



The Client

A short story by **Mel Gosling:**

Coming Soon

Minster Court was, and is, on Mincing Lane, off Fenchurch Street, in the heart of the insurance quarter of the City of London. Rising over eight floors, made of pink granite and glass designed to dominate the surrounding buildings and inspire awe to the casual visitor, its tall grey spires reach ever upwards to mimic and mock the churches that can still be found dotted around the City. This was my first visit to this gothic cathedral of money and risk, where I had an appointment with Richard Drake, the larger than life chief executive of Londinium Insurance Ltd.

The entrance to Minster Court is up a very wide, but short, flight of steps that are flanked by two enormous rearing horses that seem to be challenging the right of visitors to enter the large open courtyard that sits between the three buildings that make up the complex. I was going into No. 1 Minster Court, the middle building, directly in front of the steps. It is entered through a set of glass doors rising a full 20 metres, above which hangs what can only be described as a half finished greenhouse roof that pretends to protect people from the rain.

Dressed in my best jacket and dark chinos, and without the obligatory neck tie, I was immediately recognisable as an outsider, and the smart security guard, who was kitted out like a cruise ship gigolo in a sky blue blazer, light grey trousers, and a white shirt with a navy blue neck tie, stepped out from nowhere to guide me to a reception desk. Sitting behind the desk was a clone of the security guard, who asked me, very politely, for my name, company, and who I had come to visit.

"Philip Marsden, from PM Continuity Ltd, for Richard Drake of Londinium Insurance," I explained.

The clone eyed me warily, and tapped some information into the computer that was situated just to his left. Several seconds passed before he gave me a thin smile and reached down to his right to get a visitors pass. Handing it to me he said "Eighth floor."

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"You've been recommended to me by Bernie Newman. He tells me that you did a good job implementing Business Continuity for his company. He reckoned that you could help us."

"Probably Mr. Drake, it depends on what you want doing."

"Call me Richard. Bernie had probably mentioned to you that what was the Financial Services Authority, the FSA, has warned us about our Business Continuity arrangements, I want them improving. We need to have everything right before

they, or rather the Financial Conduct Authority, the FCA as they now call themselves, come back in six months.”

“What exactly do you mean by right?” I asked.

“We need to show that we’re taking Business Continuity seriously, have made major improvements, and that we’re well on track to meet whatever capability they’re looking for.”

“And what is that?” I enquired.

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“How long will that take?” Richard asked.

“Well, I should be able to get all I need by talking to you, and David, in the next few hours. If I can then be given access to some key documents, such as the FSA’s report, I could put a quote together for you in a couple of days.”

“Sorry Philip, you’ve already had a lot of my time, I’ve got a business to run here. David will give you everything that you need. Send me the quote and I’ll give you a reply the next day. When can you start?”

“I can make a start next week if you want,” I replied.

“Good,” Richard said as he got to his feet. “David will look after you. Goodbye Philip.”

David and I rose from our seats, the meeting had lasted only a few minutes. I’d just had time to drink my espresso, Richard hadn’t touched his coffee. I shook Richard’s hand, and followed David out of the door. He still hadn’t said a word.

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