If he’d thought that being a hologram stuck on a mining ship for three millennia with Dave Lister (the ultimate slob), Kryten (the ultimately obsequious but loyal to Lister android and therefore scum beneath his feet), Holly, the ultimate snotty computer who was more interested in their private lives than she was in the running of the ship (and who liked Lister more than she liked him and was therefore obviously seriously malfunctioning on a daily basis), and Cat (the ultimate in vanity but who still thought that Lister was really sharp and was therefore obviously a complete mental defective who was in dire need of a taste-bud transplant) was the worst thing that could ever, possibly, by any fevered stretch of the imagination be the absolute worst thing that could happen to a man—or a hologram for that matter—well, that was only because he had never had his body restored to him in the morning and by afternoon been stuck in a small cargo hold with Cat.

Who had just explained one of the major differences between real Earth domestic cats and this strange breed of creatures that Cat’s ancestors had evolved into during their three million years in space.

It wasn’t the females who went on heat.

It was the males.
Cat was a male.
And Cat was on heat. In fact, Cat was positively boiling.

He, Arnold Rimmer, good ol’ Arnie Rimmer, was the only other living being stuck in this impenetrable cargo hold with a randy tomCat. And meanwhile, with every passing second and every second pass, his bottom was beginning to feel anything but impenetrable.

“Now, Cat,” he was saying, edging round the outer wall, rump positively glued to the bulkhead, “I’m sure you can hang on, just another few minutes now. I’m sure the others will be doing everything they can to get us out of here.”

Cat flexed his arms, and mewed. Loudly, and painfully off-key. Showing rather frighteningly long and sharp fangs. Rimmer began to hope that it was fucking Cat had in mind: he didn’t much fancy having those chompers wrapped around his pecker. But—what was that he had read about cats? The small (and a very detailed stare—well, he had to look properly to be certain, didn’t he?—made sure of his, and Cat’s, rather impressive facts here) and domestic variety on Earth, the ones who were nice enough to have the female, and therefore blessedly prick-free, members of the species go on heat? Oh smeg. That was it. The toms had pricks, all right. With spines. He gulped, pressing even harder against the bulkhead, which was, perhaps, not the wisest choice of adverbs.

“Now, now, Cat, nice Cat, good kitty, I’m sure Lister is—”

Actually, he knew that bastard. Lister probably wasn’t even anywhere near the cargo hold, he was probably up in the officer’s quarters with that bloody android Kryten, and the two of them and Holly would be sittingwatching, laughing at him. Well, Kryten and Lister might be laughing at him. Well, Lister would definitely be laughing at him. But that computer—she’d be getting her knickers wet and shorting out all sorts of circuits.

Cat was prowling, weaving back and forth in front of him, pausing every now and then to tuck his breast pocket handkerchief in just so or to smooth away a faint crease on his salmon pink satin suit, the one with sequins that Rimmer had so often admired. Rimmer shook his head: this was not the time to be admiring sequins. In fact, the only sequins he wanted to admire was the sequence that would unlock this smegging door.

He was hampered, just the tiniest little bit, by the fact that he didn’t dare turn his back on Cat long enough to try keying in any new sequins—sorry, sequence.

Cat seemed to have forgotten how to speak, which was, in Rimmer’s opinion, not necessarily a bad thing. Cat also seemed to be in imminent danger of bursting forth from his trousers without benefit of the unzipping of flies, which was definitely a bad thing. Or a good thing, if you were another cat, preferably one of the female persuasion. Or gay, or bi, anything, in fact, but one very virgin Arnold Rimmer, who was scared shitless. Which was probably just as well, considering what Cat had in mind.

“How, Cat,” Rimmer said again, “you wouldn’t want to do anything hasty. After all, I’ve been sharing quarters with Lister and god knows what I might have caught from him.”

Cat positively roared. “Oh, smeg, I forgot you like catching small defenceless creatures and torturing them before you eat them.” A thought crossed his mind and he added, all thought of sex as being a fate worse than death throwing itself down on the deck and spreading its legs. “You’re not going to eat me after, are you? Not with those fangs!”

Cat circled closer, doing peculiar things with his backside and doing some very blunt (or sharply pointed if you caught him at the right angle. Full profile was particularly interesting...) things with his hips. It seemed to have something to do with an in and out motion. Rimmer blushed. Then said, “Can you teach me how to do that for—”

Rimmer blushed again. “Actually, no, I don’t think I’ll bother. Won’t be much point, don’t suppose there are going to be too many girls at the next party, considering there’s only Lister, Kryten and—” he gulped, as Cat danced closer, “you and me. Ah. Yes, well, it’s been a pleasure, but I really must go now, so many things to do. You know how it is, so many Universes, so little time.”

Cat came up and licked him on the chin.
Rimmer screamed and turned, hammering on the door, and screamed again, “Get me out of here! Lister, you bastard, get me out of here! Kryten, if you don’t let me out, I’ll give you a bath!”

Something very pointed and very very hard was digging into the small of his back. “Oh, smegging fucking shit,” he moaned, “What a way to lose my virginity! And after saving it for so long!”

Cat leaned into him, purring. “Now, Cat, nice kitty,” he said, squirming before it dawned on him that that was not the best way to actually discourage a randy tomCat. “You’ll be gentle with me, won’t you?”

Cat bit him in the back of his neck. “Obviously not,” Rimmer muttered.

Cat was mewling now, not, Rimmer noted, in pleasure.

That’s when he noticed he still had all his clothes on. He stood there for a minute, nothing between him and losing his virginity but a bit of cloth.

“Hang on a minute, Cat,” he whispered, dislodging the teeth and turned round. Which is how he discovered how Cat’s race had found a way round the old animal instincts versus clothes dilemma. Things simply ripped in rather appropriate places. “Oh, my, you are a big boy now, aren’t you?”

And if a cat could get round the problem of clothing, he didn’t see why he couldn’t. In fact, Cat was so far gone that he didn’t even notice that Rimmer ripped his salmon pink trimmed with sequins jacket off and threw it over the computer camera-cum-monitor, for if there was one thing the computer wasn’t going to do, it was monitor cum.

“Now,” Rimmer said, pulling his nice green Captain Emerald trousers down round his knees and wiggling over to the door again, “where were we? Oh, yes, that’s right, you had just sunk your teeth in my neck and you were about sink your...em, thingy, into my...em posterior. OUCH! NO, Cat, the other way around, you stupid animal. God, you’ve been spending too much time with Lister, haven’t you? I hadn’t realised how contagious stupidity could be. There, now that’s better.” He settled himself comfortably against the door, shut his eyes and said, “Where was I? Oh, yes. You will be gentle with me, won’t you?”

And he was most pleased to discover that something else had changed between the domestic cat and Cat. It wasn’t spines. It was ridges. Lovely, delicious, oooh-all-shivery ridges.

By the time anyone noticed that Rimmer was missing, Cat was a shagged out mess on the floor, and Rimmer was walking bow-legged. But with a beatific smile all over his face, and a tendency to call, “here kitty, kitty...”

One thing hadn’t changed about cats over the millennia. They still went on heat for months at a time. One other thing had changed, though. Now, it was contagious. As Rimmer found out, when he woke up with itchy teeth, from the way they were growing, and a, well, not precisely itchy cock, but that was definitely from the way it was growing.

“I’ll kill you! Cat, I’m going to brush your hair the wrong way and get dog perfume all over your clothes!” He sat up in his bunk and felt his teeth. “Oh my god, they’re as big as Cat’s.” He looked down at his cock and felt it. And grinned. “Well, well, well, it’s as big as Cat’s!”

And it was as thick as Cat’s and just as ridged.

A thought occurred to him.

What was that they said about revenge? He stood up, trailing his clothes as he went, calling, “Lister. Oh, Listie, oh Listie dear, I have something for you...”

Well, at least it gave them something to do for the next three thousand years...