

The Laurels

Stageplay

by
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CHARACTER NAME	DESCRIPTION	AGE	GENDER
SATURN	big boots slim slouchy jeans	50's	Female
MARS		40's	Male
JADE	Flowing 1960's clothes	30's	Female
CLARA	Flapper clothes		

SCENE ONE.

MIRIAM MAHONEY Tudor home in suburban Philadelphia. The walls are lined with books. The table tops are full of small sculptures and large framed black and white photographs.

A SILENCE.

SATURN

I can't believe I'm back here at The Laurels. It's been seventeen years and it's exactly the same.

MARS

It was like this before we both were born. That's the way she liked it, exactly the same. She was a strong willed woman, our grandmother.

SATURN

I guess you could call it that, or get real and say she was an ironside battle-ax.

MARS

Remember the story mom would tell about the time she painted her room psychedelic colors and a mirror ball from the ceiling?

SATURN

Maybe if she had let her, Mom wouldn't have twisted up and tie-dyed her whole life. You'd have been named Susan instead of SATURN and I'd have memories of birthday parties instead of orgies.

MARS

Oh, come on. You are so harsh. It wasn't all bad. Remember the goats?

SATURN

Yeah, the goats were so cute. I wish I had one right now. You think they'd let me keep goats on the grounds?

MARS

Haha. That'd get Alistar's goat. Gran really could pick them. She had absolutely no gaydar. He's been keeping this place locked up like a mausoleum since the beginning of the trial. Aren't you glad that's all over, Saturn? It's your universe now.

SATURN

Alister was so crooked if he swallowed a nail he'd shit out a screw.

MARS

(Does a double take and stares at his
sister)

Um, ok. Where'd you pick up that little saying?

SATURN

Oh, shut up. I heard it online, ok?

MARS

Well, you better come up with some better prose if you are going to earn your
(makes air quotes)

GENIUS AWARD for best poet in town.

SATURN

It's not named the

(makes air quotes)

GENIUS AWARD its the McBarstool Prize for Most Promising Playwright or the Mickey P. I get 30,000 bucks to make something. Big whoop. Maybe 30,000 was a lot in the fifties but that won't even cut my student loans.

MARS

Mmm. Nice acceptance speech. Was there a standing ovation for you?

SATURN

It's not like there was a fancy dinner and I got an oversized check. I got an email and they wired the money into my account. Of course the bill collectors saw it and started circling. I just put it into the stock market and skeddadled out here as soon as I could. Thanks for meeting me.

MARS

It's fine. Actually, it's fun. I wanted to do more about the probate problems and feel bad that left you to do all the work. Thanks for buying me out. I really couldn't stand to take you to court.

(laughs and elbows her in the side)

You'd clean my clock and I'd end up owing YOU money, eventually.

SATURN

Well, you don't think I'd let that Alister get away with marrying Gran just to get her fortune. He was a good caregiver, but he was a serial caregiver who became husband who became sole heir. Did you know that?

MARS

Know what?

SATURN

That Gran's fourth husband had four wives before Gran?

MARS

Man, the twentieth century was wack. Was he like a Black Widower or something?

SATURN

Yeah, Mom would talk about him, but she was bi-polar

MARS AND SATURN

(together)

With psychotic features

(laugh)

SATURN

Mom always said it like it was an expensive add on to her vehicle. It's got leather seats, a moon roof and *psychotic features*.

MARS

She really was psychotic though.

SATURN

Who are you telling, bro? I'm older than you. I had the worst of it. You got to live here with Gran while I was out with Mom in the commune at the clothing optional school. I only got to stay here for a few months when I was 8.

MARS

You know we tried to find you. When you and Mom ran away Gran cried for a year. I was stuck here in the old people's home with Griefy Gran and Alabaster Alister while you got to play with the goats.

SATURN

It's amazing we both made it out and are functional members of society.

MARS

Speak for yourself, genius. JUPITER is still doing time.

SATURN

Oh, God. Do you talk to her?

MARS

I tried to visit once. It was such a pain and she wouldn't even come out and see me. I write letters, sometimes she writes back. She's really funny. You should hear the stories she has. I think JUPITER could write a novel and sell it.

SATURN

For drugs? Could she sell it for drugs? Otherwise stop daydreaming and let's start sorting these boxes. These are the ones Alister had taken and put in his storage closet. I'm dying to see what he thought was so important that he defied the judge and kept moving them.

MARS

Ugh, I don't want to look. They are probably screwy pictures of his ex-wives. I want to preserve my eyesight.

SATURN

Looks at a picture of her Grandmother. She was not a beauty was she? Wow how could one person inherit all the bad features of her grandparents. Good thing she was brilliant and had access to a good education.

MARS

Oh, nice feminism, sis. First you body shame and then you get grateful she had white privilege.

SATURN

But but but

MARS

Gotcha!

SATURN

Oh, shut up. I refuse to walk on eggshells in front of you.

(sees the look on her brothers face and
grins sheepishly)

You're right. I loved Gran, she was a pioneer and so funny. I still remember her elbowing Frank Lloyd Wright in the ribs.

MARS

Was he really here?

SATURN

Yes, in 1955 Gran hosted a meeting between Rabbi Mortimer Cohen and Frank Lloyd Wright right here in this living room. It was after they returned from Long Beach Island. They were tanned and immaculately dressed in linen.....

FADE TO BLACK.

SCENE 2

Same living room. Some objects are missing. The music and clothing make it clear we have gone back in time to the 1950's

CLARA and YOUNG SATURN are in the living room with a small rabbi COHEN and a tall architect WRIGHT and stunning Mrs Wright. COHEN AND WRIGHT and looking at a paper and mumbling.

SATURN

Where's mommy, Gran?

CLARA

Shh, not now Satie. We've got company.

SATURN

When is she coming back? I miss my brother. I don't think he's ok.

CLARA

Now, you don't worry. All will be well. Why don't you go upstairs and work on the dance?

MRS. WRIGHT

The little girl dances?

CLARA

Why yes she does. Not the dances we used to do, Oglivanna. She's just playing.

MRS. WRIGHT

Why ballet when Gurujief invented the perfect dance. How have you not taught this to your granddaughter? How will she grow into the strong and intelligent woman?

CLARA

She's a delicate child and I'd rather not talk about her anymore. Does that bother you? That I decide what to talk about because you are in MY house now?

MRS. WRIGHT

(looks at Clara inquiringly and then
laughs)

Oh, I knew you'd get me back for making you cut down trees in Wisconsin.

CLARA

I mean, I thought I was going to learn architecture from the Great Frank Lloyd Wright and there I am digging irrigation ditches and dancing all evening. Now that I look back on it I can thank you, but at the time I thought you were severe and a bit cruel.

MRS. WRIGHT

Too strict? You Americans are soft and do not appreciate the rigors of discipline while you are in the thick of it. Complain complain complain. But tell me about the child.

SATURN is playing the piano absently. It's a
lovely little tune that is original.

CLARA

She is my daughter's first child. She's been here for three weeks. I think I am going to enroll her in the local school until her mother resurfaces. My daughter Jade is living in San Francisco, and just put her on a train to Philadelphia. I got a telegram the day before she arrived. Fortunately Saturn is an intelligent and resourceful girl.

MRS. WRIGHT

Her name is Saturn?

(the piano plays louder)

CLARA

Oh, yes. She has a son named Mars and is pregnant with what I can only imagine is Pluto.

MRS. WRIGHT

You must have either done a great job or an awful job parenting. I suppose the ward in the living room is proof in the pudding?

CLARA

She is exploring Egypt with her paramour. I'm half jealous and have terrified for her safety. She hardly knows this man and is going to marry him.

MRS. WRIGHT

Love is love. I fell in love with Frank the moment we set eyes on each other. No matter we were both married and he was 30 years older than I. We knew in our very souls that we were destined to be together forever.

CLARA

It's not that romantic. She met him at a music concert six months ago. He is a sitarist.

MRS. WRIGHT

A guitarist?

CLARA

No, a sitarist. Someone who plays the sitar. You know. The long instrument that looks like a gourd mixed with a guitar?

MRS. WRIGHT

Oh, yes, they are lovely. We once had a famous sitar player from India come to Taleisin. It was lovely but I prefer marches.

SATURN

(calls out from the other room)

I can hear everything you are saying.

MRS. WRIGHT

Why don't you come here dear and join the conversation?

SATURN

I don't like when grownups talk.

MRS. WRIGHT

I understand completely. Do you like when grownups dance?

SATURN

Not like my mom's friends dance. I like it when everyone does everything at the same time and it looks good.

MRS. WRIGHT AND CLARA

(look at each other conspiratorily)

Like this?

(Both begin to make dance like but regimented music)

MRS. WRIGHT

I think we need music. Do you have the record I sent to you, Clara?

CLARA

I have it here.

(puts the needle on the record strange music emits from the player)

(both women make more Gurujief dancing moves)

MRS. WRIGHT

Come here, girl.

(Saturn walks over)

When you have been asked to dance you dance. You must never sit there like a dullard. Do you want to be a participant in life or just a spectator. Come here and stand like this...

Shows SATURN how to do the dance moves. All three begin to dance in unison.

MRS. WRIGHT

Why are you holding back? Why are you acting? It is your responsibility to be whole, to be yourself. Do you know who you are?

CLARA

(stops dancing)

She's just a child. She's not one of your students. You know you can be harsh and she's not ready for that.

MRS. WRIGHT

For me, all problems financial structural or natural are human problems. I am a part of your family and I will improve this situation by being a part of the solution. My immediate family has no use for my teachings. I prefer to teach the larger family. This girl has given me new life.

(speaks to SATURN)

Since you have no mommy I'll be your mommy. Are you my little buddy? Are you my little soul?

(Little girl begins to cry)

You mustn't cry. You mustn't sit still for a minute. Keep working on your dance and the feeling will go away. It will be difficult but you will do it. Carry on now, no matter what. You go. You go. You will grow to be a wonderful human being.

CLARA

Yes, Satie. Listen to Mrs. Wright. She's a great teacher and can help you remember who you are, just like she helped me remember who I was all those years ago.

MRS. WRIGHT

Yes, Clara. I recall your drastic haircuts and mad romances all too well. It's wonderful to see you as a Grandmother.

CLARA

I think I am a better Grandmother than I was a mother. I didn't have time for domesticity. I was a widow with a child and a business to run. I relied on the fact that Jade was such a quiet little girl. I could leave her with anyone and she was no trouble.

MRS. WRIGHT

Until there was trouble.

CLARA

Yes, but how was I supposed to know he was a degenerate! Will I never be forgiven for leaving her with him?

MRS. WRIGHT

Now, now. It's all way in the past and little pitchers have big ears.

CLARA

Come here, Satie! Give your Grana a hug. We are going to the city today to see the sculptures at the museum. Won't you like that?

SATURN

Will they be naked?

CLARA

(embarrassed)

Why do you ask?

SATURN

Because all the sculptures I ever saw were people naked. They were much prettier than the naked people at the commune.

(smirks, knowing what she is saying is going to upset the adults)

CLARA and MRS. WRIGHT look at one another and continue to dance. SATURN joins in.

FADE TO BLACK.

