



Autobiography of **Cat**

Joseph Young

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Designed and written by Joseph Young.

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One.

There is something under the stove. It is smaller than me and it is not me. That makes the thing 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 rend 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 you 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 before I could see or hear or smell. My mother was a heartbeat that I felt, an echo in my body, and her tongue was 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. All of them 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 trou-

ble that I have, a new one, one that you do not yet know about. 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 are different. But you don't yet know what my trouble is. It is this bump that is 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 getting 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 see it when I am asleep but when I wake up it is gone. I can't remember when I wake up from a nap what it was that was in my head just a moment before.

There is some white colored thing. I don't know what it is but maybe I can feel what it is. It has the shape of a button, like the one I bat around the floor, or did before the bump came. It is round and small, the thing like the button, smaller than me, and it is exciting. It is white and smooth, 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, the same as the button. The button and you are the same. 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 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 follow you to the glass bowl. Next to it you will find the small thing from under the stove, broke-necked and bent. 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 the grass is something I know. I have always eaten it. I do it because the grass is there, so much of it, all the way 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 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 anymore. 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 ache in my limbs.

I make it to the top of the tree where the branches are thin. They bend 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 scratchy 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 for 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 a picture, a dream that I have. I am lying on the smooth cool 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. That

is the way that you and the button look at me, so quiet.

Even though I do not bat at 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 soon 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. The food that is not yet in the bowl is exciting. It is like the small things under the stove when they have not yet come out but they are about to come out. It is like you in one room and then you coming to another room, to the room that I am in.

The button and the light are something I want. I want to bat at it. I want to set it twirling across

the floor. But I want even more for it to sit still, not moving, the way it sits now. I want to wait a moment until I bat at it. I want to feel it like a thing that is 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 angry. You growl but you 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 too 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 matted. My mother rubbed them with her tongue and she 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 at stones and chase moths. Then I would remember my mother was gone and I would look up and cry. She would hear me and she

would run toward me, with the thing in her mouth that 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 to me 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 things 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 that you gave me. You say it low, now that you know that something has changed. Maybe you know I am going to die. I purr for you in your lap. I am trying again 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 that 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 at 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, 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 at you 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 being 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 toward the very 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 I pull out my leg. There is blood on my leg 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 that 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 the things 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 on 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 die

underneath the place where other things live. I want to go back to the place where 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 other grass instead. The things that hate me will come and rend me with their teeth before I die. I will scratch at 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 come 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. Then 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 that come with the water 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 bright light that comes with the water crackled in my fur.

I was afraid, but I heard a noise that was like so much purring. It was in the tree that is outside of

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 in the bowl 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 where I was hiding and I went to the place where I can see. I looked out, and in the tree there was a light skipping. It skipped from branch to branch, lighting up the darkness that comes 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 the 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 can feel is water. For as far as I can feel, it is water, and the feel of it is far away, even though the water is so close. There are noises I can't hear across the

top of the water that are like the noises of you and your growl. The noises float across the top of the water and they remind me of something. They tell me 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 not-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 does not 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.

Six.

I think I am dead. There is nothing now, not even the gray. I look and I listen and I feel for the echo in my body, but there is nothing. I do not feel your heart-beat. 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 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 I tried to catch them. 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 four 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 don't know what it is. I will not tell you, and I will never know what it is.

But look. There is something. Now that there is nothing, there is something. What the something is is that the white light was nothing. The button was nothing, its purr when it spun across the floor was not anything at all. What the something is is the thing that I was before I was born, my mother in the box beside me. Before that, I was nothing. What I was was so much smaller than me, and so much

bigger. The button the size of your eye is so much smaller, and so much bigger. It's not that I liked to bat it across the floor. It's 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. Nothing is the thing that something always is.

But look. Here is the something. Out of the things that are nothing, all white light and purring, comes the thing that I wanted to say. Out of your middle that is now nothing, it comes. From the nothing that I now am comes everything I wanted to tell you. Now that it is gone I can 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, and you will always be waiting for me to be going as well.

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