

## **Ambra Sancin – A sad and sorry tale**

A recent early morning encounter with backyard wildlife became a drama I hadn't expected.

I was about to step onto my patio, but after a double-take, I stifled a scream and shut the door. I was sure the long bushy tail near the pot plants didn't belong to either of my two cats. They were inside the house, and besides, this tail was black, and my cats are a marmalade and a tabby.

I opened the door again after a strong coffee. Whatever creature I'd seen had disappeared. But it hadn't gone far. The brushtail possum lay motionless at the rear of the yard, with a large chunk of flesh missing from its lower back.

Shutting my back door tight like any good coward, I rang the wildlife rescue service WIRES for advice. By the time a volunteer – on her way to a party – arrived, the possum had climbed high into a conifer. She decided to call reinforcements, not least because she was wearing a tight dress and strappy sandals. An experienced possum wrangler arrived within half an hour, armed with an assortment of tools and aids.

What followed was a masterclass in coaxing, chasing, trapping and securing the beast. It struggled and shrieked, its tail thrashing and it confirmed my suspicion that they aren't always as cuddly as they seem.

The possum's injuries indicated it had probably been attacked by a dog. Looking at its wound, the possum wrangler guessed it had been in this sorry state for a few days, pointing out the maggots in the wound. She said that euthanasia looked to be the kindest solution and took the caged possum to her car.

I've cursed possums for nibbling on my citrus fruit and destroying my passionfruit vine. I've been woken at night by their blood-curdling yelping outside my bedroom window and been annoyed by their galloping on the roof. However much I've wanted them to disappear forever, I felt sad this one came to such a violent end.

If this possum was responsible for the carnage to my backyard fruit and flowers, I'll bet it shared the news with its family on the location of my all-you-can-eat smorgasbord before its untimely end.