

Marie-Virginia Grace

# SCALLYWAGS

*Richard  
de Fontaine*



*Cheers to a supercalafragalisticexpialidocious country  
and this serendipitous city!*



*"In a gentle way, you can shake the world"*  
Mahatma Gandhi

*"Ask not what the country can do for you,  
ask what you can do for the country"*  
JFK

## For Adam

“The difference between a cook and a chef is the difference between a partner and a prostitute. Cooks do meals for people they know and love. Chefs do it anonymously for anyone who’s got the price.” A.A. Gill 1954, *Independent* 4 November 1998.

*Dear Reader,*

Whether you are or have been a Scallywags guest, are an adventurous tourist or a visitor without a plan, are family or friend, business-partner/colleague, neighbour, local or expat, permanent or temporary inhabitant of The Hague or otherwise, you have contributed to the colourful pallet of facts, fun and trivia comprising this biographical portrayal of our Richard. That's why it is important for us that you read it with the love and pleasure it has been written and above all, enjoy it as a co-participant of his life. You will unmistakably recognize some of the "Richardisms" and stories but hopefully it also reveals some interesting newies for you.

The idea to compile a chronological narration of what makes him an unforgettable icon of candid charisma in the 'horeca', especially in The Hague, was born out of admiration for what he has and still gives to (an expat) city life: his legacy of personalized service, banter, spontaneity, openness without frills, passion to share and to bond like-minded people - fueled by his lust for life - in combination with the upcoming celebration of Scallywags' 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

*Charly*

## WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A TRUE BLUE SCALLYWAG

*A romantic biography of The Hague's best known icon in  
British catering since 1994*

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“Where will we go for lunch, darling?”

“Somewhere that’s eclectic and daft and feels like home at the same time. Somewhere that’s more expressionistic than extra *fake-tastic*... where the walls are homey and the Wedgewood-blue ceiling is adorned with sparkles like Queen Victoria’s tiaras; where melting candles slowly build their own Madam Tussaud artworks and where the floor gives a blind man a chance to trip into the seventh heaven of a delicious brothel of authentic, homemade, fresh British bites and eternally quenching fluids... all enhanced by a selection of nostalgic music that makes the soul beg for more. More of the past; a past that was about giving rather than having. But even rarer than all that, a place where we are always greeted as friends who have never walked alone, where there is spontaneous, libertarian discussion and where the passion of the heart is richer than the entire country’s wealth in gold and where the values of freedom, consideration and decency are civil for all”.

“I don’t know of such a place, but I’m sure we could find a compromise”.

“Compromise? For me there is no compromise because there’s only one place worth spending time and hard earned money for eating out”.

“O.k. Take me there, babe”.

“On one condition. That you won’t be jealous”

“Jealous? What do you mean? Of what, of whom?”

“Of the scamp who runs it”.

“What’s a scamp? “

“A rascal”.

“That doesn’t sound like a person to envy. Why would anyone be jealous of someone like that?”

“Well, actually, it’s also a pet name for someone who is naughty in a good way. You see, after the US civil war (1861-1865), white Southerners who supported the Republican Party and its policy of Black emancipation were viewed as traitors by their fellow Southerners”.

“I see. So, let’s check this place out, then. Am rather curious what makes this person a traitor. Are we talking a he or a she?”

“Both”

“Ahaha.... You mean both in one?”

“Yeah”

“O.k., so which half is male and which is female?”

“You’ll see. S/he is one of these amazing human beings who’s got that unique balance of life. A hard worker who has the ability to enjoy every minute of the day. An androgynous type, who is complete in oneself. (A bit like our MP). S/he has become an icon



in this city for many reasons. S/he is in need of no one yet many, both male and female, seem to be in need of this vocally gifted person's uncomplicated, low profile hospitality because they keep coming back. Over decades the place has become a melting pot of countless meets and greets between people from all walks of life and backgrounds who come to exchange their ideas and views, but also their grief and glory. S/he is the orchestrator of many-a friendship and business cooperation but also a sounding board for the locals to bounce off their opinions of the country's progress and grating paradoxes.

“Are you sure you want to go with me, to this place?”

“Why not. S/he won't ask you to take off your clothes”.

“Well that's a bonus”

“Besides, it's time you knew why I'm always asking you to learn proper, beautiful English and listen to Anglo-Indian humour. Once you hear this rascal speak, you'll never want to listen to CNN or watch an American movie again”.

“We'll see about that...”

“Well, just listen to him recite Bernard Shaw:”

*Henry Look at her, a prisoner of the gutter,  
Condemned by every syllable she ever uttered.  
By law she should be taken out and hung,  
For the cold-blooded murder of the English tongue.  
Eliza Aoooooww! Henry imitating her Aoooooww!  
Heaven's! What a noise!  
This is what the British population,  
Calls an elementary education. Pickering Oh,  
Counsel, I think you picked a poor example. Henry Did I?*

Hear them down in Soho square,  
 Dropping “h’s” everywhere.  
 Speaking English anyway they like.  
 You sir, did you go to school?  
 Man Wadaya tike me for, a fool?  
 Henry No one taught him ‘take’ instead of ‘tike!  
 Why can’t the English teach their children how to speak?  
 This verbal class distinction, by now,  
 Should be antique. If you spoke as she does, sir,  
 Instead of the way you do,  
 Why, you might be selling flowers, too!  
 Hear a Yorkshireman, or worse,  
 Hear a Cornishman converse,  
 I’d rather hear a choir singing flat.  
 Chickens cackling in a barn Just like this one!  
 Eliza Garn! Henry I ask you, sir, what sort of word is that?  
 It’s “Aooooow” and “Garn” that keep her in her place.  
 Not her wretched clothes and dirty face.  
 Why can’t the English teach their children how to speak?  
 This verbal class distinction by now should be antique.  
 If you spoke as she does, sir, Instead of the way you do,  
 Why, you might be selling flowers, too.  
 An Englishman’s way of speaking absolutely classifies him,  
 The moment he talks he makes some other  
 Englishman despise him.  
 One common language I’m afraid we’ll never get.  
 Oh, why can’t the English learn to set  
 A good example to people whose  
 English is painful to your ears?  
 The Scotch and the Irish leave you close to tears.  
 There even are places where English completely  
 disappears. In America, they haven’t used it for years!  
 Why can’t the English teach their children how to speak?  
 Norwegians learn Norwegian; the Greeks have taught their  
 Greek. In France every Frenchman knows

his language from “A” to “Zed”  
The French never care what they do, actually,  
as long as they pronounce in properly.  
Arabians learn Arabian with the speed of summer lightning.  
And Hebrews learn it backwards,  
which is absolutely frightening.  
But use proper English you’re regarded as a freak.  
Why can’t the English,  
Why can’t the English learn to speak?

“Point taken”.

“Let’s go on and find out more about this incorrigible head-turner,  
shall we?”



“Mind the step” (Charly)

In 1964 life in Calcutta was marked by violent anti-Muslim riots, the movie *Nuit Noir*, India versus England and India versus Australia test cricket matches; the year that Mohammed Ali was recognized as a champion and, the birth of an Anglo-Indian boy called Richard: second child of a British mother and Indian father, brother of an older brother and two younger sisters. He