

Schadenfreude

SCENE: Lights up on Audrey, standing center stage.

AUDREY: You call me Schadenfreude.

It's a German word referring to the pleasure derived from the misfortune of others. A coworker announces that their house has burned down, and that they're now homeless. And everyone else says, "Oh, you poor thing---that's just terrible!" But I say "hmmm". And I feel happy inside.

And when something like this happens....

CADENCE: *(Enters from stage left, crossing right in a hurry with a ream of papers in her hand.)* I've got the report right here! *(Accidentally drops the report all over the floor and walks off terribly distraught.)*

AUDREY: Everyone else says nice little things like:

RACHEL: *(From off right).* Oh, I'm so sorry!

AUDREY: And:

KIERIANA: Oh, no, Cadence! Let me help you with that!

AUDREY: But I say *(pauses, then begins to smile)* Ha!

Years ago, my psychiatrist said it's a mental disorder. But then, a couple of months after that, he got hit by a bus. And I felt just fine.

Oh, I do get a little down sometimes, but it's never long until somebody's pipes burst on a cold day, or until somebody's dog dies---and then I'm back to normal again, feeling just fine.

(Cadence and Kieriana enter right and exit left, talking along the way.)

KIERIANA: ...and then we found out our house has termites. *(Sobbing)*

CADENCE: Oh, Kieriana, that's just dreadful!

AUDREY: And I say *(similing)*, Yes, perfectly dreadful. Delightfully dreadful.

But I don't want you to think that I'm ungrateful. I realize that many people serve to make me happy by their misfortune. In fact, some of them seem to be heavily invested in unhappiness---like they're happier being unhappy than happy. I don't really understand why they get irritated with me getting happy over their misfortune when they themselves seem so intent on living the unhappy life. I totally appreciate their choice in the matter, and find more joy in it than they do.

And if that makes me mentally disorderly, then what does that make them?

For years, I worked as a dental assistant. Best. Job. Ever. But they had to let me go because they said that my laughing at the patients was unsettling and unprofessional.

I applied to work at a funeral home, and they told me I was the most cheerful interview they ever had. I was practically giddy as they explained the job description to me. But they said they needed somebody with more *gravitas*.

My friends told me I might enjoy working at the Department of Motor Vehicles, or maybe as a divorce lawyer. But what I've discovered as I've matured is that I can work a normal job, and just learn to quietly enjoy the routine misfortunes that the people around me suffer. I don't laugh out loud as much as I used to. Instead, I normally just smile to myself and I keep a journal to celebrate their misery.

Ironically, I'm often misunderstood. They take my smiling as some sort of kindness.

(Cadence and Rachel enter left and exit right, talking along the way.)

CADENCE: *(to Rachel)* Audrey is such a nice person. Her sweet smile is so reassuring when I'm going through hard times.

RACHEL: I know, right? It's like she has some special way of feeling joyful about me, even when I'm not joyful myself.

CADENCE: Yeah, it's quite a gift.

(both exit right)

AUDREY: Yes, I'm a very gifted person. *(Smiles)*

Fade to black.