Pet Rock

by

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FADE IN

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...
DAD
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


    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.
KATIE
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?
KATIE
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.
KATIE
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?
DAD
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.
DAD
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
Well...at least I saved four dollars on Mr. Strong. We’ll call it even.

KATIE
Um...Dad?
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?
KATIE
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.
DAD
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.
KATIE
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, wild-eyed 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.