

Sassy,
Not Sissy



"Sassy, Mommy's going to work now. You be a good girl." Sassy barked twice, her usual response.

"At last," Sassy ruffed once her owner closed the front door. Sassy trotted to the window to watch her owner drive down the driveway out into the street. When she was out of sight, Sassy hurried out the doggy door. She sniffed her way to the loose board in the fence and squeezed her small body through. "Free at last," she said as she pranced happily down the sidewalk.

Sassy continued on, stopping for quick chats with all her friends. When she reached the edge of her neighborhood, Milo the cat was waiting as usual. In his catty voice, he said, "Your name should be Sissy. You prance here every day, and then you turn around and go home. If you were truly Sassy, you'd cross the street."



"I am NOT a sissy," Sassy protested. Milo cleaned himself, pretending to be uninterested. "Watch this, Milo!" Sassy poised herself at the end of the sidewalk. She looked both ways. No cars were coming, but still she hesitated.

"Ha ha! That's what I thought, Sissy!"

With that, Sassy ran as fast as she could across the street and into the woods. "You're okay, Sassy," she panted. "Leaving your neighborhood was a big risk, but you took your chances. You showed Milo."

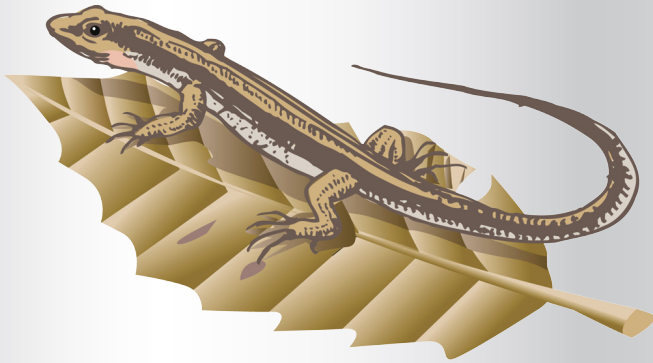
On top of the world, she continued to prance farther into the woods. Leaves crunched under her feet and tall trees towered above her. "So this is what the wild looks like. This is where I belong, for I'm a relative of a wolf after all!"

"Watch out!" cried a small voice under the leaves.

Stunned, Sassy shrieked in a high-pitched voice, "Who is that?"

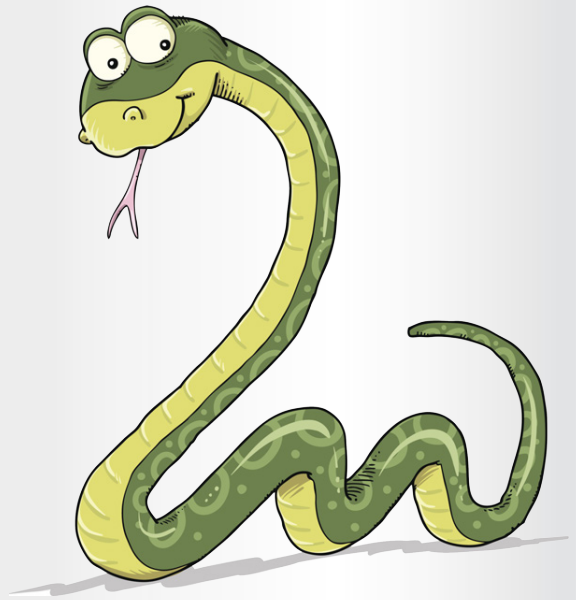
A small, very angry lizard changed from brown to green, allowing Sassy to see him. Sassy apologized and continued on her way. "What a strange place this is," she muttered.

Realizing how thirsty she was, Sassy thought about her water bowl back home, and she decided it was time to go back. When she turned around, Sassy couldn't see the way out. Nose



to the ground, she found her scent and began to retrace her steps.

Sassy was on her way when all of a sudden, she came nose to nose with a snake. "Ssssss... you smell tassssty," he hissed.



Quickly, Sassy turned to her right and ran as fast as she could. Sassy didn't stop running until her feet splashed into a stream. Panting, she bent to take a drink of water. Just as her tongue took the first lap of refreshing water, something pinched poor Sassy's tongue.

"Ouch!" she yelped. A snapping turtle stuck its head up out of the water. "Watch where you stick your head!" he snapped.

"I'm so sorry," Sassy said, but the turtle had disappeared back under the water. Sassy turned around. Her head and tail hung low. "What a **harsh** place," Sassy cried. "I want out of

this cruel environment. I want to go home." Now Sassy was extremely thirsty, hungry, and tired. "This is not the **outcome** I wanted for my adventure! Milo was right. I AM a Sissy! Now I'm going to **starve** out here in the woods!"

Sassy sulked over to a tree and eased herself slowly to the ground. "I'm so tired," Sassy bawled. "I'll just **doze** here for a few minutes."

Something poked Sassy on her side. She twitched in her sleep, sure she was dreaming. When the poke returned even harder, Sassy jerked awake and jumped to her feet.

She looked up into the eyes of a dog twice her size. When the dog reached out with a large paw, Sassy closed her eyes waiting for the blow. Instead, the dog touched the tag on her collar. "Your name is Sassy?"

"Yes," said Sassy, "but it should be Sissy."

"My name is Sasha," the dog said. "You look like a Sassy, that's for sure."

"What do you mean?"

"It's obvious you have an owner that loves you. Your fur is clean and groomed, and you have a

fancy collar. Look at the pads of your feet! They're soft, not rough and calloused like mine. What are you doing here?"

Sassy told Sasha the story of her daily neighborhood walk and her run-in with Milo.

"The tabby cat?" laughed Sasha. "I chase him out of his own yard every day and eat his food! He should not intimidate you! Come on, I'll help you get home. If you stay here, someone from the dog pound will capture you. You really wouldn't like it there."

Sasha led Sassy out of the woods and to the street. Sassy turned to say goodbye to Sasha, but Sasha nodded across the street. Seeing Milo, Sassy understood. After checking for cars, Sassy crossed the street. She trotted past Milo. "Ahhh... look who's back. It's Sissy!" Milo laughed.

Sassy kept walking. All of a sudden, ferocious barking erupted from behind her. Milo hissed and ran out of sight. Laughing, Sassy turned to see Sasha. "That was awesome, Sasha! Thanks! Do you want to come to my house?"

"I'd better not," answered Sasha. "Your owner probably wouldn't like a stray dog." Before she could change her mind, Sasha ran back across the street and disappeared into the woods.

All the way home, Sassy thought about Sasha. It wasn't fair for Sassy to be a pampered pooch while Sasha lived in the wild. By the time she was home, Sassy had a plan.

Back inside, Sassy watched for her owner. As soon as her owner came in, Sassy dragged the leash to her. Her owner understood!

She clipped on her leash and took her outside. Sassy ran, forcing her owner to follow. She didn't stop until she was at the edge of the neighborhood. Sassy started to bark, "Sasha! Sasha!"

Timidly, Sasha stuck her neck out of the woods. Sassy smiled as her owner said, "Oh, look at that gorgeous dog!"



The End