Pet Rock

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EXT. - DRIVEWAY - DAY

KATIE, 9, shows a glass jar with a roly poly bug in it to NICK, 12, who reads a book while listening to his iPod.

KATIE

I named him Herman. Isn't he cute?

Nick reads on, not looking up from his book.

KATIE (CONT'D)

I like roly polies. I wish I could have a pet. Maybe Dad will let me get another hermit crab. Or a fish or something. Whaddya think?

Nothing from Nick.

KATIE (CONT'D)

Yeah. You're probably right.

INT. - LIVING ROOM - DAY

DAD, 44, fatherly in an Eisenhower-era way, reads Goodnight Moon in a big armchair, feet kicked up on the ottoman. Katie approaches him tentatively.

KATIE

Daddy?

DAD

(putting down his book)

Yes, Sugar Pumpkin?

KATIE

Can I have a pet?

DAD

Now look, Honey Muffin, you know the rule on that.

KATIE

I know but...

DAD

What's the rule?

KATIE

I know but...

What's the rule?

KATIE

Pet's die. And when pet's die, I cry.

DAD

That's right. So when you ask me if you can have a pet, what you're really asking me is if you can cry at some future point. And I'd just hate for my little Fluffy Bunny to cry. Okay?

KATIE

Okay.

DAD

Okay?

KATIE

Yeah. Okay. I just really want a pet is all.

DAD

You mean you just really want to cry?

KATIE

No.

DAD

Right. Run along, my little Potato Bug. Off you go.

Katie slumps away.

INT. - KITCHEN - DAY

Katie and Nick sit at the table. Nick draws while he listens to his iPod. Katie eats pretzel sticks out of a bowl.

KATIE

Well, you were right. He said no. Then he called me Hunny Bunny and Fluffy Muffin and all his other weird names.

She eats a pretzel stick.

KATIE (CONT'D)

Man, I wish I could have a pet.

EXT. - STREET - DAY

Katie and Nick stroll along the street in their upper middle class suburban neighborhood. Nick listens to his iPod.

KATIE

But if I could only pick one I'd have to take Patrick the Starfish. I think he would taste better.

INSERT - SIGN FOR A GARAGE SALE

KATIE (CONT'D)

Hey, Nick, look. A garage sale. Think Dad will let us go?

Nick shrugs.

INT. - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Dad reads a Spider Man comic book. Katie approaches him hesitantly.

KATIE

Daddy?

Dad puts down his book.

DAD

Hey there, Buttermilk.

KATIE

Buttermilk?

DAD

Whatcha need?

KATIE

Can Nick and I go to a garage sale on Saturday?

DAD

Sure. Do you have any money?

KATIE

Yeah. I still have that money you gave me for stripping the asbestos out of the basement.

DAD

There's a good girl. Run along, now, my little Fender Bender.

Fender Bender?

DAD

Run along.

He makes the shoo motion with his hand.

EXT. - DRIVEWAY - DAY

Nick rocks out while listening to his iPod. He's in a full-blown air guitar jam when Katie comes up.

KATIE

Hey, Nick, guess what?

Nick immediately stops his jam and looks at her.

KATIE (CONT'D)

Dad said we could go.

Nick gives the thumbs up. Then, a moment later, returns to his full-blown jam session. Katie watches him, unsure.

EXT. - GARAGE SALE - DAY

A MAN and WOMAN, married, thirties, look over the wares, which consist of a fold up card table with four random objects on it, one of which is a stuffed Mr. Strong doll.

All the objects are priced at fifty dollars. On a folding chair behind the table sits a stern looking SELLER, 18, wearing a jeff cap.

The man and woman slowly move away from the table.

WOMAN

This is the lamest garage sale I've ever seen.

MAN

No kidding. Why even bother?

WOMAN

So did you want to get that Mr. Strong?

MAN

What?

WOMAN

I think we can probably bargain him down to forty five bucks.

MAN

What? No. I don't want a Mr. Strong doll.

WOMAN

What if we could get him down to forty.

MAN

No.

WOMAN

Okay, fine.

A SMALL CHILD, 6, comes up to the Man and Woman while they're talking. She holds a small, smooth, round rock in her hand.

SMALL CHILD

Mommy! Daddy! Look what I found. Isn't it pretty?

WOMAN

It's a rock, honey. Put it down.

Man and woman start to walk away.

The child sets the rock down on the table, waves and smiles at the Seller, who glares back at the child.

The child runs back to the Man and Woman, who continue their conversation as they trail off.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Okay, thirty-five. But that's as low as I'll go.

MAN

As low as...what? No, you want to go as low as possible. And I don't want a Mr. Strong.

WOMAN

Okay, thirty.

MAN

No.

WOMAN

Well we have to buy something.

MAN

No we don't.

The child, now with the Man and Woman, turns around to wave and smile at the Seller one more time. The Seller glares, shakes his head no.

As the Man, Woman and Child leave, Nick and Katie approach. They walk up to the table and look at the sparse objects.

They look at the Seller. They look at the objects. They look at the Seller.

KATIE

Are you serious?

**SELLER** 

I'm serious, kid. You want something it'll cost you fifty bucks.

KATIE

Oh, man, I only have four fifty.

She sees the rock. Picks it up.

KATIE (CONT'D)

How much for this rock?

SELLER

The rock? Oh, it's um, how much did you say you had?

KATIE

Four fifty.

Seller rubs his chin.

**SELLER** 

Well...Tell you what, kid. I was gonna sell it for twenty five eighty but...oh, what the heck, you can have it for four fifty.

KATIE

Four fifty for a rock?

SELLER

Hey, that's not just any rock. It's a pet rock.

KATIE

A pet rock?

SELLER

Oh, sure, kid, haven't you heard? Pet rocks are the best. You don't have to feed them, or clean up after them, they don't die...they're the best.

KATIE

Oh, boy, a pet rock. I'll take it.

SELLER

You did the right thing. Here, let me wrap that up for you.

Seller picks up the rock, looks around, finds nothing. He wipes it off a little, rubs it with his sleeve, hands it to her.

SELLER (CONT'D)

There you go.

Katie lights up.

KATIE

Awesome.

Nick looks on, unsure.

INT. - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Dad reads a Dr. Suess book as Katie comes up to him.

KATIE

Daddy, guess what! Guess what!

DAD

Hey, Rubber Duckie!

KATIE

I got a pet. Look.

She holds out the rock.

DAD

That's a rock.

KATIE

It's a pet rock. I bought it at the garage sale.

DAD

You bought it? How much?

Four fifty.

DAD

Four fifty! Oh, honey, you got bamboozled.

KATIE

Bamboozled?

DAD

Swindled. Scammed. Where was this garage sale?

KATIE

Just around the corner.

DAD

Well, honey, you march right back there and demand your money back. Rocks are free, my little Rubber Buggy, you shouldn't have to pay for them.

KATIE

But it's...

DAD

Ahhh.

KATIE

But, Daddy, it's...

DAD

Ahh ahh ahh. Go. Now.

KATIE

Yes, daddy.

EXT. - STREET - DAY

Katie and Nick stand at the end of the driveway in front of the house where the garage sale had been. The driveway is empty - no sign of the sale.

They look at each other.

EXT. - FRONT DOOR - DAY

Katie rings the doorbell. She waits. Nothing. She rings again. She waits. Nothing. She looks at Nick, who's waiting at the bottom of the stairs. Nick shrugs. Katie shrugs.

INT. - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Dad reads Mr. Strong. Katie walks by, trying not to disturb him.

DAD

(not looking up)

Did you get your money back?

KATIE

No. There was nobody home.

DAD

Hmmm. Which house was it?

KATIE

The one with all the pink azaleas out front.

DAD

(putting down his book)

In the cul-de-sac?

KATIE

Yeah.

DAD

Oh, Honey Penny. Nobody lives in that house. Are you sure that was the house that had the garage sale?

KATIE

Yeah. I'm positive.

DAD

Sugar Pops, those people moved out three months ago. They were deadbeats. The bank foreclosed on it.

KATIE

What's foreclosed?

DAD

That's when the bank kicks you out because you're a deadbeat.

KATIE

What's a deadbeat?

DAD

A deadbeat is someone who doesn't pay their mortgage.

What's a mortgage?

DAD

A mortgage is the transfer of an interest in property, or the equivalent in law - you know, a charge to a lender as a security for a debt - usually a loan in the form of money although among the Laplanders of Scandanavia...

Dad keeps rambling.

KATIE

Um, I have to go to the bathroom.

Katie leaves.

DAD

The term actually comes from the Old French "dead pledge," apparently meaning that the pledge ends, or dies, either when the obligation is fulfilled or the property is taken through foreclosure which....

Honey? Sugar Muffin? Pumpkin Pie?

He looks around.

DAD (CONT'D)

Huh.

He goes back to reading Mr. Strong.

INT. - KATIE'S ROOM - DAY

Katie sits at her desk, looking at her pet rock.

KATIE

I don't care what Daddy says. I think you're worth it. We're gonna have a lot of fun together. So...what should we do first? Wanna play some parcheesi? I can roll for you since you don't have arms. Or hands. Or a soul.

INT. - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Katie rolls the dice.

KATIE

Five! I won again! Wow, three games in a row. I've never beaten anybody three times in a row before. So now what should we do?

The rock just sits there, inanimate. Katie just looks at it.

KATIE (CONT'D)

I wish you were a fish. Fish are more fun than rocks.

EXT. - STREET - DAY

Katie and Nick walk along.

KATIE

I don't know what to name my rock. Which do you like better, Rocky or Gunther? I'm thinking Gunther. What do you think?

Nick doesn't respond.

KATIE (CONT'D)

Yeah. Gunther.

INT. - KATIE'S ROOM - DAY

Katie enters. The rock slides back into place, apparently moving on its own. Katie looks around, eyes the rock suspiciously.

INT. - KITCHEN - DAY

Katie and Nick eat bowls of cereal. They're being watched, unaware.

KATIE

Rocks can't move, can they?

Nick shrugs.

KATIE (CONT'D)

I could swear I walked into my room the other day and Gunther moved. It was kind of creepy. Nick stares at her.

KATIE (CONT'D)

I know. It's weird. But I could swear I saw him move.

Nick looks at her, unsure.

KATIE (CONT'D)

Rocks suck. I thought it would be fun to have a pet rock since they never die but they never live, either. They just sit there. Plus they're not very good at parcheesi.

Katie looks up at the camera, which quickly disappears behind a corner.

KATIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Did you just see something move? I think I just saw something move.

INT. - KITCHEN - DAY

Dad and Nick sit at the table wearing black robes. Lights are off. Lit candles abound. Demonic music plays. Dad reads/chants from a book on the table.

DAD

Dies irae, dies illa Solvet saeclum in favilla Teste Satan cum sybilla. Quantos tremor est futurus Quando Vindex est venturus!

He looks up.

DAD (CONT'D)

Okay, now it says I'm supposed to carve a pentagram into your forehead with the Unholy Blade of Beelzebub. You cool with that?

Nick gives the thumbs up.

DAD (CONT'D)

That's my boy.

He looks around but can't find what he's looking for.

DAD (CONT'D)

Where's the...? What happened to the...?

(MORE)

DAD (CONT'D)

It was just here a minute ago. Have you seen the Unholy Blade of Beelzebub?

Nick shakes his head.

DAD (CONT'D)

Huh.

INT. - KATIE'S ROOM - DAY

Katie sits on her bed reading "Anna Karenina". Dad knocks.

KATIE

Come in.

Dad enters.

DAD

Hey, Honey Puddles, whatch doin'?

KATIE

Reading.

DAD

I see. Hey, check it out.

He holds up a stuffed Mr. Strong doll.

DAD (CONT'D)

Got it at a garage sale in the other neighborhood. Course they wanted fifty bucks for it but they didn't realize who they were dealing with. Forty-five, I said. No more. Oh, but he's a shrewd one, that kid. He says forty-seven fifty. Then I said forty-six and gave him my famous icy stare. Well that did it. Nobody can handle the icy stare. Ha! Saved four bucks. Can you believe it?

KATIE

Wait. You said it was a kid?

DAD

That's right, Raisin Muffin.

KATIE

Did he look kind of shady? Was he wearing a jeff cap?

That's right.

KATIE

And the garage sale was about six things, all for fifty bucks?

DAD

Well, sure, but like I said you can always haggle...

KATIE

That's the kid who sold me my pet rock.

DAD

What? How do you know?

KATIE

It's him. I'm sure it's him. He was selling that same stuffed Mr. Strong.

DAD

Well, I'll be...come on, Scamper Hamper, we're going to settle this right now. Let's go get your money back. Where's your rock?

Katie gets up out of bed.

KATIE

Over there on the desk.

Dad walks over to the desk.

DAD

He doesn't realize who he's...hey, how did this get here?

He picks a knife up off the desk.

KATIE

What's that?

DAD

It's the Unholy Blade of Beelzebub. I don't like you taking knives out of the kitchen, Rubber Bubble.

KATIE

I didn't. I've never seen that before in my life.

Now, now. Lying is only going to make it worse. Put your shoes on now, Monkey Pants. We'll get this all squared away.

KATIE

But Dad, I swear. I didn't take it.

DAD

I'll let it go this time but I really don't like you having knives in your room. Especially ones that have been cleansed with the blood of the righteous.

Dad leaves. Katie looks on the desk. The rock sits there.

KATIE

You did this, didn't you?

Rock just sits there.

KATIE (CONT'D)

You got me into trouble. Well that's the last time. I hate you, evil rock.

EXT. - ROAD/HOUSE - DAY

Dad and Katie look at a house that seems abandoned.

KATIE

You sure this was it?

DAD

I'm sure.

EXT. - FRONT DOOR - DAY

Dad knocks on the door. Waits. No answer. He rings the bell. Waits. No answer. He looks at Katie. Katie shrugs.

DAD

Well...at least I saved four dollars on Mr. Strong. We'll call it even.

KATIE

Um...Dad?

Yes, Sunny Bunny?

KATIE

Nothing.

EXT. - BACK PORCH - DAY

Katie throws the rock off the back deck into the backyard.

KATIE

Good riddance!

INT. - KITCHEN - DAY

Katie and Nick eat goldfish crackers out of bowls.

KATIE

I didn't have the heart to tell him that you can get a stuffed Mr. Strong for about four bucks at any toy store. And he gave me a hard time about my rock. Sheesh.

Nick shakes his head in agreement.

KATIE (CONT'D)

Oh, that reminds me. I need to return that weapons-grade plutonium I borrowed.

INT. - KATIE'S ROOM - DAY

Katie enters her room, humming a tune. She sees the rock on her desk in its usual spot and stops dead in her tracks, terrified. She runs out of the room as fast as she can.

INT. - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Dad sits in his chair reading a shampoo bottle.

DAD

Chlorozone tetracycline. Hah. What'll they think of next?

KATIE

Um, Daddy.

DAD

Hey, Sugar Puddles, how's it going?

Um. Well...you know how you're in cahoots with the Dark Lord?

DAD

Sure.

KATIE

Well, I'm pretty sure my pet rock is possessed so...

DAD

Possessed? What makes you say that?

KATIE

Well...first I saw it moving. Then later I think it was spying on Nick and me. Then after that it took your knife. And then finally I threw it off the back porch but it came back. I can't get rid of it.

DAD

Oh my. That sounds serious.

KATIE

It is. I'm scared. Do you think you could work one of your spells on it?

DAD

Well, I could, but...

KATIE

But what?

DAD

Well, see, I only know how to make things evil. But it sounds to me like your rock is already evil and you want to make it good. Am I right?

KATIE

Right.

DAD

Yeah, that's a problem. Hmmm. So when you threw it off the porch, exactly how far did you throw it?

KATIE

I don't know. Twenty feet maybe.

Ha. Twenty feet. You throw like a little girl.

KATIE

I am a little girl.

DAD

Go get your rock, kid. Let your old man show you how it's done.

EXT. - BACK PORCH - DAY

Dad stretches out his arm preparing to throw the rock.

DAD

It's really all in the legs, see? That's where the power comes from. Now watch and learn.

Dad throws the rock as far as he can. He turns around and wipes his hands.

DAD (CONT'D)

Now that's how we used to do it back in...

Suddenly the rock comes flying out of nowhere and cracks him on the back of the head. He falls to the ground.

KATIE

Daddy!

INT. - NICK'S ROOM - DAY

Katie, Dad and Nick sit in a tent made out of blankets. They speak in hushed voices. Dad has a bandage on his head.

KATIE

I think it's gone.

DAD

That's just what he wants you to think.

KATIE

It's been four days. I can't stay in this fort any longer.

DAD

No. It's still out there.

I don't care. I can't live like this any more.

DAD

Rubber Puddles, no!

Katie walks out of the fort and into the main part of the house.

DAD (CONT'D)

What are we gonna do?

Nick shrugs.

INT. - KITCHEN - DAY

Katie looks down at something on the table.

INT. - NICK'S ROOM - DAY

Nick and Dad are still in the fort. Dad looks around, wildeyed and scared.

DAD

It's gotten her. It's gotten her, I just know it. (weeping) Oh, my little Pooper Scooper...

KATIE (O.S.)

Dad!

DAD

Honey Puddles?

KATIE (O.S.)

Dad! Nick! Come quick.

INT. - KITCHEN - DAY

Katie still stares at something. Dad and Nick enter.

DAD

What is it, Turtle Dove?

KATIE

(pointing)

Look.

Dad and Nick look down at the thing.

KATIE (CONT'D)

You know, I thought you paid way too much for that thing but now I'm thinking it was worth it.

DAD

Yeah.

INT. - KITCHEN - DAY

On the table is the rock, broken into several small pieces. Behind the pieces stands Mr. Strong, flexing his arms and smiling.

INT. - KITCHEN - DAY

Nick, Katie and Dad look from the table to each other.

DAD

It's over, kids. It's over. Mr. Strong saved us all.

They group hug.

NICK

God Bless Us, Everyone!

FADE OUT.