WINNER

YEAR 7 AND 8 CATEGORY

A Story in Miniature

Trapped

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Darkness. Absolute, suffocating darkness pressed all around me, closing in. Not the kind that comes when you close your eyes, but the kind that seems to have weight. Pressed against my face, my knees and my chest like a hand trying to smother me. The walls are too close. I try shifting but the fabric just scratches my skin. I can't even stretch. There's nowhere to move. Nowhere to look. Nowhere to go. I'm curled into some sort of ball and my knees are jammed awkwardly against my chest, with something hard digging painfully into my back. The cramped space forces my spine into a curve that aches with every tiny movement. Every attempt to move sends another sharp edge digging into my ribs and a hard metal-like object jabbing into my side.

All I can manage are short, sharp, shallow intakes of breath. My breathing has made the thin air, hot and thick, with every breath bouncing back against my red face. I've been counting my breath for what's feels like hours. In, out. In, out. I close my eyes and tune my ears into the outside noises. High pitch screams cut through, followed by voices - deep voices telling the screams to keep quiet. Next, I notice muffled voices surrounding me and rushing feet hurrying past. There are overwhelming sounds of everything that blend together to become one.

A dull vibration hums beneath me, steady and mechanical. Sometimes it stops, sometimes it jerks. Every so often, the entire world jolts. A deep mechanical rumble passing through. Then, the world tilts to the left, followed by a violent lurch to the right. I'm being carried. Dragged. Dropped. A sense of nausea comes and goes, while sweat drips down my forehead. I start to wonder how long it'll take until someone finds me. Will *anyone* find me? Then comes another low rumble.

The ground beneath me shakes, and my head smacks into something hard, then BANG – the entire world jolts. Now I'm laying curled up on my side. Heavy footsteps approach and I hear a muffled voice:

'Ma'am your luggage is too heavy.'

I freeze, not daring to speak a word, I hold my breath and put a hand over my mouth. My pulse spikes as my heartbeat grows louder - I think it might burst out my chest. Silence stretches, thick and suffocating. The world stops as I watch a thin line of light slice through the darkness around me. The suitcase flips open, and a flood of light blinds me for half a second. I squint my eyes and look up at a man in his mid-fifties peering down at me with a look of shock on his face. I look at my friend with a look of betrayal as she stands beside the suitcase trying to hold in her laughter.

So much for saving me from getting a plane ticket.

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