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Self Portrait Through Objects

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I was in the kitchen, and saw my cat with a mouse in her mouth.

Everyone else was in the living room. I heard my mother’s laughter. My cousin yelled, “Stophe! Come in here!” and so I did.

Everyone applauded when I entered the room. “Bravo!” they said, and lit the candles of a cake. My family knows that I love cake. My father said, “Congratulations! I’m so happy for you.” I searched for a smile. I could not find it.

My family was happy for me because I had just published my first story in a magazine. A magazine called The New Yorker.

The story was about my family, about how all of them, my mother, my father, my brothers, my cousins, all of them are authors, and about how they throw a huge party whenever one of us is first published. The story had a passage: “If this story is published, my family will throw me a party. I do not want that. If this story is published, I will enter a world from which there is no escape. There is no author in the world who says, ‘I am finished. My works are complete.’ If I enter the world of literature, I shall be its slave forever.”

But I wrote that I did not have a choice. I wrote, “I come to literature as a mouse comes to a cat.”

I think that perhaps my family, those active authors, those busy authors, never did read my story.