

Cloudburst

A cool breeze blew into Isaac's room through his open window. It offset the warm springtime sunlight. The perfect Saturday was coming to a close: catch in the park with his friends, a movie with his girlfriend, and his mother was downstairs finishing cooking his favorite meal. The day felt as if it flew by. He wished every day could feel like this. Even his homework had been simple and small in volume.

He leaned back in his desk chair, staring out the window to his left. "Cloudburst" by Frank Strazzeri floated through his bedroom door behind him from his father's office down the hall. There was always some upbeat jazz playing when his dad was home. He told Isaac that it helped him think. Jazz-funk rarely interested Isaac himself, but it made him think of his father when he heard it. Because of his father's passion he was well aware of a large assortment of artists. Eventually it had even become somewhat of a comfort for him; and on days like today, it fit the mood well.

Isaac's mind wandered to his girlfriend, Sophia. Their date had been fun. She had told him as they walked out of the movie, "I love sci-fi movies like that. One off, weird stuff that's just good. Sequels are overrated. They even used practical effects like in old films."

"I thought you wouldn't like it since the girl had to get rescued," teased Isaac.

"It's not always a bad thing," she laughed, "It's just annoying to see anyone in a movie who is a useless burden. And her whole survival story was cool."

"Yeah, I guess it's better when everyone has their own story arc. It's less boring," he added.

“It’s more than that. Good guys can’t just sit around complaining. It takes bravery, charisma, cunning, and strength! Real heroes are better than most of us in movies, and in real life they’re usually those of us acting at our very best in a moment,” Sophia replied passionately.

They continued their in-depth analysis of “Gumball Headed Freaks”, and Sophia was happy to also hear the small details Isaac noticed that she did not.

Isaac felt as though he had found someone special who could look into his very soul. Only his mother had ever been able to look at him so deeply before, and she had an unfair advantage. Sophie, through some mystical insight, fate, or other bizarre phenomena just connected with him.

“Sometimes it’s almost creepy,” his friend Lucas said while they played catch, “I’ve been your friend since kindergarten and I can’t read your mind like that.”

Isaac smiled to himself. Lucas, Sophia, playing catch, science fiction, and moms roast. Perfect weather. A perfect day. Now, golden hour sat on the horizon just outside his window. These were some of the things that built upon Isaac’s mind, or his “inner garden” as he imagined it. With lush foliage all around and the smell of cut grass hanging in the air, a cool breeze under a warm sun. He could see himself sitting there under a tree right now, taking in life in all of its wonder.

“Mysterious Vibes” by The Blackbyrds was now playing in the backdrop. Isaac gave his paper one last review on his laptop before hitting print and hopping up from his desk. He walked to his fathers office down the hall, opposite his room, and lightly rapped his knuckles against the door. There was a sound of socked feet shuffling across the floorboards to the rhythm of the music.

His father, Mike, cracked the door halfway, "Hello, son!" he said with a smile as he swayed to the music. He wore a loose fitting, colorful, short sleeved button up, and baggy cargo pants. His demeanor made it apparent that his mind was mostly somewhere else when Isaac asked him if he could enter to retrieve his papers from the printer. Instead, Mike grabbed them up and began to read while dancing around in his goofy way. After a beat, he said, "I think it's great! But maybe be a little less wordy."

"It has a length requirement." protested Isaac.

Mike raised his eyebrows in an indication of realization and understanding, and handed him a thesaurus with his paper, "May the words of our ancestors guide you, son," he replied sagely before hip bumping the door shut.

Isaac chuckled to himself, and walked back to his room to put both the paper and thesaurus on his desk.

As he was about to turn around and leave, he noticed something strange. It seemed as if golden hour outside had somehow become brighter. Suddenly, an intense beam of light entered his room, so bright that he instinctively shut his eyes. He began to hear odd noises, like popping balloons and carbonation fizzing all around him. The light, for a moment, was too much to bear even with his eyes closed, so he covered them. After a moment, when he sensed that it had faded, he uncovered them again. The myodesopsias danced around the focal point of his vision. A deep, bellowing voice faded in and out, speaking to him as if it were trying to find the correct frequency to do so effectively.

"Hello, it is me, I am here," said the voice.

"Hello?" Isaac replied, in a mild state of confusion.

"Yes, yes, chosen. Many are chosen. Few light the way," continued the voice

“What do you mean?” questioned Isaac.

A breath of warm air graced his forehead. Brief visions flashed through his mind. Seven images of places followed by hundreds of faces all in a moment. When it finished, he realized that the breath of air he felt had been flowing through his head the whole time, and stopped a moment after the visions did. The unseen entity then fired what felt like a jolt of electricity into his chest, before its presence was gone forever. As soon as it left, Isaac fell backward. When he was later asked to describe the next thing he felt, he said it was as if a tension in his chest cavity, that he had never before noticed, suddenly released. He felt a crumpled part of his body unfold inside of him. It unleashed a vast new amount of vigor within his very being. Each sense felt stronger than ever before.

“Andromeda Style Fuunk” by Wonky Logic faded in from the hallway to his fathers office until every note was loud and clear. He was becoming more cognizant of his surroundings.

Unbeknownst to Isaac, this was, at the time, not a unique phenomenon to him. People all around the world were experiencing the same incident at the same time. However, many of these individuals were sleeping. The majority of them, when they awoke, discounted what they saw and felt as a weird dream and the most restful nap of their life. Others attributed what they experienced to seasonal allergies, overeating, psychedelic hallucinations, and repressed childhood emotions. Some of them never felt the same powerful release that Isaac felt.

The sensations that Isaac felt continued to flood his system. His mind was now processing the world around him at an unprecedented rate. This first sparked a feeling of wonder, but his euphoric moment was soon stolen by a feeling of danger. He sensed an ominous presence lurking downstairs, in the kitchen, near his mother. In fact, he felt it stood to threaten her very life.

Isaac rushed out through the hall, down the stairs, and to her side to see what could create such a horrible sensation of dread. This crooked, wretched presence made his stomach churn, “What are you doing, running in here so fast?” his mother smiled and gave him a curious look, “You smelled me making your favorite?”

He ignored her for the danger and, almost instantly, he found it. Dashing around the kitchen like a speeding bullet; a little black fly. It flew and landed on the edge of the roast tray on the counter and rubbed its hands together, laughing maniacally, as it said to itself, “This will be the last meal she remembers,” it started uncorking a bottle with a tiny white speck stored inside. But something made it pause. It was the feeling of Isaac’s eyes staring daggers directly at it.

Without a moment’s notice, Isaac took the fly swatter hanging on the wall to his left and began swinging it as hard as he could in the fly’s direction, “What are you doing here?” he shouted, feeling an uncanny rage bubbling up, both from the disgust he felt at the sight of this unwelcome entity, and the threat it represented to his mother.

“You can see me? You know who I am?” the fly asked in shock as it dodged the fly swatter, buzzing frantically around the room.

Isaac roared, only somewhat aware how silly he might have looked, “You’re not welcome here! Stay away from our food!”

The quickness of his swings and careful strategy caused the fly to drop its bottle. The little white spec spilled out, expanded, and popped. All of its bits quickly dissipated in the air. The fly exclaimed in frustration, “You may have stopped me this time, but I’ll be back!” then, with unexpected speed, it dodged Isaac’s swings once more and shot straight through a hole in the screen of an open window above the sink.

His mother, who had witnessed the entire ordeal, was laughing hysterically, “My hero! You just saved dinner!”

Isaac’s heart raced. The feeling of vile degeneracy dissipated, but had left a mark on him. He did not know it was possible to encounter something so evil.

“Kelly? I thought I heard some commotion. What’s going on?” asked Mike, who had just entered from the hallway behind Isaac, “Is that roast?”

Isaac's mother then jovially shared the brief tale of their son’s fight against the wicked fly who got away. Mike listened with mild amusement, but sighed heavily, realizing that he would have to buy a new window screen. Isaac tried his best to play along with the humor of the situation, but he was still shaken.