



MILLIONAIRES' EX-WIVES CLUB

Is divorcing really that harsh in reality?

As a family lawyer, I tend to avoid television programmes about divorce. Dealing with it on a day to day basis can be stressful enough without thinking about it my spare time and I find that it is so often depicted in a completely unrealistic way. However, I was intrigued enough to watch the recent BBC Two documentary "Millionaires' Ex-Wives Club" after a friend mentioned she had watched it and was, in her words, "terrified" by it. I have to say after watching it myself, I could see why.

The programme followed two high-profile divorcees sharing their experiences of divorce in Central London. There was Michelle Young, haunted by 10 years of her life spent in contentious litigation (including over 60 Court hearings) and spending £17m on legal fees only for her husband to fall to his death in mysterious circumstances and for her to not see a penny of her £26m divorce settlement. "Where is the justice?" she exclaimed. Whilst she may have a point, it was difficult to feel sympathy when her husband had offered her £30m just a few days before his death only for her to turn this offer down, convinced her husband was hiding pots of gold offshore. She was left bankrupt with only £300,000 to her name from her husband's life insurance policy.

We then saw Lisa Tchenguiz, wealthy in her own right before she met and married Vivian Imerman, "The Man from Del Monte". Seeking 50% of her husband's fortune after a 9 year marriage, Lisa sought £150m; her husband offered her £2m. After a 4 year battle (and only possible as she had money in her own name to afford her legal representation), Lisa finally had enough and settled at £15m so she could get on with her life.

What concerned me about this programme and why I considered it frightening to the "average Joe" is that the vast majority of divorces do not involve years of litigation, sky rocketed legal fees, hidden assets and deception. Yes, it happens and it would be remiss of me to say it does not, but it is fairly rare. Divorce does not have to be contentious, expensive and all-consuming. It does not have to take over your life. With co-operation and a good, sensible lawyer on your side, divorce can be a much smoother and less expensive process than this programme would lead you to believe.

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Samantha Archer is an Associate Solicitor at K J Smith Solicitors. Samantha has most recently been recognised as an Outstanding Individual by the Legal 500, the leading independent referral guide for law firms across the UK.

If you would benefit from specialist family law advice then remember that K J Smith Solicitors are the only niche family law firm offering advice right across the Thames Valley. We offer a free 45-minute consultation with a specialist family lawyer – this gives us an opportunity to give you the important initial advice but it also gives you the chance to meet our team and decide if we are the right fit for you. ■

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