

The structure of 10 Adelaide Avenue has survived many crises: mold, house parties, that one time Lauren burned pancakes at 6am on Shrove Tuesday and nearly called the fire ambulance. Caitlin is afraid that this time is the last straw. The relentless *thump-thump thump-thump* on their bedroom roof doesn't stop - one more lap and the roof will give in!

Yes, it's only 10am but it's hard to drag themselves away from their cocoon of blankets while pouring over their medical law notes and climb the stairs to the bedroom directly above theirs. The two of them have been flatmates for nearly two years now, so there's no need to knock. Caitlin pops their head in the door to see Lauren concentrating hard as she runs tiny laps around her room, decked out in sports gear and all.

"Hey, hey. Aren't you supposed to be studying? Do you want to study together?"

Caitlin asks.

Lauren halts, fixing them with that confidence only doomsayers have. "What's the point? Who cares if we pass our law degree? We're all going to die of this *coronavirus* and if we don't, well, no one will need *rules* in the post-apocalyptic stateless world that comes after!"

*I'm the only person here at risk of dying*, Caitlin thinks to themselves but restrains the comment with a practised sigh. "Do you have your fidget spinner? Second screen? I know physical exercise is your favourite way of managing your anxiety, but it's not exactly a good idea to go outside at the minute."

Lauren flops down on her bed. “Cancelling my gym membership was the worst day of my life. Even worse than when we failed tort law in first year.”

“We’ve had worse days than that,” Caitlin says.

“Oh, here it comes again.” Lauren’s voice is sharper with sarcasm; this is another familiar measure, her taking out her frustration on her only flatmate. “Here comes the sob story. Come on, you’ve been out of chemo for what, a year? There’s no cancer left in your body. You’re fine. Don’t start crying about how you’re at a higher risk of the virus than I am.”

Caitlin flinches, wincing. “I’m not going to answer that,” they say instead. “I’m going to go back and study.” With that, they return to their room, a cramped tiny prison. The coronavirus has been an enclosing circle: first other countries, then this country, then this state, then this town, then this street. Two more steps: this house and then this room. Caitlin knows the science, the risk groups for coronavirus, how many immunosuppressive drugs they took during their survival.

Their fight against cancer was a fight only they could do. The doctors were assistance, the drugs were vital, but whether or not Caitlin would live depended on the strength in their body, whether or not they were *desperate* to live. They were. They found out that inside them there was a fundamental want, a yearning to live. Caitlin wants the whole world. They want to become a high-flying international

medical lawyer, working in Big Law, in London and New York and Hong Kong all in the same week. They want everything out of life.

Here they are in a 10 ft x 12 ft room and that is all the world is. A dark room, fairy lights strung out, a desk piled high with law textbooks and colour-coded highlighted notes. The two of them have had fights before and Caitlin has learned not to respond to Lauren's antagonism. Lauren used to go out twice a month for check-ups on ADHD and anxiety (before the quarantine), medications are not what is best for her body's sleep schedule, she regulates them with running and therapy and visiting the penguins at the zoo. It isn't exactly Lauren's fault that she's irritable, but sometimes Caitlin wants to lean over the table and hiss: *you use that as an excuse to be a goddamn jerk.*

Usually the tension dissipates after a break, after Lauren goes out running and Caitlin attends an extracurricular law seminar. There's no escape this time. Caitlin only leaves their room to shower or to cook and every time they stumble across Lauren, the girl has a strange proud look of hurt and anger on her face. Lauren takes to pacing relentlessly, crashing down the stairs and thudding back up, trying to move as fast as possible to achieve the impossible runner's high in a confined space.

Then one day, Caitlin brings herself out of a studying-focused haze to go downstairs to heat up scotch broth in the microwave. What's wrong? The flat is silent. No pacing. Dipping white bread into the soup, steam hot on their fingers, Caitlin considers. There are dirty dishes tossed in the sink. Caitlin disinfects the

entire bathroom before they use it, cleans the clean plates and cutlery once more before eating, just to be sure that no viruses will pass onto them.

The door opens and Caitlin breathes in a wave of fresh air for the first time in months. They should be relieved, but instead a shock of panic zips through their heart. Lauren slinks in, mud on her trainers, cheeks glowing pink. She seats herself at the opposite end of the table meant for two, where they have spent years having dinner and arguing over legal definitions and drinking beer, a defiant and hostile tilt to that proud face. "What?"

"You were outside," Caitlin says, an admission of fact and a judgement all in one.

"You know you shouldn't be. It's against the law, are you a law student or not?"

"I needed to. What kind of life is it where you don't have the freedom to do what you want?" There's a glimmer in Lauren's dark-green irises, shadows in the whites of her eyes.

Caitlin snaps. They lean over the table, voice hard, "You need to go disinfect your clothing. You need to go wash your hands. Do you understand what you're doing to me? Do you understand the virus you can carry in here on your clothes, your hands, your cells? Don't you understand the threat your existence poses to me?"

"Don't you understand what this confinement is doing to me?" Lauren cries. "I'm not *made* to be locked up! I'm an extrovert, I want to meet people, I want to see places, I want to run and run and not stop and stay still!"

“You don’t think that I want that too? Don’t you understand that some things are more important than your freedom? Isn’t *saving my life* more important than what you *want?*”

“I’m done,” Lauren snaps, standing up. “I’m done. I’ll grab my things and go somewhere else, to another damn house, until this quarantine is over, I don’t *care* what the law says. I cannot stand being here in this house with you and your fragile damn body a second longer. Stay in this fridge and shield yourself from the world - you’ll *die* once the quarantine lifts, once real life comes back. I wish you *bad luck.*”

Caitlin shrinks back. Lauren’s back, disappearing. Thumps up the stairs, crashes, thumps back down. The slamming door. The silence, stretching on and on, the soup going cold. Caitlin’s shoulders relax. This flat is still a prison but the threat is gone.