

DESTRUCTION PARTY

Written by

Amanda Meyncke

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1

EXT. AVA'S BACKYARD - DAY

1

We see party preparations from above, and the side. It's a balmy mid-afternoon, warm and sunny. Stacks of plates are being arranged, teacups placed just so on a table. We see a woman's hands carefully placing and checking items. A cake is similarly brought into frame, pink and heart shaped. The general mood of this intro is somewhere between a Martha Stewart Wedding and an Anthropologie catalog.

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\*

As party preparations continue:

AVA (V.O.)

You're still coming, right?

EMILY (V.O.)

Yeah, we're meeting at your house at 5? Erin's with me, I think Laura texted and said she would just meet us there.

AVA (V.O.)

Okay cool. You guys should bring something to drink if you want, Laura's bringing wine, I've got snacks.

\*

\*

The preparations draw to an end as the conversation does.

2

EXT. AVA'S FRONTYARD - DAY

2

We see an establishing shot of the house, an old Victorian mansion.

\*

3

EXT. AVA'S BACKYARD - SAME

3

We see the backyard, all the party preparations, a large table with the glasses and breakables on it, the brick wall that surrounds the house. EMILY, 27 and ERIN, 28 walk into the backyard carrying wine and a brown paper grocery bag of snacks. They are both wearing dresses or skirts and blouses, librarian chic with a modern twist. LAURA, 27 and AVA, 28 are sitting in lawn chairs enjoying the breeze and sunshine, we hear the sounds of summer all around them, it is late afternoon. As Erin and Emily enter the backyard, Emily says Ava's name jokily, perhaps alluding to an inside joke:

EMILY

Avaaaaaaa.

All four girls are in their mid to late 20s, all are good looking if not unconventionally attractive. The girls exchange hellos and sit down, putting their bags down. These exchanges are soft, friendly, but hard to hear. Laura pops up and starts pouring wine, the girls are getting settled. It is obvious they are all very comfortable around one another and spend a great deal of time together.

As she pours wine into Erin's glass and then her own:

LAURA

Okay, okay.

AVA

Okay, everybody have a drink?  
Laura? We set?

LAURA

Wait! Okay, I'm ready.

ERIN

Ready for what?

\*

4

EXT. AVA'S BACKYARD - SAME

4

There is a very ritualistic feeling in the air as Ava leads them to the destruction area, complete with the table we saw being prepared before. Somehow it should be presented as if it was in readiness for a grand feast or something similar. The dishes are neatly stacked, and there are plenty of them.

With a hint of Vanna White presentation, while remaining solemn:

AVA

Welcome... to the... Destruction Party.

Everyone giggles but Ava.

AVA (CONT'D)

As you can see, I have gathered an impressive amount of breakables, and over there we have a wall. The way it works is you have to say something you're mad about and for your bravery you will be given something to throw. Ideally the size of the item will relate to how good the secret is.

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\*

This is met with dead silence.

\*

ERIN

Did you practice that?

Ava hesitates for a moment, attempting to maintain her bravado:

\*

AVA

Maybe once.

LAURA

(jeeringly)

Yeah right, you totally wrote that down.

Emily cuts in:

EMILY

We don't really have any secrets at this point, we've known each other forever.

AVA

Oh c'mon, Emily. Well, okay, not secrets then, unless anyone's got something good we don't know about, just stuff you're mad about. And you have to say what it is.

There is some hesitation among the group as they look to one another, the other three girls have slowly moved almost shoulder to shoulder surveying the scene and Ava is standing next to the table.

ERIN

I don't wanna like... clean it up.

LAURA

Lazy.

AVA

Don't worry, I will clean up in the morning, that isn't the point.

Laura lights a cigarette and speaks slowly:

LAURA

This seems like the kind of thing  
where people say hurtful shit  
without really meaning to and  
everyone gets upset.

Ava is annoyed that everyone's not more excited and  
laughingly explodes:

AVA

OH MY GOD, you guys. Okay, fine.  
I'll start with something teacup  
level and show you how it's done.

She grabs a teacup off of the table.

AVA (CONT'D)

I'm mad that I always say I'm a  
writer but I don't actually write  
that much and everyone thinks I'm a  
fraud.

As she's about to throw it, Laura speaks up, gesturing with  
her cigarette:

LAURA

Wait, I don't think that counts.  
Like, the first part does, but the  
second part is just an assumption.

She turns to the other girls and deadpans:

LAURA (CONT'D)

An accurate one, but still.

AVA

Okay, jeeze, I'm mad that I always  
say I'm a writer but I don't  
actually write that much.

Ava throws the cup, and as it smashes against the wall, the  
girls kind of perk up. Ava exhales, and turns to the girls.

EMILY

Okay I'll go.

Ava is delighted and runs over to the table, waiting to  
select an item for Emily.

EMILY (CONT'D)

I'm mad that I always say I wanna  
travel or sail boats and fly planes  
but I never actually go anywhere.

Erin nods, encouragingly. Ava hands her a plate, Emily grabs it and throws it.

ERIN

I am definitely gonna need some more wine.

Ava pours out more wine into the glasses and gestures to the wineglasses:

AVA

Don't throw these, by the way.

5

EXT. AVA'S BACKYARD - SAME

5

The afternoon sun is beginning to fade, the girls enjoy their wine and relight cigarettes, considering the table and enjoying a moment of contentment from being together.

ERIN

I'm mad that no one ever wants to date me for very long.

Erin throws a bowl. Emily speaks up hesitantly as she watches Erin's satisfaction:

EMILY

I'm mad that I'm not pretty.

Things stop a little as the girls cautiously and playfully turn to her as she's looking at the table for her object.

ERIN

Oh you don't really feel that way do you?

AVA

Erin, the point isn't to talk people out of things.

ERIN

I just didn't know.

EMILY

Just not, like, pretty-pretty. I feel like I like what I see in the mirror but then in pictures and stuff I just hate myself.

Emily throws something heavy, but it bounces off the wall, which makes them all laugh.

LAURA

The universe disagrees with you.

\*

6

EXT. AVA'S BACKYARD - SAME

6

The sounds of summer linger in the air, kids laughing far off and a sprinkler running. Ava turns away from the group as she catches hints of these sounds and then turns back softly.

AVA

I'm mad that no matter how many cool jobs I get or... the fact that I have my Masters degree, or how much more successful I am than other people my age-- Sometimes I pretty much still feel like a colossal failure at life.

\*

Everyone nods sadly, it is a common feeling among these girls. Ava throws something heavy.

\*

LAURA

Sometimes... I...

\*

\*

ERIN

What?

\*

\*

LAURA

Nothing.

\*

\*

The three other girls share a quick look.

\*

ERIN

I'm mad that my feet are too big to wear vintage shoes and I'm too fat to wear vintage clothes.

Erin breaks something.

EMILY

Right there with ya. I'm mad at all those bible school bitches I went to school with who got married at 20 and act like they've got everything figured out. 'Ooh look at me, I have a baby and live in a dumb apartment'. Keep your stupid Facebook albums to yourself.

Everyone looks at each other and then all four throw something.

AVA

They're always named something stupid too, "Our Humble Abode" and their ugly babies mostly just look like a bunch of potatoes. I don't even get it.

The four of them consider this, and Emily shudders.

\*

EMILY

Gross.

\*

7

OMIT

7

\*



\*

8

EXT. AVA'S BACKYARD - SAME

8

The girls enjoy the fading sunlight and again are content to let the silence between them stand for a few moments. Ava speaks almost too quickly:

AVA

I'm mad at Carter for letting me spend every minute of the four years we were in college falling in love with him and then saying we should just be friends and marrying that fucking girl I hate.

Ava throws a bowl, which breaks.

AVA (CONT'D)

And I'm mad at everyone for letting me make a fool of myself over him.

Throws another item amidst a general hue and cry.

ERIN

Dude, that is not fair. You know you wouldn't listen to us... it was like you couldn't even hear what anyone was saying.

LAURA

You'd agree with us about stuff, and then ignore our advice.

EMILY

Is that seriously what this is about?

Emily gestures to the entire party, wine glass in hand. Ava is clearly not angry, just sad.

AVA

No, I get that it was years ago, I just think I get over it... I'm just angry that I still care. But it's not as bad as it used to be. It was just so easy to be with him. I miss that.

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There is a pause, and she throws something else. Laura saunters over to the table and picks up a plate.

LAURA

I'm mad that no one ever invites me to parties.

Laura reaches up to throw it and is interrupted.

AVA

HEY!

LAURA

Other... parties.

EMILY

That reminds me, I'm mad at every hot interesting guy at a party who talked to me for hours and then left to go bang an Eva Green lookalike.

Emily selects an item and throws it. Laura raises an objection as Emily is throwing:

LAURA

I'd probably bang Eva Green. Just bein' honest.

EMILY

You're right, bad example.

ERIN

I'm mad that I never make time for the stuff I say is important to me, like what you said about writing.

AVA

Like what?

Erin is clearly a little embarrassed and nervous:

\*

ERIN

I don't know, after work I'm too tired and annoyed to do anything creative that I care about when I get home, so I waste time. I guess that's it -- I'm mad that I think I'm too good to work forty-hours a week in an office. I should be glad I even have a job right now.

Erin walks over to the table, Emily hands her an item with a compassionate look. Erin runs her finger around the rim of a bowl and then savagely hurls it.

9

EXT. AVA'S BACKYARD - SAME

9

The girls are tired of standing and Ava and Laura sit down in the lawn chairs as Erin freshens everyone's drink. Emily wanders towards the already broken things and investigates the damage so far.

LAURA

I'm pissed that I still lie so casually about stuff that doesn't matter, just to impress people.

\*

ERIN

You still do that?

\*

\*

Laura sighs and then imitates a version of herself with a silly voice:

LAURA

"Oh yeah, last weekend I totally read the new Bret Easton Ellis. Yeah, it's so good." When really it's like: "No you stupid fraud, you watched seasons four and five of Dawson's Creek on the Internet. And what's worse is you stole it, you couldn't even be bothered to shell out the 20 bucks per season or whatever."

ERIN

You know I have all the seasons, right?

LAURA

Oh yeah, I forgot.

\*

EMILY

That reminds me, I'm mad that I fall in love with artsy dudes on the Internet so easily and make these embarrassing attempts to try to get them to like me.

Erin wanders back towards them and chimes in on the tail end of Emily's thought:

ERIN

I hate when I do anything to try and get strangers to like me more.

They both pick things out and then throw them together.

10

EXT. AVA'S BACKYARD - SAME

10

Ava is clearly struggling with whether to say something as the evening shadows begin to fall.

AVA

I hate to say this but, I'm angry that I don't really care about like Haiti or Darfur... or the Tsunami.

The three other girls look at each other quickly, and noting their concern, Ava finishes up:

AVA (CONT'D)  
Or like... breast cancer.

\*

Erin half-laughs and then hands the seated Ava an object, perhaps a small ceramic cat or something perfectly oppositional, but speaks tentatively:

ERIN  
You really don't?

Ava is embarrassed and clearly a tiny bit inebriated.

AVA  
No, I do in this abstract way, but I feel like I can't even care about my own shit most of the time without getting insanely depressed, that stuff just puts me over the edge. I had to stop listening to NPR during all that recession stuff 'cause I felt like I would never be okay again.

ERIN  
'I had to stop listening to NPR', that is a first world problem if I ever heard one.

EMILY  
Yeah, sometimes I feel that way, like a lot of the time I can't take care of myself.

LAURA  
Oh my god you guys, this is turning into the early stages of an anti-depressant commercial.

EMILY  
Oh, well, I've got one then. You guys know my gramma has dementia and can't remember who anyone in our family is anymore? I'm mad that I don't have any good pictures with her when she still remembered who I was. That I hated the way I looked so much I couldn't take a picture with the person I cared about the most. Her not-knowing me makes me feel...

The girls are quiet, unsure of how to help.

AVA  
Maybe we should stop.

LAURA  
I told you.

EMILY  
No, that's what this about isn't it?

Emily throws something huge, and looks lost in thought for a few moments. Ava quickly speaks up to distract her and Emily looks grateful for the interruption:

AVA  
I'm mad at every guy who ever fake-dated me.

LAURA  
What?

ERIN  
You know, like you guys go out for dinner and have a good conversation and maybe have a drink or two and then you say you'd like to do it again sometime and he looks confused and then gets weird and is like "Oh you thought this was a date?!" Like somehow you were the idiot.

LAURA  
Ohhhh, that is a good one.

Ava throws a giant bowl, and the other girls clap.

11 EXT. AVA'S BACKYARD - SAME

11

The trees rustle in the wind and the evening shadows continue to lengthen. Above them there is a string of bulb lights that flicker on. Erin nudges Emily and they begin to move towards the kitchen as she announces:

ERIN  
We're gonna go get more wine from inside.

AVA  
Hey, bring out a knife too.

Everyone looks a little alarmed.

AVA (CONT'D)  
For the cake! For the cake!

As Erin and Emily go into the house, Ava turns to Laura.

AVA (CONT'D)  
You haven't said much, is  
everything okay?

LAURA  
It's the same old... I don't really  
want to talk about it. I don't  
think this is gonna help. \*

AVA  
Well you know this is just silly,  
right? I know it isn't  
going to like, solve anything. \*

LAURA  
I can't... I think Ben's going to  
break up with me soon. He's been so  
weird lately. I don't even know how  
to feel about it. You know what he  
said? No, not even said, texted? \*

Laura pulls out her phone and looks something up.

LAURA (CONT'D) \*

"Other things have yet to make me  
stay like well-marked exits do."

AVA  
What does that even mean? \*

LAURA  
I have no idea. I've read it like  
eighteen times. I'm getting sick of  
the mind games, like why is he  
being like this? Just be normal. \*

AVA  
Is he still being a sub-human and  
not telling you his work-schedule  
and stuff? \*

LAURA

Yes, dammit. It's always like secrets, and I feel like I have to ask one hundred questions and do a skit, just to get a straight answer about simple stuff like dinner plans.

AVA

But, Laura, this isn't new stuff, I mean... what'd he say on your first date?

LAURA

Oh, god what was it? "Lend yourself to others but give yourself to yourself." (beat) But it didn't used to be like this, really, and it's not always bad. He's just making me crazy these days.

AVA

Yeah, I mean, he's always been kind of... a jerk, I know he's nice a lot of the time, but Ben can be super pretentious... and kind of mean, too. Remember that time in grad school when he carried his books around with a leather belt? Like it was the olden days?

Laura laughs at the thought of it and sighs heavily:

LAURA

I know, I know all that.

AVA

Well why are you still with him? I know we've talked about it, but I just don't...

LAURA

Well Ben at his best is... I love him. I mean, It used to be great, and now it's like I can never say the right thing or do the right thing... But it's been two years of my life and I'm not sure I wanna just give up when things get tough. Like my parents did.



AVA  
That's not the same, you know that.  
It's not exactly giving up, you've  
really tried --

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LAURA  
Maybe not enough.

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AVA  
You know it's okay to be happy,  
right?

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LAURA  
Yeah.

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AVA  
We just want such good things for  
you.

\*  
\*  
\*

LAURA  
I know that.

\*  
\*

DESTRUCTION PARTY BACKER

Ava gets up and walks over to the table, selects a plate and returns. \*

AVA

Here, go on.

Ava is eager for Laura to be free of her sadness. Laura stands up, her back to Ava and struggles to throw the plate, fighting with something in herself, half lifting the plate. Ava is distracted and turns as Erin and Emily burst out of the house, returning with the wine, boisterous and loud, they call out for help and she walks over to them. Laura looks down at the plate in her hand, and then quickly, quietly and deliberately sets the plate back on the table and turns back to the other three with a sad smile and false cheeriness. No one notices that she did not throw it, as they were too busy. Erin calls out as the girls get closer and see Laura standing by the table:

ERIN

Oh no! What'd we miss?

Ava looks quickly at Laura and short-cuts the conversation by sympathetically saying:

AVA

Just Ben stuff.

EMILY

New stuff or the same?

LAURA

Yeah, he's just being mean lately,  
and I'm not quite sure what to do.

\*

The girls look sad as they pour out more wine and express concern.

LAURA (CONT'D)

I guess I'm mad that nothing has  
turned out the way I thought... the  
way I hoped it would.

EMILY

That's a good one, that's like a  
soup tureen level of good.

Laura throws a soup tureen, looks happier. The girls cheer  
and Ava says with an air of finality:

AVA

I'm mad that I'm still mad, that  
this stuff still bothers all of us.

12 EXT. AVA'S BACKYARD - SAME

12

The four girls grab the remaining dishes and silently throw  
them all. The girls start out sad, and purely destructive and  
then begin to get far more excited, laughing and enjoying  
themselves by the end of it. Breaking things is fun, after  
all.

ERIN

Okay I need some water or I'mma be  
way too drunk.

EMILY

Yeah, me too.

AVA

I made some cake, who wants some?

Everyone but Erin raises their hand.

AVA (CONT'D)

It's gluten free.

Everyone lowers their hands.

LAURA

Just a small piece for me.

EMILY

Me too.

13 EXT. AVA'S BACKYARD - SAME

13

Close up from above of the cake being cut, handed out. "You  
Break It You Bought It" it says inside of the heart shape.

The girls eat the cake and survey the damage. Ava drops her fork in the dirt and everyone laughs.

LAURA

I think you might be a little drunk.

EMILY

Oh you think?

ERIN

Drunk on cake.

LAURA

No, just drunk drunk.

AVA

I remember reading some Miranda July thing where she said it wasn't enough to scream into a pillow anymore you had to take the pillow outside, put it on the ground and stab it with a knife until you were stabbing the whole earth.

14

EXT. AVA'S BACKYARD - SAME

14

The girls are sitting out with glasses of wine, all the stuff smashed as night falls entirely. Two of them are smoking and Erin puts her head on Laura's knees. All four stare into the camera, smiling slightly. While things are not solved, they are a little bit better.

THE END