

Audition Scene: ERNIE and COOKIE  
(We will read all other parts)

LENNY. Yes! We're ready, we're ready!

(CLAIRE smiles and opens the front door. CHRIS and LENNY break into loud LAUGHTER.)

ERNIE and COOKIE are at the door. ERNIE is in his early fifties, in a tux and carrying a gift box. COOKIE is in her forties, wears a god-awful evening gown. SHE carries a sausage-like cushion under her arm.)

CLAIRE. Cookie! Emic! It's so good to see you. (Hugs them both.)

CHRIS. Oh, God, that is so funny, Lenny. You should have been an actor, I swear.

CLAIRE. Everybody, it's Emic and Cookie.

LENNY. (Still laughing.) Hi, Emic. Hi, Cookie.

CHRIS. (Waves, laughing.) Hi, Cookie. Hi, Emic.

ERNIE. Hello, Chris. Hello, Lenny.

CHRIS. (To Lenny.) So go on with the story. What did Mr. Gorbachev say?

LENNY. (After an awkward silence.) Mr. Gorbachev? ... He said, "I don't know. I never ate cat food before."

(There is much forced LAUGHTER.)

→ ERNIE. Sorry we're late. Did we miss much?

CHRIS. You have got to get Lenny to tell you the story about Mrs. Thatcher and the cat food.

(LENNY shoots Chris a dirty look.)

ERNIE. (Laughs.) It sounds funny already. Heh heh heh.

COOKIE. Everyone looks so beautiful.

CLAIRE. Cookie, I am cr-azy about the dress. You always dig up the most original things. Where do you find them?

COOKIE. Oh, God, this is sixty years old. It was my grandmother's. She brought it from Russia.

CLAIRE. Didn't you wear that for Muscular Dystrophy in June?

COOKIE. No. Emphysema in August.

CLAIRE. (Looking at the cushion.) Oh, what a pretty cushion. Is that for Charley and Myra?

COOKIE. No, it's for my back. It went out again while I was dressing. (SHE opens the pretzels, easily.)

ERNIE. You all right, honey?

COOKIE. I'm fine, babe.

CHRIS. You and your back problems. It must be awful.

COOKIE. It's nothing. I can do everything but sit down and get up.

ERNIE. Hey, Lenny, is that your BMW? (HE laughs.) Looks like you put a lot of miles on in two days.

LENNY. A guy shoots out of a garage and blind-sides me. The car's got twelve miles on it. I've got a case of whiplash you wouldn't believe.

COOKIE. (Crossing to other side of the room.) Oh, I've had whiplash. Excruciating. My best friend had it for six years.

(LENNY nods sardonically. SHE picks up the Steuben gift box.)

COOKIE. Oh, this looks nice. Who brought this? (SHE turns it to see the label but loses control and drops

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it.) Oh, my God ... Did I break anything? (SHE shakes the box. *It RATTLES.*) What was it?

LENNY. Steuben glass.

COOKIE. Oh, don't tell me! Lenny! Claire! ... I'm so sorry.

ERNIE. It was an accident, honey. (To Lenny and Claire.) We'll replace it, of course.

LENNY. Sure, if you want. I don't care.

CHRIS. What about a drink, everyone?

ERNIE. I'll have something.

CHRIS. What do you want?

CLAIRE. I'll get it.

LENNY. (Getting up.) I'm right near the bar.

ERNIE. You're all going to get me a drink? Such friendly people. I'd love a bourbon, please.

(CHRIS crosses to the bar.)

COOKIE. I should have let what's-her-name pick it up. Moo Loo.

CHRIS. Mai Li ... Here you go, Em. (Gives Ernie his drink.)

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 lower Cookie onto the sofa, beside Ernie.)

COOKIE. The cushion. I need the cushion.