

## Shoe in Closet vs New Kitten

By Jennifer Perryman Petsche

I sit in silence, unmoving—not only because I cannot move, but because I do not wish to move. Despite the warm, stale air, I am most comfortable here, when I am not working. In here, in the dark behind the unremarkable door, I feel safe. The others agree for the most part, or I assume they do because they do not speak. I do not speak. We make no noise because of what lurks on the other side of the door. Those sounds we hear and shadows we see under the door are the reasons I am fine in this cramped space. I do not care how many others join me, no matter how crowded it gets. I am safe here. Here and outside, I am safe. But not out *there*.

Many of us have come face to face with our enemies—the teeth, the claws, the heated eyes and ugly tongues. Such horrible tongues when we are used to such friendly and docile ones. When it is time to work, we must pass them, hoping it is brief, hoping they are otherwise occupied, hoping they are asleep, hoping they have just gone.

But today as I sit here—always quietly, always still—I feel something is different. Something is not right. I feel it deep down in my soul. There's more commotion on the other side, new and terrifying noises. I think the others in here with me feel it too, but that's just a guess as I cannot see anything. And we are all silent.

Just when my feeling of dread is about to overwhelm me, it happens. I see it. Right there in front of me. I am one of the most popular here, so I sit nearest the door, nearest the one-inch crack under the door. It was never more than a way to see the shadows and light before, but now—now it has been breached by something solid. Something large, hairy, moving, and *sharp*. There are several sharp points. So close. and for the first time that I can remember, I wish I could move on my own. Move!

Move away from that thing! But I cannot. And it reaches me in what feels like a split second, but also several hours.

It's touching me. *Pawing* me. Reaching, reaching for something. The blades that stick out from the hair are so sharp. Ouch! They poke and pull at me until they find what they must have been looking for—what this broad, strong limb was looking for—my laces. My laces! I need those laces to work—leave my laces alone! But no, it grabs hold with its blades and pulls. Pulls! I am dragged against the door forcefully. Bang! Bump! Smash! It keeps pulling! My laces are now on the other side of this door, and my body is still here on the other side of the door, the safe side. Ha! Nowhere is safe! I think back to the others farther inside here and wonder if this thing could reach them, or if they are still safe. It seems unfair if they are. Why me?!

The creature still jerks and pulls at my laces, and I feel more blades join in. So much sharpness! And yet more join in, these somewhat damp and joined by soft roughness. It's unholy. Make it stop!

And then it does. I feel some pulling and then know I am being saved by the hand that usually ties me. The hand shoves my laces back into me. But not far enough in—please place me back farther inside. Please! I know this thing will be back—and it will not be pleased at having been interrupted. It will take it out on me. And my laces. But maybe next time it will reach for the one next to me instead—yes, maybe I will be spared. I can only hope as I sit here in silence, unmoving.