

THE COOKIE JAR

By Patti Veconi

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SYNOPSIS: Doug and Susie are about to become first-time parents and Doug is very proud of how he has just handled what surely would have been a terrible threat to their new baby: the family cat. In his enthusiasm to share every detail of the day's successful euthanasia event, he blithely fails to see how his very pregnant wife feels about it. When Eve, Susie's best friend, arrives to add insult to Susie's injury, she and Doug become stuck over the proper way to memorialize the cat.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 females, 1 male)

SUSIE (f) Nine months pregnant and very hormonal. She's a nine-to-five, corporate type. *(13 lines)*

DOUG (m) Susie's husband. Works from home. He has a somewhat nervous disposition and is both very solicitous and also not too quick reading other people. In other words, while he isn't self-centered, he does get caught up in himself while trying to do the right thing. *(35 lines)*

EVE (f) Susie's best friend. Assertive, single, a go-getter. She would describe herself as thoughtful, generous, practical and positive. *(26 lines)*

DURATION: 10 minutes

SETTING: A small urban apartment. Set includes various seating.

TIME: Present. The dog days of summer.

PROPS

- Laptop computer
- Mug
- Magazine
- Miscellaneous papers
- Iced coffee in a take-out cup with straw
- Purse
- Gift bag containing cat-shaped cookie jar

COSTUMES

Susie is dressed for summer in maternity clothes and carries a purse.

SET

Susie and Doug's apartment with a sofa, chair and coffee table. There is a pair of men's shoes by the door.

PRODUCTION NOTES

A slash (/) in the middle of any line means the next line should begin then.

PREMIERE PRODUCTION

The Cookie Jar premiered at the Midtown International Theatre Festival in New York City, 12 Ways to Play Theatre Festival at the Public House Theatre in Chicago, and was a finalist for the 2016 Boston Theater Marathon.

AT RISE: *DOUG is sitting on the couch working on his laptop with a mug and papers littering the coffee table in front of him. He is barefoot. SUSIE enters, exhausted. She closes the door behind her, drops her purse, kicks off her shoes, leaving them next to the door, plops down on the chair, grabs a magazine off the coffee table, leans back with her eyes closed and begins to fan herself.*

DOUG: *(Watching her eagerly.)* Oh hi. You're home early – earlier than I thought you would be. *(An expectant pause.)* You're good? *(Beat.)* Your day was good? *(Beat.)* You look good.

SUSIE: *(Without opening her eyes.)* I'm good. You?

DOUG: Yeah. Everything's good. Everything went real good today. Everything – you know – went just fine... It's – it's all good.

SUSIE: *(Opening her eyes, but choosing not to acknowledge the subject.)* Mmmm. Well, I'm going to go take a shower – try to cool off.

DOUG: That's good. That's a really good idea. You should go do that... That, that's good.

SUSIE: Mm-hm. *(Starting to leave.)*

DOUG: *(Speaking as she is about to leave.)* You know, it went real, you know, good. It was all good. You should feel – really / good.

SUSIE: *(Testy – spoken simultaneously with DOUG.)* Good? *(Beat.)* Nods as though to say "shut up." Right.

SUSIE turns away again and DOUG continues – not getting the message yet.

DOUG: It wasn't at all sad / or depress –

SUSIE: You know, you're not supposed to be talking about this. I – I – how can you even be talking about it? I went to work for the day and expected it to be done and to never talk about it again. Ever. And now you're talking about it, like it – like I can't ignore it – or pretend – or even pretend or anything!

DOUG: Suze – aw Suze. I'm sorry. I just thought you'd want to know.

SUSIE: Well I don't want to know. I don't want to know anything! And – and besides, how can I not know? Of course I know! Maybe if you weren't talking about it, I could pretend that I don't know. But, of course, you are talking about it and making sure that I do know.

DOUG: Well – yeah. Yeah, I mean, you **do** know.

SUSIE: *(Takes a deep breath and begins speaking very slowly.)* Yes... Yes – I do know – but do you think I care if it was “good”? *(Becoming agitated and speeding up.)* And what does that even mean? How could it possibly have been good? I’m, I’m, it’s, I’m... it’s... Ugh... How was it good? What do you mean by that? What are you even saying? *(Softening.)* I mean, how could it have been good?

SUSIE sits on the end of the couch, not too close to DOUG, trying not to cry. DOUG is not tuned in to her emotional state as he almost proudly tells her all about it.

DOUG: Well, it went just about as good as you could have hoped it would go. I gave Nimrod an extra big breakfast, even though they said not to let him eat beforehand, but I thought he should enjoy his last meal. And plus, you know how he gets – I mean he would get so mean when he was hungry and I didn’t want him hissing at me all the way over to the clinic.

SUSIE covers her ears and begins rocking herself.

DOUG: But he was... pretty... calm – and good and they were real nice there and they took him right away and it was real professional and they were even being real thoughtful to the other people in the waiting room and talking to me kind of – like in code – you know? They were acting like it was just a regular drop-off for surgery of something – but there was this understanding between us. I played right along. You see, there was this little girl in the waiting room – she had a kitten – well, I just played right along – didn’t want to upset the little girl – so I just played it cool. Like, I was just, “no big deal” kind of cool, and I didn’t act upset or let on or anything. And then they could see he wasn’t going to stop hissing, of course, because he’s so damned mean. *(Catching himself.)* I mean, he *was* mean, you know what I mean. So the receptionist suggested we just go right on in to the back. And that receptionist just was so professional – I was so impressed with her professionalism. It was just... *(At a loss for words.)* really...good. And so then she just real quiet said,

“If you want to settle up now, I think we can just let you go right on home and you just leave everything to us.” And when she said “everything” it was like – you know – in code. Then she said, “I would, as a point of policy, also like you to know that you do have the option of keeping Nimrod’s file if you so wish. It is yours to take and keep as a remembrance. Otherwise, we will be happy to dispose of it along with the remains of your dead cat.”

SUSIE lets out a soft moan. There is a knock at the door. DOUG goes toward it.

SUSIE: *(Softly, to herself – not in response to the door.)* Noooo.

DOUG: No? Don’t you think we should answer the door?

SUSIE continues moaning. Another knock at the door.

DOUG: Suze? Honey?

SUSIE: What?

DOUG: The door?

SUSIE: Who cares who’s at the door?

Another knock.

DOUG: I’m getting the door.

DOUG answers the door and EVE bursts in.

EVE: *(Rushes in very animated and carrying a gift bag. She immediately kicks off her shoes – following the protocols of the house.)* Oh my God, Susie, I have the best news! *(Seeing DOUG’S drink on the coffee table and helping herself to it.)* Is this iced coffee? *(Back to SUSIE.)* I have been thinking about you all day and am I ever your very best friend!

SUSIE: *(Confused.)* What?

EVE: *(Continuing with one hand holding the coffee and the other holding the gift bag.)* And, I am the very best godmother-to-be of that precious, beautiful little baby girl who will never have to suffer the terror of that horrid creature, which you called a pet, but that we all know would have eaten that little baby for lunch the first moment you turned your back. Now, as the uncontested holder of the most – and probably sexiest – Nimrod scars – *(Pointing with a free finger to a spot on her chest.)* I have a particular interest in seeing the memorialization of that he-devil properly handled – and that is why I'm here. *(Beat.)* To handle that. Properly. *(Beat.)* With this.

EVE hands DOUG his drink back, clearing a spot on the coffee table with her free hand and then proudly placing the gift bag on the coffee table in front of SUSIE.

EVE: So beginning today and henceforth every time I come over, I can pay my respects with the same malice I shall forever feel toward Nimrod. But now – and I know Doug will join me in appreciating this – I can do that with the freedom of petting this enclosed, tasteful urn, without fear of losing a finger.

SUSIE: What?

EVE: I know. Isn't it great? *(Beat.)* Open it!

SUSIE doesn't move, so DOUG gingerly peeks into the gift bag and begins to lift out a cookie jar in the shape of a cat. As he does so, EVE enthusiastically pulls the bottom of the bag away to help him.

DOUG: Wow. That's an urn?

EVE: Well, actually, no. It's a cookie jar. But aren't you surprised? And aren't I amazing that I could do this so fast? Don't you love it?

SUSIE: I loved Nimrod!

EVE: I know honey. I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I know. And I know you're going to love that baby even more. And now that that irrational, hormonal, absurd, ridiculous fear you've had of sharing your love between that EEEEVIL animal and your blessed, blessed baby is over, you can close that chapter of your life and look forward to the next one.

There is a pause. SUSIE sits, stunned. DOUG is unsure what to do and EVE is just smiling. The following dialogue should clip along quickly.

DOUG: Wow, Eve, that's really something. You?

EVE: Yes, I did. They were so nice at that veterinary clinic – very professional.

DOUG: I thought so too!

EVE: Gave me his remains with no questions.

DOUG: His ashes? (*Impressed.*) That was quick.

EVE: Oh no, no. Not his ashes. But, I did get his collar and a half-cup or so of his fur. (*Lifting the lid to show him.*) They shaved it right off for me.

DOUG: Thoughtful.

EVE: Wasn't it?

DOUG: So they – ?

EVE: (*Snapping fingers.*) Just like that.

DOUG: And they didn't ask for any – ?

EVE: Not at all.

DOUG: So you – ?

EVE: I did.

DOUG: And it's – ?

EVE: Right here.

DOUG: And the rest of Nimrod – ?

EVE: Gone.

Pause.

DOUG: Well then.

EVE: Yep.

DOUG: I should probably...

EVE: Probably?

DOUG: Say something.

EVE: Oh, don't thank me!

DOUG: No – I mean – yes! Thank you. But no, I mean... about... (*Indicating the cookie jar.*)

EVE: (*Understanding.*) Ah! Some words, perhaps?

DOUG: Right!

EVE: Right.

DOUG: So, um...

DOUG can't think of anything to say and looks helplessly/questioningly at EVE, finally handing her the cookie jar. She fumbles with finding kind words, too.

EVE: Oh, erh, um...

DOUG: Nimrod was...

EVE: He was very...

DOUG: Such a very...

EVE: Really quite a...

DOUG: Friend!

EVE: Friend?

DOUG: To Susie...

EVE: Ah, yes!

DOUG: And we feel – um, a loss...

EVE: At a loss...

DOUG: Yes – at a loss...

An awkward pause. Then, simultaneously, DOUG and EVE look at each other, knowingly land on a solution and look to SUSIE.

DOUG and EVE: Susie?

EVE thrusts the cookie jar into SUSIE'S lap, relieved to have settled the matter. SUSIE shocked, lovingly cradles the cookie jar, then, looks up and lets out a loud moan or cry.

THE END