

"Cookies for Mr. Martin"

by
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1 INT. DOUG'S CONDO - EARLY EVENING

DOUG MARTIN, in his early 40s, and two of his friends (KEN and IRA - also Doug's age) are seated at a card table in the living room of his condominium playing poker. The table is littered with a few empty pizza boxes, used paper plates, and drained beer cans. The condo itself is orderly, but not what you would call "neat."

Ken, who is holding the cards, speaks to Doug.

KEN

How many?

DOUG

Two.

He is dealt two new cards.

KEN

Ira?

IRA

Three.

He gets three.

KEN

The dealer takes one.

He deals himself a single card. They study their new hands briefly, then the doorbell rings.

IRA

(peevish)

Who's that?

DOUG

How should I know? I lost my x-ray glasses at the beach last weekend.

KEN

I thought you said Bob couldn't come tonight.

DOUG

That's what he said when he called.

The doorbell rings again.

(CONTINUED)

1

CONTINUED:

IRA

Are you gonna get that? It's *your* condo.

DOUG

(sighs)

Yeah, yeah.

He pushes out his chair, stands, and walks to the door. He opens it to reveal EMILIA FIEDLER, a gray-haired, senior who lives a few doors down the hall. She is holding a dish wrapped in tinfoil.

DOUG

(surprised)

Mrs. Fiedler?

She glances into the condo.

EMILIA

Oh, I'm interrupting something.

DOUG

Nothing important: Just a friendly game of poker.

EMILIA

I won't stay long.

(beat)

I was wondering if you and your friends might like some cookies.

She peels back a corner of the aluminum foil.

EMILIA

(enticingly)

Chocolate chip.

DOUG

You spoil me.

EMILIA

I enjoy it.

DOUG

Of course I'll take them. Thank you.

Doug takes the dish from Emilia.

EMILIA

No need to return the plate. You can just throw it away.

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED: (2)

DOUG

Not to seem ungrateful, but. . .
uhm. . . why don't you bake *fewer*
cookies?

EMILIA

The recipe I have is for a batch
big enough for my boys and - rest
his soul - my husband. I've never
been able to figure out how to
scale it back!

(beat)

Besides, I enjoy baking. It
reminds me of better days.

DOUG

Well, you'll always find a willing
appetite here.

EMILIA

I'm so glad.

(beat)

I don't want to keep you from your
game anymore, so I'll be going.

DOUG

Thank you, Mrs. Fiedler. I'm *sure*
we'll enjoy these.

EMILIA

If I may offer you a *little* advice
about the game. It's something my
dear husband always said.

DOUG

(prompting her)

Yes?

EMILIA

"Jerks" are better to open.

(beat)

Goodnight.

She slowly walks off down the hall.

DOUG

(calling)

Thanks again!

He closes the door and, dish in hand, walks back to his
friends.

(CONTINUED)

IRA

Who was that?

DOUG

Mrs. Fiedler.

KEN

Who's she?

DOUG

A little old lady who lives down
the hall.

He holds the plate up.

DOUG

She brought us cookies.

KEN

Then she's OK with me!

IRA

Same here.

(beat)

Cookies and beer is an odd mix,
but I can take it.

DOUG

She also gave me some advice on
how to play poker.

IRA

Yeah?

He puts the plate down on the table and sits.

DOUG

Jerks are better to open.

IRA

(chuckles)

KEN

(chuckles)

Jerks?

DOUG

Uh huh.

IRA

Then it's *your* turn.

1 CONTINUED: (4)

DOUG

Hey!

FADE OUT.

2 INT. LOBBY - NEXT MORNING

An ordinary lobby: In-need-of-paint walls, a plant or two, and some cheap hanging pictures.

The elevator bell dings. The doors open, and Doug steps out. He sees MRS. PERRY, a tired single mother, standing by the bulletin board with some papers in her hand.

DOUG

Good morning, Mrs. Perry.

MRS. PERRY

(very tired)

Oh, I wish it was.

The elevator doors close. Doug sees the picture and text on the papers.

DOUG

Not Muffin!

MRS. PERRY

(sighs)

Afraid so. We don't know where the little tiger has gone.

DOUG

Angie must be *so* upset.

MRS. PERRY

That's an understatement. We were up *all* night looking for that kitten - every nook and cranny of our condo. It was all I could do to get Angie to stop searching and get on her school bus this morning. *She* seemed full of energy, but *I* could sleep for a week.

DOUG

I'll certainly keep my eyes open.

MRS. PERRY

Thank you.

(CONTINUED)

2

CONTINUED:

DOUG

Has she ever gotten out before?

MRS. PERRY

Never. She looked out the door one time, but then thought better of it. I think she was afraid.

DOUG

You're *sure* she's not hiding in your unit?

MRS. PERRY

I can't think of any place we didn't search!

She shakes the "lost kitten" posters in her hand.

MRS. PERRY

Before I made these up, I did the two things that *always* make Muffin come out of hiding.

DOUG

(prompting her)

Which are?

MRS. PERRY

Turning on the vacuum and the can opener.

FADE OUT.

3

INT. COMMON ROOM - EVENING

A big, open room. A card table is set up on one side. Many folding chairs are arranged before it. MR. COLLINS, the condo board president, sits behind the card table, speaking to the dozen or so assembled residents.

Late, Doug slowly opens the door and tries to sneak inside. Some residents acknowledge him.

COLLINS

The "ayes" have it.

He pounds his gavel.

(CONTINUED)

COLLINS

Let the record show that members have voted to accept the offer of John Pantuso and Sons for the repaving of the parking lot.

(beat)

I will contact Mr. Pantuso in the morning and work with him to put into place the quickest, least-disruptive plan.

The residents murmur their approval.

COLLINS

Also, I would like to remind Mr. Martin that these first-Monday-of-the-month meetings begin at 7:00 p.m., *not*. . .

(looks at his watch)

. . . 7:12.

Some residents chuckle.

DOUG

(humbly)

Sorry, Harry. Traffic.

COLLINS

(clears his throat)

And now, onto the last item on the agenda: Cats.

DOUG

(sotto voce)

What?

COLLINS

To date, nine residents have been in touch with me about their cats or kittens inexplicably going missing. I'm afraid the board can offer no solution to this problem at the moment, but we will continue to diligently look into it. We urge all residents with pets to pay extra-close attention to them.

Doug raises his hand.

COLLINS

The chair recognizes Mr. Martin.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DOUG

Have the disappearances been
focused in a certain area of the
complex?

COLLINS

No, they've been all over.

He picks up a sheet of paper and reads from it.

COLLINS

Four of the cats resided in the
main building on the first floor.
Another three were on the second
floor. The other two lived on the
second floor of the *old* building.

He puts the paper down.

COLLINS

Please, everyone, keep an eye out
for them. As a cat owner myself,
if anyone can *truly* own a cat. . .

Some residents chuckle.

COLLINS

. . . I'm sure the missing animals
are frightened and would love to
be reunited with their humans.

(beat)

This meeting is adjourned.

He pounds his gavel.

FADE OUT.

INT. CORRIDOR - THE NEXT DAY

Doug opens his door to see Mrs. Fiedler walking down the
hall. She is carrying a plastic bag in one hand. He can
see through the plastic to the cat food boxes inside.

DOUG

Good morning.

(beat)

We meet again.

EMILIA

Yes. Yes, we do.

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

EMILIA (CONT'D)

Did you and your poker buddies
enjoy the cookies?

DOUG

Absolutely delicious. They asked
me to pass on their thanks to you.

EMILIA

I'm *so* happy to hear that.

The door to the incinerator squeaks as she pulls it down.

DOUG

Cleaning up, I see.

EMILIA

(chuckles)

Yes. It's a never-ending battle.
This incinerator is a *godsend*.

DOUG

Are those. . . cat food boxes?

The door squeaks as she lets go of it.

EMILIA

Excuse me?

DOUG

In the bag.

(beat)

I didn't know you had a cat.

EMILIA

Oh, yes.

DOUG

Boy or girl?

EMILIA

(quickly)

A boy.

DOUG

Neutered, I hope.

EMILIA

Of course!

DOUG

Good. I don't want to run into an
angry Bob Barker in the hallway.

(CONTINUED)

EMILIA
(chuckles)

DOUG
What's his name?

EMILIA
Him?

DOUG
The cat.

EMILIA
Oh. . . uhm. . . Bogie.

DOUG
A kitten?

EMILIA
No. He's an older cat. I don't
have the stamina to keep up with a
kitten.

DOUG
May I see him?

EMILIA
I'm afraid not. He's very shy. . .
still getting used to his new
home, I suppose.

DOUG
He's a good eater.

Doug reaches out and shakes the bag his neighbor is
holding.

EMILIA
He *definitely* is.

One of the boxes slips from the bag and drops to the
floor, spilling its contents. Doug stoops to retrieve it.

DOUG
It looks like Bogie missed this
one.

EMILIA
I. . . I must have taken the wrong
box. I'll *bet* there's an empty one
on the kitchen counter. Silly me!
(beat)
May I?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Rising, he hands her the box.

DOUG

Maybe I can see Bogie some other time?

EMILIA

Of course. She should be settled in soon.

DOUG

You be careful with. . . with her.

EMILIA

Why do you say that?

DOUG

Haven't you heard? A bunch of cats from the complex have gone missing.

EMILIA

No?

DOUG

Harry Collins said *nine*.

EMILIA

What happened to them?

DOUG

No one knows.

EMILIA

Well, I'll *certainly* keep Bogart safely inside.

She opens the squeaky incinerator door again and drops the bag down the chute. She lets go of the hatch and turns to leave.

EMILIA

I'll be right back to clean that up.

DOUG

Allow me.

EMILIA

Oh no, no. Thank you, but it's my mess. I'll do it.

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

4 CONTINUED: (4)

EMILIA (CONT'D)

I can't waste Bogie's food. Not on my budget.

FADE OUT.

5 INT. COLLINS'S CONDO - LATER

A well-appointed condo - nicer than Doug's. The men talk as Frisky, Harry's cat, meows occasionally.

COLLINS

You said you wanted to talk?

Frisky meows.

COLLINS

There, there, Frisky. It's not quite dinner time yet.

(beat)

Doug?

DOUG

It's about. . . the cats.

COLLINS

(hopefully)

You found one?

DOUG

Unfortunately not.

(beat)

Did you know that. . . that Mrs. Fiedler got a cat?

COLLINS

Did she? Good for her.

(beat)

What's his name?

DOUG

Bogie.

COLLINS

Cute. I hope he doesn't go missing too.

(beat)

Why are you telling me this? Do you have a problem with cats?

DOUG

Not at all.

(CONTINUED)

5

CONTINUED:

COLLINS

With Mrs. Fiedler then?

DOUG

Of course not!

COLLINS

Then *what*?

DOUG

Did she. . . Did she pay a pet deposit?

COLLINS

There's no need. Cats are OK. A deposit would be necessary for a *dog*, but we don't allow dogs in the complex anyway.

(beat)

Why are you ratting on that poor old lady?

DOUG

(chuckles nervously)

"Ratting?" Not me. Just. . . uhm . . . making sure everyone follows the rules.

COLLINS

Since when?

DOUG

(clears his throat)

COLLINS

Leave that to the board. We can take care of things. You just keep your *own* nose clean.

Frisky meows, as though in agreement.

FADE OUT.

6

INT. DOUG'S CONDO - LATER

Ira is visiting.

IRA

So she has a cat. So what? As long as she keeps baking those cookies, she can have *twenty* cats.

(CONTINUED)

DOUG

There's something. . . *screwy*
going on.

IRA

Whaddya mean?

DOUG

When I asked her the cat's name,
she couldn't remember it at first.

IRA

She must be a hundred years old!
She's *entitled* to forget. Hell,
I'm getting forgetful, and *I'm*
only 42.

DOUG

She called the cat both "Bogie"
and "Bogart," and I could *swear*
she called him "she" at least
once.

IRA

You said the cat was fixed. Does
it matter what sex it was?

DOUG

And that half-full box of food.
What about *that*? If Bogie has such
a good appetite - like she said he
does - why didn't he eat all of
it?

IRA

She explained that.

DOUG

I don't buy that it was her fault -
that she took the wrong box out to
the incinerator.

IRA

Why not?

DOUG

You had to be there. There was
something about her face when she
told me that.

IRA

You think she was lying?

(CONTINUED)

DOUG
(longish beat)
I'm. . .

IRA
Maybe Bogie -

DOUG
Or Bogart.

IRA
Whatever.
(beat)
Maybe he got tired of that brand.
(beat)
Did you ever hear of the word
"finicky?"

DOUG
Sure.

IRA
Cats are worse than kids with what
they won't eat! One day, they'll
love something and, the next day,
it's garbage.

DOUG
But -

IRA
Who knows. . . Maybe the old lady
is eating the food *herself*?

DOUG
The *cat* food?

IRA
Have you heard any cat noises
coming from her place?
(beat)
Even a single meow?

DOUG
Well, no, but -

IRA
Maybe there isn't a Bogie or a
Bogart at all? Maybe she's too
embarrassed to admit what she's
eating because she's broke?

(CONTINUED)

DOUG

She would never -

IRA

You must have seen the stories on the news, Doug. I see them all too often: The poor old guy or old lady - not much money coming in, a fixed income, you know? - starts eating cat food to survive.

DOUG

Yuck!

IRA

Granted, it's usually *wet* food, but she could be someone who likes the crunchy stuff.

DOUG

I doubt she's -

IRA

(quickly)
Who shot JFK?

DOUG

Huh?

IRA

Who shot him?

(beat)
And *Apollo 11*, did it *really* land on the moon or was it all a Hollywood hoax?

DOUG

What are you -

IRA

You're building a conspiracy theory about my favorite cookie baker, pal.

(beat)
My advice would be to calm down and let Mrs. Fiedler be.

DOUG

(beat; sighs)
Maybe I *am* getting a little carried away.

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED: (4)

IRA
(chuckles)
Maybe?
(beat)
Don't you do *anything* to anger
her. If I come over for poker next
month and find out that you've
been blackballed from her cookie
list, I'll *never* let you forget
it.

FADE OUT.

7 INT. LOBBY - MORNING

With Doug onboard, the elevator doors open to Mrs. Perry
again. He steps out.

DOUG
Any luck finding Muffin?

MRS. PERRY
I'm afraid not. I came down here
to see if any of the phone number
tags had been removed from the
poster.
(sighs)
Not a one.

The doors close.

MRS. PERRY
Have you had any luck?

DOUG
(sadly)
No.
(beat)
How's Angie doing?

MRS. PERRY
Not well. She was awake *all* night -
crying - so I was awake with her.
That's one of the "joys" of single
parenthood.

DOUG
Have you thought about getting her
another cat?

(CONTINUED)

7

CONTINUED:

MRS. PERRY

I brought it up, but she wants Muffin.

(beat)

Did you hear the latest?

DOUG

Latest what?

MRS. PERRY

The Kelletts' cat, Oreo, is missing too. That makes *ten*.

DOUG

Has Harry Collins called the police?

MRS. PERRY

Police? A bunch of missing cats doesn't constitute a crime. . . unless you've heard something I haven't.

DOUG

(quickly)

No. Not me.

MRS. PERRY

I love Muffin too, but if she's gone, she's gone. I don't know how many more tears Angie has in her.

FADE OUT.

8

INT. DOUG'S CONDO - LATER

Doug is peering out his door's peephole. He sees Mrs. Fiedler walk down the hall. She signals for the elevator. As the doors close with her onboard, he sneaks from his condo to her door.

Looking up and down the hall, he quickly picks her lock with an unfolded paperclip. After another look, he steps inside, closing the door behind him.

The condo is as neat as a pin.

He looks all around the kitchen, but sees no cat stuff. He sniffs and smells nothing.

(CONTINUED)

DOUG
(sotto voce)
Bogie *must* have a litter box.

EMILIA
(shocked)
Mr. Martin!

DOUG
(gasps)

EMILIA
What are you doing in my home?

DOUG
(growing nervous)
I. . . I thought. . .

EMILIA
How did you get in here?

Ashamed, he holds up the paperclip.

EMILIA
And what was so important that you
had to break in?

DOUG
I. . . I heard. . . crying.

EMILIA
What?

DOUG
Cat crying, you know? I thought
Bogie might be in trouble.

EMILIA
(sarcastically)
Did you now?

DOUG
I didn't want the little guy to
get himself hurt.

EMILIA
So, rather than going to the super
for his master key, you broke in?

He takes a couple of steps towards her. She backs up and
unsnaps her purse.

(CONTINUED)

DOUG

It was quicker.

(getting nervous)

You. . . You know what it's like
finding Mr. Donovan sometimes.
Bogie could have -

She removes a small gun from her purse.

EMILIA

Stay *right* there.

DOUG

(shocked)

Put that. . . that thing down?
(beat)
Somebody could get hurt.

EMILIA

That "somebody" would be *you*.

DOUG

But I'm your *neighbor*. You know
me.

EMILIA

I *thought* I did. Right now, you're
someone who's broken into my home.

DOUG

I'll. . . I'll leave then.

Doug takes a couple of steps away.

EMILIA

That's exactly what you're *not*
going to do.

(beat)

Isn't it serendipitous,
"neighbor," that you broke in here
right after I left to go food
shopping? If I hadn't forgotten my
coupons and come back, your crime
would have gone unnoticed.

DOUG

Crime?

EMILIA

Breaking and entering, and maybe
other things. Who knows what else
you had in mind?

(CONTINUED)

DOUG
(adamantly)
I was trying to help Bogie.

EMILIA
There is no Bogie! Haven't you
figured that out yet?

DOUG
No -

EMILIA
I'd never own a cat. Despicable
balls of fur, all of them.

DOUG
(beat)
You're responsible for the cat
disappearances, aren't you?

EMILIA
Very good. Maybe you're not as
dumb as I thought.

DOUG
Are they all. . .

EMILIA
Dead?
(proudly)
Yes.

DOUG
(confused)
But they were *indoor* cats.

EMILIA
Did you know this complex has
several secret passages - ways to
get into other condos?

DOUG
No.

EMILIA
The blueprints don't show them. I
stumbled on them accidentally. I
believe they may have been part of
the Underground Railroad back
when.
(beat)
I've made it a point to. . . use
them.

(CONTINUED)

DOUG

How?

EMILIA

I keep a close eye on everyone who lives here. I know when they leave in the morning and come home at night. When they're gone, I take the passageways to their condos and. . . help myself.

DOUG

Stealing? *You?*

EMILIA

Only *little* things - trinkets the residents will later convince themselves have been misplaced.

(beat)

I've built up a nice nest egg with the help of several pawn brokers and fences who know how to *not* ask questions.

DOUG

But the cats -

EMILIA

A diversion, albeit a *pleasant* one.

(beat)

I heard Mr. Collins mention that the condo board is considering renovating the buildings.

DOUG

I heard that too.

EMILIA

They'd find the passageways, which would cut into my. . . "*business.*" I started wondering what would keep those busy bodies too bogged down to move ahead with the renovations.

DOUG

(shocked)

Killing cats?

EMILIA

Two birds with one stone.

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

EMILIA (CONT'D)

I can't tell you how many of those vile creatures I've nearly tripped over during my "rounds." And, if they're not underfoot hoping that you'll fall and break a hip, they're hissing at you.

DOUG

(laughs nervously)
You're joking - right?

EMILIA

Once they eat the food I put down and came close enough to me. . .
Crack! Their necks are very fragile - one quick twist.

(beat)

I'd bring their carcasses back here with my windfall.

DOUG

You didn't cook -

EMILIA

No! Why would I want such a *despicable* thing inside of me? I dropped them down the incinerator chute when no one was looking.

She gestures at the kitchen table.

EMILIA

Sit.

DOUG

Wh-Why?

EMILIA

(adamantly)

I said *sit*.

Doug quickly pulls out a kitchen chair and sits.

EMILIA

The cats were a convenient cover. They kept everyone busy and unsuspecting of what I've *really* been doing.

She steps to the fridge, opens the door, and pulls something covered in Saran Wrap from one of the shelves. She tosses it onto the table in front of Doug. It lands with a sickening *squish*. He springs back. A human leg!

(CONTINUED)

DOUG
(shrieks)

EMILIA
Calm down!

DOUG
(beat)
Wh-Whose. . .

EMILIA
My late husband, Rudy.

DOUG
(disbelieving)
You've been. . . cooking him?

EMILIA
Slowly but surely. He was a hefty man, so it's taken some time.

DOUG
You killed your husband?

EMILIA
No. He died. Everyone, including our boys, believe he was cremated . . . but he wasn't.

(beat)
I'm on a fixed income. I have to get by where I can. No sense in letting all that good eating go to waste.

DOUG
You're nuts!

She waves her pistol at him.

EMILIA
I wouldn't be so mouthy on the wrong end of a gun, Mr. Martin.
(beat)
You'd be surprised how malleable human flesh is when you know how. Some simple spices work wonders. I've made all kinds of things with my husband's remains: Casseroles, pasta dishes. . . *cookies*.

DOUG
You *didn't*!

(CONTINUED)

EMILIA

Did you and your poker friends
enjoy them?

DOUG

(gagging)
I'm gonna be sick.

EMILIA

You never suspected anything? Not
even for a minute?

DOUG

(still gagging)
No.

EMILIA

See how good I am.

DOUG

May. . . May I leave now?

EMILIA

Certainly not!

DOUG

I won't tell anyone. I swear.

EMILIA

I don't believe you.

(beat)

No, Mr. Martin, from this moment
on, you. . . you are my customer.

DOUG

Customer?

EMILIA

Imagine this condominium as a
restaurant. A small bistro, if you
will.

(beat)

You are going to help me dispose
of Rudy.

DOUG

D-Down the incinerator chute?

EMILIA

Think again.

(CONTINUED)

DOUG

(beat)
I *couldn't*.

EMILIA

You already have.

DOUG

I'll. . . I'll puke.

EMILIA

You'll clean it up if you do.

DOUG

I could get rid of his remains -
at no risk to you. Why do you want
to. . . to. . .

EMILIA

It's good practice, and it fills
the tummy. I used to be quite the
terror in the kitchen. I want to
keep my hand in it. Besides, if I
truly wished to burn Rudy up, I
would have really had him
cremated. No, the incinerator is
definitely out.

She rolls the squishy leg around on the table.

EMILIA

All defrosted. Wonderful.

(beat)
I was thinking of a nice. . . leg
of lamb. Wouldn't that be yummy?

DOUG

I. . . I. . . can't possibly -

EMILIA

You *will*. You didn't suspect a
thing with the cookies, and you
won't with any of my future dishes
either.

DOUG

But I know what you're doing now.
I'll know what I'm eating!

EMILIA

I suggest you put it out of your
mind. After all, I still have
several dishes to prepare.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (9)

Doug gestures at the leg.

DOUG

All from. . . from *this*?

EMILIA

Oh no.

She opens the freezer door. It is very full.

EMILIA

I said he was a hefty man. There's still enough for many more dinners that we will share at this very table.

She closes the freezer door.

EMILIA

Why, Mr. Martin, you've gone white. Let me fix you some tea.

DOUG

I don't want any tea. I want to go *home*.

EMILIA

Very well.

DOUG

Excuse me?

EMILIA

Dinner will be at 7:00.

DOUG

I can leave?

EMILIA

Of course.

(beat)

Could you bring something for dessert? Strawberry shortcake would be nice. I think Stop & Shop is having a sale this week.

Doug hurriedly pushes out his chair and stands.

DOUG

I'm not coming back here - not for dinner, not ever!

(CONTINUED)

8

CONTINUED: (10)

EMILIA

You will.

(beat)

Remember the passageways? I'd hate to have to show up at your place tonight with this gun.

DOUG

You *are* crazy!

EMILIA

Don't think of telling anyone about my thefts or my husband. At the slightest hint of trouble, I'll disappear into the passageways. The police will never find me. . . but I'll find you.

(beat)

7:00 then, Mr. Martin? Dress is casual.

FADE OUT.

9

INT. DOUG'S CONDO - A WEEK LATER

A haggard Doug speaks directly to the camera.

DOUG

What could I do? For the past week or so, I've been going over to her place every night for dinner. Once I got over my initial gag reflex, it wasn't *that* bad. Mrs. Fiedler did a good job covering up the source of. . . of the meat. There's plenty left if you'd like to join us.

(beat)

If you say so, but can you answer one question for me: Would red wine or white wine go better with . . . with Rudy?

FADE TO BLACK.