

THE CONFECTION DEBACLE

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Lights up on the Hughes' dining room.

The room exudes old-worldly elegance with mahogany and lace. It is a dining room with a large table and doors on both sides to the kitchen and living quarters. A phone is mounted on the wall.

English aristocrat GEORGE HUGHES sits uncomfortably across from his English aristocrat wife PRUDENCE. They are both somewhere in their 40's, stuffy and proper to the last. They speak quickly, nearly overlapping each other, in distinguished British accents.

George looks out the window as Prudence addresses him.

PRUDENCE

Dear I was talking with the Watson's about Thursday at the club and they said...George, you're not even listening to me.

George comes out of his daydreaming and turns back to Prudence.

GEORGE

What dear? The Watson's?

PRUDENCE

You seem so preoccupied George. What is it? Did they increase the VAT again?

GEORGE

Hm? Oh, no. I should hope not.

From the door to the kitchen BERTRAND the butler enters carrying a chocolate cake. He is impeccably dressed and in his 50's. He is sharp and well spoken.

He sets the birthday cake down, candle glowing before George.

PRUDENCE

You hadn't thought I'd forgotten, had you?

GEORGE

It's...

There is a long pause here. Prudence and Bertrand stare at George expectantly as he stares down at the cake.

BERTRAND
(taking over)
Shall I make a wish for you sir?

GEORGE
No, Bertrand, thank you.
(disbelief)
Prudence, this cake is chocolate.

BERTRAND
Really sir it would be no trouble. I --

GEORGE
(interrupting)
I shall make my own wish. I wish...to leave you Prudence.

He blows out the candle.

BERTRAND
Sir you mustn't tell your wish...

GEORGE
I can not go on living in this horrid manner.

Bertrand realizes what is going on and picks up the cake.

BERTRAND
(quickly)
I'll just go slice this cake then, shall I?

He removes the cake, and himself, from the room.

PRUDENCE
George, dear, don't be silly. It's just chocolate cake...

GEORGE
Prudence, I am deathly allergic to chocolate. The last time I touched the stuff I was in hospital for days.

PRUDENCE
How could I even have known you were allergic to chocolate?

GEORGE
You just don't listen to me, do you? Just last week you tried to force your chocolate croissant on me.

PRUDENCE

What is this sudden obsession with chocolate George? You're being ridiculous.

GEORGE

It is not an obsession. It is an example Prudence.

Bertrand reenters with slices of cake.

BERTRAND

Sir, it does sound awfully like an obsession.

He places the cake before George and Prudence.

George picks up the plate.

GEORGE

If I ate this slice of cake, I could very well die. It seems to me that a decent wife would try and remember facts such as this.

PRUDENCE

George! This is so unlike you.

BERTRAND

Shall I have the chef prepare another dish? A creme brulee perhaps?

PRUDENCE

I suppose so Bertrand.

GEORGE

No. Bertrand, you remember my allergy, don't you?

BERTRAND

Why, sir, I hardly see what my memory has to do with the matter.

GEORGE

Alright, fine. Prudence, please. I am leaving you.

PRUDENCE

You'll leave me over chocolate, George? Don't be ridiculous.

GEORGE

This isn't about chocolate, dear. This is about my happiness.

PRUDENCE

Your happiness? What on earth do you mean?

GEORGE

Listen, I just can't take it anymore, Prudence... This way of life...

PRUDENCE

What way of life, dear? We live very well, wouldn't you say so Bertrand?

BERTRAND

Why yes, madam, if I could be so bold.

PRUDENCE

You could Bertrand, you could.

GEORGE

No, this. These conversations every night about who served better crumpets, the Watson's or the Pearl's...

PRUDENCE

Desserts again, dear!

GEORGE

No, no, no. Just the sheer monotony of it all. Every day sitting with you at tea time and having the same biscuits.

BERTRAND

(leadingly)

Biscuits sir?

GEORGE

Yes, biscuits! I mean, no. Anything. Don't you understand? I simply can not tolerate it anymore. It's all so revolting to me now.

BERTRAND

Shall I cancel the creme brulee then, sir?

GEORGE

(thrown off)

What?

BERTRAND

(more slowly)

The creme brulee sir, shall I cancel it?

GEORGE

Why on earth would you cancel the creme brulee?

BERTRAND

Well it would seem to me sir, that sir has taken a great distaste for all sweets...

PRUDENCE

Yes, Bertrand, do cancel the creme brulee, I don't feel at all hungry anymore.

BERTRAND

Yes madam.

He disappears as George gets to his feet abruptly.

GEORGE

Now look here! I do want a creme brulee, blast it! Bertrand!

PRUDENCE

Dear, you really must calm down. All this sudden hatred of desserts... It won't do your blood pressure any good at all.

GEORGE

I don't at all hate creme brulee. My feelings about it, are, in fact, the exact opposite of what you have just said. You see, here we have another example, you simply do not care what I think about anything.

PRUDENCE

(exasperated)

George I don't care how you feel about creme brulee.

GEORGE

Exactly!

PRUDENCE

Oh for god's sake, George! Calm down. What reasonable man could become so inflamed over brulee?

She pauses, realizes she's made a pun,
LAUGHS.

PRUDENCE

Oh, I've made quite the joke there. George, do you get it? Inflamed... over brulee...?

George heads over to the door to the kitchen, and YELLS through it.

GEORGE

(yelling)

Bertrand! Do not cancel that creme brulee! I expect it shortly.

BERTRAND (O.S.)

(yelling)

So you've changed your mind then, sir?

GEORGE

(yelling)

What? Changed my mind?

Bertrand pops in from the kitchen.

BERTRAND

About sweets, sir. You've changed your mind on the whole confection debacle, have you?

GEORGE

(wearily)

No, Bertrand.

Bertrand eyes George suspiciously.

BERTRAND

Alright then, sir...

GEORGE

Fine! Yes. I expect to be eating a creme brulee shortly, Bertrand.

Bertrand, confused, heads back into the kitchen.

PRUDENCE

George, you're acting outrageously. You have me quite convinced that you've catapulted your right mind straight out the window.

GEORGE

Prudence, that is not at all the case. I'm quite within my right mind and I have come to the logical realization that I positively hate you.

PRUDENCE

You couldn't possibly hate me over crumpets.

Bertrand re-enters.

BERTRAND

And biscuits, madam.

PRUDENCE

Yes, and biscuits.

George begins pacing the room, quite angry, on a tirade.

GEORGE

It is not about biscuits! Nor crumpets! Nor chocolate! Nor treacle tart for that matter, which you refuse to serve for some ungodly reason. My feelings from day one were all mixed up, contrived, and over the years and years of your icy temperament have cooled. But, just recently some fire has sparked within me, and feelings have bubbled up, uncontrollably, forming into an exquisite souffle of loathing.

He turns to Bertrand.

GEORGE

Bertrand, where is that creme brulee?

Bertrand exits.

PRUDENCE

Is this one of your strange ideas of a joke?

George sits again.

GEORGE

No.

PRUDENCE

(heating up)

You know George, it's no easy feat on my part to put up with your antics! Constantly discussing the perfect tiramisu! I have... Oh, rubbish!

She lights a cigarette.

Bertrand reenters with the creme brulees, which he places before George and Prudence.

Everyone remains motionless for a few moments of uncomfortable silence.

George prepares himself to dig in, arranging his napkin as a bib.

Prudence attempts to stifle the beginnings of tears.

GEORGE

Looks quite delicious Bertrand.

Bertrand bows.

GEORGE

Thank you, Bertrand. That'll be all.

Bertrand gives a little COUGH. Prudence looks up at him.

BERTRAND

Madam, if I may...perhaps you would like me to pack a few things for you stay at Her Ladyship's? Until all these pudding troubles have blown over...?

GEORGE

Bertrand, that won't be necessary, I shall be leaving.

PRUDENCE

(sharply)

Oh, eat your creme brulee!

George is shocked by the sudden outburst from Prudence. He picks up his spoon and goes to eat.

Prudence composes herself before turning back to Bertrand.

PRUDENCE

Why, yes, I do believe that to be the best course of action. We shall wait things out. Call ahead, Bertrand.

George takes his first bite, MOANING in delight.

GEORGE

Oh, my! This is delectable!

He continues eating, savoring every bite, oblivious.

BERTRAND

Of course, madam. I shall make the arrangements.

He exits.

GEORGE

Are you going to eat yours, dear?

She stares at him and takes a long drag on her cigarette.

George walks over and grabs her creme brulee, bringing it back to his side and eating it standing up.

GEORGE

(yelling)

You know, Bertrand, this is quite delicious!

Bertrand pops his head back in.

BERTRAND

I shall tell the cook sir!

He exits as Prudence stands pointedly.

PRUDENCE

(yelling)

And do prepare the car, Bertrand!

He pops back in.

BERTRAND

I have already spoken with the driver.

He exits.

GEORGE

(yelling)

Something about this that's quite peculiar! Know what it is Bertrand?

Bertrand pops back in.

BERTRAND

I haven't the foggiest, sir.

GEORGE

Well, ask the chef then when you get a moment.

BERTRAND

Absolutely, sir.

He exits as George finishes the creme
brulee and sets it down.

PRUDENCE

I am leaving you George.

GEORGE

(to himself)

I wonder if it's cinnamon?

PRUDENCE

(louder)

I shall be at my mother's. You can expect to hear from a
lawyer shortly.

George simply continues contemplating
the brulee.

Bertrand enters and hands an overcoat
and hat to Prudence, which she puts on.

BERTRAND

Shall madam be requiring further assistance this evening?

PRUDENCE

No thank you Bertrand. That's quite alright.

Bertrand bows. Prudence turns to
George.

PRUDENCE
Goodbye, George.

George comes out of his thoughts for a moment.

GEORGE
Hm, what?

PRUDENCE
(finally)
Goodbye. George.

She turns and stomps out.

A moment passes.

BERTRAND
Sir?

GEORGE
(through some coughing)
Yes, Bertrand?

BERTRAND
Shall I inquire as to --

GEORGE
(coughing harder)
Yes, Bertrand.

Bertrand ducks his head into the kitchen for a moment as George desperately drinks water.

Bertrand returns.

BERTRAND
Bad news, I'm afraid sir.

Bertrand pauses for a moment, ashamed.

BERTRAND
It's chocolate sir.

GEORGE
(horrified)
Chocolate? What do you mean! I just ate it! I ate both!

BERTRAND
Oh, sir...you really shouldn't have...

GEORGE
(gasping for air)
Bertrand?

BERTRAND
Shall I call an ambulance, sir?

George collapses face first onto the
ground. Bertrand picks the phone up off
the wall.

Lights out.

The end.