

I affirm under penalty of the laws of the State of New York that the following

Or "assert."

I assert under penalty of law that the following is a true, no a true and accurate account of blah blah, blah blah blah. Some minion at Blundell, Blundell, Hobbel & Kringe is please to cast this statement into proper legal jargon, which I cannot guess, and bring it back to me to be signed.

I am assuming that even Blundell, Blundell, Hobbel & Kringe can produce a valid affidavit. I have paid you enough for your so-called work. It is not as if you have done me much good to date.

These notes are to be translated out of English into jabber. They are to be printed on your firm's vulgarly thick, creamy, aspirational stationery. The whole thing is to be back on this desk (if we can call a metal table bolted to the floor a desk) before lights out tomorrow night. Remember that I am an unsatisfied customer.

**Section (1).**

No doubt an affidavit must be divided into numbered sections to give it that authentic parched look.

If so, section (1) will be a preliminary statement about my custody case as it stood three months ago, on the afternoon of 13<sup>th</sup> July 2012, when Scuffy had finished being "deposed."

I refuse to compose such a statement. I leave it you to summarize your wretched failure.

Scuffy, damn her, had affirmed and asserted at length. I had asserted or affirmed. My impression is that we lied about equally. But Scuffy's lies, channeled through those sly attorneys at Drewster & May, were far better than my lies channeled through you. And *I lost*.

By what perverse chivalry did Drewster & May elect to represent Scuffy and not me? Why was I subjected to their nonsense about "professional honor and discretion"? Drewster & May were the Bertram family's lawyers back when great-great-grandfather helped Jay Gould corner the gold market. They kept him out of prison. They got his descendants acquitted of grand larceny and embezzlement. They helped various Bertrams through many a shady property deal. At our behest they have often put the fear of the gods into other Manhattan

families. If it comes to that, they shut the mouth of the headmaster of Groton when he expelled me all those years ago. Other children, accused of such a thing, might have wailed for their mothers, or called upon God, or killed themselves. But the sixteen year-old Heathrop Bertram V had the Drewster & May telephone number by heart. (AL5-2040. It has changed twice since then.) I knew to call them the moment I got out of the headmaster's study.

I had it *by heart*. Doesn't that paint an appealing picture? The troubled yet trusting youth, loosening his excellent necktie, dragging fingers through his chestnut hair, rushes, almost with affection, to the counsels of that parcel of corrupt quiet men. How soothing and quiet they were that afternoon. They were swift, too. By the time the headmaster called my parents, iron had been hammered into Papa's spine by Drewster. Papa, vaguest of all the Heathrop Bertrams, quoted the headmaster certain terrible words from the General Laws of Massachusetts. The upshot was that, although I was indeed sent away from Groton, it was in the tenderest possible fashion. I was let go discreetly, almost regretfully. It seemed that the headmaster had forgotten his foul words – "rapine," "abandoned," "ungentlemanly," "cast out," "procurement" – every one of them, according to Drewster & May, actionable.

Why, then, could Drewster & May not have stood with me, with the balding but equally trusting sixty-five-year-old me, against Scuffy, a Bertram merely by marriage? It is not as if they are so reputable a firm. Where was professional honor when they lied so richly for five generations of the Bertram family? It has been a beautiful cronyship. They might surely have overcome scruple and represented me in a simple custody dispute.

Instead I am in the hands of Blundell, Blundell, Hobbel & Kringe: your hands. And quite frankly yours is not a firm with which I would have chosen to place my affairs. Do not console yourselves that my distaste springs from snobbish prejudice. I am interested in results. I came to you because of your reputation for relentlessness in family law, that is, in the art of domestic besmirching. Not to mention medical malpractice and even worse things. You were commended to me as bar-brawlers, as ambulance-chasers. Yet your conduct of *Bertram v. Bertram* has been feeble. So I assert, so I affirm.

I entirely realize that you will cut these observations when you recast my notes as an affidavit. No matter. Knowing that you will produce a thoroughly new section (1) gives me a sense of wild liberty

most fabulous step-dad in the world. And of course providing Chaddles and Po with lots of half-Chicago-Irish half-siblings. Imagine a former Mrs. Bertram bringing forth such creatures! I console myself that he's probably a deviant. He's certainly impotent, you can tell by the way he sits. No matter. Drewster & May made even Kelt-Doggie-the-daddy seem plausible, and you failed to cross-examine Scuffy effectively about her *beau* or about anything else. On and on she went, on and on you let her go, grossly exaggerating my drinking, explaining away her own notorious psychotic episodes. Which I had exaggerated, but not, I thought, implausibly. Long-legged plastic bitch.

So much for the holiday spirit of section (1). Let's get serious, folks.

**Section (2).**

"Behold the warranty of the prophet." That was the thing he said that caught my attention.

Up until that moment I had merely been doing what I always do after a disappointment. I give money to the first hobo I come across. That is what I was trained to do as a boy, not of course by my parents (my mother being in France, trying out this sanatorium or that, my vague father being busy with cigars and chorines). It was Mrs. Cricklewood, my nanny, who instructed me. "Never waste a good disappointment, Heathie," she would say. Thus I grew up knowing what the poor are for: making our own wealth more emphatic, soothing our disappointments with their small excitements.

I see that I'm still putting down more than you can possibly want in an affidavit. Very well. The editorial work is yours. Cut what you dislike, write in what you need. I will, as you know, sign anything. Just make sure we get the marvelous thing I did recorded on paper.