

The Girl and the Goldfish



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Emily skipped home from the pet store, clutching a clear plastic bag. Inside swam a little goldfish with bright orange-gold scales and a flowing tail. She had named him Sunny because he looked like a splash of sunshine. Emily's warm light-brown skin glowed with excitement as she set the bag on the kitchen table. "Welcome to your new home, Sunny!" she said.



Emily carefully poured Sunny into a tiny round bowl. She placed it on her dresser, next to her favorite books. The bowl had a little plastic castle and a few colorful stones. Sunny swam in small circles, his big dark eyes looking around. Emily smiled, her hazel eyes sparkling. "It's small, but it's cozy," she said. "Just you and me."



Every morning, Emily sprinkled fish flakes into the bowl. She watched Sunny gobble them up. But after a few days, Sunny didn't swim to the top anymore. He floated near the bottom, his fins drooping. Emily pressed her nose to the glass, her freckled cheeks frowning. "What's wrong, Sunny?" she whispered. "Don't you like your castle?"



Emily's mom noticed her worried face. "Maybe Sunny needs something different," Mom said gently. Emily nodded, her dark brown hair bobbing. She put on her red sneakers and walked to the pet shop on the corner. The bell above the door jingled. Inside, a tall man with round glasses and a green sweater vest looked up and smiled.



"Hello there!" said the man. "I'm Mr. Harper. How can I help?" Emily pointed to the tiny bowl she had brought along. "My goldfish, Sunny, seems sad," she said. "He just floats and doesn't swim much." Mr. Harper knelt down to her level. "Let's take a look," he said kindly, his warm brown eyes crinkling.



Mr. Harper studied the bowl. "Goldfish are amazing pets," he said, "but they need much more room than a little bowl. A bowl doesn't have enough space for them to swim, and the water gets dirty quickly." Emily's eyes widened. "Oh no! I didn't know," she said. "I want Sunny to be happy. What should I do?"



"Don't worry," Mr. Harper said. "We can fix this together. Goldfish need a big aquarium with clean water and a filter. A filter keeps the water fresh and healthy." He pulled a small notebook from his pocket and drew a simple picture. "See? The filter cleans the water, and the fish has lots of room to explore."



Emily and Mr. Harper picked out a large glass aquarium. It was much bigger than her bowl. Mr. Harper also helped her choose a fun filter that made a gentle bubbling sound. "This will keep Sunny's water clean," he explained. Emily chose a bag of smooth gravel and a leafy green plant for the tank. Her heart felt light and hopeful.



Back home, they set up the aquarium on a sturdy table. Mr. Harper showed Emily how to rinse the gravel and fill the tank with water. "Always let the water sit for a day before adding the fish," he said. "That makes it safe for Sunny." Emily listened carefully, her round cheeks serious. She wanted to do everything right.



The next day, Emily gently moved Sunny into his new home. Sunny darted around the big tank, his orange-gold scales shimmering. He swam through the green plant and around the bubbling filter. "Look at him go!" Emily laughed. "He loves it!" Mr. Harper smiled. "He's already happier," he said. "But remember, clean water and the right food keep him healthy."



Mr. Harper gave Emily a special goldfish food, not the flaky kind she used before. "Feed him just a little twice a day," he said. "Too much food can make the water dirty." Emily nodded. She made a chart with suns and moons to remember feeding times. "I'll take good care of him," she promised. "That's the responsible thing to do."



Every week, Emily changed part of the water in the aquarium. She used a special siphon to clean the gravel, just as Mr. Harper showed her. Sunny followed her hand, his big dark eyes watching. "You're a good helper, Sunny," Emily said. She felt proud of her hard work, and her kindness made Sunny healthy and happy.



One afternoon, Mr. Harper visited to see how Sunny was doing. "He looks wonderful!" he said, peering at the bright fish. "His colors are brighter, and he's swimming so lively." Emily beamed. "I learned that caring for a pet means learning what it needs," she said. "And it's fun to learn!" Mr. Harper nodded. "You're a wonderful pet owner, Emily."



Emily invited her friend Maya to see the aquarium. "Wow!" Maya said. "Sunny looks so happy!" Emily showed her the feeding chart and the water-changing tools. "It's a big responsibility," Emily said, "but Sunny is worth it. He's my friend." The two girls watched Sunny swim through the bubbles, his tail flowing like a ribbon.



That night, Emily sat by the aquarium. The filter hummed softly, and the water sparkled under the lamp. Sunny swam up to the glass and wiggled his fins, as if saying thank you. Emily smiled, her hazel eyes shining. She had learned that pets need more than a bowl—they need love, space, and clean water.



Emily's mom tucked her into bed. "I'm proud of you," Mom said. "You noticed Sunny needed help and you learned how to give it." Emily hugged her pillow. "I'm glad I did," she said. "Sunny is my responsibility, and my friend." She fell asleep dreaming of a big, sparkling aquarium and a happy goldfish with a flowing tail.