

BAD HABITS

HEDGES

I just wish I were beautiful like you. And I don't want you to just say I am.

BENSON

I wouldn't do that to you.

HEDGES

Thank you.

BENSON

I said you were adorable.

HEDGES

And I said you were beautiful.

BENSON

You're sniveling again.

HEDGES

I know.

BENSON

Becky, listen to me. You think I'm beautiful. Thank you. I can accept a compliment. But I wasn't so beautiful when I met and lost the love of my life, Hugh Gumbs.

HEDGES

Such a beautiful name.

BENSON

There you go again, Becky.

HEDGES

I didn't snivel that time.

BENSON

You made a stupid, flattering, self-serving, Minnie Mouse remark, which is much worse. Hugh Gumbs is not a beautiful name and you know it.

HEDGES

I'm sorry. I'll be good. I'll be better. Finish your story.

BENSON

I don't even remember where I was.

HEDGES

You were talking about your lack of beauty and how it cost you the love of your life, Hugh Gumbs.

BENSON

It drove Hugh away from me and into the arms of a beautiful hussy. Mildred Canby.

HEDGES

What a horrible name, too.

BENSON

I know now what Hugh Gumbs wanted in a woman, what every man wants in any woman. He wants character. He wants the traditional virtues.

HEDGES

You can say that again.

BENSON

Believe me, Hugh Gumbs is a very unhappy man right now. Mildred Canby had even less character and more faults than I did. I knew that marriage wouldn't last.

HEDGES

Don't cry, Ruth.

BENSON

Me? Cry? Why should I cry?

HEDGES

Because you lost Hugh?

BENSON

I'm grateful to him! He broke my heart, I don't deny it, but if it hadn't been for Hugh I would never have been forced into the soul searching and self reevaluation that ended up with the 118-pound, trim-figured woman you say is so beautiful. I thank my lucky stars for Hugh.

HEDGES

You're so wise about love, Ruth.

HEDGES (CONT'D)

I'm downright dumb about it. If I weren't, I'd be married to Tim Taylor this very minute. What I wouldn't give for another chance at him!

BENSON

Buck up, Hedges.

HEDGES

Oh I will, Ruth. I'm just feeling sorry for myself. I don't know why. If you want to know the truth, I haven't thought of Tim Taylor one way or the other for a long time.

BENSON

I should hope not. A man who smokes is a very bad emotional risk.

HEDGES

Tim didn't smoke.

BENSON

But he drank. It's the same thing.

HEDGES

Did Hugh Gumbs drink?

BENSON

Among other things.

HEDGES

It must have been awful for you.

BENSON

It was heck. Sheer unadulterated heck.

HEDGES

That sounds funny.

BENSON

Believe me, it wasn't.

HEDGES

No, what you just said. About it being heck. I'm still used to people saying the other.

BENSON

It won't seem funny after awhile. You'll see.

HEDGES

Ruth?

BENSON

What?

HEDGES

I know it's none of my business, but I've seen that look in your eyes whenever Dr. Toynbee passes.

BENSON

The only look, as you put it, in my eyes when Dr. Toynbee passes is one of sheer and utter respect. Certainly not the look you're grossly alluding to. You're out of line, don't you think. Hedges?

HEDGES

You're not sweet on the good doctor?

BENSON

Dr. Toynbee is above that.

HEDGES

I know but are you?

Benson slaps her.

HEDGES (CONT'D)

Is any woman?

Benson slaps her again. They fall into each other and cry.

HEDGES (CONT'D)

I'm sorry Ruth. I didn't mean to hurt you. You've been so good to me. I'm such a different person since I've been with you! I don't even know who I am anymore and I say these silly, dreadful, awful things! I don't recognize myself in the mirror in the morning. I've changed so much it scares me.

BENSON

You haven't changed. You've improved, refined, what was already there. I always had this figure, don't you see?

HEDGES

Even when you were up to 230?

BENSON

I was never 230! Now shut up
listen, will you?

HEDGES

I'm sorry Ruth.

BENSON

People are born without any faults,
they simply fall into bad habits
along life's way. Nobody's trying
to change anybody at Ravenswood,
Becky. It's the real them coming
out, that's all.

HEDGES

The real them!

BENSON

Look, face it, you've got big
thighs, that's the real you.

HEDGES

That's exactly what Tim Taylor
didn't like about me. And now that
I'm getting thinner they look even
bigger. I know! I'm sniveling
again! I don't know what to do
about them, Ruth!

BENSON

Wear longer skirts! You can be so
dense sometimes. I mean really,
Hedges, I'm talking about a whole
other thing and you start sniveling
about diets. You can diet all you
want and you're still going to end
up with big thighs. That's not the
point.

HEDGES

I'm sorry.

BENSON

And stop that horrible sniveling!

HEDGES

I'm not going to get any better. I
have just as many bad habits as
when I came here. We just keep

(MORE)

HEDGES (CONT'D)
pretending I'm improving when the
real truth is, I'm getting worse!

BENSON
What are you doing?

HEDGES
Why shouldn't I? I'm no better than
any one of them. I'm a disgrace to
this uniform!

BENSON
Give me that!

HEDGES
Let me do it, Ruth!

BENSON
Have you lost your mind?

HEDGES
I wish I was dead!

Ruth and Hedges wrestle. Ruth starts to smoke.

HEDGES (CONT'D)
Ruth!

BENSON
Ohmygod! I wasn't thinking!
I wasn't going to smoke one!