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Setting: A back room of a suburban home.

Cast:

BINKY, an affluent suburbanite: Any race, gender, 30+

CLYDE, a young person: Any race, gender, younger than BINKY

COOKIE, a dog: Any race, gender, or age.

No attempt should be made to turn Cookie into a cartoon. No cute ears, snouts, or tails. Cookie is just a good dog.

As the pandemic comes to an end, a young person makes the painful decision to get rid of their dog.

Enter a well-dressed suburbanite, BINKY, followed by CLYDE, holding a leash. At the end of the leash is a cute, but somewhat unkempt dog, COOKIE.

BINKY

... and then there's this...

CLYDE

Wow. A whole room? See this Cookie? A whole room just for you.

BINKY

Of course.

CLYDE

It's a beautiful home.

BINKY

Thank you. Is there something the matter?

CLYDE

Oh, no. No. I... The way Liz described... This is stupid. It's such a beautiful home. So... spare, I guess is the word.

BINKY

Oh. Why... thank you for noticing.

CLYDE

You're welcome.

BINKY

We've been practicing Minimalism. Julia Roberts. Leonardo DiCaprio. Gwyneth, of course. Kanye. Everyone is doing it. Minimalism. I highly recommend it.

CLYDE

I'll look into it.

BINKY

We were so thrilled when Lizzie mentioned she knew someone who was looking to re-home a dog.

CLYDE

Yes.

BINKY

May I ask why?

CLYDE

I guess you could say the pandemic has forced me into practicing my own form of Minimalism.

BINKY

It has been such a nuisance, hasn't it?

CLYDE

Yes.

BINKY

Did you find the masks to be drying to your face? It got to the point where I was just embarrassed to even get on a Zoom. I mean, it was like no one was even looking at me anymore. I had to spend an entire day trying to find a decent moisturizer. The lower half of my face was just... some of us have super sensitive skin, you know? And we were never once a consideration in all of this mask mandate... No. I... I... Deep breath. I saw this headline in my Facebook feed on how Julia Roberts practices Minimalism and I was like - Yes, Julia, yes! Just release attachment to this whole Western concept of, you know, 'results', and then like magic, the universe provided - as it always does - and I found this amazing new seaweed/yak placenta extract on Gwyneth's website, and my skin has never looked better. And... well, people are looking again. I feel seen. And I owe it all to Julia. And Gwyneth, of course. Anyway, it has been such a relief to just, you know, put that whole mask nightmare behind us. Don't you agree?

CLYDE

Yes.

BINKY

Minimalism! Well, it's changed my life.

CLYDE

Good for you.

BINKY

So, this is Pookie.

CLYDE

Cookie.

BINKY

Let's have a look, shall we? First...

BINKY puts on a pair of Latex gloves.

If there's one thing I've learned these past few years is that you never can be too careful.

CLYDE

I gave Cookie a bath yesterday.

BINKY

Oh, I'm sure. Come here, Pookie. Such a good dog. Yes. Seems rather thin.

CLYDE

Yes?

BINKY

Well, we'll fatten you right up. Yes, we will. Yes, we will. Pookie seems a little lethargic.

CLYDE

It was a long walk.

BINKY

You should have Ubered.

CLYDE

Oh...

BINKY

I'll send you home in an Uber-XL.

CLYDE

No. Thank you. I have some of Cookie's favorite toys... and some...

BINKY

Let me.

BINKY takes the shopping bag from CLYDE.

This must be very hard for you.

CLYDE

Yes.

BINKY

I promise, we'll take good care of Eton.

CLYDE

Eton.

BINKY

Oh. We're going to call the dog Eton.

CLYDE

Oh.

BINKY

It's a surprise for... Our son, Buster, is coming home next week. He's been away, studying abroad at -

CLYDE

Eton?

BINKY

Yes! We've been trying to tempt him back home and we thought...

CLYDE

I get it. I get it.

BINKY

Taking in an unfortunate animal is the least we could do. Buster's always saying, you know, we have to find ways of giving back. So much suffering in the world. And. Well. Dogs have always been the key to our hearts. Buster and me. A way for Buster and me to, you know... bond, I guess is the word all the cool kids are using these days. Don't you find that two people who love animals, yet have absolutely nothing else in common, that a deep and abiding love of animals can unlock something special between two people, bring them just a little closer together? Buster will be thrilled to meet Pookie. Could I offer you some coffee? My father grows it, literally, in his own back yard. Or I could have Lizzie put together a basket of some things to take with you. She made some lovely mango-cardamon scones this morning, and I think we just had a delivery of beef... We might have some extra soap?

CLYDE

I should be going.

BINKY

Well. I'll give you a minute to say good-bye.

BINKY steps back but does not leave the room.

CLYDE

Bye Cookie. You be good, OK?

CLYDE kisses the dog and begins to exit. COOKIE blocks the exit.

I have to go now.

BINKY

Eton. Come.

COOKIE looks at BINKY but does not move.

CLYDE

Go on now.

COOKIE moves away from the exit but does not go to BINKY.

Sit.

COOKIE sits.

BINKY

It will take a little time to get used to us.

CLYDE

Yes.

BINKY crosses to the dog, but COOKIE backs away.

Cookie. Be nice.

BINKY

Are there some treats in the bag?

BINKY finds some treats in the bag.

Here Eton. Look. Binky's got something for you. Come to Binky.

COOKIE is unimpressed. BINKY tosses the treat to COOKIE, who just lets it land. CLYDE picks up the treat and tosses it to COOKIE, who catches it in its mouth.

Good dog! Eton. Good dog! Who's a good dog? Eton's a good dog.

Again, BINKY tosses COOKIE a treat, which the dog ignores.

CLYDE

Maybe if you held it out in your hand.

BINKY retrieves the treat and holds it out to COOKIE.

BINKY

Come on, Eton. Come get your num-nums from Binky. Here Eton.

CLYDE

Try Cookie.

BINKY

Oh. It's such a plain name, isn't it? So retro. I love it.

CLYDE

Try it.

BINKY

Here Pookie.

COOKIE crosses to BINKY and sniffs the treat. Then crosses to the exit and lays down.

CLYDE

It'll just take some time. I want to thank you for doing this.

BINKY

Our pleasure.

CLYDE tries to leave, but COOKIE will not move. CLYDE finds a treat in a pocket and holds it out to COOKIE, who slowly comes forward and takes the treat from CLYDE. While COOKIE eats, CLYDE moves so that COOKIE cannot block the exit again. CLYDE can't exit.

BINKY

You know... maybe this isn't going to work out.

CLYDE

No. It has to. I just can't...

BINKY

If it's a matter of money, maybe we could, I don't know... sponsor the dog at a daycare facility while you look for work.

CLYDE

I couldn't.

BINKY

I'm sure it wouldn't be for long.

CLYDE

No.

BINKY

You obviously love your dog.

CLYDE does not answer.

And Cookie loves you. Maybe once you're on your feet...

CLYDE

Cookie needs a home.

BINKY

Well, I think we both want what's best for the dog.

CLYDE

Yes.

BINKY

See? Pookie has unlocked our hearts and we're bonding! Over a dog! Oh. The universe is such a magical place. But maybe this isn't the best place for Cookie. Or... Maybe it is! Let's have a scone and some coffee and wait for a message from the universe. And I'll get Lizzie to put together that basket we talked about. OK?

CLYDE

OK.

As BINKY and CLYDE start to leave, COOKIE begins to follow.

BINKY

No, Cookie. Stay.

BINKY and CLYDE exit. From offstage we hear a door close.

BINKY

(off stage)

You're going to love this coffee. We literally grow it in my father's backyard..

We hear the door lock.

Lizzie! We need some coffee and scones STAT! The cardamon Lizzie uses is ground by blind Belgian nuns in a convent that survived the bombing in World War II and a visit from Meghan Markle! You're not one of those people with a nut allergy, are you?

As the voices recede, COOKIE is left alone, sniffing around the room. COOKIE ends in the middle of the room.

Pause.

COOKIE howls.

END OF PLAY