



Cemetery Fox

It was the coldest night of the year. Linda had just finished putting extra straw in all the animals' houses so they would stay warm. After making certain all the animals were taken care of, she hurried back to her house. The warmth that greeted her when she stepped inside made her grateful that she had a warm, comfortable home to go to. She was getting ready for bed when the phone rang. It was the Tempe police Department. Two officers were at a cemetery with an injured fox. "Would someone from Southwest come and help?", they asked.

The hour was late; most people were in bed. But our dedicated volunteers are available at any hour of the day or night, so Linda assured them someone would be there. Her first call was to Randy and Teresa. They immediately said yes and braved the cold night to meet the officers at the cemetery. There was a little fox—injured, cold and nearly lifeless. Teresa and Randy immediately wrapped the fox in a blanket to try to warm him up and sped off to Sonora Veterinary Hospital.

Sonora is open 24 hours a day for just such emergencies that won't wait. The veterinarian examined the fox, took X-rays, and gave him fluids and medication through an IV. The fox was very cold and in shock. The staff wrapped him in warm blankets to stabilize him. The fox was severely injured with a broken leg and head trauma. The head trauma was so severe that it caused the fox to go blind. Doctors hoped the blindness was only temporary. But for now, he was barely clinging to life. That was what the veterinary staff had to focus on.

He stayed at Sonora for several days and began to stabilize. On the fourth day, the interns called with the good news that the fox had regained sight in one eye. Finally stabilized, Dr. Soderstrom repaired the broken leg the next day. The fox is now at Southwest Wildlife and is getting stronger every day. If he continues to thrive as he is now, he will be released back into the wild.

But that's not the whole story. There is an unlikely hero whose name we don't know and probably never will. Without him, the little fox never had a chance. You see, the little fox had crawled far away from the road where no one could see him. But on this bitter cold night, a homeless man went looking for shelter to get out of the

cold. He chose the cemetery, as had the little fox.

When he came upon the little fox, he did not ignore the animal's suffering because he too was cold and without shelter. He immediately went to the road and flagged down a police car to get help for this defenseless animal. With nothing of his own, not even a place to stay warm, he put the fox's needs before his own. After our volunteers took the fox, the homeless man disappeared into the cold night.

We have attempted to find him to let him know how the fox is doing and to see if we can do something for him to make his life more bearable, but he simply slipped back into the world of homeless people.

In our world of plenty that sometimes seems to be spinning out of control, on a cold night, in the dark quiet of a cemetery, the world stopped long enough for a man who appeared to have nothing to stop and give a little animal the greatest gift of all: his compassion.