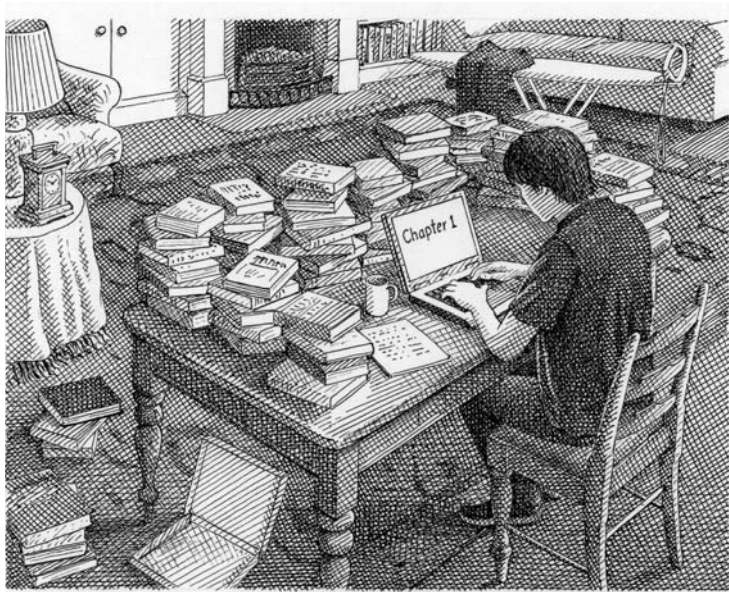


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## Chapter 1 *Books are my life*



*My name is David and this is my room. There are lots of books in the room. And a cat. His name is Socrates. Why? Because he thinks all day.*

No. Again.

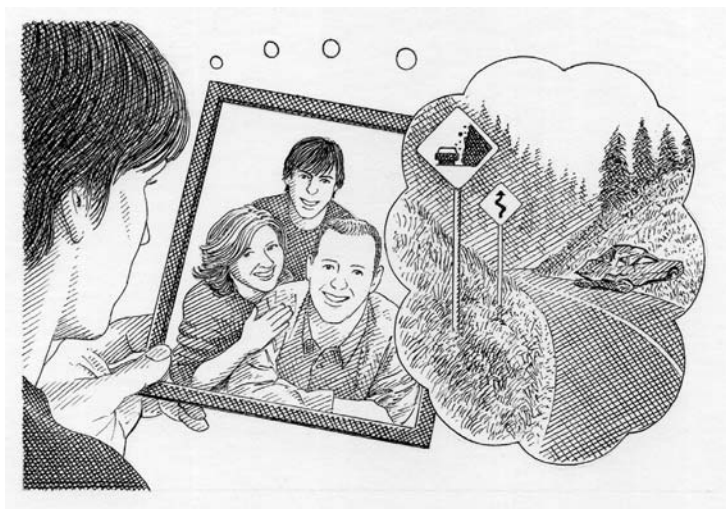
*This is a book about books. My name is David and books are my life. There are so many worlds in books. In books, I can be anybody. Books are my friends.*

Friends? No. That's not good. Books are my world? Again.

*This is my house.*

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Well, no, it isn't. It's my mother and father's house, but they're dead.



So, it's my house, but nobody knows that. Everybody here thinks that my parents are in Canada. My aunt knows that they're dead, but she's not here. She lives in Canada.

My aunt thinks I'm at a friend's house. She thinks there's no-one in this house. She gives me money. It's not a lot, but I can buy food for Socrates and pizza for me. My aunt is going to come here in September. Now it's June.

But all this isn't important. In a book you need a story.

*David Sims is seventeen. His mother and father are dead. He lives in Hampstead with his cat, Socrates, and three thousand books.*

Is it three thousand? I don't know. Four thousand? This is stupid. I'm going to start again.

*My name is David and I'm writing a book about my life.*

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No. This is wrong. I don't have a life. My life is: I read books and I talk to my cat. And I eat pizza every day and ... and ... my life is books. No, that's really stupid. I want to write a book. But I need a story and I don't have a story. I'm going to start again. No, I'm going to get a pizza and then I'm going to find a story.

'Is that OK?' I ask Socrates.

Socrates says, 'I want fish.'

No, he doesn't. He's a cat; he can't talk. But he says, 'Miaow' and 'Miaow' is 'I want food.' 'Miaow' is also 'I want your bed.'

'OK,' I say to Socrates. 'I'm going to get some cat food. Then I'm going to get my pizza.'

I like pizza. I eat it every day.

I buy the cat food and then I go to a bookshop. They have lots of old books and sometimes I buy one. Then I go to a café in the High Street.

Today I see a girl outside the café. I think she's sleeping. I walk into the café. I'm hungry and I want a pizza.



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## Chapter 2 *Ella*

When I come out with my pizza I see the girl again. She isn't sleeping now. She looks cold and hungry. I stop.

'Hello,' I say.

'Have you got a pound?' the girl asks.

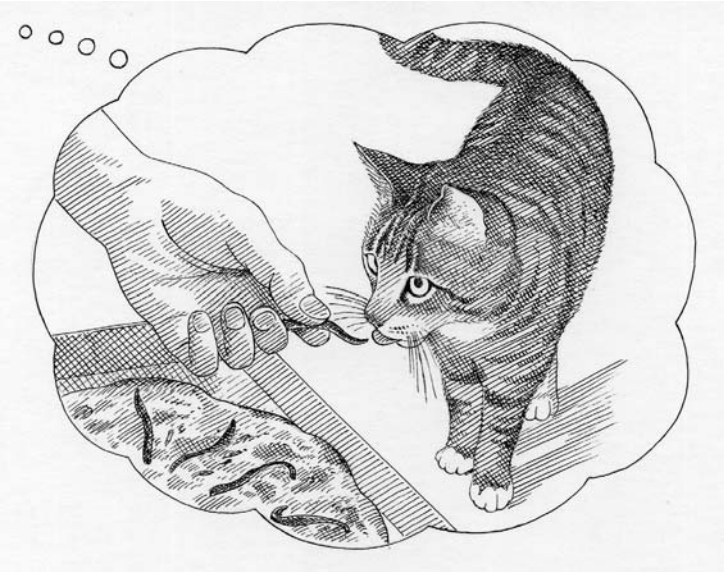
'Yes,' I say. 'Are you hungry? I've got a pizza. Do you like pizza?'

'I don't eat anchovies,' says the girl.

'Anchovies?' I say.

'Small fish, lots of salt,' she says.

'I know what anchovies are. There aren't any anchovies on this pizza.' I laugh. 'Socrates likes anchovies, but I don't.'

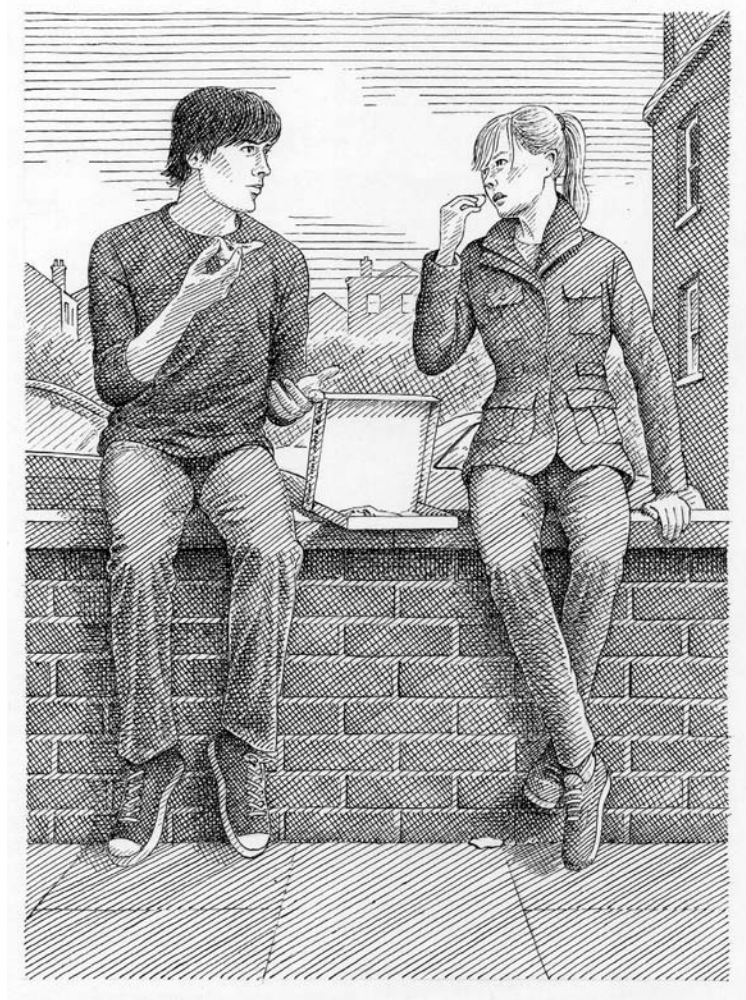


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‘Socrates?’ she asks. I think she’s about sixteen, and she’s pretty, but very thin.

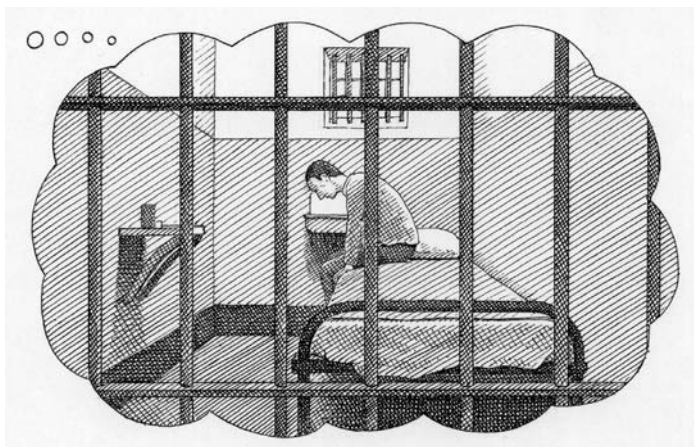
‘Socrates is my cat,’ I say. ‘And I’m David,’ I tell her.

‘My name’s Ella,’ says the girl. ‘Now, where’s this pizza?’



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The pizza is good. We eat and don't talk. Then Ella smiles.  
'Are you a student?' she asks.  
'No,' I say. 'But I'm going to be a student. In October.'  
'But you're not at school,' she says.  
'No,' I say. 'I don't go to school now. I'm seventeen.'  
'Do you live with your mother and father?' she asks.  
'You ask a lot of questions,' I say. 'No, I don't. My mother  
and father are dead.'  
'My father's in prison,' says Ella.

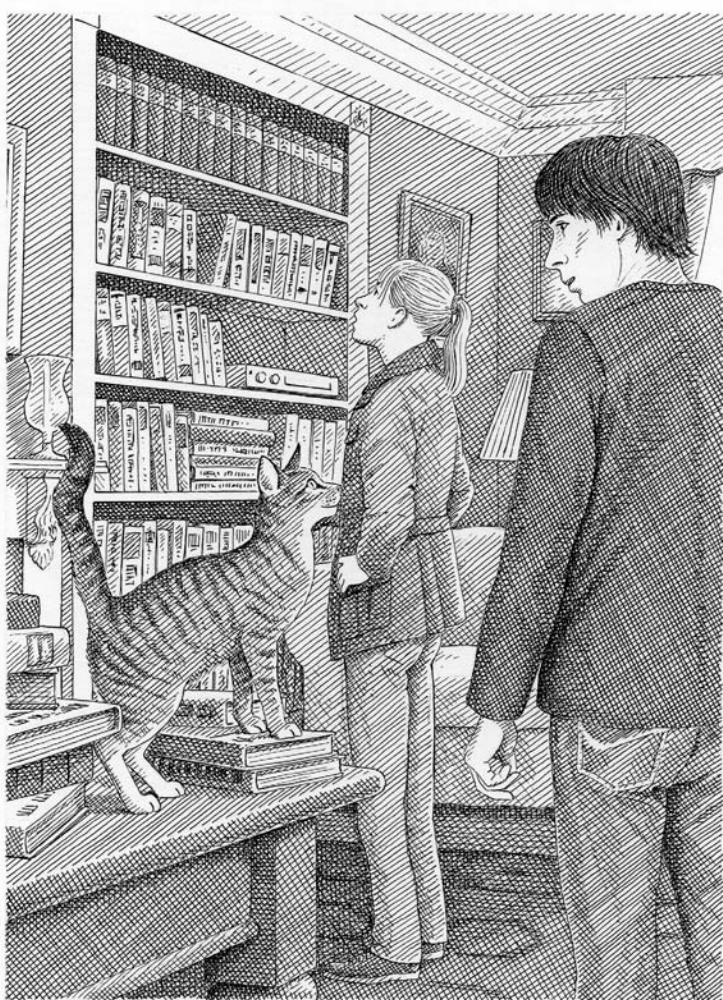


'Oh,' I say. 'Why?'  
'I don't talk about it,' Ella answers.  
'I'm sorry,' I say. I look at Ella. It's a hot day, but she looks  
cold.  
'Are you OK?' I ask. 'Are you cold?'  
'I'm always cold,' Ella answers. 'I'm cold because I'm tired.'  
'My house is near here,' I say. 'You can come back with  
me. And you can meet Socrates.'

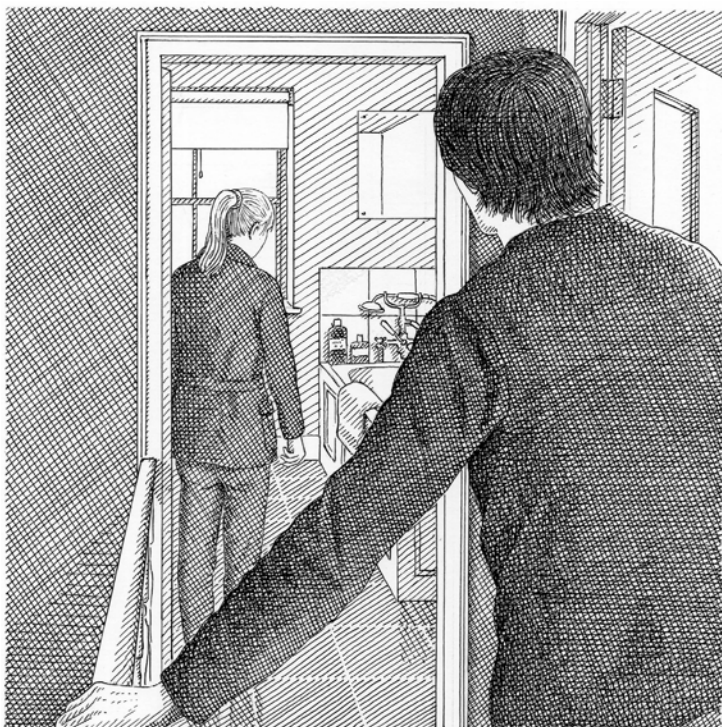
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‘Wow! You must have a million books,’ says Ella.  
‘Yes,’ I say. I want to ask Ella a lot of questions, but I don’t  
know where to start.



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‘Can I have a bath?’ asks Ella.

‘Of course,’ I say. I look at Ella. Her clothes are really dirty. My mother’s clothes are still in the house. But they aren’t her clothes now, because she’s dead. No. I can’t think about that. But my mother’s clothes are clean and Ella needs clean clothes.

I go into my parents’ room and find some clothes for Ella. I don’t often go into this room. My parents’ things are all still here. I don’t want to think about my mother and father. But I think about them every day. I don’t want them to be dead. I want them here, with me.



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Ella looks good after her bath. She's wearing my mother's dress.

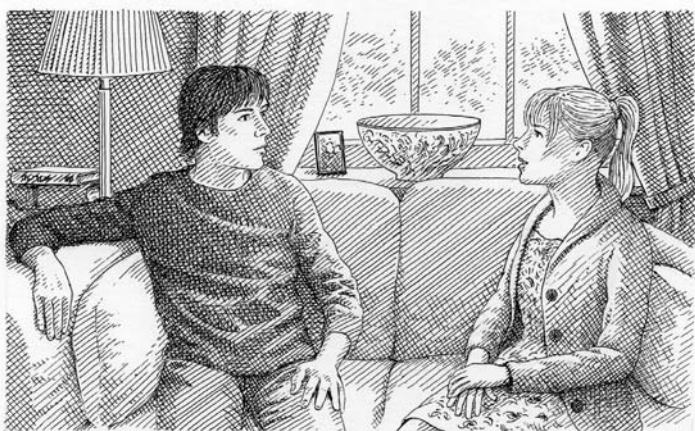
She tells me something about her life. She comes from Leeds. That's where her mother lives. Her mother drinks a lot. Ella doesn't like her mother. I think she's bad to Ella. Ella has a friend in London called Steve. I think he's a friend, but I also think she's afraid of him.

I tell Ella about my parents, and my aunt in Canada.

'So you live here now with your cat?' she asks.

'Yes,' I answer.

'It's a very big house for one person,' she says.



'Do you want to live here?' I ask. I don't know why I say this.

'You're a nice boy,' says Ella. 'But you don't know anything about me. You don't know me. I'm not a good person.'

'I like you,' I say. 'It's OK.'

'You don't understand,' says Ella. 'You live in a house. I live on the street. The street is bad.'

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## Chapter 3 *Where's my laptop?*

'You don't understand the street,' says Ella.

'Tell me,' I say. 'I'm listening.'

'OK,' says Ella. 'Everybody walks down the street, but they don't live there. They see me and they walk on.'

'I stopped,' I say.

'You're not everybody,' says Ella. 'People walk on and people go home. But on the street there's no home. There's only the street, and it's England and it's cold. It's always cold on the street. And you can't sleep.'

I look at Ella and I think about her words. I'm not a rich person. I don't have a lot of money, but I have a home.

'On the street, you sleep for an hour or two hours on a good night,' says Ella. 'But you're always afraid. People come and kick you.'

