

The snake who would not shed his skin

Long ago, and far away there lived a snake. We'll call him Krisss. Now as we all know, snakes shed their skins as they grow and are very vulnerable when they are in the process of shedding. Krisss thought to himself that it might be a cool idea to keep his old skins, then he wouldn't be vulnerable. He reasoned that the old skins would be tough and hard and help protect him from attack. He also reasoned that the old skins would be a sort of camouflage that would further help protect him from attack. Krisss thought about this while he was sitting on a rock one day, basking in the early morning sun trying to warm up. It suddenly dawned on Krisss that if he kept his old skins then he would also be able to keep his body heat in and therefore be the very first warm-blooded snake in the world....Boy! He'd be all sorts of famous.

A couple of days later he found himself scratching and rubbing on a rock...Uh oh, those were the first tell tale signs of an impending skin molt. But Krisss was a superior snake, he could resist a little itch. O.K. a few days later it was a *really bad* itch, but Krisss was a superior snake and he could withstand the discomfort for the ultimate payoff was going to be worth the effort. Unfortunately one of the side effects was that Krisss became a little more irritable, but he was a superior snake and he could overcome his irritability and went out of his way to not scratch, not be irritable and to remain the suave snake-about-town that he knew himself to be.

Things went pretty well for Krisss, except that every couple of months he went through a couple of days of not scratching and not biting his friends' heads off.

A few months later, Krisss noticed that he wasn't seeing quite as well as he used to. He decided that it was probably because the seasons were changing and the days were more cloudy. He didn't think that his extra layers of skin had anything to do with it. He also noticed, much to his satisfaction that he was staying warm for longer, which meant that he could go hunting later in the day, and even early into the night. The only problem seemed to be that he wasn't scoring as many hits when he attacked his dinner. Perhaps it was the extra rustling caused by his extra skins, or perhaps it was because he was hunting in dim light conditions. Yeah, that was it!

As time went by, Krisss found himself more and more alone, his old friends knew to avoid him because he was irritable, and other snakes didn't recognize him as a friend because he was covered in old skins. But you know, he did get attacked once by a mongoose and the mongoose couldn't bite his neck because of all the old tough skins, so giving up a little speed for a tough hide was a good trade. Krisss reflected that he didn't see the mongoose coming and didn't seem to move as well as he used to when the attack came, but he also knew that everything in life worth having comes with a price.

As more time went by, Krisss found out that he was lonely with no-one to talk with. He also noticed that no matter how he tried, his tail always stuck out the end of his oldest skin. He also noticed that he was slower, made more noise when he moved about and couldn't see as well. He decided that all of this must be due to his age, so he went out less and therefore saw even fewer snakes and ate even less. The less he ate, the less he wanted to go out and then more lethargic he became. He sat at home and watched Discovery Channel shows about great hunter snakes and their exploits.

Somehow, he never saw that the great hunter snakes were sleek, lithe, fit, admired and well toned....not to mention well fed.

But Krisss knew that he was a superior snake and he was not about to slough off his yesterdays and give up all the advantages of hanging on to his past skins.

Living in the past became a habit.

Living in a shadow became a habit.

Living without vision became a habit.

Living with baggage became a habit.

Since all stories have a happy ending, this one does too. It turned out that Krisss lived in an area of India where there were frequent earthquakes and one day there was a big earthquake which almost closed off the opening to Kirsss' burrow. His T.V. collapsed and all his furniture was crushed. Even his microwave, in which he warmed up his precooked mouse dinners, was crushed, so he simply had to go out, or starve.

He stuck his nose out of the small opening to his home and wriggled....and got stuck. REALLY stuck. Like, wedged right in there, part in, part out. He squirmed, he wriggled, he twisted, turned, tugged, pulled, pushed and generally panicked about impending mongoose attacks. Suddenly there was a loud tearing sound and this blinding light flash....Oh my, the world was SOOOO bright. It actually hurt his eyes to see so much sunlight. He was almost blinded for a few moments, but soon his eyes became accustomed to the light and he decided that this was no time to stop moving. He wriggled, he rolled, he coiled himself up and he heaved...all day long. Eventually and almost at the end of the day he pulled himself free, but gosh it was cold out there. And, he felt...well naked, you know...vulnerable. He slithered over to a pool, coiled himself up on a rock and looked into the water and saw that he'd torn off all his old skins. He thought about this for a while. Most of the night in fact.

The following day he came to a great conclusion: "If you want to be sleek, healthy and a real snake-about-town, and you truly want to embrace the day, you have to slough off your old self and take a risk every once in a while." He ended up being one of the wisest snakes in the Indian subcontinent. Wow!

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