

## Waiting- 1996

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As the woman sat on the patio of the little cafe her thoughts were wandering. They always seemed to do that lately, especially when she was waiting.

On the surface, the woman looked picture perfect. Her blonde hair was perfectly styled, she was classily dressed, and her nails were freshly manicured. Her face held a cool and neutral expression which gave her the appearance of being totally at ease, even in the heat the day had created. But appearances can be deceiving.

*'At least it's a nice day,'* she said quietly to herself as she glanced at her watch. The sun was shining brightly and there were only a few clouds in the sky. The only coolness existed where the table top umbrellas created shadows. She had her's removed when she first arrived though, preferring to feel the warmth the sun gave her.

To pass the time and to control her mind's wanderings she looked out to the walkway outside the patio cafe. The warmth of the day had brought many people outdoors; couples enjoying the day together, people feeling the need to exercise, and mothers shopping with their children.

She remembered those trips with her own mother when she was a child, especially the excitement of feeling 'grown up' when she was allowed to pick out her own things without getting her mother's approval, but all the same, still hoping for it. Her mother had always wanted so much for her. She remembered her mother telling her when she first became pregnant that she had read some-

where that the baby could hear outside the womb, and that things you read to a child could affect the way he or she developed. So, when her mother found out she was pregnant with a girl she made sure she read classics by great women writers, hoping that her daughter would be independent like them and always follow her dreams.

Her mother hadn't been the only one to encourage her as a child. Her father had contributed too. Where her mother encouraged her intellect, her father had encouraged her confidence. Even though to him she had been his 'little girl,' he always praised her when she kept up with her older brothers and told her to never let anyone tell her that she couldn't do something. At some point she had lost those lessons though, and she was afraid if her parents could see her now they would be disappointed.

The waiter interrupted her thoughts when he came over to ask her if she wanted anything. '*God yes I want something*,' she wanted to say, '*I want a life, I want to live!*' But instead she just ordered a white wine spritzer.

As she let the bubbly drink slide down her throat she continued to think back on her life, this time on her high school years. There she had discovered her true passion: writing. It had begun with a few poems, and surged ahead when her English teachers had praised the talent she had for words. From then on she wrote constantly- poetry, short stories, essays- whatever came into her mind she would put into words. She had imagined herself one day being a great writer, creating the next classic. Remembering the thrill of seeing her words on page brought a sad smile to the woman's lips. A smile which quickly vanished when she remembered she no longer felt that excitement.

Remembering those happy years she couldn't help but wonder what had happened to that idealistic girl who thought she had the world at her fingertips. She had gone to college, pursued an English degree with a passion, leaving little time for anything but homework and writing, in hopes of honing her writing skills. It was her senior year and she was getting so close to accomplishing her goals. She was editor of the school paper, and had some short stories that showed real promise of being published. She could almost feel the world in the palm of her hands.

She met him at a party and he swept her off her feet. Looking back she realized he was the typical cliché. He was handsome, rich, and said all the right things.

They got married right after graduation. He went to work at the family business, and she went to work at being the perfect wife. At first, she had thought that she could do both, write and be the charming socialite wife. But the roles just wouldn't mesh together, and when she looked in the mirror she saw the writer in her fading away. And gradually, the face in the mirror was no longer the woman she had once known herself to be, but a woman someone else had created.

After once again looking at her watch in frustration, the woman slipped a small mirror out of her purse and looked at the woman that she was. As she looked, a little voice inside of her cried out *'NO! This can't be me! This can't be my life! I want more!'* The voice faded away though when a shadow loomed over her and quickly kissed her cheek, apologizing for being late.