

Buster

By Greg Ernstrom

Boston University
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ernstrom@bu.edu
585-750-9160

FADE IN:

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - DAY - ESTABLISHING

A perfect neighborhood. White picket fence. The smell of money.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

MONICA (20s) sits at attention. She jots notes down furiously.

MRS. FORBES (40s), dressed in a smart suit, paces. Her heels strike the marble floor and echo like gun shots.

MRS. FORBES

We keep Buster's medicine in the fridge. He needs it twice a day. Help yourself to anything else in there.

MONICA

Thank you so much for this opportunity, Mrs. Forbes.

A dog barks and scurries into the room. A medium sized dog with a lush coat. A flashy collar hangs on his neck. It reads: BUSTER. Mrs. Forbes kneels down and pets her beloved pooch.

MRS. FORBES

Hi Buster-wuster. You're a good boy. Yes you are. Monica is going to take great care of you, baby. Yes she will!

Monica is a bit disturbed by the amount of affection being shown.

MR. FORBES (50s) walks into the room. A powerful man with a power suit to match. His body language reeks of arrogance with a splash of charm. He watches his wife with Buster.

MR. FORBES

We're going to miss the plane.

Mrs. Forbes continues to play kissy-face with Buster.

MRS. FORBES

I'm going to miss you, big boy.

Mr. Forbes motions for her to follow him.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Each room is more lavish than the next. Filled with expensive vases, furniture -- even the books look like they have their own IRAs.

Mr. Forbes grabs a leather bound address book off a desk.

MR. FORBES
All the emergency numbers can be
found here.

MRS. FORBES (O.S.)
Come on, honey, get a move on!

The sound of the front door closing. Mr. Forbes adjusts his tie.

Buster wanders into the room. He casts the stink eye at Monica. Mr. Forbes notices.

MR. FORBES
Buster, sit.

The dog doesn't move. Mr. Forbes grins at Monica.

MR. FORBES (CONT'D)
Sit.
(nothing)
He only listens to the lady of the house.

Monica politely smiles.

MR. FORBES (CONT'D)
Monica, have a lovely week. Don't let this little guy push you around.

MONICA
No problem, sir. And thanks again for this opportunity.

Forbes smiles and hands her the book.

MR. FORBES
I'll see you at the office in two weeks.

MONICA
The office?
(eyebrows shoot up)
The position opened up?

MR. FORBES
Monica, would I let the receptionist dog sit for us?

She doesn't know how to respond.

MR. FORBES (CONT'D)
That's a job for our new copywriter.

MONICA

Thank you, Mr. Forbes! I won't let
you down!

A horn honks.

MR. FORBES

Be good. Both of you.

Forbes exits. Monica does an excited jig. Buster cocks his
head.

After the front door closes, Monica lets out an excited
squeal. She looks to Buster -- he GROWLS.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Chaos. Buster GALLOPS through the decadent living room.
Hyperactive and destructive, he leaves a path of destruction.

Monica gives chase, a cell phone pressed to her ear.

MONICA

Come here, you little shit!

The dog runs through her legs, knocks her on her ass.

MONICA (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)

Danny, you're supposed to be helping!

INT. APARTMENT -- SIMULTANEOUSLY

DANNY (20s), decked out in dread locks and a Rastafarian
shirt, sits on his couch, ear pressed to the cell phone,
lips pressed against a glass bong. A video game on pause.

He takes a long hit. Exhales a thick cloud of smoke.

DANNY (ON PHONE)

I am.

INTERCUTTING

Buster tears out of the room. High pitched barking continues.

MONICA (ON PHONE)

I thought you were a dog person!

The sound of another bong hit being ripped.

DANNY (ON PHONE)

I thought you were "Little Ms.
Perfect." Wonder Woman. Never
needing my help.

Buster barks and enters the room at breakneck speed.

MONICA

SIT! STAY!

Buster blows by her.

DANNY (ON PHONE)

Let me ask you something. Why would you agree to dog sit when you hate dogs?

MONICA (ON PHONE)

I like dogs.

Buster knocks over a table.

MONICA (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)

Cartoon dogs.

Danny sets down the bong. Leans back, stoned and happy.

MONICA (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)

I'm your sister! Help me!

DANNY (ON PHONE)

Let the little guy run around, he'll tire out eventually. Then just lock him up. Problem solved.

Buster jumps onto one of the plants and knocks it over. CRASH! One more expensive vase bites the dust.

MONICA

Damn it!

Monica snaps the phone shut.

LATER

Monica sits on the couch, a nice glass of booze in her hand. Buster continues to run laps around the house.

LATER...MUCH, MUCH LATER

Monica is passed out. The nice glass has been replaced by the actual bottle of Vodka.

Buster stops. Looks to the sleeping Monica, then, finally, lies down.

Monica opens one eye and POUNCES.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

She drags him into the pantry and closes the door.

MONICA

(to the closed door)

Stay!

She slumps against the door. Her eyes drift to the living room. Surveys the damage.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Monica cleans up the damage caused by Buster. The living room is almost back to perfect condition, minus the vases.

She takes a good look around, satisfied. A night of little sleep wears on her face.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Monica strides back into the kitchen and opens the fridge. She finds Buster's medicine.

MONICA

Are you ready for your medicine, you little shit?

Monica listens to the pantry door. No sound. She opens the door...

MONICA (CONT'D)

Bus...

...And GASPS. The sight stops her. There, in the middle of the pantry, lies Buster. On his back, feet up. She drops the medicine.

MONICA (CONT'D)

...ter?

Unsure what to do she searches for a pulse...but dogs don't have wrists. And this pooch is most certainly dead.

MONICA (CONT'D)

Don't do this to me. Please, God don't do this to me.

She flips open her cell phone...

INTERCUTTING WITH DANNY'S APARTMENT

MONICA (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)

The dog's dead!

DANNY (ON PHONE)

What?

Danny is positioned on the couch exactly how he was before. Bong next to him, video game controller in hand. He plays a particularly violent game.

MONICA (ON PHONE)

Dead! I am looking at a dead fucking dog, Danny.

She stops checking the pulse...

DANNY (ON PHONE)
Are you sure?

MONICA (ON PHONE)
Of course I'm sure!

Danny pumps his fist as he dispatches a video game villain.

DANNY
Take that scum-sucker! DIE!!!

MONICA (ON PHONE)
Get off your ass and help me! I
have covered your share of the rent
for the past three months. You want
a fourth?

Danny's video game persona meets a grisly end. Danny tosses the controller, as frustrated as a stoner can get.

DANNY (ON PHONE)
Call a vet.

Danny hangs up the phone and rips a long bong hit.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Monica grabs the leather bound address book. Finds the correct page. A number is dialed.

MONICA (ON PHONE)
Hello? Yes! I have an emergency!

INT. ANIMAL HOSPITAL -- CONTINUOUS

A haggard NURSE (40s), buried in paper work half listens to the caller. A couple CO-WORKERS drone on behind her.

NURSE (ON PHONE)
What kind of animal is in trouble,
miss?

INTERCUTTING

MONICA (ON PHONE)
The dead kind.

NURSE (ON PHONE)
We are a hospital, miss. We can't
raise the dead.

MONICA (ON PHONE)
There has to be something you can
do. This is Mr. Forbes's dog!

NURSE (ON PHONE)
Mr. Forbes? As in Mr. and Mrs.
Forbes's dog, Buster?

The Nurse stops shuffling files. The Co-Workers snap to attention.

Monica senses an opportunity.

MONICA (ON PHONE)
Yes, that Mrs. Forbes. I need your help.

NURSE (ON PHONE)
Help? You already helped me and this whole office.

The Nurse addresses the gathered Co-Workers:

NURSE (CONT'D)
This girl killed the bitch's dog!

A chorus of cheers.

MONICA (ON PHONE)
I didn't kill it!

NURSE (ON PHONE)
Good luck explaining that to Mrs. Forbes.

Monica regroupes.

MONICA (ON PHONE)
Unless you want me to tell Mrs. Forbes that her dog is dead because you prescribed the wrong dosage for the dog's medicine, then you're going to help me.

NURSE (ON PHONE)
We did no such thing.

MONICA (ON PHONE)
Good luck explaining that to Mrs. Forbes.

The nurse "shushes" the Co-Workers.

MONICA (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)
Mrs. Forbes needs to know there was nothing I could have done to prevent this.

The Nurse weighs her options.

NURSE (ON PHONE)
I am certain Mrs. Forbes will have explicit instructions on what to do with the remains.

MONICA (ON PHONE)
Meaning?

NURSE (ON PHONE)
Meaning you better get the body here before it starts to stink. We'll put it on ice and notify Mr. Forbes.

Monica clicks off the phone and quickly dials another number. It rings and Danny picks up.

INTERCUTTING WITH DANNY'S APARTMENT

DANNY (ON PHONE)
What?!

He is in the middle of another video game.

MONICA (ON PHONE)
Get the car and come pick me up.

DANNY (ON PHONE)
Uh...

Danny blasts another video game demon.

MONICA (ON PHONE)
No "Uh's", Danny. Not today. Get your ass in the car.

DANNY (ON PHONE)
I gave Sam the car.

MONICA (ON PHONE)
You gave that degenerate my car?!

DANNY (ON PHONE)
He had a job interview. He'll be back by four.

MONICA (ON PHONE)
Danny, Sam hasn't been employed...ever.

DANNY (ON PHONE)
Yeah, that's why he needed the car.

She groans and flicks off the phone.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

She stands over Buster's body. Looks down upon it.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Monica tears through a bedroom closet. Tosses bags left and right. Bingo!

EXT. STREET - DAY

Monica walks down the sidewalk, following the signs for the subway. She drags a small suitcase, complete with a set of wheels, behind her. An address tag hangs off the handle.

A rigor mortis paw dangles from the bag...

EXT. SUBWAY STATION - DAY

Monica gets onto the escalator and descends into the station.

INT. SUBWAY STATION - CONTINUOUS

People pass Monica by. She notices their stares. Monica looks back and sees the paw.

MONICA

Shit.

She quickly stops and re-zips the bag. She boards the train.

INT. SUBWAY STATION - DAY

Monica has reached her stop. She exits the train, bag in tow.

She hurries, nearly tripping as she races towards the exit. Monica stops suddenly. In front of her is a large, steep staircase. No escalator in sight.

Monica sighs and begins to lug the bag up the steps.

Suddenly, the weight is lifted...

CHARMING MAN (O.S.)

Need a hand?

Monica turns and sees that a good looking, CHARMING MAN (30s) has picked up one end of the bag.

MONICA

Oh, thank you so much.

Together they begin walking up the steps.

CHARMING MAN

You looked like you were in a hurry.

MONICA

You have no idea.

She makes eye contact with him. He smiles. Flirty.

CHARMING MAN
Moving into the area?

MONICA
No.

CHARMING MAN
What's in the bag?

She looks down at the bag -- she can almost see Buster's paw sticking out. But it's her mind playing tricks on her.

MONICA
Stereo equipment.

The Charming Man laughs.

MONICA (CONT'D)
It's for my boyfriend. A surprise
for his birthday.

CHARMING MAN
He's a lucky guy.

Monica stops for a moment, flustered.

MONICA
That's what I tell him all the time.

They reach the top. He sets the bag upright.

CHARMING MAN
There you go, ma'am.

MONICA
Thank you so much. It's so nice to
know that gentlemen like yourself
are still out there.

He smiles, his eyes dart around slightly.

CHARMING MAN
It was my pleasure.
(he looks to the ground
behind her)
Oh, did you drop something?

He points. She turns and sees a quarter on the ground.

MONICA
See what I mean? A real...

She bends down to grab it....

MONICA (CONT'D)
...gentleman.

The Charming Man SNAGS the bag and TAKES OFF! Monica doesn't even have time to process what has happened.

MONICA (CONT'D)

What the...Hey!!!

She starts chasing after him, but he is far too fast. The thief loses her in traffic.

Panic sets in on Monica's face. She looks around.

MONICA (CONT'D)

Fuck.

Her cell phone rings. She answers it in a panic.

MONICA (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)

Danny?!

INTERCUTTING WITH ANIMAL HOSPITAL

NURSE (ON PHONE)

This is the Park Street Animal Hospital....

The Nurse sits at her desk.

NURSE (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)

I just wanted to let you know, I called the Forbes and explained the situation.

MONICA (ON PHONE)

Oh, that's wonderful. Just lovely.

NURSE (ON PHONE)

They were relieved you had the foresight to bring the animal to us. And don't worry, I told them there was nothing that could have been done.

Monica bites her lip.

NURSE (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)

They are coming home tomorrow to have a service for the dog.

MONICA (ON PHONE)

What?!

NURSE (ON PHONE)

Crazy how some people love their pets, isn't it?

Monica flips off the phone.

INT. POUND -- DAY

Monica and Danny stroll through the cages of barking dogs. Monica is intense and focused.

DANNY

I can't believe I'm doing this.

MONICA

In twenty two years I have never once asked you for a favor.

She stops in front of a cage -- the dog looks exactly like Buster. Only this one is quiet. Pleasant even.

MONICA (CONT'D)

Oh my God, that is a dead ringer!

Danny looks at the dog, giggles at the pun.

DANNY

Who are you, Marsha Brady? You're going to try to pass this dog off as the one you whacked?

MONICA

First: I didn't whack anything. B: Not exactly.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- DAY

Danny sits in the Forbes's living room. The new dog sits before him. Wags its tail happily. They are engaged in a staring contest.

DANNY

This dog is totally checking me out.

Monica paces in the background.

MONICA

Okay, we can solve this. For every problem, there's a solution, right?

Danny cocks his head. The dog follows suit.

DANNY

Whoa...

MONICA

Danny! Pay attention!

The dog hops up on the couch next to Danny, nuzzles his head in his lap.

DANNY

See? Told you this dog wants me.

MONICA

The Forbes's plane lands at 10am tomorrow. We have to get this new dog to the vet before then.

DANNY

Don't you think the vet will notice that this dog is...alive?

He continues to pet the dog.

MONICA

That is why we have to figure out a solution.

Danny stops. Realization sets in.

DANNY

Whoa, whoa, whoa!

He jumps off the couch.

DANNY (CONT'D)

You're going to kill this dog?!

MONICA

No, we are.

DANNY

Duuuuude! I did not sign on for this! Whoa!

Danny grabs his dread locks.

MONICA

They are going to have a fucking funeral for Buster and his body is gone! We need a replacement.

DANNY

Do I look like a Dog Assassin to you?! I'm a pacifist!

MONICA

I've watched you play countless hours of that bloody video game!

DANNY

Dude! Way over the line!

Monica gets in his face.

MONICA

I pay your rent. I pay for your food. I pay for the electric. And I do that with a job. If we don't do this, I'll have no job.

(MORE)

MONICA (CONT'D)

And you'll have no apartment. No food. And no more weed.

DANNY

Take that back!

LATER

Both Danny and Monica now sit on the couch. They share booze straight from the bottle, no glass needed.

The new dog, sleeps at their feet. Calm and quiet. The perfect dog.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Look at him. He has no idea what's going to happen.

MONICA

None of us ever do.

Danny takes a stiff shot.

DANNY

I don't think I can do this.

MONICA

It's the only way. It has to look like natural causes.

She checks her watch.

MONICA (CONT'D)

That is if that degenerate ever shows up.

There is a KNOCK at the door.

MONICA (CONT'D)

Wonders never cease...

INT. KITCHEN -- LATER

Danny and Monica are joined by SAM (20s). Shaggy and rotund, Sam looks even more out of touch than Danny.

SAM

You're looking really good, Monica.

He licks his lips. Ogles Monica.

MONICA

Where's the stuff, Sam?

Sam reaches into his trench coat. He pulls out a bag of WHITE PILLS.

SAM

This is the good stuff. It will do you up real nice. Usually it's a bit more pricey, but for you...

He looks lovingly at her. She cringes.

SAM (CONT'D)

I'm willing to go half off.

Monica forks over a wad of bills. She starts sorting the drugs. Sam walks over to join Danny.

SAM (CONT'D)

I gotta say, I never knew your sister was into this sort of thing. It's kind of a turn on.

MONICA

It's not for me. It's for the dog.

She begins to mash up the pills in a bowl. Danny looks away...Sam just smiles.

SAM

Now that...is a real turn on.

On cue, the dog scampers into the kitchen. Tail ever wagging.

SAM (CONT'D)

Well I certainly see the attraction.

He pets the dog.

DANNY

She killed her boss's dog then lost the body. Now she needs a new body.

MONICA

I didn't kill the dog!
(stops mashing pills)
How many of these will make this dog OD?

Sam looks to Danny. He shrugs his shoulders.

The new pooch yips slightly and wags its tail.

LATER

The pills have been mashed into a fine paste and mixed into a mouth watering mixture of mashed potatoes and gravy.

The trio sit around the kitchen table -- the potatoes in front of them, the dog at their feet. The clock on the wall reads 5:30am.

DANNY

I guess there are worse ways to go
than death by mash potato.

Monica looks to the dog. She breaks a little. Danny looks
away. Sam is all smiles.

SAM

Who gets to do it?

The dog might as well be smiling. It puts its paw on Danny's
leg.

DANNY

I'm a pacifist.

SAM

I'll do it.

Sam reaches for the potatoes...Monica stops him.

MONICA

Wait. I can't. We can't. This is
wrong.

She stands up and reaches down to pet the dog.

MONICA (CONT'D)

Look at him. He is precious.

DANNY

I thought you hated dogs.

MONICA

He isn't a beast like all the rest.

The dog licks her face. She smiles.

DANNY

What about the job?

SAM

What about all the pills we just
wasted?!

She stands. Paces the kitchen.

MONICA

They'll understand. They have to.
It was an accident. Right?

She looks to the peanut gallery. Blank faces.

DANNY

There's a mural of the damn dog in
their bedroom.

She tries searches the fridge for alcohol. Comes up empty.

MONICA

Where's the damn booze!

She slams the fridge and sinks down in tears. Danny and Sam rush over to her.

The new dog hops up onto the table and starts to eat the abandoned potatoes, unbeknownst to the others.

DANNY

It's okay. It's okay.

She sobs into his arms. Sam just watches from above. He might be trying to look down her shirt.

MONICA

I don't know what to do!

DANNY

You're Wonder Woman. You can find another job.

Monica smiles and wipes away a tear.

THUD!

They turn and see the new dog collapsed near the now empty bowl of potatoes.

SAM

Cool.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- MORNING

Dressed all in black, Monica sits with the Forbes. The body of the new dog is covered by a sheet on the living room floor.

MONICA

With the heat wave, the vet said it was best to leave the body here in the AC.

Monica dabs her eyes. Mrs. Forbes balls.

MRS. FORBES

I'm just happy that Buster didn't die alone. I'm so glad you were there for him, Monica.

Mrs. Forbes grabs Monica's arms, then turns and buries her face in Mr. Forbes's shoulder.

The doorbell rings. Neither Forbes move.

MONICA

I'll get that.

MR. FORBES
Thank you, Monica.

INT. / EXT. FRONT DOOR -- MOMENTS LATER

Monica opens the door. A LARGE POLICE OFFICER stands in the way.

POLICE OFFICER
Is this the Forbes's residence?

MONICA
Yes, can I help...

She looks down and notices THE MISSING BAG at the officer's feet. She goes white.

MONICA (CONT'D)
...you?

Mr. Forbes comes to the door.

MR. FORBES
Is there a problem, Officer?

POLICE OFFICER
This bag was dropped off at the station. It had your address on it. When we looked inside...well...

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mrs. Forbes continues to sob. On the ground, the sheet begins to twitch...and twitch some more.

Mrs. Forbes notices.

INT. / EXT. FRONT DOOR -- CONTINUOUS

The Police Officer lies the bag down and begins to unzip it.

Mr. Forbes looks to Monica.

MONICA
I can explain...

POLICE OFFICER
When we looked inside, we found...

MRS. FORBES (O.S.)
BUSTER!

Mr. Forbes turns towards the noise coming from the living room. A dog BARKS from inside the house. Monica's head spins.

The bag is opened. Buster's body is revealed, flashy collar and all!

MR. FORBES

Buster?

Mr. Forbes scrambles to put the pieces together. He looks to Monica who cowers.

The new dog, alive and well, runs to the door and sniffs the bag. It looks up to Mr. Forbes and wags its tail.

Mr. Forbes pets it in shock. The friendly pooch nuzzles his leg.

MONICA

I can explain, I really can...

MR. FORBES

(to the dog)

Sit!

The dog happily complies.

Mrs. Forbes bounds after it. Happy as a peach.

Quickly, Mr. Forbes kicks the bag closed, covers the body.

MRS. FORBES

Look, honey! He's alive! It's a miracle! He came back to life!

Monica and the Officer stare at Mr. Forbes.

MR. FORBES

Thanks for your concern, Officer, but that is not our bag.

Mr. Forbes grabs Monica and shuts the door on the Officer.

MR. FORBES (CONT'D)

(to his wife)

Honey, why don't you take Buster outside. I'll join you in a moment.

MRS. FORBES

Come on, Buster-wuster! Come on!

The dog looks at her. Hesitant, not used to the name.

MRS. FORBES (CONT'D)

Come on...what's wrong, baby?

Monica motions with her head for the dog to follow Mrs. Forbes. After a moment, the dog stumbles after Mrs. Forbes -- still a little wobbly from the drugs.

Once the wife is out of ear shot, Mr. Forbes shakes Monica's hands. She is shocked by the gesture.

MR. FORBES

Thank you.

MONICA

Thank you?

MR. FORBES

That dog was a monster. I never had the balls to take him out myself.

MONICA

Sir, I didn't take him...

MR. FORBES

You were creative and inventive. The makings of a great copywriter. I knew I was right about you.

MRS. FORBES (O.S.)

Honey! Come play with Buster. He misses you!

Mr. Forbes looks over to the living room. He reaches into his wallet and withdraws a wad of bills. He pauses.

MR. FORBES

The new one is better, right?

MONICA

The best.

He gives Monica the cash and Monica exits. She stands outside for a moment and takes a deep breath. Calm for the first time.

She starts walking down the path away from the house...

MRS. FORBES (O.S.)

Honey, where's Buster's collar?!

Monica looks back towards the house, then...sprints away!

FADE OUT: