

The Elevator

When Zimi woke to a dull humming noise and throbbing bright light coming from the patch of the wall behind her wardrobe, she had no idea that her life was about to change dramatically. She rose from her bed and sauntered towards the glow. Whatever it was, she knew that she wouldn't be able to go back to sleep without investigating it thoroughly. The wardrobe was handed down from her older sister, like most things in her room, but it was a cheap one made of very thin wood and a few coats of paint. It was easy enough for Zimi to move by leaning against it until it slid across the cheap laminate flooring that her parents had insisted on laying. Zimi wasn't sure what she had been expecting to find, but she certainly hadn't been expecting to be presented with a pair of elevator doors.

Each one was made out of polished brass and was a little taller than Zimi herself. Where they met, there was the faintest of cracks, but Zimi had to look closely to find it. Above the doors, and stuck to her bedroom wall as though it had always been there, was a semi-circular dial that Zimi had seen above older elevators in the movies. This one seemed to have four levels: CORE, LE, UE, SPACE. If Zimi had been the type of girl to worry, this would have worried her. However, she wasn't, so it didn't. If anything, she was curious to know more.

Unfortunately, there didn't seem to be any buttons on the wall to call the elevator. Instead, she stood and waited. After a while, the display above the doors began to light up—first SPACE, then UE. Finally, it stopped on LE. There was a soft “ping” before the doors slid open with a whisper.

The doors had been no wider than Zimi's wardrobe, but the room that they opened on to was much larger. It was almost the same size as Zimi's house, although not as tall. She couldn't quite work out how it all fit into such a small area. Just inside the door, somebody had set up a desk. It might have been the thing that was currently sat at it, working away with its head bowed low. There was no escaping what the creature was, but Zimi couldn't quite bring herself to accept it yet. Instead, she focussed on the other details.

The creature was wearing a well-fitted (possibly even a little snug) red waistcoat, much like a doorman at one of the more expensive London hotels. On its head was a red cap trimmed with gold thread. Thin tassels hung around the brim. As Zimi watched, it flicked out its tongue and started to nibble at one of the strands. It was clearly engrossed in its work.



“Are you getting in, or not?” it said. Its voice sounded exactly like Zimi would have expected a goat’s voice to sound. There, she’d thought it out loud. The elevator was being manned by a goat. It was, in fact, being goated. Nevertheless, she stepped through the doors and coughed politely.

“You’re a goat,” she said bluntly.

The goat looked up from its work and, for a second, looked startled. “Who the devil are you?” it bleated.

“Where is Haverby?”

Zimi looked around, back into her room. She didn’t know anybody called Haverby, but then she hadn’t known any talking goats until that point. She shrugged her shoulders.

“Well, he’s late. He’ll have to catch the next elevator. I’ve not got time for this.” As Zimi watched, he reached out a hoof and pushed a button on the wall. The doors slid shut, and Zimi felt the elevator carriage start to move upwards. As she watched, the goat rubbed its eyes and yawned.

“Where are we going?” Zimi asked.

“The Astrogalactic Waste Disposal Facility,” the goat said. “Where else would the transgalactic elevator be taking you?”

INFERENCE FOCUS

1. What evidence is there in the first paragraph that Zimi is inquisitive?
2. How can you tell that Zimi gets a lot of things from her older sister, rather than brand new?
3. How might Zimi react when she gets to the Astrogalactic Waste Disposal Facility? Why?
4. How does Zimi feel when she sees the goat in the elevator?
5. Why might Zimi have coughed politely?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

V

Which word in the first paragraph tells you that Zimi moved in a relaxed manner?

R

How many floors did the elevator appear to stop at?

S

What did the goat do before it spoke to Zimi?

V

Find and copy a phrase that tells you how the goat was sat at the desk.

R

What was the goat wearing?