

Autobiography of Cat

One.

There is something under the stove. It is smaller than me and it is not me. That makes it exciting. I wait for it. I stare at the dark spot under the stove for many hours. I will wait for the thing all night and then when it shows itself I will catch it. I will play with it and tear it with my teeth and claws. It is not me and it is smaller than me.

You are bigger than me. You make the place where I live. You make the food to be in the glass bowl. You are bigger than me and are not me and you are exciting because of the food in the glass bowl. You rub my fur, and that is something I know. My mother rubbed my fur with her tongue. That was even before I could see or hear or smell. My mother was a heartbeat that I felt, an echo in my body, and her tongue on my fur. I couldn't see or hear or smell. I had no way to be in the world, no nose or eyes or ears. They all were covered in a gray film. It was just my mother and me. The world was gray.

I have this problem with the things under the stove. I need to kill them. I have the trouble that is the glass bowl too, how I need you to make that happen, once every few hours. But there is a bigger trouble I have, a new one, one that you do not know. You look at me and you see that there is something that is not the same. I know because your noises at me are different, your growls. But you don't yet know what my trouble is. It is this bump

growing in my stomach. It is getting bigger. It is growing fast, faster than the things under the stove can run. My eyes and nose and ears are being covered again with gray. The world I came into, the one next to my mother, is going. I will be dead soon. The world will be gray.

There is a thing I need to do before I am dead. It has to do with you. I have to tell you something. I have to crawl in your lap, lie there feeling the heat from your middle, and I have to make you know something. I don't know what it is. I can't remember when I wake from a nap what it is was that was in my head just a moment before.

There is some white colored thing. It has the shape of a button, the one I bat around the dining room floor, or did before the bump came. It is round and small, smaller than me, and it is exciting. But it is white and smooth as well, with four little holes. There is something about the holes. They let through a light, a warm white light, a beautiful white light. It is the same somehow as you. You and the white light are somehow the same.

I will stare at the stove while you sleep. In an hour or two the small thing will peek out its head. It will see me. I will be there waiting, but it will not care. It has been under the stove too long. It will know without a doubt that I have claws and teeth, but it won't care. It longs to run, to scurry across the floor. It will come out from under the stove and it will run and I will catch it. When I catch it, I will rend it and make it squeal. I will kill it.

You will wake when the light comes to the place where I live. I will rub your legs. I will chase you to the glass bowl. Next to it you will find the small thing from under the stove, broke necked and bloody. You will make a noise at me, angry, and then you will make the food happen in the bowl. I will eat it and purr, but I will want something else. I will feel the gray of the bump in my stomach. The food in the bowl will not taste good, and it will not be the thing that I want. I will want to crawl in your lap. I will want to tell you about the button. It is round and smooth and it has a white light. It is exciting. I have only a few days to tell you. I don't know how. It is small and not me. It is big, very big, and not me.

Two.

I eat the grass. It does not taste good and it will not help. The bump is too big. But eating grass is something I know. I have always eaten it. I do it because the grass is there, so much of it there, to the very far fence.

There on the fence is a bird. It hops on its stick legs. It has feet like bones. I watch the bird and soon it tires of hopping on the fence and it flies away. I watch it to the top of the apple tree. I can see how it stands now in the wind. The wind blows and its feathers ruffle. The way the wind blows on the face of the bird reminds me there is not much time. The way it blows on my face reminds me. I will not feel it long. I want to climb the apple tree.

My limbs hurt when I climb. As I lay on a branch resting, the world is gray. The taste is not in things any more. Things are not exciting. Even the birds and the ants in the tree are not exciting. I rest for a while on the low branch and then I climb higher. I want to get to the top of the tree. I might get stuck. I might not be able to get down. I might fall because of the aches in my limbs.

I make it to the top of the tree where the branches are thin. They bow under my weight. They blow in the wind. The wind blows in my face and it ruffles my fur. From the top of the tree I can see the green hill that is the top of the place where I live. It climbs up one side and falls down the other.

It is dangerous to sleep in the thin branches. I will fall. It is a long way to the ground and it will hurt to fall. It will kill me. But I want to sleep here. I am tired. I want to sleep and the wind to ruffle my fur. In the apple tree, I want to have the dream of the button. That is why I climbed the tree. I want to sleep while the branches blow and have the dream of the button.

I sleep and there is the picture, the dream that I have. I am lying on the dining room floor. Over by the place where the hot air comes is the button. You dropped it on the floor a long time ago. I have lost it and found it many times. It is the size of your eye and it looks at me the way you look at me when you are not making your growl. It is empty and quiet. This is the way, so quiet, that you and the button look at me.

Even though I do not bat it, the button begins to twirl. It twirls on its end across the floor. It comes near me as it spins, making a noise like the sound of purring. It spins toward me until it hits my nose, and then it stops to twirl. It stands on its edge and the four holes are toward me. I can see through them. The button is white and there is white light through the holes. It is the size of your eye.

In the dream of the button, the button is exciting. I look at it and my tail switches. I look at it and I purr, my purr like the purr of its spinning. The four holes and the white light are like a thing that is coming. It does not move but it is going to move. It is like the food before it is in the bowl, like the food that is about to be in the bowl. It is like the small things under the stove when they have not come out but they are about to come out. It is like you in one room and then you coming to another room, the room that I am in.

The button and the light are something I want. I want to bat it. I want to set it twirling across the floor. But I want more for it to sit, not moving, the way it sits now. I want to wait until I bat it. I want to feel it like a thing coming. The white light through the holes is coming. It pours through the holes. It pours and pours through the holes. It is like you, in the way that it pours. It pours and it comes. It is always coming. You pour. You come. You are always coming.

Three.

When you sit down I want to jump in your lap. As soon as you are ready to look at the box with the light and noise in it I want to jump up and feel the heat of your middle. It makes you angry sometimes. You shove me to the floor. But with the gray coming to everything, this is what I want, all of the time. You can see that there is something different in me and you do not get so angry. You growl but you will rub my fur.

I lie on your lap and I think about the dream in the apple tree. I woke up with the branches bending and I remembered parts of the dream. I remembered how the button twirled and how it was always shining with the white light through the four small holes. I remembered how the button was the size of your eye.

I remember that I used to live where there were things even bigger than you, things that stood in the grass. This is when I was born. My mother was there and she was warm. I slept next to her in a box. There were things in the grass that ate more grass than I ever could. They made noises in their throats that were loud but soft as well. Once one of these things licked me with its tongue.

I lived with my mother. I had brothers and sisters too, though all of them died. They were skinny when they were born and they would not eat from our mother. I do not know why I was fat and sleek when they were skinny and their fur was missing in places. My mother rubbed them with her tongue and growled when they died.

My mother was the first thing that was always coming. She would be hunting small things in the grass, far away. I would sleep in the sun or I would play with my tail. I would bat stones and chase moths. I would remember my mother was gone and I would look up and cry. She would hear me and she would run toward me, the thing in her mouth she had killed.

Later, you came to the place where I lived. I was half the size of my mother. I now hunted the small things in the grass and sometimes caught birds. Some things were exciting and small, and some things had names. My mother had a name for me. She would growl it when she saw me. When you came to the place I lived you had a different name for me. Some things have names and some have different names. Some things do not have names at all.

You took me from my mother. For a while I missed her because now she was not always coming. I would cry and wait for her. But soon I would cry and you would come. Like my mother, you would make the food happen. Like her you would rub my fur.

I lie in your lap and you say the name you gave me. You say it low, now that you know something has changed. Maybe you know I am going to die. I purr for you in your lap. I am trying to remember my dream, the button and the white warm light. I want to give it a name. I want to make it a thing I can call, a sound in my throat. If I call it, maybe you will hear it too. Maybe you will know what it is.

Four.

You take me to the place I do not like. It is the place that smells like I am dead and where the thing like you presses me and makes me hurt with sharp points. I am put on a cold flat spot where the other thing like you makes me open my mouth and puts things that taste bad inside. Once when I felt very bad you took me there and then I felt better. But I do not like the place because the smell is so bad.

The thing like you makes noises and then you look at me. I see that now you know about the bump. You say my name very low and you rub my fur. You put me back in the dark box to take me from the place. I never struggle when you put me back in the box to take me away. This time I do not struggle or even make the noise that I am afraid. I thought that this time I would not leave the place at all. I thought that the smell that is like me dead would this time be true.

But I am afraid when we get back to the place where I live. I got sick in the box and it made me afraid. You lift me out of the box but I scratch at you with my claws. You growl at me and let me go. I run out of the place that I live and into the yard where the grass is. I run fast toward the far fence. I try to jump over the fence and my leg gets caught in the wire. I start to howl. I pull at my leg and I see you coming toward me. I become more scared and pull out my leg. There is blood on it as I run away from you.

I am outside of a different place where other things live and I am hiding beneath it. It is dark under there and the dirt is cool. I sit in a hole I scratch in the dirt. I sit there for a long time and look at the gray world around me. There is a gray spider and gray ants. There is the sound of things like those that run under the stove, the small sounds that they make. But I am not excited. I am afraid and everything is more gray than before.

I wake up and it feels like the bump has eaten me. It feels like the bump is not inside me but I am inside of it. It is all around me. I can feel it pressing my limbs and my head. It makes me ache all over and I can hardly move. This must be the time when I am going to die.

But I do not want to die yet. I do not want to be underneath the place where other things live. I want to go back to the place I live. I will crawl away and I will try to make it back to that place. Maybe there it will be warm. I am cold now. Inside the bump it is cold.

I crawl out of the dark place. I can smell the things that hate me and chase me, their smell strong in the grass. Perhaps they live here. I want to run through the grass but my limbs are heavy and everything is gray. I am afraid and I want to run, but I have to go so slow.

I make it to the fence, and through the wires I can see the place where I live. But I cannot make it over the fence. It is now too high. I will have to die in this grass instead. The things that hate me will come and rend me with their teeth before I die. I will scratch them but they will rend me still.

You come out of the place where I live and you call to me. You call and call but I cannot jump over the fence. You say my name and I answer you with my cry. You call and I cry.

Because you see that I am different and cannot come, you make it over the fence to me.

You stand near me and say my name. You wrap me in a soft thing and then you go back over the fence with me. It is all gray. I cannot see or hear or smell. Everything is covered in a film and I am inside the bump. I can only feel your heartbeat like an echo inside me.

I am lying on the part of you where your heartbeat comes. I stay there. I sleep there.

Sometimes it hurts and I cry.

Five.

It is like water everywhere. You opened my mouth and put in something that tasted bad.

Now it is like water everywhere. It is gray and it no longer hurts. I cannot feel my legs or my tongue. I am in nothing but water.

There was the time when all the water was falling and the loud noises were in the sky. I was afraid, as I always am when the loud noises shake the place where I live. There was one noise that was so loud. As I hid in a dark place, the noise and the light that comes with it crackled in my fur. My fur jumped from my body and stood all around me.

I was afraid, but I heard another noise that was like so much purring. It was in the tree that is outside the place where I live. I could hear it crackle and purr. The sound was like me when I am excited, when the food is in the bowl and it hasn't been there for a very long time. It was like me purring when you have not been coming toward me for a very long time and then you are finally coming.

I crawled out from the dark place I was hiding and I went to the place where I can see. I looked out, and in the tree outside there was a light skipping. It skipped from branch to branch, lighting up the darkness that came with the water falling. The light crackled and purred like your hand in my fur when it is cold and you rub very hard.

I was afraid of that light that skipped in the tree. It was very bright in the daytime dark and it stung my eyes. But I did not want to stop watching it. I wanted to watch it and listen to the way it purred. It was so bright and very beautiful. It was exciting. Everywhere in the tree the light skipped and made its wonderful noise.

Now there is no fire and no tree and the only thing I see is water. For as far as I can see, it is water, and the sound of it is far away, even though the water is so close. There are noises across the top of the water that are like the noises of you, your growl. The noises float across the top of the water and they remind me of something. They tell me that there was something to be done. I had a thing I wanted to do, but I can't remember what it was.

For a while I fall asleep and I have a dream. The dream is the same as when I am awake, the water everywhere and the sound of it sloshing. I float in the water as I float in the dream. The not-dream and the dream are only different because in one there is my mother. She swims through the water. She has a fish in her mouth. She is swimming toward me. She keeps swimming in my direction, the fish wiggling in her mouth, but she does not get to me. She doesn't get to me no matter how long she swims. She does not get tired in the water and she never gets to where she is coming. I sleep and wait for her to come, waiting for the fish.

Six.

I think I am dead. There is nothing now, not even the gray. I look and I listen and I even feel for the echo in my body, but there is nothing. I do not feel your heartbeat. I do not have your hand on my fur. I do not have anything.

There was a time when I had all the things everywhere. I had the bugs that crawled on the grass and up the sunny fence. I had the things under the stove and my heartbeat as I waited for them. I had the birds that dropped their feathers into the air when tried to catch them, making parts of them fly as they flew away. I had the noise of you growling when you were coming and had not yet come. I had the fire that purred in the tree. I had my mother with the fish and the milk and her tongue.

There is still the thing that I did not tell you. Now you are not anywhere and I will never tell you. I will not feel the heat of your middle and tell you the thing that is the button, that is it spinning, that is the white light in the holes. I will not tell you that it is the same size as your eye and that it is somehow the same as you. I still do not know what it means. I will not tell you and I will never know what it means.

But look. There is something. Now that there is nothing there is something. What is something is that the white light was nothing. It was nothing at all. It is that the button was nothing, that its purr when it spun was not the thing that it was. It was not that I liked to bat it across the floor. It was not that it was exciting. It was not that I lost it and found it many times. It was none of these things because it was nothing.

But this is the thing that is something. Out of the things that were nothing, all white light and purring, came the thing that I wanted to say. Out of your middle that is now nothing, comes the thing that is to say. From the nothing that I am now comes everything I want to say. From all that is gone I see that the thing I wanted to say has no name. And without a name I know what it is called.

I say it now, now that there is nothing to say. I say it to you and I wait for it to be gone. I wait for it to always be going. I wait for you to be here and to always be going. You are always going and you will always be gone. This I will always know. That you will be going, always going, waiting for me to be going as well.