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Category: Humor

Chocolate

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“Did you take my chocolate?” Mom asks, eyes narrowing, hair billowing while she stalks towards Kristy.

“No...,” Kristy’s pitch rises as droplets of sweat inch towards her sticky brown fingers.

“Hmm,” Mom replies.

Her gaze slides towards the laundry room. Teeth click the metal water bottle, warm fur thumps plastic, and squeaks bounce off walls, echoing through the kitchen.

“Alright... just remember to feed Ruby later,” Mom says.

“Ok!”

Kristy’s feet tap the floor as she skips down the hallway. Humming, her fingers grasp the door and she halts in front of her scampering guinea pig. Sweet blobs of brown smear Ruby’s mouth, matching Kristy’s fingers. She laughs, sticking the soft bedding onto Ruby, the tan pieces of fluff coating the circle of its mouth like a pacifier.

Fluorescent lights flicker, casting swaying shadows on light green walls. Dirt scatters on the floor. Feet tapping, lines of people cuddle dogs, cats, and cages, their eyes boring into Mom and the vet through a window.

“So why isn’t Ruby eating?” Mom asks.

“I think your guinea pig may have eaten chocolate...” the vet sighs, “In fact, a very large amount. Hopefully, it just passes through her system, but there is a possibility this amount could be fatal. Sadly, there’s nothing I can do. In the worst-case scenario, she only has a few more hours left.”

Dust clings onto the beeping medical tools squashed against the wall. Barks, meows, and rattling of cages seep into the room, slicing through the silence. The vet’s glossy, black shoes rap the floor. Blobs of brown fur loitering on the ground flatten underneath her soles. Mom’s wide eyes peer at Ruby’s furry body slowly bobbing up and down.

The car engine grumbles and pebbles skitter against metal. Pieces of bedding seep into Mom’s lap as wheels squish bumps in the road. Lightning pricks gray clouds. Blocks of hail strike the windows.

“How are we going to tell her?” Mom asks.

“What do you mean ‘how’? Just say that Ruby’s dead because she gave it chocolate.” Dad answers.

“She’s just a child- and I don’t want her to feel any worse.”

“It was going to die eventually,” Dad shrugs. “Don’t guinea pigs live for like two years, anyway?”

Mom gapes at Dad as another bump rattles Ruby’s cage.

Weak sunlight peeks through pink and purple clouds, splattering across the neighborhood. Frogs jump in the grass and mosquitos circle around. Colonies of ants scamper in sidewalk crevices. As Kristy trods ahead, Mom and Dad’s whispering crawls from behind her, luring her, clutching her, and slowing her down.

“What are y’all talking about?”

“Nothing.” They glance at each other, spinning around and folding their arms.

“Ok...by the way, can one of you take Ruby to the vet? I checked on her a few minutes ago and she wasn’t eating.”

They stop.

“Um, honey...,” Dad starts.

“-I’ll take her tomorrow, it’s seven already.” Mom interrupts.

“You seem to care a lot about Ruby. I wonder what you would do if she died.” Dad jokes.

Mom turns to Dad, eyes glaring, teeth clenched.

Kristy frowns, “I would be sad, I guess?”

Shouts and laughter swarm the stuffy school bus. Balls of paper soar across heads, some landing in seats, others crashing into the floor. Candy wrappers litter the rocking bus, sloshing like water. Shimi bobs up and down next to me, her hand reaching out, opening and closing as the paper flies past her.

“Shimi, I took the funniest video of my guinea pig yesterday,” Kristy laughs as she scrolls through hundreds of photos and videos, each of the little squares covered with a picture of Ruby and a heart.

“She looks a little bloated.”

Kristy stares at Shimi, “Well...it could be because of the chocolate.”

They lurch forward; the bus halts in front of Kristy’s house. Feet smushing the paper balls, she skips down stairs, landing on the concrete. Wheels squeal behind her as the school bus drives away, brushing Kristy’s mailbox. In the distance, another vehicle grumbles.

Kristy scurries inside her house, yanking off her shoes, tossing her backpack aside, scrambling to the laundry room, slipping and sliding on the cold floor. Gripping the wall, she stops; the fibers in her socks catch on the cracks between the wood. She blinks. An empty plastic box lingers in front of the washing machine. No bedding. No water bottle. No Ruby. Spinning around, she dashes into her parents’ room, the lifeless furniture peering back at Kristy. She whimpers; her fingers clutch the side door as she clambers onto the patio, dust suffocating the vacant concrete. The garage creaks. Mom and Dad shuffle inside, mumbling about the weather.

“Where’s Ruby?” Kristy asks.

Silence mushrooms with the sound of her words. Mom and Dad freeze.

Before words can come out of Mom’s widening mouth, Dad says, “In the trash can.”

The doorbell rings.

“Mom??” Kristy gawks at her.

Knuckles rap wood.

“It’s true. Ruby died this morning,” Mom sighs.

Heartbeats pound Kristy’s eardrums. A knocking hammers the door.

Dad peers at the foyer as he scratches his head.

“MOM I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU TO TAKE HER TO THE VET!” Kristy screams.

Mom groans as she runs to the front door; Kristy chases her. A delivery man stands in front of them, handing Kristy a cardboard box shaped like a house. Squeaks and thumps emanate from inside, shifting the box left and right. Peeling open the package, a chocolate-colored guinea pig scampers in bedding, the tan pieces of fluff speckling its fur.