



Bat Summer by Sarah Withrow

Subjects: Runaways—Fiction; Family problems—Fiction; Emotional problems—Fiction

Book List: Gifted

Props: Black cape, bat, kite

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Terence is twelve years old, and this summer is turning out to be just as boring as every other summer. His best friend Tom has gone off to camp and his older cousin Elyse is now assigned to keep an eye on Terence during the day while Mom is at work—even though Terence knows he is way too old for a babysitter. The only thing left to do is hang out all day with that sleazeball Rico. It's either that or play chess with the two old guys in the park. But this summer ends up being very different from any other. Because this is the summer that Terence turns into a bat. (*Bring out bat*)

It doesn't happen all at once, of course. And it wouldn't have happened at all if it weren't for that strange girl Lucy MacPhail. (*Set bat down*) Lucy is the one who became a bat first. When Terence meets her she is wearing a black cape and hanging by her feet in the playground at the park. (*Put on black cape*) Lucy tells him that being a bat is great. You can see the world more clearly with your eyes closed, she says. And you only really know what everything feels like when you're hanging upside down. She also tells him that there are certain rules about being a bat. For one thing, bats don't rat on other bats. They also help each other. And no matter what, bats always hang together.

Rico is disgusted with the whole bat business, of course. He thinks Lucy is a loser and now he thinks Terence is

a loser too—for hanging out with her. “Lucy’s family is nothing but a bunch of losers,” Rico tells him. “They live in a crummy dirty apartment, but she’s there by herself most of the time anyway. And just yesterday she got kicked out of the public pool because they found lice in her hair.” Terence pays no attention to Rico. But when Lucy doesn’t show up at the park the next morning he is worried. Later that day the police question Terence, telling him Lucy has run away from home, and that nobody knows where she is. But Terence thinks maybe he knows where she is. He can’t tell anyone, though. Because bats don’t rat on other bats. They look out for each other. They hang together. But. . . what if a bat is in trouble and doesn’t even know it? What if a bat is trapped in a lie and can’t seem to get herself out?

Then Terence has an idea. He makes a kite (*Bring out kite*) out of a brown paper bag and paints the shape of a huge black bat on the underside of it. If he flies this kite in the park, will Lucy see it? And if she does, will she come out from wherever she is hiding? Can she come out? Is Lucy hurt? Is she still a bat? Is she even alive? And—if she is—how long can Terence keep her secret? (*Hold up book*) *Bat Summer* by Sarah Withrow.

