

PARTY DOWN

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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.