor Shine.

“How accurate and precise is the cannon?” said Dr Charlton-Perez.

“Yes, don’t forget your error bars,” said Professor Highwood.

“What’s this, a statistics lecture?” said Mr Gill. “Who do you think you are – Dr Ambaum? Come on, everyone get in the cannon.”

One by one, each of them climbed into Mr Gill’s cannon. Mr Gill lit the fuse, then retired to the safe distance of 11 metres. With an almighty explosion, the cannon fired.

“Well, that didn’t work very well, did it?” echoed the voice of Professor Hogan from within the barrel.

“I do declare I’m stuck,” coughed Professor Illingworth.

There was a farting noise. “Dr Charlton-Perez!” shouted everyone.

“I’ll get started on the Health and Safety accident report forms,” said Mr Gill, trudging off towards his office.

So Dr Methven took off from the roof of Happy Met Land with his secret orders to bring eminent scientists back to Happy Met Land. And the exiled Happy Met Landers set off on foot to the distant Sugarland. But what will befall them on their journeys?