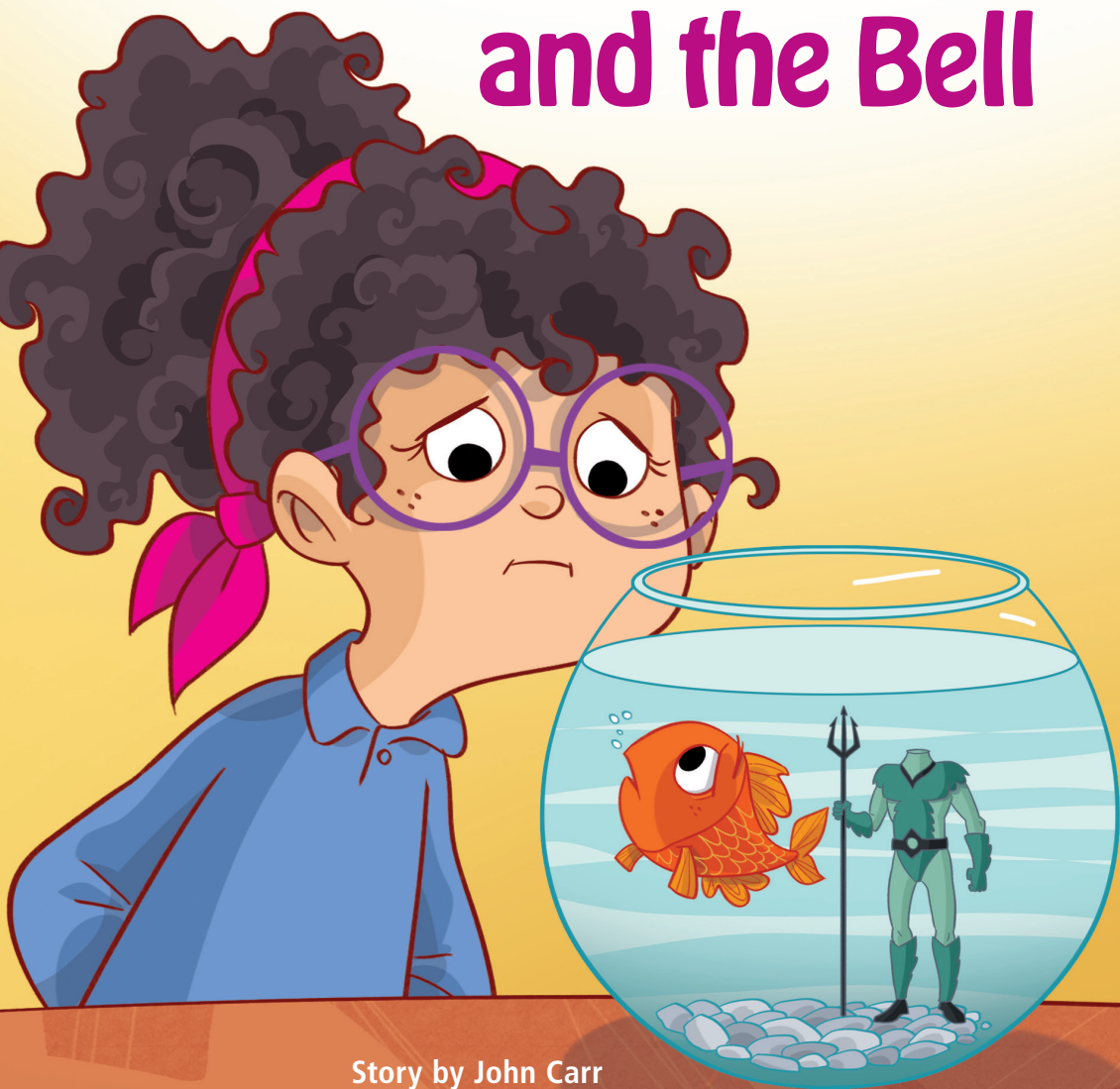


Rupert, Purple Circles and the Bell



Story by John Carr
Illustrations by Fabiano Fiorin

Teacher support material and reader response activities are available at: spca.nz/schools

Rupert, Purple Circles and the Bell

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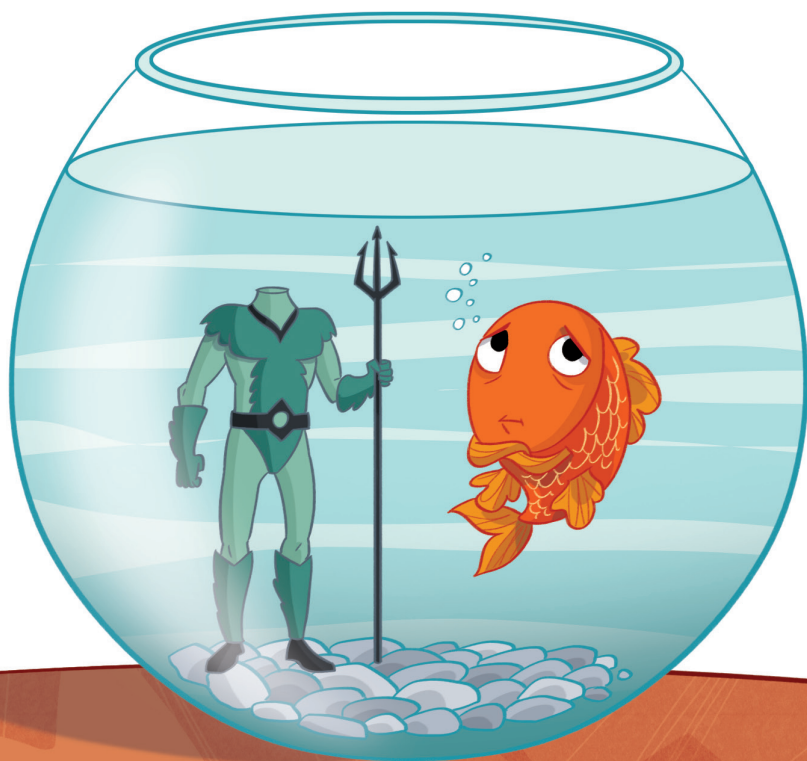
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Chapter 1

Rupert stared through the invisible wall to the dry world. The finless ones were already there. They arrived at the same time every day, and always after the terrible clang of the bell. The noise sent him down to the stones at the bottom, looking for shelter that wasn't there.

Rupert could see Purple Circles. That calmed him down. She was his favourite finless one. She was looking at him through her own invisible walls. She had bright purple circles above her nose.

Suddenly, something big, red and round crashed into Rupert's wet world. This sent him swirling around the bowl.

"Sam! Stop that! You know you're not allowed to throw stuff in the classroom," shouted Hanna. She steadied the wobbling fish bowl and grabbed the wet cricket ball.



Large waves were still washing Rupert from one side of the bowl to the other. At least he was still in the bowl. So much of the water was spreading itself out on the classroom floor.

Hanna looked closely at Rupert.

“Sorry,” said Sam. “Just practising my out-swing. Is he okay?”

“You could have killed him,” Hanna said. “His life is hard without you making it worse.”

“Forget about it,” said Sam. “Rupert already has. Goldfish forget everything after three seconds.”

“That’s not true!” said Hanna. “Rupert remembers me when I arrive at school. He gets excited. He knows I’m going to feed him and give him some attention. Fish have feelings, you know!”



Chapter 2

Later, when Hanna was supposed to be working on her inquiry topic, Rupert was on her mind. She tried to imagine swimming alone all day in a tiny bowl of water. Rupert had no shade when the sun streamed through the window. For company, he only had an action figure Sam had dropped in the bowl as a joke. He was mostly alone and in the dark in between each school day. She also saw that Rupert was frightened by the school bell clanging eight times a day.

Hanna closed her inquiry book and stood up. It was time to stop thinking about Rupert's problems and to do something about them.

"Mr Barea," she said. "I've changed my inquiry topic and I need to go to the library."

Mr Barea agreed immediately. He knew what a good student Hanna was.



The bell clanged as Mrs Anand, the librarian, was issuing Hanna's books about aquariums. Mrs Anand squealed, jolted upright and smiled.

"It gets me every time you know."

The bell was behind her desk. Sometimes kids would go to the library before the bell clanged just to hear Mrs Anand squeal.

"I'm like a flying tennis racquet," she said, "very highly strung."

"Just like Rupert," thought Hanna, as she prepared to research and present "Operation Rupert".



Chapter 3

After the weekend, with only Mr Pickles, the caretaker, for company, the bell was back. So were the finless ones. Rupert was glad to see them, especially Purple Circles. She was talking to Shiny Top.

The others were pointing at a large rectangle. Everyone in Room 4 had listened carefully to Hanna's presentation. Now they all wanted to be involved in making Rupert's life better.

The large rectangle was filled with colourful moving objects. They looked familiar. Rupert recognised that they were fish like him. He stared in wonder at them. They were swimming in a clean watery world with plants and rocks to explore.



Then Rupert realised that Purple Circles and the finless ones were looking at him.

Room 4 were surprised by what Hanna said about fish. She told them how fish “talk” to each other through sounds. She told them how fish recognise each other and work together to catch food. She told them that fish remember things for much longer than three seconds.

They felt sad and a little bit guilty when Hanna listed the things that companion goldfish need to have happy, healthy lives. They realised that Rupert didn’t have some of those things. But Rupert’s excited reaction to Hanna’s coral reef video convinced everyone that Rupert deserved a better life. They would work together to give it to him.



Chapter 4

Hanna asked Mr Barea to record ideas for things that could be done to improve Rupert's life. By Thursday, all of the ideas from the brainstorm were on the whiteboard. On Friday, Sam placed his laptop next to Rupert's bowl. He loaded an animated "swimming goldfish" screensaver on it. Rupert wouldn't feel so alone at night and over the weekend.

Hanna went home happy, but with bigger plans for Rupert in her head. She would have to speak to someone higher up than Mr Barea.

- 
- CHANGE WITH TREATED WATER
 - AQUATIC PLANTS
 - MOVE BOWL TO SAFER, COOLER PLACE
 - COVER FOR BOWL
 - VARIETY OF GOLDFISH FOOD
 - REPLACE HEADLESS MODEL WITH SOMETHING MORE INTERESTING TO EXPLORE AND HIDE IN.
 - ADD TANK FILTER

Mrs Henare, the Principal, listened carefully to Hanna's presentation and smiled.

"Well done, Hanna," she said. "A school aquarium! I think that's a great idea. I've always been a fan of fish in schools. It's the best place for them."

Hanna laughed at Mrs Henare's joke.

"This is a large-scale project, Hanna, but I'm hooked," she laughed. "Maybe we could help pay for it with an underwater themed multi-day. I've still got a mermaid costume. Mmmm, maybe not. I'll think of some fin else."



"There will be so much learning for everyone in the school," continued Mrs Henare. "I'm going to need reports on equipment, how big, technology, feeding, rosters!"

Hanna had already thought of all that.

"The aquarium can go in the library," she said. "That means everyone in the school can see Rupert at least once a week. We can have a roster to help Mr Pickles feed the fish during the holidays."

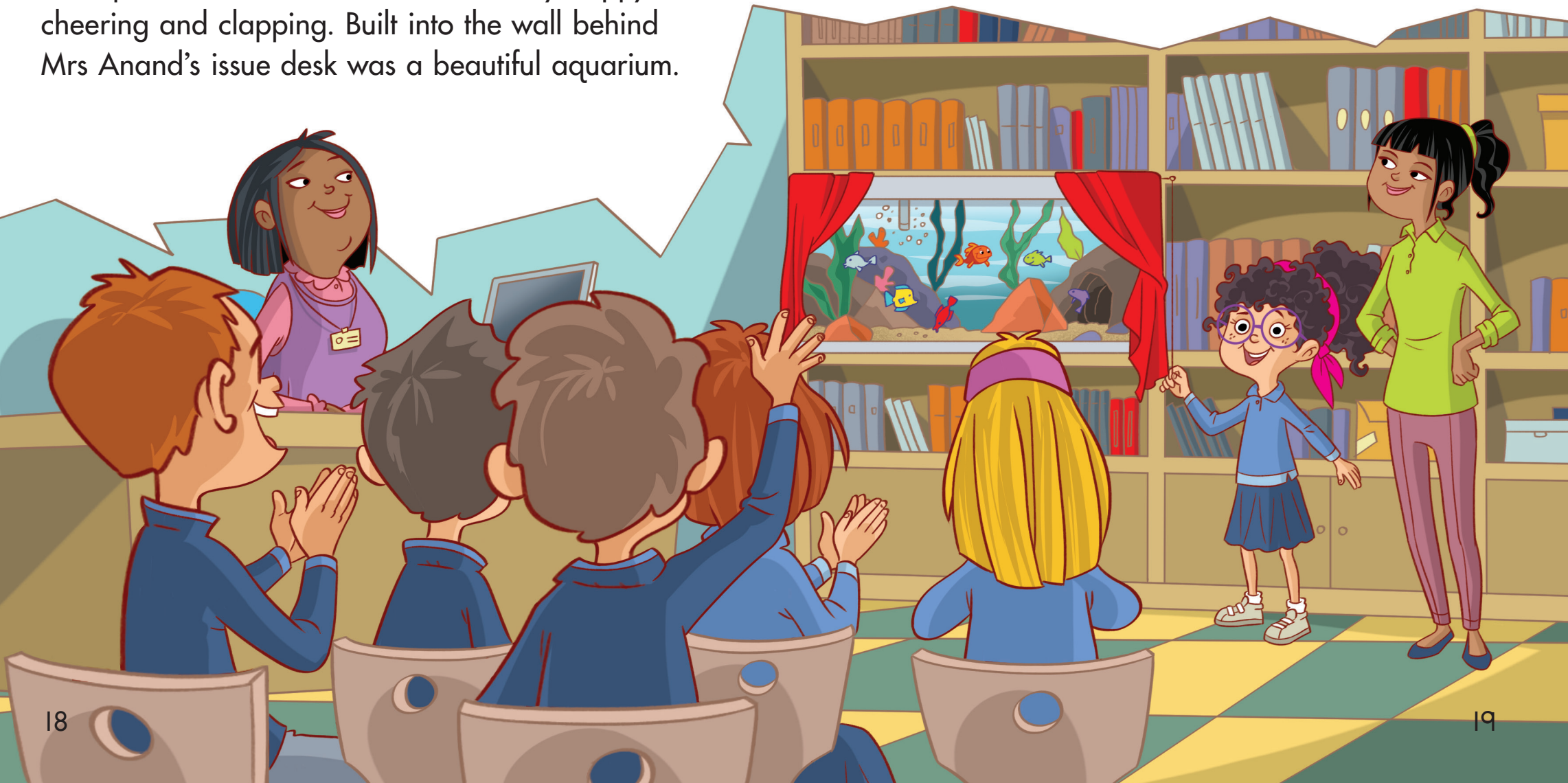


Chapter 5

At the big reveal, the school was packed into the library. Mrs Henare gave a thank-you speech to all those who had been involved in “Operation Rupert”. She asked Hanna to pull the curtain.

Gasps of amazement were followed by happy cheering and clapping. Built into the wall behind Mrs Anand’s issue desk was a beautiful aquarium.

It contained four goldfish swimming around. They were surrounded by a variety of plants and colourful objects to provide enrichment and shelter. With his fins swaying gently in the water, Rupert looked through his glass wall. He was the centre of attention and he seemed to be enjoying it.



Attention shifted to the clock on the wall above the aquarium. It was almost 3 o'clock. Everyone was eagerly waiting to hear Mrs Anand squeal as the bell rang.

The excitement rose as the second hand rotated until... Nothing! Complete silence! Mrs Anand didn't move. She looked at the sea of confused faces. She pointed to a flashing neon sign on the wall above her. She winked at Hanna and then broke the silence.

"Sorry my lovelies," she said. "The bell clang mysteriously disappeared during the renovations. We are going to have to make do with this flashing light. I'm sure I won't miss it. I'm highly strung you know, like a..."

"Flying tennis racquet!" came the reply as the children headed out into the weekend.



Most of the finless ones had gone. Purple Circles was still there, staring through the invisible walls at Rupert's new home. She looked happy.

Now he had others just like him to share his world. He had a wonderful world of clean water and bubbles of oxygen to keep it moving around. His new world had gently swaying plants to provide food, oxygen, shelter and a place to explore. In one corner there were caves and tunnels to hide in.

On the bottom of the tank, Rupert spotted something round. It reminded him of something.

Rupert swam closer to it and flapped his tail to clear some gravel away. He recognised what it was. "A bell!" he thought. But when he saw Purple Circles smiling at him, he knew that this bell would never roar again.

That made his new world perfect.



Caring for Companion Fish

Facts and Tips

- Different species of fish have specific needs. When choosing which fish are right for you and your whānau, do research and make sure you choose companions whose needs you can meet.
- Fish DO NOT have short memories. Fish are intelligent animals that remember sounds, people and other fish.
- When it comes to choosing the best aquarium for your fish – the bigger the better! When fish have lots of space, they are less likely to become stressed and aggressive or get sick.
- Good water quality is important for the health and survival of your fish. There are water-testing kits to use. Always talk to a fish specialist to see what is best for your fish and follow the instructions. Ask an adult for help when testing the water.
- A well set-up and maintained water filter is extremely important for any fish aquarium. Fish eat a lot and produce a lot of waste. A filter helps to keep aquarium water clean and aerated so your fish can breathe.
- Enrichment allows fish to express their natural behaviours. Safe fish enrichment includes artificial and/or real plants, driftwood, rocks, hideouts, shells and hoops. These types of items give fish places to rest, hide and explore.
- Fish need a veterinarian who specialises in fish as they are expert when it comes to our scaly, water-dwelling friends.
- Always consult a fish veterinarian immediately if your fish are sick, injured, or not acting as they usually do.

Visit spca.nz/kids to learn more about caring for fish

Sapphire

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