

# 1 Fish, 2 Fish...Dead Fish, New Fish

“The kids each won a goldfish at the fair”, my wife uttered into the phone as I bounced down the freeway in my rusty, white van. “Great”, I said, “that should be fun”.

The next time my wife and I spoke, it was in hushed tones while I gorged on lunch at a local Chipotle. My daughter's fish had died and I was now being tasked with stopping at the pet store for a replacement on my way home. After my wife whispered a rough description of the dead fish into the phone, I sped off in hopes of making the switch before the kids woke up from their naps.

Within minutes, I burst into the pet store and paid \$7.00 for an 11 cent goldfish, some goldfish food and water purifier – then scrambled home to pull off the switch.

At home I found two flower vases-turned-fishbowls on the kitchen table, each containing 1 LIVE goldfish! “I thought you said one died!” I called to my wife as she sat watching her favorite prerecorded T.V. show. “It did!” she yelled back while walking into our dining room. Her jaw dropped as she saw two very live fish swimming in their bowls. “I swear it was dead, floating belly up on top of the water”. I barely heard her as I stared at the clock, trying to figure out what story to tell the kids about fish #3. I thought for a second about just flushing it down the toilet, but when I gave him a look, his beady little eyes won me over. I rifled through the kitchen cabinets, found a medium sized glass cooking bowl and dumped in the new goldfish.

Moments later, the children bolted out of their rooms, newly energized from naps and eager to see their prize fish again. “Where did THIS fish come from?” My daughter asked. I heard myself say something about Daddy wanting a fish like they had and so I had bought one. This patchwork story must have seemed plausible enough to them since they turned back to their own fish – leaving me to ponder if I had just lied to my children or done us all a favor by avoiding two hours of questions I really couldn't answer.

My job apparently finished, I kissed everyone, and hustled back out the door for a workout. An hour later my daughter greeted me at the door. “My fish is DEAD Daddy! Why is my fish dead Dad?”. I didn't answer right away, I wanted to examine the body to make sure this thing really was dead. Sure enough, the fish had given up the ghost – there was no doubt about it this time. “Fish don't live long

honey...” was where I left it and my daughter and I had a makeshift funeral over her toilet bowl. We each said our goodbyes and flushed the fish. To help cheer her up, I told her she could have “my” fish – I was now her hero!

That same evening, my wife bought a proper fishbowl, complete with multicolored rocks and a plastic underwater plant.

Seated at the kitchen table, my son and I set about arranging the colored rocks and plant in the new fishbowl, then added some water. Satisfied with our work, we ended the evening with plans to relocate the two surviving fish into their new home the next morning.

Sometime during the night watches, the Angel of Death visited the fishbowls and claimed the second carnival fish.

My son was crestfallen that morning as we attended our second toilet bowl funeral in as many days. I said a few kind words before the big flush, but again my post funeral explanation of “why the fishies died” seemed woefully inadequate, even for a two year old.

By this time, the 11 cent pet store fish, bought as a replacement for an undead brother had become “our” fish, as both kids claimed ownership. We all (especially me) pinned our hopes of having a living pet on the gills of this lone survivor. Armed with my last shred of hope, I scooped “11 Cent” out of the cookware and plopped him into his new home. We all eagerly watched to see if he would take to his new home. I stole quick glances in the direction of the bathroom, dreading the thought of having to preside over one more burial at sea.

To everyone's delight “11 Cent” as he's now officially called has lived almost a week in his new home. He turned out to be a scrapper, a survivor in a sea of death. He's no longer a novelty to the kids, who barely notice him, but I enjoy him. As a matter of fact, I'm the only one that ever feeds him, so I guess in the end he really is my new fish.