

## Pet Problems by Hilton Ayrey

Ashley and her mother Claudine were not very good with pets. Their bird had died when its head got stuck between the wires of its cage. Their long haired cat Sophie got a fur ball stuck in her throat one day and died. Their pet frog went missing from its tank. They found it a week later dead under Ashley's bed. There were lots of pets buried in their garden.

So they were a bit worried when they brought home two goldfish and a new fishbowl. The first three weeks were great. Ashley and Claudine cleaned the fish bowl every second day. But then one morning they found Simon lying on the bottom of the fishbowl only just moving. And Steve had something wrong with one of his eyes.

"On no...here we go again," said Claudine. But Ashley was not giving up.

"Mum, we have to get this pet thing right!" said Ashley. They took the fish to the vet. She told them they should only change the water once a week.

"Goldfish didn't like it if the water is too clean," she told them. So they only changed it once a week. Slowly Steve's eye got better and Simon was much happier. It seemed like Ashley and Claudine's luck was changing.

It was Sunday, their new day for cleaning the fish bowl. Claudine took the fishbowl over to the kitchen sink. She slowly tipped out some of the water and smiled at Ashley. This was going SO well. Just then the large rock in the fishbowl started to move. It crashed into Simon and that was the end of him. Steve got swished out into the sink and down the plughole.

### FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. Think of a new title for this story.
2. Make a flow chart for the story.  
*Characters - Setting - Problem - Feelings - Action - Outcome*
3. Write the next chapter in this story - a new pet?
4. Story Map - draw a map of the settings in this story showing where the action takes place.
5. Design a super pet that will be able to survive living with Ashley and Claudine.  
Use diagrams with labels to show your interesting ideas.

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Ashley and her mother Claudine didn't seem to have much luck with pets. Their budgie had died a horrible death when it stuck its head between the wires of its cage. Their beautiful long-haired cat choked on a huge furball. Their special frog disappeared from its tank and was found very dead under Ashley's bed. There were pet graves everywhere in their garden.

So they were a bit nervous when they brought home two goldfish and put them in a fishbowl in the lounge. Everything went well for the first three weeks. Ashley and Claudine made sure they cleaned the fishbowl every second day. But one morning they noticed that Simon wasn't swimming around much and Steve had something wrong with one of his eyes. Claudine was sure the fish were going to die. But Ashley didn't want that to happen.

"Mum...we can do this! We have to get this pet thing sorted." They took the fish to the vet. The vet quickly solved the problem. They were changing the water too often.

"Goldfish didn't like it if the water is too clean," she told them. So they only emptied out half of the water each week and filled it up again. Slowly Steve's eye got better and Simon had a lot more energy. Ashley and Claudine began to feel much more positive about being pet carers.

Sunday afternoon was their new day for cleaning the goldfish bowl. Claudine carried the fishbowl over to the kitchen sink. She carefully began to empty some of the water. She looked across at Ashley and they smiled at each other. They were so pleased with themselves. At that moment the large rock in the bottom of the bowl started to roll. Simon was crushed against the glass and Steve was swished out into the sink and down the plughole.

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Ashley and her mother Claudine had a terrible track record with pets. Their budgie had cut off its own air supply while sticking its head between the wires of its cage. While they were out shopping one day their beautiful longhaired cat choked on a huge furball. Their frog disappeared from its tank and was found dried out and very dead under the couch a week later. There were pet graves everywhere in their garden.

So you can imagine that they were a bit nervous when they brought home their latest pets - two goldfish. Simon and Steve, the goldfish, did really well for the first three weeks. Ashley and Claudine made sure they cleaned the fishbowl every second day. But one morning Simon was sitting on the bottom of the bowl looking very limp and one of Steve's eyes was looking infected. Claudine went all quiet and then started talking about flushing them down the toilet. Ashley, however, was having none of that.

"Come on Mum! We have to turn this around. We are not bad people." A trip to the vet identified that the problem was over-cleaning. Apparently, goldfish need to swim in their own filth. With some drops in the water and a reduced cleaning schedule (replacing just half the water once a week), the fish gradually returned to good health. Ashley and Claudine began to feel that they had turned a corner and that they now had this pet thing under control.

Sunday afternoon was now their established fish bowl cleaning day. With great care, Claudine carried the fishbowl over to the kitchen sink and began to empty some of the water. She looked across at Ashley and they nodded at each other ... 'we've got this!' It was at that exact moment the large rock in the bottom of the bowl overbalanced. Simon came to a sticky end, flattened against the glass, and Steve was swished into the sink and down the plughole.

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Ashley and her mother Claudine had a miserable track record with pets. There was the budgie that had somehow strangled itself by sticking its head between the wires of its cage...a gruesome sight! Their beautiful long haired cat, Sophie, managed to get a massive fur ball lodged in her throat one day while they were out shopping...that wasn't pretty either. The newt disappeared from its tank and was found dried and shrivelled like a prune under the couch a week later. Their garden resembled a pet graveyard.

So it was quite understandable that there would be a great deal of nervousness about their latest pet purchase - two goldfish. Simon and Steve, the goldfish, did brilliantly for the first three weeks. Ashley and Claudine diligently cleaned the fish bowl every second day. But one morning they discovered Simon looking very limp and listless on the bottom of the bowl and Steve's eyes were badly infected. Claudine sighed and prepared herself for the worst - flushing them down the toilet. Ashley, however, was having none of that.

"Mum, we can't give up like that. We have to break this pet curse." An emergency trip to the vet provided a quick solution. It seemed that they were guilty of over-cleaning. In their eagerness to get things right they had overlooked the fact that goldfish are at their best in water that contains some of their body wastes. With some drops to treat the eye infection and a lot less cleaning (replacing just half the water once week), the fish returned to perfect health. Ashley and Claudine began to feel that perhaps this pet curse had indeed been broken.

On Sunday afternoon, Claudine carried the fish bowl over to the kitchen sink. They now had a well established cleaning routine - once a week they carefully tipped out half the tank water before refilling. She looked across the room at Ashley and they exchanged a knowing smile. Unfortunately that moment of inattention was a mistake. The large rock sitting at the bottom of the tank became dislodged and tumbled against the side of the bowl. Poor Simon, in the wrong place at the wrong time, was hopelessly crushed against the glass and the wave effect flushed Steve into the sink and down the plughole.

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When it came to pet care, Ashley and her mother Claudine were doomed. There had been the budgie that had garrotted itself on the wire of the birdcage while trying to do a Houdini impersonation. Sophie, their adored long-haired cat, had come to a gruesome end when she choked to death on a massive furball. The newt had lasted four days before it vanished only to reappear as a shrivelled, dried up morsel in the vacuum cleaner. Their backyard was a pet cemetery, dotted with little white memorial crosses.

So there was great trepidation associated with their latest pet acquisition - two goldfish. Simon and Steve appeared to be thriving for the first three weeks and Ashley and Claudine were paragons of virtue when it came to goldfish bowl cleaning. But one fateful morning it looked like the rot had set in. In Simon's case, it was fin rot, while Steve had developed a nasty eye infection. Claudine recognised the inevitable and was resigned to flushing them down the toilet but Ashley protested vehemently.

"Mum, we can't cave in like that. We have to break this pet curse." An expensive expedition to the vet identified the problem - over-cleaning of the fishbowl. In their eagerness to succeed they had overlooked the fact that goldfish thrive in their own excrement. With some additives to treat the infection and a reduced cleaning schedule (replacing just half the water once a week), the fish were gradually rehabilitated. Ashley and Claudine began to feel that indeed they were embarking on a new phase in their life with pets.

On Sunday afternoon, Claudine carried the fishbowl over to the kitchen sink to enact their now well established weekly routine of tipping out half the water before refilling. She shot a look across the room at Ashley and they did a mental high five, congratulating themselves on their triumph. Unfortunately, that moment of inattention proved to be fatal as the large rock sitting at the bottom of the bowl succumbed to gravity and tumbled over. Simon was crushed mercilessly against the glass and the ripple effect flushed Steve into the sink and down the plughole.

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