

THE STARTER MARRIAGE

Written by

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"THE STARTER MARRIAGE"

FADE IN:

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT — NIGHT

Passing tables and guests seated in a very elegant, modern dining room are JACKSON FARREL, 23, tall and handsome; and KRISTEN DEPOLSKA, 25, beautiful and sharply dressed. The restaurant is decorated with a hint of Roman decor. Arm in arm they head with purpose towards the back of the restaurant.

JACKSON

Are they here?

KRISTEN

Hanna's plane landed about a half-hour ago. She and Robert should be here soon.

JACKSON

(Pointing)

Somebody beat us here.

CUT TO:

INT. RESERVED ROOM

At an elegantly appointed table set for six are MIKE ANTIGUA and JULIE CARLETON. Mike is munching a bread stick. As Jackson and Kristen approach, Julie waves.

JULIE

Hey!

MIKE

(Singing the "Wedding
March")

Dah dah dah-dah!

Everyone laughs good-naturedly. The arrivals shake hands, kiss cheeks, and take their seats.

JACKSON

You're a little early on that,
buddy.

MIKE

Just getting you ready for
tomorrow.

Everyone settles in as Mike pours the new comers
wine.

JULIE

So, Kristen, isn't your
girlfriend coming?

KRISTEN

They should be here soon.

JACKSON

(Looking towards the
door)

Isn't that them?

Another couple approaches. HANNA MURDOCK, beaming a
brilliant smile, and her finance ROBERT FRANCIS,
smiling but reserved. Kristen nearly up-ends the
table getting to her best friend. They embrace,
laughing. Robert stands by.

HANNA

(Motioning)

This is my Robert!

Robert extends a hand. Very conservatively dressed,
he could be meeting a potential client rather than
his fiancée's best friend. Kristen ignores the hand
and gives him a hug. Jackson rises and grabs his
hand, which is still extended.

JACKSON

Jackson Farrel, Robert. Thank
you for coming all this way.

ROBERT

It was a long flight. But, I
know this is important to Hanna.

JACKSON

(Beat) And it should be! Hanna,
beautiful as ever.

They embrace briefly.

KRISTEN

Let me do the introductions.
Hanna, Robert, this is Michael
Antigua...

MIKE
(Interrupting)

Mike.

KRISTEN
...Mike is Jackson's Best Man, and
this is Mike's girlfriend, Julie
Charleton.

JULIE
Hello.

Jackson pulls out Hanna's chair.

JACKSON
Sit. Eat.

ROBERT
There's no food.

MIKE
It's on its way.

The newest couple sit. Jackson and Kristen return to
their seats. It's boy-girl around the table: Kristen,
Jackson, Hanna, Robert, Julie, Mike. Mike lifts the
bottle of wine.

ROBERT
None for me.

HANNA
Come on honey. It's a special
occasion.

ROBERT
No. Thank you.

Hanna frowns as Mike and Jackson exchange glances.

JULIE
(To Hanna)
You must be size six, right?

HANNA
Yes, that's right.

ROBERT
You're an eight.

HANNA
I was an eight.

JULIE

Wait till you see your dress.
It's going to go perfectly with
your eyes.

HANNA

I can't wait.

KRISTEN

It's not fair, you know.

HANNA

What?

KRISTEN

Maid of Honor, then right to
bride! There should be a
mandatory waiting period.

ROBERT

(To Hanna)

What is she talking about?

HANNA

She doesn't know.

MIKE

That's all right; I've been lost
since the introductions.

JULIE

That's a surprise.

Mike play-acts being offended.

KRISTEN

What don't I know?

Kristen shoots a warning look and points a finger at
Mike, who was just opening his mouth. He blatantly
takes a bite of bread stick instead.

Just then a trio of waiters arrive, lead by LEON, the
maitre'd.

LEON

So, Jackson, you have arrived!
And brought your lovely bride-
to-be!

JACKSON

Hello, Leon!

The waiters, each carrying two plates, move in and back, expertly leaving a very expensive looking dinner in front of each of the guests.

LEON

As you requested: Peruvian Purple Potatoes with Heats of Palm, and medallions of pork tenderloin garnished with a light marsalla dressing.

KRISTEN

It looks wonderful, Leon. Thank you.

Leon bows and departs, waiters in tow.

HANNA

You know the maitre'd?

KRISTEN

We come here a lot.

HANNA

Wow. Must cost you a fortune.

JACKSON

It's relative.

Mike laughs. Everyone digs in.

KRISTEN

All right, Hanna. What don't I know? Give.

HANNA

(Shooting a look at Robert)

I didn't want to mention it the night before your wedding...but Robert and I have postponed our wedding.

KRISTEN

Oh, no! For how long?

ROBERT

Indefinitely.

MIKE

Ah!

ROBERT

What?

MIKE

You don't want to marry her.

JACKSON

Not cool, Mike.

ROBERT

You don't know what you are talking about.

MIKE

Don't I? You said indefinitely. Means you don't want to get married.

ROBERT

What qualifies you to make a judgment?

MIKE

(Grins)

Tell him, honey.

JULIE

(Rolling eyes)

Mike is a psychologist.

HANNA

Well, I don't know about the rest of your practice, but you're wrong this time.

MIKE

I'm never wrong.

Jackson, Julie and Kristen stare at him.

MIKE

Suit yourselves.

ROBERT

Hanna and I just have a few things to work out first. Not that it is your business.

MIKE

(To Julie)

Didn't he hear you say I'm a head-doctor?

JULIE

Shut up a minute, honey.

KRISTEN
(To Hanna)
What kind of things?

HANNA
Robert is in law school...

JACKSON
(Interrupting)
Ah! Makes sense. You want to
wait until Robert graduates.
More wine anyone?

Mike and Robert both lift glasses. They stare at each other. Jackson pours Mike a half-glass, then Robert a full. Robert gives him a "what are you trying to pull" look.

JACKSON
You're a half glass behind.

KRISTEN
I don't think that's it...

MIKE
No, he's right. We all had half
a glass, except Robert, who said
"No. Thank you."

KRISTEN
(Ignoring Mike)
What's the real reason?

Hanna and Robert look at each other. Robert shrugs and takes a healthy swallow of wine.

HANNA
Robert thinks we should have a
pre-nuptial agreement.

The entire table goes still. Everyone but Hanna and Robert are exchanging glances. They are startled by the sudden change in attitude. Suddenly the other two couples burst out laughing.

MIKE
I should have known!

ROBERT
(Shouting)
That's! It!

He throws down his napkin and stands, jabbing out a hand for Hanna. She, hurt and conflicted, slowly stands.

Kristen and Jackson quickly jump up and move to intercept them- Kristen to Hanna, Jackson to Robert.

JACKSON

No,no! Please! We're sorry.
Please, stay. You just took us
by surprise.

ROBERT

Well, what the hell was that?
I'm telling a table full of
strangers the details of my
engagement and I get mocked and
ridiculed, then laughed at!

JACKSON

I apologize, Robert. That was
mean of us. But, I can explain;
in fact, I can explain very well
if you'll just stay. Please;
sit-eat.

Slowly Robert gives in and returns to his seat,
followed by Hanna. Again Jackson and Kristen return
to their seats. Robert glances around the table and
sees Mike staring at him. Mike smiles and raises his
glass.

HANNA

All right. What is so funny
about a pre-nup?

All others defer to Jackson, who is looking suddenly
somber.

JACKSON

Well, actually, it's not funny
at all.

KRISTEN

Honey, are you sure you want to
do this?

Jackson takes a long look at Hanna and Robert.

JACKSON

I think I have to.

FADE OUT:

V.O:JACKSON

Mom and Dad were about our age
when they were engaged. They
were recently graduated from
college and laying out plans for
their future...

FADE IN:

INT. ANNE FARREL'S HOUSE — TWETY-FIVE YEARS AGO (YEAR ZERO), DAY

MOLLY BREWER is fastidiously arranging and
rearranging magazines on a coffee table. 22, trim and
pretty, Molly spends a few moments making final
touches. She sits back on the couch, satisfied...until
she looks across the room. Then she must get up,
cross the room, and rearrange the knick-knacks that
decorate a bookshelf.

VO:FEMALE

She's doing it again.

CUT TO:

INT. THE KITCHEN

DEAN FARREL is bringing down cups and saucers from
the cupboard and placing them on a serving tray. 23,
strong and tall, Dean smiles at his mother's comment.
He turns, tray in hand.

DEAN

What's that, mom?

ANNE FARREL, mid-50's, looks both kind and wise. She
steps up to meet her son, and places a steaming
teapot on the tray. She meet's Dean's eyes for a
moment, then moves to stand next to him, moving him
toward the den.

ANNE

Meddling.

DEAN

Mom!

Anne pats her son's arm and stops.

ANNE
She's definitely the one?

DEAN
Definitely!

Anne looks up at her son, who is staring off screen at Molly. His gaze is full of love, and hard as iron. She pats his arm again.

ANNE
She's a nice girl.

INT. THE DEN

Molly is examining a porcelain animal, running her fingers over a broken ear. She sets it down and reaches out to touch another chipped figurine.

ANNE
Do you like them?

Molly turns.

MOLLY
Yes, they are very nice.

Molly steps back to the coffee table, where Dean is sweeping the magazines aside to make room for the tray. She reaches out...to have her hand smacked by Dean.

DEAN
Nope. You do enough serving at work. My turn.

Molly and Anne sit as Dean pours. The recliner Molly sits in is like the rest of the furniture in the room- clean, but very threadbare. Dean hands each of them a cup and takes one himself, sitting on the couch, close to Molly's chair. Everyone takes a sip.

DEAN
Ahhh! Good!

MOLLY
Yes, it is very good, Mrs. Farrel.

Anne takes a second sip, looking over the rim of her cup at Molly. Molly looks at Dean, and then back to Anne, who sets down her cup.