

THE BIG BOOK OF KITTY PORN

Adele owed \$13,261 in overdue property taxes to L.A. County, which she, at the age of 68 living on a monthly Social Security check and a small pension, had absolutely no way of paying. That's why she did it, I explained to our shocked friends at the Westwood United Methodist Church. She didn't want to lose her house.

The book was just a lot of pictures of her cats that she took with her iPhone camera in sexy positions, which they get into naturally when they're cleaning themselves or sleeping because cats are shameless, and also very flexible. She said the idea came to her in a dream.

The picture that people were making the most fuss about was Elagabalus, the big Maine Coon cat, sitting on Wonker's face, but all they were doing was wrestling with one another, it just *looked* kind of naughty. And I suppose people were also having problems with Ms. Sadie cleaning Marx's belly with her tongue, but you'd have to have a pretty filthy mind to make something sexual about that, especially since both cats were neutered.

Adele self-published the book and in less than two weeks it was Amazon's #7 ebook top seller. But no matter how I explained it, our church friends were still troubled, especially after Janice Goodrich googled the book on her Mac and got sent to a bunch of actual pornography sites, one of which involved donkeys.

Adele is my best friend but she didn't breathe a word to me about the book until after it came out, I guess because she was afraid I'd try to talk her out of it, and I surely would have. Our minister, Harold Potter, said he received 14 phone calls in one evening about it. He told everyone to pray for Adele and to refrain from making harsh judgments about another parishoner, which I think was very Christian of him.

But I really didn't know what I was going to say yesterday when I went over to Adele's house. I had wanted to wait until I had charitable thoughts, but she was so busy talking to agents and publishers who wanted to re-launch the book commercially that she didn't have any time for me until yesterday anyway.

When I let myself in, she was on her hands and knees on the living room floor. I thought for a minute that she had fallen down or had a stroke, but she said, "Hang on, Virginia, I'm finishing this article on the best investment bets for seniors."

"Why are you reading it on the floor?"

"Jefferson pissed in the house again and when I put the newspaper down to soak it up, I noticed the article. Help me up," she said, reaching for my hand.

"I just don't know what to say, Adele," I said, pulling her onto her feet. "You are getting stranger by the minute."

That's when I first began to think that I'd probably be losing her pretty soon. Here she was worried about keeping her smelly old house in West L.A. and now she'll probably be so rich that she can move to New York City or Paris, France and live in one of those fancy pre-war apartments with a view of the Left Bank and the Eiffel Tower.

When I got back home, there was an invitation in the afternoon mail with a picture of a gray haired couple in their sixties smiling like they had just won the lottery. It said, "Come to a free luncheon and lecture about Cremation."

"Want to go to a free luncheon and lecture on cremation?" I asked Adele on the phone.

"What?"

"I'm joking. I just wanted you know about the exciting new opportunities in *my* life."

That evening I sat on my sofa, thinking, which I do by crocheting hats for cancer patients who are undergoing chemo, because their heads get

cold. I thought about my husband Joseph who died suddenly of a heart attack two years ago. I thought about my son Jeffrey, a high school history teacher in Torrance, who I am waiting to tell me that he is gay, although I already know it. And I thought about Adele's son Gabe, a compulsive gambler who squandered most of Adele's savings before he shot himself to death, and I thought about how grateful I was to have Jeffrey, who is a very good boy despite the sex thing. I thought about my own house, which is paid off, thank God, and the life insurance that Joseph left to cover the property taxes and homeowners insurance. And I thought about how judgmental I had been about Adele and how unchristian that was, given my own blessed situation. I finally thought about how thirsty I was and got up off the sofa and went into the kitchen to get a glass of ice tea.

Should I have tried to loan Adele the money to pay her property tax? I wondered. Should I have just given it to her, knowing that she couldn't pay me back? I asked our minister after choir practice, and Pastor Harold told me that only God could answer those questions.

When I asked God, He referred me to Lao Tzu's proverb: "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." I was surprised that He quoted Lao Tzu and not the Holy Bible, but then I realized that He created Lao Tzu, too.

Lao Tzu made me think about ordering some of Suzy Orman's books on managing money for Adele to read, but I'm afraid she's too busy now getting rich and famous. By the way, I heard that Suzy Orman is gay. I guess it's no big deal anymore.

Last night I dreamed that Pastor Harold was photographing naked cherubs. I said, "Pastor, what are you doing?" and he said, "I'm photographing angels, Virginia. The Big Book of Naked Angels." "But Pastor," I said, "isn't that really kiddie porn?" He looked at me with such disappointment, as if he

had offered me salvation and I had mistaken it for hell fire. I woke up in tears and I finally understood how completely I had failed Adele.

I drove over to her house and let myself in. Jefferson, her crazy old Boxer, beat his tail on the floor twice by way of greeting but didn't get up. Adele was standing on a counter in the kitchen taking empty glass jars down from the top shelf of a cabinet.

"What are you doing up there, Adele?" I asked, alarmed.

"I'm getting some jars for the kumquat marmalade I'm going to make. My little tree finally blossomed and I've got forty fat kumquats and a bag of sugar waiting to be boiled. Help me down," she said, reaching out her hand.

"Will you sit?" I asked her, because I was so full of things to tell her that I could hardly contain myself.

I told her about the angel dream and then I told her what it meant.

"God gave you a vision, Adele, and it led you out of the darkness of your tax debt by way of the light of inspiration. You knew it was completely innocent, but I made it sinful because you were clever enough to wrap it in such radiance that everyone would notice. My dear friend," I said, grasping Adele's hands and crying in shame. "I was self-righteous and afraid, while you were strong and courageous. Please forgive me."

"Oh, my goodness, Virginia, you have nothing to apologize for."

"I do, I do," I insisted.

"Let me make us a pot of tea," she said, quickly getting up and putting the kettle on the stove. She laid out two cups and a jade green pot, dropping two apple cinnamon tea bags into it. When she returned to the table, I could see that she was lost in thought.

"I don't think we need to call them *naked* angels, do you? I mean, it's a given that angels are naked, isn't it?"

"What are you talking about, Adele?"

"The book. The Big Book of Angels. We'll photograph a book of angelic children."

“No, no,” I said, “it was only a dream.”

“The agent is already asking me for something else. That’s what they do, Virginia. When you have a best seller, they want to capitalize on it with a follow-up book.”

“It was just a dream,” I said, feeling a little dizzy.

“Of course this should be *our* book, Virginia, we should do it together.”

“It’s not a book,” I said weakly, feeling swept aside by Adele’s enthusiasm. “And there’s probably already a Big Book of Angels.”

“Well, then we’ll call it The Big Book of Seraphim, the highest order of angels, or The Big Book of Cherubs. Don’t worry, we’ll make it work.”

The kettle began to whistle but Adele ignored it until the sound grew into a scream.

“Pastor Harold should write the words for the book, don’t you think?” she said, turning off the burner. “He’s very learned, and esteemed. And he has the most wonderful way of making God seem easy.”