

Chat on Cat-Tale #59 Do No Harm

January 17, 2010, Cat-Tales Lobby

Guest Speakers: Chris Dee

Attendees: ichigenka, Kessie, Letomo, mpro, Pred, Random Equinox, silent meow, SteelBlaid, ussentinel

chris dee: Alright, I've got 3:06. Let's get started. Anyone who isn't here yet can play catch-up.

Welcome to the chat on *Cat-Tale 59: Do No Harm*, Huzzah

SteelBlaid: Hip Hip

chris dee: As usual, I've got a mailbag full of questions in case you guys run dry. But you all get preference, for being here

SteelBlaid: You've left an awful lot dangling on this one

ichigenka: i agree on the opened ended stuff

chris dee: That's why I'm here, Steel. Any loose ends you want tied up - if they aren't dangling for a reason that is - just shout them out

ichigenka: so question, do the other members of the JLA know that selina knows who superman really is?

chris dee: Let me think. I know the Bat Family learned that she knew who is who during the preparations for Dick and Barbara's wedding. It's alluded to in the writing, and Selina says that outright in *Identity Element*.

I don't recall anything in *JLAin't* to settle the question one way or another, so that's a big question mark.

ichigenka: ? Eddie would like a big question mark :D

chris dee: As long as it's not floating over his head with him as the dot, that is true

SteelBlaid: all the big dangles look deliberate especially the scarecrow stuff, Eddie moving in, and we better see some of cassie's lessons in proper female behavior or else.

on which topic not only is cain evil he's stupid as well

chris dee: Well, as Bruce stated at the end of that chapter where Scarecrow's formulas were revealed: it is a piece of the past filled in. It may become relevant in the future, it may not. That said....

The title of the next fic is Don't FEAR the Joker, so you can expect Jonathan to pop up.

ichigenka: Thought as much

ichigenka: I think Crane is often over looked. just a one dimensional fear monger

chris dee: He would be the first to agree with you. Just because he's not a 300 lb bruiser. No respect. The thin weedy guys get no respect.

chris dee: It's amazing how few women want to be henchwenches too.

ichigenka: lol, wonder why.

Pred: I think its the term "henchwench" that scares 'em off.

chris dee: One little joke about Carrie being "the feel good movie of the decade"

SteelBlaidd: humor is such an individual thing

chris dee: Okay, let's dive into the mailbag for a quick one and then it will come back to the room

Q. how much of this Cat-Tales did you have mapped out? Were all the broad strokes set in advance, or did you just let your muse inspire you as you went? Can you provide any examples of each?

chris dee: It's a good question, but it may take a ramp up to explain properly

Readers had been asking to see two particular Book 1 events for a long time, and I wanted to find a way to do them.

The subject came up again in the forum discussion for ***Demon's in the Details***, and in an unrelated conversation a friend mentioned the Simpsons had done a fake clips show with all new material. Sizzle-pop-bang, that was the creative spark.

Readers had asked for the first meeting between Selina and Alfred, and they asked to see when and how Selina learned Superman's identity, so that provided the structure – that was going to be the *first* chapter and the *last* one.

When I say it now, it might sound like the result of careful thought, but that seed idea for the tale and its structure popped in as a whole: Alfred HAD to be the first part, right after ***Normal*** when Bruce brought Selina back to the house. Superman HAD to be very late, after the events of ***JLAin't, Reds, Whites, and Holiday Blues***. (Henceforth to be abbreviated JLA-Holiday 'cause that's way too much to type out every time).

She obviously knew Superman was Clark Kent by ***Something Blue*** and ***Dearly Beloved***, so I had a range where I could have set the last chapter. I decided it was most logical immediately after the big trust amp up in ***Times Gone By***.

Anyway, as I said, that was the creative spark. Before anything was written, I decided Oracle and Robin would be the intermediary chapters. If you check out the cover, you'll see Oracle, Robin and Superman's emblems there. Cassie and the filler chapter with the rogues were late additions. Not ready for Superman yet, what can we do next? Cassie!

And as usual, she stole the show

ichigenka: the silent cute ones will do that

chris dee: That's probably true. Whiskers and Nutmeg have a tendency to walk off with any chapter they appear in also

mpro: Is there an overall plan to the entire series of stories?

chris dee: If you mean in the sense of Babylon 5, it will take years to tell this story arc, first season mirrors the fifth, no. There are mini-arcs of 3 or 4 stories that are vaguely planned

mpro: that's what I meant yes

chris dee: Selina's queen of the underworld stint is an example of that, began at the end of **Riddle Me-Tropolis** with the Iceberg burning down, and ended at the end of **I Believe in Harvey Dent**. What I tend to do is have more detail for the first or next 1/3 of the "whatever" (story, multi-story arc) and leave it vague farther out.

Pred: Do you know how it will end or do you leave that vague as well?

The best way I can explain it is a road stretching out to the horizon. The next few chapters of a story, or the next chunk of a 3 or 4 story arc, those are pretty clear in my mind. There is a direction but it is vaguer out at the horizon, leaving me plenty of room farther out to adapt to wherever the story leads, and whatever pops up in the news

Like that Catwoman bank robber in New Zealand. I couldn't pass that up

SteelBlaid: Can you think of anything that would completely break the Cat Tails Universe

chris dee: If I got a debilitating fear of the letter "e", that would make it pretty hard to write.

mpro: Am I to understand that you don't usually know exactly how a story is going to end?

chris dee: It varies. Some stories like Armchair Detective are strictly outlined before I begin without many options to vary from the outline. There is no way to write something like a murder mystery unless you know on page 1 who the killer is and how the layers of the onion will be unpeeled

But there have been stories where I didn't know at the beginning how it would end - most often because what I thought was going to be an ending peaked a little too soon, and more was needed. It sounds weird to say the story decides that, but it is the best way I can explain it.

mpro: There is a risk in that way of writing isn't there?

chris dee: Probably, there's a risk in most things.

Some stories are like the moon landing. At this point, we don't know how we're going to escape the earth's atmosphere, but we start building these other elements and trust that by the time we get there, we'll have that figured out.

DNH is probably a good example. I knew Superman would be the last chapter. I knew Bruce investigating Selina's parents' deaths would be a major catalyst, but I didn't know how it would play out exactly

ichigenka: I did find that a nice little piece, in that superman thought of something that didn't even occur to batman

chris dee: Clark is surprising that way. He has a different perspective than everyone around him.

SteelBlaid: I like how you write Clark. It's so easy to do him Wrong

SteelBlaid: just like it's so easy to do Bruce wrong

chris dee: Another thing they have in common

I think it comes down to - not laziness exactly, but the path of least resistance

Like with Bruce, it is incredibly easy to the snarling psychobat

With Superman, it is incredibly easy to write big, strong, and stupid

If you're in a hurry, or just don't want to take the time, the wrong portrayals are just easier

ichigenka: semi, next chapter question. Is that a cow bell in the picture? I can definately see that being something very funny to joker

chris dee: YEP, and you win the prize for being the first to identify the cowbell.

ichigenka: woot! needs more cow bell!

chris dee: Chapter 2: MORE COWBELL

SteelBlaidd: You can have to much cowbell

SteelBlaidd: It's to write them as caricature and forget that they do what they do because every person's life has value., even Lex and joker

chris dee: Exactly, Steel. Like in Tim's paper. "Batman scowls. Superman smiles" It's a very -color version of the world.

SteelBlaidd: Yup people forget that they use their civilian identities to fight evil just as much as they do in costume

chris dee: Well said. I think one of the most moving pieces on Bruce is from Doug Moench's ***Forensic Files of The Batman***

It has a younger Bruce, maybe 14 or 15 years old, saying how he thinks a good way to fight crime would be to battle the poverty and desperation that creates most of it

Alfred tears up at the sentiment, and the Foundation is born

That's something you lose completely with "Bruce Wayne is the mask"

Bruce Wayne is the human being. If you don't get that, you don't get it period

chris dee: Hi sentinel! Glad you could make it. It's a small informal room, feel free to call out whatever occurs to you

ussentinel: Thank you; sorry I'm late (log in issues)

SteelBlaidd: Haven't seen that. there is an old one that I remember from my dad's collection called the **Four faces of Batman** that includes him solving the murder of a friend and catching the man who randown a couple so that their son can stop obsessing over their killer and pickup the Violin again.

chris dee: :) I do like the sound of that

The Moench book isn't a comic, btw. it's text, and a lot more actual forensics textbook than Batman story. Really great way to learn, if you're into it.

SteelBlaid: My wife does anthropology, which is related

chris dee: Okay, back to the mailbag

Q. Why did Alfred make scones instead of the infamous double chocolate cookies?

ichigenka: ooo good question

chris dee: In the flashback, Alfred himself wonders why he made the scones when they are not one of Bruce's favorites. He then remembers Dr. Wayne was fond of them.

When the cookies of unspeakable chocolaty richness are introduced, they *are* one of Bruce's favorites. So if Alfred made them, he would just attribute it to guilt about deceiving Bruce and that would be the end of it.

There would be no further search leading back to the Dr. Wayne memory.

Also, it let me introduce yet another food item into the Cat-Tales mythos. I believe I currently have the highest calorie per page average in fan fiction.

SteelBlaid: So its a nudge from his back brain to help him remember

chris dee: Yep, that's it

SteelBlaid: One of my favorite detectives is Lord Peter Wimsey who is more like Bruce than any other fictional detective I know. The Wimsey books had enough food to justify a cook book

I love stories where people actually eat

chris dee: There we go. I think I picked it up from the E.F. Benson Lucia novels. Lots of food there too

One more from the mailbag - chapter 2 this time

Q. Is the hackers cage at the FBI based on anything? And are Twinkies really that bad?

I think I answered these in the message board, but I don't mind repeating here. Not everybody reads the forums

Pred: Indeed I do not.

chris dee: The popcorn is from the early days at Apple Computer. Creating a comfortable dorm room environment that their programmers were most comfortable with, they provided free popcorn the way other companies have a coffee machine.

Microsoft copied them (yes, even in that) and had a bin of Twinkies.

Twinkies are indeed that bad because they are delicious, and we all eat them despite the fact that nobody knows what the stuff in the middle is.

It could be dairy, it could be Crisco, it could be soylent green. Nobody knows. Nobody cares.

SteelBlaidd: banana cream

chris dee: Seriously?

SteelBlaidd: I saw it on modern marvels once

it took them a long time to find the right flavor

chris dee: I just saw a blog the other day how you can make "ice cream" out of bananas without adding anything

Welcome, Random. Glad you could join us. It's an open room. Feel free to join in

ichigenka: speaking of food, will we see any more eateries in cat tales?

SteelBlaidd: I would be leave it though i suspect that twinkies only have bananas waved in their direcon at some point during the process

Random Equinox: Thanks! Glad I could make it! So... what did I miss?

Random Equinox: And yes, discussions of food are always welcome!

chris dee: I think it started with my observing that I have the highest calories per page ratio in fanfic and now I just found out what that stuff inside twinkies is made of (not people, yay)

Random Equinox: So what is inside twinkies?

SteelBlaidd: banana cream

Random Equinox: Ah. Wikipedia agrees with you, SteelBlaidd, so it must be true :P

Now, if it was deep-fried twinkies...

chris dee: Deep... fried... *faints*

Somebody's been to the Chip Shop, I see

SteelBlaidd: while we are on food an excellent tea for drinking with dessert (especialy chocolate cake and such like) is Rooiboos(Red) with vanilla bean cooled with cream and sweetened with molasses

Random Equinox: Eh. No. Wikipedia again.

chris dee: Ah okay. Was worried for your arteries.

SteelBlaidd: You can get anything fried at the fair

Random Equinox: This isn't really "drinking with dessert" food, but how 'bout bacon-wrapped scallops?

Random Equinox: Or fudge? Fudge might be more of a "fair-type" food. You know, the kind of fudge that melts in your mouth.

chris dee: Well the Mars bar is a classic, so fudge should work

Random Equinox: Hang on. According to Wikipedia, bananas were rationed during WWII, so Hostess switched to vanilla cream. They never switched back, because the new Twinkies were so popular.

SteelBlaidd: darn Im out of date

:(

again

chris dee: Oh well, there's still Bananas Foster

Random Equinox: Or banana cream pie.

SteelBlaidd: Ok back on topic

Whats cassies day job?

chris dee: Yes, okay, okay. In my mind's eye, Bruce, Selina, Superman and Whiskers are standing off to the side scowling, while we flutter off topic make ourselves hungry. Back to the fic

Random Equinox: That's okay. We can always ask nicely for Alfred's chocolate-dipped double chocolate chip cookies. *faints*

chris dee: I've never given her one. I didn't think her social skills were up to it. But I'll give it some thought.

SteelBlaidd: she needs something to do besides be bat girl, if only so she has answers to peoples questions when she is out on dates with tim

Random Equinox: She's already got school and patrols to worry about. Unless she needs the extra cash...

SteelBlaidd: well if she's doing school that counts but she better be doing school to some end. Bruce would insist

chris dee: Oh god, images of Randy Quad trying to cut in on Tim's action by chatting up his girlfriend, and winding up in the ICU

SteelBlaidd: ;) my work here is done }:-)

ichigenka: well with selina's vamping classes, she just might be flirty with Quad just to watch Tim pop

Random Equinox: Cass: "Not understand. What is 'go back home get busy?'"

Cass: "Have lot of homework due tomorrow?"

Pred: Steel I'd like to nominate you for some kind of award.

chris dee: And the award for most original characters hospitalized as the result of a single chat... And the Vicodin goes to....

Random Equinox: Dr. House. Before he checked himself in for detox.

SteelBlaid: "I would like to thank all the little people who made this award possible..."

chris dee: Okay, one more from the mailbag, and maybe 3 more from the room

Q. Will we ever get the rest of the story about Igor and his rival fence?

naughty grin Maybe. For the most part, these stories are all already filling in episodes from the earlier time. There probably won't be any more filling in the fill-ins, but you never know. Igor and the European fencing world are interesting. It is certainly possible that that will be developed some more.

Random Equinox: Especially any differences between North American fencing and European fencing, or fencing in general versus "Hollywood" fencing.

SteelBlaid: pary pary thrust thrust

chris dee: Speaking of, who saw the Onion video in my blog?

SteelBlaid: ?

Random Equinox: *raises hand*

That was unexpected.

The shenanigans, I mean.

chris dee: I laughed for ten minutes. Steel, it's a very Francois-ish french art thief, presented in the style of a typical sports highlights show. Pure Onion

Pred: I have no idea to what you refer.

chris dee: The Onion is a faux news magazine and website. Scathing satire. Apparently they have branched out into video. Somebody sent me a link, I passed it along in the blog, that's all.

ichigenka: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oZi-zovNsw>

chris dee: Thanks Ichi

SteelBlaid: oh...dear. is he anything like the tool who plays the opposing thief to George cloony in Oceans 12

chris dee: Okay everyone, one or two more questions on the fic, and I'm ready to call it an afternoon.

Who hasn't gone yet?

Pred: Whoops. I allowed popups and it reloaded...

chris dee: Happens to the best of us, Pred

Random Equinox: Not sure if you asked this yet, but how much of this Cat-Tales was planned in advance and how much came to you on the spur of the moment?

chris dee: I did answer in detail earlier, but briefly, Alfred as the first chapter and Superman as the last was part of the original idea spark for the story. Most of the rest was filled in as I went - although something I didn't get into before

Some new data: The Oracle backstory I have had in my head for some time. You'll find occasional allusions to it, Selina mentioning Oracle among the law-abiding heroes who had hired her back in the day.

I never found an opening to do more with it. Back when I was in role-playing games, I had exchanges with more than one Oracle-rper about the synergy with hackers and thieves. It's the same mindset, just a different box of tools.

Random Equinox: I guess both of them like to participate in or introduce a bit of chaos and anarchy into the ol' system.

SteelBlaid: Yup though as a professional programmer laugh at the idea of sticking an unnoticed back door in any piece of code you can go through in less than 4 hours

chris dee: I would think it comes down to that word "unnoticed". What Oracle can find in 4 hours, you can probably find in 5, but the guys Mayhem was working with at the FBI couldn't find in a month

Unless one of them is the brother of that guy from Numbers

Then he's screwed

ichigenka: nope, initiate protocol, math guy finally gets a date

SteelBlaid: :(

:P

ichigenka: of course i'm jk :D

chris dee: Ichi is right, part of the shtick on that show was to distract math guy with something, like shooting the brother or kidnapping the girlfriend

chris dee: Welcome Letomo

Letomo: Hi. Plans fell through - well, delayed, so have 15 minutes.

I liked it, but still want to see Selina meet the rest of the JLA.

chris dee: Well, this closes the fill in flashbacks for a while, but anything could happen down the line

ichigenka: i don't know how Kyle would deal knowing that Catwoman was a fan

Letomo: She is an art fanatic; in many ways. Kyle is an artist beyond all the other Green Lanterns. How would she 'bug' him for more works?

chris dee: It is a funny picture, isn't it, Ichi. Probably the one person who can really relate to his feelings about the Post

Scratch that, Lois can too. I stole that idea (homaged the idea) from JLAin't

SteelBlaidd: well she's met Arther, l'onn, and Her Highness on screen who else counts

chris dee: Eel too

Random Equinox: I remember that! It would be interesting, though: we've had a fair number of Batman/Superman pairings in Cat-Tales, and some Batman/J'onn pairins, but I don't think we've done a Batman/GL pairing yet.

I suddenly have a picture of Bruce seeing Selina gush over Kyle's work, and wondering whether to bring out the Fop or the Psychobat.

chris dee: You're right, Random. Maybe I can lure Myk out of hiding for something like that

Random Equinox: Would twinkies help?

chris dee: Can't hurt

ichigenka: :D

chris dee: Twinkies and the chance to add a new face of Bruce Wayne to the world: the PsychoFop

ichigenka: LOL

Letomo: Lol!

ichigenka: i have to see that now

Letomo: The PsychoFop! I love it!

chris dee: Do we have any artists in the room? I can probably get Thundering Monkey on board for a visual before I can get Myk for a collaboration

Letomo: We've seen what happens when Selina is hurt, and when Bruce is hurt - and when Selina is sick. What happens if Bruce gets sick, but wants to continue like he has in the past? How would Selina react?

ichigenka: well he was sick when he found about how selina can cook

chris dee: Hm, well we have seen him injured and she pretty much stepped aside and let Alfred do his thing. She didn't take sides in the vicodin wars. But would sickness be the same?

My gut reaction is that "He's Batman, he knows what he can do and what he can't"

SteelBlaidd: And what happens when he gets to the point that his body just won't let him do this any more

Letomo: But he keeps trying, anyways?

ichigenka: i'm taken back to when he finished the new zogger

he was over extended and had muscle fatigue

he tried to ignore it

but finally realized he just keep couldn't deluding himself

chris dee: That's a superb example, Ichi. Boy, I'm glad you remembered that

You're right, he tried to push like always, saw it wasn't working, and said "not with the grapnel, nuh-uh"

SteelBlaidd: when was that again

chris dee: It might be **Women Lacking Complexity** or it might have been later, **Strange Bedfellows** maybe?

Random Equinox: Can't remember exactly. Something about exercising and exercising and exercising (Psychobat and/or Catwoman related), and then belatedly realizing that he'd overexercised...

Random Equinox: Possibly Books 2 or 3

SteelBlaidd: I'll have to go look(oh darn ;))

chris dee: Yeah, trying to pin down exactly which time it was that Catwoman drove him to distraction and Zogger. How often does that happen

Letomo: I admit - GL is my favourite character. And in the comics one of my favourite scenes was Hal and Bruces coming to terms. Anything like that happening? Or is Hal permanently gone?

chris dee: If Hal returns to the Catverse, it will be MyklarCure's call for JLAin't.

ichigenka: Personally, i'm a Kyle fan

Letomo: Oh, I love Kyle, probably more than Hal - I just loved that particular scene.

Kyle has more imagination; as an artist he is the better GL in a lot of ways.

ichigenka: the zogger scene was in "Strange Bedfellows" last chapter

chris dee: Point. I have a soft spot for artists myself, of all varieties

Letomo: He is also closer to being a normal person than any of the others, more human and more relatable.

Letomo: That is another reason for Batman's popularity - he is among the most relatable heroes. We may not be like him, but we know we could have been, with enough work.

chris dee: Hear, hear, Letomo

Well gang, I would love to keep this going but we're an hour overtime. One final question, and I have to go feed Cashmere

Pred: You feed cloth?

chris dee: Oh sorry, Cashmere is my cat

Letomo: Is Gordon going to be more involved/get back into the Commissioner job? He is a great part of the legacy, and hasn't shown up lately.

SteelBlaid: oh yeah he must be completely stir crazy by now

chris dee: I would love to bring him back as commissioner for exactly that reason. I will see if I can find a way to do it credibly

Letomo: What if he joined Dick's PI agency for a while?

ichigenka: i dunno

chris dee: Preferably without shooting Muskelli, who has done a fine job

ichigenka: the stress might be too much

and it's not like Muskelli is doing a bad job

chris dee: Well, it is true that stress isn't GOOD for anybody, but I think Gordon is one of those guys like the stockbroker who feed on it

If they're not 10 ticks from a coronary, they're not really happy

Letomo: Maybe Muskelli marries someone [hint, hint], and takes a honeymoon, with Gordon covering?

ichigenka: i'd almost rather him go work with the new Grasyson Assoc.

Letomo: I'm great at ideas, suck at working them out.

chris dee: Renee says you sound just like her brother.

I don't know, Ichi, would you want to work with your father in law?

ichigenka: no but i don't think i'd want him to go back to a very stressful job

well

he grayson assoc are pretty independant

they get jobs and do their own things

chris dee: Babs will probably agree with you on that part

Letomo: Thank you for your time, Chris! Can't wait to read the full write up!

chris dee: Thanks for coming Letomo, and everyone

ichigenka: thanks again!

chris dee: I'll try to get the transcript up in a day or two

Pred: It seems I'll have to look into those forums.

SteelBlaidd: yup

SteelBlaidd: Night all