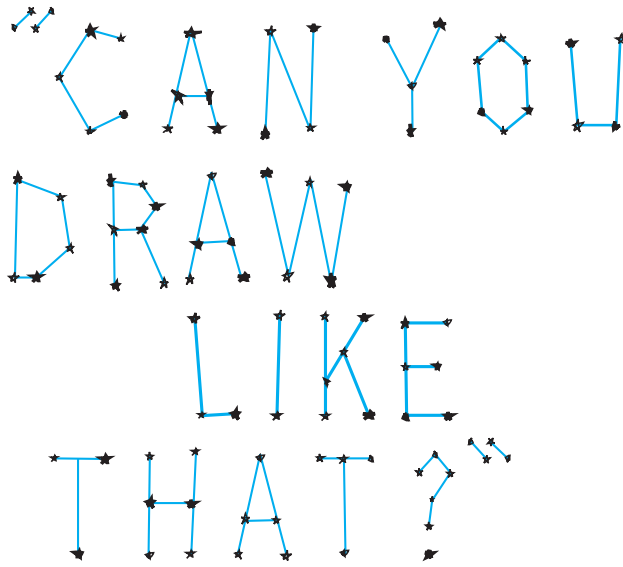


★ ALL OF A SUDDEN, **MILA KUNIS** IS EVERYWHERE—FROM PLAYING THE BEST REBOUND EVER IN *FORGETTING SARAH MARSHALL* TO A LEATHER-CLAD HARD-ASS IN ACTION MOVIE *MAX PAYNE*. NOW, SHE JUST NEEDS TO GET SOME SLEEP.  
BY DAN CRANE

PHOTOGRAPHED BY **LAUREN DUKOFF**



asks Mila Kunis, pointing in awe at an intricate drawing of hyacinths by Maria Sibylla Merian at the Getty Center in Los Angeles. I begin to answer jokingly that I can, but choose not to, when I am interrupted by a loud thump—like a bird colliding with a windowpane.

“Oh Jesus Christ!” she says.

Kunis’s forehead has smacked—with what I assume is a significant amount of force based on the sound—into the glass protecting the rare 17th-century illustration.

“There’s glass there,” grumbles a security guard with a gift for the obvious lurking in the corner.

“I realized that the hard way!” says Kunis, wandering off and giggling hysterically. “I am the clumsiest person you’ll ever meet. Ever!”

This petite, winsome 25-year-old brunette wearing flip-flops and ripped jeans, prone to bumping into and tripping over things, is clearly an unlikely candidate for an action-film assassin. Nonetheless, she’ll be starring this fall opposite Mark Wahlberg in the video game-inspired shoot-em-up, *Max Payne*. It’s a bit of a departure for the comedic actress, who played the spoiled and superficial Jackie Burkhart on *That 70’s Show*, lends her voice to the homely character Meg on *Family Guy*, and recently lit up the screen as the romantic rescuer of the dumped Peter (Jason Segel) in *Forgetting Sarah Marshall*.

“It’s not only a departure, it’s just absurd. OK?” Kunis tells me. In *Max Payne*, she’s outfitted with five-inch heels, leather pants, a bustier, and a very large gun. “And mind you—” she says, “I walk into glass, I trip. I’m the clumsiest assassin you’ll ever meet in your life. There’s one part where I’m supposed walk over a metal shelving unit thing, and my heel went right through it, and I’m like AGGHH! And I fall. And you hear me scream...”

“So you did your own stunts?” I ask.

“By accident!” she replies. “I’m the worst fighting assassin. I think on screen it will look good, but in real life, with my 10-pound gun...it was the hardest job I’ve ever done!”

Did she enjoy her new gun-wielding empowerment?

“I killed so many people!” she says, excitedly. “Well, only like six or seven. I wasn’t allowed to go on a full on rampage, but I was really good with aiming the gun.”

We amble from the exhibition of nature and entomological drawings to a show of August Sander photographs taken in Germany in the late ’20s and early ’30s. Kunis—who immigrated to America from Ukraine with her family when she was

nine years old—begins to imagine herself and her ancestors in many of the photos.

“Hey! It looks like my grandma and grandpa!” she says excitedly, pointing at a photo of an elderly German couple. “Well, not really. But they’re cute. I love old people.”

She eyes a portrait of two vintage Ringling Brothers circus girls and declares, “This is me!” Then she launches into a mock circus act: “Welcome to Ringling Brothers!” she announces, while ushering an imaginary audience into a tent, singing like a carnival calliope—“Dah dah dada-dada da-da da dah...”

Then another photo prompts her to say, “That could have been my family. Totally my family, like from a teeny village—not in Germany but in Ukraine.”

As a child “fresh off the boat” from Ukraine, Kunis learned English watching Bob Barker on *The Price is Right*. Early on, she started taking acting classes in Beverly Hills and landed the role on *That 70’s Show* at age 14. Her parents, both scientists, quickly realized that academia was not her *raison d’être* and reluctantly let her pursue acting. “When I was 12 they would say, ‘Are you sure you don’t want to quit acting? Are you sure?’ They were the opposite of stage parents.” In turn, she reluctantly agreed to graduate from high school to make them happy. “I sent out my college applications, I took the stupid fucking SATs, I got into all the colleges I wanted to get into, I went to orientation and that was that. End of story.” Her parents gave her the OK to pursue acting and defer college, as it turned out, indefinitely, which suits her just fine. “I really love reading and learning; I just don’t like doing it on someone else’s time.”

In real life, as in her performances, Kunis conjures an ebullient, uninhibited, innocent little sister who might be just a little bit naughty. Her on-screen sexuality is still somewhat playful, naïve. Maybe it’s her enormous, glossy doll eyes—one brown, one green due to a condition called iritis—or perhaps it’s her unabashed klutziness that I find so charming as we walk into another room, now playing a spontaneous game of “What Celeb Does This Photo Look Like?” I point to a shot of four young German boys and remark that the guy on the left looks remarkably similar to her current co-star, Mark Wahlberg. Mila gasps.

“Stop it! It is!” she says, punching my arm for emphasis, like Elaine to Jerry. “And that looks like, what’s his name? *Jurassic Park*?” she asks.

“Jeff Goldblum?” I answer.

“A young Jeff Goldblum! It’s like the weirdest brat pack ever!”

I point out the guy on the right side of the photo and try to lead her to my discovery, “Michael Pitt?” she asks. “Who were you thinking?”

★ “I GOT TO KICK MARK WAHLBERG’S ASS. THINGS COULD BE WORSE.”

I clap my hands to my face, *Home Alone* style, as a clue, to no avail. I admit I think he’s a dead ringer for her boyfriend of nearly seven years, Macaulay Culkin.

“No! Stop it! Shut up!” she shouts, punching my shoulder again. “Okay a little bit, because he’s got full lips. Yes, maybe.”

She and “Mac” (as she refers to him) have been dating since she was 18 (he is three years older). And despite a disastrous vacation to Israel during the war with Lebanon two years ago, they still travel together. “Mac said, ‘This is the wrong time to go.’ He is really fucking smart and sometimes I just don’t listen. He was watching the news six months before and saying ‘Something bad is going to happen—it’s inevitable. Can we please just do the trip to Greece?’ And I said, ‘Nah you’re crazy, c’mon’. We were there for three days and he was right. The bombs started hitting, we were on our way to Haifa. Haifa got hit, so we had to turn around to Tel Aviv. Then Tel Aviv was under alert. It was...” she searches for the right word to describe being evacuated from a war zone. “Exciting...?” she offers ironically. “For all the wrong reasons. I never heard the end of it. To this day it’s his favorite story to tell people.”

According to Kunis, one story that Russell Brand—the lanky, suave British comedian who co-starred with her in *Forgetting Sarah Marshall*—is currently telling in his standup is of his thrill in meeting Culkin.

“He was really excited to meet my boyfriend,” says Kunis, who recently caught Brand’s act in Los Angeles. “I kept talking about Mac, Mac, Mac, Mac... and he just thought Mac was just some guy that was my boyfriend. I never said his full name. He [Culkin] showed up and Russell went CRAZY! It might have been the second coming of Christ to him, and Mac was really cute—he’s such a sweetheart.”

Lately, she’s been keeping her sweetheart up at night with her newly acquired case of insomnia.

“It’s driving me crazy, it’s driving my boyfriend crazy... of course I wake him up because if I’m awake he has to be awake too. If I have to suffer so does he!”

It’s gotten so bad that, from here, Kunis is heading to the dentist to pick up her new night-guard. She’s been clenching her teeth lately and it is supposed to help. “I don’t know what the fuck’s wrong with me. I think I’m broken. I wake up and my jaw is super tense and it takes me a while to open my mouth.”

Why so tense? She’s had a fairy tale immigrant success story; she paid her television dues for eight years, and she’s more than proven herself as a talented and alluring comic film actress. Now, she’s got a new action flick in which she wears sexy tight leather pants and totes a big gun like most actresses might carry a YSL bag. Maybe things aren’t so bad after all?

“Yeah, y’know, I got to kick Mark Wahlberg’s ass,” she says. “Things could be worse.”

dress by stella mccartney,  
shoes by manolo blahnik  
for alexander wang, necklaces  
by annie costello brown.







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★ stylist: jenny ricker at the wall group. hair: mara rosak at themagnetagency.com using pantene. make-up: rachel goodwin for chanel at themagnetagency.com. shot at rec center studio, los angeles. top by phi, overalls by diesel, necklaces by erickson beamon, tights by wolford.