



Nigella & Saatchi: it's war

Nigella Lawson is said to be reeling after her husband publicly announces his divorce plans

NIGELLA LAWSON WAS LEFT "BLINDSIDED" LAST WEEK

after her husband Charles Saatchi publicly announced he was filing for divorce.

According to pals, the TV cook and author was shocked by Saatchi's decision as she had no idea he had been planning to release a statement telling the world their ten-year marriage was heading for the divorce courts.

"The cruelty of it takes your breath away," said a friend. "Nigella is devastated."

Fears for the 53 year old grew last week, with pals saying they are worried she'll be dragged into a bitter war over her divorce from the former advertising tycoon.

One pal said, "Charles will crush her if he wants to. Clever as she is, she's no match for his power."

But it seems Nigella is pulling out all the stops for her divorce, and is said to have sought advice from top lawyer Fiona Shackleton, who acted for Sir Paul McCartney



The throat-grabbing incident was caught on camera



Nigella has refused to speak publicly about their split



Charles Saatchi said he is filing for divorce

when he divorced Heather Mills.

"Nigella never wanted it to come to this – but Fiona has been a rock of support and [Nigella] is glad to have her on her side," said a pal. "Nigella is soft so needs someone strong representing her – and they don't come tougher than Fiona. Charles must be quaking in his boots."

Fiona, who is also Nigella's cousin, will no doubt fight tooth and nail to ensure Nigella walks away with a chunk of the couple's estimated £150 million fortune.

Charles, 70, claimed that he was forced to release a statement about the divorce because Nigella failed to "defend" him after he was pictured

grabbing her throat in a restaurant. In a 268-word statement, published in a Sunday newspaper, he blamed her for the split, claiming he had become a "disappointment" to her. He also accused Nigella of physically grasping his neck in the past, saying, "The row photographed at Scott's restaurant could equally have been Nigella grasping my neck to hold my attention – as indeed she has done in the past."

An insider close to Saatchi said, "Charles is furious and has been exploding like Mount Etna. He feels his reputation has been dragged through the mud without her lifting one finger to help him."

But sources in Nigella's camp have hit back, saying she thinks his claims are ridiculous. "Nigella finds the idea she didn't help him ludicrous. What was she meant to say? She very nearly had a nervous breakdown with the stress she was under."

The friend also defended her decision to keep quiet over the scandal, revealing she's refused to publicly respond because of fears for her children, teenagers Cosima, 19, and Bruno, 17, from her marriage to her late husband, John Diamond.

"Nigella is absolutely floored and blindsided by the statement. That he would do something like this when there are the children to consider amazes her. Charles is seeing himself and his feelings as the most important part of the equation. It really is stunning behaviour," a friend said.

Nigella is renting a four-bedroom house in London, reportedly close to the capital's infamous red-light district. It's thought the couple's £12 million Chelsea home, where Saatchi has remained, could be a sticking point in the divorce.

Last week Nigella's spokesperson told **new!** they would not be responding to Saatchi's comments

KARMEL DOUGHTY

'NIGELLA COULD WALK AWAY WITH £75M'

We speak to a divorce lawyer about Nigella and Charles' court battle

Leading London divorce lawyer Rodney Hylton-Potts tells **new!**, "The judge won't be interested in who grabbed whose throat. I expect a divorce to be delivered within four months. If they dispute a financial settlement, it'll no doubt become a celebrated case, like with Paul McCartney and Heather Mills. In London, it takes 14 months on average to settle a financial dispute.

Rodney, who isn't representing Nigella or Charles, adds, "A judge would consider their marriage a long one, so the starting point will be 50/50. Everything will go into the pot and be divided by two. With no prenuptial agreement, Nigella could walk away with £75 million, but if they do have one it will make a huge difference and severely restrict Nigella's claims. Charles would have no doubt filed for divorce based on her behaviour. It could be as light as, "She put work before my feelings."

