



## A Lot Too Late

by Garf Collins

‘The reading of the will of Joseph Miller will take place on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2018 at the offices of Strut, Sutter and Roberts at the above address. As a beneficiary you are invited to attend.’

“What a theatrical process,” Marcus thought, “but I’ll never forgive the old bastard for what he did to me.”

His mind went back to the traumatic event of 1998. The Finance Director in Joseph’s oil broking business had resigned suddenly. Marcus had been promoted to take over. He was inexperienced but welcomed the opportunity. At the time a complex negotiation with various Middle Eastern countries and Russia was coming to a conclusion. A huge pile of contracts, side agreements and commission agreements had been created. The day before completion Joseph had announced he would have to attend an important negotiation in Nigeria. So he arranged for Marcus to be the firm’s signatory to complete the deal.

Late into the night Marcus had tried to understand the morass of documents but found them impossible to comprehend fully. In the end, believing that Joseph knew what he was doing, he signed them anyway.

The firm went on to prosper with deal after profitable deal. But then disturbing rumours started to surface about the one Marcus had signed off. A campaigning journalist had uncovered the reality. The entire structure of documents was a ruse to avoid sanctions on Iran. Marcus was extradited to the US to face charges. He was convicted and jailed for 7 years. Joseph escaped by claiming he had instructed Marcus not to sign until the documents were checked for any irregularity by their lawyer.

“So he’s going to mock me from the grave by leaving me some trinket. Surely it’s enough that I’ve been banned for life from acting as a qualified accountant and my wife ran off with someone else while I was inside. But I *will* go. I’ll tell them all what an unprincipled scoundrel their Joseph was.”

A week later at the solicitors’ office, he sat amongst Joseph’s immediate family. The reading began;

“I Joseph Miller being of sound mind...”

Marcus’ attention wandered as he watched the participants. He saw by their faces when they were being mentioned. Joseph’s trophy wife incredulously heard of an allowance of a mere £100,000 per year and ownership of the house she was living in. His middle-aged offspring were told that they had benefitted enough and would receive nothing further. A number of charities were given substantial legacies.

Finally, the solicitor read;

“Now to Marcus Williams. I’ve finally come to realise that the truth makes a better story. So I now declare I was to blame for the illegal contract, which put him in jail and left me to continue to make my fortune. Hence, much of what I possess I owe to him. He was duped into signing that disastrous deal and to make amends I hereby leave the rest of my fortune to him.”