

Anemones Aren't Enemies

By Steve Heron

Hennie the sea anemone lived on a reef in the sparkling waters of the South Pacific.

His tentacles were the perfect home for a new family of Tomato Clownfish.

Mum and Dad frolicked in the tentacles but Penny, the newest addition to the family, was not so sure. She watched as a small fish was stung as it swam too close to Hennie's tentacles. Afraid to join her parents, she hid in a clamshell.

'Come and join us in our new home,' Mum called.

'But I don't want to be stung,' Penny replied from the safety of the clamshell.

'Anemones aren't enemies,' said Dad. 'We have a symbiotic relationship with them.'

'Don't use such big words with her,' Mum said. 'What your father means is that we're meant for each other. We help them, and they help us.'

Penny jiggled her fins and swam behind a piece of coral. 'But I'm frightened.'

'You'll be okay,' said Dad. 'You have a special coating that will protect you.'

'It's hard to do something for the first time.' Mum understood.

'Anemones are our friends, they don't want to hurt us. It's a perfect partnership,' Dad added before he disappeared between Hennie's tentacles.

Much to Penny's delight, he popped out the other side.

'Come on Penny be brave,' Mum called.

Penny peeked out from behind the coral.

'H...h...how can I be brave? I'm s...s...scared,' she said.

'If you're not scared you don't need to be brave,' Mum encouraged.

Penny watched Mum and Dad duck and weave into Hennie's tentacles again.

Her little heart beat faster as she plucked up the courage. With a quick flick and a wriggle of her tail, she flapped her fins and darted through the water into Hennie's tentacles.

Hennie waved his tentacles all over her.

In and out she swam as she chased after her mum and dad.

When she caught them, she felt safe.

'I thought it might sting, but it tickled,' she said.

'See, anemones aren't enemies.' Dad winked.

Mum smiled. Hennie hugged the family.

'S...s...s... Symbiotic!' Giggled Penny.

END

Sea anemones are a group of water-dwelling, predatory animals of the order Actiniaria. Named after a garden flower they look like.

The Tomato Clownfish with a single stripe near its head is a clownfish found in the waters of the South-Western Pacific.

Scientific name: Amphiprion frenatus.

Host anemone, a bubble-tip (Entacmaea quadricolor)