

Old Habits Die Slowly

by

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Cast of Characters

WILFORD: 51

CADENCE: 19

Place

Balcony

Time

Early afternoon

Setting: Morning breakfast is served on a bright sunny day on top of a balcony overlooking the valley.

At Rise: Wilford sips his tea and his daughter Cadence eats her breakfast. Father sits at the head of the table, Cadence beside him.

WILFORD: ...You're mother and I are getting divorced.

CADENCE: ...What?

WILFORD: I received a telegram, this morning. Apparently, her lover has won her over.

CADENCE: Mother was having an affair?

WILFORD: Why, certainly.

CADENCE: You knew?

WILFORD: Your mother tells me everything.

CADENCE: What??

WILFORD: I agreed to it. Before we were married, your mother made me promise to allow her the freedom she so craved...didn't matter, woman, man, if she felt the desire, the need, it was forbidden for me to stand in her way.

CADENCE: You accepted such insanity?

WILFORD: I loved your mother so much that I accepted all of her, including you. At the time of our arrangement you were growing in her womb and I could not turn my back on you. Therefore, I agreed to your mother's terms wholeheartedly, if not for the sake of your well being.

CADENCE: Who is mother---

WILFORD: I know the man. Marcus O' Reillus. Dapper fellow. Wealthy. Polite.

CADENCE: Who is he, exactly?

WILFORD: A banker—well, started out as a banker but soon retired at the ripe old age of thirty, before venturing out into the produce and goods business...danced around that for many years until he got involved in the steel trade by way of importing and exporting on boats, helping to build towns and bridges.

CADENCE: Why are you so calm?

WILFORD: I cannot say that I am calm. No, I am crazed, but appear calm. There's a difference.

CADENCE: ...What happens now?

WILFORD: Now? Well, I'm going to finish eating my lovely warm apple pie, wash it down with this fabulous raspberry tea and enjoy the rest of this gorgeous sunny day. Care to join me for a walk?

CADENCE: This is all so irrational.

WILFORD: It may seem so, but I assure you, this is all quite normal for us.

CADENCE: Normal? How is any of this normal?

WILFORD: For our family unit, this is acceptable behavior.

CADENCE: Is mother going to return?

WILFORD: Return? That I do not know. She seems quite happy in Paris.

CADENCE: I don't know how I feel...really. A bit disbelieving, a bit---

WILFORD: Now, now, it all may come as a shock to you, but really, we are all adults. If your mother fancies another man and wishes to marry, well, I won't begrudge her. Good luck!

Wilford laughs heartily.

CADENCE: How can you laugh?

WILFORD: It's a release of all the years of built up stress and agony. All the years of waiting by the window for your mother to return. Always scared that one day she'd leave me, when you became old enough to understand and now it has happened and I am quite relieved of it.

The more I sit here and talk to you, the more happy I become.

This news isn't anything I had imagined it would be. No. This feeling is a pleasure I never could have invented. There's a lightness in my chest, I feel as though I can fly away and soar through the sky! Don't you see? I am free!

Don't think your father doesn't have other interests, oh, I have a great many interests...many things to occupy my time, my mind...my mind has always been my greatest asset, you know...when one knows how to take the time to think, all will be very well.

And don't you dare look at me and feel sorry for me. No! No! There are women who will still have me, too. The kind of women who have always let me know with their eyes that they found me attractive, but I never acted upon such inclinations due to my loyalty to your mother.

WILFORD (cont'd): So, there you have it! I will enjoy this wondrous day in the month of May and think and wonder...and have some wine, out in the garden, and...and...read over those words in the telegram...those words...and wonder if they were sent out from glee or uncertainty or anger, perhaps, but...no...there must not have been a mistake or a jest of some sort...no, no, of course not.

Ha, ha, ha, ha.

It will all be fine in the end won't it, Cadence?

CADENCE: I'm sorry, father.

WILFORD: Whatever are you sorry for?

CADENCE: It all makes sense to me.

WILFORD: What does?

CADENCE: Why I've always disliked mother.

WILFORD: Hush, hush.

CADENCE: She is an absolute disgrace!

WILFORD: Cadence! Please do not bad mouth your mother!

CADENCE: Even now you will defend her? After she's made a mockery of you? Even now?!

WILFORD: Old habits die slowly.

CADENCE: When I find her I am going to give her a piece of my mind! She should be banned from this estate, banned from our lives, forever!

WILFORD: Cadence, you must understand---I know your mother extremely well, better than she knows herself.

CADENCE: What are you trying to say?

WILFORD: She may change her mind. For all we know she may come back in two days, as if no telegram was ever sent.

CADENCE: Or she may remain in Paris until the day she dies. She can't just go off and marry!

WILFORD: Actually...Cadence, your mother and I were never actually, *married*, married.

CADENCE: Excuse me?

WILFORD: Your mother and I were never *officially married*.

CADENCE: How does one not get officially married?

WILFORD: We simply decided.

CADENCE: Decided, what?

WILFORD: We decided that we were to remain together.

CADENCE: What do you mean?

WILFORD: When we realized your mother was pregnant, we went on about our daily lives as if we had been married all along.

CADENCE: What about family, friends...wasn't any of this questioned?

WILFORD: Actually, no. We said we were married overseas and everyone went along with the story.

CADENCE: I am born out of wedlock?

WILFORD: The truth has come out...I'm sorry. You needed to know.

CADENCE: Am I your real daughter?

WILFORD: That, I am most certain.

CADENCE: How do you know?

WILFORD: Your mother and I were deeply in love...infatuated with one another. You couldn't pry us apart if your life depended on it. We went on like that for quite some time, long enough for you to arrive, that's for sure.

CADENCE: Why not marry?

WILFORD: If you haven't realized it yet, your mother is a peculiar creature and I went along for the ride.

CADENCE: You didn't wish to marry?

WILFORD: Of course! I would have married your mother at the drop of a hat, but it takes two to agree, doesn't it?

CADENCE: That never haunted you all these years?

WILFORD: Not until today...I loved your mother, still do, there isn't anything I would not do for that woman...she's been my whole life, really...not the typical situation, but we worked because of our oddities, ways of thinking, strangeness, whatever these things are called...we worked!

CADENCE: But she's had affairs and now eloped with another man to be married!

WILFORD: There are worse things in life, Cadence.

CADENCE: Are there? Do not make light of this, father?

WILFORD: I had a good time. Twenty years, more good than bad but all worth it and now who knows, maybe she really is truly happy and that was that.

CADENCE: Maybe, she's lying. Maybe, she wants to see if you will fight for her honor!

WILFORD: You're reading much too many romance novels, Cadence. Ha, ha, ha. No way! This is real. Your mother has always been the real thing and now it's time for me to step aside and give her what she wants.

CADENCE: What about what *you* want? What about our family?!

WILFORD: We're still a family, just an unusual one is all.

CADENCE: I hate her!

WILFORD: Cadence, darling, please.

CADENCE: I hate her with all my heart. She's evil and I hope she dies!

Cadence storms off.

WILFORD (to himself): Yes, yes, run along, release your woes until you shine bright again...it will be all be good again...some day.

END OF PLAY