

Black and White

One night many years ago, I returned home rather late in the evening. I had been smelling eau de skunk for several blocks. As I turned into our fairly long driveway, the pungent odor became very, very strong. "Oh, no." I thought. "I hope Star hasn't mixed it up with a skunk again."

Star was my cat of, as of that time, nineteen years. Several times previously, she had tangled with a skunk, much to the disgust of everyone's sense of smell, but it had been a long time since the last incident. "Please don't be you, Star," I thought. The idea of having to go out and get cans of tomato juice and then battle her through a tomato juice bath that night was unthinkable (but living with that stench would be worse.)

Worrying that skunk spraying had happened yet again, I quickly drove the length of the driveway to the garage and zapped the garage door opener. As I waited for the door to open, I implored, "Please, Star, don't let it be you again." As the door neared the apex, I looked for my cat in the garage. I spotted her in the far back corner, so I quickly parked my car outside of the garage. I didn't want to scare her out the cat door and into an encounter with this skunk so slowly, quietly I walked into the unlit dark garage, gently calling her name. "Star. Here, Star. Good Girl. Time to come in for the night. Come here, Star."

Thankfully, she stayed where she was. I slowly and quietly edged my way around the piles of stuff on the floor of the garage. Reaching the back of the garage, where I had last seen my big bundle of fur, I sidled up to her and carefully bent down to pet her, in preparation for bringing her up to the house. I was thinking to myself "Thank you, Star. Thank you for not tangling with that skunk."

I was still petting her when my father came home from some lawn bowling match or other, probably in Providence, as it was dark already (a lot of the bowling greens don't have lights). As the car lights shown onto the driveway, I automatically looked up to see who it was. What was revealed was enough that I went "Oh, shit." There was Star, calmly sitting on the back porch stairs.

I unbelievably looked down and saw the skunk I was petting, sitting on the garage floor, evidently enjoying being petted. I slowly, carefully stood back up, talking quietly the whole time. "Nice skunk. Good skunk. Easy there, boy. I'm not going to hurt you, pretty one." I inched myself away from the creature and exited the garage. I returned to my car, closed the garage door, let out sigh of relief, and headed up to the porch stairs and my unscented black and white cat.

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