

SIDE#4 pgs. 38 - 42 - CHRIS, CLAIRE, LENNY, ERNIE, COOKIE,

DESCRIPTION OF SCENE: Cookie has a major back spasm, Ernie is catching on that something is being covered up and insists he be told. Chris, Lenny and Claire try to spontaneously make up a story about a "surprise" to cover up the real story of Ken shooting himself.

WHAT DIRECTOR IS LOOKING FOR: HAVE TO SEE physical comedy from Cookie. Cookie's physicalisation makes the scene funny. Claire, Lenny and Chris need to think quick and work together to create a fantastic story. The interplay has to be sharp. Ernie is intelligent, inquisitive and the ever protective husband always ready to defend his wife.

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→ COOKIE. Where's Ken?
CLAIRE. Ken? Ken's with Charley.
COOKIE. And Myra?
CLAIRE. Myra's with Ken ... They're waiting for Myra to get dressed.
COOKIE. (*Grabbing the back of a chair and screaming.*) Ooooh! Ooooh! Ooooh!
CLAIRE. What is it?
COOKIE. A spasm. It's gone. It's all right. It just shoots up my back and goes.
ERNIE. You all right, poops?

COOKIE. I'm fine, puppy.

LENNY. Listen, maybe we should all sit outside. It's such a beautiful evening.

ERNIE. (*Smiles.*) Okay. Okay, you kids, what's going on here?

CLAIRE. What do you mean?

ERNIE. You think I don't notice everyone's acting funny? Three people want to get me drinks. Chris wants me to hear this funny story. Lenny wants to get us all outside. Everyone creating a diversion. Why? I don't know. Am I right?

CHRIS. No wonder you're such a high-priced doctor. OK ... Someone's going to have to tell them.

LENNY. Tell them what?

CHRIS. About the surprise.

LENNY. What surprise?

CHRIS. The surprise about the party.

COOKIE. What surprise about the party?

CHRIS. Well, I think it's the cutest thing, isn't it, Claire?

CLAIRE. Oh, God, yes.

CHRIS. Tell them about it.

CLAIRE. No, you tell it better than I do.

COOKIE. I'm sorry. I think I'm going to have to sit down.

CHRIS. I'll help you.

LENNY. I'll do it.

CLAIRE. I've got her.

They all help to awkwardly lift Cookie to the sofa, while she winces, wails and screams

COOKIE. The cushion. I need the cushion.

LENNY. Here it is. (*HE puts the cushion behind her back.*)

ERNIE. You all right, chicken?

COOKIE. I'm fine, Pops ... So what's the big surprise about?

CHRIS. Well ... Charley and Myra decided ... because they were going to have their closest friends over to celebrate their tenth anniversary ... they weren't going to have any ... servants.

COOKIE. (*Nods.*) Uh huh.

CHRIS. No Mai Li, no anybody.

COOKIE. (*Nods.*) Uh huh.

CHRIS. Isn't that terrific. No help. Just us.

COOKIE. Why is that terrific?

CHRIS. Because!! We're all going to pitch in. Like in the old days. Before money. Before success. Like when we were all just starting out. Those were the best times in our lives, don't you think?

COOKIE. No, I hated those times. I love success.

CHRIS. But don't you find these are greedier times. Lazier, more selfish. Nobody wants to work anymore.

COOKIE. I work fourteen hours a day. I cook thirty-seven meals a week. I cook on my television show. I cook for my family. I cook for my neighbors. I cook for my dogs. I was looking forward to a relaxed evening. (*SHE reconsiders.*) But I don't want to spoil the fun. What do we have to do?

CLAIRE. We have to cook.

COOKIE. You mean all of us cooking in the kitchen together?

CHRIS. Everyone except Charley and Myra. Claire and I told them to stay up there and relax. We'll call them when we're ready.

COOKIE. What are we going to make?

CLAIRE. It's all laid out. Roast ham, smoked turkey, duck and pasta?

ERNIE. Roast ham? Duck? ... That's too much cholesterol for me.

LENNY. Ernie, we didn't come here to live longer. Just to have a good time.

COOKIE. I just don't understand why we're all wearing our best clothes to cook a dinner.

CLAIRE. That's not your best clothes. It's a fifty-year-old Polish dress.

COOKIE. A sixty-year-old Russian dress.

ERNIE. The dress is hardly an issue worth arguing about.

COOKIE. I didn't say we wouldn't cook it.

ERNIE. She didn't say we wouldn't cook it. Why is everyone getting so worked up about this?

CLAIRE. All right, Ernie, let's not turn this into group therapy, please.

ERNIE. This is nothing like group therapy, Claire. You, of all people, should know that.

LENNY. Oh, terrific. Let's just name all the people in your Thursday night group, Ernie, heh?

COOKIE. Why are Ernie and I being attacked? We just walked in the door.

CHRIS. Please lower your voices. We're going to spoil the surprise for Charley and Myra.

ERNIE. What surprise? It was their idea.

COOKIE. Listen, I don't want to take the blame for ruining this party. *(To the Group.)* I'll do all the cooking myself and Ernie'll do the serving.

ERNIE. Honey, no one's asking you to do that.

CHRIS & CLAIRE. If she wants to do it, let her.
Sure. Why not? Fine with us.

LEN. If it makes her happy, she can clean up, too.

COOKIE. (*Struggling to her feet.*) Okay, then it's settled. Just give me forty-five minutes. I promise you this is going to be the best dinner party we ever had.

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