



QUITE FRIGHTENING

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After taking care of a Burmese python for five years - she had reached a length of about 3 m - I decided to find another snake lover who could better provide her with the space she needed for her length. An advertisement in the newspaper was answered by someone who needed an adult female to breed with. That sounded like a perfect solution. After the future owner came and had a look, he offered me a couple *Liasis childreni*. The animals were 35 and 40 cm long which was certainly quite different from a Burmese python! The *childreni* appealed to me and because I prefer to exchange rather than sell, the deal was quickly done.

At first the new animals did not eat, but after I offered them new-born mice of which I had damaged the heads, feeding went well. I put them together in one terrarium of 80x40x40 cm, because in my opinion being together is much nicer than being alone. I keep my other snakes, Rainbow boas and *Boa constrictor* in pairs as well, and this has never posed any problems. When I come home from work the first thing I do is to have a look at my animals, first to check whether everything is alright and to turn on some lights. I did so on one particular day.....and I was shocked to see one of the *childreni* eating the other one. It had already swallowed about 12 cm and in a reflex I

pulled it out of its mouth. What I retrieved was totally lifeless, tongue out of its mouth, stone dead. In a first reaction I uttered some cries, but immediately it flashed through my mind: how can I get another specimen? How could this have happened - they had already been together for some time?

I checked to see if there were any possible signs of life, but the animal looked as if it had definitely passed away. After I put it on the floor I went downstairs to tell the other members of my family what had happened. When I returned to the snake room - I did not feel like eating now anyway - I wondered what to do now. Because I used to have a job in nursing, I suddenly thought why not try resuscitation?. But how to go about it with a snake and does it make any sense? For how long has she been in the throat and oesophagus of the other snake? Anyway, I would not be worse off if I tried. I roughly located the position of the heart, at about one third of its bodylength and I gently applied heart massage by gently pressing the underside of the body with a finger. I did this for about five times. Then I breathed air into the snake. I took her in my hand, the head pointing to my indexfinger and the tail in the direction of my little finger, I made a fist and opened her mouth with a pair of tweezers and I started breathing softly into her mouth. I did this for several minutes, after which I checked for some sign of life. Nothing.

Then I stretched her a little by rubbing her from the head to the tail. I did not know why I did that but I felt I had to try something. I had just performed another two of these rituals when I thought I saw the tip of the tail move. I realized that at times like that you really want to see things so I could have imagined it. I went downstairs for a while, to tell them what I was doing and that I did not want any dinner because I thought I was having some success. When I got upstairs again I continued resuscitation. After stretching her for the third time, the tip of her tail really moved. I then put her under a hot lamp. After some minutes she started to move her body and I was beside myself with joy. I let her quietly come-to herself, in a separate

container. Several days later she looked quite well again. Some small scratches on her head are the silent witness to what has happened to her but they will heal. A week after the adventure she ate again. I have housed the animals separately now. I do not know whether she stayed alive because of what I did or whether she would have survived regardless. Anyway, I feel good that I tried it the way I have described. In the meantime, I have become quite curious about further information concerning these animals. I would be grateful to anyone who can help. Expenses will be paid for!

*Translated from Dutch by Astrid Gomes
English corrections by Mark Wootten.*