**Tis Unnatural: The Tale of a Great Schism**

*Methought I heard a voice cry "Sleep no more! Macbeth does murder sleep," the innocent sleep, sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleave of care, the death of each day's life, sore labour's bath, balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course, chief nourisher in life's feast—*

Anthony awoke with a gasp, springing into an upright position and causing Lika and Nika— his two Scottish Short-haired cats— to flee from his cozy bedside. An assortment of laced pillows toppled onto the ground, and a panicked ‘meow’ echoed through his bedroom. Anthony had a good heart and always meant well, and he possessed a certain Ukrainian charm: rosy cheeks acted as the basis for his face. Thick eyebrows stood over a pair of light blue eyes, slender lips and a broad jaw structure.

“What the actual fuck…” he said, falling back into the mess of blankets and pillows that coated his bed. Apparently, upon coming home last night, he had constructed a pillow fort to house the layer of three separate comforters he was enveloped in. And even more so he spared no expense in doing so as he depleted the house’s pillow resources, somehow acquiring pillows that he’d never even seen before. An assortment of Lego peppered the floor— remnants of his, now *former* prized collection. The last thing that he could ascertain from last night was himself holding a 2-6 of Vodka, claiming it was “Russian water” and his subsequent chugging of said 2-6. From there it was all blurred memory fragments that he didn’t bother to put back together. He fell back onto his bed and let out a loud sigh.

“This is some bullshit,” he exclaimed, rubbing his eyes until they turned into an even brighter shade of red. The sliver in between his window’s curtains revealed the flurries of snow that raged in the outside world and the darkened February sky.

‘At least I don’t have to deal with too much brightness,’ he thought, rolling over and burrowing his face into his softest pillow. ‘Kay, 45 more minutes then I’ll be good to go.’ He began to doze off.

*Whence is that knocking?— How is’t with me, when every noise appals me?*

*WHAM*. His door flung open, once again halting Lika and Nika’s tiny feline hearts.

“Anthony, get up.” Anthony’s brother, Pavel, entered the room, punching the light switch with a deafening crack.

“What is it, Pavel?”

“Are we having an open house today, Anthony?”

“What?”

“I said: Are. We. *Having.* An. Open. *House.* Today?”

“No?”

“Then why are two of your friends standing outside your door asking for you? Don’t you have work to do? Are *they* your work Anthony?”

Pavel wasn’t of large stature, not larger than Anthony anyway— but he nevertheless called the shots around the house when his parents were absent. Anthony just sat there, face still buried in his pillow.

“I’m going to ask you again, but this time pretend not to be an idiot.”

“It’s fine Pavel. We’re doing our *Macbeth* movie for Dickstein’s class.”

Several weeks earlier the entirety of the Grade 11 student body had been tasked with filming a scene from *Macbeth*, interpreting part of the play through a different medium, while packing a bunch of metaphors into their unique rendition. His group had decided to cross *Macbeth* with the *Star Wars* universe. He had teamed up with his two good friends, Lucas and Patrick, the very same people who were now knocking away at his door.

“The *fuck*? What time is it?” Anthony said.

“It’s eleven forty-five. Now get your ass out of bed.”

Pavel exited the room, slamming the door and leaving a trail of rage in his wake.

‘Whelp. This should be fun,’ thought Anthony. He was plagued with a vicious head-rush as soon as he sat up straight. Then the jackhammer started— pounding away at his head as he hastily replaced last night’s stained clothing with something fresh out of the laundry. He grabbed the digital camera he’d placed on his bedside the day before, stumbled down the stairs and prepared to deal with the day.

“Anthony, what the fuck?” Lucas said, holding back a fit of high pitched laughter. “You look like full trash.” The three of them made for a tightly knit trio. Pat was the laid back one— not quick to anger, and a generally understanding guy. Lucas, characterized by his ear shattering laugh and swimming capabilities, always had a smile on his face, and was the first to enjoy a good laugh; usually at something stupid Pat had said.

“Thanks. I have the camera, is there anything else we need?”

“Nah, we secured all the necessary mats at my place,” said Pat, words muffled by his striped wool scarf. “Aight, let’s get out of here and get this shit done.”

The journey between Anthony’s house and Pat’s wasn't normally all that bad, only about 10-15 minutes depending on their speed, but the biting cold made it feel like an eternity. Hillsdale Avenue West’s desolate residential sidewalk was canopied by a layer of barren tree branches— now encapsulated in a thin layer of frost. Snow continued to fall as they walked, occasionally blowing into their faces with oncoming gusts of wind, and salting the wounds Anthony had received the night before.

*It will have blood; they say, blood will have blood*

“Okay, so if we start now we should be finished by… 7:30ish? Damn though, then we’ll need to fix it in post…” Lucas ran his hand cross the length of his dark, slicked back hair.

“It’s chill; that’s not even that bad. You guys can just sleep over at my place and we’ll pull an all nighter or something,” Pat said.

“Yeah, um, I can’t do that,” interjected Anthony. Lucas just looked at him, eyebrows raised, and nostrils flaring.

“Anthony… What do you mean, ‘I can’t do that’?” he said through his teeth, biting his lip.

“Well I have a rave to get to by, like, eight, so, I’ll have to leave at around six, six-thirty at the latest.” Anthony stared ahead and just kept walking like nothing was wrong. Lucas and Pat looked at each other in disbelief.

“That’s a joke, right? Anthony you’re straight-up not leaving until we’re finished,” Pat said.

“I already paid for the tickets. I’m not going to *not* go.”

“Anthony, you’re not leaving until we’re done. I don’t even give a fuck,” Lucas said, giving an uneasy smile.

Anthony contorted his face into a look of perplexion with his palms facing upwards, failing to see what was wrong with the situation.

“I fully told you guys, like, two weeks ago that I’d be busy today.”

Each of them exchanged a series of glances.

“Like, I don’t know what you want me to say.”

“Anthony, you’re not leaving until we’re done,” Lucas said conclusively.

The trio made it to Pat’s house and began to film. The time passed slowly, each scene dragging on and on as the three pieced together their lines. Daylight turned to dark— outside, the blanket of white that covered the ground piled higher and higher, as the wind howled through each nook and cranny of the house’s exterior. The agonizing process was remedied only by Anthony’s near unconscious state, and the thought of the night of dancing and dubstep he prepared to surrender himself to. Regardless, Anthony had some time to sober up— though he was still in an extreme state of unease. His wristwatch read 5:30pm.

‘*Shit,’* he thought to himself. ‘*Immediate evac is required…’*

“Excellent— now that the garbo parts are done we can finally film the lightsaber battle,” Lucas smiled.

“Young ‘Stein might need a change of pants after seeing this,” jested Pat.

“Yo. Pat,” Lucas interjected.

“Hmm?”

“We should have it so you’re fighting me in a Darth Vader Helmet…”

“…And when I kill you I take it off…”

“And we jump to a cut where we switch places and it turns out I was fighting myself.” Lucas smiled mischievously.

“Change of pants confirmed. Entire class change of pants confirmed.” They high-fived.

“Uhh, how about we not make this too complicated guys,” Anthony interrupted. “Come on, let’s just get this done.”

“I don’t see what your issue with time is Anthony. You’re not leaving,” smirked Lucas. Anthony rolled his eyes.

“Fine… where are we filming this?”

“Oh, well we could do it in that sketchster hallway in the Eglinton Centre,” suggested Pat.

*Is this a dagger which I see before me, the handle toward my hand?*

**‘**The perfect escape,’ thought Anthony. The trio re-entered the frozen wastes, but this time equipped with filming gear, and an armoury of plastic lightsabers. What Anthony hadn’t told his group was what awaited for him at this rave. The fairest of maidens, the very archetype of beauty itself, the embodiment of style, grace and character rolled into one. Golden locks cascaded over her petit facial features— delicate brows, deep blue eyes, and a slender jaw topped off the body of an angel.

‘*Liara…’* he thought, looking at the selfie she had sent him several hours ago. She had painted her skin blue for the occasion, and tied her hair in a pony tail.

‘But can I really go through with sewering the boys?’ These two were his closest friends— they’d seen him through thick and thin throughout the entire year. He’d even go as far to say that he *loved* them— as bros of course.

*Put rancors in the vessel of my peace, only for them; and mine eternal jewel given to the common enemy of man.*

He pondered the question for several seconds, then his phone vibrated.

***One unread message from: Pat Z.***

‘What the fuck Anthony we need you here to do this.’

***‘***Damn, maybe I should head back…’ His phone buzzed again.

***One unread message from: Liara T.*** He opened it.

‘Can’t wait to see you tonight bae ;)’

‘*BANGBANG,’* he smirked, and replied “Its going to be a good time, I promise ;)”

‘*Kay gotta get the hell ‘outta here, h*e thought . He looked over at his friends who were building a makeshift set out of cross-beams and bedsheets. He backed away slowly, silently retreating into the shopping centre. Once he was in the clear, he hurried down several escalators to the train terminals, hastily deposited a handful of pocket change and narrowly slipped through the subway’s doors.

*Fair is foul, and foul is fair …*

His wristwatch read 7:45pm— just enough time to take a ‘couple shots before the night began. He made his way to the venue, getting off at St. Andrew Station and walking towards Adelaide and Bathurst. Before entering he stashed his bag in a nearby bush, but not before downing half a 2-6 of Smirnoff.

“Anthony!” He couldn’t quite make out who’s voice it was— the “Russian water” had already kicked in.

“Bro! Liara’s been talking about you *all day* fam. You gonna hit that?” Anthony lowered his head and raised his brow, wrapping his arms around the mysterious kid.

“I’m about to enter the zone,” he said.

The kid laughed, “Yo, the man is *heat*!”

“The zone. Of which therein lies… DANGER.” And with that he descended into the neon lights of the club. LED lasers pierced through the veil of smoke flowing through the underground club, seemingly dancing at the mercy of the deafening bass that shook the club’s inteerior. Electronic rhythms and beats surged from the stage’s towering stacks of amps, with countless auxillary cords slithering up to a lone DJ’s Pioneer mixer, from where he conducted the sweaty, formless chaos. The ground was sticky with god-knows what and draped with metallic streamers. Rapidly flashing lights made everything seem like stop motion to him as he traversed the crowed looking for Liara— navigating through a heap of tepid, sweaty bodies. She was nowhere to be seen.

‘*Dammit.’* Had be blown his chance with her? Maybe she was in the bathroom, or just buried deeper within the crowd…

It was then, like a ray shining from beyond the clouds, the spotlight revealed her heavenly radiance.

“Anthony!” She cried out, rushing towards him and surprising him with an attack hug. “I was starting to think you weren’t going to show.” she laughed, face nuzzled between his neck and shoulder blade. She backed off of him, looking at him dead in the eyes and brushing a loose strand of her blonde hair behind her ear.

“So…” her voice got breathier and she leaned in, shutting her glittered eyes.

“So.” He reciprocated, leaning in with the same intent. Something wasn’t right. He looked toward the stage, causing her lips to collide with his chin. The DJ emerged through the smoke and light, wearing what appeared to be a Darth Vader mask. He began to twitch.

“It’s a metaphor,” he said, eyes widened and tearing. “It was all a metaphor.”

His legs felt weak, and his stomach moaned. He fell to his knees.

“Hey are you okay, Anthony?” Asked Liara, putting one hand on his shoulder, shaking him gently. His phone vibrated.

***One unread message from: Lucas M.***

‘Be a bigger snake, please— hope you enjoy your rave, it only costed you a 40% on this project.’ He dropped his phone.

“It was always… a metapho—“ but before he could finish his senses were overcome by nausea— causing him to release the contents of his stomach all over the shoes of an unsuspecting crowd. Liara jumped back.

“Dude! Are you fucking’ *kidding* me?!” Vomit splattered onto her boots and knee high tiedye socks. What ever shred of dignity Anthony had left was immediatly reased as he coughed at the ground, and spit out whatever remained in his system on to the already dismal floor.

“I’m leaving before I get fucking sick myself… bye Anthony.” She stopmed away, disappearing into the infinite ocean that was the crowd. Anthony suspected that that was the last he’d hear from her again, but that was the least of his priorites at the moment. With all of his remaining strength, he looked towards the light show that arched over the crowed. Images of his friends creeped into his subconcious. The times that they’d laughed together, the late nights out, the hours and hours of play time they poured into Halo Reach Matchamaking — they were a team. His strength failed him, and he collapsed onto the floor.

*“Nought's had, all's spent, where our desire is got without content; 'Tis safer to be that which we destroy, than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy.”*

*2,447 Words.*