

# EAT A CAN

## By Leon Kaye

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

IAN: A young actor with low self-esteem. Short, slight, and unremarkable, he needs to please others to make headway.

ALLEN: About fifty-five, a veteran of the theatre, Mr. Allen tries to bring a theatrical touch into his commercials. He often waves his arms around as he speaks.

MICHAEL: About fifty, he's seen it all and is quite bored with his job. It pays the bills and gives him opportunity to needle Allen.

## PROPS

Bowl of dog food  
pair of mittens  
newspaper

## SETTING

A sleek residential kitchen with a counter lining the back wall. Perhaps, an island is situated downstage center. Left, is a large commercial video camera and two director-style chairs.

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***AT RISE: ALLEN stands center stage, surveys the kitchen from all angles, bending, raising his hands as if holding a camera. MICHAEL sits on one of the two chairs, reading a newspaper.***

ALLEN: Nice. This is very nice. The counter is nice. The appliances... Everything is coming along quite swimmingly.

MICHAEL: *Swimmingly?* I thought we were done with pretentious, useless words... Actually, forty-five down.

***(HE takes a pen, scrawls on the newspaper.)***

ALLEN: You're doing a crossword now? We need to set.

MICHAEL: We were set fifteen minutes ago.

ALLEN: How's the lighting?

MICHAEL: Seems like it's on.

ALLEN: You set the marks? The camera's ready?

MICHAEL: Asked and answered.

ALLEN: Asked and answered? Very smart. ***(theatrically)*** By day he's a lowly cameraman, but at night, he turns into a paralegal.

MICHAEL: You were boring as Lear, you were boring as Macbeth, and you're more boring now.

ALLEN: You're a lifetime cameraman. What do you know about Shakespeare?

MICHAEL: Only what I've read. I haven't actually met the man like you have.

ALLEN: Where's Ian?

IAN: ***(enters from stage left, holding a script in hand)*** I'm here, Mr. Allen.

ALLEN: Ian, my boy! ***(HE approaches, throws one arm around IAN.)*** Are you ready to play perhaps the greatest role of your career?

MICHAEL: It's a dog food commercial for crying out loud!

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IAN: I know I'm going to do very well, Mr. Allen. I'm well prepared. **(HE places the script down on a seat.)** I'm sure if we walk through the commercial just one time, I can nail it on the first take.

ALLEN: I'm afraid not.

IAN: No?

ALLEN: What I mean is we're revamping the commercial.

IAN: **(disappointed)** Oh.

ALLEN: It's the promotional people. They had this eleventh hour thing.

MICHAEL: They always do that, kid. Someone always has a better idea.

ALLEN: Right, so we're going with a different tact, a more sophisticated approach --

IAN: Is there a script?

ALLEN: No. No need for a script. It's a silent commercial.

IAN: Where's the dog? Where's Randy?

ALLEN: No dog.

IAN: A dog food commercial without a dog?

ALLEN: The dog's going to do a voice over.

IAN: That's some smart dog.

MICHAEL: **(stands, heads to the camera)** They're using a cartoon dog, and they're gonna dub the voices in later. **(IAN turns to MICHAEL, tries to understand.)** It's better. Then they can dub in different languages.

ALLEN: The cartoon dog moves its lips and out comes Spanish, German, or Japanese. It's all very cost effective. You understand?

IAN: I guess. So, just show me what you want me to do. I'm very familiar with the whole concept of commercials.

MICHAEL: Show him his mark.

**(ALLEN walks toward center stage.)**

IAN: I've studied them in detail at UCLA.

ALLEN: You start off here. You sit for about eight seconds.

IAN: Sit? On the floor?

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ALLEN: Yes. You sit quietly right here, but then--you see something across the room. It excites you. It's all very nouveau, very hip, delectable. So you jump up, race across the floor to the doggie bowl here. **(HE points stage left.)** And then you start eating. And it's wonderful.

IAN: I eat dog food?

ALLEN: Well, yes, of course you do.

MICHAEL: It *is* a dog food commercial.

ALLEN: We couldn't have you eating lobsters or paté, now could we?

IAN: I... I don't --

ALLEN: Oh, you don't understand the theme. **(to MICHAEL)** Method actors. **(to IAN)** The cartoon dog stands right here. And after you've swallowed your mouthful, the dog looks at you and says, "good boy." And then you smile at the camera. **(ALLEN points to the camera. MICHAEL waves at IAN.)** It's very amusing actually.

MICHAEL: Smile AFTER you've swallowed the dog food.

IAN: What?

ALLEN: Yes. Good point. Smile after you've cleansed your mouth. Otherwise, it would be rather disgusting. **(to MICHAEL)** Of course, the computer people could whiten any stray doggie nuggets. **(IAN looks lost.)** Still having trouble picturing the dog? You've seen the film, "Roger Rabbit," haven't you?

IAN: I really eat dog food?

ALLEN: Yes, yes. I thought we've already been through this.

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