

## 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.