

A Tale of Two Sisters

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Matrimonial Property Issues

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Scene: The comfortable but slightly dusty office of Bentley (“Ben”) Redcliff Winfield, Q.C.

Present are Ben, his client Patricia Lake-Claire (“Patty”) and her supportive twin sister, Edith Lake (“Edie”).

For nearly two hours, Ben, his client and, indeed, her sister, had been reviewing the property settlement proposal received from the lawyer for Patty’s husband, Kirk Patrick Claire (“Kirk”). His counsel, Philomena Aldevan Conklin (“Philly”), while somewhat junior to Ben Winfield, probably has a higher profile in family law circles particularly given her well known preference to represent the interests of men in divorce and her well known and much publicized belief that truly liberated women fend for themselves. (Philly never offers less than three or four inputs at any family law “Townhall meeting” and never saw a microphone at a LESA event that did not have her name on it.)

Still, given the disclosure received (fulsome) and the expert opinions obtained, Ben, Patty and Edie are in agreement that the property settlement proposal, advanced on behalf of Kirk is fair and reasonable.

It is just as the sisters are packing up to leave, comfortable in their (joint) instruction to Ben to confirm acceptance of the property settlement proposal when Edie does the classic *“I just have one quick question”*.

Ben, pretty much guessing what is coming, (and quite used to the *“one quick question”* that gives rise to a law school exam answer) bites.

“Oh, and what is that?”

As expected, Edie replies, *“Well, may I just ask what should Patty get for alimony?”*

Ben notes *“It’s not a simple answer. Certainly we will be looking into that but I’ll have to get back to Patty as to what we should be asking for, if at all”*.

A TALE OF TWO SISTERS

“They were the best of twins, they were the worst of twins”.

Patricia and Edith Lake, identical twins, were a happy surprise to their parents just over fifty years ago. From the outset, they were bright, delightful girls, a joy to their parents and to all who knew them through their childhood. They were inseparable for years and it was only about grade 6, when their friends and classmates began to suggest that it was not really that “cool” anymore, that they gave up their occasional habit of dressing identically.

Excellent students throughout school, it was suggested by some educators that, if there were any educational concerns to be dealt with regarding the twins, they probably related to the fact that the curriculum was not necessarily challenging enough for them.

The one minor blip in their academic performance occurred in grade ten when Patty, succumbing to the lure of a warm Spring Friday and less than engrossed in the Social Ten curriculum, skipped a last class (without even telling her sister) opting instead to explore the more interesting history of “Charles Darnay” in hardcover, under a tree. Years later the twins still laughed about what happened the following Monday when the report of Patty’s unexplained absence from class reached the school principal, Cowley Oldman, who was storming around the halls between classes when he ran into Edith Lake near the drinking fountain. Obviously upset and in a raised voice, Oldman confronted her with *“Are you Patricia Lake or are you her sister?”*. Edie, sensing trouble and reacting defensively, truly flustered, replied, *“Please sir, I am my sister!”*. There was much to be sorted out thereafter.

So close were the twins that even their career ambitions matched. The only real schism between them came about when, about to turn twenty and having both completed successfully the first year of a four year education degree, Patricia’s “career plans” suddenly changed.

Patricia had a Summer job at the front desk at a Brazeau Lumber outlet. She would take orders, assist in sales, dispatch loads and the like and it was that Summer that she met Kirk Patrick Claire, a young trucker with a big rig. He was two years older than she, shy and quiet enough but pleasant withal. He still owed on his rig but he had plans. He was going to work hard, get his truck paid off, save money and buy another truck, even before he bought a house. He would hire a driver for that truck and expand his business over time. He was really going to be something.

Within the year, Patricia had dropped out of University and she and Kirk had married.