

The Secret Gold Fish

"Fifty, fifty-five, sixty, sixty-five, seventy..." As Billy counts up his nickels and dimes from his piggy bank, he smiles as he reached five dollars. It was from two years of saving, back when he was six. He puts the counted up coins in a little decorated glass jar that he made in school last year. He leaves the broken glasses of his piggy bank and happily charges to the kitchen where his mother prepares breakfast.

The bright sun shining through the window, hits Billy's shiny brown hair. With his eyes wide with excitement, "Mom, I'm going to buy a gold fish, with my own money! I have five dollars all counted out!" His mom smiles warmly, "Sweetie, five dollars isn't enough. You need the fish bowl, the rocks, the food, and it's a lot of hard work and responsibility."

"I am responsible. I'm a grown up now." After minutes of persuasions, Billy's mom finally allowed him and offered to pay for everything except for the fish. Billy bought the fish the very same day. He named him Chubster because of its bright, round body, its round puffy cheeks and its big bulgy eyes. He spent lots of time taking care of Chubster. He talked to it about his favorite Grandmother, his parents, all his secrets, all his happiness and unhappiness, anything and everything.

One day after school, Billy invited his friends to his house, to show them his collection of Digimon cards. After they traded some cards, Billy's friend, Kenny caught sight of Chubster.

"Hey! Cool fish! He's so fat! He's the fattest gold fish I've ever seen! What do you feed this little dope?" As he walks towards it, Billy blocks his way, "Don't call him that! It's rude, didn't people like your Granny teach you manners? Its name is Chubster, he doesn't like strangers like you who call him fat and stuff." Kenny was offended and went to join the others. As Billy invites his friends to his house, he realizes that all his friends notices Chubster. He invited less and less people to his house and eventually he stopped inviting them.

Every night Billy's mom would read a bedtime story to him and Chubster before they went to bed. This time they decided to talk instead.

"Billy, how come you don't invite your friends over anymore? Is everything ok between you and your friends?" His mom asks with concern.

"Nothing's wrong. They always bug Chubster, I don't like it when they go near him."

"Why is that? Chubster is a cute little stubby old fish."

"Don't call him that! That will hurt his feelings. Didn't Granny ever tell you not to call people fat and judge them?" His mom's warm smile left and her face sank. Her eyes began to shine, not shining from happiness but shining from the forming to tears.

"Oh, sweetie, is this whole buying a goldfish thing all because of your

Grandmother?" Billy gets out of his bed and brings the fishbowl and places it on his lap, arms wrapping around it, and sits on the edge of his bed, beside his mom.

"Before Granny left, she told me that it was important to be responsible in life. Being responsible is an important sign that you have grown up. Being responsible is just like taking care of a goldfish. You have to feed it just enough food, not too much, clean its tank, talk to it and care for it, just like caring for your loved ones. She said if I was able to do that she'd be really happy. I want Granny to be happy. Mommy, do you think Granny knows that I'm a grown up now?" His mom hugs her son and nods her head, wiping tears away at the same time.

"I really miss Granny, mommy," said Billy, looking down at Chubster as a single drop of tear fell and joined it.