



The Life of the Party

by Cynthia Benjamin

Characters:

Lee
Sandra
Ken
Nell
Peter
Holly
Larry

Scene One: the kitchen of Lee's house. Lee is looking in the refrigerator for a snack. His sister Sandra is getting a soft drink. It's 7:00 P.M.

LEE: You look nice tonight. Where are you guys going?

SANDRA: Mark wants to try the new restaurant on Grant Street.

LEE: Big date, huh?

SANDRA: Come on. Most of the time it's take-out for us. But Mark really aced his midterms. So he wants to celebrate. You know these college types.

LEE: Tell me about them. Remember that guy you went out with two years ago?

SANDRA: *[laughing]* Bobby Frank? What a bozo.

LEE: He was always here for a free meal.

SANDRA: He even showed up at the restaurant once. He wanted dinner on the house. But Dad tossed him out instead. He was drunk out of his mind. *[suddenly embarrassed]*

LEE: That's all right. Don't be embarrassed. Bobby Frank did drink a lot. He was like me. There's one difference. I have a disease. It's called *alcoholism*.

SANDRA: I'm sorry. I guess I said the wrong thing.

LEE: No, you didn't. It's not a big secret or anything. I'm a recovering alcoholic, and I take things day by day.

SANDRA: You've come a long way in just three months.

LEE: Hey, wrapping Dad's car around a tree helped. It was a painful way to get my act together. But the doctors and nurses taught me a few things.

SANDRA: *[smiling]* Like what?

LEE: No beer parties. They're against hospital rules.

[Lee takes an apple and walks slowly to the table. He's limping. Sandra watches him, concerned.]

SANDRA: How's your leg?

LEE: A lot better. I talked to Doctor Ransom today. He said the stiffness will be gone in about six weeks. Hey, I might even be shooting baskets with Dad soon.

[They sit down at the kitchen table.]

SANDRA: You know something? It's nice to have you back. I mean the old you.

LEE: Instead of the drunken clown. Remember? My friends called me the life of the party.

SANDRA: I remember.

LEE: Going to a party was one thing. Staying there was something else. Man, I needed that drink in my hand. Without it, I felt like a major loser. But even my best friends didn't know that.

SANDRA: What about Peter and Ken? Have you talked to them?

LEE: A couple of times since I came home. Peter said there's a party at Ken's house tonight. I guess it's the old crowd.

SANDRA: Why don't you go?

LEE: *[shrugs]* I don't know. I haven't seen them since the night of the accident. *[pointing to his leg]* And until this heals, dancing's out.

SANDRA: So? A lot of the guys won't be dancing. You go to a party to see your friends and hang out.

LEE: And drink. We don't have to pretend the word doesn't exist.

SANDRA: OK. Some of the people at the party will be drinking. And some of them won't. What would you do if you went?

LEE: *[pointing to Sandra's soft drink]* Probably what you're doing. I haven't had any alcohol since the accident. Three months of living sober. I'm not going to screw up now.

SANDRA: *[kissing him]* You know, when you were a little kid, you were always such a pain. What happened?

LEE: I turned into a teenage couch potato. *[getting up from the chair]* Now if you'll excuse me, I'm headed for a night of heavy channel surfing.

SANDRA: They asked you to the party because they wanted to see you again.

LEE: I know.

SANDRA: Mark and I are going out. I know Mom and Dad will be working at the restaurant. It might get a little lonely here.

LEE: I'll let you in on a little secret. When I was boozing, I felt lonelier at parties than I do now by myself. And to tell you the truth, Sandra, it's a little scary for me to think about going. What do I do at a party? How do I act without a drink in my hand?

SANDRA: All the more reason to try a party sober. You might even like it.

Scene Two: the living room of Ken's house. Music is playing. A party is getting underway. There's a table with food and drinks. As Lee walks in, his friends Ken and Nell come up to welcome him.

KEN: *[patting Lee on the back]* Hey, man, it's good to see you. Glad you could make it.

NELL: How're you feeling?

LEE: OK. The leg's healing up fine. I'm going back to school next semester.

NELL: Terrific. We've really missed you. I kept meaning to stop by and say hello. But I wasn't sure when you got out of the hospital.

LEE: About six weeks ago.

NELL: I'm sorry. I didn't know it had been so long. *[looking uncomfortable]* I'm going to get something to eat. See you later.

[She walks to another corner of the room. Ken stays with Lee.]

KEN: Sorry about that.

LEE: That's OK. Some people are better at visiting than others. I don't take it personally.

KEN: I really am glad you made it tonight. Peter wasn't sure if you would be here.

LEE: I figured it would be nice to see everyone again. It's been a long time. Say, where is Peter, anyway?

KEN: He just left.

LEE: *[disappointed]* So early?

KEN: *[laughing]* Come on, man. You know Peter better than that. He was here all day helping me set up the sound system.

LEE: *[trying to brighten up]* Remember when we set up the speakers at your party last year?

KEN: Are you kidding? We could have used your expert help this time around.

LEE: Hey, where is he anyway?

[Ken gets a drink from a nearby table. He tries to avoid Lee's question.]

KEN: *[turning to Lee]* Can I get you anything to drink?

LEE: Whatever doesn't have booze in it. *[Ken hands him a soft drink.]* You still haven't told me. Why did Peter split so early?

KEN: He's picking up Holly. She decided to come at the last minute.

LEE: I haven't seen her since we split up. Guess it was just before the accident. *[He gulps down his drink.]* That same night, in fact.

KEN: I'm sorry, man. When Peter invited you, he didn't know she was coming.

LEE: She always did change her mind at the last minute. *[He slaps Ken on the back.]* Hey, forget it. I was bound to run into her when I got back to school. Might as well be tonight. Anyway, I'd like her to know I'm OK.

[Holly and Peter enter the living room. Holly sees Lee talking to Ken.]

KEN: There's something else you should know.

LEE: *[spotting Holly]* Sure. Later, man.

[Lee walks over to Holly and Peter.]

PETER: Glad you came.

LEE: So am I.

[He and Holly stare at each other]

HOLLY: When are you coming back to school?

LEE: Next semester. I saw Mr. Stein last week about my course schedule. If I go to summer school, I should be caught up by the beginning of next year.

HOLLY: I'm glad to hear it.

PETER: I'm going to check on the sound system. *[to Holly]*
See you later.

[Holly and Lee look at each other uncomfortably.

They both try to talk at the same time.]

HOLLY: When did you leave the—

LEE: My sister said she bumped into you at— *[They look at each other and laugh.]* OK, you first.

HOLLY: I stopped by to visit you in the hospital. But only your family could see you.

LEE: Thanks for trying. My mom told me you had been there. It meant a lot to me.

HOLLY: I'm just so sorry about that accident . . . about everything that happened that night.

LEE: Breaking up with me didn't cause the accident. I did. Of course, I had a lot of help. Six cans of beer made it real easy.

HOLLY: Your sister said you're OK now.

LEE: I've stopped drinking. And there are no hard feelings.
[He looks at Holly for a few seconds.] In fact, if you
have some time, we could go out for coffee. We're still
friends, right?

HOLLY: Sure we are, Lee.

PETER: Hey, Holly, did I bring the CDs?

HOLLY: *[to Peter]* You left them in the car. *[She turns to Lee.]*
I have to tell you something. It's about Peter and me.
[She stops, embarrassed.] We've been going together
for almost two months.

LEE: Oh. Well. *[trying to sound glad]* I think it's great. Best
of luck.

*[Lee turns away from Holly. He walks to the refresh-
ment table. Larry walks over.]*

LARRY: Hi. My name's Larry. I'm Ken's cousin. *[He picks up
a can of beer.]* You look tense, buddy. Have a beer.

LEE: No thanks. I don't drink.

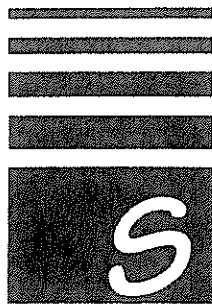
LARRY: Everyone drinks. What harm can a beer do? *[He
holds out a can of beer to Lee.]* There's plenty more
downstairs. Take it.

*[Lee looks at the beer. Then he looks at Holly. She's
standing close to Peter, talking to him.]*

LEE: Well . . .

■■■■ THINKING ABOUT THE PLAY

1. Why do you think Lee's friends called him the life of the party?
2. Why did Lee drink at parties?
3. What does Lee mean when he says, "When I was boozing, I felt lonelier at parties than I do now by myself"?



Stand Up and Be Counted

by Cary Pepper

Characters:

Mike

Joan

Hank

Mr. Zand

Scene: a neighborhood schoolyard. Mike and Joan meet in the middle.

MIKE: Thanks for helping me study for tomorrow's test. The library's open until 6:00, so we'll have plenty of time. Meet you here at 3:00?

JOAN: OK. Did you hear about the video store?

MIKE: Yeah! Someone threw paint all over the windows. I saw it on my way to school this morning.

JOAN: Did you hear why?

MIKE: Uh-uh.

JOAN: Whoever did it slipped a note under the door. It said, "We don't want your kind in our neighborhood."

MIKE: How do you know that?

JOAN: Mr. Zand, my history teacher, told us.

MIKE: The Bowens own that store. What "kind" are they?

JOAN: They're not a *kind*. They're *people*.