

THE MOSQUITO

BY STRIPES THE ECO-CAT



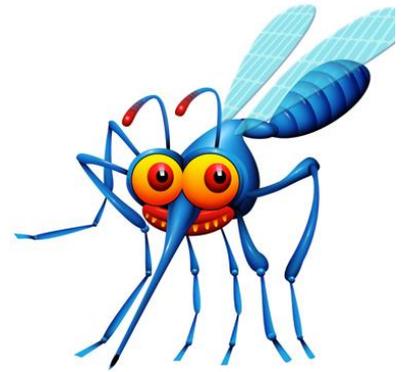
"Neeeeoooo"!

I swatted vaguely at the noise, half asleep.

"Neeeeoooo", it came again. And then silence. A silence much more ominous than the annoying sound. It means that the fiend has landed - on me.

"Don't you dare!" I shouted, "I'm not your supper".

"Sorry Stripes", said a tiny voice. "But I really need to get some blood. Please won't you help me? I only need a few drops, and you have a lot of blood. I'm sure you can spare some for me."



The little mosquito was sitting on my paw, looking really apologetic. But I was not fooled.

"I don't think so", I said crossly. "Why do you need my blood anyway?"

"Oh Stripes, it's not my fault that I need protein from your blood. I need it to make eggs and have babies".

"Babies are overrated, mate. Look at me, I don't have any because my humans 'fixed' me, but I can't say I miss them."

"Well I want some and I need your blood!" insisted the little vampire.

"How did you find me, anyway", I asked not quite convinced that I wanted to part with any of my blood, not even a few drops.

"Oh, that's easy", the mosquito said, "I just follow the trail of the carbon dioxide you breathe out. It's like a treasure hunt."



"But why on earth does your bite have to be so itchy", I demanded.

"Well, think about it Stripes. When I bite you (and I hope you will let me), I stick my long needle-like mouthpart into you and suck the blood. But the problem is the blood can clot in the thin needle, so I have to inject stuff that stops it clotting. Unfortunately humans, and I suppose

cats too, can be allergic to this anti-clotting stuff and it makes the bite very itchy."

"But why, Miss Mozzie, do you have to sound like a manic mini dive-bomber? It warns us when you come in for your vampire thing and we can swat you or 'doom' you."

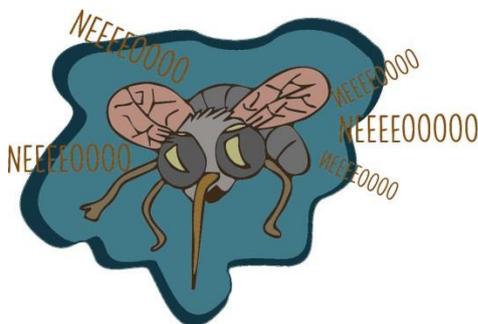
"Yes, Stripes, that is a bit of a give-away, but that's how I tell the boy mosquitoes that I'm ready to mate. I'm actually a kind of fly and I can beat my wings so fast that they make the sound that everyone knows is coming from a mosquito - a girl mosquito."

"What about the boy mosquitoes? Don't they have fast wings?"

"They do, but they don't eat blood. They eat nectar and pollen from flowers because they don't need extra protein."

"I'm still not convinced, Miss Mozzie. What about the terrible diseases like malaria I can get from you bite?"

"Yes, that really gives us mosquitoes a bad reputation. The truth is I can't help that. The little parasites that make people sick sneak into me when I suck blood from an animal or a human that's infected. I can't tell if they are or not. I'm really sorry about that, but what can I do?"



"Well, I don't really care, but do it somewhere else", I said. "I was nearly taken in by your sob story, but next time you come near me, you'll be dead meat!"

Text by Anina Lee

Illustration by Jacci Rudling with colourist Dante Campbell