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LILY

TO THE rescue

THE
NOT-SO-STINKY
SKUNK

Illustrations by

JENNIFER L. MEYER

STARSCAPE



A TOM DOHERTY ASSOCIATES BOOK

NEW YORK

This is a work of fiction. All of the characters, organizations,
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LILY TO THE RESCUE: THE NOT-SO-STINKY SKUNK

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Lily, Lily, Lily!” Maggie Rose said to me.

“We’re going camping, Lily!”

Maggie Rose is my girl, and I am her dog. When she is happy, I am *very* happy. When she is excited, I am *very* excited. She was obviously excited and happy at this moment, so I jumped up to put my feet on her knees and then dropped down to run in circles around the kitchen. Whatever was going on, it was the best!

I looked up, wagging, when Mom came in the kitchen carrying a bag. I could smell something delicious in that bag!

“We were out of dog food, so I brought some from the shelter,” Mom said. She set the bag down and I padded over to sniff it more carefully. “Would you put it in the pantry, Maggie Rose?”

I was excited when Maggie Rose lifted the bag, grunting a little. “Can you get it?” Mom asked. “It’s heavy.”

“I got it,” my girl replied. I followed her, my nose up, as she put the bag in a closet and shut the door. She skipped back into the kitchen, though I felt that a celebration could include opening the bag at that moment.

“You are such a help with all the animals, Maggie Rose,” Mom said, praising her. “I really appreciate everything you do for our rescue operation.”

“And Lily!” my girl replied. “Don’t forget, she’s a rescue, too!”

“And Lily,” Mom agreed.

My girl and I ran into the living room, where the floor is softer. We had a very good wrestle with an old towel because we were both so happy.

“Dad’s taking us, Lily,” Maggie Rose whis-



pered. “We’re going up to the mountains. I *never* get to spend time with just Dad!”

I love it when my girl talks to me. I jumped into her lap and licked her ear and under her chin, where she tastes especially delicious.

I didn’t know what she was telling me, but I knew it was good.

Maggie Rose flopped down on her back so that I could lie down on top of her and pant in her face.

“Dad says we’re going to take care of some prairie dogs first,” she told me. I heard the word “dogs” and licked her chin again. Obviously, whatever she was talking about was going to be very good, because she’d said “dogs.”

“And then we’ll go and camp. You and me and Dad.” Maggie Rose hugged me. “Just us!”

“Hey,” said a voice that was not as happy as Maggie Rose’s. “What do you mean, you’re going camping with Dad? Just you?”

Maggie Rose's older brother, Bryan, had come into the room. I ran to sniff Bryan.

"If you're going camping, I want to go, too," Bryan said. "No fair if you get to go and I don't."

"Bryan's right," said another voice. Maggie Rose's oldest brother, Craig, was standing in the doorway, listening to them talk. I went to greet him, and then whipped my head around to stare at my girl.

Something was wrong. Suddenly, just like that, Maggie Rose was not as happy as she'd been a moment ago!

"But Dad said it was just going to be him and me," she said. "You guys are always doing stuff with Dad, and I don't get to go."

"Stuff like what?" Bryan demanded.

I pounced on the old towel and shook it. *This* would make Maggie Rose happy again!

"He goes to your games all the time," she

said, “and takes you to the park to practice soccer and baseball.”

“Well, if you did a sport, he’d do that for you, too,” Craig pointed out. “You could join the soccer team at school. Or T-ball.”

Bryan snorted. “She’s too much of a runt to be any good at soccer.”

Maggie Rose’s back stiffened. I could tell this was some kind of wrestling match going on between her and her brothers. I used to live with my three brothers, before I came to live at Home with my girl, and I remembered wrestling with them.

People sometimes wrestle with words instead of jumping on each other and rolling around in the dirt. I don’t really understand how it works, but I can tell when they are wrestling. I can also tell when somebody wins.

Right now, Maggie Rose was wrestling back. But she hadn’t won.

“Don’t call me a runt,” she said. “You’re supposed to stop that.”

“Yeah, Bryan, knock it off,” Craig agreed.

Bryan flopped down on the couch and snorted again.

“And I don’t want to play soccer or T-ball. I’m busy most days after school helping Mom at the animal rescue,” Maggie Rose went on. “Anyway, I don’t see why I should have to play soccer just to spend time with Dad. That’s not fair.”

“And I don’t see why you get some sort of special girl camping trip just for you,” Bryan said. “That’s not fair, either.”

When a dog doesn’t understand what people are doing, sometimes the best thing to do is to hunt for treats. I jumped up on the couch to sniff at Bryan’s jeans. I could tell that he’d recently had a peanut butter sandwich in one of his pockets.

I pushed my nose as deep into the pocket as

it would go. There was no sandwich in there now, but if I kept sniffing, maybe one would appear.

“Dad!” Bryan called. “Maggie Rose says she’s going camping with you.”

I pulled my head out of Bryan’s pocket to see Dad join us in the living room. I wagged. Mom followed as well, standing just behind Craig in the doorway. She didn’t say anything, probably because she was holding a towel. When *I* have a towel, it pretty much takes all my concentration.

“Yes, that’s right,” Dad agreed.

I could tell that Dad didn’t have any peanut butter sandwiches, so I stuck my nose back into Bryan’s pocket.

“We want to go, too,” Bryan said.

“Yeah, come on, Dad,” Craig said. “We haven’t been camping since last spring, when it rained the whole time. We should get to go, too. It’s not fair if Maggie Rose is the only one.”

“But Dad, you said it would just be you and me,” Maggie Rose protested.

Her voice sounded so worried that I pulled my head out of Bryan’s pocket. I realized I had let her down. To be a good dog, I needed to comfort her, especially since no sandwich had shown up in Bryan’s jeans. Something was really bothering her. I jumped to the floor, the peanut butter scent forgotten. Maggie Rose was sitting with her legs crossed. I leaped into her lap and gazed up into her face. What was happening?

“Well,” Dad said thoughtfully. “I can see what you boys mean.”

“No,” my girl moaned. I could see Maggie Rose slump in on herself.

She had lost the wrestling match.