

Chapter Twelve

Allow me to begin Lady Virginia by reminding you that the relationship between a lawyer and his client is ~~a~~ sacrosanct, so so whatever you tell me concerning this case, cannot and will not go beyond this room. However, it is equally important to stress, that if you are not completely ~~open~~ ^{frank} with me, I cannot hope to advise you to the best of my ability.

Nudely put ~~enough~~ ^{enough} Virginia who sat back and prepared herself for a series of questions that she didn't want to answer.

My first question is quite simple, are you the mother of the Hon Freddie Fawcett.

No, said Virginia.

And are, as Goodman Demick suggest in their letter of the 18th August, the parents of that child, a certain Mr and Mrs Norton, who were previously your butler and housekeeper.

Yes, said Virginia.

And from that, can I assume, you were not and have never been pregnant.

Yes.

And ~~that~~ ^{their} the settlements and maintenance payments you claimed, the Q.C. hesitated were made promptly.

Yes said Virginia. (PD)

~~I'm grateful Lady Virginia for your candid response to all my questions, so I am now bound to ask do you have~~

So with that in mind ^{Lady Virginia} I am bound to ask, do you have 2,000,000 pounds, available, to pay Mr Cyrus T Grant III and avoid him issuing a writ, and all the attendant publicity that would ~~go with it~~ attract.

No I do not sit forward ^{that} ~~what~~ is the precise reason I am seeking your advice, ^{in the hope of finding} ~~find~~ out if there are any options left open to me.

Are you able to pay a large enough sum for me to attempt to make a settlement.

No Sir Edward, I do not have 2000, let alone 2,000,000.

I'm grateful Lady Virginia for your candid response to all my questions, and ~~given~~ ⁱⁿ the circumstances, it would ^{be} pointless for me to attempt to play for time and try to hold proceedings up, because Lord Goodman is a wily old bird, and will realize exactly what I am up to, and in any case, you would then have the added expense of both sides legal bills to add to ~~the sum~~. The sum. And the judge will order that the legal bills are paid out.

So what do you advise Sir Edward.

Sadly madam we have been left with only two choices, I can ~~either~~ ^{try and} throw myself on their mercy, which ~~I cannot~~ ^{cannot} believe, will ~~elicit~~ ^{elicit} ~~one result~~, I cannot believe will be met with any sympathy.

And the second choice said Virginia.

You can declare yourself bankrupt, which would make the other side realize, that taking a writ for 200000 pounds would be a complete waste of time and money, unless Mr Lynn's grant only purpose is to ~~publicly humiliate you~~ ^{publicly humiliate you}.

This time Lady Virginia did not respond immediately, but as Sir Edward remained silent she eventually said. I am grateful for your advice Sir Edward, and ~~have only one~~ ^{more} ~~question~~.

Yes, M'lady.

~~Does a writ have to be served on the person named in the writ?~~

~~Yes my lady, unless you instruct me to accept it on your behalf.~~

~~I feel sure you will understand that given the circumstances ~~Sir Edward~~ I will need a little time to consider my position.~~

Of course M'lady. However, it would be remiss of me not to remind you that the date on Goodman Demick's letter, is August 14th and if we do not reply before September 14th I fear they ^{other side} will not hesitate to issue a writ ~~claiming~~ ^{claiming} the full amount.

May I ask you one more question Sir Edward.

of course Mr Lady.

Am I right in thinking that a writ was to be served on the person, named in the letter.

That is correct Lady Virginia, unless you instruct me to accept ~~it~~ ^{the writ} on your behalf.

* * *

During the ~~the~~ journey to Sudford the following morning Virginia gave some considerable thought to Sir Edwards' advice. By the time the train pulled into Sudford station, she had decided to invest in a one way ticket to Bunn's Hotel, and take up the invitation to stay with her distant cousin.

When a taxi dropped her outside a local estate agents office, she switched her attention to the job in hand, and how much ^{money} she could accumulate before she departed for Argentina.

Virginia was not surprised to be ushered into the senior partners office, within moments of telling the receptionist her name.

A man, who had newly put on his Sunday best suit for the occasion leant up from behind his desk, and introduced himself as Mr Jones. He waited for his client to be seated before he resumed his place. Without another word he opened a file in front of him, extracted a cheque for 2000 pounds ~~made out to Lady Virginia Forest~~, and handed it across to ~~the~~ Lady Virginia.

Virginia folded the cheque, placed it in her handbag, and was about to leave when it became clear Mr Jones had something else to say.

During the short conversation I was able to gauge with Mr Mellor over the phone he said trying not to look embarrassed, he did not instruct me, what I should do about his mother's goods and chattels, which we have removed from the sale and placed in storage.

Are they worth anything? asked Virginia
A local ~~second hand dealer~~ ^{second hand dealer} ~~merchant~~ had offered £300 for the lot.
I'll take it said Virginia

The estate agent opened his cheque book, and asked, and should this cheque also be made out to Lady Virginia Ewlett.

Yes said Virginia.

Of course that doesn't include the pictures, said Jones as he handed over the cheque.

The pictures said Virginia

Yes ~~it~~ it seems Mr Mellor had been collecting the works of a local artist for some years, and a London dealer ~~of~~ contacted me to say he would be interested in ~~buying~~ ^{purchasing} them. ~~I have written down his details~~ Jones said. A Mr Culman of the Krane Latham gallery.

Most interesting said Virginia not sounding at all interested, as she ~~wanted~~ ^{needed} to get back to London as quickly as possible.

On the journey back to ~~London~~ ^{Kings Cross} she went over her plans for the next few days. The SS Arora was due to sail ~~for~~ from Southampton on Thursday, so she didn't have a moment to waste, once she had cashed both cheques, and cleared her account, which was only a few hundred pounds in credit, she intended she intended to dispose of any valuables she had ~~with her~~ ^{with her}, and be half way across the Atlantic before any of her creditors ~~could~~ ^{were made} aware she'd 'done a bunk' to quote Bobie Bridgewater. And as for Desmond Mellor, by the time he got out of prison, she would be the best of his problems, and she ^{also} ~~felt~~ ^{felt} wouldn't ~~that~~ he wouldn't be traveling half way around the world to retrieve his money.

Virginia was so grateful for Sir Edward's advice, because it would be difficult to serve ^{her} with a writ, if they didn't even know where she was. She'd even told Bobie that she would be spending a few weeks in the south of France ⁽¹²⁰⁾ she didn't give a passing thought ⁽¹²⁰⁾ to the Hon Freddie Fawcett, ~~she~~ after all, he wasn't her child.

* * *

Virginia was pleased to receive a letter from Alfonso her distant cousin, confirming that there would be a chauffeur waiting for her on the dock side, ^{with instructions} to drive her to his estate in the country. She liked the words chauffeur and estate.

Once Virginia had cashed Melville's check, cleared her bank account, and purchased a one way ticket to Buenos Aires, she ^{set about} the long process of packing. ~~She~~ ^{she} discovered just how many of personal possessions ^{she} had left her shelves, she just couldn't live without, ^{pro} which would require another large trunk. A short walk to Harrod usually solved most of her problems, and to-day was no exception, ~~because~~ she managed to find a trunk with a dent in the side, and to take it off their hands, ^{she asked to buy} ~~it~~ ^{it} half price. The young salesman hadn't noticed the dent before. And be sure that it's delivered to my home in Cadogan Street she instructed the airport assistant, later this morning.

A ~~the~~ ^{lured} doorman opened the door and touched his peaked cap ~~the moment he saw her ladyship~~. ^{pro}
Taxi naturally.

Virginia was about to say yes, when her gaze settled on ~~the name of~~ an art gallery on the other side of the road. Krane Cabman. Why did she know that name? And then she remembered.

No thank you she said, ^{Virginia} ~~she~~ raised a hand ^{to stop the huff} ~~and~~ made her way across the Brompton road, wondering if she would pick up another two or three hundred. As she entered the gallery a bell rang, and a stout man with ~~very~~ wavy hair bustled up and said. Can I help you madam, unable to hide his mid European accent,

Yes I was recently in Saltard when...

Ah, yes of course, you must be Lady Virginia. Mr Jones called to say you might come in, if you were ~~at all~~ interested in selling the late Mr Melville's art collection.

what are you willing to offer asked Virginia who didn't have a moment to waste.

Over the years said Mr Calman who didn't appear to be in any hurry, ^{Ms Mellor acquired eleven oils, and twenty three drawings from her real estate.} I feel sure you know she ~~was~~ ^{became} a close friend of the artist, and I have reason to believe...

How much Virginia ~~was~~ ^{insisted}, aware of how much she still had to do in the next couple of days.

I consider 180 would be a fair price.

200 and you have a deal said Virginia

Calman hesitated for a moment before saying. I would agree to that, ^{and even go to 230,} if you were able to tell me where the missing painting was,

The missing painting?

^{LS} ~~Yes~~ ^{Lowery} I am in possession of an inventory of all the works ~~that~~ sold or ~~given~~ ^{given} to Mr Mellor, but I have been unable to locate the Mill Lane indicated estate, and wondered if you had any idea where it is. ^{no longer had}

Virginia knew exactly where it was, but ~~didn't~~ ^{didn't} ~~have~~ the time to travel down to Bristol to pick it up. However, one phone call to X Mellor's secretary, and she could dispatch it ~~immediately~~ ^{straight away} to Mr Calman immediately.

I accept your offer of 230, ^{said Virginia will} and make sure that the painting is delivered to you in the next few days.

Thank you Mr Lady said Calman who returned to his desk, wrote out a cheque and handed it over to Lady Virginia.

She folded the cheque, dropped it in her ^{hand} bag and gave the shopkeeper an unobtrusive smile. She walked back out onto the Brompton Road, ^{and} hailed a taxi.

Walt in the strand she ~~to~~ ^{to} initiated ^{the} ~~cab~~ ^{cab} ~~before~~ ^{before} ~~leaving~~ ^{leaving} ~~visit~~. Virginia was considering how she would spend her last night in London - Duke and suggested Anabel - when the taxi drew up outside the bank. wait

there she said, This won't take long.

As she ~~walked~~ ^{entered} to the banking hall, she turned
around to one of the girls, unfolded the cheque, and
slipped it across the counter.

It was to cash this ^{immediately} she said.

Certainly madam said the cashier who when he saw
the cheque turned white.

I presume you ~~would~~ intended to deposit ~~the~~ it in
your account.

No, I'll take it cash said Virginia, preferably five.
I'm not sure that will be possible ~~Madam~~ ~~and~~ ~~for~~
~~cash~~ ~~to~~ ~~be~~ ~~made~~ ~~at~~ ~~the~~ ~~cashier~~.

And why not demanded Virginia

I don't think we carry 230,000 pounds in cash ~~Madam~~

* * *

She's willing to make an offer said Eli May, I must
confess, that comes as a surprise.

~~For the~~ ^{I have} said Lord Goodman, as I have it on good
authority that Lady Virginia was cut out of her ^{late} father's
will, and was no longer to be seen frequenting London
most fashionable night spots.

So how much is she offering, said Eli May.

One million pounds, which will be paid in ten equal
installments of one hundred thousand pounds, over ten years.

But she stole two million from my husband said Eli
May, so she can go to hell.

~~I can understand exactly how you feel~~ ^(No) ~~Mr Grant~~, but
when I received the letter, I decided to have a
private word with Sir Edward Murellie Q.C. who has
represented the Fenwick family interests over many years.
~~and he~~ ^{Sir Edward} made it clear this was a full and final offer,
and there was to quote him 'no wiggle room', and he
added that were you to turn down the offer, he had
been instructed to recover the rest on Lady Virginia's behalf.

~~Her~~
~~the~~

~~the~~ bluffing said Elli May.

I can assure you Mr Grant Sir Edward doesn't bluff.

So what do you think I should do.

If I were in your position Mr Grant, I could ~~not~~ ^{approach} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~amount~~ ^{amount}, however why you would ~~want~~ ^{want} to go after the full amount, however if we were to go down that path, it might take several years, and as we now know she has enough money to cover her legal ~~costs~~ ^{costs}, if you might end up with nothing to show for it, other than a large legal bill, ^{of your own} because I'm not convinced it her own money ^{pro} I suspect she got her brother, she might call to bank her, and even ^{Lord Foxworth} ~~will~~ ^{will} have his limits ^{pro} and then we must consider all the other aspects of this case.

What do you have in mind asked Elli May.

Were ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~action~~ ^{action} to come to court, Lady Virginia would be ruined and possibly end up in prison.

Nothing would please me more said Elli May while at the same time, your husband's reputation would also suffer.

How can that be possible when she the innocent party clearly Mr Grant, you have not experienced the English habits on the rampage.

I have no idea what you are talking about,

then let me assure this story will run and run, and I fear your husband will not come out of it smelling of roses. They will paint him as a naive fool and a casholt, a man I fear is

~~the~~ ^{the} ~~more~~ ^{more} than the truth said Elli May solemnly, possibly Mr Grant, but it that something you want to share with the whole world.

So what are you suggesting Lord Goodman.

It is my considered opinion you should settle, unprofitable as ~~that~~ ^{that} may be. This case could run for years and years, and the only people who would benefit ^{from the action} ~~would~~ ^{would} be the lawyers

I therefore suggest you accept their offer of 250,000,
return to America and put this whole unpleasant
experience behind you. However, you are the client, and
naturally, I will abide by your instructions, whatever
they may be.

My old Scottish grandfather ~~Robert~~ ^{Robert} Campbell used to
say "Lad, better ten dollars in the bank, than a
promise of twenty."

was he a lawyer by any chance said Goodman.

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