

# AVA'S WEDDING: An English Tragedy

An excerpt from the libretto by Alexandra Taylor

## ACT I            SCENE 1: AVA'S 21ST BIRTHDAY PARTY

BRIAN AND CELIA'S HOUSE - A LARGE, COMFORTABLE, MIDDLE CLASS HOME, BEDECKED FOR A 21<sup>ST</sup> BIRTHDAY PARTY.

A HOT SUMMER DAY.

JACKIE SHOULD BE WEARING TENNIS CLOTHES AND CONSTANTLY SWINGING HER ARMS TO PRACTISE HER SERVE, OR BOUNCING UP AND DOWN AS IF TO RECEIVE.

IN THIS SCENE, ALL CHARACTERS ARE ON THE STAGE THROUGHOUT, AS THEY ARE ALL AT THE PARTY. 'EXIT' AND 'ENTER' REFER NOT TO LEAVING THE STAGE, BUT TO MOVING IN AND OUT OF THE FOCUS OF THE ACTION.

BRIAN:            So, to my darling Ava.

ALL:             Ava!

BRIAN:            Happy birthday!

ALL:             Happy birthday!

EVERYONE RAISES THEIR GLASSES AND TAKES A DRINK.

AVA:             Thank you, thank you all for coming. It's so lovely to see so many people I care about here today. Please bear with me for a few minutes while I say some special thank yous. Firstly, huge thanks to mum and dad without whom I wouldn't be here. They paid for this delicious food and opened up their house, so a round of applause please.

ALL:             [APPLAUSE]

AVA:             Secondly, my best friend Fran, who's been there for me since before I can remember.

FRAN IS STANDING WITH MARTIN, THEY ARE CLEARLY A COUPLE.

AVA:             My wonderful boyfriend Ian, who I've totally neglected in planning this party.

MARTIN CLAPS IAN ON THE BACK. THEY ARE CLEARLY FRIENDS.

And Martin, who has helped so much and provided all the booze.

IAN CLAPS MARTIN ON THE BACK.

And of course to every single one of you, for being here today, and for your ongoing love and support. I'm a very lucky girl.

ALL: [APPLAUSE]

AVA: Now don't stand around staring at me. There's food to be eaten and wine to be drunk. Go!

THE GUESTS DRIFT OFF INTO GROUPS AND GO ABOUT ENJOYING THE PARTY. ENTER FRAN AND MARTIN.

FRAN: Isn't it lovely to see Ava so happy?

TRUTH: Being with Ian would make any girl happy.

MARTIN: It certainly is.

TRUTH: I wish it was me making Ava happy.

FRAN: Do you think her and Ian are for keeps?

MARTIN: It certainly looks that way. Unless she's said something to you?

FRAN: Not at all, she's totally into him. Why? Has Ian said something to you?

MARTIN: No, definitely not. He's mad about her. So, as far as you know, it's the real deal?

FRAN: Yes. And as far as you know, they've both found The One?

BOTH: Great.

MARTIN: What about you? Are you happy?

FRAN: Of course.

TRUTH: I don't love you, I love Ian.

FRAN: Why? Aren't you?

MARTIN: Of course I am. But you would say, wouldn't you, if you wanted to break up?

FRAN: Of course I would! Wouldn't you?

MARTIN: Yeah, sure. Why wouldn't I?

TRUTH: Because I don't love you, I love Ava.

BOTH: Great.

TRUTH: I can't break his/her heart for nothing. I am trapped.

EXIT FRAN AND MARTIN. FRAN GOES OVER TO  
TALK TO IAN, MARTIN GOES TO THE BAR. ENTER  
OLIVE AND NORA.

NORA: Come on mum, it's past your bed time, let's get you upstairs.

OLIVE: I don't want to drag you away from the party dear.

NORA: It's no problem, honestly.

TRUTH: I wish I could pay someone else to do this.

OLIVE: It might take a while, with those stairs.

TRUTH: I wish I could pay someone else to do this.

NORA: Just go at your own pace, take your time.

TRUTH: You are robbing me of my life.

EXIT NORA AND OLIVE. MARTIN BRINGS DRINKS  
BACK FROM THE BAR AND HANDS ONE TO FRAN.  
IAN STOPS TALKING TO FRAN AND BUMPS INTO  
AVA. ENTER AVA AND IAN.

IAN: Thanks for giving me a mention in your speech.

AVA: Ah, you've been great. I've hardly seen you and you haven't complained once.

IAN: Well, you had a big party to plan.

TRUTH: I didn't really notice.

AVA: But now it's over, we can spend more time together again. That is, if you want to.

IAN: Of course I want to.

TRUTH: But I'd rather be with Fran.

AVA: Me too.

TRUTH: But I'd rather be with Martin.

IAN: We could go out tomorrow night. Perhaps with Fran and Martin too?

AVA: Great idea. I'll go and ask Martin if he's free.

IAN: And I'll go and ask Fran.

EXIT AVA AND IAN. AVA GOES OVER TO TALK TO FRAN AND MARTIN. FRAN LEAVES THEM TO IT AND GOES TO TALK TO IAN. NORA COMES BACK TO THE PARTY. ENTER CELIA AND QADIM.

CELIA: I'm sorry there's so much alcohol around, but there are plenty of soft drinks in the kitchen - coke, lemonade, orange juice.

TRUTH: He must think us non-Muslims are all going straight to hell.

QADIM: It's quite OK Mrs Blackwell.

TRUTH: I wish she'd sod off. I really want a beer.

CELIA: All of these are vegetarian. These aren't, but they are halal. Oh, these have bacon in. I'm sorry, I'll get them taken away. Trude!

QADIM: Mrs Blackwell?

CELIA: Yes?

QADIM: I don't know how to say it...

CELIA: What? Is there something wrong?

QADIM: Not at all. It's just...

CELIA: Do you need to pray? I've set up the box room with a prayer mat for you.

QADIM: That's very kind, but the thing is...

ENTER TRUDE.

TRUDE: Mrs Blakevale?

CELIA: Ah, Trude. Could you please remove the bacon bites to the kitchen, out of poor Qadim's way. Oh, there's Elaine. I need to ask her something. You know where the box room is, don't you Qadim?

QADIM: Yes, Mrs Blackwell. Thank you.

EXIT CELIA. TRUDE STARTS TO MOVE AWAY WITH  
THE BACON BITES.

QADIM: Trude, wait a minute!

HE TAKES A HANDFUL. EXIT TRUDE WITH THE  
REST OF THE BACON BITES.

QADIM: How can I tell her I'm not Muslim? I've practically grown up in this house, spent my whole life being fed and looked after by her. My parents are Muslim, but I gave up on religion a long time ago. It's not the sort of thing you discuss with your mate's mum, and now I don't know how to bring it up. She'll make a big fuss about it, talk to my parents, ask a lot of questions and it's really none of her business. But it's so annoying to constantly have all my favourite food taken away from me. I need to man up and just tell her. But not today.

EXIT QADIM. ENTER BRIAN, PATRICIA AND RITA.

BRIAN: Where are those two lovely sisters of mine? Ah, there you are!

PATRICIA: That was a wonderful speech Brian.

RITA: Absolutely beautiful.

BRIAN: I just can't believe that's my little girl. Mother would have been so proud of her. I wish she could have been here today.

PATRICIA: Me too.

RITA: And me.

THE TWO WOMEN GLARE AT EACH OTHER. EXIT  
BRIAN.

PATRICIA: I see you're wearing mother's necklace again.

TRUTH: Just to remind me that you stole it from me.

RITA: I couldn't not.

TRUTH: I never wanted this ugly thing.

PATRICIA: It suits you so well.

TRUTH: It would look better on me.

**END OF EXCERPT**