



## Stinky Sid

story by [Zoë Disher](#), illustrated by [Anna Bron](#)

WHEN SID CAME into the house, flowers dropped their petals and the paint peeled off the walls. Bert's feathers dropped out and fell in his birdseed.

'Sid stinks!' cried Mum, putting a peg on her nose. 'I can't put up with that any longer.'

'It's not his fault,' said Ben, throwing his arms around Sid's neck. But it was true—Sid smelt worse than an old sock in the bottom of a rubbish bin. The trouble was that Sid loved fetching the sticks that Ben threw into the creek for him. Sid's fur picked up all the slime and muddy water from the creek. When his fur dried, the muddy smell wafted into the air. Today he smelt like dead fish and yabbies.

'I've had enough!' said Mum. She picked up Bert's cage and marched out of the house. 'I can't live with that smell any longer.' She slammed the car door and drove away.

Ben ran to Dad. 'Mum's left!' he said. 'She said she can't live with Sid's smell anymore and now she's gone!'

Dad turned white. Sid bounced up and licked his face. Dad turned green. 'Phew!' he gasped. 'I guess it's time to give you a bath, old mate.'

In the laundry, Dad found carpet shampoo and nit shampoo—but no dog shampoo.

'He can use my shampoo,' offered Ben.

'No,' said Dad, 'it's bad for his skin.'

Sid squeezed into the laundry. His stink hung in a dirty cloud all around them. Dad staggered and fell over. 'I think this is a job for the professionals,' he wheezed. He looked up a dog grooming salon on his phone. 'Perfect!' he said. 'We'll catch the bus.'

'Sid can't catch a bus!' said Ben. Dad just winked.

At the bus stop, Sid whined. He didn't like hiding in a bag.

'Just some dirty washing!' Dad said to the driver when they bought their tickets. Ben and Dad dragged the bag to the back of the bus. Sid whined again. Dad slipped him a bone to chew on. The bag went *crunch!* And *slurp!* An old lady turned and stared. Then her nose twitched. Her eyes started to water. She pressed the bell to get off.

The stink rolled around the bus. It was like being in a big hot oven of pong. Dad and Ben stuck their heads as close as they could to the open window to get some fresh air.

'What's that stench?' coughed a man in a suit.

'We're being gassed!' groaned another man.

The stink hit the driver, and the bus began to wobble. He slammed on the brakes and veered off the road. He opened the doors and everyone ran out, gasping for breath.

'Let's get out of here,' said Ben, dragging the bag away.

Dad and Ben walked Sid the rest of the way. When they went into the dog salon, the dog groomer fainted and fell into the pot plants. Ben threw a glass of water on her.

'How could you let your dog get so smelly?' she spluttered.

'It's not his fault,' said Ben. 'Anyway, Sid likes the way he smells.'

'Just give him the works,' said Dad.

'I'll do my best,' said the dog groomer. She put on thick rubber gloves, safety goggles and a nose plug. Then she got to work.

When she finished, Sid didn't smell of creek water and slime anymore. He smelt of roses and flea powder. He looked different too. His fur was pink, and there were pompoms everywhere on his head, on his feet, on his hips, on his tail and even on the ends of his ears.

‘Sid?’ asked Dad. ‘Is that you?’

The dog groomer charged double price. There was no money left for the bus so Dad and Ben walked Sid home. Dad kept shaking his head and saying, ‘What has she done to you?’

Sid didn’t seem too happy about his new smell. His tail lost its wag. It drooped down, dragging its pompom in the dust.

When Ben and Dad got home, the car was in the driveway.

‘Mum’s home!’ cried Ben. Mum was in the driveway getting the birdcage out of the car. Bert was sitting back on his perch wearing a tiny jumper.

‘Whose dog is that?’ said Mum. She looked again, ‘Is that Sid?’ She was so surprised she dropped Bert’s cage. It bounced down the hill to the creek. Bert swung wildly on his perch and chirped like mad as the cage splashed into the water.

‘Oh no!’ said Mum. ‘Budgies can’t swim!’ The cage drifted down the creek and started to sink.

‘Don’t worry!’ said Ben, ‘Sid can help.’ He unclipped Sid’s lead. ‘Go fetch, Sid!’

Sid raced to the creek like a pink cloud. He splashed into the muddy water. He paddled over to Bert and grabbed his cage with his teeth. When Sid brought Bert back, he didn’t look like a cloud any more. He looked like a dirty puddle. Mum checked that Bert was okay. Then she gave Sid a big hug. ‘You’re a hero, Sid,’ she said.

‘But now he stinks again!’ cried Dad. ‘Please don’t leave us!’

‘Don’t be silly; why would I leave you?’ said Mum. ‘I just took Bert to the vet—that’s all. His feathers should grow back in a few weeks.’

‘But you said you can’t live with Sid’s smell,’ Ben pointed out.

‘I can’t,’ said Mum, reaching into the car. ‘That’s why I picked up some dog shampoo at the vet’s.’

‘Come on,’ she added, as Sid shook creek water all over her. ‘You need a bath!’