

The Thing About Cats & Hamsters

“Yes, Mary, I think she could do it,” said Jessie’s mom on the phone. “Okay, I’ll let her know. Goodbye.”

“Who was that?” Jessie asked.

“Miss Mary, our neighbor. She has to go away for a few days and wants you to take care of her three cats and a hamster. She said they’re all very friendly.”

Jessie nodded. She took care of her own cat, Freckles, so this should be easy.

The next day after school, Jessie ran next door to Miss Mary’s house. As she walked in, two cats greeted her with hungry meows. “Meeoow! Mew, mew!”

“Okay, okay! Give me a chance to find your food,” Jessie said as she went to the kitchen. She tried not to trip over the cats as they moved in and out around her legs.

Jessie pulled out the bag of food. As she was opening it, another cat came charging toward her through the doorway. “Wahhh!” Jessie yelled. *Riip!* Jessie looked down at the bag of cat food. She had torn the bag down the side when the cat startled her, and kitty kibble poured out all over the kitchen floor.

“Oh no! See what you made me do?” she said to the cat, who busily gobbled the kibble. When she picked him up so she could clean up the mess, the cat scratched her arm as he squirmed and jumped down to the floor.

Jessie sighed as she refilled the water dishes. She let the cats eat while she went to check on the hamster. “Hi, little guy!” She said as she opened the cage and poured a scoop of food into his dish. The hamster squeaked and

huddled in the corner of the cage. “Aww, are you scared?” She gently pet the hamster’s quivering nose to calm him down, when suddenly—*chomp!* He bit Jessie’s finger!

“Ow! Hey, that’s not nice,” Jessie scolded before she slammed the cage door shut.

Jessie trudged back to the kitchen. The cats were lazily cleaning their whiskers after finishing their meal. Finally, Jessie headed home, exhausted and frustrated.

“Hi, Jessie! How did it go?” asked Mom.

Jessie looked up with a sour look. She held up her finger that the hamster had bitten and showed her mom the scratch on her arm from the cat that scared her.

“Oh, my. I see it didn’t go so well,” Mom concluded. “Do you want me to come help you tomorrow? It looks like you’re outnumbered—three cats and a hamster against just you.”

“No, thanks.” Jessie sighed heavily. “I’d like to try and do it since Miss Mary asked me to.”

“Taking care of pets can be hard. Let’s pray and ask God to help you,” said Mom as she bowed her head to pray.

The next day Jessie was just about to go out her door when her cousin Emily rang the doorbell.

“Hi, Jessie. I heard you were petsitting. Can I come help?” Emily asked.

“That sounds like a great idea, Emily,” said Jessie’s mom.

“Okay, let’s go! I’ll tell you what to do,” Jessie said, smiling.

Jessie opened the door of Miss Mary's house. This time, no cats came to greet her. "Kitties?" Jessie called. "Here, kitty, kitty!" She turned to Emily. "That's weird. They were right here at the door yesterday." Jessie shrugged and walked into the kitchen. "Come on, let's get their food."

The girls bent down to scoop food into the dishes when suddenly all three cats came running full speed into the kitchen.

"Ahh!" Emily yelled. "They're all attacking!"

Jessie pulled Emily out of the way, and they both sat down hard on the kitchen floor as the cats went straight to their dishes and wolfed down their food. "Ow! Well, that part of the job is done. Now we have to feed the hamster," Jessie said leading the way down the hall.

"Oh! He's adorable!" Emily cooed at the little animal. "You're so cute."

"Watch out, Emily. He bit me yesterday," Jessie warned.

"I'll feed him then," Emily volunteered. She stuck her hand into the cage and poured food into the dish. Then, without warning, the hamster made a break for it! Emily felt his tiny cold feet on her skin as he scrambled up her

arm and out the door of the cage. "Wahh! Eeek! Ahh!" Emily squealed.

Jessie turned just in time to see the hamster jump from the top of Emily's head onto a shelf where it hid behind a book. "Let's get something to put him in, then I'll move the book, and we'll catch him."

Jessie ran and grabbed a box from another room. "Ready? One, two, three," Jessie whispered. Emily quickly moved the book out of the way, and the startled hamster jumped right into the box Jessie was holding. "Hooray! We caught him," the girls cheered as they put the hamster back into the cage.

"Whew! Let's go home now," Jessie said. "Thanks for your help, Emily."

"I'm glad I could help. It was like you against three attack cats and a crazy hamster." Emily shivered, still thinking about the hamster's little feet skittering up her arm.

"Yep, I think you were the answer to my prayer for help. I couldn't have done this job without you. The thing about cats and hamsters is that they are full of surprises."

"That's for sure!" Emily agreed.

