

Pigeon Post

by Chris Wright

"I can hear the sound of the great unwashed, thundering over the horizon, Peregrine, fortune favours the brave, what!"

Theobald Tanqueray Thompkinson, leaning unsteadily forwards, jocular and rotund; rubicund, reckless and implausibly optimistic. A glass of gin cradled carefully in one hand, the other carving swathes through the alcoholic fug. A Prince of Wales checked suit a size too small, offset by a vast paisley handkerchief exploding from the breast pocket. Two flies perform aerobatics around his gleaming pate, while Patience, a cat, fixes them with a trained killer's eye.

Peregrine, perplexed, plays for time. Carefully twirling the ends of his mustache into ever finer points he tries manfully to make any sense whatsoever out of the proposition. It seemed to have gone on for hours. On the table in front of him a slip of paper, damp and smudged, but he could just make out the characters

"@Peregrine gldn boy Kempton 2.30"

"Theobald old chap, I can hear the words, not sure about the order...."

He tails off, Theobald is one of his oldest friends, fiscal fiascos a speciality, a bankrupt born and bred.

If he understood it correctly and he was by no means sure that he did, Theobald proposed to sell something called a service for a fixed price of nothing? There had been talk of value nets and revenue adjustment, outsourcing, insourcing and intellectual capital had all wandered onto the stage, beamed magnanimously and exited, leaving an uncomfortable feeling that here was a proposition that was simply too clever for mere mortals to understand. Peregrine turned his attention, as he often did under such taxing circumstances to Patience.

The cat was lying on his side in the sunshine, exposing an unfeasibly vast belly to the warming rays. Peregrine's thoughts turned to food; the cat's languid movements suggested a devotion to idling that rivaled Peregrine's own, his tail flicked with insouciant

disdain, seeking balance as he pawed feebly at the air recently vacated by the acrobatic flies. Dismally failing to make contact he rolled, yawning wide and succumbed once more to sleep.

“Monetising the mecosystem” Theobald blathered, “extend the value proposition, core competencies create cash rich commitment free conurbations...partnership models proliferate non essential services spawning new opportunity...” Peregrine tried to follow, but this was a leap too far. What the hell was a mecosystem?

“Theo old chap, we’ve known one another for what? Twenty years? We’ve talked a lot of bollocks in that time, well, you have, mostly. This bollocks really takes the biscuit. Mecosystem? Monetise?”

Patience opened an eye, fixing Theo with a basilisk stare.

“Virtual networks exchanging value free platitudes? Twaddle rich content creating truncated taxonomies?”

Theobald leans forward conspiratorially “I see the skies dark with a thousand birds, mass communication on a scale hitherto undreamed of. The cocktail party is dead Peregrine, this is the age of free speech and we’ll make it sing. We’re going to revolutionise communications...”

Patience had heard enough. Advancing on Theo's plus fours, he reached up and carefully spreading his paws, inserted four razor sharp claws into the area betwixt the nitwit's legs. A terrible shriek rent the air and the cat jumped, nimbly avoiding a wildly flailing mitt. If there was to be talk of darkening skies, one thing was for sure, Patience would face the fiasco on a full belly. He stalked from the room with tail aloft, a palpable air of affront hanging in the ether for fully five minutes after his exit.

