

TOXOPLASMA GRANNII MAYBE

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16. 12. 2018 – 15. 01. 2019

I don't know if I'm really afraid of death as much as I'm afraid of corpses.

I had a cat that lived for eighteen years. Chloé. She was black and not very affectionate. We all tried to win her over, but the most she'd do was occasionally sleep on your feet. One night when I was ten and she was five, we were lying in bed and I started to cry because I thought she might die soon. I envisioned her death, or, more like, her disappearing from my reality. The day she actually died was the day she was the nicest to me in her entire cat life. We lived in a new house and I had just returned from college for summer break. She was slinking behind furniture and hiding. She was bleeding from her gums. She was old. At one point, despite being so weak, she jumped up on my bed and sat with me for a while. My mom took her to the vet that day and came back alone. To console me, my mom told me that Chloé had waited for me to come home to die, that she wanted me to be there.

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I've spent most nights and mornings in my life in bed with a cat or two. It's impossible to sleep at night nowadays, because Mia always sleeps dead center in middle of the bed, forcing me to contort my body into uncomfortable positions as the hours pass. Last night, I was looking at her lying in bed and I had this thought again, this thought about being sad when she'll die. My mom won't be there to take her to the vet, I'll have to. That's one thing about growing up, you become the true guardian of your pets. It's not your parents' responsibility anymore to take care of the sad things. I don't know if I'm really afraid of death as much as I'm afraid of corpses. Like, witnessing life or energy vanish into nothing, that terrifies me. Lifeless bodies. I've seen a few at funerals. I remember in fourth grade bragging to classmates that I had been to like five funerals already. Who brags about *that*? If I pick up Mia now and try to cuddle her the way I want to, like a doll, she will scream and scratch me and this will trigger one of her spiteful moods where then she wrecks my room and hunts my feet all night. No sleep, sleeping in.

I don't know if I'm really afraid of death as much as I'm afraid of corpses. Like, witnessing life or energy vanish into nothing, that terrifies me. Lifeless bodies. Aging. Disease.

I'm scared of the materiality of it all.

*text by, Christina Gigliotti*