

# **Silky and the Parrot**

**Bill Baynes**

## 1.

Silky was feeling sorry for herself. Her brothers were totally boring. There was nothing to do. The den was becoming a prison.

She was not allowed to go outside unless Mama was watching and Mama was taking her morning snooze, even though her two brothers were still nuzzling her. She went out at night when the kits were asleep. The little ones were supposed to play inside quietly until late afternoon.

Phooey. What about now?

Silky licked her paws, washed her face and pouted. She knew every inch of this place. She'd sniffed every corner. She'd looked under every leaf. She'd dug down to the cold metal floor of the old culvert.

She felt like she could scream, but she couldn't even stamp her tiny foot because it might wake Mama.

Poor Silky.

She looked toward the end of the pipe. Everything seemed safe, at least in the small circle of light she could see. She edged partway down the shaft. She could see a small section of dock, where two sailboats were moored, a narrow strip of water and distant sky.

She listened to the soothing early sounds – birds chirping, boats creaking, water against the grassy bank beneath the culvert – and something else. What was that?

The little skunk strained her ears. Was that muttering? Was that the wind? She couldn't be sure.

Her brothers weren't paying any attention to her, so Silky tumbled out the front entrance. She picked herself up and scanned the marina for signs of danger, as Mama had taught her. All clear.

The sound was louder here – low, kind of grating.

She couldn't make out what it was. It was mumbly and she couldn't tell where it was coming from.

She moved down the bank of the canal and she thought she saw something on a spar on that boat, something behind the sail, a spurt of color, and then she heard the words:

“Whapped. Wasted.”

With a little whistle ...

“Wiped. Whew!”

There. Silky could see some sort of bird back there, although her eyesight wasn't very good that far away. Definitely feathers. Definitely colors. She moved a little closer.

“Who is he talking to?” she said to herself.

A bright red head peeked around the sail. A sharp curved beak.

“Who's askin'?”

“Me. Over here.” She raised up on her hind legs and waved her arms.

The head disappeared.

“Leave me alone,” said the voice behind the mast.

“Could you please come out?” Silky asked sweetly.

“Don't want to.”

The little skunk was surprised. Everyone answered yes when she used her sweet voice.

“Why not?”

“You’ll see. I don’t want you to see.”

Silky was used to getting her own way. If her nice voice didn’t work, she’d try her nasty voice.

“Of course, I’ll see,” she said sharply. “That’s the point.”

The bird muttered some more and eyed her from behind the pole.

“Geez. I mean, no big deal.”

He stepped sideways onto the spar above the sail. It was a bright red parrot with blue and yellow wings and a long pointy tail.

“Oh, my,” said Silky, a saying she picked up from her mama. “You’re ... you’re wonderful.”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah. Happy now? Have your fill.”

“You’re so ... so ... wow!”

“Gaudy? You mean gaudy, don’t you?”

“N-n-no. I never said that.”

“I am so tired of everyone telling me about me.” The parrot ruffled his feathers and shook all over. “I just wanna be normal. Normal for a bird means unnoticeable. I wish I was black and white like you.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Well, you are kinda ... you know, drab.”

“I don’t know that word,” Silky said.

“Like ... colorless? Plain?”

“Well,” she snipped. “ I ... I ...”

“Uh huh,” the parrot interrupted. “Look, don’t mean to be rude, but I’m needing some feeding.”

He took the two-flap flight to the dumpster by the marina fence, which was underneath a large tree. He picked out a piece of fruit and threw his head back to swallow.

The little skunk waddled over, which was pretty brave because the parrot was twice her size.

“You hurt my feelings,” she complained. She stretched to her full length and flounced her big fluffy tail. The bird couldn’t help but flinch, just for a second.

“I’m considered quite beautiful, you know,” she said.

“I’m sure you are,” the bird said, hopping to the ground. “Sorry, I get sharp sometimes when I’m hungry and right now I’m famished. I came a really long way.”

Silky watched the parrot peck around with his big hooked beak, so precise picking up seeds and pulling pieces of bark from the tree.

“Where did you come from?” she asked.

“I have no idea,” he said, gulping a leaf.

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