

The Cat in the Corner

I'd been writing for a good three hours on that cool November morning when I heard the rustling. A small noise, like papers being shuffled, drew me out of my trance. Then there was a movement. Out of the corner of my left eye, something furry moved from between the large armoire in my sunroom and the wall. I jumped out of my chair and ran up the three steps that lead back to the house. Heart racing, I inched forward and peeked behind the armoire. The fur moved again and I let out a scream. Then I banged on the armoire. Bright blue eyes blinked up at me and then I heard the moan-like *meow, meow, meow*.

"Get out!" I yelled, banging on the armoire again. I flew down the steps and flung open the back door.

"Out, out!" I started back toward the cat, while it *meowed* again, squeezing its plump body out of the small space. Then it raced out the door.

My heart pounded as I slammed the door and watched the tabby sprint across our yard. The relief that it wasn't a rat, as I had first assumed, quickly dissipated as I went back to my desk and hesitantly peered behind the armoire. Big clumps of white hair remained, but there were no other furry creatures, thank G-d. I sat down and tried to go back to work.

It must have been sitting there, silently, for hours, not four feet away from where I'd been. Probably hungry and thirsty. And stuck.

The unease wouldn't leave me. I felt like a spy had been watching my every move. I had thought I was in that place of aloneness so coveted by us introverts. Turns out, a big furry creature had invaded my space, and was breathing my air!

Unsettling, yes, but really, what's the big deal? Don't we all have unwanted "guests" — be it ants, flies, mosquitoes... or worse? But this cat had entered my protected space. How dare he do that?

How often are we totally unaware that a "cat" is hiding in our corner? We assume we are alone as we go about our day, but there's a cat — lurking. We don't even know that it's there most of the time. But the occasional stir, the small rustle, is just enough to get my attention and spin me out of control.

I imagine this "cat" as the fearful, negative thoughts I'd rather not have; the ones that, without my consent, intrude anyway. The ones that whisper,

It'll never work, or, he's a lost cause, or you can't possibly believe you'll succeed at this! Meow, meow! Words like "rationality," "realism" and "practicality" cloak my cat, masking all sorts of unwelcome messages.

As I go about my day, post-cat trauma, I try to remember that although there are "cats" lurking everywhere, it is my choice whether I choose to ignore them or continuously check to see if they're still there.

As the expression goes, "We are where our thoughts are." I'd much rather be in a place of movement and light, where the possibilities are limited only by my imagination, than crammed into the narrowest of spaces, where there's not even room to breathe.

My mind can take me anywhere. Yes, it can take me to places of doubt and despair. But it can also soar to places of hope, trust and positivity.

For everyone, especially writers, this is crucial. The key is not to let an acceptance or rejection define us — not as writers, and not as people.

A woman recently told me of the time her husband, then a young man, was starting to build his *parnassah*. He was in sales, and went to various businesses to sell his product. He had bought a box of 100 matchsticks, and every time he got a rejection, he took a match out of the box. He knew that, odds were, after going to a hundred businesses, he'd get at least one buyer. So he just kept going, taking out the matchsticks, simply and diligently, time after time, confident that he'd make a sale before the matchbox emptied. Eventually, he got his first sale, and the rest, as they say, is history.

He didn't let the rejection stop him. He just kept going, one matchstick at a time, until it happened. After all, there is more than one way to skin a cat. ■

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