

The Kids' Table

By Colleen M. Hughes

Colleen M. Hughes
67 Endicott Ave.
Somerville, MA 02144
colleenn@gmail.com
617-947-9469

Cast of Characters

Sophia (F) - 15, Avery's older sister

Noah (M) - 13

Hailey (F) - 14, Olivia's older sister

Olivia (NB) - 12, Hailey's younger sibling

Jordan (F) - 13

Avery (F) - 11, Sophia's younger sister

Madison (F) - 12, Olivia's classmate, the only non-cousin of the group

Jack (M) - 15

A note on pronoun usage: Olivia is just beginning to explore and understand their gender identity. They/them pronouns are used in the stage directions, but the characters still refer to Olivia as "she/her" because they have never discussed this topic with Olivia before. With the exception of Olivia, most of the characters' genders and pronouns are flexible and can be changed as needed to match the group of actors.

Race is not specified, but casting should reflect the diverse make-up of society.

Setting: Jack's older sister's wedding.

The "kid's table" at a wedding.
Seated around the table are
SOPHIA (15), NOAH (13), HAILEY
(14), OLIVIA (12), JORDAN (13),
AVERY (11), and MADISON (12).

SOPHIA

I can't believe they stuck me at the kids' table. I'm in high school. In a few months I'd be able to drive myself here.

NOAH

You can go hover around the head table. No one's making you stay here.

SOPHIA

Jack is my age and he's not at the kids' table. He's three months YOUNGER than me.

HAILEY

Yeah, I don't think the bride's brother sits at the kids' table. Like, ever. And 8th grade is almost high school, and they stuck me here too.

SOPHIA

It's totally different. I'm not a child.

AVERY

(To Olivia.)

Why is your hair all funny?

Olivia shrugs.

MADISON

Leave her alone.

AVERY

I was just ASKING. And we don't even know you.

SOPHIA

See? They have no idea how to plan things. They stick poor-- what's your name again?

MADISON

Madison.

SOPHIA

Poor Madison here with the rest of us when she's the only one from Charlie's side. Because sitting with a bunch of strangers is SO FUN.

MADISON

I don't really mind all that much. I know Olivia from school.

SOPHIA

I'm just SAYING. They don't even think about these things.

JORDAN

Why do you want to sit with the grown-ups anyway? All they do is gossip about each other.

SOPHIA

Exactly. I want to know what they're saying about me.

NOAH

Probably that you complain too much.

Sophia makes a face at him.

SOPHIA

It's like, no matter how old I get, the aunts will never see me as an adult. They'll ALWAYS see me as a kid.

JORDAN

I love that we have our own space. I don't want to put up with my parents all night.

SOPHIA

I don't "need my own space" away from the adults. I AM an adult.

JACK (15) enters and approaches the table.

JACK

GET ME OUT OF THERE.

HAILEY

Enjoying life at the glamorous "adult table"?

JACK

It's AWFUL. My mom is super-stressed and keeps muttering things like "they got the centerpieces all wrong" and then my dad tells her to "shut it" in a voice he THINKS only she can hear. I'm supposed to be getting her a water. But I had to come someplace sane first.

He glances over his shoulder.

JACK

Quick, they're looking this way. Hide me!

He practically pushes Noah out of his seat and hunches over.

NOAH

(Checking over to the head table.)

OK, you're good. They're back to looking at the centerpiece. And frowning.

JORDAN

Ugh. Weddings just seem to make everyone miserable. I don't see why they're such a big thing.

AVERY

They're romantic!

JORDAN

Maybe for the people getting married. For the rest of the family it just seems to cause fights. It's not worth it. I'm not having a whole big wedding when I get married.

NOAH

I don't even want to GET married.

SOPHIA

You say that now, but you'll change your mind when you grow up.

NOAH

You're two years older than me.

SOPHIA

I'm more mature than you.

NOAH

I'm not the one whining about being at the kids' table.

SOPHIA

(Off "whining.")
I DON'T WHINE.

NOAH

I can make an informed decision even though I'm only in 7th grade. And I don't want to get married.

OLIVIA

Me either.

AVERY

Who'd WANT to marry you?

SOPHIA

Avery. Don't be a brat.

JACK

(Standing up.)

OK, I have to get out of here and get back to the OTHER fight.

SOPHIA

We're not fighting.

AVERY

You can't boss me around.

Jack exits.

SOPHIA

I'll tell mom who REALLY broke the dishwasher.

AVERY

You wouldn't.

SOPHIA

Then shut your mouth. Olivia's really pretty.

OLIVIA

I don't want to be pretty.

AVERY

See? Who SAYS things like that? How are we even related?

Sophia glares at her. Avery shuts up.

HAILEY

I know 6th grade is like, the worst year ever, and everything feels super-awkward, but you really are pretty, even if you don't feel like it all the time.

MADISON

I... don't think that's what she means. Is it, Olivia?

Olivia shakes their head no.

HAILEY

I just want her to know she's not ugly.

OLIVIA

I don't want to be pretty. Like... girly-pretty. With dresses and bows and makeup.

JORDAN

Do you, like, want to be a boy? There's a kid in my class like that.

HAILEY

(To Jordan)

Of course she doesn't.

(To Olivia)

Do you?

OLIVIA

No.

HAILEY

See?

OLIVIA

I mean. I don't think so. Or maybe? I don't know.

HAILEY

How come you never talked to me about this before?

Olivia shrugs.

HAILEY (CONT)

(To Madison)

Did she tell YOU about this? Before me?

MADISON

No. I just... I figured.

(To Olivia)

Since your hair is shorter and you like to wear more, like, guy-ish clothes.

(Clearly talking about
Avery.)

I'd just never confront you about it in public like SOME people.

AVERY

I didn't SAY anything mean. I just asked why her hair is all funny. It looks different than the last time we saw it.

SOPHIA

You have to learn when to just mind your own business.

AVERY

Shut up.

OLIVIA

I don't want to be a boy, really. I just... don't feel a whole lot like a girl either.

MADISON

That's OK.

AVERY

The aunts are probably gossiping about you.

SOPHIA

Avery!

AVERY

I'm just saying. You know how they are.

SOPHIA

Yeah, and clearly you take after them.

AVERY

Do not.

SOPHIA

Do too.

NOAH

(To Sophia.)

Really mature, grown-up conversation you have going there.

SOPHIA

I wasn't even talking to you.

NOAH

Whatever. This is boring.

He pulls out a Nintendo Switch or some other handheld gaming device and begins to play. Sophia, horrorstruck, looks over at the adults' table.

SOPHIA

What are you doing? Put that away.

NOAH

You're not my mom.

SOPHIA

You're being embarrassing.

NOAH

I'm saving my sanity.

SOPHIA

You look like an impatient kid who can't wait for this to be over.

Beat.

NOAH

...And?

JORDAN

Yeah, Soph. No one's even paying attention to us anyway. And I like it that way.

(To Noah.)

Can I see?

Jordan gets up and crowds herself in between Sophia and Noah to look over Noah's shoulder at the game screen.

JORDAN (CONT)

Cool! Have you caught a shiny yet? I have.

SOPHIA

This isn't how you're supposed to act at a wedding.

She pulls out her phone and begins typing furiously.

HAILEY

What are you doing?

SOPHIA

Texting Jack. If they're going to stick me here and make me the family babysitter, I need reinforcements.

HAILEY

You're not our babysitter. We're almost the same age.

AVERY

Sophia thinks she knows everything.

SOPHIA

I know more than you.

(Texting again.)

Ugh, Jack, where are you?

NOAH

Why are you allowed to whip out your phone every five seconds but me playing my game is some huge embarrassment?

SOPHIA

That's different. Everyone texts. Gaming's for children.

Jack enters again.

JACK

What's the BIG-EMERGENCY-ALL-CAPS-911 you need help with?

SOPHIA

Thank God, another voice of reason. Noah think's it's totally fine to just play Nintendo in the middle of a wedding and that it's not making everyone stare at us and--

Jack notices the game on Noah's screen.

JACK

Hey cool! Is that the new Pokémon?

NOAH

You know it.

JACK

NICE. I don't have it yet.

He, too, squishes in beside Noah to see the screen better.

SOPHIA

No, what are you doing--you're supposed to be helping me.

JACK

Helping with what?

SOPHIA

(Gestures around her.)

THIS.

JACK

I'm sure he'll let you play if you just ask.

SOPHIA

NO ONE SHOULD BE PLAYING WITH ANYTHING.

Silence. A beat. Clearly one of those awkward moments where the whole room somehow goes quiet at once. The kids glance at each other. Finally:

AVERY

God, Soph, you were so loud.

JORDAN

Ugh, now they're all looking at us. Quick, hide the game.

Noah hides the game under his lap. The kids look over at the adults' table and wave/smile nonchalantly, while Sophia buries her head in her hands.

NOAH

Good job, Soph, you just embarrassed all of us.

Jack is laughing at this whole situation.

SOPHIA

I don't see why any of this is funny.

(To Jack.)

I asked you to come help me. Not to make things worse.

JACK

Nothing looked wrong when I got over here.

SOPHIA

You think it's fine that they're pulling out video games in the middle of your sister's wedding?

As if on cue, Noah pulls the game back out.

JACK

I wish I'd brought mine.

SOPHIA

I can't believe you're at the head table and I'm stuck here.

JACK

You wanna switch with me? Go ahead. You think it's all stimulating adult conversation or something over there? It's not. It's whispering and staring and gossip. Nonstop judgment.

JORDAN

Ugh, keep me away from that.

JACK

I had two aunts already tell me how much nicer I'd look if I cut my hair.

(Imitating his aunt.)

"You can't see your handsome face behind all that long hair."

(Continues in his own voice.)

And when I was like, "Actually, I like it the way it is," I just got this LOOK.

(Demonstrating.)

Like you knew they couldn't wait to get back to their seat and tell whoever about it.

OLIVIA

I want to cut my hair. Like, for real cut it. Shorter than this.

Everyone focuses on Olivia.

OLIVIA (CONT)

I just... you have no idea how much I'd love the aunts to tell me I should cut my hair. All they've said to me is how it "used to be so pretty."

AVERY

But it was though.

SOPHIA

Avery.

JORDAN

Who cares what they think? You wanna cut your hair, cut your hair.

OLIVIA

But I don't want them to point and whisper. I want them to just let me be me.

HAILEY

What would that look like? If you could just be you?

Olivia shrugs.

HAILEY (CONT)

Well... what would you wear today, if you could've done anything you wanted?

OLIVIA

Not this thing, definitely.

Olivia gestures to their dress.

OLIVIA (CONT)

It makes me feel awful.

HAILEY

So, pretend only your absolute BFFs were going to see you... what would you wear?

OLIVIA

Is it still a wedding where I have to look nice?

HAILEY

Yes, still a wedding. Just free of judgment.

Olivia thinks for a moment. They get up from the table and face the audience, as if looking in a full-length mirror. Here, they are free and uninhibited in their own imagination. We can see a total change in them... they lose their shyness and absolutely light up.

OLIVIA

Not a dress. I don't want to wear a dress. But if I have to look nice... maybe like... something like what Noah is wearing, only fun.

NOAH

A suit? A suit is not "fun." It's hot and uncomfortable.

OLIVIA

But I'd make it fun. I'd have a fun color, like blue or red or purple.

Olivia pulls a "fun" suit jacket seemingly out of nowhere and tries it on, modeling in front of the "mirror" and loving how they look.

NOAH

I actually HAVE a "fun" suit. It's bright, obnoxious blue. My mom wouldn't let me wear it. I brought it in case I felt like doing it anyway, but so far I haven't felt the need to. Maybe later. If she annoys me.

MADISON

Are you going to that brunch thing tomorrow? Wear it there.

NOAH

I SHOULD.

During this exchange, Olivia has been trying on various accessories (a tie, a scarf, a cool belt buckle, anything). They finally settle on a hat. They are pleased with the result.

OLIVIA

And I'd have a hat to match. Like a top hat--yeah definitely a top hat. OR I'd go no hat and wear my hair kind of spiky. Because it would be shorter.

They do their best to demonstrate in front of the "mirror."

JORDAN

I think that sounds really cool.

And, just as quickly as it started, Olivia's fantasy is over. They snap back to reality, back to their dress and hairclips, and resignedly sit back down.

OLIVIA

It would never happen though. Not here. I want to be me, but I want everyone to leave me alone while I do it.

NOAH

Yeah, good luck with that. Do you know how many times I get "Noah, why don't you play a sport this year?" "Noah, you shouldn't be so shy"?

He imitates their voices. Jordan does too.

JORDAN

I always get "Jordan, you're too loud." That's why you just have to say screw it, I'm going to be even louder.

OLIVIA

I'm not really the "screw it" type. I want to just... quietly be me? Without making a big deal about it.

NOAH

I get it.

JORDAN

Where's the fun in that?

HAILEY

Mom and Dad would support you no matter what.

OLIVIA

I know. I mean, I think I know. It's just that the aunts and uncles can be a little...

NOAH

Shallow?

JORDAN

Petty?

OLIVIA

Sometimes. No offense to any of your parents, I mean.

JORDAN

On their own, they're OK.

NOAH

Most of the time anyway.

JORDAN

It's when they're all together that all the gossip comes out.

JACK

They have to show each other up because they're all still insecure kids at heart. It's like "my kid is doing better than your kid, that makes me better than you."

MADISON

Big families are weird. I guess I'm lucky it's just me?

JACK

Nah, you're stuck with us, now that Charlie's marrying my sister.

MADISON

So I'll have to get used to the crazy, is what you're saying.

SOPHIA

Not really.

JACK

Why not?

SOPHIA

Think about it. Avery, how often do we see Dad's cousins?

AVERY

Dad has cousins?

SOPHIA

Exactly. The wedding is the one time you ever see random people like your cousin's-husband's-other-cousin. It's not like she'll be at Easter.

JORDAN

I'd give ANYTHING to skip Easter.

NOAH

(To Madison.)

So I guess that means you only have a couple hours that you have to put up with us. Then we're gone. You're welcome.

MADISON

You're not THAT bad. It's been kind of fun. Nothing ever happens at my family parties. Charlie's the only other cousin, and he's OLD.

JACK

Speaking of old, I guess I should get back to the old-people party.

SOPHIA

Take me with you.

JACK

I mean, I don't recommend it, but come if you want.

NOAH

You can't ditch us.

SOPHIA

Watch me.

She leaves with Jack.

JORDAN

Ugh. Never let me be like that when I get older, OK?

Avery looks carefully over at the adult table, decides that it's safe, and pulls out a compact mirror and starts putting on makeup.

HAILEY

Your mom lets you wear makeup?

AVERY

My mom's not here. And now neither is my sister.

HAILEY

Whatever. That color's terrible on you though.

AVERY

Why don't you save the makeup advice for someone who needs it? Like your sister.

HAILEY

Olivia doesn't need makeup to look pretty.

OLIVIA

I don't want to look pr--

AVERY

Well you should want to.

HAILEY

Avery, seriously? Cut it out.

JORDAN

We get it. You like clothes and dressing up and wearing WAY TOO MUCH makeup--

AVERY

I am not wearing too much makeup.

JORDAN

(Continues talking right over her.)

--but that doesn't mean everyone else has to be just like you.

HAILEY

How does it in any way affect you if Olivia has shorter hair or dresses different?

AVERY

It doesn't.

HAILEY

Exactly. So just leave her alo--

AVERY

But it affects her.

MADISON

What do you mean?

AVERY

I know I'm not in your grade, but I know what it's like. If you're the least bit different, if you don't dress right or talk right, you get made fun of nonstop. Or if your best friend tells everyone you still sleep with your Peppa Pig, they'll call you a baby and no one will want to eat lunch with you and you HAVE TO change to show everyone that you're a NOT a baby but it doesn't do any good, and--

HAILEY

(Understanding.)

Is that why you're wearing all this makeup?

JORDAN

And being so mean?

HAILEY

Jordan, not helping.

JORDAN

She IS being mean though.

AVERY

There was a sleepover and Ava announced to EVERYONE that I brought my Peppa Pig with me, and she's supposed to be my best friend. By Monday the entire class knew. I have to start acting like a grown-up or I won't have any friends. And neither will Olivia if she goes to school with weird hair and weird clothes. Kids are mean. I don't want her to be alone at lunch too.

MADISON

She won't be. I'm her friend, and I like the way she dresses.

OLIVIA

Thanks.

MADISON

(To Avery.)

And we may not have the same lunch, but we can hang out with you before school and after school.

OLIVIA

(Sarcastically.)

We can?

MADISON

YES. We can.

OLIVIA

I guess.

(To Avery.)

IF you don't mind being seen with the "weird kid with the funny hair."

AVERY

You'd really be seen with me, the baby who still sleeps with her stuffed animals?

HAILEY

Um, I still sleep with my stuffed animals. And I bet at least half the kids in your class do too.

MADISON

And you won't be a "baby" when people see you with us. You'll be that cool girl who hangs out with the older kids.

OLIVIA

Or at least we can all be weird together.

Sophia enters, with Jack following closely behind her.

SOPHIA

Ugh. I HATE this family.

NOAH

I see you enjoyed your stay at the adult table.

SOPHIA

You have no idea how awful--

She notices Avery's makeup.

SOPHIA (CONT)

WHAT are you wearing?

HAILEY

Relax. I took care of it. You're not the only one who can be the family babysitter.

SOPHIA

I'm sorry, I was wrong. You aren't the ones who need a babysitter. THEY do. Or like, a teacher. To tell them how STUPID and UNINFORMED they are.

NOAH

Haha. Did you talk to Uncle Mike?

SOPHIA

How'd you know?

NOAH

You said "stupid" and "uninformed."

SOPHIA

They asked how school was. I told them I joined the whole "teens for climate action" club thing this year.

And he was like "oh, you only care about that stuff because you're so young." And I'm just like "what?" Like, any belief I might have is automatically dismissed as some sort of youthful phase. And that's crap. I probably know more about the world than he does.

NOAH

You DEFINITELY know more about the world than he does.

SOPHIA

And then--AND THEN--they started talking about Olivia and the "new phase she's going through" with her hair. Not all of them, don't worry Olivia, your parents were cool and some of the others were too, but the usual loudmouths tend to drown out everyone else. I got really angry and had to leave.

Olivia glances over toward the adult table sadly.

OLIVIA

I knew they'd all talk about me.

HAILEY

Want me to go over there and tell them to stuff it?

OLIVIA

No! Please don't. I'm fine. I can at least be myself at this table.

SOPHIA

You should be able to REALLY be yourself. Come with me.

OLIVIA

Where?

SOPHIA

Just come with me. Noah and Madison, you too. Hailey too if you want.

They exit. Jordan, Avery, and Jack are left at the table.

JORDAN

(To Avery.)

You need a makeup tutorial.

AVERY

I'm fine, I watch youtube.

JORDAN

Yeah, but no one wears a smoky eye or a "full-face glam" to school. You want to look natural.

JACK

Can we maybe NOT talk about makeup?

JORDAN

Yeah, I guess you DO deserve a break after being stuck with the grown-ups all night.

She grabs Noah's video game.

JORDAN (CONT)

Hey! Noah left his game here. Want to trade away all his Pokemon to randos online?

JACK

No! What are you doing--that's awful. Gimme that.

He grabs it from her and checks out the game.

JACK

Wow, he has some rare ones. If I'd remembered mine, I'd be transferring them over to myself right now.

JORDAN

Yeah, and I'M horrible.

AVERY

What's a Pokemon?

The other two look at her as if they'd forgotten she was there.

JORDAN

Seriously?

AVERY

I've heard of it, but I have no clue what people are talking about.

JORDAN

So, it's a game--

AVERY

I know that.

Jordan ignores this.

JORDAN

And there's like, little animals everywhere, and you catch them and train them to fight.

AVERY

It sounded cool before the "train them to fight" part.

JACK

There IS a little mini-game where you can cook. I mean, it's kind of pointless, but you might like it. Here...

He presses a few buttons on the game.

JACK (CONT)

Try it. Throw in some ingredients and do what it says.

Avery takes the game and plays it.

AVERY

I can't believe I'm saying this, but this is actually kinda fun.

JORDAN

You'll be a gamer nerd in no time.

AVERY

I wouldn't go that far--OMG. Look. Over there.

The kids are reentering. Olivia is wearing Noah's obnoxiously blue suit with their hair slicked back, maybe even a bit spiky. They look a bit self-conscious, but happy. The closest they have come to living out what they'd only previously imagined.

Jack and the others notice the reaction from the adults' table.

JACK

They're staring. Should I go back to the adults and run damage control?

JORDAN

No. Let's be here for Olivia.

Olivia and the group approach the kids' table. Jack, Jordan, and Avery wave and smile at the adults as if to say "who cares what you think about this?"

JORDAN (CONT)

Wow. You look... just, wow.

JACK

That's a good thing.

JORDAN

Yeah. Definitely a good thing.

OLIVIA

(Shyly, but happy.)

Thanks. I love it.

MADISON

You look awesome.

NOAH

Glad my "fun suit" could at least get some use tonight.

SOPHIA

And there was hairspray and stuff in the bathroom.

AVERY

You really do look great, Olivia. I mean it.

OLIVIA

And I really mean it about you hanging out with us after school.

HAILEY

That was a great idea, Soph. Thanks for looking out for my sister.

SOPHIA

Of course.

HAILEY

I know I said we don't need a babysitter--and we don't--but it's pretty cool to have an older cousin.

SOPHIA

I guess I can handle being the cool older cousin.

MADISON

I'm gonna miss all of you after tonight. My family parties are so quiet and lonely.

OLIVIA

I am hereby inviting you to Easter.

MADISON

Can you do that?

OLIVIA

...I don't know.

HAILEY

I'm gonna go with "me and Olivia's family always hosts it so just show up."

NOAH

It's loud and crowded and there's nowhere to hide... you'll love it.

OLIVIA

(To Noah and Jack.)

Can I maybe borrow something from one of you guys for the brunch tomorrow? I think I'm feeling brave enough.

JACK

As long as you don't mind things being too long for you, you're welcome to whatever I brought with me.

NOAH

If I have anything you're not already wearing, definitely.

SOPHIA

And I can help with your hair again.

OLIVIA

What if I get really nervous tomorrow?

NOAH

We'll all be here. I'm not letting any of the adults say anything to you the way they did about my hair.

JORDAN

Or me being a loudmouth.

JACK

They were kinda right on that one.

Jordan makes a face at him.

JACK (CONT)

And I am officially done with my wedding party duties and will be sitting with the cool kids tomorrow morning.

Beat.

JACK (CONT)

That's you guys.

JORDAN

Wow, thanks for gracing us with your presence.

SOPHIA

Count me in too.

HAILEY

Is... is that you VOLUNTARILY offering to sit at the kids' table?

SOPHIA

The adults treat me like a little kid. You guys don't. I like that.

OLIVIA

It's better here. No at this table points or whispers about me.

JORDAN

Not even Avery.

SOPHIA

You know what, it's not a kids' table anymore. That's what THEY called it.

JORDAN

(Half-joking.)

You go Soph, reject society's labels!

SOPHIA

No, I mean it. THEY decided it was the kids' table, but they're the ones acting like children.

HAILEY

So what's our new name?

AVERY

The cool girls' table at school is called the Unicorn Table.

NOAH

Ugh, no way.

JORDAN

What about just "the Cousins' Table"?

MADISON

Uh, I'm here too.

JORDAN

Oh yeah.

SOPHIA

I don't think we need to label ourselves anything. It can just be Our Table.

OLIVIA

Yeah, I like that.

The cousins and Madison nod in agreement.

BLACKOUT. END OF
PLAY.