

‘Huge respect for the skilfully crafted legal thriller *A Trial in Three Acts*.
A brilliant and entertaining read’

B.A. Paris, author of *Behind Closed Doors*

‘A captivating murder mystery executed with pin-point precision and
skill that verges on the masterful. My verdict: all rise for a future
book of the year’

Janice Hallett, author of *The Appeal*

‘Is there a genre of comfort crime? *A Trial in Three Acts* is like a hearty
stew on a winter’s evening; it fills you up yet still leaves you wanting
more. There are so many levels to savour through the brilliant writing
and plotting and Charles Konig is a wonderful character’

Ian Moore, author of *Death and Croissants*

‘I was found resoundingly guilty of dropping everything to lose myself
in this courtroom tale of dark emotion and murder amongst the tombs
of a Necropolis. The legal and historical twists were as involved and
enthalling as the catacombs themselves’

J.M. Hall, author of *A Spoonful of Murder*

‘*A Trial in Three Acts* is as deft as it is surprising. It’s a masterclass in
character, has the wit of those sublime moments of Rumpole,
and a plot that’s completely unforgettable. Guy Morpuss is
annoyingly good at this’

Helen Fields, author of *The Institution*

‘An absolute delight. A tale of rampant narcissism, cruelty and
despicable behaviour. More Charles Konig please!’

Emma Curtis, author of *The Babysitter*

‘If you like your thrillers multi-layered, clever and compelling,
this one’s for you’

Jennie Godfrey, author of *The List of Suspicious Things*

‘A clever, gripping and innovative legal mystery. It’s a whip-smart page
turner which truly delivers’

Sarah J. Harris, author of *The Colour of Bee Larkham’s Murder*

‘A clever concept executed with real panache. Thoroughly recommended’

Victoria Selman, author of *Truly, Darkly, Deeply*

‘An ingenious murder mystery with a fiendishly clever puzzle and
brilliantly original theatrical set-up. It had me guessing until the very end’

Philippa East, author of *Little White Lies*

‘Fiendishly clever with elegant prose. Perfect if you like your
whodunnits elevated’

Tina Baker, author of *Call Me Mummy*

‘Funny, clever, and written with heart – it would be a crime to miss this’

Joanna Wallace, author of *You’d Look Better as a Ghost*

‘In the dry, wry letters and calm unspooling cross-examining of
Charles Konig KC you have the infinitely gratifying sense of being
in the hands of a master’

Oskar Jensen, author of *Helle and Death*

‘Guy Morpuss has the uncanny ability to take his unique blend
of savagery and wit to the jugular and very much the heart at the same
time. I couldn’t put this down’

Matt Wesolowski, author of *Six Stories*

‘A terrific legal thriller, easily one of the most satisfyingly accurate
I’ve read in some time’

Tariq Ashkanani, author of *Welcome to Cooper*

‘Guy Morpuss ensnares the reader with this meticulously woven legal
mystery that builds to a sensational climax’

Eve Smith, author of *The Waiting Rooms*

‘A wonderful murder mystery told in a way only Guy Morpuss could.
Charles Konig KC is a wonderful new literary character, one I hope
to see more of soon. This is one trial where you’ll happily be held in
contempt – of putting the book down!’

Chris Frost, author of *The Killer’s Christmas List*

‘A fantastic novel, full of flair and so easy to read that by the time you
realise it, fifty pages or more have been gobbled up’

G.D. Wright, author of *After the Storm*

‘This is an unputdownable courtroom drama with an enigmatic
protagonist, a cunning plot, and atmospheric stage setting.

Thoroughly engrossing’

L.J. Shepherd, author of *The Trials of Lila Dalton*

Also from Guy Morpuss and Viper

Five Minds

Black Lake Manor

A TRIAL IN THREE ACTS

GUY MORPUSS



First published in Great Britain in 2025 by

VIPER,

an imprint of Profile Books Ltd

29 Cloth Fair

London

EC1A 7JQ

www.profilebooks.com

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1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Designed and typeset by Crow Books.

Printed and bound in Great Britain by

CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY.

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A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

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Compliance Ltd., Ground Floor, 71 Lower Baggot Street, Dublin, D02 P593,

Ireland, www.arccompliance.com

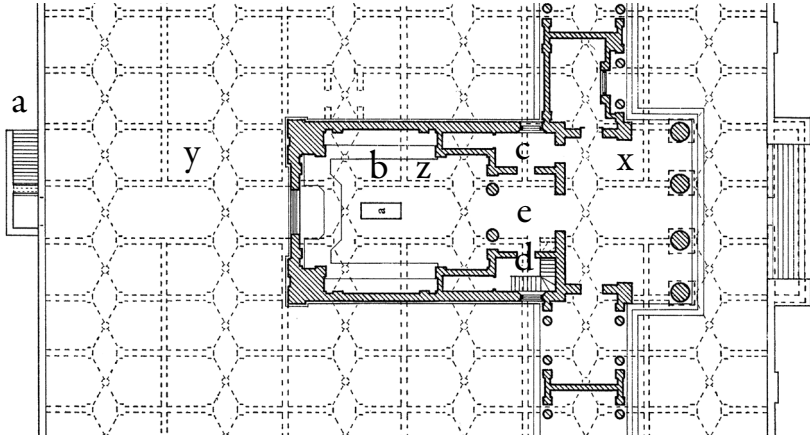
ISBN 978 1 80081 898 9

eISBN 978 1 80081 899 6



To my Yara

ALL SOULS CHAPEL



Ground Level

- a – Western gate
- b – Chapel and catafalque
- c – Vestry/control room
- d – Stairs to catacombs
- e – Vestibule & Lady Virginia's coffin

Catacombs

- x – Actors' dressing room
- y – Female bodysuit found
- z – Dummy found

DAUGHTER OF THE REVOLUTION

Cast List

Mr Bai Feiyu	Sir William Hamilton / Citizen Genet
Ms Alexandra Dyce	Lady Dunmore
Miss Francesca Dyce	Lady Augusta Murray
Mr Leo Lusk	George Washington / John Quincy Adams
Mr Gwala Ngidi	Prince Augustus / the Earl of Dunmore
Ms Ada Pullen	Lady Virginia Murray

Directed by Mr Sfiso Dlomo

ACT ONE

**MURDER IN
THE CHAPEL**

20 October

Daily Telegraph

BAFTA-WINNER ALEXANDRA DYCE DIES ON STAGE

Daily Mirror

OFF WITH HER HEAD: ACTRESS BRUTALLY
KILLED DURING ROYAL PLAY

Sun

SLICE AND DYCE!

Independent

MURDER OR MISHAP? POLICE PROBE
GRISLY DEATH OF ACTRESS

Daily Mail

SHOCK AND HORROR AS AUDIENCE FLEES
BLOOD-SPATTERED STAGE

Guardian

ONSTAGE AND VULNERABLE: UNIONS CALL FOR
SAFETY REVIEW AFTER DEATH OF ACTOR

Daily Star

FROM LIMELIGHT TO TWILIGHT: DID VAMPIRES
STEAL SLAIN ACTRESS'S HEAD?

The Times

Letters to the Editor

Sir,

Your report that 72% of King's Counsel share the same character traits as psychopaths ('Single-Minded Sociopathic Silks', Sep 17) would, I suspect, come as no surprise to my former fiancée. I confess that I once missed the start of a romantic weekend away after a trial overran thanks to my determination to persuade a particularly cloth-eared judge that I was correct in my construction of section 5(2)(a) of the Fraud Act 2006.

Much as I enjoyed my victory, my fiancée, who was left with nothing to do but tour the Icelandic National Herring Museum on her own, seemed rather less impressed.

Charles Konig KC

London

CENTRAL CRIMINAL COURT, THE KING V JAMES WARD, DAY 3

Litigation is all about momentum.

My first pupilmaster used to say that trials are like oil tankers: once they've started heading in the wrong direction it's almost impossible to turn them around.

Putting a client in the witness box ought to be the high point of their case. It's invariably what they've been crying out for since they first strode confidently into my room in chambers, gripping my hand with a too-firm handshake, and sitting down without waiting to be asked.

I deal mostly in corporate fraud, and my clients are all the same: bold, brash, rich – and in trouble. But they don't see it that way. They think that they've been tripped up by government bean counters, ants so far below them that they're not even worth stepping on. Partly the clients resent the need to have to ask for my help; partly, though, the bit they won't acknowledge: they're terrified that they'll end up in a six-by-eight cell with a tattooed roommate who's searching for a new love interest.

They're all sure of one thing. They've spent their lives making a fortune by selling their crap to the little people. 'Get me in front of the jury and I'll have them eating out of my hand,' they say.

It doesn't usually work out that way.

When a client goes into the witness box it's the moment that I lose control. Up until then I've been the one running the show, asking the questions, pulling the strings. Once my client's being cross-examined there's nothing I can do. I just watch, helpless, expressionless, as more and more of my carefully constructed case falls apart – hoping that

enough remains to allow me to use the words ‘reasonable doubt’ in my closing submissions.

Because what clients don’t realise is that being in court isn’t just another day at the office. Cross-examination is the worst business meeting they’re ever going to attend.

The courtroom isn’t their territory. It’s mine. Mine, and people like me.
King’s Counsel. KCs. Silks.

Psychopaths in wigs.

We hide our true selves behind history. Four hundred years on we’re still wearing robes mourning the death of King Charles II. And a monkey jacket, a long-sleeved waistcoat with the last button undone out of solidarity with King Edward VII, because he was too stout to do his up.

But beneath the pageantry and tradition there is a ruthless desire to win.

Few people who enter a courtroom leave with their reputations intact.

John Varley KC doesn’t look much like a shark. At five foot eight, and sixteen stone, he fills out his robes more than most. Even the second button of his monkey jacket seems in danger. He reminds me of a pufferfish as he gets to his feet: chest pushed out, narrow eyes fixed on the witness, a slight sneer on his meaty lips. He speaks slowly, a cultured drawl manufactured on the playing fields of Eton.

His languid manner belies the reality. In truth, John Varley is one of the most vicious predators to inhabit the courts of the Old Bailey.

True to form, he had spent the best part of the day slowly taking apart my client’s story.

James Ward, Chief Executive Officer of Icon Corp, had been no different from the others. He’d sworn the oath with a faintly smug smile on his face, nodding to the judge as though welcoming him to his boardroom. The judge had looked back impassively. He had sent many better men to prison.

At first Ward had been calm and confident in his answers. He’d remembered his instructions: listen to the questions, answer yes or no,

don't elaborate unless you have to, don't try to be clever. Above all, don't lie. If you're not sure, say so.

CEOs are the worst at that. They are used to having answers to everything. They can't bring themselves to say: 'I don't know.'

So they get tripped up.

As the morning went on it had started to unravel. At first just a few minor inconsistencies. Then some bold statements that didn't quite match the historic documents. Suddenly there were hesitations in Ward's answers. Then, worst of all, he was looking across at me as though I could help.

There's nothing I can do. This isn't some US courtroom drama. If I shout 'objection' the judge will tell me to sit down and shut up. Worse, the jury will see that I no longer trust my client to answer the question. And if *I* don't trust my client, why should *they*?

I could see that Ward was on the edge, and it wasn't going to take much for Varley to push him over.

But sometimes even the top shark makes a mistake. Takes one bite too many.

Like most of my cases the subject matter was dry as dust, my client's alleged manipulation of the stock markets being founded on economic theories formed in Margaret Thatcher's Britain in the 1980s. Varley had taken Ward down a series of ever more convoluted rabbit holes, culminating in putting to him several articles written by Thatcher's chancellor, Nigel Lawson.

Varley ought to have quit while he was ahead. Instead, he got greedy.

He reached towards the screen in front of him, about to dismiss the last of the Lawson articles. Then he paused, looking at the photograph of the overweight chancellor next to his byline. He chuckled.

Varley had my client on his knees, now he wanted to deliver the *coup de grâce*. To show that he was so much in command that he could even afford to make jokes. His lip curled as his gaze travelled along the jury box. 'Evidently, ladies and gentlemen, that's a photograph of Mr Lawson taken before he wrote his famous diet book.'

There was a moment's silence, then the witness coughed, leaning forward slightly. He looked the silk up and down, and for the first time in hours he smiled. 'Evidently, Mr Varley, a book you've not read.'

My opponent stiffened, his face flushed.

The judge's hand flew to his mouth as he snorted, trying to stifle his reaction.

I remained, as ever, impassive. Outwardly at least.

At first there was a quiet ripple behind us in the public gallery, then a wave of laughter engulfed the courtroom.

Juries are fickle creatures, and in that moment Varley lost them for good.

Litigation is all about momentum.

John Varley was waiting for me in the robing room.

His wig and gown were flung over a chair, and he was standing with his back to me, staring out of the grimy window at the traffic passing along Old Bailey below.

He turned as I entered, his face red, nostrils flaring. 'What the fuck was that? Did you put him up to it?'

I smiled. 'You screwed yourself over. You know the first rule of cross-examination is stop while you're ahead.'

'I taught you that crap, so don't throw it back at me. We both know trials are about perception. Make yourself look like a fool and the jury think you're a fool. They don't care if it's fair or not, suddenly they don't believe in you any more.'

'Well, you did give him an open goal.' I paused, then offered a crumb of comfort. 'I'll admit it was a pretty low blow from my client.'

That's the funny thing about being a barrister. In court no quarter is given. You'll do whatever it takes to win. Outside court, though, we're all meant to be friends. By tradition we don't even shake hands with one another, our trust so complete that we don't need to demonstrate that we're not carrying swords.

At least that's the pretence.

Varley and I have known each other for years. We are in the same set of chambers, and have crossed metaphorical swords on many occasions. It doesn't mean that we have any great affection for one another.

He slumped into a chair and looked up at me. 'It was worse than low,' he grumbled. 'I'm tempted to report him for hate speech.'

'Not my area, but I'm fairly certain size isn't a protected characteristic.'

Varley bristled at that, and I moved on quickly.

'So, are you going to make us an offer?'

'The CPS won't let me. They can't be seen to drop the case, so they'd much rather have an acquittal and blame the jury.'

I shrugged. If we won it wouldn't be my victory, and I'd long since stopped caring about whether people like James Ward went to prison. Most of them deserved it, but that didn't stop the CPS screwing up more often than not.

Varley glowered at me.

As I turned to go, I grinned at him over my shoulder. 'At least I've got a good story to tell at chambers tea this evening.'

He snarled as the door closed behind me.

2

GARROW CHAMBERS, INNER TEMPLE

Chambers tea. That quaint tradition where we gather after court and feign modesty as we recount our latest triumphs. Or disasters. Or, better yet, someone else's disasters.

I didn't make it to tea that day.

The jury were sent out mid-afternoon, and twenty minutes later returned a not-guilty verdict.

By the time I bade him goodbye outside court, my client had recovered his poise. His smile was wide, his handshake firm. 'See, I told you I'd win it for us, Charles.'

For once he was actually right, but he didn't realise just how lucky he'd been.

'I'm pleased we got the result you wanted,' I said. 'Let's make sure we don't meet up like this again. Next time listen to your accountants.'

Ward's smile faded slightly. I wasn't meant to be raining on his parade.

I walked back to chambers, down bustling Ludgate Hill and Fleet Street, then ducking into the tranquillity of Inner Temple with its ancient buildings and gardens. Garrow Chambers, where Varley and I were tenants, was at the bottom of Middle Temple Lane.

Mine is one of the round turreted rooms with the best views over the gardens and the Thames beyond. And the highest rent. The perks and curses of seniority.

I was halfway up the worn stone staircase when a voice called from below. 'Mr Konig, sir, can we have a word?'

I stopped as my head clerk, Geoffrey, bounced up the stairs behind me. 'Can I come up with you, sir?'

'Of course.' I resumed my climb.

'Congratulations on the acquittal.'

'You heard what happened?'

'Indeed, sir. The judge's clerk was on the phone to me before the jury had even returned, and the story's gone round the Temple by now. Mr Varley will be ribbed mercilessly for the next couple of weeks.'

There's nothing barristers like more than hearing about someone else screwing up. It makes us feel better about our own mistakes. The price of living life on a high wire is that you're always just a misstep away from disaster. It's much better to watch someone else fall.

'He seems to blame me for it,' I said.

'It is true, sir, that he didn't seem best pleased.'

At the top of the stairs Geoffrey scurried past me, opening my door and standing aside as I passed through. I dropped my bag on the desk and sank into my chair, tugging loose my collar studs and bands.

Geoffrey tutted under his breath, then opened the bag and removed my crumpled silk gown and wig. The gown went on a battered tailor's dummy in one corner, the wig on a wooden Indonesian cat next to it. The collar studs and bands were tidied away into a drawer.

'Thanks,' I said. 'I'm tired. I'm glad that's over.'

'I trust you're going somewhere to celebrate with an appropriately expensive vintage, sir?'

'Not likely. I'm peopled out. I'll probably go for a run along the Thames to clear my head, and then I need to start packing. After three back-to-back trials I'm looking forward to getting away for a couple of weeks.'

Geoffrey turned from where he was fussing over my gown, and coughed lightly. 'Ah. About that, sir ...'

'What?' I asked testily.

He answered with a question of his own. 'Have you seen the latest rankings on Cicero's Law?'

‘Why should I care what some legal gossip blog says about me? I might be more interested if I knew who writes it.’

‘Rumour round the clerks’ room is that it’s a retired judge,’ Geoffrey said.

‘Wasn’t the last rumour you told me about a head of chambers shagging the husband of a Supreme Court judge? It’s a good job I never repeated that one, because I’m pretty sure it wasn’t true. I think it’s much more likely Cicero is written by some pissed-off lawyer who never even got pupillage. Or maybe by one of your fellow clerks.’

‘Whoever writes it, sir, they evidently like you. You’ve just leapfrogged Mr Varley to number one in their rankings.’

I hesitated, and Geoffrey smiled.

‘What, overall, or just in fraud?’ I asked.

‘Criminal fraud silks. As of ten minutes ago you’re number one, and Mr Varley has dropped to two. Overall in crime you and Mr Varley are three and four respectively.’ He sighed. ‘You’re never going to get to number one unless you stop the fraud trials and start doing more murders.’

‘You know I don’t like all that squishy human emotion stuff,’ I said. ‘Murders are dull. Ninety-nine per cent of the time you know who’s done it, and the only question is whether the fact that the victim was sleeping with his personal trainer justified his wife stabbing him with a kitchen knife, or whatever. Besides, none of this matters, since I’m going to be away for two weeks; by the time I get back I’ll have slipped down the rankings again. And I don’t believe clients pay a blind bit of notice to what Cicero thinks of us. I’ve lost plenty of cases where I’ve been better than the other side – and won plenty where I wasn’t.’

‘I disagree, sir. I’m the one who is selling you, and I can tell you that lots of clients check where you’re ranked. And I’ve got the perfect case to get you to number one.’ He coughed and looked away. ‘The only downside is that the trial starts in ten days.’

‘Then it’ll be starting without me. Ten days from now I’ll be on the Baltoro Glacier, somewhere near K2 base camp. Most importantly,

without a mobile phone.' I smiled. 'No clients, Geoffrey, and no clerks chasing me. The world isn't going to stop turning without me.'

'Oh, come now, sir, you'll miss us. You can reschedule your trek. With great respect, it's not as though you've got a partner you're letting down, or family.'

I stared at him.

With great respect?

If I want a judge to know that they're being pig-headed and stupid, my submissions start 'with respect'. If I want them to know that they've come out with a legal proposition that would make even the dumbest first-year law student blush then I say 'with *great* respect'.

I shook my head. 'Don't use that on me. I need a break.'

'Really, sir, you need to appreciate that this isn't just your run-of-the-mill murder case. If you don't do it Mr Varley will, as Ms Ortiz told me he's their second choice.'

'Who?'

'Yara Ortiz,' Geoffrey said. 'Didn't you read the piece that Cicero did on her last week? She's some hot-shot New York lawyer, a partner at Eastman Scamp, and she's been parachuted in to sort out the mess their London office is in after the Synchron Equities case.'

'Why the hell does she want to instruct me, then? It was my cross-examination of her partners that exposed their malpractice.'

'I did subtly ask her the same question, to make sure that she knew you'd been on the other side. Turns out she shared your view that her ex-partners were, as she put it, arrogant, lying dickheads. And she said she likes instructing winners.'

'Well, flattering though it is, tell her to instruct Varley. I've had enough. Find me something else in a month or so and I'll jump at it, but for now K2 is calling.'

'I thought you might say that.' Geoffrey paused, then walked over to one of my bookshelves. He ran a finger along a series of near-identical spines. 'John Tyler, James Polk, Zachary Taylor. I'm not sure I've heard of

any of them, sir. I have to confess that I've never really understood your obsession with reading about dead US presidents.'

'It's a hobby, not an obsession. To be a great advocate you need to understand human nature at its most extreme, so who better to study? Although you have chosen three of the dullest there, as the 1840s didn't give us many memorable presidents. Taylor is probably best known, and only for his death, caused by a surfeit of fresh milk and cherries.'

Geoffrey chuckled. 'Like Henry I, with his lampreys.'

I stood up. 'Look, I'll happily discuss US presidents or English kings with you another time. Fascinating though this is, I need to get out for a run, and then go home and start packing.'

'Before you do, sir ...' Geoffrey reached behind him, and pulled the first volume from the shelf, turning it to me. On the cover was a familiar portrait: powdered white hair, lips clenched tight, a high-necked black coat. 'Even I have heard of George Washington.' He paused. 'How would you fancy defending him on a charge of murder?'

Cicero's Law

Leo Lusk Trial: 'You're Fired!'

There was high drama at the Old Bailey this morning, as embattled Hollywood superstar Leo Lusk channelled his inner Donald Trump and sacked his entire legal team – from the dock!

Lusk was infuriated at the decision of Mrs Justice Orridge to revoke his bail less than two weeks before the start of his murder trial. He has spent the last year under effective house arrest in his £30 million penthouse apartment in Chelsea, after the judge was previously persuaded that his high profile and the surrender of his US passport meant that he did not constitute a flight risk. His lawyers successfully argued that because of his celebrity he would be vulnerable if put in prison while on remand.

However, that all changed with a report in the *Daily Mail* last week that, thanks to a German grandparent, Lusk holds dual US-German citizenship. His lawyers were castigated by Mrs Justice Orridge for their failure to disclose this at previous bail hearings. Their inability to say whether Lusk even holds a current German passport – let alone its whereabouts – seriously undermined his position. It was also reported that Lusk owns a multi-million-dollar beach house near Los Roques Archipelago, Venezuela. Despite his lawyers insisting that he had not visited it in several years, the UK's lack of any extradition treaty with Venezuela seems to have weighed heavily with the judge, who pointed out that he could be on a private jet and out of reach of British jurisdiction within hours.

Lusk's reaction to the judge's decision to revoke bail was one of fury, only calming down when threatened by the judge with a charge of contempt of court. Before being taken to the cells Lusk told his shamefaced legal team that they were fired.

No doubt the silks in the Temple will be lining up to take on such a high-profile – and lucrative – brief. It's the celebrity murder trial of the decade: warring movie stars, decapitation, and one of the biggest names in Hollywood.

But it could be something of a poisoned chalice. There is no doubt that Lusk had strong reasons for wanting to see his ex-wife dead, and it remains unclear what his defence is going to be. Some have suggested that he ought to be pleading diminished responsibility on the basis of the controversial celebrity SoulGene Therapy that he underwent in preparation for his role as George Washington in the play in which his ex-wife died. Many thought that he was losing his grip on reality after he declared, in interviews, that the therapy had left him 'imbued with the spirit of Washington', and that he now identifies as the former president. Whatever that means!

Could it be argued that that is what led him to commit murder? Or was it all just a publicity stunt for his play?

How the mighty have fallen. Just two years ago Lusk was riding high with the success of box-office hit *Velocity Risk* and the blockbuster *Orion Protocol* trilogy. Then he shocked Hollywood by moving to London for a one-year sabbatical to star in a play with his ex-wife and daughter – a move which could now become more permanent than he intended.

Could Leo Lusk be about to swap Beverley Hills for Wormwood Scrubs?

3

ALL SOULS CEMETERY, THE KING V LEO LUSK, DAY 1, SITE VISIT

Most trials start in a courtroom. This one started in a cemetery.

All Souls Cemetery, Kensal Green, West London. Seventy-two acres of woodland and mausoleums wedged between the Harrow Road to the north, and the Grand Union Canal to the south.

It was a blustery autumn morning, a light rain in the air, leaves swirling between the gravestones. I shivered, pulling my coat closer about me.

Above me loomed the portico and colonnade that framed the entrance to the Anglican chapel. Steps made of thick Portland stone led up to metal doors twice my height.

It was ten days on, my trek through the Karakoram Mountains now nothing more than a distant dream.

Three other people stood with me. Mrs Justice Orridge was on the bottom-most step, dressed all in black, a hat pulled low over her grey hair. Behind her was her clerk, a thin man struggling to hold an umbrella steady over her. As a gust of wind pushed him sideways she glowered over her shoulder at him.

‘Henry, you’ll have someone’s eye out with that,’ she snapped, glancing up at the dark clouds overhead. ‘Put it away.’

Her clerk seemed grateful for the instruction, hastily turning his back on us and fighting to furl the umbrella.

‘Gentlemen,’ the judge said, ‘are your instructing solicitors not coming?’

John Varley shook his head. To my annoyance, having missed out on

the defence brief, he'd been snapped up by the prosecution. It wasn't going to make for an easy trial.

'Unlike Konig here, we haven't got unlimited funds,' Varley said. 'The CPS budget doesn't run to day trips, Judge. She said she'd be in court this afternoon instead.'

I glanced at my watch: 09:58. Yara Ortiz should have been here by now.

'I thought my solicitor was joining us, but who knows?' I said. 'Maybe they're still on US time at Eastman Scamp.'

The judge smiled. 'Anyway, I think we all know your views on instructing solicitors and juniors. What was it Cicero called you? The lone wolf of the Temple?'

'It was something like that, Judge. Perhaps, though—'

I could hear a vehicle approaching from around the side of the chapel. The judge's smile faded, and the time for pleasantries was clearly over. A small bus rounded the corner, stopping in front of us.

'Right, gentlemen,' the judge said. 'Just on time, so let's get started. I'll remind the jury of the ground rules and then I'll hand over to you, Varley. Since this is effectively part of the Crown's opening, Konig, I'm only expecting you to chip in if absolutely necessary.'

I nodded. 'Of course, Judge.'

The twelve members of the jury filed out of the bus, escorted by two court ushers. They gathered on the gravel path in front of the chapel, shuffling nervously and looking about them.

10:02. My solicitor was late.

'Ladies and gentlemen, good morning,' the judge said. 'Given the weather, we will keep you here for as short a time as possible. As you know, I am Mrs Justice Orridge, the judge who will be presiding over this trial. To my right is Mr John Varley, King's Counsel, who will be leading the prosecution, and to my left Mr Charles Konig, King's Counsel, for the defence. It is unusual for a jury to visit the site of a murder, but given the circumstances of the killing, and the setting, I thought it necessary. The primary purpose of this morning is for you to get a feel for the

location. I would remind you that the rules of trial apply just as much here as in court. Mr Varley will lead proceedings today. If you have any questions please save them till the end of the visit, and convey them to me through one of the court ushers.' She looked to her right. 'Mr Varley, I will hand over to you now.'

'Thank y—'

Varley's words were interrupted by the sound of a car approaching at speed. It could be heard circling round the back of the chapel, following the road that in years gone by would have been taken by hearses.

The jury glanced nervously behind them as a taxi came into view, skidding to a halt in the gravel. A door flew open and a dark-haired woman in a black trouser suit jumped out. She slammed the car door, then turned to us with a bright smile.

'Hey, guys. Sorry. Gridlock.'

The judge sighed, and stared at me coldly. 'Mr Konig, I think that your instructing solicitor is here.'

Varley raised his voice. 'Good morning, Ms Ortiz. So nice of you to join us.'

The Times

Letters to the Editor

Sir,

In his letter of 11 October, His Honour Judge Fircroft KC describes the relationship between barristers and their instructing solicitors as love-hate, with solicitors viewing barristers as a necessary evil.

I fear that the opposite is also true. I recently observed the following exchange in court: My opponent had concluded his submissions and was about to sit down, when his solicitor urgently tugged at his gown and passed a note forward. The silk glanced at the note, seemed about to crumple it up, but then paused with a look of surprise, and said to the judge: 'My lord, there is a further point that I want to make. It hadn't occurred to me, and it comes from my solicitor – but it is actually correct.'

Charles Konig KC

London

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Varley pointedly waited for Yara Ortiz to crunch across the gravel to stand beside me.

I'd only met her a couple of times previously: shortly after being instructed, when we'd gone to Wormwood Scrubs Prison together to see Leo Lusk, and a few days later, at a pre-trial hearing. She was tall and slim, poised, and looked to be in her early thirties. But she had to be older than that to be a partner in a New York law firm. She spoke with a soft New York accent, a professional veneer hiding something harsher that occasionally slipped out.

As she reached me she stumbled, grabbing onto my arm.

'Shit,' she muttered. 'Louboutin heels suck on gravel.'

Varley cleared his throat. 'If we're quite ready ...' He turned to the jury. 'Ladies and gentlemen, on 19 October last year the actress Alexandra Dyce died in the chapel behind me. She died during the performance of a play, *Daughter of the Revolution*. Her death was brutal and shocking, and streamed to a worldwide audience. At first it was thought to be a terrible accident. It is now common knowledge that it was not. The question is not whether she was murdered, but by whom. However, that is not the question that you are tasked with answering. Your task, over the course of the next week, is a simpler one. It is to decide whether, having heard all the evidence, you are satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that Ms Dyce was murdered by the defendant, Leo Lusk.'

Varley paused, catching at his coat as it was blown open by the wind. 'Mr Lusk will, I am sure, be familiar to you all. He is a Hollywood star who for more than thirty years has graced cinema screens worldwide. For the next week he will grace the dock of the Old Bailey.'