

The Hibernaculum

(A Short Story by T. U.-P.)

Exploring the old ravine by _____ Creek, two bat biologists (also known as Chiropterologists) follow the old creek-bed to get to gap between two giant boulders.

“This must be Split Rock. I can see by the rock formations that our Little Browns could have found a way into a cave not far from here.” An aging professor wearing a worn Tilly hat says to his research assistant.

“Looking at my coordinates, this is roughly where we radio-tracked Myotis L-5B last fall.” The young PhD student says to his supervisor.

“Plenty of bats in this ravine foraging around when I checked last summer’s acoustic files. It makes perfect sense their hibernation groups were right here under our noses the whole time.”

“You’re right Doc. The signal we had indicates we should try to find a way in below that rocky ridge.”

“I can tell you humans once settled here. Back in the 2040s, it was rumoured a group of neuro-diverse folks were found hiding below ground in these same woods to avoid the ‘Great Psych-bot Massacre’.”

“Right, right. Just before the neurodiversity right movement of 2049. I remember learning about that as an undergrad.”

“See this outcropping here and how it drops off... Let’s see if we can find a way in. You’ve got to think like a bat here Gregory. They’ve got a real knack for finding these kinds of openings where they can be sheltered for owls or whatever other predators are out and about...”

“What about this spot here Doc? See that row of Birch logs below that stump... Could be where the so-called ‘Psych-bots’ found a way down, way back in the day...”

“Good eye Gregory! Let’s check to see if there’s a way to see under these small logs.”

After tapping on the logs with his walking stick, Dr. Penrose notices a hollow sound. His assistant Gregory Waldrop then gets on his knees and digs around the logs before noticing it is in fact a latched doorway into a hidden cave.

“Eureka! You’ve found it Gregory! I can tell this is the hibernaculum! This place should still have our Little Browns awakening from their winter slumber. Let’s use our phones to quickly take the coordinates. We might even find ML-5B in here among the rest!”

“Wow! There’s a lot going on down here! Thank goodness we radio-tracked that little bugga when we did. We should call this Split Rock Cave. There appears to be a tunnel down here, Professor!”

Putting down their acoustic recording gear and turning on their solar powered head lamps, Dr. Penrose and his assistant climb down into the cavity below the Birch logs to have a look around.

“Bingo! We’ve found it, Doc! There’s at least a couple thousand down here on the cave walls. It appears they’ve found a way in through a slim crevice some twenty yards away that we didn’t notice.”

“Take a picture and index it with coordinates through ImageDirect. They were here the whole time, Gregory! I can’t tell you how many times I’ve wondered where the ‘Lucies’ were going every fall in this watershed.”

“Got it! Wow! Check out this tunnel! Looks like human activity has existed down here for quite some time!”

“Let’s take these Drift-Co dry bags to gather any artifacts we come across while we’re down here. I can’t get over how many *Myotis lucifugus* are down here. We’re going to have to inform the Congress about this winter colony.”

“It’s been a long time coming. Pretty soon they’ll be emerging from here to forage and look for summer roosts. Holy smokes! Doc... This tunnel here looks like it’s been here for centuries! You should see this old wooden sign!”

“Fort Getzmana. Could be an old Civil War bunker. One thing I could tell you is that these bats here claimed this spot even earlier than our own kind once did.”

“Should I photograph this opening here, Doc? It appears that big boulder we saw above ground had a small crevice that our Lucies are using at sundown when they venture out to fill their small tummies with moths and other night insects.”

“That boulder is important. We could set up our ultrasonic array outside to get an idea of their foraging habits. We might want to catch a few to radio-track them and chart the path to their roosting sites.”

“Good call.” The young and enthusiastic teaching assistant says using a special camera to take shots of the tunnel walls and their hand-winged residents. After venturing into the old abandoned fortress, the two Chiropterologists stumble upon the remains of the Getz Colony with its deserted main chamber and cavernous sleeping quarters.

“Check this out Professor! People used to live down here. I can tell this small cavity once acted as a rocky sleeping compartment right here in the rock. There’s even an old plastic pill jar or something on the ground here!”

“Take the artifact and bag it! We’ll study it later on.” Dr. Penrose says, studying the Getz Colony for bat guano residue and evidence of other *Myotis*.

“Yes, Gregory. I think our day is done. We’ve collected enough initial evidence to present to the Congress. We’ll be back next Thursday with the rest of our gear.”

Soon, the two bat experts retrace their steps to get back to the latched entrance, happy to have found Split Rock Cave. On their way out, they notice another dead-end tunnel where a shattered solar panel is resting on the rocky ground.

“Looks like this cave has seen better days for our Hominid kind. Only our beloved Lucies lived through that Massacre, I’m afraid.” Dr. Penrose says pensively.

“It’s kind of sad to find the place after that fateful raid. The furry buggers on the cave walls cheer me up a bit though.”

--The End--