

Sophie's Choice

by Adam Sifre

Sophie is a cat. I tell you this upfront so as not to get you all wound up about moral angst, Nazis or a mother's love. Sophie is cat, okay. Relax. She's not an emotional wreck and no one is forcing her to make an unbearable choice.

I won't describe Sophie, except to say that she is a creature of habit, and her habits consist of sleeping in my laundry basket, and sleeping in the sunny spot on the carpet that slowly travels as morning moves on. This is her habit until around 11:00 o'clock each morning, at which point she will make her way downstairs for a bit of brunch.

She is the only the second cat I have ever owned. Is that strange? Maybe. If Facebook is to be believed, people all over the world are collecting cats, the way children used to collect baseball cards, or beanie babies. I have never been much of a collector, and I'm not about to start with cats.

It's just past eight in the morning, and Sophie is enjoying the best of both worlds at the moment. She lies in her laundry basket, and the basket is on the sunny patch of carpet. In about twenty minutes, however, the sunlight will have moved on, and Sophie will have to choose between laying where she is, or following the sun.

If she lays where she is, I'll get up, go downstairs and open up a tin of Fancy Feast. If Sophie follows the patch of sunlight, I'll lie down next to her. I'll scratch her ears and let her press her face against the outside of my hand. She loves that and always, always purrs. Then I'll strangle her. Or more likely, I'll squeeze her throat until her neck breaks. Don't worry. She has been declawed for two years.

This is not something that I have really thought through. To be honest, the idea came to me only just now. It's not something I would ever do. I don't love cats, but I do love Sophie.

I hate definition though. I once heard someone say that all language is used to define reality. That if we have no words for something, it essentially does not exist. I read this years ago and didn't think much of it.

But lying here in bed, I obsess over this statement, this philosophy. If language defines reality, then it must obviously define me. Who am I? The answer defines me. It *limits* me. If I am kind, then I don't hate. If I am normal, then I don't do insane things. Words create who I am. I hate that. The idea of being limited. It makes almost everything a story. Fake.

I am not me. I am my idea of me. The idea of me is a definition that limits me. The image of a luge track comes to mind. It is in the middle of a great expanse of mountain, covered in snow. But the luge track keeps me on a specific route. The rest of the mountain may as well not exist. It has no bearing on where I am going.

The thought makes me laugh. A luge track. I didn't even like sledding when I was a boy. The image stays with me. And it doesn't *really* make me laugh.

I sit up in bed and rub my eyes. There is nothing to stop me from strangling Sophie, except for who I am. Can I change who I am, simply by answering that question differently than I did yesterday? I believe so. I think so. Do other people ever think about these things? Do you?

Sophie's laundry basket is only halfway in the sunny spot now.

Tempus fugit.

