

# LIVING WITH MOTHER

## WILD CARD

By

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### SCENE 1

MARGARET:

We can trace our family back to William the Conqueror. He gave this land to his cousin, William Bernay in 1068, made him a Duke and we have lived here ever since. The house as it stands now was built in the sixteenth century although as you can imagine it has been added to many times over the years; most notably around the Restoration when the west wing was built by a certain Christopher Wren.

Naturally, the family has been through many ups and downs over the centuries. The interregnum of course and various Labour governments and we have had our own fair share of scandal but I am very proud of the fact we have never ever had to open our doors to the public. Let me tell you a.....

### **DOOR FLIES OPEN AND XANDER STUMBLES IN**

XANDER:

*(Drunk and singing away).*

“I want to move it move it. Ya like to move it. All girls all over the world. Original Mad Stuntman Pon ya case man!”

MARGARET: Xander!

XANDER: ARGH!..... Mummy what are you doing here?

MARGARET: This is my bedroom.

XANDER: Is it? I thought I was.....

MARGARET: I am mid way through my diary entry! And I don't expect to be disturbed by my own son.... who is drunk!

XANDER: I only had a tiny little wine and then Hector said, “Why don't you try this Xander.” And I.....

MARGARET: Drunk!

XANDER: Sorry Mummy, I'll....

MARGARET: Go!

XANDER: Yes I'll go..

**XANDER LEAVES AND CLOSSES THE DOOR BEHIND HIM.**

MARGARET: (*clears throat*) As you have probably guessed, that was my son, Xander. I don't think I am giving anything away by saying that the boy is an idiot. One day I shan't be here anymore and the running of Bernay House will be handed to him and that's what he should be focussing on. But no.....The boy is a wastrel

and a fool. He's set up his own television company if you can imagine such a thing. Once upon a time the aristocracy would send the idiot of the family into the church....now they seem to drift into the media. I could blame his father and do you know....I think I will. It's all his fault. No doubt you have heard of him, Oliver Norman Bernay. I would put the title, Duke in front of his name if I thought he deserved to keep it. Like his son, the man was a drunken fool, cavorting in town and lording it over the boys at the stock exchange making 'deals' and making 'donations' until he finally found himself arrested. My lawyers told us we had a choice. We either paid millions in fines and compensation or Oliver went to prison. So naturally, Oliver went to prison. Ten years but as I keep telling him.....You're an utter arse. Shut up and bite the bullet. And on that note I shall turn out the lamp and bid you good night.

#### **LIGHT SWITCH**

MARGARET:

Course I shan't sleep a wink.....

## SCENE 2

### **BREAKFAST NOISE. DOOR OPENS AND CLOSES**

MARGARET: Ah, you have decided to rise. Good morning.

XANDER: Have I missed breakfast?

MARGARET: You're lucky. I was just about to get Mrs Popov to take it away.

XANDER: Just in under the wire then.

MARGARET: Don't make light of your indiscretions Xander.

XANDER: I only went for few drinks with Hector and then....

MARGARET: How much did you loose?

XANDER: Mummy! How could you think that I would be gambling when I promised to.....

MARGARET: How much?

XANDER: A thousand.

MARGARET: Well..... I have punished and harassed and smacked and ridiculed. If you want to gamble away your allowance then that is up to you but.....

XANDER: And the Bristol.

MARGARET: Xander! That was your father's prized motor car! He entrusted it to you until he emerges from his confinement. He will be

heart broken. I suggest you go to your den of gambling and buy it back. It can come out of your trust fund.

XANDER: Yes Mummy. But I think Mr Sweet likes it so I....

MARGARET: I hope you feel ashamed boy.

XANDER: I do Mummy.

MARGARET: Loosing the odd thousand pounds is one thing but when it comes to heirlooms then you need to look at yourself and think; do I want to be the sort of person that cannot be trusted or loved by his own family.

**DOORBELL GOES. OLD STYLE ACTUAL BELL.**

MARGARET: Oh, you'll have to go.

XANDER: Why does Mrs Popov never answer the door?

MARGARET: She's scared it might be the immigration people. If I could replace her I would but she's so good.....and cheap.

XANDER: I'll get it on my way out.

MARGARET: It'll just be the window cleaner. He refuses to use the tradesman's entrance. What do you mean on your way out? What about breakfast?

XANDER: I'll take a piece of toast. Just going for a quiet stroll. Gather my thoughts. Think about what I've done Mummy.

### SCENE 3

(EXT) **BIRDS TWEETING**

XANDER: PULL!

**THE WANG OF A CLAY PIGEON THROWER FOLLOWED BY A  
GUN SHOT.**

XANDER: Bullseye! Nothing better than a feeling the kick of a 12 bore first thing in the morning. Makes me feel like I can do anything. I feel like Churchill. “ We shall fight them on the beaches. We shall fight them...somewhere else....U turn if you want to....because ..erm...I don’t want to.. turn.....” Pull!

**THE WANG OF THE THROWER FOLLOWED BY A GUNSHOT.**

XANDER: Bullseye! I could do this all day. But I have a day job now you know. Bernay Television. Sounds rather good don’t you think? We’re going to make documentaries about hunting and fishing and shooting. Bloody hard work though I can tell you. Had to go to the office twice last week. Mummy thinks work is vulgar and that I’m just playing at it. She thinks I should be learning how to run the estate instead of, ‘messaging about with frippery’ as she calls it. The big problem though, the big ‘bone of contention’ shall we say is....well it’s the gambling. She worries about me ending up like Daddy but I’m rather good at it....Well apart from last night when Mr Sweet took me for a grand and

the Bristol. I just had one too many cheeky whiskies that's all.

Pull!

### **WANG OF THE THROWER AND TWO GUNSHOTS.**

XANDER: Oh two clays this time hey Mr Popov? Cheeky. Got both the beggars though.....He can't understand me. And more to the point I can't understand him. But we jabber away to each other as we tootle around the estate in the old landrover. Mother won't let him in the house though. Says he smells of cabbage. Rather unkind, I think he's a marvellous chap. .... Now where's my little friend.... Ah there you are.

### **BOTTLE BEING UNSCREWED**

XANDER: (*Drinks*) Oooooo that's a breakfast warmer that's for sure. Mmm goes right down to yer Y fronts, Ha! That's what Daddy used to say. Marvellous man. Shame about the prison business but there you are. And Mr Sweet liked him very much. Would always organise a little game when Daddy was in town and do you know he's been ever so fair with me. I lost ten thousand pounds last month and he gave me a whole twenty four hours to raise the cash. Very fair and I know he was joking when he said he'd break my fingers if I was late....Pull!

### **WANG OF THE THROWER A GUNSHOT.**

XANDER: Bullseye!...Now....don't tell Mummy but there's big game in town tonight. Lots of big players like myself. And Mr Sweet has given me a personal invitation. He thinks I'm one of the best poker players he has ever seen. Hector and I shall pop along after dinner and let me tell you: I feel lucky..... Right come along Mr Popov. Let's go and shoot some badgers.

### **SCENE 3**

MARGARET: .....and so I left Roedean with my head held High. If they wanted to expel me from every school in Britain well they could. And the use of the word, 'bully' was very harsh I thought. I was merely building character in those who were weaker and less intelligent than myself.....

#### **DOOR FLIES OPEN AND XANDER BURSTS IN.**

XANDER: (*Drunk*) Oh God I'm such an idiot Mummy. Hector said we should take these pills and then before I knew it we were dancing and then we had to buy our way into Mr Sweets. And the ladies came and laughed and then some cheeky whiskies and I was singing Mr Bombastic and my trousers fell down.....

#### **SLAP**



MARGARET: Pull yourself together...Get up off your knees .....and wipe that lipstick off.

XANDER: Sorry.

MARGARET: Now tell me what happened.

XANDER: Ladies came and the whiskies and trousers.....

**SLAP**

MARGARET: Slowly. Take a deep breath and tell me from the beginning.

XANDER: Yes.....Hector and I went for dinner and then he said we should go to Mr Sweets and play a little.....erm poker.

MARGARET: I thought as much.

XANDER: I won the first game and a nice lady sat on my knee so....

MARGARET: How much this time?

XANDER: Well it wasn't money.

MARGARET: It wasn't money?

XANDER: I lost Bernay House.

MARGARET: You lost....

XANDER: Not the grounds or anything or the contents just the house.

MARGARET: Bernay.....House.....I....

XANDER: Mummy?

MARGARET: You stupid idiot of a child!

XANDER: I thought I could win back the Bristol mummy.....

MARGARET: You bet our family seat against a car?

XANDER: And a night with Lula Bay. She's ever so pretty with a lovely....

MARGARET: A prostitute?

XANDER: Well that's a bit strong.....

MARGARET: You lost to your precious Mr Sweet again no doubt.

XANDER: Yes.

MARGARET: Well he simply can't have it

XANDER: I gave him the deeds.

MARGARET: Ohhhhhhhhh.

XANDER: I took them from the safe.

**SLAP**

XANDER: Owwww that hurts!

MARGARET: I can't look at you.

XANDER: But.....

MARGARET: Go to the Priest Hole!

XANDER: Mummy I'm not a child anymore. You can't treat me like.....

MARTGARET: The Priest hole Xander and think what you have done. I shall see you in the morning.

#### SCENE 4

MARGARET: Four in the morning. I can't sleep and who could with such news lying so heavy and fresh..... Oh to think Bernay House could be lost forever over a deck of cards. Lost by my own son. The fruit of my womb. Oh what a mess we are in.... I knew I should have had an abortion.

Nine Hundred years of history wiped out over the turn of a card. It's not right. Maybe it isn't legal. Oh what can I do? I could send Mr Popov to steal the deeds back or maybe he could take a gun and...Oh, I'm not thinking straight. My husband's in prison, my son's in the Priest Hole and I'm on the verge of losing the only thing with any meaning in my life.

Bernay House must be kept for future generations of the family it's as simple as that. Mind you that means Xander finding a woman and having children but that's not impossible he's only forty six....or forty seven or something....Damn it! As usual the men balls things up and it's the women who must

rebuild the empire. Right.....Calm and... Think....Think! Come along woman it's up to you! .....To me it's up to me....What a to do. What a to do.....Haaaaa I have it. There is one solution and I am an intelligent woman. Forget sleeping, It's down to the Library for me.

## **SCENE 5**

### **BREAKFAST NOISES**

XANDER: But you don't know the first thing about gambling.

MARGARET: So speaks the Cincinnati Kid.

XANDER: Pardon?

MARGARET: It's a simple game from what I can see.

XANDER: There's more to it than the rules.

MARGARET: I have been studying all night.

XANDER: And anyway, Mr Sweet won't let you in the game.

MARGARET: On the contrary. He was very happy to give me a place at the table this very evening. I am more than welcome.

XANDER: But....

MARGARET: Especially as I will be gambling with your Trust fund.

XANDER: But Mummy, that's mine. You set it up for me....

MARGARET: I set it up for the heir to Bernay House and the Dukedom not a whimpering coward. Gird your loins and show some support.

XANDER: Yes Mummy.

MARGARET: One last throw of the dice my boy. It's death or glory for us.

XANDER: Shall I get the cards and help you practise?

MARGARET: That's more like it. Fetch me a cigar and find me that green visor of your fathers. I do like to look the part.

XANDER: Yes Mummy.

## **SCENE 6.**

### **CLOCK TICKING**

XANDER: She's been gone for hours. It's nearly two in the morning. I'll give her half an hour and then call the police. I hope Mr Sweet

goes easy on her. I shouldn't have let her go but it's not my fault. I can't help it. I didn't ask to be born into the aristocracy. I sometimes wish I was from the lower orders like George Osborne or that I'd been born on a council estate like Lilly Allen or someone. Life might have been easier. All this responsibility and pressure. I suppose I shall just have to wait here for Mr Sweet to come and take over the house and rape me of my trust fund. Oh I'm such a fool. Why did I ever pick up a deck of cards or a glass of whisky? And now I shall be hurled out onto the cold street with just a Rolex and a Television company to my name.

**DOOR FLIES OPEN.**

MARGARET:                   *(Topsy and singing away)* "I'm Spinning around. Move out of my way. I know you're feelin' me 'cuz you like it like this."

XANDER:                   Mummy. Have you been drinking?

MARGARET:               For the game to mean anything one must have a whet whistle don't you think.

XANDER:                   Pardon?

MARGARET:               Well, what an unusual evening. Do you know, there was a fellow there who had been to a comprehensive school? Imagine.

XANDER: Well?

MARGARET: I had a very nice time thank you Xander?

XANDER: And?

MARGARET: Well I thought Mr Sweet was a thoroughly nice man.  
Admittedly he did swear somewhat but one can't help one's upbringing.

XANDER: But the game. Did you win the game.

MARGARET: Pour me a drink and I'll tell you.

XANDER: Tea?

MARGARET: Don't get clever. I'll have a bloody Mary....with vodka.

XANDER: Well it is with vodka....

MARGARET: Just get it. Right, well....The game: A few hands were played to warm up the deck and let everyone see what was what and who was who. Naturally they couldn't read me at all. I folded on a couple of hands and Hector called on a bluff but a mere.....

XANDER: Hector was there?

MARGARET: Naturally. He works for Mr Sweet.

XANDER: Does he?

MARGARET: Oh yes. He'd brought some silly fop along for us professional players to feed off.

XANDER: Oh.

MARGARET: And then the real game began. The stakes rose until slowly the others dropped out. Just Mr Sweet and I left at the table with Bernay House up against your Trust fund. All to play for. I knew I had a good hand and I'd seen two Queens get dumped early on but what did old Sweet have hidden away there close to his chest?

XANDER: What did he have? What did he have?

MARGARET: I wasn't quite sure but I knew he'd already played a Royal Flush and all the Naves with an ace kicker earlier that night so I knew he was no fool. So, the final cards were dealt. Sweet pitched up a four of clubs and then to me .....and there she was right in front of me. That beautiful solitary remaining little Queen of hearts. I leant across the table and blew cigar smoke right in his face. "I'll show you mine if you show me yours" I said. Sweet laughed but I could tell he was nervous. He flipped over his cards. Full house, Kings and tens. Not bad but now it was my turn.

XANDER: What did you have? What did you have?

MARGARET: One, two, three, four aces and my lovely Queen on the side.



XANDER: You beat him Mummy!

MARGARET: I did.

XANDER: I can't believe it. An utter novice....no, no, a genius Mummy.

MARGARET: Well maybe not genius. I mean I did have a little help.

XANDER: Mmmm? A little help?

MARGARET: Oh yes well I cheated of course. There was a wonderful book on how to do it in the library. I had a couple of aces in my brazier. Ha, you don't get to my age with out making full use of one's assets.

XANDER: Mummy. Mr Sweet is a member of a hardened criminal elite.

MARGARET: Pish. I am a member of the aristocracy.

XANDER: He'll know you cheated.

MARGARET: Don't be silly. How will he find out?

XANDER: They have cctv cameras everywhere.

MARGARET: Oh.....well maybe they won't bother checking the tapes.....

**DOORBELL SOUNDS LOUDLY**

XANDER: Mummy!

MARGARET: Quickly. To the priest hole.

**CREDITS**

