



About a year ago I wrote about rescuing a gopher ("Gopher Broke", Oct. 2022). Now there's been a bat. Long story short, a bat somehow got inside and then couldn't get out. After 3 days, someone found it hanging from a towel (ha, bats! Always reinforcing stereotypes 😊), evidently asleep. This guy, no fan of bats but apparently not a sadist either, quickly folded the bat into the towel and tried to take it outside, but he got stuck waiting and as others became aware of the situation, someone brought him a plastic bag to put around the terrycloth bat-burrito. However, no one felt a need to put a hole in the bag because, if the bat died, so what? In fact, good! That seemed to be the consensus: "Fuck that bat. Kill it. Who cares? It's full of disease anyway."

The idea of this creature suffocating kept gnawing at me as the door failed to open, so I suggested poking an air hole, which prompted further "I don't care about that bat" comments. Concerned that a more persistent advocacy might backfire and cause the guy to just crush the thing and be done with it, I eventually made one last attempt, quietly pointing out that it's not the bat's fault he got stuck inside, and there's no need for it to suffer. My appeal to his conscience apparently succeeded on some level, because he replied with a touch of irritation, "Do YOU want to take it out?" He clearly expected me to say no, but instead I eagerly took the Bag O' Bat off his hands and promptly poked a small airhole at the top. I was greatly relieved and fully convinced that, if the bat wasn't already injured, it'd just fly away the moment it got outside, but when the door finally opened and I unwrapped the animal, it was immediately clear that it wasn't even slightly interested in leaving its adopted towel cave. I couldn't dislodge it; each time I uncovered part of the bat, it just crawled lethargically back into the folds. I was being especially cautious, as I know next to nothing about bats and the truth is, I was as afraid of it as most of the others, but the more glimpses I caught of that pitiful little thing seeking cover, the more I realized it was just a small mouse with wings, not some vicious monster. I soon began to perceive nothing more — or less — than a fellow mammal, cold and tired, hungry and thirsty, surely scared and wanting only to retreat into the scant comfort and shelter it knew, however alien an environment it may be. I can relate.

I wanted to bring him back inside and hide him in a soft, dark box under my bed until nightfall, but that would've caused a riot with the <sup>callous</sup> and stupid people around me, I'm sure. So, what to

do? When I tried explaining my dilemma to a friend, the truth began to settle upon me and my voice cracked a bit: I simply had no idea what to do with this seemingly helpless little animal whose very existence now seemed entirely dependent on me. I had its fate in my hands, and it appeared I was going to be forced to leave him to the mercy of a merciless place, and the realization that I could do no better for it choked me up. I finally left the towel-covered bat on the cold cement with someone who assured me he'd keep watch while I looked for someone who could take it in - lots of guys like weird pets around here, and that seemed preferable to leaving it out in the daylight with no shelter if it was, as it seemed, unwilling to fly.

Unbelievably, the watchman soon tracked me down, waving a now-empty towel and triumphantly announcing, "We got it out!" What?? That's exactly what I was trying NOT to do! They must've just shaken the bat out onto the concrete (as though merely dislodging it were the only concern), leaving it vulnerable to practically any gruesome fate... and I felt absolutely sick. I ran back out and found the little guy cowering in the tiny space below a 3-inch pipe at the bottom of the fence, but I couldn't coax him out to move him to the far side of the yard where there was less traffic. He wasn't having it. Ultimately, I had no choice but to give up, using the cardboard I'd tried to pull him out with to make a little barrier that might provide the orphaned bat with a shady hideaway from any prying eyes or curious dogs that might harm him. I went back inside to get some mashed apple, hoping he might be a fruit bat (he did seem to have a little sashay when he moved), then pushed the crushed apple along the sides of his cardboard ramparts, blocking him in even more on the three sides that led to nothing good and completely exposed on the other side of the fence, where birds might get him but not much else.

I don't know if the bat ever ate, or how long he stayed holed-up, or if he made it out alive. In truth, it was impossible to see if he was even still there when I brought the fruit, and I didn't even want to know. There was literally nothing more I could do, and as he seemed unlikely to survive if he ventured from his little fortress before evening, I consciously chose not to check in again until the next day. He's gone now, and I see no little bat body anywhere nearby. That's all I know, so I'll continue to imagine the best, and that has to be enough. Even if it isn't.