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Melissa Sautter

Shannon Sansoterra

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Study in Anatomy

by

Melissa Sautter

and

Shannon Sansoterra

SETTING:
Living room of contemporary 90's house. Colonial furniture. Couch SC with table in front of it. Chair center stage L. Door SR.

CHARACTERS:

MOTHER       Petite, brunette woman around 45. Dimwitted and airheaded.
FATHER       Balding, with glasses and slight build, around 47. Wimpy type.
CHARLOTTE    Genius in science around 18. Dark brown hair, slightly wavy; very domineering, with big attitude problem.
MR. STANLEY PIPPS Salesman—short, stocky, with mustache, balding.

Act One Scene 1

(Living room. Knocking offstage R. Enter MOTHER from SL.)

MOTHER: I'll get it. (She goes to the door and answers)
MR. PIPPS: Good afternoon, dear woman. My name is Stanley Pipps and I'm from Vacuums Unlimited. Could I interest you in purchasing one of our custom made, heavy duty, housecleaning miracles? Allow me to show you the new V-6 powered carpet sucker.

MOTHER: My, my, my, won't you please come in? I'm Mrs. Ludenbacher. Can I offer you some tea? I most certainly would love to hear about your wonderful product and we seldom get visitors. Please, please come in. (Motions Mr. Pipps to the couch and keeps talking rapidly) Sit, sit. Now, would you like sugar or honey in your tea, or would you rather have coffee? Don't be afraid to speak up. (MR. LUDENBACHER enters SL.) Father dear, look. We have a visitor. Mr. Pipps, this is my husband Mr. Ludenbacher. I was just getting him some tea, dear. Would you like some? Mr. Pipps sells vacuums and such. Isn't it splendid to have a visitor? Show him some hospitality while I get the tea. (Exits SL.)
FATHER: How do you do?  (Shakes MR. PIPPS' hand.)
MR. PIPPS: I'm well, thank you. As I was telling your wife I work for Vacuums Unlimited and I would like to demonstrate for you our new V-6 powered carpet sucker. (MR. LUDENBACHER sits in his chair and lights pipe.)
FATHER: My wife handles the domestic responsibilities. Whatever she needs for the house I'll get her, so you don't have to charm me into buying one of your vacuums. It's the little woman you have to convince. Good luck, Mr. Pipps. (FATHER smiles and starts reading the paper. MOTHER enters from SL.)
MOTHER: I'm back. Are you two getting along? (Hands cup to MR. P.) I hope you don't mind, I put honey in your tea. But of course you wouldn't mind. You look to me like you have a sweet tooth. Some women love a little meat on their men. I personally have a fetish for avocados. It's the strangest thing, I know, but I just can't get enough of them.
MR. PIPPS: (A little overwhelmed) Well, my new product is the wave of the future. (Pulls out a briefcase) This is our V-6 powered carpet sucker: allow me to demonstrate. (Puts vacuum together out of briefcase) Easy to assemble and the most powerful suction of any other vacuum in the country. (Turns on vacuum which sounds like a power saw. MR. P. yells over the noise) You can just feel the power in your hands. (Hands it to mother who drops it on the coffee table, where it sucks up everything: ash tray, magazines, tea cups, etc.)
MOTHER: Oh my, oh my. (Reaching for the table trying to save something frantically. PIPPS grabs the vacuum and turns it off.)
PIPPS: Oh, I'm so sorry. Please allow me to pay for the damage, it was all my fault. (To himself) I shouldn't have become a salesman. (To MRS. LUDENBACHER) My mother made me, you know! I've always wanted to be a polka dancer, the best in the world! More popular than Barry Manilow. But Mother, she was so demanding, she crushed my dreams and now look what I've done! I've intruded into your home and wrecked everything. Oh lord, forgive me, I'm so sorry! (PIPPS starts crying hysterically as MOTHER and FATHER stare at him flabbergasted.)
MOTHER: Oh, please don't get upset. (MOTHER pats PIPPS on the back) Nothing is broken, see? Just calm yourself, Mr. Pipps, and why don't you stay for dinner? We don't get many visitors ever since the neighbors' dog dug up all of Charlotte's used experiment things. Boy, that was a nasty scene. I was knee deep in rabbit bones, that girl! Oh well, anyway you'll stay, Mr. Pipps. I'll go set an extra place.
FATHER: Mother, while you are up, could you bring me a martini, and speaking of Charlotte, please tell her to stop using my razors for her damn experiments. (MOTHER exits SL) It'll be nice to have another male around this house, Mr. Pipps. It gets to be an annoyance, having two women in one house and you are the only man. So you wanted to be a polka dancer, eh? Do you have to wear tights and all that fairy stuff for that? You aren't one of those fairy men, are you?
MR. PIPPS: Why, ah, I don't really think I should stay, and no, I don't have to wear tights.
FATHER: Nonsense, Mother says you'll stay for dinner and what Mother says goes. So whereabouts do you live?
MR. PIPPS: Not very far, actually. I live with my mother about five or six miles from here. I'd like to get a place of my own someday--my mother can be a pain sometimes.
FATHER: I feel the same exact way about my daughter Charlotte. Sometimes I just wish she'd find a place of her own. She's eighteen, you know, and she's very smart. I'm very proud of her but I swear sometimes she goes too damn far with those experiments of hers. At first, it was the cat--open heart surgery. I didn't mind that, though. You see, I hated that cat but when she started using my razor blades, I couldn't take it anymore. I've run out of things to shave with. She goes through twenty blades a day! (CHARLOTTE enters SL
Well, speak of the devil. Hello, dear. Why don't you give Dad a hug?

CHARLOTTE: Affection is a waste of intellectual brain activity, Father. Besides, I'm busy studying for my anatomy project exam.

FATHER: Well, at least say hello to our guest for dinner. Mr. Pipps, this is my daughter Charlotte. (To CHARLOTTE under his breath) please do behave tonight, Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE: (Irritated) Excuse me, I must go feed the lab rats. (MR. PIPPS rises and tries to exchange greetings. CHARLOTTE nods and exits SL.)

MR. PIPPS: Intriguing girl. What is she studying to be?

FATHER: Oh, she thinks she is going to be the greatest woman scientist in the world. Such dreams she has. Well, why don't we go into the dining room? I'm sure dinner is almost ready. (MR. PIPPS and FATHER exit SR, CHARLOTTE enters SL. She is still reading her book, but aloud; she sits on the couch.)

CHARLOTTE: "... basics of the anatomy include the vital organs of every living organism, but the most complex and fascinating is the human anatomy. Its intricate workings are still wondered about by even the greatest of scientists. To see the human organs at work is beauty in motion. It is suggested that one study the anatomy of the human cadaver soon after death to get the full effect of its workings." (CHARLOTTE stops reading and looks up into the audience, then notices MR. PIPPS' briefcase on the floor. She snaps her fingers and with a malicious smile darts offstage.)

Close curtain.

Act One Scene 2

Setting:

Dining room, table and four chairs, table is set for dinner. MR. PIPPS, FATHER, MOTHER, and CHARLOTTE are sitting at the table. CHARLOTTE is next to MR. PIPPS.

MOTHER: Well, everything is ready. I hope you like it, Mr. Pipps; Charlotte, why don't you say grace?

CHARLOTTE: (Who is wearing a lab coat) There is no God!

MOTHER: Yes, well then I'll take that as a 'no,' I'll say grace. Dear God, thank you for this wonderful meal, this wonderful guest, this wonderful house, my wonderful husband and daughter and please take care of Fluffy, my wonderful deceased cat. (Everyone begins to eat.)

MR. PIPPS: Mrs. Ludenbacher, this is an extraordinary meal. It's the best meal I've had since, well, since yesterday with my ma. What's in this dish over here. It looks quite interesting. (Reaches for dish.)

CHARLOTTE: Oh, I'm sorry, Mother. I seem to have left my fungus sample on the table again. (MR. PIPPS drops the bowl and CHARLOTTE screams.) Be careful with that. I've put four weeks of work into that project. Doesn't anybody care? Nobody understands me! (Storms out SL in a huff.)

MOTHER: Oh, my my! The poor dear. Oh, well, let's just finish eating. Maybe she'll calm down for dessert.

MR. PIPPS: I'm terribly sorry for upsetting your daughter. I really didn't mean to. I seem to be screwing up everything tonight. Maybe I should just go.
FATHER: Nonsense, Pipps. Her little tantrums don’t last long. She’ll be back here (looking at his wrist watch) in about five minutes.

MR. PIPPS: Are you sure? I really didn’t mean to upset her. (CHARLOTTE re-enters with hands behind her back, then sits and puts her hands under the table.)

CHARLOTTE: (Very sweetly) I’m sorry. Mother, Father, I didn’t mean to ruin your dinner.

MOTHER: That’s o.k., dear. You’re just in time for dessert. (MOTHER enters SR to get dessert. FATHER lights pipe and sits back in chair.)

FATHER: So, Mr. Pipps, how long have you been in the sales business? (As PIPPS talks to FATHER, CHARLOTTE slips poison in his cup.)

MR. PIPPS: Well, sir, not that long. You’re my first customer. I just started yesterday. (Takes a sip of his coffee. CHARLOTTE watches him intensely.) As I said before, I was studying to be a professional polka dancer, that is, until I had a serious pelvic injury. That’s also why I’m not married.

FATHER: (Brows raised) That’s very interesting, Mr. Pipps. Whereabouts do you live?

PIPPS: Well, I ... (PIPPS falls to floor.)

FATHER: (Who has started reading the paper) What was that, Mr. Pipps?

CHARLOTTE: Oh, look, Father, he was so tired he fell asleep at the table. Maybe we should take him somewhere to rest in peace, I mean, comfortably.

FATHER: (Looking over edge of paper) Poor man, why don’t you do that, Charlotte, and tell Mother there’ll be one less for dessert. (Goes back to reading paper.)

CHARLOTTE: (As she exits) I’ll just go get the stretcher from my lab. (Exits SL. Enter MOTHER.)

MOTHER: (Carrying tray of pudding) Dessert is ready! (Trips over MR. PIPPS but doesn’t lose balance.) Oh, Mr. Pipps! What are you doing on the floor? My meatloaf didn’t give you indigestion, did it? No, what a silly thought. Father, why is Mr. Pipps on the floor?

FATHER: He’s just taking a nap, dear.

MOTHER: Well, it’s a good thing I washed the floor today, I wouldn’t want him to get all dirty. But wouldn’t he be more comfortable somewhere else?

FATHER: Charlotte just went to get a stretcher so that we could move him. (MOTHER steps over MR. PIPPS.)

MOTHER: Well then, eat your pudding, dear. (She sits down at the table and begins eating with FATHER. CHARLOTTE enters with the stretcher and picks up MR PIPPS and starts to drag him out of the room.) Oh, wait, dear. I just want to ask him one thing. (Walks over to PIPPS and starts to shake him.) Mr. Pipps? How much was that vacuum you are selling?

CHARLOTTE: (nervously) Ask him later, Mother! He needs his rest.

MOTHER: (still shaking PIPPS) Charlotte! He isn’t sleeping! He’s dead! (To CHARLOTTE) What have you done?! First the cat and now this! I’m tired of you killing whatever and whoever you damn well please. You had better shape up before I get so angry that I forget you are my daughter! Father, Charlotte has killed Mr. Pipps. What are we going to do?

FATHER: What was that, Mother? Did you say the old boy was dead? What happened? He was just speaking to me a minute ago. (Walks over to PIPPS and takes his pulse.) Well, you are quite right, Mother, he’s dead.

MOTHER: Of course he’s dead. Do you think I’m stupid?

FATHER: That’s beside the point, Mother, but what are we going to do about poor Pipps?

CHARLOTTE: We will do nothing! I killed him, not you! He’s mine! I need his body for study. Help me, he’s getting stiff and then he’ll be of no use and killing him would’ve been a waste.

FATHER: No, Charlotte, you’ve done something far worse than killing the cat. This is a human being and you will be severely punished for what you’ve done. This is the last straw! Go to your room, you are grounded for a week!
MOTHER: Aren't we being a bit harsh? I mean, she was only grounded for 2 days after killing Fluffy! And Fluffy was much more interesting to talk to than Mr. Pipps. Besides, you didn't mean it. Did you?

CHARLOTTE: I did mean it and I'll do it again if I have to. Now give me the body.

FATHER: Charlotte, go to your room! (CHARLOTTE exits SL stomping her feet.)

MOTHER: But what do we do with Mr. Pipps, dear?

FATHER: Well, Mother, get the shovel. We'll just have to bury him next to Fluffy.

MOTHER: Okay, dear, but what about the vacuum? I feel guilty for not paying for it.

FATHER: We'll just send a check to the company. (FATHER and MOTHER pick up the stretcher and start to exit.)

MOTHER: I hope he likes the nice grassy spot behind the garage. I know Fluffy did.

FATHER: We really ought to do something about Charlotte's actions! She is getting a bit too eccentric for my tastes. Let's send her to Uncle Morty, he'll take her. He always said there was room at the mortuary for us!

MOTHER: What a splendid idea, Father. I will miss her, although it will give us some time to be alone.

FATHER: Oh, I never thought of that. (Starts to kiss MOTHER.)

MOTHER: Oh, Father, not in front of Mr. Pipps!

(FATHER and MOTHER drag PIIPS offstage L.)

Curtain closes.

THE END