

THE HIGH LIFE

"Holiday From Reality"

by
Chris Kelly

TEASER

FADE IN:

1

INT. CAFFEINE OASIS - EVENING

1

Sitting in a booth, across from each other we find EMMA and CHRIS. Sharing an ice cream dessert of some kind between them.

They appear to have the place to themselves as every other table is spotless and shiny, chairs in their proper place.

The neon sign that reads "Open" is no longer brightly blinking. Note: Chris still wears his work uniform.

CHRIS

Sorry about the wait again. That last customer just would not take the hint.

(beat)

You think the empty store and me turning off the espresso machine would have done it. Or the 'kitchen's closed comment, and "We close at ten, sir," followed shortly after that.

EMMA

It's fine. And ice cream is an excellent way of earning forgiveness.

CHRIS

Is that so?

EMMA

Yep! Besides, your uniform makes you look like you're from medieval times. It amuses me.

CHRIS

Just don't expect me to start jousting or to take you home on a white horse.

(beat)

I mean I'd do the prince charming bit if I could still pull it off. But that crap is pricey.

EMMA

(laughing)

They do say it's the thought that counts. I usually don't believe it, but I'll make an exception just this once. Because of the ice cream.

(CONTINUED)

CHRIS

I promise you, our next date will not be at my place of employment.

EMMA

No, I like it. The whole being alone aspect is nice and -

LAURA (O.S.)

Pardon our interruption.

Stepping out through the kitchen, arms linked are Chris' fellow employees: LAURA, who's quite pretty - and Emma notices this - and BRENT.

BRENT

This should not be misconstrued as us checking up on you in any way.

CHRIS

Not to worry. You guys were just almost witnessing our first non-fight... in which an apology was somehow made anyway.

LAURA

Yeah, that guy wouldn't leave huh? In spite of us giving him burnt food and looks of doom.

CHRIS

(grinning)

Yeah, well maybe our terrible service has discouraged him for life now. You guys done for the night?

BRENT

Yep, now we're off bowling. You two enjoy the best dessert this place has to offer.

EMMA

Oh, we will!

LAURA

Just remember to hit the lights and lock the place when your date's done, Chris.

Laura tosses a set of keys onto the desk and smiles, as she and Brent leave.

BRENT

Have a good one.

(CONTINUED)

CHRIS

Will do. Adios.

Chris pockets the keys and the entrance door bell rings, signaling that Laura and Brent have left the building. Emma watches them go, before turning back to her ice cream.

EMMA

It's a good thing those two are dating. Otherwise the working with pretty ladies while on the job thing might have been a problem.

CHRIS

Jealous, are we?

EMMA

What? No! Working with a troll or two'd build some character, is all. Nothing wrong with that. In fact, I support the idea that there should be more ugly people in the world.

CHRIS

(gleefully)

You were potentially jealous of Laura. Interesting. What if I worked for a modelling agency?

EMMA

Chris, please. She serves coffee. That's her job skill. When they perfect artificial intelligence, her job will be replaced.

(off look)

Which is sad. I just hope more work comes along her way.

Taking another spoonful of dessert, Emma folds her hands.

EMMA (cont'd)

And they wouldn't let you see the inner workings of a place like Vogue. A straight guy in fashion, making models pregnant instead of bulimic? That's their 2010 calender down the drain.

Emma shakes her head at the notion and Chris laughs as they dig into the dessert, having a grand old time as we:

FADE TO:

WAYLON sits on the couch, arms crossed and eyebrows furrowed.

(CONTINUED)

WAYLON

This blows!

LEE and IAN sit on the other couch. Ian uses the remote and raises the volume on the TV. Lee has a bowl of popcorn in his lap and appears quite comfortable.

LEE

Shall I dare to inquire what you're ranting about?

WAYLON

Isn't it obvious? Who's missing from the apartment?

IAN

Claire.

WAYLON

Aside from Claire!

LEE

Ah. Of course. You miss Chris and Emma.

WAYLON

No, they're just still dating! In spite of my advice!

LEE

Ah, right. You wish misery upon everyone who isn't you.

IAN

It's only been a few weeks.

WAYLON

And it's felt like eternity. They're always together. Except when they go to the washroom.

LEE

That would ruin the magic, I suppose.

WAYLON

They're always giggling and holding hands... it's pesky is what it is. I knew this would happen! I just knew it! They're forgetting about me and all of you less important people.

IAN

You can't blame them for being happy. That's just cruel.

Lee takes a handful of popcorn and starts to eat.

WAYLON

I don't blame them. I blame Lee.

Lee CHOKES on his popcorn. No one lends him any help as he smacks his chest with his hand a few times. Waylon just looks at Lee a little sadly, as Lee COUGHS.

LEE

What?

WAYLON

You should have forbid them from dating.

(beat)

Bad for the project, blah, blah. What if they break up and we get that 'we all still live under the same roof' garbage?

LEE

Excuse the hell out of me for letting them make their own decisions.

IAN

Besides, we've all been doubting Lee's judgement since he let you live here.

Lee ignores Ian as Waylon uncrosses his arms and is apathetic as ever.

LEE

Why don't you give them a call? Maybe they'll want to hang out with you later?

WAYLON

I can't do that! That makes me look needy.

LEE

And what do you think you sitting here bitching is doing, exactly?

WAYLON

(beat)

Shut up!

Getting up, Waylon nods to himself and picks up the phone. He dials a number, as the others look at him. Waylon nods again as he hears the dial-tone start to ring.

INTERCUT WITH:

3

INT. CAFFEINE OASIS - SAME TIME

3

Chris and Emma now sit in the same booth, in the typical couple make out mode.

Chris' cell starts to RING with a weird electronic beat.

Chris manages to pull it out with one hand from his pocket, still in the middle of a make out session, until the ringtone successfully manages to destroy the mood.

The couple breaks apart. Chris looks to Emma and to the cell phone.

CHRIS

I don't have to get it. I can press 'cancel.'

EMMA

No, answer it. It could be an emergency.

Chris nods, and opens up the phone.

EMMA (cont'd)

It could also be -

CHRIS

Hello?

WAYLON

(filtered: through phone)
Dude! Where you guys at?

EMMA

(sighs)
A Waylon.

Chris gives an apologetic shrug, as Emma unwraps her arms from around Chris, and leans back in the booth. The heat of the moment is gone.

CHRIS

We're on a date, Waylon. Like we told you we would be earlier.

EMMA

It's okay. I'll just pretend to make out with young Eric Clapton in my head.

She pats Chris on the knee and leans back starting her day dream.

(CONTINUED)

WAYLON

Your whole life's a date now. Make that woman begone and banish her from coupled-ness, freeing yourself in the process!

Chris rolls his eyes, as does Emma.

CHRIS

I'm hanging up now.

WAYLON

Wait! Is that how you treat your best friend? A simple 'hello'? Hell, I thought I deserved better, and -

Chris hangs up, and puts the phone away. Looking back, full attention on Emma again.

CHRIS

Now, where were we?

Chris heads in for a kiss as Emma playfully swats him.

EMMA

Oh Eric!

END INTERCUT:

4 INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

4

Waylon is still on the phone, blissfully unaware:

WAYLON

The worst part of all this is that you guys see each other way too much. I'm trying to help you. You see...

The dial-tone can now be heard. Waylon slams the phone down.

WAYLON (cont'd)

That bastard hung up on me!

LEE

Maybe the connection just cut out.

WAYLON

Oh no, that assgoblin definitely knew what he was doing.

IAN

Maybe it was something you said.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Waylon heads back to his position on the couch and crosses his arms again, like a little kid throwing a temper tantrum.

WAYLON

This blows!

BLACK OUT:**END OF TEASER**

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

5 INT. APARTMENT - KITCHEN - THE NEXT DAY

5

Pouring some milk into a glass, Chris shuts the fridge with his foot. He hands the glass of milk to Emma, taking an over the top bow before grabbing a seat.

CHRIS

Your beverage, m'lady.

EMMA

Thank you, kind sir.

CHRIS

Is there anything else I can do while I'm in your service?

EMMA

Hmmm... there's a dragon down the hall that needs slaying if memory serves. But that could just be a metaphor for what the working class call rent, so...

Emma has that overly flirtatious smile working, and Chris looks equally as cheery and is about to say something when:

Waylon enters and looks sickened at what he sees before him.

WAYLON

Gross.

Waylon shakes his head and grabs the milk, as Chris and Emma don't pay any attention to the comment.

WAYLON (cont'd)

(louder)

I said 'gross'!

Waylon starts to drink straight from the milk carton, gulping it down as he examines the duo for any signs of a reaction.

EMMA

(off milk carton)

That statement about covers my sentiments towards you at the moment.

Waylon takes a few more gulps, and BELCHES, before putting the carton back on the counter.

WAYLON

What?

(CONTINUED)

CHRIS

I'm just waiting for you to go all Popeye from the calcium overload.

WAYLON

My bad, dude.

Waylon grabs the carton again and extends it to Chris.

WAYLON (cont'd)

Did you want some?

Emma politely turns away, as Chris waves it off.

CHRIS

Just this once I think I'll go against the dentist's advice, and decline any milk.

(beat)

Until we live under different roofs.

WAYLON

Whatever. So what's on the agenda today? A little mayhem? A bit of messing with Ian's head?

Chris and Emma exchange a look, and awkwardly look to Waylon.

EMMA

Uh...

CHRIS

About that... see, Em and I... kind of, sort of... already made plans.

WAYLON

That's cool. I'm down for whatever.

EMMA

No, Waylon...

(beat)

See... Chris and I made plans... for us.

WAYLON

Yeah Em, I know! So what are we doing?

Waylon points to all three of them with a smile. Chris and Emma exchange another look - this is going to get awkward. A long beat.

Chris points between himself and Emma.

CHRIS

Sorry man, the plans... are just for us.

WAYLON

(beat)

Oh.

Chris sheds an apologetic smile, while Emma avoids eye contact with Waylon, who just awkwardly rubs the back of his head and grins.

CHRIS

(jokingly)

Unless you'd be interested in a walk through the park, hitting up LA's shops and restaurants with snooty waiters and candle lit tables?

(seriously)

Sorry. It's just... I mean, we just didn't think it'd be your thing.

(beat)

Unless you want to provide the commentary bashing us as a couple and listing off all our faults, like you did the last time we let you come along.

WAYLON

Yeah, I get it. You two want more alone time. Blossoming love and all that crap.

EMMA

We're sorry, Waylon.

(beat)

We'll arrange something soon, just the three of us. How does that sound?

WAYLON

No, no I'm good! That would have worked if I was five, Emma, but the truth is this whole being the third wheel thing sucks!

EMMA

You're not the third wheel! You're the...

(beat)

The... um...

(to Chris)

Help me out here.

CHRIS

(shrugging)

You're... the... police guy.

(off looks)

That doles out tickets. Which keeps... everyone in check, so... no one's speeding and there's less... collisions.

(beat)

Do either of you get what I'm trying to say? 'Cause I don't!

WAYLON

You pulled that out of your ass!
And I can tell when I'm not wanted.
Waylon Wyche can take a hint!

Waylon glares at the pair before storming out of the kitchen. Emma and Chris share a worried glance and Emma's about to say something, when:

Waylon storms back in, and points at them.

WAYLON (cont'd)

And I don't need you guys! You guys suck! And when this romantic comedy between you guys fades to black and the credits roll, know that the critics hate it and I've already left the theatre and moved on to better things.

With that, Waylon storms out of the kitchen again. Chris and Emma still glancing where he just previously vacated.

EMMA

What just happened?

CHRIS

(beat)

I think Waylon broke up with us.

Chris and Emma finally look to each other and we FADE TO:

Lying on his bed, Lee is strumming his guitar.

He yawns as he glances around the room, not really paying attention to anything in particular. His laptop blinks in screensaver mode.

The door swings open and Waylon enters. Waylon saunters in casually, Lee paying him no attention as he throws himself onto Ian's bed.

WAYLON

Hey! Whatcha doin'?

LEE

(off guitar)

Pondering existence.

Lee strums a sad little tune for a few beats, which clearly has no effect on Waylon.

LEE (cont'd)

You could knock in future.

WAYLON

Doors are meant to be opened. Besides, it's not like you have any love interests we're aware of, so I knew I wouldn't be interrupting anything. And Ian's more likely to have a secret basement where he stores his women and harbors an alter ego with a knife. So I figured, again, not likely to walk in on anything.

LEE

(not paying attention)

Uh huh. That's nice.

WAYLON

So, what's with the inner Garth Brooks vibe? Didn't you normally pretend to do this on the boardwalk?

Lee strums for a few more seconds, before furrowing his eyebrows. He places the guitar down on the floor.

LEE

I did. That I did.

(reflective)

I miss stripping.

Lee nods to himself and sits up, while Waylon raises his eyebrows.

WAYLON

You're not gonna start now, are ya?

LEE

(beat)

What? No.

Waylon raises his eyebrows again, as Lee enters defensive mode.

(CONTINUED)

LEE (cont'd)

I'm not! For one thing, my old double lifestyle had paying customers! And since a) you're a guy, and b) you're broke, as much as I miss dancing exotically I can live without it.

WAYLON

A stripper with standards.

LEE

Damn straight! One of my old shows involved this routine with Rex, where we'd have a parrot on stage, and from there we'd start off with this move I invented called "The Fourth Monkey," where -

WAYLON

Where the hell are you going with this?

LEE

It was a show about animal rights... and ties in with that standards thing. I still have some modicum of respect for myself.

Waylon laughs, to Lee's obvious annoyance.

WAYLON

You were a manwhore with a licence.

LEE

Call it what you want! I raked in a buttload of cash, and so what if I miss the techno beat music and the shaking of my hips. It was damn liberating taking my clothes off. And I made some good contacts. If we ever get famous, I know who we're hiring as bodyguards.

WAYLON

Your pimp?

LEE

(annoyed)

Look, is there a point to this visit of yours? Because I'm pretty sure I like the deal we have going where I clean up your mess and almost have a heart attack. It's become a good pattern. Unhealthy, but consistent.

(CONTINUED)

WAYLON

I just came in to see what you wanted to do today.

Lee nods, and then his eyebrows furrow. Waylon nods to himself as well and looks around the room. There's a long beat.

LEE

But... you never come in to do that.

WAYLON

I'm pretending to give a damn now!

LEE

(gulps)

We're not going to have to... bond, are we?

Waylon stands up and cracks his knuckles, as Lee is still frozen in fear from his last statement.

WAYLON

Damn it! It's just not the same! This is weird.

LEE

Tell me about it.

WAYLON

I know! I can hang out with someone way cooler than you.

LEE

(muttering)

Sitting right here.

Waylon shakes his head to himself and begins to exit, as Lee picks up his guitar again.

LEE (cont'd)

Should I go after him?

(beat)

Ah, I don't really care.

Lee starts to strum another ditty on the guitar as we CUT TO:

CLAIRE sits on a chair in front of the bedroom's dresser mirror. She powders her face, humming to herself.

Placing the powder down, she grabs a tube of lipstick and uncorks the top off. Rolling the red lipstick up, Claire purses her lips and applies it.

Claire's focused on her reflection as she smacks her lips, clearly not paying attention to Waylon who sits over on Emma's bed, drumming his fingers.

Claire examines herself one more time, before finally looking to Waylon with the lipstick in hand.

CLAIRE

Oh, I'm sorry. Did you want some?

WAYLON

As polite as your offer is, I'll pass. This isn't Vegas. And I'm as sober as a cow being milked.

CLAIRE

Alright. But I do think Mysterious Magenta is your colour.

WAYLON

Do I look like a metrosexual to you?

(belches)

I'm as man as they come.

Claire puts the lipstick back down and stands up. She smoothes out her nice green dress, and once again glances in the mirror.

WAYLON (cont'd)

So why are you getting yourself all glittered up and sexy?

(off look)

Not that you're not normally! It's just... aren't you working today?

CLAIRE

I am.

WAYLON

And the dress that's far too fancy to be in the presence of kids? What's the occasion? Because if it's one of their birthdays, I can already hear cop sirens. And not the good "naughty or nice" novelty stripper kind.

CLAIRE

Please, like I'd waste this on those miserable gremlins.

(beat)

I got called into work at Brian's school today to supply a class for two weeks.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

CLAIRE (cont'd)

Their former teacher had to take some time off for a family emergency.

Claire looks like she dreads the idea as she awkwardly folds her hands to stop from fidgeting, as Waylon nods to himself.

WAYLON

Ah, and so you have to bring your "A" game to show the ex you're doing fine without him?

CLAIRE

That about sums it up. Yeah.

(beat)

And you're hanging out with me in a vague attempt to replace your... what was it you called them last night? "Bastardized subpar traitors who shall not be named"? Am I right?

Waylon nods, as Claire smiles to herself and puts on a pair of earrings.

CLAIRE (cont'd)

Have you thought that maybe the answer isn't in replacing Chris and Emma just yet?

WAYLON

I tried waiting for them to break up already, but it took too long!

CLAIRE

Waylon, if this was the olden days and you were a man and I were a woman with no rights, you'd get to do whatever it is you want and things would be lovely, by your twisted definition of the word.

(beat)

But it's not. So welcome to the modern world, where I'm allowed to tell you that you're being stupid.

WAYLON

(Surprised)

What?

CLAIRE

You think that since you're at the apartment twenty-four seven and we're not, it gives you the right to act however you wish and pretend that you're the center of everyone's world.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CLAIRE (cont'd)

Now it's time to let you in on the truth. You're sadly mistaken, so stop harassing everyone for having lives. Get over it. And if you keep up this disillusioned attitude you'll not only get on my nerves, you'll eventually lose the few friends you currently have.

(dangerously)

So if the next words out of your mouth involves some blatant jab that insults me or your fellow roommates, I'm warning you now to button it!

Waylon looks like he's ready to say something. But doesn't.

CLAIRE (cont'd)

Now. I'm off to go show my former love interest how being single is the best thing that's ever happened to me.

Claire heads towards her bedroom door and opens it. She stops to look at Waylon, who looks ready to nest on Emma's bed.

WAYLON

Oh, did you want me to leave?

CLAIRE

(nods)

I'm sorry if my rant came as a surprise, but Waylon, you have to live in reality sometime.

WAYLON

Yeah, yeah.

Waylon walks out first, and Claire gives the room one last scan before shutting the door. Death Cab for Cutie's "Different Names for The Same Thing" starts to play over the following set of scenes.

Waylon sits on his usual spot on the couch, alone. Flicking channels with the remote every few seconds. Not really settling into anything in particular.

He stretches out his arms for a second or two before looking dismal again. He glances around the apartment, but it's obvious no one else is home.

9 EXT. LA - STREET - SAME TIME 9

Emma and Chris walk down a street, arms linked and laughing hysterically, though we can't hear what they're talking about.

Emma jumps up and points to a store in a distance, to which Chris over-dramatically groans and stops walking, bringing the duo to a halt.

Emma unleashes the girly puppy dog eyes on him. Getting really close and making sure she bats her eyelids - only for it to have no effect whatsoever.

Emma drops the act and lightly punches Chris in the arm! Chris rolls his eyes and nods his consent. Emma drags him down the street, grinning, as we FADE TO:

10 INT. SCHOOL - GRADE SIX CLASS -SAME TIME 10

Claire stands before a class of eleven year olds. She shuffles a sheet of papers neatly together, much to the classes dismay. Claire stands up straight, entering teacher mode, and then says something to the class.

Instantly the class separates their desks, so that each student now sits alone and has no neighbor to talk to. Claire nods to herself.

She starts to walk down an aisle of desks, leaving a paper on each of their desks as she does so. Much to the students distaste. We then DISSOLVE TO:

11 INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATER 11

Waylon's still flicking channels, when the phone RINGS. He glances at it for a second, watching it ring, before finally getting up to answer it.

Picking it up, Waylon's still engrossed in the TV as he talks to whoever's on the other end. Nodding along for a second until instantly, his eyes bulge!

Waylon drops the phone, and it CLASHES to the ground. Waylon looks like someone just sucker-punched him as we FADE TO:

12 EXT. LA - BOARDWALK - SAME TIME 12

With Lee now, he strums his guitar, but no one passing by seems to give him any attention.

His guitar case looks quite empty aside from a few stray bills and one coin. Lee glances upon his earnings with a sigh, as he almost appears to enter a trance as he continues to strum and we DISSOLVE TO:

13 INT. LIBRARY - SAME TIME

13

Ian's pushing along a a cart with a tonne of books. Not really paying attention to where he's going.

He doesn't notice the wall in front of him as he's too busy listening to his iPod. Lipsynching whatever song is playing and doing the classic head bob to the beat only he can hear.

THUD! Ian and the cart jolt to a stop and several books fly off, landing on different spots across the floor. Ian glares at the wall, before bending down to start picking up the books.

As he places two books back on the cart and reaches for another we DISSOLVE TO:

14 INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATER

14

Waylon now sits on the couch again, staring at an envelope in his hands, which we see scribbled on there is addressed to:

"GANG"

Waylon stares at the envelope with raised eyebrows as he bites his lip. (As if debating something in his head) Waylon glances up to the ceiling for a while, before placing the envelope on the coffee table. A sad smile flickers on his features, for a beat.

Waylon stands up and cracks his knuckles, looking up to the ceiling once more. He SIGHS before grabbing the suitcase beside the couch, and heads towards the apartment door.

Giving the apartment a final glance, he takes a few seconds as the music comes to a stop.

Waylon opens the door and exits without looking back and as the door closes we:

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

15

EXT. BOARDWALK - DAY

15

Lee strums the guitar, still being ignored by the masses. His eyes fixed on an invisible spot before him, it's almost like he's in a trance.

A bird flies dangerously close overhead but Lee doesn't flinch. Even as a piece of bird shit falls from above:

Narrowly missing and SPLATTING a foot away from him. Lee cranes his neck, before focusing again on the fascinating woodwork of LA'S boardwalk.

Still strumming, one chord strikes a terrible note! SNAPPING Lee to action, he stops playing. He tries playing one string again. The note is definitely off.

LEE
(muttering)
Bollocks.

Lee shakes his head and starts to turn one of the tuning pegs at the end of the guitar, setting about the mission of tuning the instrument.

LEE (V.O.) (cont'd)
One thing I didn't have to worry about when stripping... the music was taken care of by a reliable sound system, and taking one's clothes off really doesn't take this much effort.
(beat)
Practice, sure. But everything does.

Lee strums the guitar, listening to the chord.

LEE (cont'd)
That's not it.

He adjusts the knob again and strums it. It sounds a little better, but not by much.

What Lee doesn't notice though, is that he's caught the attention of a very attractive woman. A little older, with that LA tan, and the fact that she's had plastic surgery done. She's still basically a damn MILF.

MILF
Having trouble there?

(CONTINUED)

LEE

(not looking up)

You know how it is, a guitar's like a woman. Most of the month it's fine and then there's those three days where you threaten to sell it at a pawn shop.

Lee laughs at his own joke and finally looks up. Finally noting how incredibly gorgeous the Milf in front of him is!

He stops laughing, as she looks incredibly offended. She starts to walk away.

MILF

Maybe the woman isn't the problem.

LEE

(quickly)

Please, they're always the problem.
(realizing what he's said)
Wait! That was a joke! A terrible joke! Can't you tell I've been single for quite a while?

Lee puts the guitar in the case, and races after the Milf. Grabbing her arm to catch her attention.

The Milf finally stops and turns around. Looking to Lee's hand on her arm and back to Lee several times, before he sheds an awkward smile, nods, and lets go.

LEE (cont'd)

(off hand)

Right. You're still a total stranger. Sorry. And I'm also sorry for those comments earlier, I was just having a bad day.

The Milf examines Lee, whose hung his head in shame.

MILF

Look, it happens to the best of us. Forget about it. I mean, it can't be easy living out on the streets.

The woman opens up her purse and starts to rifle through it, as Lee quizzically ponders that last comment.

LEE

Wait, wait, I'm not -

MILF

Into charity, I know. You work! And that is what this money's for!

(MORE)

MILF (cont'd)
 For roughing it out and giving LA
 your music.

She pulls out a twenty dollar bill and stuffs it into the pocket on Lee's shirt. Lee still looks baffled.

MILF (cont'd)
 Buy yourself a nice warm meal now.

LEE
 But... but I'm not homeless!

MILF
 (not buying it)
 Right... and I don't live in
 Beverley Hills. Now, I'm sure that
 one day you'll be a contributing
 member of society, right now you're
 just going through a rough patch.

Taking out a pair of sunglasses, the Milf puts them on and smiles before starting to walk away.

MILF (cont'd)
 Good luck!

LEE
 But I have an apartment! I do! I
 can take you back there if you
 like! And I don't need your money.

Several passerby's look at Lee, as he said it just a bit too loud! The Milf turns around and lowers her glasses, she's putting on an act for the people watching.

MILF
 Aw, that's so sweet of you honey.
 Really. But you don't have to lie
 to me.

She starts to walk away again, as a couple walking by laughs at Lee's public rejection.

Lee heads back to his guitar case, and sits down. He looks in the Milf's direction as she's now become a tiny spec on the boardwalk of people.

She eventually disappears through the crowd as Lee stands up, guitar case in hand.

LEE
 (shouting)
 I used to be a stripper, you know!
 You'd be lucky to have me!

Lee ignores the tonne of eyes that have shifted in his direction as he pulls out his guitar again. And we CUT TO:

16

INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATER

16

Chris and Emma enter the apartment. Emma with a few (and few is putting it lightly!) shopping bags in her hands.

Ian stops what he's doing on the computer, and faces them. Visibly happy at the couple's glee.

IAN

Hey. How was the park? Or were you guys at the art museum today?

CHRIS

The museum was two days ago, if I recall correctly. And sadly we never made it to the park.

(off Emma)

This one heard the call of the cash registers.

EMMA

Hey, is it my fault I'm a girl with a keen eye for sales?

Emma sports a dazzling smile, and raises her bags like they're trophies. However, this has no effect on the guys whatsoever.

CHRIS

You didn't buy anything on sale though. You looked at them and thought, "Hmm... I'd get rid of this stuff as well."

EMMA

Keen eye!

Chris shakes his head and grabs a seat, as Emma drops the bags at last. And sets about silently counting them.

IAN

So good day? Bad day? Shall I now add "We're going to get a visit from the scary repo-men people day" to our calendar?

EMMA

Excellent day!

CHRIS

In which credit cards were not used. Emma made some employees who make commission as well as their usual salary very happy, though.

(CONTINUED)

EMMA

Is it my fault Chris decided to buy me things? He has no will power.

(beat)

And I bought me things as well.

Emma turns her attention back to her mountain of bags.

IAN

What's in the bags?

CHRIS

You don't want to know.

EMMA

Girly items.

IAN

Like what?

EMMA

Let's see. A few tank tops, underwear, perfume and Chris' moisturizer.

CHRIS

Emma!

EMMA

I'm sorry.

(to Ian)

It's manly moisturizer!

Ian laughs, as Emma picks up her bags - but realizes there is quite a lot of them.

EMMA (cont'd)

A little help, please?

CHRIS

Oh no, you wanted most of them, you can move them yourself.

(off look)

They're girly bags.

Emma rolls her eyes and somehow manages to get them all onto both of her hands. She glares at Chris, before making her way to her bedroom. (Though it looks like an awkward balancing act). As we CUT TO:

Emma enters the room sporting a different outfit, and takes up a seat beside Chris, just as Lee enters.

IAN

So then I told him to piss off, and if he didn't pay his fine, he just couldn't take another book out.

CHRIS

You showed him.
(beat)
Hey, Lee.

LEE

Hello.

EMMA

I think if I was a librarian I would lie about fines all the time, just to make a little extra.

Emma leans back into the couch and ponders this, as Lee marches over to the living room, looking around as he does so. Furrowing his eyebrows as he examines the living room.

IAN

So how was your day?

Lee's too busy concentrating on trying to casually peer into the kitchen, until he realizes that the other three now have their eyes glued to him with tilted heads.

LEE

What?
(beat)
Oh, it was fine. Fine. Made enough money to get a cab back home. Not very productive.
(long beat)
Thanks for asking.

Ian nods and appears content, as Lee looks around to the others, even though everyone is clearly just sitting down.

Lee stands, scratching his head as he looks around the room again.

LEE (cont'd)

Something's different.

Lee finally stops looking around the room and glares at the others for an explanation, as Emma jumps up.

EMMA

I got new clothes!

LEE

(smiling)
That's not it.

CHRIS

I'm more broke. If that's possible.

LEE

Nope.

Lee surveys the room again as he puts his guitar case up against the wall.

Chris, Emma, and Ian all exchanging curious looks in the meantime. Lee takes a few steps over, still scanning the apartment.

EMMA

Well?

LEE

Give me a minute.

CHRIS

Are your Spidey Senses tingling?

Lee raises his hand to halt any further comments, as he notes how the TV is off, the computer is on, the doors to the balcony are shut, etc.

Lee starts to stroke his chin. And takes another step towards the gang. Taking in each of their faces. Until:

LEE

(to Ian)

What did you do?

IAN

Nothing!

LEE

Ian...

IAN

'Ian' what? I'm not the reason you're having a mid-life crisis at the moment, so find another scapegoat.

(beat)

You bollocks.

CHRIS

Are you alright, Lee?

(off look)

I'm not asking for your well being, don't worry! Just asking because if you've gone mad and have to be deported, can I have your bedroom?

LEE
 (ignoring comment)
 Something's missing. It's too quiet
 around here.

Lee finally crosses the threshold into the living room and takes a seat, as he looks around the room once again.

LEE (cont'd)
 There's no arguments over what
 we're doing tonight. Less insults
 flying about. We're all kind of
 getting along...
 (beat)
 Where's Waylon?

Lee looks to Chris for an explanation.

CHRIS
 (shrugging)
 I don't know. Out scamming children
 or replacing us would be my guess.

EMMA
 I don't want to know.

IAN
 He hasn't been here since this
 morning I don't think. I worked
 till twelve and came straight home.
 He wasn't here.

LEE
 (curious)
 I see.
 (beat)
 I have a bad feeling about this.
 Different from my regular bad
 feelings. Waylon's usually home to
 pester us and make me question my
 existence.

CHRIS
 (condescending)
 He's an adult, Lee. He can go out
 when he wants and make his own
 decisions.

LEE
 See, that's what I'm afraid of.
 That road always ends with me
 paying bail money or... well,
 that's about it. But still!

IAN
 He did leave a note.

EMMA

But you just said you didn't know where he was!

IAN

I didn't open it!

Ian gets up and heads over to the computer, picking up the envelope we saw earlier. Lee, Emma, and Chris all give him stony looks for keeping this information from them.

IAN (cont'd)

What? Last time Waylon left me a note, it was a ransom note telling me if I wanted my stuff back I'd have to play a deadly game.

CHRIS

I remember that. That took us ages to set up!

IAN

You douche. A scavenger hunt for my own personal belongings through a condemned building about to be demolished isn't my idea of fun!

Ian picks up a pillow on the couch and chucks it at Chris, who raises a leg to block it.

CHRIS

It kept us entertained. And it was Waylon's idea.

IAN

Mrs. Sarre in 802 thought I was trying to rob her!

CHRIS

Hey, no one told you to use the fire escape to climb through her window to get your comics back. You could have just asked her.

IAN

Not the point! The point is I had to explain myself to a senior citizen who had a chair and was ready to use it.

EMMA

She still thinks you're a menace Ian. She gave me pepper spray the other day in case you decided to try anything.

Emma laughs and Chris smirks, as Ian balls up his fists and takes a few calming breathe. Lee looks to Chris and Emma, like a disappointed parent.

LEE

Are you two done winding Ian up?

Chris and Emma look to each other and back to Lee who raises his eyebrows.

BOTH

Yes...

Lee nods and turns his attention back to Ian.

IAN

So anyways... you can see why I wasn't going to be the one to open it. There could be itching powder or anthrax.

Ian tosses the letter over to Lee, and takes his seat back.

IAN (cont'd)

So you open it.

Lee picks up the letter and gently RIPS it open. He pulls out a tiny piece of paper and puts the envelope on the coffee table, before starting to scan the document.

Emma tries to peer over Lee's shoulder, as Lee's expression falls.

EMMA

(beat; scanning)

No... that can't be right.

CHRIS

What?

Lee takes another few seconds, and then hands Emma the letter. She scans it again, as Lee puts his head in his hands. Chris stands up.

CHRIS (cont'd)

What's wrong?

Ian leans forward as Lee looks to both of the guys before standing up.

LEE

Chris... you might want to sit down before -

CHRIS

Just say it!

LEE

Chris, I'm serious, just take a second and -

CHRIS

Lee! Tell me now before I manipulate you into committing a serious amount of crime in which perjury may be your only escape.

LEE

(beat)
Waylon's left LA.

Chris is frozen as Emma looks up from the letter at last.

IAN

My horoscope was right! Good fortune did occur today.

Everyone ignores the comment. Lee sits back into the sofa as Chris looks to him for answers.

CHRIS

Left, left? As in... gone?

LEE

It would appear so.

CHRIS

(matter-of-factly)
The letter's wrong.

EMMA

(off letter)
Chris... it's all right here.
Waylon's really gone.

IAN

Yes! Finally.

CHRIS

It's some kind of joke.

Ian gets up and starts to dance, jumping on the couch, not bothered in the slightest from the glares the other three send his way.

CHRIS (cont'd)

His stuff! Proof that he's messing with us!

IAN

Anyone else notice Chris is starting the five stages of grief?

Chris heads over to the other couch (also known as the one Waylon uses for a bed). Chris crouches down and looks under the couch.

CHRIS

His stuff will be right...

There's nothing under the couch, as Chris double checks, even triple checks. He picks up a couch cushion and looks under before finally looking to Lee and Emma.

CHRIS (cont'd)

(shocked)

Nothing's... here.

IAN

Now he's at stage five, acceptance.
A little faster than I would have
thought.

Chris stays where he is and sits down, as Emma steps over to him.

EMMA

I can't believe it either.

IAN

You spend all your time scheming
and hoping that a family member
will fall ill, or that your enemy
will have a heart attack or
mysterious accident, and in the end
they leave of their own accord.

LEE

Ian, not now.

EMMA

(to Chris)

Read for yourself.

Emma hands Chris the letter and puts a hand on his shoulder, as Chris reads.

WAYLON (V.O.)

Hey guys! If you're reading this
I'm sorry to say that it means I'm
long gone by now. Waylon Wyche has
left the building. And LA.

(beat)

Y'all will now have to learn to
live a Waylon free lifestyle as I'm
on my way back home. Now, I know
you're all probably upset, except
for Ian. He can burn in one of
Dante's levels of hell.

(MORE)

WAYLON (V.O.) (cont'd)

And I give anyone else my blessing to hit him. Something personal came up and that's why I've had to go. There wasn't time to say this to everyone in person, and I'm not a goodbye man myself. Just know that this is for the best.

Ian jumps onto the coffee table and starts to dance like an Egyptian.

Lee KICKS the coffee table and the jolt sends Ian flying off! He lands with a thud on the carpet a few feet away.

WAYLON (V.O.) (cont'd)

In the meantime, if any of ya are ever in Oklahoma, don't be afraid to stop by. Sincerely, Waylon Wyche. The best damn southerner you ever got to know.

Emma takes a seat, still looking quite shocked. Ian gets up and rubs his elbow, while Chris lets go of the letter and it falls to the ground, and we:

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

18 INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

18

Yellowcard's "Five Becomes Four" starts to play as Lee sits on the coffee table, head in his hands again. The group, minus Ian, look very depressed.

EMMA

I can't believe it.

Emma looks outside, sporting a sour expression at the world for still being sunny and bright outside.

CHRIS

Who's going to remind us of our flaws? Keep us in check? What if we're never bluntly honest anymore, and everything starts to bubble under the surface until the group falls apart?

Everyone shares a communal SIGH, once again except for Ian.

LEE

He was the glue of our group. The annoying, fat, extra-strength crazy glue.

IAN

Weirdest compliment ever.

CHRIS

(beat;sighing)

I can't believe he just left. Maybe we can chase him down. Have a boombox playing some sentimental song as everyone in the group tries to beg him to stay! Then he still decides to go until some *deux ex machina* conveniently stops him. Like inconvenient travel conditions, or -

EMMA

Chris...

CHRIS

You're right, no boombox, that's not practical. But the rest of it...

EMMA

That's how it's supposed to go.

(CONTINUED)

Chris nods, and sits back in the couch as Emma slouches her shoulders. No one in the room makes eye contact.

EMMA (cont'd)

(sadly)

I think we should buy me more things.

LEE

We were this close to moving on with the project as a group!

CHRIS

We don't even know where he lives... how can we visit him?

LEE

(beat)

It's never going to be the same around here.

IAN

I could really go for a hamburger.

Lee, Emma, and Chris all sharply turn to Ian and glare.

IAN (cont'd)

Seriously, can you guys stop doing that?

EMMA

Remember the time he hired midgets for us?

Chris and Lee nod fondly, as Ian gets up.

IAN

This is ridiculous! He left. He isn't dead!

A BING from the computer gets Ian's attention as Yellowcard's music stops playing.

IAN (cont'd)

Would you look at that? Life goes on. We've got mail.

Ian sits down at the computer desk, and clicks open a window. He scrolls down a bit and spots the new e-mail.

IAN (cont'd)

Speaking of Lucifer.

Ian glares at Waylon's name on the computer screen. Biting his lip, he finally clicks on it, and out opens up what looks like a good paragraph or two of writing. Ian's eyes start to scan the screen as we pan back over to the others.

They haven't moved, and are right where we left them. Sitting and sad.

IAN (cont'd)
That fucker!

LEE
It's bad luck to speak ill of the departed.

CHRIS
(reflective)
Maybe we should have been nicer to him.

IAN
Guys... he played us! Again!

Ian looks to the group, rage in his eyes, as they all slowly turn to him. Snapping out of their states.

EMMA
What are you talking about?

IAN
(off computer)
He just sent us an e-mail. Giving us a real reason. He ditched us to hang out with a bunch of backstabbing city folk!

Emma rushes over to the computer, while Lee and Chris stand up and also make their way over.

CHRIS
(outraged)
We're backstabbing city folk!

IAN
I knew him leaving was too good to be true!

EMMA
(to Ian)
Let me see that!

Emma PUSHES Ian out of the computer seat. As the boys hunch over her, trying to read the e-mail as well.

WAYLON (v.o.)

Ha ha, I sure did pull one over on you guys, huh! Thinking I left the state for "personal reasons." I love how gullible all of you are.

(beat)

I know, I know. I'm an asshole, but I'm okay with that. And I'm not really gone forever so there's no need to mourn. If all goes according to plan I'll be back in a month or two. So you fartknockers better not have moved by the time I return. 'Cause the truth is that I have great news! Chris, you'll remember a few months ago that you helped me film that audition tape for a reality show? Well, turns out I didn't make the cut for those 12 contestants originally. Luckily though, some dude broke both his legs in a construction accident and had to pull out of doing the show! Isn't that great?

(beat)

So they called and said they needed me if I was still interested because they start filming tomorrow! So you fascists better stay tuned because you now know one of the contestants on "Dystopia: City meets Country edition"!

Ian, Lee, Chris, and Emma all exchange worried looks, before looking back to the computer screen.

LEE

I knew I had a bad feeling about this.

WAYLON (v.o.)

In conclusion, I think Ashton Kutcher himself would be proud of the punking I did on you guys. Drink safe! Sincerely, Waylon. P.S I think the show's trying to come up with a better title.

Everyone is scanning over the last remains of the e-mail one last time. Ian now sulking.

CHRIS

That bastard!

Chris smacks the desk, and looks out the window as Lee looks away from the e-mail.

(CONTINUED)

LEE

My sentiments exactly.

IAN

What did I do in a past life?

CHRIS

I can't believe we even missed him.
Next time we change the locks and
replace him.

EMMA

Or move. That'd be funny and mean.
I'm okay with that.

Lee rubs his temples as he starts to pace.

LEE

I just can't get my head around how
he's always one step ahead of us.

IAN

I've been saying it all along.
Waylon is evil.

EMMA

I just can't believe he -

CHRIS

I know!

EMMA

And that he had the audacity to
laugh and think this was a prank
and -

LEE

We know!

Emma switches off the computer monitor and stands up with her
arms crossed and looking pissed. Chris shakes his head.

CHRIS

Waylon on a reality TV show?

EMMA

We're boycotting it!

IAN

Come on, Waylon making a douche of
himself on reality TV, only good
can come of this situation.

LEE

What the hell is 'Dystopia,'
anyway?

(CONTINUED)

EMMA

Oh, I love it!

(off looks)

Except for the fact that King Bite Me is now on it. Anyways, it's this show where they stick a bunch of contestants into their worst nightmares - in this case the environment they're least suited to. So basically you have a bunch of morons afraid and making fools of themselves on national television as they're out of their element. It's basically quality entertainment.

LEE

But this is the country edition.

IAN

So?

CHRIS

It means that Waylon stands a freakishly good chance of winning!

The group swap equal looks of worry with one another and we
CUT TO:

A hawk flies overhead, as we pan down to the camera crew. Who have all the necessary angles staked out, as all their focus is on Waylon and the 11 other contestants who stand looking out at the wilderness.

Some of them filling out the necessary Stereotypes of life as there's the HIPPY, the GOTH, the SOCCER MOM, and the REBEL.

SOCCER MOM

It's odd isn't it? Being somewhere without skyscrapers.

GOTH

At least the wilderness hasn't conformed to the stereotype of having two point four children and isn't plagued by the STD of suburbia.

SOCCER MOM

Hey! I'm happy with my normal life. And at least when people look at me they don't think rejected groupie.

REBEL

Mom has spirit. Cool.

One Contestant JUMPS as a snake slithers past. A Camera Guy - let's call him JOEL - walks past with camera in hand, making sure to get the face of each contestant.

A nice car pulls up and comes to a stop. The door opens and out steps DANIEL SILVERTHORN (Late thirties, physically fit, dripping with charisma). Daniel smiles as some of the contestants start to chatter amongst themselves.

DANIEL

Joel!

JOEL

Hey D-Man, how's it going?

Joel swings the camera around and points it at Daniel. Daniel immediately hides his face in his hands.

DANIEL

(yelling)

Joel! I wasn't ready! What the hell did I tell you? Warn me when you're going to point that thing in my direction! Got it? If you want to keep your damn job and feed your three kids, listen to the host!

GOTH

He's so sexy.

JOEL

Got it, bossman.

DANIEL

Good. Now, important question.

JOEL

Shoot.

DANIEL

How's my hair?

Daniel runs a hand through it, and starts to fiddle with it.

JOEL

(sarcastic)

It's fine. As always.

DANIEL

(not picking up on it)

Okay. The last thing I want is that Perez Hilton guy making fun of me.

(MORE)

DANIEL (cont'd)

Then it'll be brought up at parties and award shows, next thing you know my social calendar is out the window until I enter rehab and start my comeback.

(beat)

You can point the camera at me then.

Joel turns the camera at Joel, who's smiling to the point where it is creepy.

DANIEL (cont'd)

Hello, America. We meet again.

(winks)

I know this is an 8 O'clock show, but a little flirtation with the audience should get past the PTC.

(fake laugh)

Welcome to the new edition of Dystopia, where we have yet another 12 contestants who will be pushed to the brink of their sanity as they face their own personal demons over the next eight weeks.

Daniel pauses for a few seconds and Joel lowers the camera.

DANIEL (cont'd)

How was that out of ten? Should I open with another joke? Maybe poke fun at a minority group or a natural disaster?

Daniel walks over to Joel, as the Hippy marches over to Waylon. Waylon watches Daniel like he's a moron, but watches him anyway.

HIPPY

Dude... where are we, man? My wife just told me to get on the bus.

WAYLON

Home, my friend, home.

Waylon cracks his knuckles and grins and we FADE TO:

Sitting up at the bar are Lee, Ian, and Claire, each with a pint glass in front of them. A band plays nearby, and the bar is packed as usual.

CLAIRE

So... this is our life now that Waylon's gone. I know it's only been a few days, but it seems...

IAN

Delicious?

Ian takes a swig of his pint.

LEE

I know he's only going to be gone for a few months... but we'd as good as finished the project! I could just see myself polishing the script up and then...

CLAIRE

(to Ian)

I was going to go with quiet. But your adjective also works. It'll be nice being able to sit on the couch and not get asked if I've thought about kidnapping a student for ransom.

IAN

It's economically worth it. Though legally you may run into some trouble.

LEE

We're in the time of a recession. Jail could have been free room and board. With only one other cell mate.

Claire laughs.

LEE (cont'd)

Yep. Now that Waylon's left it feels like the end of an era. Or at least like the era has taken a sabbatical within itself.

CLAIRE

Can an era do that?

IAN

It will be interesting, though. Life will be like it was supposed to be with just the five of us in LA.

CLAIRE

There'll be less adventures, I'm sure. We might actually have to get hobbies.

(beat)

Aside from drinking.

IAN

Blasphemer!

Ian takes another swig of his pint as if the action itself retracts what Claire just said.

CLAIRE

I'm just saying it's not like it's a special skill.

IAN

It is if you do it right!

CLAIRE

Ah, I see. And on the designated walker side of things as the one who always walks you guys home, I think I see it in a different light.

IAN

See, you're just doing it wrong then. What about the night I couldn't feel pain when Chris and Lee kept playing "Does This Hurt?"

CLAIRE

You felt it the next morning.

IAN

Touche. But at the time I won the game.

LEE

There was that time Emma flashed that lesbian foreign maid, and the girl fell head over heels for her!

IAN

(fondly)

Marelda. She didn't speak a word of English.

(reflective)

Except for that one word of course.

LEE

(laughing)

Do you remember she followed us home and just kept knocking on our door for hours going...

Lee knocks on the bar twice as Ian bursts out in laughter.

LEE (cont'd)

(faking accent)

Housekeeping?

IAN

That's the word!

CLAIRE

Until of course she proceeded to break in, and I had to call the cops because you were all hammered!

IAN

She was cleaning our apartment!

LEE

Besides, Emma's young. She's allowed to experiment.

IAN

I can't believe you didn't like Marelda. Sweet old thing. Come on, Claire, you have to appreciate that drunk story, it's one of our best!

LEE

And the fact that I have yet to throw up over here is another feat in itself.

IAN

That should go on your resume!

LEE

Claire, I'm sorry if we're not funny drunks. We know we think we're hilarious, but you don't have to babysit us. We're adults.

IAN

Plus we live two streets over. Even inebriated it's not a challenge.

CLAIRE

I know, it's just... something could happen. And don't say odds of that are slim or any other b.s, because you can't know for sure that it can't.

(beat)

Damn my maternal instinct.

IAN

Oh sweet Jehovah's witness!

Ian places his glass down and stares at Claire, who looks slightly uncomfortable for a second.

CLAIRE

What?

IAN

You've never been drunk before!

CLAIRE

(laughing)

What? Ian, get off it.

(matter-of-factly)

I drink with you guys all the time.

IAN

True. But it's always one or two and then you switch to soda. Or distract whoever's trying to get you another alcoholic beverage.

CLAIRE

No, I don't.

IAN

Yes, you do! Like the time...

CUT TO:

The whole gang sits in the booth, Emma giggling. Everyone drinks their beverage and is nowhere near done except for Claire.

EMMA

You know what... let's get you another!

CLAIRE

No, I'm good, thanks.

EMMA

No... spelt Y-E-S?

CLAIRE

Tell you what, I have a better plan.

EMMA

(really excited)

What?

CLAIRE

Let's get you another!

EMMA

Yes!

Emma falls onto Claire's shoulder and hugs her, clearly in a drunken stupor.

(CONTINUED)

21 CONTINUED:

21

Everyone else aside from Claire not far behind. Claire signals to the waiter going by and points to Emma's drink, gesturing for another.

EMMA (cont'd)
I love you, Batgirl.

CHRIS
I love Batgirl!

EMMA
She's mine!

CUT TO:

22 INT. O'GRADY'S - PRESENT

22

Ian and Lee look to Claire, each of them nodding as if everything in the puzzle is coming together.

CLAIRE
Ian, you're crazy.

LEE
Norrmmally, I'd agree. But this time the insane person has a point.

CLAIRE
What, that I don't drink? Please. I get drunk, like, all the time, yo.

Lee raises an eyebrow, as Claire picks up her beer and takes a drink.

LEE
'Yo'?

CLAIRE
Yeah. As in... I... be drunk all the time, like... damn. Y'know? Butchering grammar, doing shots. My inner teacher is always disciplining me. She makes me wear a hat.

IAN
Alright, it doesn't take an intoxicated person to point out that none of that sentence made sense.

CLAIRE
I'm just saying... I drink all the time! I don't need to take the twelve steps to recovery or anything. But I do!
(awkwardly)
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CLAIRE (cont'd)
 Like I'll be at school... and
 ponder... where are my five... rum
 and coke's! I need them to get
 through the day.
 (beat)
 Bitches.

LEE
 Maybe she does need to do the
 twelve step thing.

IAN
 Claire. Claire. Claire. You have
 clearly been sober for far too
 long. But don't worry, you are in
 the presence of two seasoned
 professionals. And the night is
 young.

The barman walks by and Ian signals him over, and Claire gulps.

IAN (cont'd)
 Four shots for the lady to start,
 please!

The barman nods, and sets about retrieving the shot glasses from underneath the bar. Ian takes another swig of his drink and slams it down dramatically. Some alcohol spills over the glass.

IAN (cont'd)
 Damn. That moment would have been
 slightly more epic if spillage had
 not transpired. Ah, well.
 (off pint glass)
 Rule number one: Don't spill the
 alcohol.

LEE
 Is there a rule number two?

IAN
 Nope! Rule number one is all you
 need, because, Claire, my dear, you
 are about to lose your drunk-inity!

Ian and Lee raises their glasses and toast as Claire nervously eyes the barman approaching them with shot glasses as we:

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

23

EXT. CALIFORNIA - OUTSKIRTS OF CIVILIZATION - DAY 2

23

Waylon sits on a red couch in spite of the fact that he is outdoors. He is completely alone, except for the camera in front of him.

WAYLON

So... how does this work? Do I just jabber on? Share my opinion? I can raise awareness on a social justice issue? I know, I'd have to bullshit my way through without laughing, but I can give it a shot.

JOEL (O.S.)

How about you tell the audience about how the first challenge went?

WAYLON

Joel, buddy, are you supposed to talk right now? I thought this was a thing where the contestants got some spotlight? You're ruining the magic. No one is supposed to hear what I'm saying except for America watching.

Waylon flashes a grin at the camera.

JOEL (o.s.)

Whatever I say we'll edit out, don't worry. Pretend like I'm not here.

WAYLON

But you are here, man! I mean, what if I tell you Tracy is a conniving bitch? Then, when Tracy comes over to do her little spiel, you mention how Waylon expressed distaste. Next thing you know I have to deal with a fifty year old woman who donated herself to tattoo art threaten to skin me.

(beat)

Now I know, I know. If it came down to it, I could definitely take her. Who are we kidding? I mean, come on. If I were to belch she'd fall over. But I don't want it to have to come down to that, man.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

WAYLON (cont'd)

Next thing you know, my face is on the tabloids and it calls me a sexist wife beater, and I can't get a date for the next three years because let's face it, everyone's seen what happened on our hypothetical smackdown on TV. What else is America watching?

Waylon drums his fingers on his knees as nothing happens for a few seconds. Then, Joel moves the camera closer.

WAYLON (cont'd)

Joel, are you listening to me? Are those headphones in your ears? Did you turn your iPod on? You audio enhanced bastard! If you edit this I will hunt you down and sit on you!

There's a long beat as Waylon realizes Joel does not care and starts to collect himself.

WAYLON (cont'd)

("anyways...")

So... I won the first challenge. No surprises there. Jeffery put up a bit of a fight on the last lap, which is impressive, because I don't think the dude has ever ridden a tractor in his life. But man, it was one hell of a race. I know I was laughing the whole time, but when that Goth chick drove her tractor into the soccer mom's a minute into it, I knew my competition had taken care of itself.

Waylon scratches his beard and laughs as we DISSOLVE TO:

Chris and Emma stand out on the balcony. Looking out at their crappy surroundings seen from their view.

EMMA

So... who would you say your arch nemesis was back in the day?

Chris leans on the railing as a wind blows past.

CHRIS

Hmm... Nick Campbell. I don't think I'd ever publicly admit that as it would imply he had some sort of intelligence and consequently would be a compliment. But that would be the guy. We met in elementary school and despised each other all the way up until high school graduation.

EMMA

Of course. Why did he hate you?

CHRIS

It was hate at first sight. Even though we also hated a lot of the same people, a lot of time was put into our witty banter of trying to outdo the other.

(reflective)

Good times. And what about yourself? Any big bads currently throwing darts at a picture of you over the Atlantic?

EMMA

Caitlin James. Skanktron, of course. She beat up my little brother, even though he was five years younger than us when we were kids.

Emma balls up both hands and rolls her eyes.

CHRIS

So what did you do?

EMMA

Found out she was pregnant and threatened to go public if she didn't drop out of school.

CHRIS

(impressed)

Really?

EMMA

Nah. Only in my head. I did egg her once though. It was equally liberating.

Emma sighs and leans against the balcony railings again as Chris takes a step behind her and encircles his arms around her waist. Emma lies her head back into Chris shoulder and grins. It's a tender moment.

(CONTINUED)

CLAIRE (O.S.)
 (shouting)
 Wooooo!

Emma turns and looks up at Chris.

CLAIRE (O.S.) (cont'd)
 Wooooo!

EMMA
 Is that Claire?

CHRIS
 Wooing?

Chris breaks away from Emma and goes beside her. They look down at the sidewalk below them. Seven floors to be exact. They spot three tiny but familiar dots.

PAN DOWN to find Lee, Claire, and Ian attempting to walk side by side, with Claire in the middle. Claire is clearly being helped by the guys, as they have their arms wrapped around her.

Claire is only taking the occasional step and is smiling with her eyes wide as if she's seeing the surroundings for the first time.

CLAIRE
 (yelling)
 LA!
 (beat; concerned)
 Lee, why is there no echo?

PAN BACK UP to Emma and Chris who are now craning their necks and leaning over the balcony even further. Each of them grinning.

CHRIS
 It looks like Ian and Lee are carrying her. She's smashed.

EMMA
 I've never been this excited before!

CLAIRE
 (shouting)
 I've lost my drunk-inity!

EMMA
 Except for now! More excited!

CHRIS
 And Claire's fallen over.

24 CONTINUED: (3)

24

EMMA

She's going to feel that tomorrow.

Chris nods as we CUT TO:

25 INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

25

Chris and Emma sit on opposite couches, each glancing at the door every few seconds. The TV is turned on and Emma has a magazine in her hands, but it is clear that neither Chris nor Emma are paying any attention to anything in the living room.

EMMA

Good Christ. There's only seven flights of stairs! It shouldn't take this long.

CHRIS

Maybe they passed out.

EMMA

We did do that once when we reached floor five.

Emma and Chris get up and head towards the door, as a jingling of keys is heard. Chris and Emma rush back to their separate couches and jump into their seats as the lock turns and the door swings open.

Ian, Lee, and Claire stumble in. Lee takes his keys out of the door and shuts it.

CLAIRE

Lee! You opened the door! Magic powers!

Claire removes her arms from Lee and Ian's necks and extends them forward, wiggling her fingers for more effect.

CLAIRE (cont'd)

Magic Powers! Oh!

Claire's fingers continue to wiggle and she starts to laugh as she loses her balance and falls forward onto the carpet.

CLAIRE (cont'd)

Ouch.
(beat)
Magic powers!

Claire still wiggles her fingers as Ian shakes his head and Lee takes off his coat.

EMMA

This is amazing! She's carefree.

(CONTINUED)

CHRIS

(to Ian)

Had fun at the bar, I take it?

IAN

Dude, Drunk Claire is awesome! She should be an action figure!

LEE

(sarcastic)

With drunk giggling action?

Claire pushes herself up off the ground with her hands and stands up.

CLAIRE

Chris! Emma!

Claire rushes over to Emma's couch and falls onto Emma in a hug.

CLAIRE (cont'd)

The Brangelina of our little group!

Claire pulls away from Emma and looks back and forward between Emma and Chris.

CLAIRE (cont'd)

Don't adopt any more kids.

CHRIS

Alright. The next starving African child we see, we'll tell them they have to look for surrogate parents somewhere else.

CLAIRE

Good! It's too crowded around here.

Claire sits back into the couch, as Emma looks to Lee.

EMMA

She's plastered.

CLAIRE

I am not!

Emma turns to face Claire and comfortingly places her hand over Claire's hand and pats it.

EMMA

Oh, not you, sweetie, the other Claire.

CLAIRE

Oh. Okay.

CHRIS

So was getting Claire shit faced
the plan?

CLAIRE

I'm not 'shit faced'! I'm drunk.
Subtle yet important difference.

Chris nods and looks to Lee and Ian.

CHRIS

Whose idea was it?

LEE

Ian's.

CLAIRE

Speaking of... guess what? Ian's a
normal person when Waylon's not
around!

IAN

Hey!

CLAIRE

What? Lee agrees, we talked about
it while you were in the washroom.

Ian smacks the back of Lee's head.

LEE

Well, excuse me for giving you what
was supposed to be a compliment.
Want me to take it back? Fine.
Compliment retracted.

CLAIRE

Lee! Stop it. You sound too
English. Shhh!

LEE

That doesn't even make any sense.

CHRIS

This is awesome! Can we keep her?
Please...

LEE

She's going to hate us in the
morning.

CHRIS

You, most likely. Emma and my names
will not be smeared, though.

Claire jolts up from the couch, looking around the room. The joy from her face gone.

EMMA

You alright, Claire?

CLAIRE

Yup. My intestines just feel like starting World War Three with my stomach. Where's our washroom?

EMMA

(pointing)

That way. Where we've always kept it.

CLAIRE

Okay. Good.

Claire nods to herself as she stands up. She walks around the couch clenching her stomach, disappearing from view, as everyone else turns back to the living room. Lee takes a seat beside Chris.

LEE

Or she'll start the loathing of our existences now.

CHRIS

Is there any way we can keep her permanently drunk without calling our morals into question or killing her liver?

(off looks)

You know you were all thinking it.

EMMA

So did we miss any Drunk Claire stories at the bar?

IAN

It was wicked. At the bar a guy asked for her number, and she gave out Chris's number instead of her own to protect herself. Then she sang "It's All Coming Back To Me Now" on the karaoke system.

(reflective)

Not well, mind you, but it was still bloody brilliant! She even wanted to get a tattoo of a seal playing with a beach ball on our walk home... but Lee said no.

LEE

It was for the best. You also missed -

CHRIS

Guys.

All eyes shoot to Chris' direction.

CHRIS (cont'd)

Should someone tell Claire that the balcony is not the washroom?

Everyone turns around and spots Claire with her hands on the railings, leaned over. From the looks of it she is heaving quite a bit.

EMMA

Ah, well. We've all done that. At least the bathroom won't be a mess.

IAN

Besides, a bit of vomit on the sidewalk in this neighborhood? Real estate price might just increase.

CHRIS

That's gross.

IAN

But sadly true.

Claire turns around and opens up the sliding door. She steps into the living room and wipes her hand over her mouth.

EMMA

Are you alright?

CLAIRE

Yup!

(beat)

I don't think we'll be getting a Christmas card from the Sultana's though.

LEE

Ah, well. Their dog bit me. A bit of projectile karma serves them right.

CLAIRE

That's what I thought.

(beat)

Alright, I didn't. It's a good thought.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (5)

CLAIRE (cont'd)
But I like it as far as thoughts go
so I'm stealing it, okay?

CHRIS
You're still surprisingly cheery.

CLAIRE
Still drunk.

EMMA
Need anything? A glass of water?

CLAIRE
Nope!

Claire walks over to the couch and takes a seat beside Emma.

CLAIRE (cont'd)
(to Emma)
Have you always been so short?

EMMA
Hey! I'm 5'2, that's not short.
That's...

IAN
You are a bit vertically
challenged, Em.

EMMA
I'll vertically challenge you!

LEE
Em, simmer down! Don't get short
with him.

EMMA
Chris, hit Lee.

LEE
What?

EMMA
Hit him.

Chris smacks the back of Lee's head.

LEE
Oy! Will everyone stop doing that?
I'll get a restraining order
otherwise.

IAN
Then we'd never finish the project.

LEE
Yes, but with a little -

(CONTINUED)

Confused, Lee turns at the RATTLING of the apartment door lock, and everyone watches as the apartment door opens and in steps Waylon with a grin and his luggage over his shoulder.

WAYLON

Guys! You'll never believe this, some drunk bitch was just puking their brains out a couple floors up. It was the funniest thing.

(off looks)

What?

Emma points to Claire, who is now fast asleep beside her and lightly snoring.

EMMA

This would be the 'drunk bitch.'

WAYLON

Seriously? Aw, man. I go away for four days and you guys get Claire drunk! I would have come home earlier had I known that was on the agenda!

LEE

Speaking of..why are you back?

EMMA

Not that we're not glad to see you.

IAN

(raises hand)

I'm not. If you wish to leave again you're more than welcome to.

WAYLON

I was kicking ass for the last three days. Making alliances and all that nonsense with my fellow contestants. After all, the game requires a certain amount of skills.

CHRIS

Get to the point.

WAYLON

Nice to see you to, assgoblin.

("Anyways")

This little goth bitch and I hooked up, and in the heat of the moment I revealed to her I was in fact raised in the country. Next thing I know, she puts her clothes back on and goes and tells Joel.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

WAYLON (cont'd)

(off looks)

Our camera guy. Joel tells the host, the other contestants found out and started stirring up shit. Bitching and moaning.

IAN

So they had met you.

WAYLON

That went on for a few hours and then those fascist bastards disqualified me! For cheating!

Waylon puts down his luggage and walks over to everyone with his arms out.

CHRIS

Well... you were.

WAYLON

Of course I was! But damn! I could have won! My competition was a bunch of stereotypical city types who had never breathed fresh air. That money was mine!

(reflective)

Episode one is set to be very dramatic though now. They're going to pimp it out in the promos. And add in another player to replace me!

LEE

Waylon. I feel like I should lecture, but I've lost the will.

WAYLON

Will you settle for buying Uncle Waylon a beer instead?

EMMA

I can't believe you lied your way onto a reality show. And were stupid enough to admit to the lie to someone else on said show.

CHRIS

Yeah, isn't the point of those things that they have cameras watching your every move?

IAN

You didn't even give us time to move and not tell you our forwarding address.

WAYLON

(grinning)

Ah, well. Something tells me you guys will forgive me.

CHRIS

If that smirk is going for genuine, you should know it comes across as creepy.

WAYLON

Come on guys! I was part of a scandal! This is big!

LEE

Big is your head! I can't even believe we missed you! Of all the things you've done since coming to LA, this is up there on the list of things we shouldn't be doing. We came here to write, not to play. We're this close to finishing our pilot and series bible, and you skip off to do your own thing because you're bored, and... and you're not even listening to a word I'm saying, are you?

Waylon shakes his head and bends down on one knee. He zips open his bag and pulls out a newspaper.

WAYLON

I have news, Chrimes. That will make you proud.

EMMA

You haven't gone to the sperm bank again to make money have you?

WAYLON

Nope! I made tomorrow's front page!

IAN

What?

EMMA

Good, 'cause the thought of another woman out there bearing a little Waylon...

Emma shudders.

LEE

I think I've had this dream before. Usually the SWAT team breaks down our front door first, though.

(CONTINUED)

Waylon turns the newspaper over and the headline reads: "REALITY FOILED: DRAMA IN DYSTOPIA" with a picture of Waylon in a cowboy hat underneath, followed by the rest of the article in several paragraphs.

Waylon hands it over to Lee, who begins to scan it over.

WAYLON

What do you think?

CHRIS

Your head's not physically that big. And where's the mole beside your right cheek? They photoshopped this!

WAYLON

I know! Tomorrow this baby is going to be everywhere! In LA at least.

Lee's eyes flick back and forth and a small smile starts to occur.

IAN

No. Don't smile! Be Angry Lee again! Waylon's a jackass, remember?

LEE

A jackass who got us publicity!

EMMA

What? Like publicity in the good... non controversial sense? Since this article is about how Waylon scammed a reality TV show that isn't clever enough to do a background check?

WAYLON

They quoted me! Multiple times!

LEE

You brilliant son of a bitch!

EMMA

Let me read that. Did you mention how we're all of normal height?

(off looks)

We are.

Lee hands over the paper and Emma begins to read. Claire snores loudly for a second, before falling onto Emma's shoulder. Emma ignores this and opens up the paper.

EMMA (cont'd)

Now... where's the part that's about me?

LEE

(pointing)

Right there.

EMMA

(reading)

"I live in LA now with five other roommates. We're all aspiring writers trying to play in the big leagues. It's not going so well but we've had quite a few adventures. We live at 755 Summerfield Avenue in apartment 78, so to any talent agencies searching for the next best thing, look no further. There's six of us, so one of us is bound to have talent."

(beat)

I'm not mentioned by name, but this makes me very content.

IAN

It makes us sound like a charity case, though.

CHRIS

Ian, have you seen the way we're living here? We could show people and they'd give us money free of charge. What's wrong with some free publicity? With an address of where to find us? Let's let success come to us!

IAN

That would be a first. And why would they even publish that quote? If I were a journalist I'd edit that crap out!

WAYLON

It was part of my deal, as I gave them an exclusive interview on my side of the story! Butt munch. Did I come through, or did I come through?

EMMA

You came through. In a weird, anticlimactic sort of way.

Emma tosses the newspaper onto the coffee table. Slowly the camera starts to pan down onto the article.

LEE

This is how it all happens. When we make it big and go to interviews and the like, this will be that moment we reference when we knew we were finally on our way.

The zooming stops so that all we see now is the headline, the picture of Waylon in the cowboy hat, and the paragraphs of text around it.

CHRIS (O.S.)

Or it's that moment when we realize this is the furthest we ever made it years down the line and it's time to call it quits.

LEE (O.S.)

(beat)
Or that.

BLACK OUT:

END OF SHOW