

Reburial at sea

by Chris Miller

“Sloshes to sloshes. Drip to drip,” I said, then ceremoniously flushed the toilet bowl, our heads bowed in reverence as Molly and I gave Swimmy its last rites.

Swimmy, named by Molly whose overstatement of the obvious is endearing in a three-year-old, was distinguished by its missing eye and black mark on the side of its body that resembled an exclamation point. And Swimmy lived a long full life for a carnival-prize goldfish that we brought home five years ago. Molly was so attached, we were forbidden from disposing of Swimmy until it floated on its side for two days at the top of the fishbowl. I think Molly wanted to hold her own personal calling hours for her scaly friend.

Molly, wise beyond her three years, looked up at me as the toilet tank filled the bowl. “Will Swimmy be reborn as a another goldfish, or maybe some kind of land animal?” Who ever told this kid about reincarnation, I wondered, because it certainly wasn't me. I quickly dismissed Molly's question with a rote line about “fishy heaven,” a magical place replete with gold-plated aquarium gravel and fishbowl decorations in the shape of mansions.

Later that night, as I drew Molly's bath water, I walked downstairs to the kitchen to prepare a typical single-parent frozen dinner when I heard a deafening shriek from the bathroom. I couldn't run back upstairs quickly enough, as my stomach dropped with bitter fear at what I might find. The first thing I saw in the bathroom was Molly, standing in the bathtub clapping her hands. Her shriek was one of joy. And in the bathtub was a one-eyed goldfish, *our* one-eyed goldfish, swimming laps around the perimeter, the black design on its side forming a question mark.

