

## Last Stop

‘SCHHH!’ The violent, heavy rain washes over the thin, wobbly, plastic cover of the bus stop. Flashing, vibrant lights catch my eyes, making me lose my train of thought. It’s going to be a long ride to the nearest hospital to visit Mum. I unzip my worn out, ripped and oversized coat, the one that I wear to keep me warm from the frosty depths of the city, pull out a pair of bright, fluorescent, yellow headphones and plug them into my sister's phone. The music keeps me patient until the bus comes by, its wheels propelling small droplets of water from the damp road onto my coat.

‘TSSS!’ The door hisses as I enter the bus. I press my opal card against the reader and cringe as the machine registers my ticket with its loud beep. We are all just anonymous numbers fed into this machine. I am stuffed in with the rest of the faceless passengers and fall onto one of the ripped seats near the rear end of the shaky bus. Once I sit down, I look to my left, expecting to see the dazzling city lights, people crossing roads as well as rows of different stores, but my view is obstructed by a large graffiti mark on the small, scratched window.

I look down at my fingers, picking at the small hangnail on my thumb, mouthing the lyrics to the ‘Duran Duran’ song that is humming through my ears. Mum had recommended this band to me on a day when I was stressed out about my school work. She told me it would help calm me. When she was young, she would listen to it constantly. The gentle, rhythmic vibration coming from the bus reminds me of when my parents would slowly rock me to sleep...

I sit there motionless, lying on my small, shaggy cushion. Through the clear, spotless windows, I stare at the scenery below me. The flashing, vibrant lights of the loud and lively buildings surrounded me. Something familiar catches my eye. It is a sleek, ginger cat walking by with its little collar jangling, in a daydream. Just like me, before my owner caught me from the side of the road. The road was where I was happy. Lying on the prickly, luscious grass made me feel at home, especially the aroma of the pot plants filled with roses that I passed by on my daily strolls. Those were the days that made me actually feel like a cat. Now, I'm just a prisoner in this small, crammed apartment building.

"Bye my little lump of cuteness! You are the cutest cat ever!" My owner says every morning before he leaves for work. He gives me a quick belly rub and a pat, then hops out the door and disappears. I sorrowfully stay, lying right by the door, waiting for my owner to arrive home, with a solemn expression on my face. The only things surrounding me are empty bowls of eaten food, small portions of water, honking car horns and cooing birds in the distance.

For hours and hours, I wait by the doorway until my owner comes home. A lonely cat, plucked out of paradise and stuck into the trenches. The only small thing keeping me awake is the small, metallic bell attached to the red collar on my neck. Whenever I lay down to rest,

the aggravating sound of the bell echoes through my empty head. The highlight of my days is managing to fall asleep for a few hours. This is madness. I need to get out of here. As I wildly look around, I notice that my owner has left the window in the living room open. This bland building has no exciting things to see or places to explore. This is my only chance!

“Come on! Hurry up or yer' gonna' get squished little cat!” The aggravated man exclaims, while staring into my clueless eyes. In disorientation, I study my surroundings once I cross the dangerous road. These roads are like playing with fire! You make a wrong move and you're dead!

The realisation finally kicks in. I'm where I dreamed to be!

*Wait, what are you doing, Feliks? You're going to get killed if your owner finds out that you escaped the building! Are you out of your MIND?*

All of these agitating thoughts fill my head. I can't think straight. Wait, there it is!

*Is this a mirage?*

I am in the city! I knew it! I remember having cat fights with the neighbours' cats near those 'No Stopping' posts. I am in such great delight that I don't know what to do first. Where do I start? I know! That patch of thick, luscious grass looks like just the place. I lay belly up, warming myself in the sun. This is the life! Heaven! My blissful silence is broken by a soft voice. “Hi my baby, how did you get out here?”

*Nooooooooo!...*

“Last stop! This bus is terminating. All passengers must exit here!”

The bus stops and the doors swing open. ‘TSSSS!’

