



THE DREAM SCENE

Newsletter



Issue no. 10 1st of December 2007

Bienvenido and Feliz Navidad

Welcome to the bumper 10 page Christmas edition of The Dream Scene. A very special welcome to all the readers abroad. The Dream Scene is sent by e-mail to Australia, Denmark, the U.K., Ireland, and we all wish you were over here with us to celebrate a Spanish Christmas and New Year.

Heartfelt thanks to Angela, John Sinclair and others for their contributions to this issue. If you have sent something in for publication, do not be disappointed if it is not included in this issue. It may very well appear in the next one, so please keep sending stuff in. Special thanks and a big hug to 'She - who must be obeyed' who not only proof-reads the newsletters but also sorts, collates and staples them - 2,500 sheets this month. Thanks also to Pat Farnaby who has now kindly archived the older Dream Scene editions on the main web-site.

I am sure you will join me in thanking David Woodcock for his excellent maintenance work in Dream Hills this year.

Having been in Dream Hills for just over four years, my wife and I are fully appreciative of the friendship and un-questioning help we have always received from our neighbours and friends in Dream Hills. It truly is a community, a wonderful place to live and long may it remain so.

May I take this opportunity to wish all in Dream Hills and Dream Hills 2, a wonderfully Happy Christmas and a prosperous and happy New Year.

TopTip: If you wish to dispose of any large household objects, for example mattress, fridge, sofa, large piece of household clutter (not your husband), then please call Veronica at the Ayuntamiento on 96 676 00 00 Extension 29. She can either arrange a specific day or date for collection, free of charge, from your home or pick-up from by the green bins. This avoids unsightly rubbish by the roadside for weeks on end.

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I told you not to let him carry the gold!

WHAT'S UP?

Not a lot of good news from Spain at the moment. Inflation jumped five points in November to 4.1%, its highest in seven years, according to El Mundo. There has been a noticeable increase in the price of basic foodstuffs during the past 12 months with increases accelerating during October and November. Fruit & Veg up 8%, Chicken up 18%, and even the humble but essential onion is now 22% more expensive. Milk has risen 51% since April. Petrol and diesel are also at an all time high. Beef, Pork and Rabbit will rise by 10% in January. Packeted foodstuffs are up 5% in six months. The Board of the National Energy Commission has asked the Ministry of Industry for permission to increase costs for domestic electricity users by as much as 30%. The Government, however, have responded that any increases have got to be in line with inflation.

The Hacienda (tax authorities) are pressurising Marbella Town Hall to pay its taxes. The town owes more than € 265 million in back taxes and social security payments. Efforts by the mayor of Marbella to delay the payment until 2010 or to get a moratorium on the debt have been refused.

The housing market remains in the 'doldrums' with demand low, supply high, property prices continuing to ease and estate agencies closing down. I have heard stories of owners, with 'buy to let' properties, handing the keys back to the banks. The banks are now much more selective in granting mortgages and re-possession in the Alicante area are now more than twice as frequent as last year. The outlook is much the same for 2008, with some analysts predicting a depressed market until 2009. The Governor of the Bank of Spain has also predicted a gradual fall in house prices over 2008. While the Costa now has an abundance of cleared sites awaiting development, few firms have committed themselves to new large-scale projects. Polaris World, who advertise heavily on British and Spanish T.V., say that they will sidestep the current downturn in the market and proceed with plans to build 17,000 new homes in the Murcia town of Alhama. The best of luck!

As part of a series of efforts to stimulate the rental market, the government are offering house owners a 70% saving on their house insurance if they make the dwelling available for rental. However, this will not benefit owner-renters who avoid declaring their rental income.

On a positive note, the Orihuela Town Hall appears to be starting to address the shortage of infrastructure in Orihuela Costa. A large new school is to be built on the recently cleared land south of Los Altos and La Florida, off Calle Pintor Ribera. A start is also imminent on the new Local Police station, which is due to be constructed in the waste ground next to the car park behind Consum in La Zenia. A new college is also scheduled to be built in the VillaMartin/Los Dolses area. A sports centre is also due to be constructed in the Las Piscinas area, close to the start of the Saturday Market area. I also hear that there will be a new weekly market in Campoamor, but few details are available to date.

The ruling PSOE party are introducing a raft of new wage legislation, nothing to do of course with a general election due in the Spring next year. If re-elected to power, the socialists have promised to increase the minimum monthly wage to €800. It would be increased incrementally during the next legislature. The current minimum salary in Spain is €570.60 a month. Also, the self-employed in Spain will have the right to unemployment benefit in 2009, if they pay an additional tax payment of €30 per month. The Hacienda reports that 58% of wage earners (11 million workers) earn less than €1,100 a month.

El País reports that nearly 300,000 Romanians have arrived in Spain in just ten months. A two year moratorium stops them from currently working in Spain. So what are they living on?

Kevin & Kaz Welcome you to

R BAR

Via Park V

New People-New Decor-New Deal

Fun Darts Tuesday

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Wednesday

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Superb Sunday Roasts

Ladies Night Sat 8th December

Check for availability

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*"There are no strangers at R Bar -
only friends who haven't met!"*

Lets get it over with!

The teacher asked little Johnny one day what his father did for a living.

"Well, he's a crack addict and male prostitute," said Little Johnny

The teacher was obviously very shocked and exclaimed "Surely not?"

"Actually," says Johnny, "He plays for the England football team but I am too embarrassed to say....."

What does a 3-pin plug and the England football team have in common?

They are both useless in Europe.

(Jock)

THE PHOENIX



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What's up - continued.

Life expectancy in Spain has crossed the 80 year barrier for the first time, according to the new data from the National Statistics Institute(NSI). It now stands at 80.23 years, with women living on average six years more than men. Navarra, Madrid, La Rioja and Castilla y León are the regions of Spain where people live the longest, and the new numbers place Spain as one of the countries with the highest life expectancy in Europe, second only to Italy. A report from the Academy of Healthy Ageing (whose statistics vary significantly - 10 years -from the NSI's), states that not only do people live longer in the Mediterranean countries, they also enjoy a better quality of life than others in the E.U. However, the down-side to this is the low birth rate in Spain, which coupled with the long life expectancy, will make Spain one of the countries with the oldest population in the world. Speaking of mortality, the average cost of a burial in Spain is now €2,500. If you die in Alicante or Palma, expect to pay an average of €3,000, while in Badajoz it will cost your 'nearest and dearest' less than €1,000. Cremation is cheaper and one in five bodies is now cremated in Spain.

The Spanish Government have stated that people who work past their retirement age – 65 – will get a 3% increase per annum in their pension until they reach 70 years. This would mean a 15% increase in their final pension. The employer would be exempt from any social security payments after the age of 65 in these instances. Imaginative and practical!

I had a brief meeting with Stefan, the president of Dream Hills, who told me that the pine-trees in Dream Hills have this week been sprayed to combat the processionary caterpillars. The long steep bank by the top pool has been weeded and the watering pipes re-connected. The bank has now been planted with additional ground-covering plants which he waters three times a week. He has also spoken to individuals in Los Balcones regarding the rubble on their side road by Via Park 3 and is awaiting a response. See back page for date of next surgery)

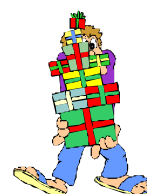
The police are still being kept on their toes with drug-smuggling. The Local Police interrupted a smuggling incident locally in Punta Prima, recovering 1,000 kilos of hashish. One smuggler was captured (probably too stoned to run) but six others escaped. A Málaga lorry driver was arrested together with five Moroccans, while they were unloading 18 tons of cannabis from a refrigerated lorry. The drugs were packed into 610 boxes and were hidden behind two pallets of frozen fish.

A judge in Motril who forgot to release a prisoner from remand after his acquittal has been sacked. The decision finding him innocent of robbery was issued on 10th January 2006, but the judge who was responsible for the sentence neglected to inform the prison of that fact. It was not until over a year later, on 22nd March this year, that he was freed from Albolote prison in Granada after authorities there got in touch with the court. Canal Sur reports that the man's lawyer also failed to realise what had happened! (This only confirms my opinions on Spanish lawyers) The judge now faces proceedings from the prosecution service in Andalucía. Two other prisoners spent more than 30 days in prison under similar circumstances.

Lots more to tell you but no space! See you next month! (Mick)



*Don't worry about avoiding temptation.
As you get older it will avoid you.*



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Beauregard & Hortense

Beau visited the Salud for a check-up. The doctor says, "You are in incredible shape. What's your secret?" "Well," replied Beau, "my wife and I have a pact. Every-time we argue, she goes to the kitchen to cool down and I go outside to cool down."

"Great idea", replied the doctor, "but how does that explain your excellent health?"

"I put it down to fresh air and sunshine", replied Beau. "Ever since we got married, I've been pretty much living outdoors!"

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Yorkshire Lad

A rugby league fan is drinking in a London bar, when he gets a call on his mobile phone. He hangs up, grinning from ear to ear, and orders a round of drinks for everybody in the bar, announcing his wife has just given birth to a typical Yorkshire baby boy weighing 25 pounds.

Nobody can believe that any new baby can weigh in at 25 pounds, but the rugby fan just shrugs and replies, "That's about average in Yorkshire ... like I said, my boy's a typical Yorkshire baby boy. Gonna be a rugby league player."

Congratulations showered him from all around, amid many exclamations of "WOW!" One woman actually fainted due to sympathy pains.

Two weeks later, he returns to the bar. The bartender says, "Say, aren't you the father of that typical Yorkshire baby that weighed 25 pounds at birth?"

Everybody's been making bets about how big he'd be in two weeks. So, how much does he weigh now?"

The proud father answers, "Twenty pounds."

The bartender is puzzled, concerned and a little suspicious. "What happened? He already weighed 25 pounds the day he was born!"

The Yorkshireman takes a slow swig of his Samuel Smith's, wipes his lips on his shirt sleeve, leans into the bartender and proudly says

"Had him circumcised..."

Update on Via Park V

An International Poker Charity Tournament was recently held in the Phoenix. Organised by Neil of the Phoenix, Dave from Pokers Wild and John from the CoastRider, the event was a wonderful success with 27 poker players competing plus loads of curious spectators and friends. The game was "Texas Hold 'em" and the eventual winners were The Dream Team comprising of Stefan, Dennis and Harry.

Every outlet in the 'Big 5', except the Chinese restaurant, contributed a prize towards the raffle.

A whopping total of €485 was raised during the evening, with €260 going to the AECC (cancer charity) and €225 going to the CoastRider Cruz Roja ambulance appeal.

On the same day Jane & Gordon from the Cavern raised an admirable €150 as well. This will be donated to a breast cancer charity.

Corruption

Although Spain's Guardia Civil Town Planning Crime Unit has only been established for six months, they have already uncovered more than 100 cases of corruption across the country. To date 57 people have been arrested and an additional 126 implicated in town planning irregularities, with fraud and perversion of the course of justice being the most common charges. Andalucia is the region where the unit has been the busiest, followed by the Balearic Islands and Madrid.

In Madrid, 16 civil servants have been arrested for charging to speed up building licences. One Spanish newspaper, Público, reported that civil servants collected up to €18,000 per deal, with El Pais headlining "If you don't give me a kilo (€6,000), you'll never get a licence".

The latest case to emerge is that of the Murcia town of Totana. Here two million hectares of rustic land are said to have been re-classified as building land to build 5,000 new houses, a golf course and an hotel. The mayor of Totana, the local police chief and two others have been arrested today (29th). There were six other arrests earlier this week. A third of the PP mayors in the Murcia region are now being investigated by the judiciary, although current corruption investigations are certainly not limited to the PP alone.

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A brief look at Elche

Situated just to the south-west of Alicante is the historic city of Elche or Elx, well worth a visit for its famous Lady of Elx statue and wealth of interesting sites, but also for their abundance of palm trees and gardens.

The city has many museums and monuments and they are very proud of their cultural heritage.

The fiestas in Elche are well worth visiting, especially the Misteri d'Elx, which is listed as a World Heritage event and it has also received UNESCO awards. The Mystery play of Elx is held in the basilica of Saint Mary on the 14th & 15th of August, a spectacular firework display precedes the play on the 13th, and is known as the Night of Dawn - Nit de l'Albá. Another memorable fiesta is the Festividad de la Venida de la Virgen, which takes place from the 28th to the 29th of December.

The Elx Holy Week processions at Easter are also very impressive, particularly Palm Sunday, when thousands of locally produced white palms are carried in the procession.

The Elche marshes are of great ecological value and are protected.

The city also produces almost half of the footwear manufactured in Spain today and they are very protective of this industry. Last year a Chinese firm, which was importing cheap shoes from China, had their warehouse burned down by workers in the local footwear industry. To date no charges have been brought.

We visited the City recently to take a look at their palm-tree gardens. We first checked-out **El Palmeral**, which was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2000. The whole park occupies more than a million and a half square metres, featuring more than a quarter of a million palm trees. It is extremely well maintained with good parking facilities and visitors centre. Access to El Palmeral is free and all the walking routes are well defined.

Within the grounds there is also a restaurant and a cafe. The restaurant, called **Dátil de Oro (Golden Date)**, Paseo de la Estación, is very impressive with glass walls and a high standard of decor. Tables and chairs are covered in white fabric, with white see-through curtains on the glass walls contrasting against the rich green colouring of the trees outside. The multi-chandeliered restaurant is hosted by a group of smart dark suited waiters who range from jolly to sepulchral.

The menu is impressive as is the food with surprisingly reasonable prices. There is plenty of choice from a large range of starters, and meat, fish and rice main courses. Sample prices are as follows - Gaspacho Andaluz €4, Spinach salad with Burgos cheese and salmon €6.50, Carpacio (beef) €12, Canelones €7, Entrecote €14, Lubina (Sea-Bass) € 14, Salmon in Cava € 12 and Shellfish soup €7. All the rice dishes, Arroz a banda and Paellas are all priced at €9. Of particular note is the local rice speciality - Arroz con costra - Rice with crust, which was very enjoyable. This dish comprises a chicken or rabbit paella with a crust on top made from an omelet with bacon. Desserts include Sorbet of lemon with Cava, Cheesecake with cream of mango and local specialities.

After lunch it was a short trip to the gardens at **Huerto del Cura** (healing gardens?). This garden area covers 13,000 square metres with 700 palm trees together with over 500 other species of plants and flowers. Again, these gardens and pathways are beautifully maintained and are very impressive. There is a €5 entrance charge here but a free pre-recorded guide (in English) to the gardens can be had for a deposit.

Dátil de Oro Restaurante Tel: 965453415, 965428087 and www.datildeoro.com (informative web-site)

Jardin Huerto del Cura Tel: 965451936

Both gardens are well signposted throughout Elche. www.turismedelx.com



You two go ahead with the frankincense & myrrh - I'll catch up later with the gold!

Night Shift

A police officer, though scheduled for all-night duty at the station, was relieved of duty early and arrived home four hours ahead of schedule, at 2 AM.

Not wanting to wake his wife, he undressed in the dark, crept into the bedroom and started to climb into bed. She sleepily sat up and said, "Mike, dearest, would you go down to the all-night drug store and get me some aspirin? I've got a splitting headache."

"Certainly, honey," he said, feeling his way across the room, he got dressed and walked to the drug store.

As he arrived, the pharmacist looked up in surprise, "Say," said the druggist, "Aren't you Officer Fenwick of the 8th District?"

"Yes, I am," said the officer.

"Well," said the pharmacist, "then what in the world are you doing in the Fire Chief's uniform?"

SHUT UP!

King Juan Carlos 1 of Spain and the Spanish prime minister José Luiz Rodriguez Zapatero attended the closing session of the Ibero-South American summit in Chile in November. During the session the controversial Venezuelan president, Hugo Chávez, had called the ex-Spanish prime minister, Jose Mariá Aznar, a fascist on several occasions. King Carlos was very annoyed by the comments of Chávez and, in an unprecedented departure from the normal diplomatic-speak, told him “Why don’t you shut up!” The King then left the meeting.

Prime Minister Zapatero tried to get Chávez to moderate his speech, saying that it was necessary to respect others. “I can be in a completely different ideological position and I am not close to the ideas of Aznar”, said Zapatero, ” but he was chosen by the Spanish people and I demand that respect”. Chávez said that Hitler was also elected and didn’t deserve respect. Interestingly, both Aznar and Chávez had previously met on 14 occasions.

The opposition parties in Venezuela have now adopted the Kings statement as their slogan. Since the meeting Chávez has stated that he is going to investigate Spanish firms in Venezuela. El Mundo has reported that President Chávez has since flown over Spanish air space without communicating it in advance to the Foreign Ministry - a normal procedure. The newspaper also reports that the president of Columbia has accused the Venezuelan leader of increasing tensions across Latin America.

Santa’s Little Angel

Santa was getting very, very cross. It was Christmas Eve and nothing was going right. The elves were complaining about not being paid overtime. The reindeer had been drinking all day and the sleigh was broken. Santa was furious. “I can’t believe it!” he yells. I’ve got to deliver millions of presents all over the world in just a few hours - my reindeer are pissed, the elves are on strike and I don’t even have a Christmas tree. I sent that stupid little angel to find one hours ago! What am I going to do?” Just then, the little angel opens the door and steps in from the snowy night, dragging a Christmas tree. “Oi fatty” she says. “Where d’you want me to stick this?” And thus the tradition of angels atop the Christmas trees came to pass.



Planes, Trains and

High speed trains in Spain have been receiving massive investment in recent years. With their expanding AVE high speed network, RENFE, the national carrier, has confirmed that they are to offer discounts, over 50% in some cases, for those who book their long distance services in advance. The news came from the Minister for Development, Magdalena Álvarez, who said that savings of 40% can be made by booking your seat at least a week in advance and there will be 60% discounts on a limited number of seats available to those who book over the Internet two weeks before travelling. The web option will not however allow travellers to change their ticket, and will also be subject to at 50% cancellation fee. New open tickets which can be used at any time on the AVE services will now also be available, and simple return tickets will have a discount of 20% each way.

The launch of a new high speed rail link between Malaga and Madrid this month could spell the end of air travel between the two cities. That’s exactly what happened to flights between other European cities such as Amsterdam, Brussels and Paris following the launch of the TGV and Thalys services between those capitals.

Stopping trains on Andalucia’s new rail service, which is due to start on Christmas Eve, will take just under three hours. But the airlines will have to compete against four non stop trains a day which will make the journey in only two and a half, at speeds of up to 300 kilometres an hour. The route has always seen fierce competition but now with RENFE offering tickets for bookings 15 days in advance of departure for just over thirty Euros one way, the airlines have responded by offering their own bargain fares. Looking at a typical journey in January, Air Europa, Spanair and Iberia are all offering return journeys priced at around fifty Euros, including all airport taxes.

The official tourist class AVE fare between the two cities has been set at 76.1 Euro one way, with a return priced at 121.76. Preferente Class is approximately fifty per cent more while the ultra-exclusive Club class almost double the basic fare. The Málaga-Madrid AVE service will run at 300 kms/hour and will see 11 trains in each direction every day – practically one every hour. Journey time to the capital will be 2 hr 15 mins.

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‘Casino City’ for Spain

A massive Las Vegas-style casino and theme park complex is scheduled to be built in the north eastern Spanish region of Aragon.

The “city”, which will be built on a plot of over 5,000 acres, will include 32 hotels and several theme parks. A conference centre and a stadium are also planned.

Total cost of the project is expected to be in the region of €17 billion, the development being handled by a multi-national consortium. The location was selected, from three possible European sites, because of the relatively low land prices and its proximity to Zaragoza airport.

Zaragoza airport is already an important hub in the low-cost air network. The airport is only a two-hour flight from Stansted and the city also benefits from a modern high-speed rail link from Madrid.

As many of you will have already noticed on Spanish television, Zaragoza hosts a world trade fair - Expo 2008 - next year. The fair has an ecological theme and has attracted contributions from 95 countries.

The casino project has already been approved by the regional government. As “super-casino” gambling in the UK has been delayed by political procrastination on a large new casino for Manchester, the Spanish politicians have welcomed the casinos for the wealth and jobs they will generate. The socialist president of Aragon estimates that the project will create 30,000 new jobs.

The massive project, which could take ten years to complete, is due to be formally unveiled in December.

Opposition politicians and environmentalists are already marshalling their resources to object to the project.

Have You ‘Arrived’?

The blog **Davicus**, has come up with a list of things that, while perfectly normal for a Spaniard, takes the foreigner some time to come to terms with. If nothing on this list surprises you, then you can consider yourself to have truly ‘arrived’ in Spain.

You think it’s perfectly acceptable to add lemonade to wine.

You are not surprised that the plumber or electrician has finished his work on time, but are surprised that he has finished his work at all.

You have been in a *botellón* (public piss-up).

You think that not kissing someone you have just met twice is a sign of bad manners.

You are surprised that people start wearing shorts as soon as it’s sunny, instead of waiting until the end of June.

You think it is normal to add olive oil to any dish including toast.

You are surprised when the commercial breaks on television are shorter than half an hour.

You know what a hangover is, and you suffer at least one every weekend.

You know how to eat *boquerones* (anchovies).

When you see the head of a bull hanging on the wall of a bar, you are not surprised and think it is part of the decoration.

You eat lunch after 2pm, and never eat dinner before 9pm.

You are not surprised when all the members of a family, be they male or female, are all called the same.

You don’t think that there is anything wrong in drinking a couple of beers in the morning.

You think that the floor of a bar is a large rubbish bin, where you can throw your cigarette ends, serviettes and the remains of your prawns.

You understand that applauding is an art, and not a way to express your approval.

You know that *ensaladilla rusa* has nothing to do with Russia.

You have breakfast on Sunday before going to bed, not when you get up.



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Last Will

A father is lying gravely ill in hospital and is surrounded by his three grown sons and an IC nurse.

He slowly opens his eyes and speaks to the three men with great effort.

“Jimmy”, he says, “you take the houses up in the hills.”

“Harry, you take all the houses by the beach”

“George, you take the shopping centre.”

The nurse is quite surprised by what the old man is saying and says “Gosh! Your father

must be a very wealthy man.”

“No,” replied one of the sons,

“He’s just a milkman.”

The Mouse by John Sinclair @ No.264

The challenge was laid down one Tuesday night. I was just making a cup of coffee in between the news and some programme I can't remember, when – whoosh - there was a black flash across the lino and a scrabbling sound underneath the cupboard. I was dumbfounded and in pain. I'd poured hot water over my hand. But not for me a girlish scream. I uttered a manly growl and poured cold water over it.

The arrival of this creature was a source of consternation. How many were there? Had they been breeding secretly? Were they now poised to take over number 41? Visions of self and wife being driven back by the relentless snapping jaws of millions of crazed mice. If they weren't in a position to take over this could be my chance. But how to remove them? Flame thrower? - no - spoil the paintwork. Cat? - yes cat - no. Visions of 'moggy' skeleton picked clean by locust like rodents.

I took the coffee through and up came problem number two. "Why are you talking to yourself?" - better half, trouble and strife etc. "Got a problem" says I through clenched teeth all John Wayneish "nothing to worry your pretty head about." "Piss off" said the better half, trouble and strife etc. Weighed up whether to come clean. Obviously couldn't mobilise last resources etc. without some story. (Got this flame thrower for when the coals wet didn't sound right somehow, also danger of wife seeing or even being attacked by said man-eating long tailed beasts from hell.)

Decided to come clean "I think we've got a mouse". Tremendous reaction - 1. Scream, 2. Legs on sofa, 3. Get rid of it. This meant that my task was firmly stated, very firmly stated. Can mice climb stairs? More problems. Trouble and strife etc. refuses to go into kitchen until said mouse exterminated. (I had already decided against discussing possible escalation of situation. No sense in panic mongering). Therefore if this becomes a long campaign Yours Truly is expected to perform all functions in kitchen. (Makes one wonder if the mouse is a plant).

After cleaning up the kitchen and going to bed, all doors bolted against starving hordes, I considered next move.

I went along to the local hardware shop. "Need some rodent exterminator". "Got a mouse have we, Sir?" Bloody nark! No need to panic the neighbourhood unduly by explaining size of the problem. "Yes, they often come into the houses in this cold weather. It's probably a field vole come in for a warm". Ha! Field vole, I ask you. What does he know. Anyway if it is only a field vole who's to say he won't go and get his wife and kids, and old mum and dad and aunties, and uncles, and cousins, even the whole goddamn tribe. "I sometimes get them" he said. Bloody Hell! Encouraging the little bleeders. Could this be a plan to sell more rodent exterminators.

Well he offered me a "little nipper" and some poison. No flame thrower, no shotgun, no biological warfare. Jus a bloody trap and some powder. Fat lot of good they have done since their inception. And another thing, this powder is supposed to dehydrate them. Give them such a bloody big hangover that they go outside for water and croak in the yard. Then the local scavengers (cats, dogs, etc) remove them and eat, bury them etc. All fine in theory. But what usually happens is they curl up in some quiet corner under the floor boards, vomit, die and stink the whole place out. Anyway back home and turn the kitchen into a mouse Armageddon. Saucers of tempting chocolate and cheese with a dash of poison. Traps with tasty succulent pieces of bacon. Better watch out. Might catch better half trouble and strife- etc with this fare.

However, this doesn't arise. Wife still won't enter the kitchen. Doubly so now there was a danger of finding poisoned and trapped mice strewn all round the kitchen. I was coming round to the idea that it was just one extremely cunning, vicious, man-eating mouse. I was relishing the battle. Every morning downstairs to the kitchen and check all saucers and traps. I reckon he was taking chocolate and cheese off the saucers and leaving the poison. I was worried he might go for my throat when I wasn't watching.

Better half, trouble and strife etc., was now suggesting that perhaps he'd pissed off of his own accord. I fostered this belief in an effort to get her back into the kitchen. It nearly worked. I was beginning to look haggard. Lack of sleep, forever living on nerves was beginning to get to me. These were the danger signs. One momentary lack of concentration and POW! - that could be me! I began to increase the doses, change the bacon every day. He was winning. I'm sure that somewhere under the floorboards he was living like a king. **(Continued on Page 9)**

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Bear with me.

A bear walks into a bar and says to the bartender, "I'll have a whiskey and..... soda."

The bartender says, "Why the big pause?"

"Dunno," says the bear.

"I've always had them."

(J.F.)

The Mouse by John Sinclair - continued.

Then I got him. It was a fortnight later. We were just home from work and sat in the living room drinking coffee, which I'd just made in the kitchen. Suddenly - CRACK. I nearly had a heart attack. It was the trap. "Go and look, go and look!", came the whispering screech from trouble etc. I tiptoed to the kitchen door.

There he was. Thrashing little hind legs and long tail. I went back to the Living room. Totally drained I leaned on the doorpost. "It's him" I said. "He's dying now. Go and look" She wouldn't. I was charged with cleaning it up. Cleaning it up - I ask you. No respect for a worthy foe. A valiant soldier. He probably had the mouse V.C..

I went in to the kitchen. He was now well and truly dead. The Little Nipper had nearly cut his head and shoulders off. His blood was sprayed on the lino and his popped out eyes followed me round the room. I couldn't bear to touch his body (No, this is not because I'm squeamish). I managed to free him from the Little Nipper and en-coffined him in a copy of The Guardian. It seemed wrong to put him in the dustbin but she wouldn't let me bury him. I thought the least she could have done was let me give him a grave fit for a hero.

The Fat Cats

Ireland's *taoiseach* (prime minister) Bertie Ahern, recently received a pay rise of 14%, making him one of the highest paid leaders in the world. This was his 26th pay rise in his ten-year tenure as *taoiseach*. The pay rise was awarded by a top-salary review body that aims to keep the pay of senior politicians and civil servants competitive with rates in the private sector. Before his pay award Mr. Ahern talked of the need for restraint to avert a "deterioration in our cost competitiveness".

The following figures make interesting reading -

National political Leaders salaries (all converted to US\$ for comparison purposes)

Irish <i>taoiseach</i>	\$ 446,000	
Unites States president	\$ 400,000	
British prime minister	\$ 389,700	
French president	\$ 357,600	
Italian prime minister	\$ 285,000	
German chancellor	\$ 280,000	
Spanish prime minister	\$ 132,500	(Source - Le Monde & Economist)

Singapore's prime minister was awarded a 26% increase in salary earlier this year, bringing his to a rather majestic US\$ 2.1 million per annum. Apparently the smaller countries have the largest political salaries. The Spanish prime minister's salary is downright miserly when compared to his peers, no doubt his wife constantly reminds him of this! Many mayors in Spain have awarded themselves salaries in excess of the prime Minister's. One, who awarded himself an annual salary of Euro 127,000 earlier this year, was forced to resign.

Doña Anna's

Pasty Shack

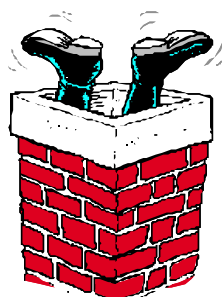
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Almost Rude!

He laid her on the table
So white and clean and bare
His forehead wet with beads of sweat
He gently held here there.
He touched her neck and felt her breast
The goosebumps on her thigh
Her skin was wet and all was set -
He gave a joyous cry -
The void was wide - he gazed inside
And all was dark and murky.
He rubbed his hands
Stretched her armsand then
he stuffed the turkey!

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chat, cheese, wine and a few nibbles,
in La Casita, on Thursday the 20th of
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Bridge

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