

# **PARTY DOWN**

Written by

Rob Thomas

John Enbom

Dan Etheridge

&

Paul Rudd

INT. BATHROOM

THE HANDSOME FACE of Kyle Bradway (23) faces itself in a mirror. Hands fluff the hair to casual unkempt perfection.

KYLE  
(dramatic, cocky)  
"You're in the Palisades, now..."  
(liking it)  
"You're in the Palisades, now..."

He consults the SCRIPT in his hand.

KYLE (CONT'D)  
..homes." "You're in the..."

INT. COFFEE HOUSE

A LAPTOP SCREEN. Page one of a SCREENPLAY. Fingers type a character name - "Sargon."

ROMAN DE BEERS (31) - sour, indistinct - thinks. Backspaces. Retypes - "Slargon." Considers this. Then more backspacing.

WIDER SHOT - the place is full of wannabe screenwriters pecking at laptops. Roman is the oldest guy there.

RON (V.O.)  
The question isn't how do I achieve  
success? It's, what is success?

INT. HALL

AT A LECTERN, RON DONALD (36) addresses an unseen audience.

RON  
I was recently made team leader, so  
I have to ask myself. Is success  
pleasing my client? My team? Me?  
It's complex! So I've learned that  
success isn't just about success.  
It's also about...balancing.

THE AUDIENCE is a group of men of varying ages. A MAN nods as Ron sits, pleased, shuffling his notes.

MAN  
Thank you, Ron. Who's next?

A GAUNT MAN stands.

GAUNT MAN  
Hi. My name is Troy, and I'm and  
I'm an alcoholic.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)  
 Goddammit, that is such bullshit!

INT. STUDIO CITY APARTMENT

CASEY KLEIN (32) - smartly attractive, very stressed - rushes through the apartment, gathering things as a MAN'S VOICE explodes from the bedroom offscreen. A furious argument.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)  
 It's like talking to a goddamn wall, you don't even try to listen--

CASEY  
 (grabbing car keys)  
 I am listening. I just have to go--

She makes for the door like it's a life-raft.

MAN'S VOICE  
 You don't have to go anywhere!  
 What you have to do is stay and--

THE DOOR slams behind her.

INT. SMALL APARTMENT

THREE AFGHAN HOUNDS blunder around a small apartment cluttered with candles and flaky Hollywood decor.

CONSTANCE (40's) - a vaguely new-agey woman in a tuxedo shirt and tie - tidies a knocked-over stack of four-picture headshots. Constance as various saucy characters.

CONSTANCE  
 ...and don't chew these! They're very important for mommy's work.  
 (to one of the dogs)  
 Millie, be nice to your sister.  
 And if my manager calls, the answer is yes! Home for bedtime.

She heads out the door, making kiss-noises to the dogs.

INT. 1995 BMW - MOVING - DAY

L.A. traffic - a hazy sea of brake-lights. In a tired, dented '95 BMW sits HENRY POLLARD (33). He wears an old tux shirt and bow tie below a handsome face starting to go to seed. On the radio, a test of the emergency broadcast system starts droning. Henry stares, reaches for the dial, and turns it up.

EXT. THOUSAND OAKS DRIVEWAY - DAY

Suburban Thousand Oaks. A van with a corporate logo sits in a drive. "Party Down! - Everything For Your Entertaining Needs"

RON DONALD -- in tux shirt and tie and clipboard -- addresses Kyle, Roman, and Constance, in cater-waiter uniforms. Bored.

RON  
People, focus here, please? Kyle,  
what did I just say?

Kyle doesn't know.

ROMAN  
We get a thirty-cent-an-hour raise  
if we do the sensitivity seminar.

RON  
--which I recommend. I've taken it  
twice, and I learned a lot.

KYLE  
You took it twice?

ROMAN  
He had to. The Hirsh-Wong Bar  
Mitzvah -- remember?

CONSTANCE  
(laughs at memory; with  
horrible, racist accent)  
"Me so hungry!"

Ron laughs too...it was funny, right?

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

Henry parks. Sighs fatalistically at sight of the van. Climbs out, wincing. His back. That dent has a story behind it.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

Ron consults his clipboard again.

RON  
...so let's make this the best Oak  
Terrace homeowners' association  
annual potluck ever, okay?  
(smiling to them)  
And...our hostess has allowed us to  
put out the jar tonight.

Groans from Roman, Constance and Kyle.

RON (CONT'D)  
I know what you're going to say...

ROMAN  
Oh, man...what about just taking  
the guaranteed twenty bucks?

RON  
What about, it's a life lesson? Bet  
on ourselves, work hard, and win?  
(spotting something)  
But let's ask our new team member.  
(as Henry approaches)  
Henry. The jar, right?

HENRY  
The what?

RON  
The tip jar. That's how we did it,  
back in the day?

HENRY  
Yeah..?

RON  
See? It's decided!  
(the crew is pissed)  
Henry Pollard. We crewed together  
before he left to be a big star.  
(to Henry)  
Welcome back. Pollard and Donald,  
together again! Yeah.

Ron grins, offers a "high five." Henry isn't in the mood, but Ron's grin and hand stay there until he gives a limp "five."

RON (CONT'D)  
Back in the day, he was on time.  
(checking watch)  
Speaking of which, that's a demerit  
for Ms. Klein. Again.  
(back to the clipboard)  
So. Our hostess wants a fun but  
responsible affair. That means  
brisk service and one modest jigger  
for all cocktails. No doubles. And,  
as always, of course..?  
(when no one jumps in)  
Smiles.

He points to his smile as he "smiles" professionally. Only Constance copies him. Then, with too much gravity...

RON (CONT'D)  
Let's roll.

AROUND THE TRUCK

The crew unloads the van. Henry - not even wanting to start, watches KYLE muttering lines to himself as he loads glasses.

RON (O.C.) (CONT'D)  
Hey, Pollard!

Ron motions from the van. Henry smiles slyly. Heads over.

HENRY  
Ah, the old pre-party ritual.  
(mimes doing a shot)  
The one thing I was actually  
looking forward to. You remember  
when we drank that whole...

RON  
Ha! Yeah --  
(serious)  
No. It's...they told you about the  
shirt, right?

HENRY  
Umm, what? A white shirt, right?

RON  
A *crisp*, white shirt.  
(over-joke)  
I mean, did you sleep in that  
thing? In a forest??  
(before he can answer)  
Don't beat yourself up. Here. I  
never leave home without a backup.

Ron hands him a plastic-wrapped shirt. Henry stares a beat.

HENRY  
Wow, Ron, you run a pretty tight  
ship. I never would've imagined, I  
mean...back in the day, you...

RON  
(cutting him off)  
A lot can happen in eight years.

HENRY  
Yeah. I know.

MUSICAL JINGLE (V.O.)  
"I Love the Nineties..."

INT. KITCHEN

MONICA - Liddy's generically "hot" 16-year-old daughter - leans on the counter, watching a small TV. Montage images of Grunge Music, Monica Lewinsky, Cargo pants, etc.

KYLE arranges mushroom caps beside CONSTANCE. LIDDY, our hostess, nervously smooths her too-dressy outfit.

CONSTANCE  
...the "Poseidon Adventure?" You remember, when the boat flips, the chandelier lands on a girl? That was me. And you know what Gene said? "Kid, you've got a natural talent for being crushed."  
(Can you believe it?)  
Gene Hackman!

KYLE  
He was awesome in Batman.  
(spots HENRY in the hall)  
Think he's someone? That guy?

CONSTANCE  
We're all *someone*, Kyle.  
(then...)  
But, yeah, I know what you mean, I feel like I know him...

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Henry pulls on Ron's "back-up" shirt. It's ridiculous - billowy and large. A glum beat as he considers himself in the mirror -- this is his life now. He takes out a pill bottle.

Pops a vicodin -- does Roy Scheider in All That Jazz...

HENRY  
"Show time."

INT. KITCHEN

ROMAN enters through the back door with a box of CD's.

KYLE  
Hey, man, you gonna play my demo?

ROMAN

Yeah, wanna grab it? It's in the truck in a box marked "shit rock."

Roman smirks at Monica. Showed him, huh? She recoils, wants nothing to do with Roman. Kyle laughs, good-naturedly...

KYLE

Right, "shit rock!"

MONICA

Are you in a band?

Roman grimaces as Monica makes doe-eyes at Kyle.

EXT. PATIO

Ron stocks a portable bar as Roman sets up DJ gear. CASEY KLEIN bustles in on her phone. In a sweatshirt -- her tux shirt is in her hand. Ron glares, but she doesn't care.

CASEY (ON PHONE)

...I had Groundlings. I can't now, because my boss is staring right at me angrily. No, Mike.

(hangs up, facing Ron)

What?

RON

You know what that is, right?

CASEY

(stares at phone, puzzled)

Actually, no. What is this thing?

RON

I mean, it's an R.D.D.

CASEY

Right. A Ron Donald Do.

(off his look)

A don't? I get them confused.

RON

Personal business on company time.

A "Ron Donald Don't."

She glances around...then pulls off her sweatshirt - just a bra underneath. Roman double-takes. Stares longingly.

RON (CONT'D)

I know you know this, but--



Ron turns. Shocked to see her in her bra. He gawks.

CASEY  
 (pulling on the shirt)  
 That's harrassment, Ron. Stop  
 harrassing me or I'll file a card.

RON  
 (turns away)  
 No, I...I didn't mean it.  
 (turns away, continuing)  
 But the point isn't to know, it's  
 to remember. Cause you're on thin  
 ice with the RDD's.

Casey, ignoring Ron, checks herself in the window. A frazzled  
 sigh. Henry approaches, looking absurd in the giant shirt.

RON (CONT'D)  
 That's more like it.  
 (to Casey)  
 This is Henry. Our new team member.

Henry and Casey exchange a smile. A little spark.

CASEY  
 Casey.  
 (smirking at the shirt)  
 Nice. Going for your own look.

HENRY  
 Thought I'd try a gay pirate kind  
 of thing.

RON  
 Actually, no, this I learned in  
 sensitivity seminar, we don't use  
 that word. I mean, I'm not, but you  
 never know who might be, you know--

CASEY  
 A pirate?

RON  
 I meant more...gays. Liddy!

LIDDY has appeared behind him. Pre-party jitters.

LIDDY  
 I just want to be sure we--

RON

I'm sure you will be the hostess  
with the mostest and this will be  
the best-est annual potluck ever.

LIDDY

And we'll be getting video--?

Casey gives a thumbs up. Pointing the camera at her.

LIDDY (CONT'D)

Good...Is that on?

CASEY (O.S.)

Yes. And you're a star.

VIDEO-CAM POV - We see Liddy frozen on camera - awkward.  
Constance sees, and steps into frame, bursting with "fun."

CONSTANCE

(playing to camera)

Who's the hostess with the mostest?

Being "helpful," she takes Liddy's arm and moves it in rhythm  
with her own turning the two of them into a paddle wheel.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)

(singing)

Big wheel keep on turning. Proud  
Mary keep on burning.

Constance gives a big "Showtime" smile. Ron claps along.

RON

Oh, boy! Look at that! That's fun.

CASEY CAM POV - Liddy might implode from self-consciousness.

INT. LIVING ROOM - BAR - DAY

A big "Sears portrait studio"-style photo of Liddy and her  
family hangs on the wall. Big smiles. Beneath it...

HENRY slices limes with glum disinterest. Looks up to find  
Ron observing with concern. A beat...

RON

You're rusty. That's cool. It'll  
come back to you.

Huh? A beat, as Ron motions for Henry to hand him the knife.

RON (CONT'D)  
Watch the old pro, here.

Henry, annoyed but covering, hands over the knife, making space as Ron steps in and lifts a lime to the light.

RON (CONT'D)  
See that?

Henry looks at the lime. He sees nothing.

HENRY  
A lime.

RON  
The grain.

HENRY  
Grain?

RON  
You see it now?

HENRY  
A lime doesn't have a grain, Ron.

Ron gives a patronizing chuckle.

RON  
I'm sorry. It's just...  
(doing a character, not a  
Star Wars character, just  
an odd voice)  
*You have much to learn young Jedi.*  
(normal voice)  
Watch this.

Ron "shows off" by overtly locking eyes with Henry as he masterfully slices a lime without looking.

RON (CONT'D)  
A lime's grain runs north/south.  
Nipple to nipple. The way you were  
cutting it, lopping it across the  
stern? That's how minimum wage kids  
working graveyard at Chucky Cheese  
do it. You end up with this...

CASEY CAM P.O.V. - INTERCUT - as Ron picks up one of Henry's early attempts. Holds it out.

RON (CONT'D)  
Wedges.

Ron then begins to demonstrate *his* way, cutting the lime vertically, then slicing each half vertically four times.

Henry looks up, sees they're being video-taped by Casey. He gives her an "I'm in hell" look. She smirks, keeps filming.

HENRY

Should I get a pen?

RON

You'll get it. Just watch me now.  
What we want are slices. Eight.

Long. Lean. *Slices*.

(holding one up)

Now that'll look good hanging off  
the rim of a G&T, rum and coke,  
what have you. You know what helps  
me remember stuff?

HENRY

Mnemonics?

RON

(surprised, impressed)

Yeah! You, too?

HENRY

No, just...I heard about it.

RON

So...what would be a mnemonic way  
of remembering this...

(pausing to think)

Slices...is nices--

HENRY

That works.

RON

And wedges...

HENRY

Are not nices...?

RON

They're supposed to rhyme.

(thinking)

Wedges...wedges...

The two men are stumped for a beat -- Ron wracking his brain;  
Henry pretending to wrack his own...until finally

RON (CONT'D)

Wedges get thrown in hedges!

HENRY

I was gonna say push wedges off ledges. What should we go with?

CASEY

Hedges.

HENRY

Slices is nices. Wedges get thrown in hedges. Think I got it now.

CASEY

Does that work with lemons?

RON

Totally different animal.  
(noticing her camera)  
How 'bout you save that video tape for the party guests, huh, Casey?

CASEY

(totally deadpan)  
Actually, they want us to film some of this instructional stuff because a lot of the younger generation employees don't read anymore.

Ron ponders that notion for a beat, decides it's a good idea.

RON

(to camera, holds up lime)  
Okay. So remember, slices...

CASEY

No, I got that.

RON

Oh. Should I do napkin fanning?

Just then, Casey's cellphone rings. Ron glares at her.

RON (CONT'D)

What ice are you on?  
(off her puzzled reaction)  
Thin. Thin ice.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Kyle struggles with jar of sauce. The lid pops, and sauce splats on LIDDY'S dress. Kyle stares dumbly as Ron swoops in.

RON  
No, no, don't touch.

He takes a Shout Stick from his pocket and attacks her stain.

LIDDY  
Mr. Darnell. You are *efficient*.

RON  
(laughing too hard)  
Listen to that. You've got your  
client feedback card half-written.

CAROL AYAAM (O.S.)  
Who likes lasagna!

Some guests have arrived with pot-luck dishes. They react to the waiters - Liddy has taken the event to the "next level."

LIDDY  
Ron, why don't you take that.  
(to her, aren't I fancy?)  
This is our catering team captain.

CAROL AYAAM  
Catering captain? Oooh...

AHMED AYAAM  
(offering hand)  
Hi. Ahmed Ayaam.

CAROL AYAAM  
Carol Ayaam.

Ron, drunk on sensitivity training, thinks he's hit a custom he hasn't been trained for. He panics, then offers a hand:

RON  
Ron... I am.  
(off the extreme awkward  
silence)  
I'm not really a captain.  
(knowing he's screwed up,  
but unsure how)  
I'll need another year of service.  
You can tell a captain, because a  
captain wears a silver bowtie.

Still the awkward silence.

EXT. PATIO

Casey wanders the patio, blankly shooting video of the party as it gets underway.

-ROMAN tweaks a knob on the music console as "fun" pop music wafts around the patio. He sourly watches...

-KYLE, handsome, hair catching the sun, circulating hors d'oeuvres. Monica pointedly stops him and takes one.

-KIDS romp around the pool. Mothers watch, smile, wave. CONSTANCE, with her tray, watches, smiles, and waves, too.

-ADULTS chat as they sip drinks. Banal suburban patio party. A man and woman sip wine, watching the waiters circulate.

WOMAN

...I mean, what, like last year's thing wasn't good enough because I didn't have waiters? When did Liddy become lady fucking Dian...

They then notice the camera. SMILE.

INT. LIVING ROOM - BAR AREA

HENRY mans his bar, watching the kids. Sneaks a drink as "Regular Guy" GORDON WING (30's) steps up, reacts to the bar.

GORDON

Wow, a bar.

HENRY

And a bartender.

GORDON

High class. Beer me.

Henry hands him a beer. As Gordon leaves, Roman approaches, sneering at him from head to toe.

ROMAN

Jesus. Ordinary fucking people.

Roman doesn't see Gordon glancing back. He heard the comment.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

Henry, right?

(re: Gordon)

Sweet pleated shorts, dude. Right?

(off Henry's bland shrug)

(MORE)

ROMAN (CONT'D)

I mean, how's business at the ski-do lot? How is it going back to your tract home and a frozen dinner with your fat wife and fat kids watching "Dancing with the Stars" until you get cancer and die?

HENRY

Probably nice to own a house.

ROMAN

I'd shoot myself, man. I would. A nobody doing nothing...

HENRY

You an actor?

ROMAN

I look stupid? Writer, director. Were you at the Houston Sci-Fest?

HENRY

No.

ROMAN

I had a short. "Wormhole?"  
(Henry shrugs)  
"Ordinary fucking people." You know?

HENRY

"Repo Man."

ROMAN

(Henry passed the test)  
Nice. Bet you and me're the only ones here who'd get that.

Kyle arrives with an empty tray.

KYLE

Three chardonnays and a G'n T. Get what?

ROMAN

(testing again)  
"Ordinary Fucking People."

KYLE

(Scoffs. It's so easy.)  
Yeah.  
(to Henry)  
He always thinks he's the only guy who knows anything.



ROMAN  
So "yeah," what?

KYLE  
Yeah, I know that movie. The guy's  
brother drowns.

ROMAN  
You anus. That's "Ordinary People."

KYLE  
Yeah, exactly!  
(as a zinger)  
"You're in the Palisades now,  
homes."

ROMAN  
Why do you keep saying that?

KYLE  
Pilot audition. "The Palisades."  
They loved me, I'm going to network  
I know it.  
(in character)  
"You're in the Palisades now..."

ROMAN  
You know what Palisades means in  
Spanish? "Boy hooker."

Kyle looks at Henry. Really? Henry gives a quick head shake.

KYLE  
Don't be pissed cause I knew your  
little trivia, bro...

ROMAN  
(totally affronted)  
You didn't!

Ron motors by - scolding mode.

RON  
Roman! What am I not hearing?

ROMAN  
I don't know. A squid?

RON  
Music! Chop chop!

Roman sneers, heads to the music station. A woman approaches.  
HEIDI-JANE (41) is pretty, once prettier. Now bored.

HEIDI-JANE

White wine. Actually, you know  
 what, I'll take a gin and tonic.  
 (as Henry reaches...)  
 Could you make it a double? I think  
 I'll need it to endure.  
 (gives a flirty look)  
 You look very familiar.

KYLE

That's what I thought.

HENRY

I have that kind of face.

HEIDI-JANE

That kind of cute face.  
 (taking drink)  
 I'll be seeing you later.

She leaves with a flirty look back.

KYLE

Sweet MILF action. Hey, "If music  
 is the food of love, play on."  
 (off Henry's puzzled look)  
 I'm totally into Shakespeare.

HENRY

Actor?

KYLE

Yeah. And you heard of *Karma  
 Rocket*? My band. Lead singer. And I  
 did some modeling, you know...

HENRY

So you're like in the overall  
 handsome business. That's awesome.

KYLE

Yeah, but acting's my passion. You  
 need passion to deal, you know, cuz  
 it's brutal. I been here seven  
 months, and this is only my fourth  
 pilot callback. It's brutal.  
 (back to Henry)

You an actor? Ron said you were  
 star of something. Like of what?

HENRY

Nothing. I did some stuff, but--

KYLE  
Who's your agent?

HENRY  
State Farm.

KYLE  
Are they good?  
(Henry shakes his head)  
You get any good auditions?

HENRY  
Well...I don't really act anymore.

KYLE  
(puzzled)  
So what are you doing?

HENRY  
This.  
(beat)  
Bartending.

KYLE  
Cool. Where?

HENRY  
Here.

A long beat as Kyle tries to wrap his head around this idea.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - SUNSET

Henry grabs a case of tonic water off the van. A back twinge. Ow. He sits, pulls out a cigarette. Glumly smokes.

Casey appears. Henry smiles but she's on the phone:

CASEY  
(on phone, stressed)  
...what would I do in Burlington,  
stand-up comedy traffic school?  
Until you know, what's to discuss?  
Look, I gotta go, you know I can't  
talk at work. Don't. Mike, do you  
hear me? Do not come here...

She hangs up. Takes out a cigarette, and searches for her lighter. Spots Henry, who holds up his lighter.

HENRY  
(as she leans in)  
Boyfriend trouble?

CASEY  
Husband trouble.

Henry registers...husband? Bummer. Casey lights.

CASEY (CONT'D)  
Thanks...sorry, I forgot your name.

HENRY  
That's strange. People rarely  
forget my name.

CASEY  
Why's that?

HENRY  
It's Scrotum Phillips. Two M's...

CASEY  
(laughs)  
Right. So how's the first day?  
(off Henry's look)  
Oh, man, right. You worked here...

HENRY  
Eight years ago.

CASEY  
So you worked with Ron? Was he  
always like this? What was he like?

HENRY  
Different. But I'd rather not  
think about the fact that--

CASEY  
Yeah, you're back. You an actor?

HENRY  
What, I look familiar?

CASEY  
You're smoking Parliments.

Henry gives a rueful smile, flicks the cigarette away.

CASEY (CONT'D)  
Well, Scrotum, could have been  
worse. You could've never left.

LIDDY (V.O.)  
And the winner is...I'm so excited!

EXT. PATIO - SUNSET

An award ceremony is underway on the patio.

Liddy and her HUSBAND stand at a table. Several small plastic "Oscars" are laid out. Casey films with the video camera.

LIDDY  
 (very "aware" of camera)  
 And the awardie for "best Christmas  
 Decorations" goes to...  
 (consulting clipboard)  
 ...The Weissmans!

CASEY CAM POV - Cheers as MRS. WEISSMAN takes her "awardie."  
 Crowd reactions. Cheers. Head shaking. CONSTANCE, more  
 thrilled than anyone, clapping excitedly.

IRATE HUSBAND  
 We lost. To Jews.

LIDDY  
 And the awardie for "best yard,"  
 goes to...the Wings!

GORDON WING watches blankly as his wife takes the award.

INT. KITCHEN - DURING AWARDS

Roman places a call. Leaves a message in a fake voice.

ROMAN  
 Yeah, Kyle, this is Jim Tower from  
 "The Palisades." We loved your  
 audition, but we're looking for a  
 rougher take on the character. Can  
 you to come back in tomorrow..?

Casey enters. She doesn't trust Roman's shit-eating grin.

INT. LIVING ROOM

GORDON enters, passing Liddy, in hostess mode.

LIDDY  
 Having a good time?

GORDON  
 (tipsy)  
 I might. If it weren't for all  
 these Ordinary Fucking People...

HENRY glumly stares at the family portrait behind him.

GORDON (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
And the Oscar goes to...

Henry turns. Gordon plops the "oscar" on the bar.

GORDON (CONT'D)  
You. Scotch and soda. No soda.

Henry makes the drink, and Gordon stomps away.

Henry stares at the "oscar" on the bar. He makes a drink for himself. A serious drink. He drinks...nakedly unhappy...

CASEY CAM POV - we see Henry drinking, unaware.

CASEY (O.S.)  
That, I believe, is a Ron Donald  
Don't.

CASEY is filming him from the sliding glass door.

HENRY  
Actually you might want to get this  
for your educational video series.  
(announcer-voice)  
Now that you can cut limes, let's  
learn to drink on the job.

Henry places a cup on the bar.

HENRY (CONT'D)  
First, look around. Do you see your  
boss? If the answer is no, it's  
time to drink. Okay. A drink ought  
to be cool, so...  
(adds ice, to camera)  
"Ices is nices." Remember that.  
(back to work)  
Now, many drinks use a "mixer"...  
(holding up tonic bottle)  
...but when you're drinking on the  
job, a mixer is wasted energy.  
(drops mixer, pours vodka)  
Remember. "Vodka is nices."  
(taking a lime slice)  
Fruit garnish? No.

CASEY  
You know your material.

HENRY  
That's just the drink. Preparation  
of the drinker is more complicated.  
(MORE)

HENRY (CONT'D)

(to camera)

First. Devote yourself to a dream and spend ten years neglecting every other aspect of your life in pursuit of success. Then, fail.

(looks at drink)

When your girlfriend gets tired of your fatalism and leaves, celebrate with a car accident. Realize you're actor's guild insurance expired and you need a job, but don't move back to Milwaukee. Your old friends have jobs and homes and families and normal lives and you still wear "Sketchers." That's embarrassing. So why not go back to your old job and avoid the subject. Have you done that?

(holding up the drink)

Now, you're ready to drink.

He drains the drink on a single swallow.

INT. MONICA'S BEDROOM

CLOSE ON MONICA - face pained:

MONICA

God, I hate this. Same boring walls, same boring people, year after year. I feel just like her.

KYLE nods, caught up.

KYLE

Yeah.

MONICA

Trapped.

KYLE

Totally.

MONICA

Knowing there's a whole world out there, and you're not part of it.

KYLE

Wanting to express herself but not knowing how.

MONICA

Right!

KYLE

No eyes, no ears.

Monica glances at the play in her lap. "Diary of Anne Frank."

MONICA

Anne Frank had eyes.

KYLE

(wise)

But could they see?

MONICA

Yeah...?

KYLE

Oh. I was thinking Helen Keller.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Back with Casey and Henry. Sharing a drink.

HENRY

How long you been married?

CASEY

143 years.

HENRY

Kids?

CASEY

No. But he wants the whole bit.  
House, kids, yard, him raking  
leaves, me holding two cups of hot  
chocolate, everyone wearing the  
reindeer turtlenecks I knitted...

HENRY

Doesn't seem so bad. I mean,  
better than this...

He nods at the bar. She shakes her head.

CASEY

This isn't what I do. Why don't you  
marry my him and go to Burlington?

HENRY

What, and leave show business?



EXT. PATIO

Music and patio lights. People scarf buffet food, chatty, getting some booze in them. Roman spins fun tunes.

LIDDY patrols. Pleased. Party is a success. She takes a glass of wine from Constance. Smiles at...

RON, who smiles back from the patio bar. He has an audience of kids and a row of glasses laid out for Shirley Temples.

RON

Hey, who here's seen "Cocktail?"  
With Elizabeth Shue?

Ron, happy, goes into a "Cocktail" act, tossing bottles around frenetically. The kids watch, until one of the kids suddenly stabs him in the thigh with an olive sword.

RON (CONT'D)

Fuck me!

The grenadine bottle hits the side of the bar and splashes red syrup across Ron's uniform from nipple to nuts.

INT. MONICA'S BEDROOM

Kyle and Monica talk. Kyle channelling Jim Morrison.

KYLE

Yeah, the whole suburb trip, man,  
it's like mind-jail. I wrote a song  
about it once.

MONICA

Can I hear it?

KYLE

Well, um...

A long awkward beat as Kyle seems to shyly struggle with the request. Finally:

MONICA

You don't ha--

KYLE

(singing)  
Gave you my soul  
You treat it like poison  
Gave you my heart  
You betray with a lie.  
Now I'm crawling on all fours  
(MORE)

KYLE (CONT'D)

*Just like a baby  
But don't hold your breath  
You won't ever see cry.*

A pause; Monica almost says how much she loves it when Kyle hits the "recorded song" function on his cellphone and bursts into the chorus...

KYLE (CONT'D)

*You stained me.  
Like an angel trapped in dirt...*

INT. HALLWAY BATHROOM

Ron furiously changes out of his grenadine-stained shirt into Henry's original wrinkly one. It's comically tight.

RON

*(trying to button it)  
God fucking damn it!*

He whips out his Shout Stick, and gets to work on the stain on his trousers. He hears singing from the other room...

INT. MONICA'S BEDROOM

Kyle is finishing up.

KYLE

*...You stained me  
Like Shakespeare said "thou doth"  
You stained me  
You shan't ever see me cry*

A beat, then they start making out, leaning back on the bed.

Monica opens her eyes. She can now see into the bathroom -- Ron squints back at her in the mirror. She can't see the Shout Stick, so it appears Ron is frantically masturbating.

Monica shrieks. Ron looks over to see her in the mirror, glances down at his hand, realizes what she must think.

Monica tosses Kyle off the bed and flees. Ron gives chase.

RON

*(to Kyle)  
RDD!*

INT. HALLWAY

Ron catches up with Monica.

RON

Whoa, whoa. Look, I was just trying to rub something out.

MONICA

Gross...

Ron fumbles to get the Shout Stick out of his pocket.

RON

No, no, it's not --  
 (fumbling in pocket)  
 I already used it on your mom, she thought it was amazing!

MONICA

Mom!!

Ron grabs her arm.

RON

(reasonable)  
 Please, there's no reason to...  
 (she struggles - he snaps)  
 Young lady, this is my job, here.  
 Don't fuck with me or I swear by  
 God in heaven I will destroy you.

INT. MONICA'S BEDROOM

Kyle, oblivious to the confrontation outside -- Monica seems a distant memory -- watches the "I Love the 90s" episode on VH-1. ONSCREEN - Michael Ian Black quips about the next bit.

MICHAEL IAN BLACK

Are we having fun yet? The answer in 1998: no...so please tell this guy to quit asking...

...and VH-1 cuts to a montage of a 90s-hip beer commercial campaign for Koontz Beer, in which a bright-eyed twenty-something guy provides various male-fantasy scenarios to his buddies -- super models, Super Bowls, Vegas casinos, sports cars, etc. That bright-eyed guy is HENRY...

And every ad culminates in the buoyant campaign tag lie:

HENRY (ON SCREEN)

Are we having fun yet?

Kyle gawks, thinking what we're thinking: how different this TV Henry looks -- boyishly handsome, buoyant, winning.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Tight on present-day Henry, expressionless. Kinda drunk.

VARIOUS POV SHOTS: the kids are gone. It's getting louder and blurrier. A new song gets several ambitious folks to start dancing, including Heidi-Jane, who winks at Henry.

LIDDY watches, nervous, as her "classy" affair gets messy. CASEY'S camera catches a pained smile. CONSTANCE jumps in.

CONSTANCE

Who's the hostess with the mostest?

She tries the "Proud Mary" again, but Liddy swats at her.

LIDDY

Don't do that.

Henry pops a Vicodin, downs it with a swig of Scotch out of the bottle. He looks up -- GORDON WING is leaning on the bar, drunk, sourly watching his neighbors. He slaps a glass down.

GORDON

Make it a double  
(out of nowhere)  
I was in a band, too.

Henry pours Gordon a double Scotch/rocks.

HENRY

(also drunk)  
I'm not in a band...

GORDON

We were good. Kind of a Springsteen meets the Police thing.  
(drinks)  
I mean, I could have been like you. I could have done that, but I chose this. And that's cool...  
(glancing at dancers)  
May not look cool, but...in here, I'm as cool as you.

HENRY

I'm not--

GORDON

C'mon, you're what, an actor?  
Living that life?  
(MORE)

GORDON (CONT'D)

Everyone knows you, no one ignores you, get that break and you're rich, free, getting more ass than a toilet seat?

(Henry shakes his head)

I thought all you waiter guys were actors. So what do you do?

HENRY

I need to figure that out. What do you do? Maybe I can do that?

GORDON

Sure, sure. You know anything about mortgage refinance?

HENRY

(shakes head sadly)

But I do know something about pouring.

He pours out two drinks. As Henry tops off Gordon's healthy double, there's a tap on his shoulder.

A very uptight Ron -- in Henry's too-tight shirt and chaffed trousers -- motions him to the end of the bar. Henry stares, amused. Ron tries to stage-whisper...

RON

No doubles. One jigger only.

But the music is too loud and Henry can't hear.

HENRY

What?

RON

(shouting)

I DON'T--

...the song ends, and the whole room goes absurdly quiet...

RON (CONT'D)

--WANT YOU SERVING THEM TWO JIGGERS!

Ron turns to find the Ayaams in line at the bar. He freezes, believing incorrectly that they have misunderstood him.

RON (CONT'D)

I am-- Ayaam!-- you am-- you are -- it's bar lingo. Henry, right?

HENRY

What is?

Ron, thoroughly tongue-tied, finally just puts his hands together Hindu-style, and bows deeply to the Ayaams. Remains bowed. For an uncomfortably long time. Everyone stares.

Henry wordlessly hands the Ayaams two drinks and they leave.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Ron the preferred term is jig-roes.

Ron fumes, slithers off.

MONICA (O.S.)

The line!

Monica rushes up with Kyle in tow.

MONICA (CONT'D)

Say the line!

KYLE

Dude, you're that guy! I knew you were someone! That's awesome! I can't believe I'm working with you. C'mon, do it. Say it, man...

Henry's expression registers utter misery. Suddenly, he spots someone. A 35-ish guy, determined and unhappy, scanning the crowd. It's Casey's husband, MIKE.

HENRY

'scuse me...

He approaches Mike. Looking to be a White Knight...

HENRY (CONT'D)

Can I help...?

MIKE

I'm looking for Casey...

Mike looks out through sliding glass doors -- spots Casey shooting video of party guests. He heads for the patio. Henry hesitates, then goes after him.

EXT. PATIO - CONTINUOUS

Henry, drunk, trying to be elegant, moves in beside Mike.

HENRY

You her husband?

Mike is in no mood. He keeps moving toward Casey.

HENRY (CONT'D)

You know, Ron's been riding her all night. Maybe if wait out front, I'll send her out--

MIKE

Who the hell are you?

HENRY

Nobody. Just...having a bad day, trying to do one little good deed here, so if you could...

That's when drunken Henry walks right into a patio chair, gets entangled in another, and pratfalls into the pool.

UNDERWATER - tight on Henry's face. It registers almost nothing -- the odd calm of a self-immolating Buddhist monk.

He settles to the bottom. A beat. Then he surfaces. Strokes toward the ladder. He glances up...

HENRY'S POV - Mike and Casey are mid-fight in a corner of the lawn. We can hear just bits and pieces.

MIKE

...it's time for us to grow up!

CASEY

We said five years...

He watches with mixed emotions. We can't tell if he's rooting for her to leave with her husband or break up and stay.

GORDON (O.C.)

CANNONBALL!

Henry turns to see the naked form of Gordon flying overhead. Splash! He surfaces, smiling, assuming others will follow.

GORDON (CONT'D)

Hey, who's getting crazy? C'mon, the water's fine!

(nods at Henry)

Bartender's with me! He's cool! What're y'all waiting for? The kids are gone, let's cut loose, show 'em how it's done.

Roman stares, shaking his head with disdain. The song ends and the silence is uncomfortable. Gordon looks around at his dully-staring neighbors. Gordon segues from jovial to surly.

GORDON (CONT'D)

Oh? What? Am I the asshole here?

(looking around)

I am! I'm the asshole here!

Henry exits the pool as Liddy reacts, appalled.

LIDDY

Put your clothes on, Gordon. No one here wants to see your penis.

GORDON

Why? Maybe I'll win an awardy for best cock! I'd rather have a trophy for best cock on my mantle than tidiest lawn, or faggiest mailbox, or goddamn Christmas lights -- they better not blink! No blinking lights, Neighbors! Ordinary fucking people! What's wrong with you? You're already dead! All of you!

RON

Roman! What am I not hearing?

Ron makes a hand gesture for Roman to play a new song. Roman nods. "Got it boss." He slides a new CD in a deck.

MUSIC CUE: Nelly's "Hot In Herre." Ron frowns at him, but Roman grooves faux-obliviously.

ANGLE ON GORDON who attempts to beach himself. He drunkenly flops, reaching for his clothes, just out of reach.

HENRY. Drunk, wet, miserable, watches Casey and Mike argue.

ROMAN (O.S.)

It's over, dude.

ROMAN is also watching the fight.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

Don't get any ideas, though. I got first dibs on her for the rebound.

Roman leaves. Henry just shakes his head. Ron appears. Joins him in shaking his head.



RON

Well, what're you gonna do..?

HENRY

(drunk, misunderstanding)

I don't know. I thought I knew, and now...I have no idea. I just feel like my life is just...shit...

RON

Yeah, know what you mean. But keep in mind. The Client drew the guest list, it's her responsibility.

(slapping him on the back)

So chin up. This isn't our fault.

INT. KITCHEN

Constance watches as Kyle stands focused on a message on his cell phone. Roman wanders in.

ROMAN

Hey, that's an R.D.D.

CONSTANCE

Leave him alone. It's network! Uh, I'm so jealous...

She crosses her fingers, looks up hopefully as he hangs up.

KYLE

They want to take me to network on "The Palisades."

Constance shrieks with joy.

CONSTANCE

That's great! Now when you go in, remember - seduce them. Make them--

KYLE (CONT'D)

But they hated the hair. They want tougher. Like the hair of someone who's seen some real shit.

Kyle fidgets with his hair. Constance sees something.

CONSTANCE

Oooh. Don't touch. Back like that, you look like Jan Michel Vincent.

KYLE

Is he tough?

CONSTANCE

To work with, yes. And he's seen  
some real shit. Real alcoholism.

ROMAN

(not liking it)  
Is your character Barry the GayBot?

KYLE

No. "Jack." Just got out of juvie.

ROMAN

(aha, I've got it)  
Dude, know what they do in juvie?  
(mimes a buzz-cut)  
I saw a clippers in the bathroom.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Henry, hair wet, drunk in Ron's grenadine-splashed shirt,  
packs up as the final mingling unfolds. Casey plops the  
dormant video on the bar. Pours herself a drink.

CASEY

Well. Thanks for the gesture...I'm  
really sorry, I forgot...

HENRY

Henry.

CASEY

Henry. Henry.

CASEY (CONT'D)

He got the job in Burlington.  
(looking up)  
What do you think?

She steps up to the portrait behind the bar. Sticks her head  
in front of Liddy's. Smiles insanely.

CASEY (CONT'D)

"Who wants smores?"

HENRY

(a beat. He likes her)  
Shame. Here we're just getting to  
know each other.  
(off her hesitation)  
You are going, right?

CASEY

What, and leave show business?

She grabs a crate of empty glasses and heads to the van.

Henry grabs the video camera. Hits record and starts filming himself -- a variety of manic phony smiles and expressions. Self-loathing washing over him. He lowers the camera...

...revealing Heidi-Jane. She gives him a "gotcha" look.

HEIDI-JANE

I knew I knew you.

A beat...then Henry flashes a drunken, what-the-hell grin...

INT. BATHROOM

Casey passes down the hall. Hears a "buzzing" sound, glances into the bathroom. She shakes her head, calls into the room.

CASEY

Jesus, Kyle, he left that message.  
No one called from network.

INT. KITCHEN

Ron goes over paperwork with a dispirited Liddy.

RON

Just sign here...and this, here...

LIDDY

(pausing, confused)  
I thought I was supposed to fill  
out the feedback card...?

Kyle enters - there's a stripe through his hair, and he's got a clump of hair in his hand. Roman follows, wheedling.

ROMAN

C'mon, we're just fooling around.

KYLE

(voice breaking)  
Dude, you totally fucked me in the  
ass! It's pilot season, man!  
(turning on him)  
Jesus, this is all because I said  
your script sucks? You ruin my  
whole career?  
(losing it again)  
I mean, Jesus! It's pilot season!

Roman just stands there. Awkward. Constance puts an arm around Kyle reassuringly.

CONSTANCE

You know, I remember when I was up for one of the jumpsuit girls in "Cannonball Run, Two." Right after my audition, I got hit by a car. I was disappointed, but in the hospital? I finally read "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance." Which totally changed my life.

(the lesson?)

So God never closes a door without opening a window.

KYLE

A window? This is my hair!

INT. LIVING ROOM

The party empties out. Ron, smiling, "job well done," shakes bills from the various tip jars onto a table. His smile fades as he counts. It's way short of what he promised.

He pulls out his wallet and throws in all the cash he has.

EXT. SIDEWALK

CASEY sits out on the sidewalk beneath a streetlight. Eyes bleary. Deep in thought. Smoking. Wiping tears.

ACROSS THE STREET - a NEIGHBOR appears. Classic suburban guy - Tshirt and pajama bottoms - leaving out the trashcans for next morning. Casey stares at him.

INT. FRONT DOOR

A SLEEPY CHILD stands beside her parents.

WIFE

I thought last year's was better.

CONSTANCE comes hurrying up, all smiles, with a tiny coat.

CONSTANCE

Here we are! It fell under the bed.

She kneels, starts attentively fussing the kid into the coat.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)

There you go. Let's get you all zipped up. That's nice. Good.

She pats and smooths the coat, smiles at the boy...

PARENT

Come on, Danny. Bed-time.

....until the parents finally have to pull him away.  
Constance watches him go. Face blank.

INT. BATHROOM

KYLE faces himself in a mirror - crumbling. A big, dumb stripe through his beautiful hair. His mojo lost...

KYLE

(attempted confidence)

"You're in the Palisades now,  
homes." "You're in the..."

(gives up)

Goddamn it...goddamn it...

INT. MASTER BATHROOM

ROMAN - blank, bitter - sits on the toilet. Finishing a dump. Sees a photo of Monica in a cheerleader outfit.

He takes it out of the frame, puts it in his pocket. Then heads out, pointedly leaving the toilet un-flushed.

INT. PARTY DOWN VAN

Henry is in the back of the van making out with Heidi-Jane. We catch on that he's receiving a clumsy hand-job.

HEIDI-JANE

C'mon. Please. You can do it. Just once. Pleeeeeeeeeeeeeeeease.

Hold on Henry's face as he finds his reflection in the rear-view mirror. He gives himself a drunk, curdled smile...

HENRY

"Are we having fun yet?"

ROLL CREDITS

INT. DRIVEWAY - LATER

Ron moves down the line of resentful waiters. Restless Casey. Grateful Constance. Distant Kyle. Smirking Roman. And Henry.

RON

Fourteen dollars... Fourteen dollars... Fourteen dollars...

FADE TO BLACK.