

Bats

By Dreamcatcher

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Just an old man's thoughts..

<https://www.storiesspace.com/stories/musings/bats.aspx>

Old guys always start every story with “When I was a boy.” It’s a standard, sorta like “Once upon a time” or “Happily ever after.” It has been my experience that it causes one of two reactions. People will either listen intently for each pearl of wisdom.. or.. roll their eyes and whisper “fuck!! Not again!” While I never presume that my ramblings are akin to duffel bags filled with such pearls, I’ve learned to accept the rolling eyes as mere rapture. When I was a boy, I spent my early years in Texas. Mostly Dallas suburbs. I was supposed to get fifty cents a week allowance for mowing the yard and washing cars etc. Don’t laugh. Back then fifty cents got you a double feature and a cartoon at the movie house and a coke with a Butterfinger or Jujubes. Of course, my dad being the prick he was, would always find a way of beating me out of my allowance. So on Saturday mornings during the summer, my best friend Fat Mike and I would get a couple of quart mason jars from the basement and head out into the neighborhood to make our daily rounds. During the summer, the bats would fly around at night

catching bugs that were attracted to the light. We didn't have central air conditioning back then so people would open their windows and curtains. The screens weren't aluminum. Only wood frames with a mesh fabric which would entrap the bats claws. We would walk around the "hood" searching for bats locked on screens. Then go up to the door and offer to remove them for a quarter. If we were lucky the bats were on first floor windows, but usually they preferred the second floor bedroom windows. Now here is one of those pearls of wisdom I was talking about. Ready? Old widow ladies never have a fricken' ladder. Fat Mike couldn't climb for shit, so I always had to shinny up a damn trellis and duckwalk over to the window where the bat was. Then you gotta get their head and wings in the jar before you loosen their claws. Otherwise you get bit and your quarter flies off in a hurry. Of course, after we collected our quarter, we would walk a few yards away and let the bat out, knowing full well he would be back again. After awhile we collected some of them so many times we gave them names. Eddy. Debbie (named after a girl Fat Mike liked who didn't like him). Tommy. Old Bob (his wings were torn). Yes, we even had one named Dracula. He was a noisy crusty dude but he used to love to hang upside down from our finger. The bats who knew us used to get excited when they saw us coming to free them. They would start squeaking and flapping and even duck inside the jar waiting for us to take them away. It was a good deal while it lasted. We could make 2-3 dollars each on a good day. One guy even asked us if we had them trained. The doosh started taking his own bats off after he saw how we did it. We had to get them off before the summer heat began or they would roast. We ran most times so we could cover the most territory. Then we would head to the park and play baseball until the sun went down. No one ever chose Fat Mike to be on their team. But I did. Fat Mike moved away that summer. We didn't cry. But we knew something ended. I often wondered whatever happened to him. I wondered what the bats thought when those boys with the jars stopped coming for them. Nothing was the same for anyone. Except for my dad. He would always be a prick. Now for my final pearl. Ready? Bats are scary looking evil things, but they hung from our fingers, let us pet them, and even ate grapes from our hands. Fat Mike wasn't popular or had great social skills but he was a good friend. Sometimes the thing we fear is the thing we shouldn't, and sometimes the people you think should love and protect you most, won't. True story.