

Harmer The Charmer

By Steve Heron

Harmer's dad promised her a new pet for her eighth birthday.

The big day arrived. Dad took Harmer to the pet shop.

'You can choose any pet you like,' Dad said.

Harmer jiggled with excitement.

First, she looked at the kittens.

'Hmmm, too fluffy.'

Harmer cuddled a puppy.

'Blah, too icky licky.'

She peered into the goldfish tanks.

'Ewwh, too ishy wishy.'

Harmer considered a parrot.

'Nah, too awky skwarky.'

A canary?

'Too cheepy chirpy.'

She discovered the hermit crabs.

'Too snippy snappy.'

Harmer scrunched her nose at the ferrets.

‘Pewh, too elly smelly.’

She stared at the Axolotl.

‘Woah, too geeky freaky.’

Mice? Guinea pig?

‘Too eeky, squeaky.’

Harmer stopped at the snake vivarium.

‘Jussssssst right.’

‘What about a puppy?’ Dad suggested.

‘I would really like a snake.’

‘A puppy would be nice.’

‘But you said I can choose any pet.’

‘You can teach a puppy to do tricks.’

‘I can teach a snake to do tricks.’

‘But a snake is too ithery slithery.’

‘I like ithery slithery.’

Dad read the sign, ‘Stimson’s Python - Cheaper to keep than a dog.’ He was warming to Harmer’s unusual choice. ‘Okay, I’ll ask the store owner.’

The store owner explained about keeping snakes, 'You will need a license, keep it in the right environment and only feed it once a week.'

Harmer's dad filled in the license papers and took them to the Department of Parks and Wildlife.

At home, Harmer's dad carried the snake vivarium into the living room.

'He must live in here where we can see him,' Dad said. 'You won't be able to handle him for the first week till he settles in.'

Harmer loved her new pet. She named him *Terrence*.

For the first week, Harmer talked to Terrence, read him stories, drew pictures, decorated his home and, with her dad's help, fed him.

Just as she thought, Harmer liked the itvery, slithery feeling as she carefully held Terrence.

She put Terence in a basket on the floor.

It was time to teach him some tricks.

'Sit!'

Terrence could only lay.

'Roll over!'

He simply slithered.

'Shake!'

He didn't have a paw, and he wasn't a rattlesnake.

‘Heel!’

He just coiled up.

Harmer threw a stick. ‘Fetch!’

Terrence didn’t.

Harmer’s bottom lip stuck out. ‘Perhaps Dad was right, maybe I should have chosen a puppy.’

The next day Harmer came home from school with a recorder.

She learned her first song, Hot Cross Buns.

‘Terrence, I’ll play for you.’

As Harmer played, Terrence’s head lifted and swayed from side to side.

Terrence could do a trick. He was dancing!

Harmer had an idea.

When her dad came home, she placed Terrence in the basket and borrowed a towel from the bathroom.

She sat cross-legged on the floor and rolled the towel around her head.

Harmer played her recorder. Terrence did his dance.

With thrilled smile Dad said, ‘You taught him a trick. My daughter Harmer is a charmer.’

Harmer couldn’t wait to take Terrence to school for show and tell.

END

Appendix:

Information on Stimson’s Python and keeping reptiles as pets.

Herpetofauna

Vivarium

License

Age

Pet stores

Future series ideas:

- Harmer and the School Drama
- Harmer and the Llama Farmer
- Harmer meets the Dalai Lama
- Harmer's Pyjamas
- Harmer goes to Yokohama
- Harmer's Cruise in the Bahamas