

Stuck – Adeline, Year 5, TAS

I am 11 years old. And I have never left my house...

I make it my job to keep everything in order. As if the incense can mask the smell of fear. My room is always tidy, mimicking myself. No sharp objects are allowed and no shouting. My home is a haven of peace. But something is always missing. It makes the night seem longer and my feet seem heavier. A true friend.

Not that I could ever make one any way. I am petrified of stepping out the oak door and into the unpredictable New York City. Every time I dare to peek behind the blinds, I see heartless people pushing and shoving each other out of the way, pretending they are better than the rest. If I didn't know better, I would have said they were acting out a Steven King horror. But unfortunately, I know better. As I gaze into the huge blurry mass, I realise that they are a vast wall of thorns, keeping me from the one desire that dominates my life.

I am stuck. In a cage that keeps me from inching forwards or backwards. If I can't get out, then I will not suffer. I will turn my prison into a sanctuary, rich with colour and life.

Forgive me for not introducing myself. I am Grave, and I suffer from anxiety. I love flowers because they cannot cause any harm, and they are predictable. I had figured out a life plan. Eat, sleep, clean, cry, dream. Not necessarily in that order. My life was simple, and I was nearly comfortable. That was, until the black cat came.

She came like a lizard. Sleek, midnight fur. I had no idea. It was almost as if she teleported here. But I know one thing. That cat is a demon. Because, yes, you guessed it, I am superstitious.

She's been here for days now. I can't get her to leave. And I cannot live cramped in my wardrobe, with this infuriating fabric flapping against my face. So, I decided I would have to face my worst fear. I started trembling at the thought of it. The soulless monsters. People.

I put a lost and found poster up. On the inside of my foggy window. A quick dash and then I sprinted back up to my room. And just like that, I had done the most dangerous thing in my life.

Almost immediately, the doorbell rang. I hadn't heard that melody since, forever. And it was sort of sweet with a touch of formality, just like the social worker that I discovered on the other side of the oak door. Her clothes were smothered in black cat fur. Maybe glancing out the window isn't as discreet as I thought it would be. But maybe some people do care about the girl who has never left her house. So, they sneak a black cat through a doorway just to speak to her. Some people do care. You just have to be brave enough to look for them.

“Good afternoon. My name is Grave, and I am blessed with human compassion.”