



# Pinky's Project

Tam Fairlie

the fl@ubert duck series



for Mavis and Pinky



**A**lthough to all outward appearances hers was a gilded existence, Pinky recognized that life in her elegant flat overlooking a leafy square was lacking in some vital dimension.

Passersby would look up enviously at the large windows glowing with an opulent light through which they might glimpse her delicate form moving from one languorous position to another. But she herself knew that the stage she trod was bare.



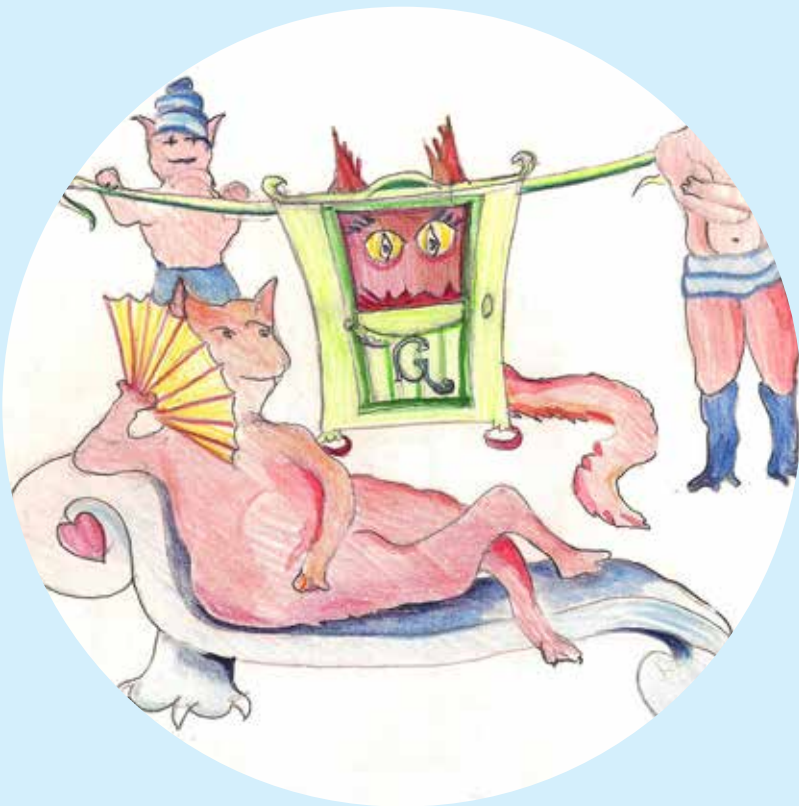
**N**ot that her daily life was completely empty. Three hulking and rather unimaginative assistants, who repeated the same routines with uninspired regularity, were employed to meet her daily needs.

Admittedly she was particularly fond of the little girl who could be counted on to dream up crazy artistic projects or provide a rare musical interlude on the harp.

The only amorous prospect on Pinky's horizon was an old rascal named Montagu who would leer at her from a neighbouring window puffing out his cheeks in a manner which he supposed to be seductive. He was so full of self-importance that he had a large sign placed outside his window announcing 'Montagu Place'.

"Surely I can do better than this!" Pinky muttered to herself as she fitted a sharpened pencil into a harp string and sent it zinging across the street. Montagu seemed to take some pleasure in these displays of feline mettle, which were invariably off target.





The only other eligible cat of her acquaintance was a bruising hulk named Ginger who would on occasion attend her afternoon salon. His presence tended to be so oppressive that she preferred him to stay in his carrying litter.

Pinky had great faith in the concept that beauty is more than fur deep. It is in the mind. She regarded her own mental landscape as quite unusually beautiful. Ginger's was not.

Just when she felt that she had reached low ebb of feline fulfillment, a plan began to formulate in her mind.

Sudden inspiration visited her in the night and brought her bolt upright in bed, a seraphic smile on her face. She imagined the benefits of transforming her salon into an introductions and marriage agency. Charitably she would help others to attain the fulfillment she herself lacked.

Also with a little judicious advertising she realized that her own social circle might burgeon and she could set aside some of the creamier clientele for her own diversion.





**B**efore the weeks end a carefully worded advertisement began to appear in the Personals Sections of the newspapers.

Pinky scattered leaflets like confetti around the local telephone booths, hoping to attract the ‘rough diamond’ types who could not be counted upon to read Personal want ads.



She decided to call her new business, so full of promise, the Bridal Beau-tique, a play on words that bounced unexpectedly into her overwrought imagination. Knowing that attractive assistants were critical to the success of her venture she was able to employ twins Lotta and Loris from an agency.

These, she felt, could be counted on for charm but not much else. Astutely she realized that having two of anything reduces the value of a commodity. Clients would not be needlessly distracted long by the obvious charms of Lotta and Loris.





**H**er business concept favoured a ‘one stop’ approach which would include all of the apparel required for any style of wedding, flowers, photographic services, cakes as well as a perfect spouse who had met the requirements of a stringent questionnaire.

From inception she decided to focus her business concept on the advantages of building up a repeat clientele. Variety can be a powerful inducement in the marriage game.

The new Beau-tique opened with little fanfare. Having located Lotta and Loris near the front windows with their well rehearsed smiles and checked that veils were impeccably displayed on the cattequins, she threw open the door to the public.

What she hoped might be her first customer proved to be an agent from Rabbit-On Promotional Services who proposed reinventing her corporate identity - as yet so untried.

Alternatively he would be available to prospect for old coins in her basement with his new metal detector which emitted a strident screeching noise.

The agent's propositions were rebuffed.





Perhaps as a result of this encounter, an unlabelled crate wrapped in a wooly blanket appeared on the threshold. Before Pinky could restore the cover, dozens of baby rabbits had escaped throughout the premises.

These shy creatures gravitated to coverts in the wedding finery and had the irritating habit of popping out of displays unexpectedly as she passed.

Almost immediately Pinky attracted the attentions of the **Fury Over Furies** animal rights group which began to picket vigorously outside her door.

The rabbits drawn to this commotion would gather in the front windows and enact heartrending, theatrical scenes against the glass.





Leafing distractedly through the telephone directory in an effort to keep her mind off these unattractive developments, Pinky encountered the advertisement for an acting agency. She decided to employ a troop of eager actors who would help to bolster the image of her enterprise. She pictured enactment of romantic trysts and a flirtatious charge to the whole environment.

When the actors trooped in she found to her dismay that they preferred to congregate in the rear cutting room, sipping tea, rehearsing and peeping nervously out into the shop area. Pinky felt that potential clients might become inhibited by this furtive scrutiny.

Of course the first actual client to step through the door of the glittering new salon was old Montagu who ensconced himself in front of Loris' desk and pulled out a foul smelling cigar.

Loris struggled to look attentive and intelligent but her mind wandered as he dusted off old stories about youthful pranks.







A locality which had been selected for its air of calm and utter conventionality suddenly seemed to harbour an alarming number of eccentric souls, many of whom began to gravitate over Pinky's threshold.

A fulsome opera diva made a reconnoitering sally, pulling the finery from the mannequins and practicing death throes in their midst.

She and Old Montagu paid not the slightest attention to one another. She wandered around distractedly with critical items stashed in her bundle buggy.



A nattily dressed marmalade cat, who introduced himself as

‘THE Original Smartie Pants’

was keen to impart his vast knowledge of the marriage customs of the Feral Dinkwa in excessively graphic detail to Lotta who sought sanctuary in a display unit.





**A** horizontally challenged Tiger Cat staggered in breathlessly. She threw herself heavily onto one of the couches in the waiting room and fell into a deep, sonorous slumber.

Old Montagu surveyed this offering with a practiced eye and returned quickly to his captivating rendition of the Caterwaulky to a semi-somnolent Loris.

An aesthetically promising young cat named Tybalt seemed to be unnaturally drawn to the display of wedding cakes.

Pinky could not help but feel that he might be taking discreet licks of the icing when unobserved.





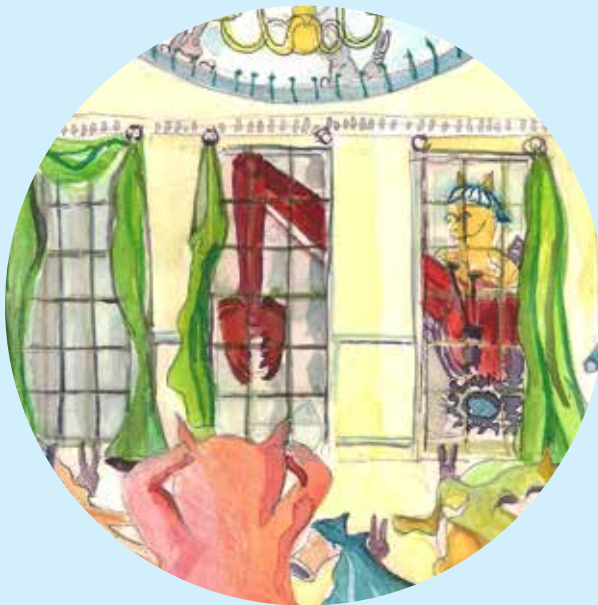
A group of surly cats who must have had trying experiences with the telephone system trundled into the shop and looked around disparagingly.

These were not the ‘rough diamonds’ that she had envisioned when she had scattered the leaflets so bountifully.

Some of the clients were bound to suffer from attitude problems, which Pinky charitably ascribed to low self-esteem.

Later that morning a slip of paper drifted innocently through the mail slot. Pinky placed it in a desk drawer without giving it a second thought. However, shortly afterwards a troop of roadwork engineers arrived and parked some very large equipment outside her front windows. They then began to excavate a very large hole just beyond her threshold in search of a drain that they assured her was located on a surveyor's plan dated 1837.

The engineers seemed to enjoy the location and became quite carried away with the important task ahead of them. Every time the shovel plunged into the ground the display cattequins assumed startling new poses in the Beau-tique revealing unusual aspects of the wedding apparel. The flummery revealed structural deficiencies and Loris and Lotta sought sanctuary under shop furniture taking tasty morsels with them to consume as siege rations.





**A**t regular intervals the operator of the cheerfully labeled 'Cherry Picker' engaged in the roadworks operations on her doorstep would descend from his commanding perch and ask to use the telephone that was inconveniently situated in Pinky's private boudoir.

From this position he would carry on complicated conversations at hysterical pitch with his wife and numerous offspring. Pinky felt it was better to reinforce this particular marriage and give the potential for business a miss in this instance.

During his frequent sallies into the Beau-tique the roadwork foreman began to develop a taste for cutting edge fashion and spent his tea breaks in front of a large mirror trying out effects with the bridal finery.

The rabbits watched from the sidelines with disapproving expressions on their faces. These activities tended to quash the ardour of the other potential patrons and were not at all in keeping with the atmosphere of discretion that Miss Pinkie had hoped to project.







**T**hough Pinky had in the past taken pride in her easy social skills, she began to feel that this new venture was far from attaining viability. Whereas she had hoped to siphon off some of the better prospects for her own diversion, she had little inclination to take up the gauntlet of any that had straggled through her door to date.

She could only feel relief when the roadwork engineer turned his attentions to the horizontally challenged Tiger cat who had begun to stir from her recumbent position. Together they cavorted around the salon snatching up items and afflicting each other with fits of giggles.



Inspired by this and by the cavorting rabbits, the actors became less inhibited and joined the general melee, snatching introductions from the grasp of wavering patrons and piloting them to the till. One of the actors developed a particularly memorable whoop of triumph as she strode forward dragging her usually reluctant merchandise.

Soon word got around and astonishing numbers of like-minded souls began to flock to the Beau-tique. Pinky was able to achieve a certain notoriety, if not exactly prosperity.





Nevertheless she reflected in the quiet moment at the end of the day as she locked the door and tottered upstairs to the sanctuary of her peaceful and mercifully solitary flat that the whole venture was not exactly as she had envisioned it.



*The End*

