

Life With Muldoon

by [Peter Glassman](#) (December 2019)



Cat and Bird, Paul Klee, 1928

Red-striped YoYo approached the huge dome-cage with caution. It was taller than their mistress, who's called "Mom" by the kids. The barred door was unlocked. YoYo easily stretched her two-foot length to reach the opening and could probably jump right in.

"Wait," said the black-striped Licorice. He had followed slowly and was the more cautious cat.

YoYo stopped and looked down at him. "This thing is empty. Maybe it's for us for when the aunt comes with her dog. We could get in and close the door."

Licorice was a foot longer and stretched up higher to pop his head inside. "It looks uncomfortable in there."

YoYo dropped to the floor. "Maybe they'll put small pillows in for us, like on the sofa. Those two small clear plastic trays look like they're for food."

Licorice was always a skeptic, "I don't know. I got a bad feeling about this thing."

Suddenly the door from the garage opened and Mom came in struggling with a boxy, wire-framed cage. Mom saw the two cats and shouted, "YoYo and Licorice, you stay away while I get Muldoon into her new place." A loud "AWK" issued from the portable birdcage.

The cats retreated and peeked back around one side of the stainless refrigerator. YoYo spoke first, as usual, "Licorice, it's a giant white bird."

Licorice, always thinking of food, reached above YoYo to get a better look. "Maybe it's a chicken she's gonna cook for us later."

Mom transferred Muldoon into the large stationary birdcage. She filled one of the plastic containers with bird food and the other with water.

YoYo moved forward for a better look. "Maybe you're right. She's giving it food to fatten her up."

Mom finished adding some bird toys, a cuttlebone tree, and a small green ladder connecting an upper and lower perch. She lightly stroked Muldoon's yellow-streaked white crown and neck and spoke to the new household Cockatoo. "Okay, my dear, welcome to the Waxman residence." She closed and locked the cage door and went upstairs.

Licorice's eyes widened, "She talked to it."

YoYo moved closer to the cage again with Licorice moving one silent paw after another as he approached Muldoon.

The cats stretched once again onto the lower level of the cage. They reached with their paws as high as they could go.

Muldoon flared her crown, raised her large wings, and opened her big menacing beak. She glared at the cats and gave a loud "AWK," followed by a louder, "NO! GET LOST! EAT POOP!"

YoYo and Licorice tripped over each other as they scrambled upstairs and hid under a bed. They were breathing hard and Licorice spoke first, "I told you I had a bad feeling about this."

Tracy, Michael, and David—ages five, six, and eight respectively, marveled at the large white Cockatoo.

Mom explained, "Your father said I could get anything I wanted for our wedding anniversary, except jewelry and a car. I always wanted a parrot so we now have Muldoon living with us."

"Muldoon?" Michael asked.

"The owner of the exotic pet store is Irish. He named all the birds with Irish names. Muldoon can talk. I think they're words she picked up from customers in the store."

"Can we touch her and let her out sometimes?" Tracy asked.

Mom advised, "Let's start slow until she gets to know us. She's a pet like YoYo and Licorice. Each of you will have things to do to care for her."

David stared at Muldoon, "You mean like feed her and stuff?"

Mom pointed to the refrigerator, "I've put each of your

names on the fridge calendar for your jobs with Muldoon. Each week, you change jobs.

“Tracy, you’ll fill Muldoon’s food and water trays. Michael, you change the newspaper with the bird-droppings every two days this week. David, you spray Muldoon with water every morning. She loves that. It prevents her feathers from producing flakes that might make us sneeze.” Mom lifted up the spray water bottle and added, “Oh, and keep this bottle next to her cage in case the cats get too close. Never leave the cage door open.”

YoYo and Licorice listened intently. YoYo nudged Licorice, “I think this giant white chicken with the steam-shovel mouth is not for sacrificial eating.”

Licorice sat and stared at the water bottle. The cats hated being sprayed with water. Anytime Mom or the others wanted them to stop doing something, the water bottle was spritzed at them. Licorice moved close to YoYo’s ear. “We have to wait for when one of the kids forgets to close the cage door. They’re all imbeciles. Then we’ll attack Muldoon.”

YoYo thought for a second, “Good plan.”

The cats didn’t have long to wait. In two weeks it was Michael’s turn to fill Muldoon’s food tray and Tracy’s turn for spraying the bird. Mom noticed some white dander on Muldoon’s perch.

“Tracy, you forgot to spray Muldoon,” Mom stated. Mom had also told the two boys to do it, in case Tracy didn’t.

Tracy gave Muldoon a generous dose from the sprayer.

Not realizing Tracy had completed her chore, Michael

and David, at different times later on, blasted the bird with twice the usual vigor.

Muldoon now looked like she'd been caught in a monsoon. She moved awkwardly and noticed the cage door was left open. Muldoon used her beak and her strong taloned legs to exit the cage. She found herself on the hardwood kitchen floor dripping water with each penguin-like step. The bird moved toward the refrigerator just as Licorice and YoYo came into the kitchen.

"Wow!" YoYo stopped in her tracks. "Muldoon's out and about."

Licorice stared at Muldoon, "She looks different. She's all wet."

"So what, she's fresh meat now. Let's get her."

The cats began a stalking creep even though Muldoon was only three feet away.

Muldoon stopped in the puddle she created just as both felines let out loud "Marowws, PFFTs, and HISSSSSSs."

Muldoon had heard these noises before and she responded in kind, "Maroww, PFFT, and HISSSSSS."

"Holy crap," responded YoYo, "Muldoon must be a mutant cat."

Licorice and YoYo stopped and started to move backward, one paw step at a time.

Muldoon decided it was time to get rid of the excess water. She shook her body like a dog after it's bath. The abundant spray was forceful and directed at both cats. It was accompanied by an ear-drum piercing "AWK, AWK, AWK" and a volley of "Eat Poop!"

Licorice and YoYo had confronted their worst

nightmare—a living water spray bottle in the form of a winged cat.

The cats again retreated to an upstairs bedroom. They were breathing fast and their fur and tails were still puffed up in a fight-or-flight adrenaline fright.

“I think we should make peace with that creature,” YoYo suggested. “If we don’t, we could get more water blasting.”

Licorice concurred, “Yeah, and remember what she did to that peach-pit after she ate the peach. Her beak pulverized it. Yeah, let’s keep our distance and stay away from her cage.”

Mom arrived home and picked Muldoon up. “Oh dear, Tracy overdosed you with the water.” She looked around. “I wonder where YoYo and Licorice are? Oh well, you should watch out for those two cats. Their instinct tells them to attack birds.”

Muldoon accepted the additional dry-toweling. She fluffed up her wings and mused, *You got it all wrong, Mom. Those losers are scared of their own fur-balls. Not to worry, I got them under control.*

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