

The Facts of Life

By

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assignment: 2 person sketch, close relationship, clearly
delineated personalities

c. 2009

ACT I

Scene 1

Father is seated, reading. Daughter runs into the room agitated.

DAUGHTER

Daddy! Daddy! Poppins is dead!

FATHER

(accepts the pet from her)

Ah, yes. She's been rather sluggish the last few weeks, hasn't she? When did it happen?

DAUGHTER

(crying)

Oh papa, I found her like this when I woke up this morning. Last night, she was making those little wheezy noises and now she's dead.

FATHER

Yes, yes, I remember those wheezy noises. And didn't I tell you that this might happen?

DAUGHTER

Yes, papa, you did...

FATHER

(wipes her eyes)

Well, it looks like it did. That's pretty much how it works. We knew it was coming and now here it is. And please stop calling me "papa", it's "Father".

DAUGHTER

Yes, father. Oh, father, why do the things we love have to die?

FATHER

(throws the pet over his shoulder and
pats his lap)

Come, come sit on my lap, dear and I'll explain.

DAUGHTER

(horrified, runs to get the pet)

Daddy! What did you do to Poppins?!

FATHER

Well, sweetie, it isn't really Poppins anymore, now, is it? Given that its respiratory functions have stopped, its consciousness has stopped as well. Much like turning off a light bulb. It's pretty much just a lifeless bunch of meat and bone covered with fur now, isn't it?

(CONTINUED)

DAUGHTER

Daddy! It's Poppins! You gave her to me on my sixth birthday!

FATHER

Yes, I thought it was time you learned about the daily care and feeding of those species we've chosen to domesticate for companionship. She was simply a pet, dear. And please stop calling me 'daddy'. It's 'father'.

DAUGHTER

But I loved her, da...father. I really loved her.

She moves to sit on his lap but he declines, puts his arm around her shoulder stiffly.

FATHER

Ah yes, "love". That chemical reaction in the brain in which a variety of endorphine-type chemicals flood the synaptic corridors in such a way that one believes a specific relationship is somehow more significant than others.

DAUGHTER

Uh, yeah, dad, that one. Father.

FATHER

(stands up)

So, shall we go purchase a new pet for you?

DAUGHTER

(stunned, still petting Poppins)

What? Now? Right now?

FATHER

Why? Do you have somewhere to go?

DAUGHTER

No, it isn't that. I don't want just another Guinea Pig.

FATHER

Ah, trying to drive a hard bargain, are we? Would you prefer a different type of pet? A fish or a puppy perhaps?

DAUGHTER

(starts crying again)

That's not what I mean, father. I mean, Poppins just died this morning.

(CONTINUED)

FATHER

Now, now, dear, you've already had a good cry, haven't you? She must have died, oh,
(looks at watch)
hours ago, it's time to move on.

DAUGHTER

But, we haven't even buried her yet!

FATHER

Good point. Let's see, she'd jam the Dispose-all and she certainly won't flush. Perhaps we can drop her in a nice field while we're on our way to the pet shop?

DAUGHTER

(growing angry)
No! I want to bury Poppins. A real funeral, with a coffin and some prayers and some of her favorite music.

FATHER

Dear, Guinea Pigs don't have favorite music and they certainly don't pray. Their brains - nervous systems really - never develop to the point at which...

DAUGHTER

Poppins did so have a favorite song! I know it, I watched her dance to it!

FATHER

No, honey, they don't dance. They may respond to rhythm...

DAUGHTER

No, Poppins was enjoying herself! I saw it! She was smiling!

FATHER

Animals don't smile. They do not have correct musculature for that kind of thing.

DAUGHTER

Poppins was so smiling! And she was dancing. And I loved her and she loved me.

(pauses)

Father, do you love me?

FATHER

Of course I love, you...muffin.

DAUGHTER

(still stroking Poppins)
No, I mean do you really love me?

(CONTINUED)

FATHER

(touches her stiffly)
Well, of course I love you.

DAUGHTER

But, didn't you say that love is just those dorphins in the hallway that make your brain wet and trick it about stuff?

FATHER

Well, uh, no, well, I did say that, but what I meant was that...

DAUGHTER

My brain doesn't feel wet but I still love Poppins.
(panics slightly)
Am I going to stop loving Poppins when my brain dries out?

FATHER

Honey, your brain doesn't dry out.

DAUGHTER

(looks at him)
And, if the dorphins aren't out in the hallway, will you stop loving me?

FATHER

Um, no, dear, it doesn't work that way.

DAUGHTER

Daddy, did you stop loving mommy when she went away?

Dad freezes up for a minute.

FATHER

Listen, I think we need to stop talking so much and get on with things. First thing, we'll need to make a little casket for Poppins. I think we can find some wood out in the garage and you and I can paint it black...

FADE