

The Cat

THE CAT

“Yes, it does make sense.” I said to myself. All my life, I’ve been pushed. Pushed by Mama, by my brother Terf, pushed to do things I did not want to do and to be places I did not want to be. Every single action or desire of mine belonged to someone or something else. Nope. Not the best feeling in the world. The only thing that was mine and mine alone was my spectacular memory, my unique ability to remember anything and everything. I found out about it when I didn’t forget about that pain when everyone told me that I would. I broke my leg when I was five, and Mama told me to stop crying because I will grow up and forget all about it, but I didn’t. I didn’t even forget “some” about it, yet alone all about it. It stuck with me till this very day, to this second that I’m reminiscing and talking to you. So when the pain didn’t vanish, the memories stayed and the pictures stuck, I discovered my extraordinary talent of being a haunted person.

I remember a lot of things, I remember every single day of my life. I remember sitting on our wooden floor on the day I was born. You may think that this is impossible and no one would ever be able to remember such a thing. But I do. That is actually the very first thing I remember: how I was pushed out of the dark into the light, on my granny’s old green blanket full of holes. Dusty and rusty lying in some kind of a liquid. I remember the first time I saw Mama. She looked like – Mama. She was looking at me with her mysterious face, she always has this I-know-things-that-you-don’t-know look on her face. You will never find out what goes on in her mind. Try asking and you will regret it for the rest of your life. She always said “Curiosity killed the cat,” whenever we asked her something we were not supposed to ask. Although she was smiling, I couldn’t tell whether she was happy to see me or indifferent. Well, that’s Mama. She smiled at me and told me: “You are hungry.” I wasn’t. She didn’t care. She never asked a

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question to know the answer. It was like her little chit-chat. Before I could cry my first cry ever, she pushed some food in my mouth. I remember crying afterward, and I remember sitting on our hardwood floor playing with my brother Terf. It feels like years since the last time I saw Terf. I miss Terf. Terf is good. Not the smartest pal around, but good. He is strong and chubby. Or was. He could easily go anywhere he desired in a few minutes, jump so swiftly and even climb things. If you think his chubbiness affected him, you're wrong. He was just so fast and delicate, he was "quick as a cat." None of us have seen an actual cat in our entire life. We just know it's an animal. But we have heard Mama say it a thousand times: "Quick as a cat!" She never told us whether she had seen a real cat or not. Or how it looked. Or how she knew a cat is quick. Well, that's Mama. Anyway, my cat-like good brother Terf was playing while eating this one day, or any other day for that matter; you see, that's one thing I knew Terf for. Besides him being good, Terf had an appetite. He was always chewing, nibbling or biting on something. Anything eatable in our house would be eaten by Terf in a few minutes. He would never stop. Now that I think of it, I've never seen him without some food or a drink by his side. And that's why he was Mama's favorite. It sounds weird, doesn't it? "My mom loved my brother more because he ate more." Mama never treated us badly or differently, but once. But that's another story. But I always had this feeling that he likes Terf and Ly way more than me. In case I forgot to mention, Ly is my sister. I liked her better than Terf because she minded her own business. She wouldn't wander around figuring me out. She wasn't as good, but she was smart. I miss Ly too. But I miss Terf more and I don't know why. Ly didn't eat as much as Terf did, but she always finished her meal. So Mama would favor her as well. Mama weirdly cared way too much about us finishing our meal. Not only she cared, but it was also a holy thing for her. The more we ate and enjoyed, the happier she was. As simple as that. Well not as simple, she had this motto "A strong future is in a

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strong body” and then she would mention that the strong body comes from the food she puts on the table every day and night. She took it personally if one of us wouldn’t finish his dish. And of course, that one of us was always me. I am the “one of us”. That’s why she liked Terf and Ly. They finished their dish, ate their meal and Terf would eat mine too. Me, I was never a big fan of eating. I simply do not enjoy it. I never really become hungry. I have no desire for eating and food for me mostly is another way to stay alive, just enough to survive. Even after playing with Terf in the garden and coming back home sweaty and exhausted, even after waking up in the morning after a dinner-less night beforehand, I was not hungry and that made my Mama real angry and even hurt. I ate to survive but that wasn’t enough for Mama. Mama wanted, no, *needed* to see us getting all nourished. Mama needed snacks and big fancy dishes full of rich food vanishing in a couple of seconds, and I couldn’t deliver. I could mostly at my best moods poke around and eat half of the amount that made Mama raise an eyebrow, and have one snack a day, and the rest of my portion was for Terf. If he could reach it before Mama appeared. If not, I would have left it out for the cat; if it ever decides to visit. And I remember Mama chasing me around the house with a spoonful of “something”, really didn’t matter what to me, pushing me to take another bite.

I remember sitting on our hardwood floor playing with my brother Terf and convincing him to eat the rest of my afternoon snack. It was a fruit or something. It really doesn’t matter. “You know you aren’t full.” I said with a voice full of despise, because he was being a baby. “Of course I’m not. Unlike you!” He said you with a mocking tone and threw a piece of wood at me. “But Mama is going to kill me dead. Don’t you remember?!” I knew he was right. Mama had no sense of pardon when it came to food. Everyone should eat her (Mama always used the pronoun her) portion and eat it whole. One time she found out about Terf eating the rest of my snack, and

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he had no dinner that night. For Terf this was the highest of punishments. For me, it was a prize. “But Mama would never find out! She is not even home and she won’t be back till late! Common don’t be a scaredy-cat!” I said with a convincing tone. My tone was too convincing perhaps. I feel bad now. Did cats scare easily? I don’t know. It was Mama’s saying and I asked her once. She said: “Eat your food and you’ll find out.” I ate the whole dish that night just to find out the answer to my question. Mama never answered any question, so I was eager, but as you may guess, she never gave an answer. Yes, that’s Mama. I still don’t know. “Stop making that face already! I ate it, no need to show that stupid face.” Terf brought me out of the cat memories back to real life. While I was thinking about Mama and her cat quotes, Terf had eaten the rest of my portion. Relieved and well- a bit grateful, I nodded and went to the window to look out. I heard Terf saying behind me: “You owe me one.” He couldn’t let me be happy for his existence for a second. As I said, I’ve been pushed all my life. To finish my food by any means, to owe my brother for his favors and now this.

You know what else I remember? I remember how that night Mama didn’t come back. And no, that was so not Mama. We waited and waited and waited some more but she didn’t return. Ly was a shy girl and the least emotional of us all, but she started crying the morning after and she wouldn’t stop. Her sound was driving me crazy and I was wondering what had happened to Mama. Where had she gone?! Was she hurt? Or even dead? Had she abandoned us because I was so stubborn and reluctant? Was she gone to see the cat? So many stupid questions were swirling around in my head. And the crying, the torturous crying. The unbelievably not-as-subtle-as-a-Ly-crying-must-sound crying. Ly wouldn’t stop. I tried to comfort her many times, but I gave up. I tried to give her some of her favorite food, but she refused. And now even Terf couldn’t eat anymore. Terf could not eat. I knew things were going horribly down the hill when

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Terf stopped eating. I had to do something. Where was Mama?? Terf sat down all sad and quiet in the corner of the room and stayed silent. I tried to talk to him several times. I even tried to feed him a little. I don't know why. For Mama's sake maybe. I knew this would have made her happy. Her children full and nourished. I stopped. I couldn't care anymore. What good came out of all that crazy obsession of eating? Nothing. So I couldn't care anymore. Mama should have thought about that when she decided to leave us behind. I knew inside my heart that Mama didn't really leave us with her own choice, but I was frustrated. I was all alone, I was hurt, and I was pushed, pushed and forced to take care of my siblings. Why wasn't I losing my mind? Why was I still sane enough to think? I wished to lose it that second. To not to be able to think anymore, to care anymore. So it would stop. So the horrible pain would stop. But it doesn't work that way and you know it... You don't make a decision not to care and not to feel. You just don't.

I was staring out of the window, far away into the meadow that my house was placed upon when I realized something had changed. At first, I couldn't even tell what it was. And then I thought I had gone deaf. Because I couldn't hear anything. But then I found out that the crying had stopped. It had been going on so long and so intense that for some brief moment I thought it was the only sound in the world. But it wasn't. The wind was there, and the sound of leaves falling, and the ants walking on the wooden floor, and Terf's breathing, but the crying was gone. Ly had stopped. She said something in Terf's ear and then sat beside him. How many days had gone by? I asked myself right at that moment. I couldn't tell. She didn't say anything after that whisper in Terf's ear, and she just sat there, right beside Terf, with the same position, hugging her knees. At least she was crying before that, at least she was doing something. Now I just had two corpses to take care of. Mornings passed, and nights too. Or maybe I thought they did. I lost the track of time and forgot the meaning of day and night. On a special day, which we will call

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the day Ly got up because I have no clue what day it was, Ly got up. She got up and walked outside. I didn't follow after her, there was no point. If she wanted to hug her knees outside, it wouldn't have made any difference. Hugging your knees inside, hugging your knees outside, hugging your knees in the doorway, no difference. It's the knees and the hug that matters. So one day Ly stood up, walked to the door and went out. And I glanced at Terf. He was all alone now, sitting motionless in silence. "I don't want him to die alone." I said to myself because I was pretty sure he was going to die. And I was going to die, and so was Ly. There were no food left, no water and even if it was, they wouldn't eat or drink. I would die the last, I thought. "I don't want my brother to die alone" So I walked to him, sat beside him and then I turned into him.

I was supposed to be the different one, the one that holds it together. But it turns out I was no different after all. I sat there and didn't move. I sat there and didn't talk. And I stopped looking out of the window. It didn't matter because even if I looked I couldn't see. Because that was when the walls came. Out of nowhere, built by some invisible person or some invisible legs belonging to an invisible person. Like magic, they were there, and I was stuck. Now I can't see out of the window, I can't see Terf and I am not dead. All I can do is to think of the horrible things happening to me, tell you about it, and stare at the walls. The horrifying walls. The white horrible terrifying walls.

So yes, it does make sense. I've been pushed all my life. By my mom, by Terf, by Ly, by myself and now by these stupid white walls. They keep coming closer and closer. And my space keeps getting smaller and smaller. They separated me from Terf. First, they were thin like a warm blanket. First I could see through them, and I could see the change of the day and the night. And eventually, they got thicker and thicker until I couldn't see Terf anymore. I can't see the sun, passing the meadow and coming through our window, spreading on the old green rug. I

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miss Terf so much. At first, I tried shouting out his name. But there was no answer. I once called Ly. She never came. Now everywhere is dark and soft. I know my walls are white because I saw them when they were thin, but there is no light coming in so it's pure darkness here. Nobody should ever experience such darkness. I'm telling you. It's like I am blind. And I can't even tell, maybe I really am. I'm being pushed again. It's getting smaller and smaller here day by day. I may be even upside down. I don't even know. And I don't even care. I just remember everything. And I don't want to. I really, really don't want to. If this is death, then Mama lied about granny going to a better place. This isn't even a place. Let alone being a better one. "Yes, that's Mama."

"ARE YOU IN THERE?" I know this voice, I've heard its annoying ringing all my life. It is Terf's. Ok. Great. Just what I needed. Now I hallucinate too in addition to remembering stuff. I don't want to die crazy. "COME OUT-Hey!" I hear a bump on the walls surrounding me, in addition to the voice. And now I know it's not a dream or a product of my crazy brain. Because the walls are shaking, and I'm pretty sure I don't have that active an imagination. Something, or perhaps, someone is hitting the wall hard. The light burst is making me almost blind and the crack causing the light to come in gets wide open. And there stands Terf. Or who I think might be Terf. What in the world is happening? "I can't believe it! You had one too!" said Terf. I carefully come out. I'm wobbling and it's really hard to stand, I feel kinda heavy on my feet but I'm alive. I missed this voice. I missed the unnecessary excitement in his voice. And the annoying ring he had in his voice. And I missed him. But that wasn't Terf. Looked nothing like Terf. Terf was chubby and-and weird looking, and- annoying looking. But the person standing right in front of me, the person I know with no doubt is Terf, is beautiful. He is- nope, he just looks beautiful. I looked around and saw the soft cotton trapping me and Terf. "Why are you so

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beautiful?” I asked him deep in thoughts. What a childish question. Also an inappropriate one. You can’t go around asking people why they are beautiful! At least it’s better than asking someone why they are not beautiful. Terf started laughing, opened his wings and went out of the window. Suddenly I heard his shout and flew after him. He was looking at some shattered walls. The same walls we were trapped in. And Ly was lying in the middle of that mess prettier than ever. It was like somebody had torn apart her walls and torn her apart as well. Her wings were broken and she wasn’t breathing. Terf flew away and covered his big sad eyes. But I just couldn’t stop looking at her. She looked peaceful and- flawless. A feeling told me she stepped outside the last day of our old life for a reason. Terf came back and placed our granny’s old blanket that was now orange on Ly’s body without a word. “All that time in that cave, I thought-“

“You were awake?”

“Yeah, I was just thinking.”

“About what?!” Terf said that with utter astonishment.

“Ugh- nothing.”

“Damn right! That hell hole! I just fell asleep. Do you think Mama knew about all this?”

“Duh! Of course- no-no. She couldn’t have. Mama never said a thing. Perhaps she didn’t know.

Yes, that’s Mama.” I said with the most convincing voice I had.

And that my friend, was a lie. Now I’m getting higher and higher up from the ground, leaving Terf behind and I’m flapping my wings to stay in my place. Do not ask how I learned to flap my wings. I started examining a bunch of flowers near the fence that separated the meadow from our land. Suddenly, I saw something I’ve never seen before. An animal perhaps... A black thing with a fluffy- well probably skin and two white pointed figure and four figures I could

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assume them only as legs. Just four!? How weird... It was napping under the sun. The weird thing saw a sudden movement in the bushes a meter away and jumped fast and quickly with its furry legs and body on the fence. The jump was a familiar one. Just like how Terf used to climb everywhere we went. I flew towards it, he (or maybe she) saw me and ran away quickly. Today is the day that, I, Bu, the butterfly, met Scaredy, the cat.