

**MAHDIYAH FAZIR**  
**Junior Category (Age up to 10)**

Hi there, I'm a jet black cat who lives in a crowded pet shop. I don't have a name because nobody has adopted me yet. I'm having a terrific nap, when Jimbo, the security guards dreadful dog starts barking at me as usual! I get super annoyed and growl back at him (he thinks he can take advantage of me because I'm only 10 weeks old), in my opinion I think dogs are the worst. Finally, he storms off and I gaze at the delicious goldfish swirling around in the clear water. A few minutes later, the goldfish spots me and tries to play dead. I start to get bored of staring and I look out of the glass window outside, nobody is there. It seems like another miserable day.

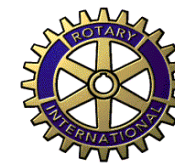
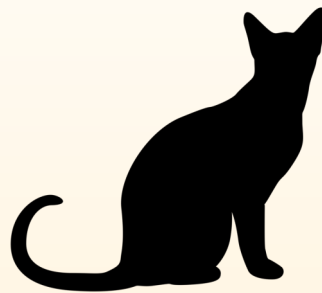
Suddenly, I spot a little white car park outside. A trendy man and a cheeky little girl enter the shop. The musing shopkeeper goes to greet them. I'm thinking they might want a silly noisy dog or a cute tiny hamster, but they are getting closer and closer to my metal cage. I start to move around slowly and look up charmingly at them. I can hear the curious girl whispering, "Dad can I get this pitch black cat?" I was full of joy not many people want me because they are superstitious of my kind!

Eventually, I figure out the affectionate girl is called Emm. They are taking me to their home. YAY!! In the car Emm is deciding on names for me, I personally like Midnight! We arrive at an incredibly modern house, an unusual lady with bright coloured clothes comes to the door. She looks scared of me and she disappears as soon as Emm runs out of the car with me. The drive has made me sleepy but then again I am starving too. The generous dad puts out some yummy chicken jelly which I wolf down.

**MAHDIYAH FAZIR (Continued)**

Sometime later, Emm starts playing with a squishy toy mouse. I jump up in delight. Feeling super energetic and no longer tired I decide to explore my brand new home all the while thinking, "Where is that petrified looking woman?" I have to find her because I'm sure she is Emm's mum, I want everyone to like me! She is hiding away in the clean sparkly kitchen, somehow I have a feeling that she doesn't like cats. I'm sure she will begin to love me someday.

Playful Emm follows me and I follow her all around the house. I rub my head lightly on her leg and slowly but surely, she starts to stroke me. I am enjoying this, so I begin to purr. I scratch her softly, but she runs away, upset. "What did I do?" I wonder to myself. Emm's kind gentle dad sits her down and tenderly tells her, "Some cats scratch you because they are being affectionate" which is totally true! Emm forgives me and takes me to my snuggly bed, which happens to be in her colourful bedroom. I am extremely sleepy. I gradually curl up on to the soft, cosy, warm bed, Emm begins stroking me again and I finally purr myself to sleep. This is the best day of my life and I am sure it is Emm's too.



**ROTARY CLUB  
OF LEICESTER**

**YOUNG WRITER COMPETITION  
WINNERS' SUBMISSIONS  
2021—"MY HAPPIEST DAY"**

**MARYAM SONEJI**  
**Intermediate Category (Age 11-13)**

It's over. One year, six months and seven days of wondering and hoping that we would all survive long enough to see this day. I flicked through the new channels rapidly, trying to determine that it was true and not some cruel joke my exhausted body was playing on me. No, there it was, in black and white running across a banner at the bottom of the TV. *Immunity reached worldwide as the coronavirus has been defeated.* The images on the channel changed to show people from countries all over the world, celebrating in their own languages in different cultures cheering. Face masks being burned, social distancing posters being ripped and shredded and most bewildering of all, people hugging.

I turned off the television. I glanced down at the tracksuit bottoms and fuzzy socks I'd made my new everyday wear. I looked up and studied by reflection in the mirror. My hair had grown so much and my face had gotten a little rounder from all the new recipes I'd been trying. Turning around, I analysed the room. There was a yoga mat lying in the corner, in pristine condition, from only being used twice. There were semi-rectangular blankets strewn across the floor that I'd made in my knitting phase. Boxes were stacked up against a wall, filled with unwanted items,

### MARYAM SONEJI (continued)

waiting for when I gathered the will to lug them to the post office. I smiled. It was over.

I made my way to the bedroom, determined to shuck my dishevelled look. It felt like I'd been given a second chance at life. This time I was going to make it worthwhile. While I forced my body to re learn how to primp and groom like before, I could hear the yells and cheers from the neighbours who surrounded me. I assumed they all had plans to throw the biggest party of the millennia, but I had my own goal.

I yanked out a box with a pair of shoes I'd bought in self-pity induced shopping spree. Tugging them on, I made my way to the door, reaching for the pack of masks I kept next to my car keys. Wait; my hand hovered over the packet and skipped over them. There was no need anymore. Euphoria flushed through me. It was over.

I entered the building for the first time since all this happened. People were everywhere, for once, crying and embracing. It didn't bother me, I was here for someone too. I dodged all the groups that had clustered around the reception and walked as fast as I could through the narrow hallways. The door was cracked open; she was waiting for me. I slid through the door to see her sitting at a table with her hand reached out towards me. I hesitated and then all of a sudden leapt towards her. Her hand was leathery and warm, but her grip was firm. Tears gushed down my face as I leant in towards her. It felt like it had been a lifetime. She smiled at me, wiping my tears and whispered, "This is the happiest day"

### DEBORAH KARGBO

#### Senior Category (Age 14-18)

I have to tell you; my happiest day isn't what you think it is. It wasn't filled with symphonies of laughter and celebration, but I can promise you it was more than that, it was my liberation manifesting itself into sheer bliss.

Call it murder, it was sublime.

It was always going to end like this. His body lay sprawled on the floor with a knife protruding from his chest, crimson runs displaced, warm and slippery reddening the floor. All that was left was licks of life keeping him from entering a submerged world of peace. Not yet dead, but death persists.

Clenching my tongue between my teeth with an overwhelming desperation I suppressed hiccups of laughter. I clenched my tongue trying to suppress the thunder that blackened my veins and maddened by judgement. But I was already shattered. Free.

Now I kneel in shaking thrill to my confession. The deed has been done. The power that you once had over me, strangling my identity is now broken. Now I rejoice in sweet ecstasy that your ravenous luminous eyes are dimmed; your once broad, cruel hands threaded with malicious morals laid there empty. Oh! How you defiled me; I wouldn't let you get away. The man who ripped the wings off angels you left me with nothing. The tears that were held back over all the years danced with gracious intent down my cheeks. I looked down as your eyes speak ....

I look up towards her before I meet my demise. She sways as speckles of light envelope her as "angel-like" the light illuminating her figure, purifying her. I see it however, the retired

### DEBORAH KARGBO (continued)

pleasure of the purge. The opulent smell of my own blood carries through the heavy air tinged with acidity as the seconds tick by: death is indefinite. Our eyes bind into an infinite loop of curiosity and even though death holds me firmly with two hands it was the smile that plastered her face that truly horrified me. How could a woven face say so much without a single word?

I hope you know that that more times you hurt me the less that I cried. Your inflicted pain demanded to be felt, creating a storm of anarchy. Conjured from the deepest parts of me you created a sanctuary of fear. That night you raped me a surging thrill of knowing how alone I was lapped onto my frail naked body. Anger purged into my ears surging, singing like an Apassionato of song. You told me you loved me. You. You broke me but today I am no long the caged bird singing. And with that, you can't ever come back from the dead.

The baby forming will never know they weren't made from love but from violet conception. My little baby. The symbol of my wonder. A symbol of my survival of the scaring pain of every sharp work and every hating touch inflicted.

I am the truth spoken from solemn lips,  
I tore myself from your poisonous grips  
I broke the chains,  
I found the sacred light  
And silenced the devil that came in the night.

See, pure happiness.