

From Math by Don Zolidis

From Math (2F 1M)

DAHLIA

DAHLIA'S MOTHER

DAHLIA'S FATHER

DAHLIA (*to the audience*)

Homework. As if we didn't get enough learning in school. Now we're supposed to learn at *home*? Impossible. I did what I always did with my homework. Avoided it as long as possible until I couldn't stand it any more. Then I mostly did this.

She sits at the table, groans and pulls at her hair as she stares at the paper.

Looks at her phone.

Sets her phone down.

Looks at her homework.

Groans. It's painful beyond measure.

This is killing me. Arrrrrghghghg.

No one is paying attention to her.

I said IT'S KILLING ME. ARRRRHGHGHG.

No one.

She looks at her phone.

DAHLIA'S MOTHER enters.

DAHLIA'S MOTHER (*entering*)

Sweetie, put your phone down and concentrate.

DAHLIA

This is torture. Math was invented as a torture device. This is like jabbing flaming needles directly into my brain.

DAHLIA'S MOTHER

I'm sure it's not like that at all.

DAHLIA

I feel like I've been punching my brain all night and I knocked it out. My brain has been put in a chokehold and is unconscious.

DAHLIA'S MOTHER

What are you trying to study?

DAHLIA

Algebra. None of this makes any sense. I bet it's an elaborate lie made up by dead people.

DAHLIA'S MOTHER

Can I help you with it?

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DAHLIA

No. No one can. It's the end of the world.

DAHLIA'S MOTHER

How `bout I look at it with you?

DAHLIA

Mom, have you ever used algebra in your life?

DAHLIA'S MOTHER

I don't think so.

DAHLIA

So why am I tortured into learning it if no one ever uses it?

DAHLIA'S MOTHER

You learned about frogs in biology class.

DAHLIA

Yeah but I might own a frog one day, or at least encounter one in a zoo or something. Or in their natural habitat, which ranges from tropical forests to frozen tundras to deserts.

DAHLIA'S MOTHER

See, you did learn something!

DAHLIA

But this is pointless. It's hurting my brain. My brain is on fire. I'm probably being traumatized by this. You know what PTSD is? I've probably got PTSD from Math class.

DAHLIA'S FATHER enters.

DAHLIA'S FATHER

Who's got PTSD?

DAHLIA

I do. From Math.

DAHLIA'S FATHER

What.

DAHLIA

Algebra should be illegal.

DAHLIA'S MOTHER

Let's just look at it. Okay?

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DAHLIA

Fine. Here.

She hands over the paper.

DAHLIA'S FATHER

Let me see that.

DAHLIA

Dad. Mom is helping me.

DAHLIA'S FATHER

Yes. But I am your father. And I will stop at nothing to help my baby girl. Other parents go to 2. I go to 179.

DAHLIA'S MOTHER

Okay. Okay... so...

DAHLIA

I'm supposed to solve for X.

DAHLIA'S MOTHER

Right. So how do I solve for X?

DAHLIA

Well that's the big question, isn't it, Mom?

DAHLIA'S MOTHER

Huh.

DAHLIA

See you don't get it either.

DAHLIA'S MOTHER

What is X supposed to be?

DAHLIA

That's the question.

DAHLIA'S MOTHER

Right, but X is a letter.

DAHLIA

Exactly.

DAHLIA'S MOTHER

I don't understand how X can be a letter and a number.

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Dahlia's Father snatches up the paper.

DAHLIA'S FATHER

Let me see that. Who told you to do this, your *teacher*?

DAHLIA

Yeah.

DAHLIA'S FATHER

Where does she get the right, that's what I want to know.

DAHLIA'S MOTHER

It's homework, Jim.

DAHLIA'S FATHER

So she's just expanding her sphere of control into our *home*? Not on my watch.

He looks at the paper.

I can't even understand this.

DAHLIA

You've got it upside down.

He flips it over.

DAHLIA'S FATHER

This is what they're trying to teach you? Why are there letters next to the numbers?

DAHLIA

Because it's algebra.

DAHLIA'S FATHER

X? What the heck is X supposed to be?

DAHLIA

That's what I'm trying to find out.

DAHLIA'S MOTHER

I didn't know either.

DAHLIA'S FATHER

It's a letter. That's what X is. There. Just write that. Problem solved. Solve for X. X is a letter!
Boom. Done.

DAHLIA

I'm supposed to come up with a numerical answer.

DAHLIA'S FATHER

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You're supposed to turn letters into numbers? Are you supposed to be able to do magic?

DAHLIA

That's what I said! It hurts my brain.

DAHLIA'S FATHER

No. No thanks. We're not doing this. It's time to invoke Classic Rock lyrics.

DAHLIA'S MOTHER

Jim, I don't want to talk about Classic Rock.

DAHLIA'S FATHER

Classic Rock taught me everything I need to know. Everything. Remember what Pink Floyd said: We don't need no education. We don't need no thought control. Teacher, leave them kids alone.

DAHLIA'S MOTHER

Okay, this is beginning to sound like a crusade.

DAHLIA'S FATHER

You're darn right it's a crusade. This is about my baby girl's safety. That teacher thinks she can mix numbers and letters like a madman and stick red hot poker into her brain. No! Your math teacher just messed with the wrong guy.

DAHLIA

I don't know that she's specifically trying to mess with you.

DAHLIA'S FATHER

Well she did. She just grabbed the tiger by the horns. And when you do that, you get *burned*. The horns are hot. Now if you'll excuse me, I've got some important things to do like watching football and yelling my suggestions at the television. One of these days that coach is going to listen to me.