

CHEATING IS EASY!

Description

(A narrative about how an officer lost his mental peace, briefly, for a simple neglectful act)

One afternoon I received a notice from a local trial court. Nothing was visible on a badly crumpled post card size paper. I couldn't make out the name or content or why delivered to me.

Not able to figure out any information I stood staring at the piece of paper brought by the postman.

Seeing a confused look of mine my wife Shanti, enquired, "What is it, anything serious?" I nodded my head slightly and said, "I don't know I have to find out who had sent this notice to me." Not knowing as to what I should make out of this court circular?

I'm Kumar a retired bank employee living with my wife who is working in a local private school. Thirty-five years of bank life had given me enough privileges to send my two children to the best local schools and later to colleges. Now married and settled living cheerfully.

Next day I rushed to one of my classmate who is a noted lawyer in the city. Ramesh is his name: a medium built character and genteel in his words and approach. I see him sitting in a well-designed office surrounded by wall to wall bookshelves stacked with all subjects related to law. Earlier I had met him occasionally in our school reunions but never sought his professional service.

Why would I? My thirty-five years of routine revolved around my bank and family and a few hobbies I enjoyed. I loved reading and enjoyed good English movies.

After we exchanged our pleasantries, I carefully extract the wrinkled court notice.

One look at it, he quickly figured it out, "I think it looks like a summons for a check bounce case."

"Did you borrow any money from anyone recently," my friend questioned me.

I said, "No I haven't." I had retired from my office three years ago. I don't have any need for money as everything stands settled for me.

He said not to worry about it, and he would collect the complete details of the case from the court the next day. He asked me to see him after two days.

I stepped out of his office half-relieved, but an unknown creepy unease didn't allow me to stay calm.

Many questions and doubts and fears began buzzing in my brain.

"Who had sent me the notice?"

"I didn't owe money to anyone."

â??I settled all my affairs in the bank and personal liabilities before I accepted my retirement.â?•Nothing possibly had bothered me for the last three years, and I very well settled in my restful retired life.â?•

â??Even for my apartment, I cleared all my payment due.â?•

Frightening thoughts sweated my body. I dully entered my house weighed down by the mental discomfort what warning I would have to hear from my lawyer friend.

Two days later I met my lawyer friend in his office to find out the details of that menacing summons from the court.

â??Do you know any women named Sumathi?â?•

â??She was my junior colleague when I worked in the bank at Hyderabad,â?• I replied, not clear what my friend was hinting.

â??Do you owe any money to her?â?• my lawyer friend inquired looking at the court papers spread before him.

â??Iâ??m retired for more than three years, and Iâ??m not in touch with any of my colleagues, and Iâ??m not financially obliged to anyone nowâ?• I spoke fast, and the situation seemed more puzzling now to me.

My lawyer friend explained the content of the court notice.

â??Your colleague Sumathi had filed a case against you that you owe her three lakhs and the cheque you have given her has been turned down by the bank for insufficient funds.â?•

â??When a cheque was given away and gets dishonored when presented in a bankâ?• it amounts to a punishable offense by law. My lawyer friend took pains to explain to me. I felt as if he already started seeing me as a wrongful guy.

Now it is my turn to come out straight before my friend.

I told my version of what had transpired three years ago before I received my retirement papers.

I was amidst the preparation of my daughterâ??s marriage, and for an important payment, I fell short of a lakh of rupees. My colleague Sumathi adjusted the amount. I promised I would payback her within a month.

I couldnâ??t pay her back immediately. Iâ??m her superior officer though and not to give her a hint that I would take it as an advantage to delay the payment. I gave her my cheque with my signature. I asked her to add interest to the amount and cash it.

I didnâ??t take much time later, but I paid her immediately in cash. The cheque I had given her has somehow slipped out of my memory.

â??You have given to your colleague a blank cheque with your signature and not specifying any date. And you also didnâ??t mention the amount payable; am I rightâ?• his face pulled in a surprised look as

he ended his inquiry. For my part, I nodded meekly.

The deceitful lady schemed to write three lakhs on the cheque and added a convenient date and presented it in the bank. They promptly referred it back with a note "insufficient funds."

Not wasting any time she approached an equally greedy lawyer and filed a case against me. It claimed that I owed her three lakhs.

Briefly, my lawyer friend made me aware of the legal consequences of how my blundering financial mistake had thrown me into a huge legal mess.

As if adding trouble to me, the case landed at Hyderabad court, and I stay in Vijayawada. Now I'm required to travel all the way to Hyderabad to attend the future court hearings. Wherein this would go on until the matter settled legally. It all depends upon how readied I'm able to repay the "disputed amount."

I realized now evidently a fraud heaped upon me. I saw no option but to contest it. In legal terms, I have to prove in the court that I don't owe the lady any money? This is how the Indian court system operates?

It is easy for anyone to wedge you into a case of criminality. Once the case was taken up, the complainant job gets done. It turns out that we, the defendant, become liable to prove our innocence in the court. And thereby wriggle out from the long arm of the law. The whole legal defense procedures are petty complicated, slow, exhausting and above all humiliating. It would be more scandalous if we come from a decent and educated background.

My lawyer friend was quite understanding of my predicament and arranged one of his colleagues to represent me in Hyderabad court for a nominal fee. He monitored the proceedings and adjournments from Vijayawada.

For more than two years I had gone through this embarrassing event of attending to the court. I felt shamefully dwarfed standing among the brutes, goons, rowdies to wait until my name called. I would then step into a nondescript court hall only to note the date; wherein I have to attend the next legal proceeding.

I haven't disclosed this disgraceful ritual to my two children, but my wife was quite supportive. She was confident that the whole episode would end up favoring me.

In the meantime, my carefully nurtured retired routine took an unpleasant tumble. My health seemed not as stronger as I thought it would under stressed conditions. My behavior grew restless, moods irritating and nothing seemed interesting, and appetite declined.

One possibility started frightening me. If that lady could prove, I owe her the money. By chance, if the judge gets convinced that I have erred. I'm afraid I may be asked to pay a huge fine for dishonoring the cheque. Or I'm punished with a jail term. Things of these sorts drove me psychotic and sleepless.

After a two year wait, the case had to come to the trial where my good friend came for final arguments on my behalf. He interrogated the lady on various technical issues which she couldn't substantiate

and defend herself. She never in her bank account held in the past five years more than a lakh. She had never in her income tax papers shown any substantial financial transactions.

To my great relief, the case got dismissed as my lawyer friend could prove before the judge that the lady had no legal evidence to prove that I borrowed a huge amount from her.

I have bitten for two years the emotional trauma and hurt by a deep dent in my mental fitness. I doubted myself could I ever come out of this sudden disorder in my life. Once again I'm enjoying the morning sunlight. I'm able to laugh heartily at the English comedies I enjoyed.

One mistake especially a financial one has all the brute power to ruin our lives• this is the lesson I have learned. The scar of the regret, which, how close I was to shatter my family, perhaps, would hurt me all through my living days. I made a mistake, and I have come out of it with less damage. The experience saw me my emotions a little stronger, my common sense a bit sharper. For my children and family now I have a choice I will not let it happen to me again.

Category

1. Uncategorized

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Author

eswarnadipalli

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