12 - 15 Years
Prose Reading
Attention Seekers by Emma Brankin

Ash and Jenna recently ended their relationship. Ash keeps their cat and gives it an Instagram page, where its fluffy tail and sassy personality prove popular. In this section, the cat gets a surprising new follower.

The cat surpasses Ash in Instagram followers. She tells herself she doesn't mind, but she does. Gone is that flighty fluttering of validation in her chest whenever her phone buzzes. Now, the likes, the comments, and follows are almost never for her. Even the most recent post - of the cat's tail - is proving infuriatingly popular.

She sighs. Over on her personal account, there is an underwhelming response to her recent upload. Thirty-four likes. The cat could get that many likes just coughing up a photo of a furball.

She types 'Jenna' in her search bar. As the profile loads, air jams in her chest but the same sight greets her. Blocked.

The car enters the living room. Ash reaches out a welcoming hand but its eyes narrow as it looks away. This is nothing new. The cat, despite being unaware of its burgeoning celebrity status, has always had the ego and entitlement of a Kardashian. The animal dumps its black, furry backside onto the carpet, unfurls a leg like a pole dancer and, with a Barbie-pink tongue, begins licking its crotch.

Her phone buzzes with comments about the tail:

SooOOooOOoo fluffy.

Swish swish bish.

Feather boa fierceness.

Ash scowls. She's cultivating a charming presence online for the car, but, like a stage-mother, lip curling while clutching a vodka martini in the wings, she's growing to resent her ungrateful offspring.

She bats one of the cat's toys towards it. The animal watches as the ball travels beyond its reach. Its disinterest is palpable. Then, for reasons only known to itself, it decides to chirrup, twist onto its back and writhe shamelessly. Ash dutifully switches on her phones camera and starts snapping. She then spends the next thirty minutes deciding which filter best accentuates the animal's emerald-flecked eyes.

Then, something incredible happens. Dazed, she holds out her phone as if to show her cat her screen. She reads the notifications aloud, every word soaked in incredulity.

'Jenna has liked your image.'

It appears Ash's ex has chosen to keep in contact with the cat.

Jenna likes five more pictures on the cat's account over the next few days. Ash screen grabs everything and conducts hourly social media autopsies about what it all might mean. She obsesses forensically over the nature of the photos her ex singles out, the times of day the interactions occur, the rate of her liking. Ash's uploads become more frequent. Captions more pointed. Posts with the cat in front of the television watching *their* favourite programme. The cat curled