

A Bat Is Born (from *The Bat Poet* by Randall Jarrell)

A bat is born
Naked and blind and pale
His mother makes a pocket of her tail
And catches him. He clings
to her long fur
By his thumbs and toes and teeth.
And then the mother dances through the night
Doubling and looping,
Soaring, somersaulting-
Her baby hangs on
underneath.
All night, in happiness,
She hunts and flies.
Her high sharp cries
Like shining needlepoints of sound
Go out into the night and
echoing back,
Tell her what they have touched.
She hears how far it is,
how big it is,
which way it's going:
She lives by hearing.
The mother eats the moths and gnats
she catches
In full flight, In full flight.
The mother drinks the water of the pond,
She skims across,
Her baby hangs on tight.
Her baby drinks the milk she makes him.
In moonlight or starlight,
In midair
Their single shadow,
printed on the moon
Or fluttering across the stars,
Whirls on all night.
At daybreak,
the tired mother flies home to her rafter
The others are all there.
They hang themselves up by their toes,
They wrap themselves in their brown wings.
Bunched upside down, they sleep in air.
Their sharp ears,
Their sharp teeth
Their quick sharp faces
Are dull and slow and mild.
All the bright day, as the mother sleeps,
She folds her wings about her sleeping child.