

"THE RETIREMENT PARTY"

FADE IN:

INT. PUB - PRIVATE ROOM - NIGHT

A CROWD of about a DOZEN PEOPLE has gathered. A buzz of anticipation hovers above the room, but immediately ceases when JUSTIN, 35, handsome in a boy next door kind of way, walks to the podium at the front of the room.

JUSTIN

I'm sure you're wondering why
you're here.

FRIEND #1

How long until we drink?

Everyone in the room laughs, including Justin, who reveals a charming, but nervous smile.

JUSTIN

You were all there for me through
my divorce and the subsequent dark
days that followed.

FRIEND #2

Anything for you, Justin!

The group nods and cheers in agreement. Justin is clearly touched by the reaction and it takes him a moment before he can continue.

JUSTIN

You endured weepy phone calls at
all hours, you offered a couch or
a guest room on nights I didn't
want to be alone, and you set me
up on plenty of dates.

FRIEND #3

But you still wouldn't take my
mooch of a cousin off my hands.

JUSTIN

I was lonely, not insane.

The room erupts in laughter.

JUSTIN

I never would've gotten through
one of the hardest times of my
life without you.

FRIEND #1

We love you, Justin!

Justin bows his head and blushes as his friends fill the room with cheers to agree with the sentiment.

Justin finally raises his hands to settle the group.

JUSTIN

Your days of worrying about my
love life are over.

FRIEND #2

He's getting married!

A loud buzz of excitement fills the room as Justin's friends discuss the possibility of who the lucky girl might be.

FRIEND #3

Who's the lucky girl?

A pained look comes across Justin's handsome face as the conversation begins to head in a way he didn't expect.

JUSTIN

There is no girl.
(the buzz lessens)
No more looking for Miss Right.
I'm retiring from dating.

The room goes absolutely silent. Justin looks out at the blank stares and lets out a long sigh.

Clearly, this was not what anyone expected.

TWO WAITRESSES enter and pop the tops off of bottles of champagne. Everyone is too stunned by the announcement to want to celebrate.

EXT. PUB PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Justin leans against the back of the building and stares up at the stars. He is depressed and looks like he needs to be left alone.

The door opens and BIRD, 36, tall, athletic and oddly handsome and DYLAN, 33, short, a little out of shape, but eternally happy, come out to join him.

Bird hands Justin a beer as he and Dylan take up positions on either side of their sullen friend.

DYLAN

That was interesting.

Justin grumbles something under his breath and takes a swig of his beer.

BIRD

It was brilliant. Once word gets out that our boy has taken himself off the market, the honeys will swarm to him. Why didn't I think of it?

Justin shakes his head and has some more beer.

JUSTIN

It's not a scheme, Bird.

Dylan shakes his head in agreement.

Justin slumps down on the wall of the pub until he is sitting on the cold black top of the parking lot. He tosses his half empty beer bottle across the lot where it smashes loudly beneath one of the lights.

BIRD

This is about "her", isn't it?

There is a long pause before Justin finally replies.

JUSTIN

I'm just sick of dating and all the shit that goes along with it.

DYLAN

But it's because of "her", right?

Dylan and Bird look down at him like they expect him to open up and reveal everything, but Justin looks up at them with a blank expression on his face.

Bird squats so that he has a better chance of looking his buddy in the eye.

BIRD

We're your best friends. I don't get how you saw her for so long and never told us who she was.

JUSTIN

You know my superstitions.

Bird stands up again, and throws up his arms in surrender.

JUSTIN

Come on, Dylan, you've got to understand my thinking.

Dylan offers a halfhearted shrug.

DYLAN

I haven't been on a date in ten years and I've never been happier. But you're not exactly the poster child for happy right now.

The door opens again, and SAMANTHA, 23, beautiful, big smile, and even bigger blue eyes, exits the pub to join them.

SAM

How goes the think tank?

Bird shakes his head in frustration.

BIRD

He's officially surrendered his penis.

Justin gives Bird the finger, but smiles as he does so.

DYLAN

Talk some sense into him, Sam. He always listens to you.

Sam stands over Justin and looks down at him like she is a disappointed parent.

SAM

Get up, mopey.

She holds out her hand. Justin takes it and she yanks him back to his feet.

BIRD

I'm going to offer a reward to the first listener who can get you to break this no dating pact.

DYLAN

Aren't all your listeners unemployed guys who live in their parents' basements?

Bird punches Dylan hard in the arm, causing the shorter guy to wince and drop his beer.

BIRD

Let's leave the girls alone, and I'll buy you another beer.

Dylan rubs his arm and follows Bird back into the pub.

Sam stares at Justin in a way that demands answers. He finally looks to the ground to avoid her gaze.

JUSTIN

You think I'm a quitter?

SAM

Only matters what you think.

Justin looks up and offers a faint smile. Despite what she says, her big, blue eyes look like they are judging him.

JUSTIN

You're pretty smart for a kid.

SAM

You're kinda dopey for an old man.

They both smile now at their playful bickering.

Justin walks to the door, holds it open for Sam, and then follows her back inside the pub.

EXT. NYC APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

KATE, 29, beautiful in a jaw dropping movie star kind of way, exits a taxi laden down with designer suitcases. The DOORMAN's eyes light up upon seeing her.

DOORMAN

Miss Kate, we didn't expect you back until tomorrow.

KATE

I caught an early plane.

He tips his hat and opens the door for her. She offers him a beaming smile as a reward and he actually blushes.

INT. KATE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Kate enters and drops the bags by the door. It is a huge apartment with an amazing view of the city.

KATE

Surprise!

Kate grabs a bottle of champagne from the fridge, takes two glasses from the shelf, and follows the sound of music deeper into the apartment.

INT. KATE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Kate enters her bedroom to find her BOYFRIEND in bed with ANOTHER WOMAN.

She drops the bottle of champagne and it shatters all over the floor of the bedroom.

Closing her eyes like she is reliving some horrible nightmare, Kate spins on her heels and exits the room as the boyfriend rushes to get out of bed.

INT. BREAK ROOM - DAY

Kate holds court in the break room as HALF A DOZEN FEMALE COWORKERS hang on her every word.

KATE

He finally left when I called the police, and then I burned everything of his in the apartment.

Kate beams as her coworkers cheer on her exploits. The women look to her like she is some sort of hero.

KATE

He's lucky I didn't throw *him* in the fireplace.

The women cheer. ALICE, 22, Kate's assistant, pokes her head into the room.

ALICE

You have a call.

The women groan and Kate shrugs.

KATE

Remember, true love is out there, so never give up.

The coworkers slowly file out, but not before each one of them gives Kate an enthusiastic hug of support.

When they have all finally left, Alice approaches.

ALICE

You didn't burn anything?
(Kate shakes her head)
You begged him to stay and talk, but he left with her?

(Kate nods)
You're better off without him.

Kate bites on her lower lip and pouts like a little girl who has just been sent to the principal's office.

KATE
How do you know me so well?

ALICE
I've worked for you for nine months and this is your fifth break up.

Alice pours her a cup of coffee and brings it to her along with a chocolate doughnut.

Kate takes a huge bite out of the doughnut, but still pouts.

INT. BOSS' OFFICE - DAY

Kate enters JANET'S office. The walls of the office are covered with framed covers of TRUE LOVE, the magazine for which they work.

Janet looks up from her work with a suspicious smile. Kate plops down in the chair in front of her desk, her face glowing with an ear-to-ear smile.

JANET
What does my star reporter need now and how much is it going to cost?

KATE
I have an excellent idea for next month's article.

Janet raises an eyebrow to that and peers at Kate over her very chic, extremely expensive eyeglasses.

JANET
Didn't I just send you to LA in pursuit of an excellent idea?

Kate waves off that notion and sits Indian style in the big, comfy chair.

KATE

That ended up being just a really good idea.

Janet spins in her seat to admire the framed covers on the wall behind her desk.

JANET

Your excellent ideas do sell more than enough magazines to cover your exorbitant expenses...

Kate smiles, knowing she has Janet right where she wants her.

KATE

My little brother just called...

The suspicious look returns to Janet's face.

JANET

The one who goes to college in Maine?

Kate puts her fingers to her lips to signal for her boss to be quiet and just listen to her.

KATE

A deejay up there is running a contest to find a date for his friend who retired from dating.

Janet looks at Kate like she has two heads.

JANET

You want to write about a Canadian radio contest?

KATE

Maine is part of the United States.

Kate jumps up out of her chair, walks around Janet's desk, and then takes a seat on the desktop.

JANET

Why would the readers of True Love care about this?

KATE

He's given up on dating because he found his true love, but they can't be together. He'd rather spend his life alone and madly in love with her than settle for someone else.

Janet leans back in her chair and ponders. Kate smiles as she watches the gears turn in her boss' head.

JANET

You're rarely wrong. Go check it out.

Kate jumps off the desk and gives Janet a huge hug.