

Somebody

During my sister's Bat Mitzvah speech, she quoted Lily Tomlin: "I always wondered why somebody doesn't do something about that. Then I realized I was somebody." To this day, if I ask "Will somebody take the dogs out," my mom replies "You are somebody!" This quote encompasses some of the major values and culture of my family.

One afternoon this summer my sister and I were biking home along Ben Franklin Parkway. A march was going on, and we pedaled alongside the protesters for a bit. As we passed by a parking lot we spotted a dog trying to get into a car through its open window. The people inside weren't letting it in. My sister and I pedaled over.

"Is that your dog?" my sister asked the man driving the car.

"No, it just ran up to us as we were trying to leave. I don't - it's not mine." The three other people in the car nodded along.

My sister glanced at me before turning back to the man. "My sister and I can call a shelter or something. You guys can go if you need to."

Once they were gone, the dog scurried under a parked white car. I felt irritated that the people in the car had left just like that, but pushed the feeling away. I knelt to take a closer look. The mutt was caramel-colored, medium-sized, with no collar or harness. It was clean and well-fed.

My sister began calling local shelters, and when none of them answered, she dialed our parents. "Can you guys drive down to the Parkway? There's a dog... we need a leash or harness or something." After a minute, she hung up. "They can't make it. They have a meeting."

"Well, what should we do?" I scooted closer, reaching my hand out cautiously. The dog stayed still. We both rummaged through our backpacks, but couldn't find anything that would work as a leash.

I'd watched Youtube videos of people rescuing animals from terrible circumstances, calling the right people and doing the right things. But I'd never imagined it was something that could happen to me. My pulse was racing. "One of us could bike home and grab stuff."

A few people glanced our way as they walked past, but no one stopped. *Why is nobody else doing anything?* I thought, furrowing my brows.

A man and two younger boys made their way towards us. "Excuse me!" I called out. "Is this your car?"

"Ah, shit. What happened to it?" the man asked, quickening his pace.

"Nothing, it's just - there's a dog underneath your car."

"A dog?"

"Yes, a dog. We don't know whose it is."

The three of them knelt beside me. "Shit, there's a dog under here. Quick," the man gestured to one of the boys, "take a video."

They backed away and started recording. "Hey, look! Is that something under our car?" one of them asked as if our conversation hadn't just happened. "Is that - it's a dog! How'd a dog get under here?"

"Oh my god, it peed!"

"What!?"

"There's a puddle under our car! Gross!"

"They're taking a *video*?" I whispered to my sister. A few passersby stopped to watch the scene before moving on.

"I'm gonna see how long it'll take for me to get back to the house," my sister pulled out her phone.

One of the boys grabbed a stick and pushed the mutt. The animal didn't move.

"Excuse me," I interjected, "are you ok to let the dog stay here while my sister runs home to grab a leash?"

"I don't want it messing up our car, and we gotta go," the man said. Just then three more adults walked over. "Hey, c'mere! There's a dog under our car." It was clear that they all knew each other.

But no one was helping. My sister and I were teenagers, surrounded by a group of adults, yet we were the only ones not jeering at the overwhelmed creature.

“If you guys need to go, will you help us get the dog out from under your car so we can grab it?” my sister chimed in. One woman threw a french fry under the car. The mutt didn’t flinch.

“I’m gonna try moving the car,” the man declared. He got in, powered on the vehicle, and inched the car backward half a foot.

The dog inched along with it.

The car moved some more.

The dog moved some more.

A woman from the second group pulled another car around. “We need to get going,” she said, stepping out without bothering to close the door. One of the boys picked the stick back up. The next time the car moved he pushed the dog with the stick.

“I don’t think that’s a good idea-” the mutt lurched forward, sprinted towards the other car, jumped in through the open door, and curled up under the steering wheel.

A wave of relief washed over me. “This is great! Do you think you can drive the dog to our house? We can give you the address-”

“Get it out of my car!” the woman squealed. “It’s getting hair everywhere!” A man grabbed the dog and shoved it onto the pavement. The animal rolled to its feet and took off down the street.

“Shit!” my sister ran towards her bike and dropped her backpack onto the ground. “Grab my stuff! I’m following it!”

“I’m coming with you!” Slinging my bag across my back and hers across my front, I lunged onto my bike and pedaled at full speed. The protesters had moved on, leaving the street clear. People shouted and pointed as I sped by.

“It went that way!”

“Is that your dog?”

“Down there!”

I followed their directions and caught up to my sister. The dog darted behind an apartment building, and, heaving in breaths, we sped along behind it. Just as we passed a gated dog enclosure, a woman grabbed the mutt and hauled it in the back door of the building.

We stopped in surprise as the woman strolled over to us. “We have people all over looking for that dog! Did you girls get it here?”

“We sort of just followed it. We didn’t know whose it was, and we didn’t want to leave it,” my sister replied.

“Thank you so much. She got scared because of the loud protesters and slipped right out of her collar.” The woman smiled at us. “Thank you again.”

My pulse was still skipping as we biked home, the adrenaline rush leaving my senses overwhelmed.

I’d been so frustrated that only my sister and I had tried to help the dog, but as we pedaled I decided to put my judgment aside. It didn’t matter what other people had done - what mattered was what *I’d* done. And I’d stepped up. The dog had found its own way home, but I was assured in the knowledge that if it hadn’t, I would have been there to help. I’d been somebody, I realized, exactly how my parents had always encouraged me to be.