

Dogs Are People Too

By

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Cast of Characters

4 Woman & 3 Men

CINDY...40s/50s

BUDDY...Sincere, enthusiastic, lots of energy

ACTOR FIDO plays:

- PAUL...Cindy's son
- MAX...Very old. Jewish/Eastern European
- REGGIE...Black belt in karate. Protective.

ACTRESS PRINCESS plays:

- JAMIE...Cindy's daughter
- ZUZU...high-strung and nervous
- BRENDA...Reggie's friend

ACTRESS LADY plays:

- KELLI...A neighbor
- TAMMY...Dog walker
- GRETEL...A teenager
- DASH.....Very organized

ACTRESS SUNNY plays:

- PENELOPE...A very well-styled neighbor
- JULIE...Groomer
- DIANE...Coach/trainer
- PAUL'S /GIRLFRIEND WIFE

ACTOR BANDIT plays:

- FRANK...A neighbor
- SVEN... Very fit. Nordic.
- TYLER....Dash's friend
- BALBOA... A soccer player. Spanish

PLACE

Cindy's home and a few other locations

TIME

The present

ACT ONE
SCENE ONE

A dimly lit living room, very tidy. To one side is the bedroom, also tidy. There is a door leading to a bathroom and a passage to the kitchen. Keys are heard in the front door and then Cindy enters with small overnight case in hand. She is wearing a brand new sweatshirt with the name of a university emblazoned on it. She turns on a light, drops her keys in a small bowl by the front door. She takes a moment to look around the quiet living room.

CINDY

Wow.

She exits to the bedroom, puts her bag on the bed and returns to the living room. She sits down and listens to the quiet.

So it's done.

A moment

GOD, it's so quiet!

She grabs the remote and turns on the television.

ANNOUNCER'S VOICE

-with the threat level at the highest alert since the terrorist attack, Congress has decided to implement the One Jerk, One Family policy. Only one person per family is allowed to have a differing opinion. This will include-

She changes the channel.

COMMERCIAL

-side effects include nausea, loss of hair, loss of appetite, loss of personality, loss of friends and family, loss of humor, increased sense of helplessness, increased sensitivity to morons, feelings of failure, and inexplicable weight gain in the parts of your body you already hate-

She changes the channel.

MALE MOVIE ACTOR

-How could I possibly be attracted to a woman my own age? You must be an agent for some bad, other country that only has old, somewhat attractive but still wrinkled women-

She turns off the television. The phone rings and she lunges for it. Checking the caller ID, she answers

CINDY

Hi, sweetie! The flight was, well, you know me and flying....How was orientation?...Great...Yes, yes...I'm so proud of you!...Yes....Okay...I love you so much....Okay....E-mail your brother sometime...okay, or text or snapgram....oh...well, whatever you two do....Okay....I love you! Be careful. Remember, if anything....let me say it....always know your exits and run, hide, fight...but.....Okay....Go. Be bold....Bye. I love you.

Light change. Jamie, Cindy's daughter enters and Paul, Cindy's son. Throughout the following, Cindy just watches. Jamie and Paul behave as seven and ten year olds.

JAMIE

PAULIE! You're a stinky, stupid, awful dog! I hate, hate, hate you.

PAUL

I'M stinky? That Taylor Swift perfume smells like POOP! Poop in a jar.

JAMIE

(Yelling towards the kitchen)

MOM! Paulie just said a bad word!

PAUL

Poop is totally not a bad word. It is the result of a bodily function that comes out of a butt smelling like Taylor-Crap-Swift's butt!

JAMIE

MOM!! He said another! *(To Paul)* You are in so much trouble.

PAUL

Oh, bite me.

JAMIE

Well, you asked.

Jamie lunges at Paul and they begin scuffling on the floor. After a moment they stop. They are now older.

(Now much calmer)

I'm telling you, I can take you.

PAUL

No way.

JAMIE

Dude. I've been taking Tae Kwon Do for seven years. You think I can't take you?

PAUL

I so think you can't take me.

JAMIE

I'll take you down.

PAUL

Take me down? You think you're the boss, don't you?

JAMIE

Oh, I know I'm the boss. Go for it.

PAUL

I don't want to hurt you.

JAMIE

Aw. You're so sweet.

Paul lunges. Jamie swiftly nails him in the stomach with a side kick. He goes down, gasping. Jamie sits down next to him on the floor. Paul has pulled out a letter and is now laughing and sort of crying.

PAUL

I got it. I got the fellowship. I'm going to LONDON!!! MOM! I GOT IT!!!

Jamie and Paul start screaming. They both leap to their feet, run all over the living room, jumping and screaming on the couch and all over. Paul runs off stage.

Now it is just Jamie jumping on the couch, holding the same letter.

JAMIE

Mom, Mom, Mom! I got in! I got in! I got in!

Now dancing all over the living room, chanting.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

I am going to college. I am going to college. I am going to college. And I got some money. They are giving me money. I am going to college. I am going to college.

She continues to sing and bogie as she exits off stage.

Silence.

CINDY

Well, this is just great. I've become a stereotype.

She stands and begins straighten up the living room.

I'm an empty nester. Hi. I'm Cindy, a middle aged empty nester. Oh my god, I'm a middle aged empty nester talking to herself! Oh, this is bad. No, Cindy. New phase. I got this. Free time. I'll study...something. After work. Yeah. But first, I think I need to stop talking to myself.

END SCENE ONE

SCENE TWO

Keys in door. Cindy enters, coming home from work. She turns on lights, tosses keys in bowl, and looks around at the empty living room. Blackout

Cindy walks across downstage, looking at her smart phone. Kelli appears coming from the other direction. She is also looking at her smart phone. They nod at each other as they pass. Blackout

Keys in door. Cindy enters, coming home from work. She turns on lights, tosses keys in bowl, and looks around at the empty living room. Blackout

Cindy walks across downstage, looking at her smart phone. Kelli appears coming from the other direction. She is also looking at her smart phone. They nod at each other as they pass. As Kelli exits, Cindy stops and turns around and looks after her. Blackout

Keys in door. Cindy enters. She turns on lights. She is struggling under an enormous number of huge shopping bags from Macy's, Neiman Marcus, TJ MAXX, and other stores. She awkwardly tosses keys in bowl and staggers to the bedroom. Blackout

Cindy walks across downstage, looking at her smart phone. Kelli appears coming from the other direction. She is also looking at her smart phone. They nod at each other as they pass. As Kelli exits, Cindy stops and turns around.

CINDY

I like...um...your boots.

But Kelli is long gone. Blackout

Keys in door. Cindy enters, staggering under the weight of a huge multi-tiered cake. She turns on lights, tosses keys in bowl. She places the cake on the coffee table and exits quickly to the kitchen. She returns with a knife and fork. Blackout

Cindy is now on the couch. She is in a Snuggie, with large cartoon character-type slippers on her feet. The television is on.

ANNOUNCER'S VOICE

Next on *Living Large in LA*, Potawatomi Kardishian confronts Peru about her relationship with Paris.

Cindy, mesmerized, brings a can of whipped cream to her mouth and shoots a large portion in.

Meanwhile, Portland causes quite the stir at Milan Fashion Week!

Cindy now raises her other hand. It holds a large can of Cheez Whiz. She ejects a large portion in.

All this launches the *Living Large in LA* viewer marathon starting at midnight tonight!

CINDY

Wow. Cool.

Cindy reaches between her legs and pulls up a large bottle of chocolate syrup. She takes the bottle of whipped cream in her other hand and stares at them both. She then tries to cautiously navigate getting them both to either corner of her mouth so she can consume them simultaneously.

She then freezes in horror.

Oh my god. This has to end. I've become an animal.

END SCENE TWO

SCENE THREE

Keys in the door can be heard.

CINDY
(Off stage)

Okay. Okay! Hold on! Let me...wait just a second.

Cindy enters, with Buddy right behind her, but he immediately pushes past her. Buddy has on a jacket with a hood, a few layers of loose fitting clothing, and unkempt hair.

BUDDY

Oh my god! This is INCREDIBLE!

Throughout his following lines, Buddy races about.

Look! LOOK! Look at this couch!

He jumps on the couch.

This is so bouncy!

He bounces, knocking cushions to the floor. He throws his jacket on the floor.

It's so incredibly bouncy! I love this couch!

He pulls off one of his sweatshirts and throws it on the floor.

You have WINDOWS!

He races to the windows.

Look! LOOK! Cindy! There are people out there!

Yelling outside, through the windows.

Hi! Hi! Hi! Do you see me? I see you! I'm here! Wow! You guys look awesome! You want to come over? I'm Buddy!! Hi!

CINDY
Buddy. Buddy! Don't spit on the windows. Come here.

Buddy races over to Cindy and gives her a huge hug.

BUDDY

I am so happy. I love you so much.

CINDY
(Laughing)

I love you too. Now calm down.

BUDDY

I CAN'T!! It's all so incredibly exciting and wonderful and incredible and I have to pee!!!!!!

CINDY

Oh boy! Okay. Come here. Right now.

Cindy drags Buddy to the bathroom.

BUDDY
(Off stage)

Oh! Okay! Okay! *(A moment)* Ahhhhhhhh.

Cindy returns. She looks at the disheveled room and giggles.

CINDY

Oh boy.

She exits to the kitchen and returns with a bottle of water. She calls to Buddy.

Buddy? You done? Are you thirsty?

Buddy returns. He gives her another big hug.

BUDDY

You're still here. I love you.

CINDY

I love you too. Are you thirsty? Do you want some water?

BUDDY

Do I?! YEAH!

Buddy unscrews the cap and, holding the bottle above his head; he opens his mouth and pours it in. He gets the majority of the water on his clothes and Cindy.

CINDY

Okay. We'll have to work on that. Give me the bottle.

Buddy drops the bottle on the floor and flops down on the couch. Cindy exits, talking.

Buddy, you can't just drop everything when you're done with it, okay? We're going to have our meals and snacks in the same place, right?

She returns with a roll of paper towels. Buddy is now fast asleep on the couch, snoring. He begins twitching and smiling as he sleeps.

What did I get myself into?

END SCENE THREE

SCENE FOUR

Very early in the morning. Cindy is fast asleep in bed. Buddy is on his hands and knees right over her chest and head, staring down at her. A long moment passes as he stares at her. Then he speaks.

BUDDY

Cindy? Cindy? Cindy? Cindy? Cindy? Cindy? Cindy? Cindy?

Cindy mumbles, turning to her side.

CINDY

Buddy, go away.

Buddy flops down on her side, on his tummy.

BUDDY

Cindy. Cindy. Cindy. Cindy. Cindy. Cindy. Cindy. Cindy. Cindy.

CINDY

Buddy! What?

BUDDY

I love you.

CINDY

Oh god. I love you too.

BUDDY

I love you so much. I mean, I really, really, really love you.

CINDY

Oh boy. What time is it?

She raises her head to look at the clock but Buddy is in the way.

Buddy, move a little-

BUDDY

-It's time to PLAY! AWESOME!

He jumps to his feet and begins jumping up and down on the bed.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

Cindy and I are going to PLAY! I love this day! This is the best day every, anywhere, ever, ever made and we are going to do things! Great things! Things that make for a great, great day with the best person ever and that's CINDY!!!!!!

He then flops back down on all fours and stares into her face.

And I have to pee really, really, REALLY bad.

CINDY

Okay. Just give me a second, okay Buddy?

BUDDY

Okay! Sure.

He pulls all the blankets off her and the bed. He then sits on the pile and stares at her. She slowly stands up and he slowly stands up, mirroring her every move. She walks to get her robe and he follows her very closely.

CINDY

(Snapping)

Sit down!

Buddy quickly goes back to the pile of blankets and sits. He then hangs his head. He then curls up in a ball. Cindy, her robe now on, walks back to him and stares down at him.

Sorry I snapped.

Buddy leaps up, embraces her in such a big hug they fall back on the bed.

Okay. Okay.

BUDDY

(Into her eyes)

I love you.

CINDY

Okay. I love you too. Go get your jacket.

BUDDY

YES!

He races into the living room as Cindy quickly pulls in sweat pants and a jacket. Buddy finds his jacket and stands in one place jumping up and down and waiting for Cindy.

(Quietly) Cindy. Cindy. Cindy. Cindy. Cindy. Cindy. Cindy. Cindy. Cindy.

Cindy enters, sees him jumping, and laughs.

CINDY

First...

She opens the bathroom door and he races in. After a long moment, Buddy is heard.

BUDDY

Ahhhhhhhhh.

He returns and Cindy goes into the bathroom. A flushing is heard.

CINDY

(Off stage)

Buddy, am I always going to have to flush after you?

BUDDY

What's flushing? I mean, what's the point? I don't get it. Can we go? Let's go!

Cindy returns.

CINDY

Never mind.

She helps him on with his jacket.

This isn't going to be long. I need coffee and a shower and then I have to...Buddy, quit pulling.

Buddy only has one sleeve in the jacket but he is already heading for the door, pulling Cindy with him.

BUDDY

Sorry, sorry, sorry but let's go. There might be great things happening out there and we're missing it. That can't happen.

Cindy is now bending over, tying her shoes.

CINDY

Just let me get my shoes on-

Buddy is now on his hands and knees, his nose right in her face.

BUDDY

-We're missing everything! CINDY!

CINDY

Buddy, stop!

BUDDY

But I love you so much and I don't want you to miss life, OKAY? It's life out there.

He goes to the window

LIFE.

Back to Cindy, growing more thoughtful and serious

And life is amazing and tasty and breezy and cold and hot and wet and green and noisy and busy and we have to experience it together. Right now. It's all I want from life. Your happiness. You, experiencing all this incredibly great stuff and we'll do it together. That's all. And then we'll eat food. And drink water. And sleep. Sleep so much. Together. And you know how good peeing and pooping feels? Really, how good that is? It's so freeing. And every day is different. Every teeny tiny thing changes all the time.

Still quiet, taking her by the shoulders

It is always changing and that is so amazing and I don't want you to miss one, single thing because I love you.

CINDY

Okay.

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Buddy jumps to his feet, fist pump in the air.

BUDDY

YES! Let's rock!!!!

They exit

END SCENE FOUR

SCENE FIVE

Cindy and Buddy are now downstage/outside.

BUDDY

This tree! Do you see this tree? It's so tree-ish! And it smells so good. Do you smell that? How can you not want to stick your nose right up to it and smell it? I wonder about you sometimes, Cindy. I really do.

Kelli enters, looking at her smart phone as she walks.

Who's that?

He races towards Kelli but Cindy just manages to stop him from giving Kelli a big hug by grabbing the hood of his jacket.

CINDY

Whoa, Buddy. *(To Kelli)* I'm so sorry!

KELLI

Oh, wow. It's okay. What's his name? He's so cute!

BUDDY

Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you. You are so, so, so cute too.

CINDY

Buddy, hush! He's Buddy.

Kelli grabs Buddy by the front of his jacket and looks into his face.

KELLI

You are ADORABLE!

BUDDY

I know I am! So are you!

KELLI

(To Cindy)

He's a sweetie.

BUDDY

(To Cindy)

She's so CUTE!!

CINDY

Buddy! HUSH!

Buddy folds his hands in front of him.

KELLI

Well, have fun!

Smiling, she rumples Buddy's hair and then exits.

CINDY

Okay, Buddy. We should get back.

Frank and Penelope enter. Penelope sports a very coiffed hairstyle, very high heels, a fur-trimmed coat (cuffs, lapels, and hemline), a fashionable purse, and a great deal of elaborate jewelry. She freezes, staring Buddy down.

FRANK

Morning.

CINDY

Morning.

FRANK

This is Penelope.

CINDY

Buddy.

Penelope and Buddy circle each other.

FRANK

He's adorable. Penelope is usually friendly. Usually.

CINDY

Buddy's just a kid.

FRANK

Yeah. You can tell by-

BUDDY

(Somewhat meekly)

-I'm the boss here. Right?

PENELOPE

NO!

She whacks him up the backside of his head.

FRANK

Penelope!

Frank grabs the strap of her purse. Cindy holds Buddy's hood.

BUDDY

Okay! Okay! Okay! You're the boss. You're the boss.

He kneels

I bow down in your presence.

PENELOPE

(With an eye roll, to Frank)

Kids these days. *(To Buddy)* Get up.

She pulls Buddy up by his jacket and begins brushing him off.

Oh my goodness, you're a mess. And you stink.

Glancing at Cindy.

Savage.

BUDDY

(To Penelope)

You are AMAZING.

He tosses Penelope over his shoulder and spins her around.

Penelope laughs.

CINDY

Buddy!

FRANK

It's okay. It's okay.

PENELOPE

Stop!

Buddy stops and puts her down.

We're done here.

Penelope exits.

FRANK

Okay! I guess we're done. Nice meeting you.

CINDY

Nice meeting you and-

PENELOPE

(Loudly, from off stage)

-FRANK!

FRANK

Gotta run! Her highness beckons.

Both Cindy and Buddy look after them.

CINDY

Geez but Penelope was prettier than I am.

BUDDY

I didn't want to say anything. But yeah. Wow.

CINDY

I think I need to get you cleaned up a little.

BUDDY

Okay! An adventure! Yes, yes, yes!

CINDY

And Buddy-

BUDDY

Yes, yes, yes. I love when you talk to me. You are so pretty and smart and wonderful.

CINDY

Okay. Hush.

BUDDY

And perfect beyond compare.

CINDY

Stop!

Buddy stops.

You're going to meet Tammy tomorrow. She's going to be taking you out. While I'm at work. There will be other kids too. So you'll need to be good. Okay?

BUDDY

Cindy?

CINDY

Yes?

BUDDY

After much thought, I have decided that I need to pee AND poop. What are your thoughts on that?

CINDY

Let's get to it.

BUDDY

YES! Another adventure!!!

END SCENE FIVE

SCENE SIX

Buddy is asleep on the couch. There is the sound of keys. Buddy leaps up and runs to the door.

BUDDY

Cindy! Cindy! Cindy! Cindy! Cindy!

Tammy enters.

TAMMY

Hey, fella! Are you Buddy?

BUDDY

My god, you're a genius! Yes, I most certainly am Buddy.

TAMMY

Hi, I'm Tammy. And you are so adorable. Do you want to go outside?

She grabs his hoodie and begins trying to get him into it.

BUDDY

(Bouncing up and down)

Tammy. Tammy. Tammy. Tammy.

Tammy pulls a "fun size" candy bar out of her pocket and unwraps it.

TAMMY

Buddy, you want this?

BUDDY

YES!

TAMMY

Then hold still so I can put this on.

Buddy freezes. Tammy slips the hoodie on and then gives him the candy bar.

Okay. Let's go.

BUDDY

Tammy, why do you smell like all good things in the world? Like fun and bacon and tennis balls and sunshine and barbeque and chocolate and garlic and grass and happiness and joy?

TAMMY

Come on, Buddy.

They exit and come downstage. There they join Max. Max is very old. He wears a hat, sweater, baggy pants. He speaks in an Eastern European/Jewish accent.

Hey, Max. This is Buddy. Buddy, Max.

MAX

(To Tammy)

Oh boy.

BUDDY

Max!? You are awesome! We are so going to be totally best friends!

MAX

Oiy.

TAMMY

Buddy, go easy on Max, ok? His hips aren't so good.

BUDDY

Absolutely.

Buddy starts running in circles around Max. Tammy and Max exchange a long look.

Hey. Hey. Max. Can I be the boss? I tried to be the boss with Penelope but that didn't work out so good so I was wondering if maybe, maybe, with you and me, I could be the boss? Huh? Whatdaya think?

MAX

(Shrugging)

Sure. Whatever. Be the boss. Less for me to do.

TAMMY

Great. That's settled. Let's go get ZuZu.

BUDDY

More!?! There's going to more of us? I don't see how this day could get better.

MAX

Or worse. It could get worse you know, kid. Have ya thought of that? What do you know about this ZuZu, eh? Nothing! You kids, you know nothing.

BUDDY

So? Tell me! Tell me, Max. Please!

TAMMY

Yeah, Max. Don't be a grouch. Tell him.

Tammy exits.

MAX

Ah, ZuZu. She's alright. A little needy but with a name like that, what do ya expect?

BUDDY

So the day IS going to get even better.

MAX

Maybe. Maybe not. See? You don't know. Be ready for anything.

Tammy and ZuZu return. ZuZu is high-strung and quivers a lot. She is extremely buttoned up in a woolen sweater, turtleneck, and long pants. She wears glasses and has her hair pulled back in a tight ponytail. Tammy has her arm around ZuZu's shoulders.

TAMMY

(Gently)

ZuZu, this is Buddy.

ZUZU

Oh dear. I don't know about this. I don't know at all about this. This is not what I expected.

Buddy stands still and tall.

BUDDY

Well, hello! Hello, ZuZu. I am Buddy.

Buddy makes a grand sweeping bow.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

I have decided I shall defend you and your honor to the death. And did you know that Tammy has candy?

TAMMY

Buddy! Well done! See, ZuZu? It's going to be okay. He's very nice.

ZuZu takes a long look at everyone. She finally looks at Tammy.

ZUZU

Did he eat all the Almond Joys?

BUDDY

Tammy! Give ZuZu some candy!! Can't you see she's starving?

MAX

Oiy veh.

Tammy gives everyone a piece of candy.

TAMMY

Okay kids. Let's get a move on.

END SCENE SIX

SCENE SEVEN

Buddy is staring out the window.

BUDDY

Hey. HEY! Penelope! Look at me. I've got new friends. Do you know Max and ZuZu and Tammy?

His head is turning as he shouts at her as she and Frank must be walking by.

You should hang out with us. Tomorrow Tammy is taking us to the park. Yes, I said it. The park. Will you be there? Everybody goes to the park. Penelope? Penelope? Where you going? Okay. Bye!

He keeps looking. After a moment, he puts his head on the ledge and keeps staring outside. Then he slowly sits up. Then he stands.

Oh no.

He begins to hop around the room, legs squeezed together.

Oh boy. Oh no. Oh Cindy, Cindy, Cindy. Please come home. Hurry up. Ouch. Ouch. Hurry, hurry, hurry.

He is hopping and looking out the window.

No, no, no, no, no, no.

He spies her.

CINDY!!!!!!

He runs to the front door and jumps up and down in front of it.

Hurry, hurry, hurry. I don't know how much longer I can be good.

Keys in the lock.

Help me! CINDY!

Cindy enters.

CINDY

Hey, Buddy, I'm home. It's okay. Here I am.

BUDDY

It is so incredibly good to see you. Thank you for saving me.

CINDY

Oh, honey, you must be lonely. Here. Let me just get my coat off-

BUDDY

-Are you kidding me? Look at me!

CINDY

Buddy, I know. Just give me a second.

Buddy hurls himself against the bathroom door and collapses, moaning, against it.

OH! OH! Yes, okay. Oh, I'm sorry!

Cindy opens the door and Buddy battle-crawls into the bathroom. After a moment-

BUDDY
(Off stage)

Ahhhhh.

Buddy returns. Cindy has grabbed his hoodie.

WHAT?! You're kidding me! This is amazing! Is it the park? It's the park, isn't it?

CINDY

Yeah. Um...sure...we're going to the park. Just get this on.

She helps the now-bouncing Buddy into the hoodie.

BUDDY

Oh boy! Oh boy! Oh Boy. Maybe my friends will be there. Oh geez, maybe NEW friends will be there. How can you just stand there, woman? Get a move on!

CINDY

I'm coming.

They exit and crossing downstage, they come to an entrance with a counter inside.

BUDDY

This isn't the park.

CINDY

Come on in, Buddy.

BUDDY

This isn't the park. You said "park." I heard you. Distinctly. "Park." There is no park here.

CINDY

Just come in. It's fine.

Julie enters behind the counter.

JULIE

Hello. Welcome to *Clip, Snip & Dip*.

BUDDY
(To Cindy)

This place smells bad.

CINDY

Buddy, hush.

BUDDY

This place...this place...it smells like...like...DEATH!

Buddy begins to tremble.

CINDY
(To Julie)

Hi, I'm Cindy. Buddy here has a five o'clock appointment.

BUDDY

WHAT?! *(To Cindy)* You lie! This is not the park! This is the...the...the...BAD PLACE.

He begins trying to back out.

JULIE

Oh, Buddy. Oh honey, it's okay. Come here.

BUDDY

(To Cindy)

You have brought me to an assassin and you just stand there? What kind of animal are you??

Buddy nervously pulls out a bottle of water to take a drink and, because of his shaking; it begins leaking all over the floor.

JULIE

Okay. *(To Cindy)* First haircut?

CINDY

Oh man. Yes. Oh, I'm so sorry. Buddy! What are you doing?

BUDDY

I'm doing what any sane creature would do when faced with evil incarnate. I'm trembling with fear and loathing.

CINDY

(Firmly)

Buddy, enough.

Julie has come over with a roll of paper towels.

JULIE

Don't worry. It happens all the time. Can you just back up a little?

Cindy pulls Buddy back.

A good twenty percent of our first timers are leakers. He's not fighter, is he?

Julie is now mopping the water up with the paper towel

CINDY

No. Oh no.

Taking Buddy's face in her hands.

You have to be good, okay, Buddy? You have to do this.

BUDDY

Why?

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Because your hair is tangled-
CINDY

So?
BUDDY

You need a shave-
CINDY

Why?
BUDDY

You kind of stink.
CINDY

You don't smell like trees and sunshine, either, Cindy! How about that!? Huh? HUH?!

It's just what has to happen.
CINDY

But you said "park."
BUDDY
(Quietly, miserable)

Soon. First haircut. Then park.
CINDY

Cindy gently brings Buddy to Julie.

Come on.
JULIE

Go with Julie.
CINDY

Buddy, head down, goes with Julie. As they exit, he glances over his shoulder.

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BUDDY

You said "park."

END SCENE SEVEN

SCENE EIGHT

Penelope sits on a bench, filing her nails. ZuZu enters.

PENELOPE
(Barely glancing at ZuZu)

ZuZu.

ZuZu jumps back about three feet, screaming.

ZUZU
(Running around in a tight circle)

AUGH! Oh no. Oh no!

Penelope rolls her eyes.

PENELOPE
Really, ZuZu? We see each other every day.

ZUZU
Well, you never know, I suppose. Do you? You don't.

PENELOPE
Don't what?

ZUZU
Ever know for sure.

PENELOPE
Ever know...what? WHAT?

ZUZU
If someone is bad. Or a kidnapper. Or bully or murderer or death-eater or alligator or spider or...or...

PENELOPE
-Kate Spade knock-off?

ZUZU
WHAT!? Who's that?! Oh god, oh no. Where? Is she here?

A ball rolls across the stage. ZuZu backs away like it's a bomb.

PENELOPE

(Calling to offstage)

Frank, I don't do sports. You know this.

Frank enters.

FRANK

Hey, ZuZu. How you doing?

ZuZu scampers off as Max enters from the other direction.

Everybody's here today. How ya doing, Max?

Max shrugs and sits next to Penelope.

Wanna play ball?

Max begins to wheeze and cough.

I guess not. Okay.

Frank pulls out a smart phone and, seeking better reception, exits offstage.

PENELOPE

Max, you are such a faker. So, how's the family?

MAX

Oiy. Little Katie? *(He points offstage)* Got her heart broken again. From where I sit, if she didn't leave it out so regular, it wouldn't get stepped on so much, but it's not like she listens to me. Although, of course, all last night, she's up, and whose shoulder is she crying on? "Oh Maxie, you're the only one who understands me. You're the only one who really listens." Oh, I listen and listen.

He pulls his jacket off. The entire left side of his shirt is soaking wet.

I'll catch my death from listening to her.

PENELOPE

Oh, you old fart. You love it.

MAX

She's a good kid. She's no genius but a good heart. The heart's a little banged up but whatchya gonna do?

Penelope straightens up, spying something in the distance.

Who's that?

SVEN comes jogging on stage. He is wearing a sleek, formfitting running suit.

SVEN

(Jogging in place)

(Swedish accent) Hello. My name is Sven.

Penelope rises

PENELOPE

(Extending her hand)

Penelope.

They shake hands and then circle each other once.

SVEN

Sven. It is a pleasure to make your acquaintance. Would you care to join me for a lap around the park? My associate has grown winded and also felt required to engage in some non-athletic communication.

PENELOPE

Oh, Sven. I don't do *(gesturing to his body)* this. Running and sweating and...panting. I'm a powerwalker. But I greatly admire your commitment to being both fit and stylish.

SVEN

Your admiration is noted. I find your park and its grounds well-tended and suitable for my constitutional. As someone new to the area, may I ask, are these superior conditions consistent throughout the year?

MAX

Vat the cry-eye is he talking about?

PENELOPE

Hush, Max!

MAX

Alright, alright. Have it your way. But Sven, you know, all this mishegoss you're doing there might not be too good for you, young man.

SVEN

I beg to differ, sir. Vigorous activity every day is the key to cardiovascular health and fitness. Along with a gluten free, low sodium, organic diet, which goes without saying. My heart rate has lowered so I must resume my interval training. Excuse me.

He runs off.

PENELOPE

That is one good looking son of a bitch.

MAX

(Looking offstage)

Hello? What have we got here?

Cindy and Buddy enter. Buddy is wearing a suit jacket, tie, sweater vest, new shoes and his hair has been slicked back.

CINDY

Buddy, go say hi to your friends.

Buddy crosses to Penelope, kneels down briefly and rises.

PENELOPE

(Circling Buddy)

Why does Julie at Clip & Snip always have to go with the sweater vest?!

MAX

Oh, hush. The kid looks fine. You clean up good. Very nice.

ZuZu enters, running.

ZUZU

Help! Help! He's chasing me!

She runs offstage as Sven enters.

SVEN

Wait! I wish to inform you how exercise can reduce anxiety!

Sergel/DOGS ARE PEOPLE TOO

*Sven runs after ZuZu. ZuZu can be heard, screaming "No! No!
I'm not anxious!!!!"*

BUDDY

I'll save you, ZuZu!

Before Cindy can stop him, Buddy bolts offstage.

CINDY

Buddy, no!

The sound of squealing tires can be heard.

END SCENE EIGHT

SCENE NINE

Cindy enters, Buddy behind her, a large plastic cone around his collar and his arm in a sling. He has a large stitched-up cut on his forehead.

CINDY

Come here, sweetie. Lie down. You've had quite the day.

Buddy just stands, head hanging.

Everybody's fine. Sven, ZuZu...well, it confirmed all of ZuZu's expectations of what the world represents but aside from that. Come on. Lie down. I'll get you some water.

Cindy exits as Buddy gingerly walks over the couch and crawls onto it. A small whimper escapes his lips as he settles into the cushions. He flips back and forth trying to get comfortable. He then reaches up, trying to get his hand to his forehead but the cone blocks it. Cindy enters, with a bottle of water and a candy bar.

BUDDY! NO! Don't scratch at the stitches!

She lunges towards him and pulls the hand down.

BUDDY

But they itch!

CINDY

No.

BUDDY

Yes!

CINDY

No! Okay, here's some water.

She gingerly tries to pour some water into his mouth. After a sip, Buddy shakes his head, spraying them both with water.

Oh, Buddy.

BUDDY

Sorry, sorry, sorry.

CINDY

(Rising)

Oh, that's okay. One more thing-

BUDDY

-what? What more thing? I've had enough "more" today. I want less. You always say, "Less is more." Can we please have less of today?

Cindy has gotten a tube of ointment from her purse.

That does not look like candy.

CINDY

Buddy, just hold still. It will only take a second.

Buddy rises.

BUDDY

Julie at Snip, Clip and Surrender to My Power said that and then cut a lot of stuff off me! With very noisy clippers!

CINDY

Buddy, sit down.

Buddy just shakes his head.

Buddy.

He continues to shake his head.

BUDDY! SIT!

He does. She puts some ointment on her finger and tries to get it on his forehead but Buddy begins moving his head back and forth.

Hold still.

BUDDY

Nope. Nope. Bad idea. Nope.

CINDY

Yes.

BUDDY

Nope. Nope. Nope.

Cindy crawls onto the couch and climbs onto Buddy's back. After numerous contortions, Buddy continuing to repeat "Nope. Nope. Nope" and thrashing his head back and forth, and Cindy saying, "Yes. Yes. Yes" and a few "Buddy, hold still," Cindy ends up sitting on top of Buddy on the floor. She finally slathers the ointment on his forehead. She falls back on the floor and Buddy sits up.

BUDDY

Wow. That feels good. Thank you, Cindy. I love you.

CINDY

You better.

They both remain on the floor for a moment.

BUDDY

Now I have to pee.

CINDY

Okay. Come here. Be careful.

Buddy rises gingerly. Coming to the doorway to the bathroom, he misjudges the distance and the cone and whacks the cone against the doorway. He falls back onto Cindy and they both fall on the floor.

Ouch!

BUDDY

Do you want me to put ointment on you, Cindy?

CINDY

No, no. I'm fine. Just go. Go to the bathroom.

BUDDY

Today is not the best day ever. I didn't think that could ever, ever happen in a million, trillion years but today? Not terrific.

CINDY

I completely agree.

He curls up in her lap and she begins breaking off pieces of the candy bar and gently feeding them to Buddy. He then remembers he has to pee, jumps up, knocks Cindy back, the candy bar goes flying and he whacks his cone against the doorjamb again before making it into the bathroom.

CINDY (CONT'D)

Yup. Not the best day ever.

END SCENE NINE

SCENE TEN

Diane enters, pulling a few folding chairs. She opens them to begin setting up when Cindy enters.

CINDY

Hi. Are you-

DIANE

-Diane. Yes. Cindy?

CINDY

Yes.

They shake hands.

So, so nice to meet you.

Cindy continues to pump Diane's hand.

Really, I appreciate you fitting us into the class.

DIANE

Oh, plenty of room. Where's Buddy?

CINDY

(Crossing to where she entered)

Right outside. *(Calling)* Buddy! Come here and meet Diane.

DIANE

So, you said some impulse control? A little ADD?

CINDY

Huh? What? Oh, yes! *(Calling)* Buddy? Oh geez, where is he? Oh, god. I'm terrible. Oh. There he is. He's hugging a tree.

DIANE

Boundary issues?

CINDY

Buddy! Get over here!

Buddy comes bounding in. His cone is gone and he is back in his regular hoodie and loose pants.

BUDDY

Hi! Are you Diane? I'm Buddy! You are awesome!

He goes to hug Diane but she angles away so he can't embrace. At the same time, she pulls a large bag of M&Ms out of her sweatshirt pouch.

DIANE

You like M&Ms, Buddy?

BUDDY

I love M&Ms!

Diane picks a single M&M out of the bag and extends it in her right hand to Buddy's right hand.

DIANE

Here.

Buddy takes it. Diane then quickly grabs his right hand and shakes it firmly.

And it's so nice to meet you, Buddy.

Buddy, confused, shakes along with her. When she releases, he quickly pops the M&M into his mouth. He then goes to hug her again.

BUDDY

Thank you. You are really awesome and wonderful!

She angles away and then offers up another M&M in her hand. Buddy takes it and then she shakes his hand again.

Okay?

He turns to Cindy and whispers.

She's a little strange, Cindy.

CINDY

It's okay, Buddy.

Diane hands Cindy a small plastic bag with M&Ms

DIANE

Why don't you grab one of these chairs and sit down while I set up for the rest of the class.

Dash and Tyler enter. Dash is wearing a plaid/flannel work shirt; she also has a pair of work gloves on, and perhaps a tool belt.

DASH

(A long howl)

Noooooooooooo! Nothing is set up! This place is a mess! NO!!!!

Dash runs over the pile of chairs, grabs the chairs one by one and furiously begins setting them up.

TYLER

Dash. No! Wait! You don't have to do this. Diane will-

DASH

(Glaring at Tyler)

You don't understand. If these chairs aren't exactly like last week, very, very bad things will happen. Look! See? *(Pointing to Cindy and Buddy)* They shouldn't be here! *(Yelling at Cindy and Buddy)* You shouldn't be here. You weren't here last week! You don't belong! Diane! Did you know about this?

BUDDY

What's happening?

Diane jiggles the bag of M&Ms. Dash freezes at the sound.

DIANE

Dash. Come here.

Diane stands at one of the upright and placed chairs.

Come on.

She nods to Dash and Tyler. Dash slowly comes over, still shooting looks at Cindy and Buddy.

DIANE (CONT'D)

You want an M&M?

Dash nods. She pulls one out and holds it up over the chair. Dash's eyes follow it. She then slowly lowers it. As Dash follows it, she ends up sitting in the chair. Then Diane gives Dash the M&M.

Excellent. Now I'm going to finish setting up and Tyler is going to stay with you. Because you don't have to organize the room. That's my job. Not yours. Mine. Okay?

DASH

Just make sure all the chairs are lined up. In a line! Not a zig zag. A line. Like last week.

DIANE

You need to trust a little. Nothing bad will happen. The chairs will be fine. You will be fine.

Another M&M to Dash. She then nods to Tyler, gives him a plastic bag of M&Ms and he stands next to Dash. She walks to another folding chair to set up, coming closer to Buddy and Cindy to do it.

DASH

Diane! Be careful!

Dash stands up but Tyler then quickly pulls out an M&M and puts it in front of Dash. Dash looks at the M&M, looks at Tyler, looks at Diane, who nods to Tyler and Dash. Tyler slowly lowers the M&M so Dash has to sit down. Tyler then gives the M&M to Dash.

DIANE

(To Buddy)

And I am very impressed with you too, Buddy.

An M&M to Buddy, with the handshake routine they are establishing.

BUDDY

(To Cindy)

This place is so weird but I love it!

Buddy sits, with Cindy next to him. Reggie enters. Reggie is wearing a karate uniform and black belt. The black belt is tied and positioned so the ends of the belt hang down the back of the uniform. Reggie is holding his hands and arm in a defensive position. He surveys the room.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

(Jumping up)

Hi! I'm Buddy!

REGGIE

Hey yah!

Reggie does a series of elaborate karate moves, kicks, spins, and punches to demonstrate his prowess. As he does this, he knocks a chair over. Dash leaps up, straightens it and then returns to her seat. Diane steps firmly between Reggie and Buddy. She holds the large bag of M&Ms right in front of her so Reggie can see it.

DIANE

Reggie. I'm the boss here. You know this. Now get Brenda.

REGGIE

But...but....

DIANE

I promise. It's okay. We've discussed this. *(She jiggles the bag)* Brenda.

REGGIE

(Calling offstage)

All clear, Brenda.

Brenda enters.

DIANA

You need to work on coming in the room with Reggie, Brenda.

Diane gives Brenda her bag of M&Ms.

BRENDA

I know. I know. But he made me wear a bulletproof vest for the drive over and I had to get it off before I came in.

DASH

Just sit down, you two. PLEASE! You're killing me.

TYLER

Dash. Stop.

DASH

(To Tyler)

Every week we go through this. Like I can't make sure a room is okay. That Reggie, he has problems.

DIANE

Okay, Reggie and Brenda, what did we work on last week?

Brenda links arms with Reggie and, in lockstep; they both slowly walk over the Tyler and Dash.

BRENDA

Good to see you both again.

Brenda extends her hand to shake Tyler and Dash's hands as Reggie stands, rigid, perhaps a small whimper escaping his lips.

DIANE

Good job, Reggie. Brenda?

Brenda gives Reggie an M&M.

BRENDA

Reggie?

Reggie steps forward and bows to Tyler and then Dash. They both bow back.

DASH

Reg, you know your belt is crooked, right? I can fix that for you if you just turn-

Dash makes a move for Reggie and Reggie immediately pops into a defensive stance in front of Brenda.

DIANE

(Stepping between the two)

Okay, everybody, get to their seats.

BUDDY

When is it our turn!?! I wanna bow! I wanna bow! And shake hands. And get M&Ms.

DIANE

Hang in there, Buddy.

She nods to Cindy, who then gives Buddy an M&M.

Okay, everyone. Listen up. Everything is communication. Everything. You show each other what your world is by what you do. And we all try to help the ones we love. If you think the world is out of control, you try to control it for each other. If you think it is unsafe, you protect.

CINDY

But Buddy is just too affectionate. It's not bad but. It's good but-

DIANE

(Gently, to Cindy)

-And if you think you aren't loving everybody enough, if you're used to being the mom, you try to give love to everybody, all the time. The control instinct, the protective instinct, the mom instinct, all these are good instincts. In moderation.

CINDY

Wow.

BRENDA

Yeah.

TYLER

That's pretty good.

BUDDY

So we need to get balanced? My god, Diane, you are brilliant! You are the most brilliant person since...since...since...CINDY!

He leaps up to hug her. Reggie leaps up to protect Diane. Brenda grabs Reggie by the tail end of his belt; Cindy grabs Buddy back by his hoodie, while Dash drops her head into her hands.

CINDY

Buddy!

BRENDA

Reggie!

Sergel/DOGS ARE PEOPLE TOO

DASH

Could everybody just please, please, PLEASE get back into their assigned seats?!?!?!?

DIANE

Okay. Moving on.

END SCENE TEN

SCENE ELEVEN

Buddy is sit at the window. Cindy enters with a small tray. On it are three clear mugs. Two have coffee and one is filled with M&Ms. Cindy exits back into the kitchen. Buddy raises his head, having seen something out the window.

BUDDY

Cindy?

CINDY
(Offstage)

Yes, Buddy?

BUDDY

I see our good friend and neighbor Kelli. She seems to be....wait....wait...YES! She's coming here! Cindy, Cindy, Cindy, Kelli is....*(checking out the window again)* Yes! She's coming here!

Buddy is now up, jumping around. Cindy enters.

CINDY

I know. Now what have we been working on with Diane?

BUDDY

Oh, you don't have to tell me twice.

Buddy sits on a chair, still extremely alert but sitting. There is a knock on the door. Cindy opens it and Kelli enters. While before she was always dressed in a very professional outfit, now she is in stained sweats.

CINDY
(Opening her arms)

Hey, girl.

Kelli wordlessly accepts Cindy's embrace. Buddy remains seated but is clearly ready to jump out of his skin. When they finish their hug, Cindy turns to Buddy.

Okay, Buddy.

Buddy jumps up and give Kelli a big hug. Cindy and Buddy then lead Kelli to the couch. They all sit simultaneously. Cindy and Kelli take a sip of their coffee and Buddy takes an M&M.

KELLI
(Wailing)

HE DUMPED ME!

CINDY & BUDDY
(In unison)

NOOOOOOOOOO!

KELLI
YES! He...he...he said I was too into my work-

BUDDY
-He's wrong! You're just dedicated!

CINDY
You work so hard because you believe in what you do.

KELLI
I do.

BUDDY
You do!

KELLI
And he said I was always into my cell phone and not into him.

CINDY
That's ridiculous.

BUDDY
If that was true, you and I would never have met! See? Right? See how wrong he is?

CINDY
Buddy's right!

KELLI
YES! And he said that I...I...I...wasn't fun. That I...I...I...was too....too...too MATURE!

CINDY
NO!

KELLI

YES!

BUDDY

You are beautiful and wonderful and wonderful and beautiful.

KELLI

No, I'm not. I'm OLD! And I don't have...anybody. I don't have kids....or....or...a Buddy or anything or anybody. I've just got a stupid job. And I'm OLD!!!

Kelli is now working on Buddy's M&Ms.

CINDY

You are not old! You are fabulous. And complex. And wonderful. And so smart and...oh, Kelli, you're great. You'll be okay. You have us, right?

Buddy springs up.

BUDDY

Where does he live? Huh? I'll take him down. I will. I've learned some karate from Reggie. I will. Watch me! I'll do this (*a kick*) and this (*a punch*) and then I'll do this (*a howl*).

KELLI

I love you guys.

CINDY

Buddy, sit.

BUDDY

Really, Cindy? I'm making a point.

CINDY

Sit.

KELLI

It's okay. I need a guy who's on my side.

Buddy sits right next to Kelli and takes her hand.

CINDY

It's going to be okay. You are better off without that jerk.

Jerk.

BUDDY

You sure?

KELLI

I promise.

CINDY

I haven't been out of bed all weekend.

KELLI

Buddy, sniffing her hair.

Sesame chicken, Frango Mints, sausage pizza and... Chez Whiz?

BUDDY

Cheddar popcorn.

KELLI

I think we need to get you out.

CINDY

I can't go anywhere. Look at me. I'm an old, smelly workaholic.

KELLI

Buddy kneels at Kelli's feet.

BUDDY

Kelli, there is this place. A place where you will find happiness again. And love. Acceptance. No one ever judges you and you are instantly surrounded by friends loyal only to you. Cindy and I will take you there. And at this place, you will find joy again.

Kelli looks at Cindy and Cindy nods in agreement.

Really?

KELLI

Really.

CINDY

So, I guess. Okay. What is this amazing place? It sounds like heaven.

KELLI

Sergel/DOGS ARE PEOPLE TOO

Buddy rising to his full height, chest out, he extends his hand to Kelli.

BUDDY

Oh, Kelli. It is better than heaven. It is....THE PARK.

END SCENE ELEVEN

SCENE TWELVE

Montage of action follows

Jamie and Cindy enter. Both are lugging suitcases and boxes and Jamie has a graduation cap on. Buddy jumps to greet them both, bouncing and hugging. Jamie and Cindy exit, laughing and Buddy flops back on the couch.

Paul enters, with a new girlfriend with him. Cindy enters from kitchen, Buddy jumps up, and all meet each other. Buddy hugs Paul, then the girlfriend, then Paul again. They all exit to kitchen, Buddy close on everyone's heels.

Jamie moving out, wheeling a hand truck with a load of boxes, Cindy close behind her with more items. They exit the front door. Buddy goes to the window and looks out, not happy. He eventually flops down on the couch.

Cindy and Paul enter, with his now pregnant wife. Buddy rises, more slowly now, and goes to greet them. Cindy makes sure Buddy doesn't hug the wife too hard. They all exit to the kitchen.

Buddy, now with a cane, returns from the kitchen to the couch and gingerly sits down. He then lies down with a sigh. After a moment, Cindy enters, holding a candy bar for Buddy. She sees him sound asleep on the couch and gently reaches down to stroke his hair.

END SCENE TWELVE

SCENE THIRTEEN

Julie stands at the Clip, Snip & Dip counter. Cindy enters and Buddy, with his cane, follows slowly behind her.

CINDY

Hey, Julie.

JULIE

Hi, Cindy. Buddy, how ya doing?

BUDDY

I'm okay. I guess. I'm here. So, you know. Whatever.

Buddy sits down and stares into space.

CINDY

Buddy's slowing down a little.

JULIE

Who isn't? The usual?

CINDY

Yeah.

JULIE

Okay. Give me five minutes.

Julie exits and Cindy sits next to Buddy. Cindy takes Buddy's hand.

CINDY

I'm sorry. I know you hate this place.

Buddy shrugs.

Maybe the park later?

Buddy shrugs.

A small foam soccer ball is punted on stage, landing between Cindy and Buddy's chairs. Buddy and Cindy look at it. Balboa, sporting a soccer uniform, races in, circling the stage.

BALBOA
(Spanish accent)

GOOOOOAAALLLL!!!!!!!

Julie enters.

JULIE

Sorry! Sorry! Balboa, get back here!

Julie begins chasing him but Balboa won't let her catch him.

BALBOA

I, Balboa, have accomplished the greatest feat of World Cup athleticism known to...the WORLD! I am the greatest!

Julie still cannot catch Balboa. Buddy, enjoying Julie's comeuppance, begins humming the "Rocky" theme.

BUDDY

Ba, bababa, ba, ba, ba baba. Ba, bababa, ba, ba, ba, baba.

BALBOA

(As Buddy continues to underscore with his humming)

This is bigger than you and me, Senorita. It is the World Cup! And I am the fiercest, best, greatest player ever to play the game! *(To Buddy)* Am I right, mi amigo?

BUDDY

The greatest!

Buddy shakes his cane in the air to punctuate his agreement.

BALBOA
(Stopping to shout)

GOOOAAL!!!!!!

BUDDY
(Joining in to howl with Balboa)

GOOOAAL!!!!!!

Julie takes this moment to grab Balboa.

JULIE

I got you!

Wrestling his hands behind him, Julie begins to hustle Balboa offstage. Buddy reaches down and rolls the ball to Balboa, who expertly corrals the ball and brings it with him via footwork. Exiting, Julie shouts over her shoulder.

JULIE (CONT'D)

I'll be right back.

CINDY

Buddy, that was bad. I haven't heard you howl like that in ages.

Buddy shrugs but is now smiling while he does.

BUDDY

Whatever.

END SCENE THIRTEEN

SCENE FOURTEEN

Buddy is asleep on the couch, snoring. Keys in the door. Buddy just raises his head to watch. Cindy enters.

BUDDY

Oh. Hey. How was the movie?

He plops his head back on the couch even before Cindy responds.

CINDY

It was good.

Buddy is now snoring again.

Kelli says hi.

No response except the snoring. Cindy looks at Buddy for a long moment. Her cell phone rings and, checking the caller ID, she answers.

CINDY

Hi, sweetie...oh I didn't check my...it was off because Kelli, her sister and I all went to a movie...Jamie honey, you have got to stop watching so much tv. I'm fine...I wasn't kidnapped.No, there was no terrorist attack...I have a life, ya know! Geez, what am I, fifteen?!...just because you can't reach me for a couple of hours...Okay....I will, MOM!....he's fine....yeah....actually, I think he's a little depressed...

Cindy sits on the couch and starts stroking Buddy's hair.

...Oh, his get up and go seems to have got up and went....I will....How is little Paulie?...Playdates are god's gift!.... .It's amazing what one kid can bring out from another....Yes.....try treats in an egg carton...yeah, it makes good food look like candy...okay...well, I love you....Yes, I'm getting off the phone. It's late here, you know!....Well, you're an independent stinker too!....I love you too, give everybody hugs...bye, bye, sweetie.

She reaches over and takes a small handful of M&Ms and then is struck by an idea. She stands slowly, now smiling.

BLACKOUT

SCENE FIFTEEN

Buddy asleep on the couch. Keys heard in the door. Buddy lifts his head up.

BUDDY

Cindy?

Cindy enters.

CINDY

Buddy. Hey. I...um...I have some news-

Gretel comes barreling in. Wild hair, a dirty sweatshirt and very old jeans, she stops in the center of the room.

GRETEL

HI!!!!

BUDDY

Cindy-

CINDY

Now, Buddy-

BUDDY

-what have you done?

GRETEL

Are you Buddy?! Buddy, Buddy, Buddy, look what I can do!

She does a cartwheel and lands at his feet by the couch.

Isn't that incredible? OH MY GOD! You have WINDOWS! Cindy! Look! Windows!

She runs to the window

There were no windows in the shelter. Not one! Well, the office did but you only went there if you were bad. Or adopted.

To Buddy

You know how I know that?

BUDDY
(To Cindy)

You've got to be kidding me.

GRETEL
Because Cindy ADOPTED me!!!! That's how I know that! That's how I know there was a window in the office!

She's back at Buddy's feet.

And Cindy told me all about you. That you can teach me stuff. Lots of stuff. And you know everybody and everybody loves you so, so, so...that's really cool! And now we're family! How cool is that?!

CINDY
Buddy.

BUDDY
Okay. Okay.

He struggles to get up, Cindy and Gretel help him.

Sure, kid. I'll teach you stuff.

GRETEL
(To Cindy)
You were right. He is INCREDIBLE!

BUDDY
Yup, that's me. Incredible Buddy.

CINDY
Yes. Incredible Buddy.

Cindy and Buddy smile at each other.

GRETEL
Hey! Hey! You know what else I can do?

BUDDY
(To Cindy)
You know she stinks, right?

GRETEL

This! I can do this too!

CINDY

(To Buddy)

Snip & Clip, 9AM tomorrow.

BUDDY

Thank god.

Gretel does a somersault, her feet landing on the desk, scattering a ream of paper across the floor. Gretel doesn't notice and proceeds to attempt a backwards somersault.

GRETEL

That was a front one and I think I can do a backwards one. Buddy, I can teach you if you want! See! I can teach you stuff too!

Gretel is now stuck halfway into the backward somersault on her shoulder. Buddy reaches down and pushes her so she can finish the move.

BUDDY

Good job, kid. *(To Cindy)* A name? Or just "kid"?

CINDY

She was-

GRETEL

-I was Dipper, which was totally lame. I mean, totally stupid but then Cindy said I was going to be Gretel because there is a grandkid who likes the...name...or story...or something...but the good news is that I'm not stupid Dipper anymore, I'm GRETEL! So, can I be the boss?

BUDDY

No.

GRETEL

Okay! Okay! Cool! I tried to be the boss once at the shelter and that did so not go over well. So, cool! Not a problem! Do you know, I can do butt spins too!

Gretel now starts doing butt spins. Cindy, laughing, takes a candy bar out of her pocket.

BUDDY

Really?! You're going to give that candy?

CINDY

Good point.

She gives the candy bar to Buddy and then she and Buddy sit back on the couch and watch Gretel.

GRETEL

The best part about butt spins is that they make you feel like when you stick your head out the car window. It's like that but inside!

She stops, jumps up and, still dizzy from the butt spins, staggers, knocking over a plant as she wobbles to the window.

Hey! Look! Somebody's out there!

The lights begin a very slow fade. Gretel yells out the window.

Hi! I'm Gretel! I live here now. Who are you? You wanna play? Do you know Cindy and Buddy? We're a family! *(To Cindy and Buddy, who are now cuddled up on the couch, watching Gretel and sharing the candy bar)* They looked at me! They like me!

BUDDY

Good job, kid.

GRETEL

Thanks, Buddy!

CINDY

Yeah. Thanks, Buddy.

As the lights fade, Gretel continues to bounce back and forth in front of the window, with joyous shouts of "Look at that tree!" and "Look, look, somebody else is coming!" and "This place is amazing!" Buddy and Cindy remain on the couch, enjoying Gretel and cuddling.

BLACKOUT
END OF PLAY