

Nowhere Near Happy

by

Joseph Arnone

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Cast of Characters

<u>AVA:</u>	19
<u>MOTHER:</u>	45
<u>FATHER:</u>	50
<u>SALVATORE:</u>	19

Place
Queens

Time
Evening

2.

Setting: A kitchen that hasn't been renovated since it was originally built in the post-war era.

At Rise: Ava enters the kitchen all smiles until she notices her mother and father talking seriously at the table.

(AVA entering the KITCHEN)

AVA: What's going on?

MOTHER: Hey, Ava.

AVA: Hey. What's up?

MOTHER: Dad and me are trying to talk.

AVA: Oh, sorry, you want me to leave?

FATHER: Stay.

AVA: Why do you both look so upset?

MOTHER: We are having a bit of trouble with the sink. It keeps leaking.

AVA: You still haven't fixed that sink? (catching herself) I mean, it must be pretty bad by now, right?

MOTHER: They want to charge us too much money to repair it and the landlord won't give us a new one.

AVA: Why don't you let me help?

FATHER: No!

MOTHER: Don't shout.

AVA: I can lend you the money.

MOTHER: Your father—we don't want you to lend us the---

AVA: Why not? What's the big deal?

FATHER: The big deal? What is the big deal? I work for a living! That is the big deal!

MOTHER: Steve!

FATHER: Day and night for thirty years like a dog and I can't even afford enough money to repair a rotten sink! But you, you prance around in a new car, fancy clothes and have more time on your hands than you know what to do with.

AVA: That isn't true!

FATHER: What do you even do anyway with that internet? How do you make money from a computer?

AVA: I sell clothes online.

FATHER: Clothes? What clothes?

AVA: I've tried to show you a million times before and now you want to take an interest?

FATHER: It is illegal!

AVA: Nothing I do is illegal. I work just as hard as you do, just differently.

MOTHER: Please, the two of you, I don't want this fighting.

FATHER (to MOTHER): Just as hard as I do...do you hear your daughter? She claims to work as hard as I do.

AVA: Dad, I know you work hard.

FATHER: I kill myself.

AVA: But you don't have to, not anymore.

FATHER: Says who, YOU?

AVA: Why don't you let me help?!

FATHER: Because a nineteen year old girl isn't supposed to make more money than her father. That's why!

AVA: But you ARE my father and I CAN help. We are a family, what difference does it make?

(FATHER exits kitchen)

Mom, why does he treat me like I don't matter?

MOTHER: It's difficult for him.

AVA: What is?

MOTHER: They recently cut his hours at the factory, which only makes matters worse.

AVA: But why won't he allow me to help?

MOTHER: Because it's not your place.

AVA: You are my parents, I'm in a position to help.

MOTHER: Your father is angry because he feels ancient. He no longer feels like a man of this world. When we were young and just starting out

MOTHER: (cont'd): together, he would dream big dreams and I'd get lost in his dreams and believe everything he would say to me and we were happy...we even had less money than we do now, but we were happy, call it ignorance, hope but over time the light shifted between the blinds and we had you and we love you so very much but things got harder and harder and all our dreams began to slip away. It was as if the harder we ran the further things would get from us. Your father is a good man Ava, but he's too much pride. I think he regrets not tapping into his full potential because he is quite intelligent. He's like a lion forced to work with mice. And now, you are doing so well...you've reached such success, we both don't know how to wrap our heads around what you've achieved. We are happy but your father, he- he feels upstaged. He's hurting because he wasn't able to provide for you what you provide for yourself. You want to help fix the kitchen sink, well, that's like rubbing it in his nose, you see?

AVA: Dad shouldn't be caught up with his pride.

(enter FATHER)

FATHER: Plumber said five hundred.

(FATHER tosses his newspaper on
the kitchen table)

He can be here tomorrow morning while I'm at work. (to AVA) Yes or no?

AVA: Yes.

(FATHER begins to leave)

Dad! I don't want this friction between us. We don't have to be like this.

FATHER: Ava, leave me alone.

AVA: But why do you blame me for being able to help?

(FATHER exits)

I have my friend Salvatore outside, can he come in?

MOTHER: Oh, Ava, I'm not properly dressed. I told you before to call ahead of time.

AVA: Maybe I should just leave.

(AVA hands mother her credit card)

Use my card for tomorrow. I'll come by later this week, maybe dad will be in a better mood.

(Lights fade out - spotlight on AVA
stage left)

(AVA speaks to the audience)

AVA: I come from a family that never had any faith in me. They all had this poor man's mentality and I knew as early as I could, that there was a different way, a better way. Nobody needs to settle for what they are born into, there's always a possibility to grow. I don't want to put my family down but the truth is in the facts. I grew up very poor. Everything was hands on. If I needed a sweater, my mother would knit me one, there was no word as 'shopping'. I looked like a boy up until a few years ago because I was always wearing my brother's hand me downs. (beat) Both my parents never strived for anything more than what they could see in front of their faces. My father, he's a factory worker and my mother does seamstress work on the side, when it's available. It was always go to school and get a job. It was never build your own business and follow what you want to do, especially if you are good at it. Even though I live on my own and have found success, I'm not one bit happy. Yeah, I could get my mother's broken sink fixed or surprise my dad with a new set of tools, but I always get the feeling that I'm looked down upon, you know? Like they aren't happy for me and it hurts. For once I'd like to get told I'm doing a good job, like I'm somewhat appreciated...

(Lights come up FULL on stage left
as Salvatore speaks)

SALVATORE: Look, you can't worry too much about what your family thinks of you. If they ain't happy for you that's their problem.

AVA: I get it but why does it have to be that way?

SALVATORE: Be patient Ava. Things might turn around. You keep being the star ya meant to be and I promise you that sooner or later they'll come around.

AVA: What if they never come around?

SALVATORE: Fuck 'em.

AVA: Salvatore!

(THEY both laugh)

SALVATORE: I'm telling you, it's cause of you I have this job and it has taken me to new heights and I ain't giving it up for no one.

(THEY laugh)

AVA: You really like your job that much?

SALVATORE I love my job!

(Lights cut to BLACK)

(Lights turn up in KITCHEN)

FATHER: I *hate* my job! Can you believe they want to cut my part-time hours? They just cut me two weeks ago! It's because I'm getting old. I see them bringing in the young guys. I am their future! I was once exactly like them and now I know why all those greasy, cracked faces had such a long look in their eyes...they were thinking back in time, just as I did earlier today...I'm going to tell those young men to get out before they even get started.

MOTHER: You can't do that.

FATHER: Who's going to stop me?

MOTHER: I will.

FATHER: Excuse me?

MOTHER: You heard me. If you create a problem down at the factory you will lose your job for sure and then what will we do?

FATHER (sarcastic): We'll have our rich daughter Ava take care of us.

MOTHER: Steve, you talk about getting old but when will you ever grow up? You should be so fortunate as to have a daughter love you as much as she does.

FATHER: Stop it.

MOTHER: That girl idolizes you but you are too stubborn to notice.

FATHER: What makes you think that?

MOTHER: The way she looks at you, ever since she was a little girl, she hasn't changed, it's us, we are the ones that create fault with her, when we should be proud of her.

FATHER: I am proud of her!

MOTHER: Why don't you show it?

FATHER: I'm a failure.

MOTHER: You are not a failure. You've woken up each day at 4AM for thirty years to go to work. You've provided a roof over our heads and food on the table. If that is a failure, then I must be a failure too.

FATHER: I didn't do enough, I could have given more. I should have given more. Had I given more I'd feel differently.

MOTHER: You are a stupid man to think that way.

FATHER: How can I look my daughter in her eyes when I am shamed by her success?

MOTHER: Her success is our success! She comes from you and from me.

(enter AVA)

AVA: Hi...I planned on coming sooner but things got busy with my work, so...

(AVA goes over to the new sink)

Wow, look at this! Look how shiny! (she laughs) I kind of miss the old sink I grew up with, but this is so nice. Do you both like it?

(pause.)

MOTHER: I have your credit card upstairs, I'll be right back.

AVA: Give it to me later Mom--

MOTHER: No, I'll be right back.

(MOTHER exits KITCHEN)

AVA: How's it going pop?

FATHER: It's going.

AVA: Home early today.

FATHER: Yeah...

(FATHER gets up from table to exit KITCHEN)

AVA: Please, don't.

FATHER: Why?

AVA: I love you, Dad.

(FATHER breaks down but tries to stay strong)

FATHER: This is hard for me.

AVA: What is?

FATHER: To tell you how I feel. It's wrong of me to treat you so terribly.

AVA: It's okay---

FATHER: ...I didn't expect my life to turn out this way. At the time I thought I was doing good, my working at the factory...thought I'd make it out of the line and work my way up to the office but it didn't work out that way. By the time I realized it, it was already too late. Options were limited, Ava. I tried. I tried to find other work but it was never good enough. Nothing was ever good enough, so I stayed on...thirty years later, here I am.

AVA: There is nothing wrong with the work you do at the factory, Dad.

FATHER: Everything is wrong with it. I should have given you and your mother more, I should have risen above because I had the brains but they kept me handcuffed.

AVA: Dad---

FATHER: What I need you to know is that I'm proud of you, Ava. I know I've never told you that. I am. I'm so damn proud of you that...I can't even control myself...when I say...the words. My problems shouldn't be your problems and I'm, Oh god Ava, I'm sorry I wasn't good enough.

AVA: You are! You are good enough! Stop saying that. I love you for who you are. It's because of you that I was able to think outside the box and build my store.

FATHER: Me?

AVA: Yes you, Dad.

FATHER: How?

AVA: You inspired me to imagine.

FATHER: I did?

AVA: I knew you weren't always happy at your job, so it made me imagine how I could find a way to make all of us happy, but even though I am making money and have a company, it made things worse for our family.

FATHER: No. No. It's not you. It's been me. Ava, no one in the world could understand how much I love you.

(FATHER hugs AVA)

(MOTHER enters KITCHEN)

MOTHER: Oh.

(FATHER extends his arms for MOTHER
to come into the hug circle)

END OF PLAY