

SEEN AND NOT SEEN

By Jennifer Maisel

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SETTING: A restaurant.

CAST:

Marilyn – 20s/30s

The Waiter - 20s/30s

Sara – Marilyn's mother

(Marilyn sits at her table. The Waiter stands over her. She's not making eye contact with him.)

No, I'll wait. MARILYN

A glass of wine maybe? WAITER

I'm fine. MARILYN

OK. WAITER

What? MARILYN

Uh...nothing? WAITER

I am fine. Really. MARILYN

I know. WAITER

I am! MARILYN

(Sara appears across the room and waves.)

Here I am!!!! SARA

(Suddenly, Marilyn's not feeling very well.)

Wine. MARILYN

A glass? WAITER

MARILYN

Bottle.
(Sara reaches the table.)

SARA

You can't make the effort stand up and give your mother a hug?
(Marilyn stands up reluctantly. She wears a mess of uncoordinated clothing strategized to hide any attractive features she might have. They hug)

MARILYN

You look good, Mom.
(Sara looks at her)
Have you lost weight? A couple of pounds maybe?
(Sara looks her up and down)

SARA

A new girdle.

MARILYN

Well you look terrific.
(Sara looks Marilyn up and down)
What?

(The waiter scopes her out from afar)

SARA

Nothing.

MARILYN

What?

SARA

Nothing.

MARILYN

Fine.

SARA

I am not going to say anything. You're a grown woman...you've got your own life to lead. And I've decided it's time we reached a new level in our relationship. It's time for us to be friends.

MARILYN

Sure.

SARA

And friends have lunch together, right?

MARILYN

Right.

SARA

And friends mean you'll call me Sara.

MARILYN.

Oh. I don't know about that, Mom. Doctor Austen says it's important to keep clear boundaries,

SARA

Boundaries. Dr-100-dollars-an-hour says there should be boundaries there will be boundaries.

MARILYN

Great.

(The Waiter arrives with the wine as Sara goes on -)

SARA

But I am your mother. You began in here. Deep in my uterus, connected to me. Your blood is my blood. I am part of your collective unconscious. And you think there are already boundaries. No. I tell you, no. As your mother we are indistinguishable. But as your friend there are boundaries. Lie down on your Dr. Feel Good's couch and free associate on that.

(Marilyn looks at the lingering waiter until he goes away.)

MARILYN

What are you going to have? Sara.

SARA

So as your friend...we're friends now? As your friend...are you trying to break your mother's heart?

MARILYN

Don't start again.

SARA

What are you wearing?

MARILYN

Mom.

SARA

Call me Sara. We're talking as friends here.

MARILYN

Friends compliment my outfit. Friends keep their mouths shut if they don't have something good to say. Friends like the way I look.

SARA

Just answer me the one question.

MARILYN

Clothes, ma, clothes.

(She waves the waiter over)

WAITER

Are you ready to order?

SARA

Why do you need a therapist? You could take that money and cheer yourself up with a manicure, a makeover, a dating service.

MARILYN

(to Waiter) One minute please. *(to Sara)* I don't want to discuss this now.

SARA

Have you talked to Dr. Fix-your-life about your non-confrontive nature?

MARILYN

I knew this was going to happen if I had lunch with you. *(The waiter retreats)* This happens every time I have lunch with you. No matter what I wear, you find some fault with it. No matter how my hair is done you'd like it better some other way. No matter what, it's wrong, wrong, wrong. On my wedding day you'll criticize the color of my dress.

SARA

I only hope.

MARILYN

Mom, a husband will not necessarily cure what ails me.

But he could.

SARA

MARILYN
(In that I'm going to murder my mother tone. Playiing with her knife)
I can think of a much quicker more effective solution.

Waiter!

SARA

I think all I want is an apology.

MARILYN

Are you ready?

WAITER

What do you think of her outfit?

SARA

Excuse me?

WAITER

Oh god.
(she sinks into her chair)

MARILYN

Tell me, honestly. What do you think? Stand up dear.

SARA

I will not.

MARILYN

We can settle this for once and for all. Tell me what you think..is this an outfit appropriate to meet your mother for lunch?

SARA

Stop it.

MARILYN

Well...

WAITER

Come on, we're all friends here.

SARA

MARILYN

He is not our friend. He is our waiter.

WAITER

I mean, freedom of expression is very important. I have to say -

MARILYN

You've been doing this to me since I was three.

SARA

Let the man speak.

WAITER

Look at me, for example. I come here and I have to put on this uniform. Part of the job and hey, I can deal with that. But do you know what that makes me?

MARILYN

You asked the waiter at the diner if he thought Mrs. Kaufman was right and did I really need speech lessons.

WAITER

It makes me anonymous. Black pants. White shirt. I am an icon.

SARA

I wanted an average person's opinion.

MARILYN

He didn't speak English, Mom. He was Greek. He spoke Greek.

SARA

A very important language.

WAITER

You look at me and you don't see the real me. You see waiter. You see food server, water pourer, check giver.

MARILYN

And when I was thirteen...

SARA

You said you forgave me for that.

WAITER

And you order me around. Coffee. Dessert. Water. Extra sour cream. Dressing on the side. You ask what's good but you don't really listen.

MARILYN

I'm crying because I'm fat and my new braces hurt like a bitch and no-ones asked me to the seventh grade dance and no-one is going to ask me to the seventh grade dance and you take me out to Swensens for a huge banana split...

WAITER

Just a uniform. Just a lousy uniform. They made me dress this way. And no-one really listens to me.

MARILYN

The entire wait staff comes out with it singing "The most beautiful girl in the world."

SARA

I'm listening to you. Didn't I ask you for your opinion?

WAITER

Yes. Yes you did. Thank you.

MARILYN

Then when you asked the busboy at Rose of Cairo to be my date for the prom -

SARA

He was cute.

MARILYN

Don't you know what you did to me?

SARA

I gave you life!

WAITER

I think--

MARILYN

I don't want to know what you think--no offense.

WAITER

She asked me - Mrs. -

SARA

Call me Sara.

WAITER

Sara asked. Maybe I've got something of value to add. Maybe your complaining about how she judges your outfits isn't being listened to because you don't follow it yourself.

MARILYN

Excuse me?

WAITER

You're automatically dismissing me because I'm a waiter. But you don't know if that's all I am. I could be an undercover reporter writing an expose on New York restaurant service or a detective - (*Marilyn is not impressed or convinced*) I just might be a cardiology resident helping out my brother-in-law because half his staff has the flu. I am someone worth listening to. I am someone worth knowing.

MARILYN

Fine, go ahead.

SARA

Yes--

WAITER

I think your daughter is a very attractive woman. With a slightly outrageous style of dress. (*his and Marilyn's eyes lock*) And amazing eyes.

MARILYN

Oh.

SARA

Are you coming on to my daughter?

WAITER

What?

MARILYN

Mother.

SARA

I should report you to your manager. Why would she want to go out with you? We'd like another server please.

MARILYN

Mom.

SARA

He's only a waiter. You need someone much more fulfilling, much more dangerous, much more bad for you.

MARILYN

Please signal when through.

SARA

I just want you to know that I have noticed the men who fit into the category of your type and I...I respect it. *(to Waiter)* Go away.

MARILYN

Don't go anywhere.

SARA

She doesn't know what she's saying. She speaks without thinking a great deal of the time.

MARILYN

Mom! I've been trying. I want to get to the point where we can enjoy each other and...but I guess I dressed this way on purpose to see you. I didn't know why at the time but I did. I did it so you could make a scene in the restaurant...So here's the deal. I get to make the mistakes and you get to say I told you so. And let me grow up.

(she turns to the Waiter -)

You -

(she hands him her card and kisses him)

Call me.

(Marilyn leaves. Sara sits for a moment)

SARA

Well.

(She breaks into a smile. To the waiter -)

Thank you doctor. And thank your brother-in-law for me.

WAITER

The pleasure is going to be mine.

SARA

And now...I'd like the cobb salad.

(The Waiter sits down with Sara, taking off his waiter apron and signalling to another waitperson)

WAITER

Waiter!!

END