

Excerpt of *ONE WIFE TOO MANY*



Seven years after his bride is lost at sea, Wilson marries again. Bigamist!

Wilson Struthers is an ambitious attorney who advances his career by marrying eighteen-year-old Andrea, the boss' daughter. Things go according to plan... until Andrea is lost at sea. Seven years later, Wilson marries again. Then the fun begins!

Chapter One

Wedded Before Bedded

Wilson Struthers--Will to his friends--had just taken the biggest step in his life... and all to further his career. He married the boss' daughter, Randolph Ernst's only child, even though Will barely knew her.

Marry in haste, repent at leisure.

On the deck of the luxurious company yacht, he leaned against the railing, and stared out at the crimson colors of the setting sun. He sighed his regret. Unfortunately, the repenting had already started.

Will had the world by the balls--or he'd *had* the world by the balls. Successful criminal attorney; associate with the prestigious law firm of Ernst, Scargill, and Petersen; sought-after bachelor never without a bed partner. He was on the fast track to obtaining everything he wanted by age thirty. His future was practically guaranteed.

He'd accomplished all this on his own, so why had he felt the need to marry? And marry a complete stranger?

Just what the hell had he done?

Someone came up from behind and slapped Will on the back. The violence of the action caused his double shot of Chivas Regal whisky to spill.

"Great vacation, Will, baby. The old boss sure knows how to pull out all the stops, doesn't he?" Kevin Ballantine, red-faced from too much sun, redheaded from birth, and also an associate attorney with Ernst, Scargill, and Petersen, joined him by the railing.

In addition to the above attributes, Kevin had the distinction of acting as Will's best man earlier in the afternoon.

Will didn't bother answering. Randolph Ernst always pulled out the stops--when it suited him.

Kevin flicked ash from the six-inch handcrafted cigar overboard into the ocean below--one of the channels around the Hawaiian Islands. Over the loudspeaker, the captain had mentioned which channel the ship was entering, but Will hadn't paid attention.

His mind, as it were, was preoccupied.

"Say, where's the new missus? If I can call someone straight out of the schoolroom--missus." Kevin took a long puff on the cigar, then watched the plume of smoke drift toward the stern of the yacht. "Not tired of you already, is she? Or is it vice versa?"

Will continued to gaze out at the sun-dappled ocean. White crests decorated modest waves as they peaked on the sparkling waters. He sighed again. Andrea Struthers née Ernst didn't have an affinity for large expanses of blue. Since the wedding ceremony, she'd preferred to stay inside the confines of their opulent private cabin.

Alone.

"Andrea is seasick," he explained. Although how someone could be seasick on almost smooth-as-glass seas was beyond him. She'd even turned green on the flight over from Virginia. Airsickness he could understand, though. That had been a helluva long flight.

Kevin wrinkled his stubby nose. He had the physique of a wrestler, and the broken nose to match. "Bummer. Louellen, the cute little gal in Claims, is indisposed, too. I'd hoped to give her an aloha she'd never forget, know what I mean?"

He winked, then slapped Will on the back again.

This time, Will was ready for the blow. He curved both hands around his whisky glass.

“Well, hopefully, Louellen... and Andrea will be better by the time night rolls in.” Kevin wagged his bushy red eyebrows. “You know, I hate to admit it, but the better man won the prize here. You’re better looking, at any rate. Although, to be honest, I still wouldn’t mind getting my hands on young, nubile Andrea... not to mention her father’s money.”

Two glasses of premium Scotch whisky didn’t dull Will’s response. “Save your shark attack for the courtroom, buddy. You forget, Andrea’s my wife now.”

My porcelain doll of a wife. Almost like a China doll. Only this doll had very blonde and short hair. And she was very, very young. Only eighteen.

“Wife in name only, my good man.” Kevin tsk-tsked. “Wedded before bedded. Such a pity.”

Will took a gulp of whisky, then grimaced as it burned a path down his throat. His lack of conjugal fulfillment was a situation he hoped to rectify. The sooner, the better.

Kevin turned his back on the compelling beauty of the ocean. Still leaning against the railing, he gestured to a roaming bartender bearing gifts of a liquid nature. “Here now, Hiuwe, I’ll relieve you of another Chivas.”

“Yes, Sir Kevin.” The good-natured server briskly covered the distance on deck, then extended his platter holding well-filled, on the rocks glasses. “And you, Sir Wilson, do you like another?”

Will turned around and examined his drink. “No thanks, Hiuwe. I’m still half-full.”

“Or half-empty,” Kevin snidely remarked.

The wait staffer must’ve been accustomed to inebriated passengers. He gave a little smile, and pointed out at the sea with his free hand. “If you look straight ahead of us, you’ll see nai’a. Dolphin. Spinner dolphins. About five of them, I believe.”

Hiuwe inclined his dark head and continued his journey toward the bow of the ship.

Will gladly turned back around to watch the blissful play of the sea mammals. They darted out and splashed back into the water, then swam in wide concentric circles, almost as a sensuous dance. It was as if the five dolphins didn’t have a care in the world.

He envied them.

The peaceful serenity of nature in the wild sharply contrasted with the no-holds-barred behavior aboard the yacht. A party of six rounded the corner of the deck, laughing, bumping

into each other and foolishly spilling drinks onto the wood flooring. The wasted liquor just made the six passengers giggle harder.

Fifty of the over two hundred employees at Ernst, Scargill, and Petersen offices had been invited on the transcontinental flight and cruise to the Hawaiian Islands. By the way many of the guests downed no-limit alcoholic beverages, one would think they were drinking to make up for a lifetime of abstinence.

As was usually the case, serious overindulging led to regrets... just like the regrets that now plagued Will.

What did he know about marriage? Of being a husband? Of starting a family and becoming a father?

Was the promise of being made a full partner at the young age of twenty-eight worth the cost of marrying a woman he didn't know? Or rather, a girl. Damn it all, he felt like he was robbing the cradle.

But not only he was at fault. Why the hell had Andrea agreed to marry him?

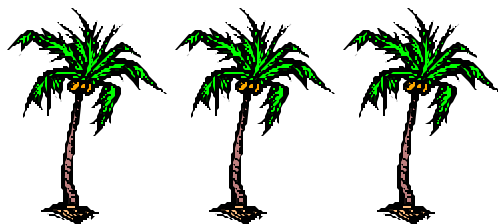
Kevin nudged him in the ribs. "You looked like you needed another drink so I took one for you." He handed over a generously filled glass.

Finishing his remaining whisky, Will took the new drink. Maybe he did need a refill.

"It's almost time for dinner. You should check up on your wife, see if she's... more in the mood." Kevin gave a sidelong glance and winked. "You could always call for room service, you know. We'll all understand if you don't join us in the dining room."

Being kidded about the sexual proclivities of newlyweds was getting old. Especially since nothing had happened as of yet. But then again, the day--or rather the night--was still young. As was Andrea.

Will finished his drink, bid his friend goodbye, then purposefully headed down to the bridal suite.



Andrea Ernst Struthers smoothed her hands down her satin covered hips, and looked into the full-length mirror again. While the blush pink negligee looked sexy enough, the person

barely filling it out appeared inadequate.

“Rats.”

Andrea turned away from her image to pace--over to the balcony, then back around again to the cabin door. Her boobs were too small, one of her fingernails--resplendent with bridal nail art--had just broke, and her insides were quaking as if she was ready to heave again.

Tears threatened to cascade down her expertly made-up face. “Rats, rats, and double rats.” She flopped down on the queen-sized bed with such force, she bounced hard enough to thrust her back up onto her feet.

Darn. What else could go wrong on her wedding night?

The answer was obvious. Plenty.

Andrea brushed back her newly-touched up blonde hair. She’d wanted her special day to be perfect. After all, she had the perfect husband, didn’t she?

Sighing, she allowed herself to linger on thoughts of Wilson. Tall, dark, and handsome was a description made just for him. His raven hair curled appealingly on his high forehead and over the tips of his ears. His generous mouth had plump kissable lips and his square jaw contained one of those adorable dimples in the middle of his chin.

Truth be told, she’d loved him the first moment she saw him, when she’d visited her father’s law office a couple of months ago.

She’d never dreamed he felt the same way about her. When he asked her to marry him two weeks ago, well, she knew she’d died and gone to heaven.

With his tanned complexion and broad shoulders, he’d looked absolutely scrumptious in his tuxedo at the ceremony. She’d wanted their wedding kiss to never end, but darn it all, the ship started rocking, causing her stomach, which had behaved during the vows, to pitch a fit. Thankfully, she hadn’t embarrassed herself in front of everyone, especially Wilson.

Andrea walked over to the coffee table and picked up a green apple from the fruit basket. She cut off a slice and daintily nibbled on it. Green apples were supposed to help seasickness.

So was acupressure--pressing on midpoints on the wrists. The steward, Ulesi, had kindly procured a pair of the effective wristbands for her. While she still felt queasy, it wasn’t as bad as earlier.

The grey wristbands didn’t exactly compliment her flimsy negligee but at least she could now manage the gentle swaying of the boat.

She glanced at the time: five-thirty. When would Wilson return? Should she dress and go

searching for him?

Gazing out the picture window at the ocean beyond, she spotted a group of dolphins frolicking in the sparkling azure waters.

“Should I look for Wilson?” she asked them, obviously not expecting an answer.

She wanted this marriage to work. She *needed* this marriage to work. Wilson was the only man she knew who was strong enough to stand up to her father.

Someone knocked at the door.

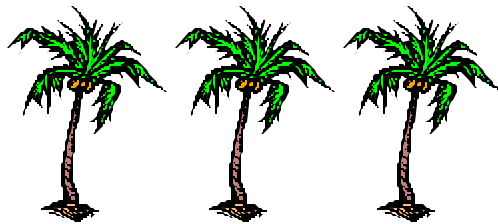
“Andrea, it’s me.”

Wilson was here! He’d insert his key card, then enter the cabin in a second. There was no need to hunt him down.

She wet her lips, suddenly flustered. He was a sophisticated man of the world, extremely knowledgeable about women... and lovemaking. She, on the other hand, was a novice, a greenhorn, a virgin.

Gulping down her panic, she crossed her fingers behind her back for good luck, then said a silent prayer.

Please, God, please let this first time at love be perfect for me and for Wilson.



Not knowing what to expect, Will opened the cabin door. Instead of suffering the discomfort of seasickness, his little doll of a wife stood by the entrance to the bedroom section of the suite dressed in a sleek, pale pink nightgown.

“Hi, Wilson.”

She was nervous; he knew that because she indulged in a nervous gesture, wrapping her finger around the un-taut spaghetti strap over her protruding clavicle. She was too damn skinny. If she’d had any curves, the gown would’ve hugged them. As it was, the satin garment just hung shapeless on her slender-as-a-boy figure.

He ran his hand through his hair. Hell, Andrea was younger than his kid sister Cassandra.

How could he even think of having sex with her?

But maybe Andrea was amenable to the idea for she waited for him with a bright red smile pasted on her pale face.

“Er, Andrea, you certainly look, er, fetching.” He stepped inside, walked over to her and gave her a chaste kiss on her perfumed forehead. “I’m glad you’re feeling better.”

She gazed up at him, blinking heavily mascaraed eyelashes. “Yes, Ulesi got me these.” She extended her matchstick arms, showing grey elastic bracelets. “They really help.”

For a second, he was reminded of handcuffs, and of a certain sexual encounter with a wanton law clerk who had, unfortunately, been invited on the cruise.

He shook away the memory and stepped into the cabin’s sitting room. “That’s good, Andrea. I’m glad,” he repeated.

She followed him in. Still smiling, she slid the palm of her hand down the short sleeve of his polo shirt and onto his bare arm.

The warmth of her fingers made him shiver. Or maybe it was the touch of her strangely decorated fingernails.

“Wilson...” She batted those artificially darkened lashes. “Do you... don’t you want to change into something more comfortable?”

Looking down at her, beyond the heavy fringe of lashes, he studied her eyes. They were an amazing color. Pure turquoise. Rather like the warm tropical waters around Oahu,--the launching point of this Hawaiian honeymoon cruise.

He smiled--the first time he’d felt like smiling in two weeks. “I thought we could call room service. Just the two of us for an intimate dinner with lots of sparkling champagne. We could get to know each other a little better. How does that sound to you?”

While the drinking age was twenty-one, he didn’t think their steward would quibble about the legality of serving alcohol to a minor. A newly married minor who also happened to be the daughter of the yacht’s owner.

Will’s smile widened. A private dinner would also serve another purpose. Not joining the rest of the group for dinner would fuel gossip, just as Kevin had insinuated. Everyone would assume the Struthers marriage was being consummated.

As things stood right now, consummation was the furthest thing from his mind.

Andrea clapped her hands together. “Oh, that sounds so romantic. And really, I haven’t had

anything to eat all day except for green apples.”

She stood on tiptoes and kissed his cheek. “Thanks, Wilson. I’ll put on a robe.” She grinned, then stepped away. “This is going to be perfect.”

As she walked into the bathroom, something gnawed at his stomach, and it wasn’t hunger. He had to tread very carefully here. The last thing in the world he wanted to do was to hurt this sweet young girl.

Reaching down, he picked up the receiver of the phone. “What’s your preference for food?”

“Something light for me,” she called out. “Maybe just salad, okay?”

Will ordered dinner, set down the phone, then went outside onto the small private balcony. Holding onto the railing, he allowed sea breezes warm with tropical fragrances to welcome him, to caress him from head to toe. As the gentle winds filtered through him, he felt cleansed, purged from his duplicity, given a second chance.

He was starting to like his new bride. She was cute, fun, eager to please. He’d erroneously assumed she’d be a rich bitch, the spoiled ice princess of the ruthless attorney-at-law Randolph Ernst.

Instead, Will was very pleasantly surprised. Maybe, just maybe this marriage could work out after all. And, maybe, as Andrea had said, it was going to be perfect.



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