

GERBIL CARE

C. Scott Ananian

July 16, 1997

ANNIE: I can't believe you forgot to feed the gerbils.

LEM: I forgot to feed the gerbils.

ANNIE: You forgot to feed the gerbils.

LEM: I did. I forgot to feed them. I will feed them now.

ANNIE: No, it's too late. You forgot to feed the gerbils. Gerbils die if they're not fed.

LEM: I will feed them now. I can. They won't die.

ANNIE: They will die. They're already dead.

LEM: Not if I feed them now.

ANNIE: It won't help.

LEM: I'm feeding them now.

ANNIE: You forgot to feed the gerbils. The gerbils are dead.

LEM: They seem to be perking up.

ANNIE: Gerbils don't perk. They skitter. Or they die. Are they skittering?

LEM: I think so. They're definitely perking up.

ANNIE: Gerbils don't perk up. They skitter. The gerbils are dead.

LEM: They don't look dead.

ANNIE: I can't believe you forgot to feed the gerbils.

LEM: But I fed them. They're happy.

ANNIE: No, the gerbils are dead.

LEM: They're not. Look at this one. He's not dead.

ANNIE: They should be dead. To me, they're dead.

LEM: But they're not dead.

ANNIE: They're dead. I'll bury them presently.

LEM: But you can't. They're happy. They're perking.

ANNIE: Gerbils don't perk. They skitter. They're dead.

LEM: You can't bury perky gerbils.

ANNIE: They'll have to go.

LEM: No. I'll take them.

ANNIE: You can't. They're mine.

LEM: But you're going to bury them.

ANNIE: They're dead.

LEM: They're not.

ANNIE: They're dead.

LEM: They're not.

ANNIE: Take your gerbils and go away. I can't believe you killed the gerbils.

LEM: I didn't kill them.

ANNIE: Take them away.

LEM: You're not going to help feed them?

ANNIE: They're dead.

LEM: Somebody has to feed them.

ANNIE: You'll forget. They'll die.

LEM: No, they won't. I'll remember.

ANNIE: You won't.

LEM: You're not going to feed them?

ANNIE: No. They're going to die.

LEM: You won't cuddle them and play with them?

ANNIE: Not if they're going to die.

LEM: Do we have to rename them?

ANNIE: The girl gerbils can keep my name.

LEM: Even if they're going to die?

ANNIE: You don't have to rename them.

LEM: I won't forget to feed them again.

ANNIE: Yes, you will.

LEM: I might.

ANNIE: You will.

LEM: But they won't die!

ANNIE: Yes, they will.

LEM: They didn't die this time.

ANNIE: They will.

LEM: How do you know?

ANNIE: Because I'm not going to help you feed them.

LEM: And you're not going to play with them or cuddle them.

ANNIE: No.

LEM: Not even if they're perky?

ANNIE: Gerbils don't perk. They skitter.

LEM: The gerbils ate all their food. They look quite healthy.

ANNIE: You can continue to name the girl gerbils after me.

LEM: They're perky, they're happy. They even skitter.

ANNIE: I'm not going to help feed the gerbils.

LEM: But why?

ANNIE: You forgot to feed them.

LEM: They didn't die.

ANNIE: You forgot.

LEM: What can I do about it?

ANNIE: Nothing.

LEM: I'm sure I can do something.

ANNIE: Nothing.

LEM: I'll design a flopacious monster automatic gerbil feeding machine!

ANNIE: Nope.

LEM: I'll quit my job, burn my books, and devote myself to gerbil care!

ANNIE: It won't change anything.

LEM: I'll establish a chapter of Gerbil Abusers Anonymous.

ANNIE: Weekly time with bad company doesn't help.

LEM: I'll donate money to Save The Gerbils.

ANNIE: They don't accept contributions from abusers.

LEM: I'll buy two ton bags of food in gerbil-friendly packaging and leave them in the cage in case I ever forget.

ANNIE: They'll stuff themselves and explode.

LEM: There has to be *something* I can do.

ANNIE: You forgot to feed the gerbils.

LEM: I'm sorry, Annie.

ANNIE: Don't use my name.

LEM: I can't call you Annie?

ANNIE: The gerbils can be Annie. Not me.

LEM: What can I call you?

ANNIE: The Frobdaecious Ann-Margaret Doyle-Hamsterdon.

LEM: Oh.

ANNIE: The Third.

LEM: I can still call the gerbils Annie?

ANNIE: Until you kill them.

LEM: I'm sorry about not feeding them.

ANNIE: You should be.

LEM: Please don't leave the gerbils, Annie.

ANNIE: Don't call me that.

LEM: I, er—I was talking to the gerbils.

ANNIE: Only if you're talking to the gerbils. The girl gerbils. Only.

LEM: Please don't leave.

ANNIE: I can't share gerbils with someone who won't feed them.

LEM: I'll free the gerbils. We can buy hamsters.

ANNIE: No. You'll forget to change their wood chips.

LEM: Alligators.

ANNIE: You won't clean their teeth.

LEM: Kiwis.

ANNIE: Feather maintenance.

LEM: Antelope.

ANNIE: Don't they have horns?

LEM: We won't buy animals, them. Just don't leave.

ANNIE: You forgot to feed the gerbils.

LEM: We'll forget the gerbils. We'll just be friends.

ANNIE: I'm not your friend.

LEM: But—we fed the gerbils together.

ANNIE: Yes.

LEM: We played with them and cuddled them!

ANNIE: Sometimes.

LEM: You'd come over special to help me feed the gerbils.

ANNIE: I was making an exception.

LEM: You weren't doing that because you liked me?

ANNIE: I like gerbils.

LEM: Oh.

ANNIE: And you forgot to feed them.

LEM: Ah.

ANNIE: So now I'm leaving.

LEM: I'll take care of the gerbils for you.

ANNIE: They're your gerbils.

LEM: I'll feed them.

ANNIE: I'm leaving.

LEM: All the girls will be named Annie.

ANNIE: Do what you like.

LEM: Bye, Annie. Oops.

ANNIE: The Frobdacious Ann-Margaret Doyle-Hamsterdon. The Third.

LEM: Can I call you Ann-Margaret?

ANNIE: Just this once.

LEM: Bye, Ann-Margaret.

ANNIE: Goodbye.

[A pause.]

LEM: Will you come back and see the gerbils sometime?

ANNIE: They're dead.