

Thunderclouds **By Elliot Holden**

The Monday clouds came far too soon. By midday on Saturday, they were here. Flying over me. Flying inside me. My cat, Alfred, walked up to me with civil happiness. I thought he was friendly enough, at least for the moment, to pet. I was wrong. He bit my hand like a bolt of lightning from the fuming clouds outside. Then he withdrew to the couch, where he perched on a cushion like a draconian gargoyle.

Monday hit me like a squall; hard, quick, unexpected. I walked home, my head still ringing from the noise and chaos. Though there was still a bleak expanse of grey clouds pressing down on me, I couldn't be too depressed-- at least I was heading home. The sun briefly appeared, it darted through the shadows cast by the last leaves on the trees like a phantom. Alfred ignored me today, except when he attacked my feet as I lay awake that night.

On Tuesday, I walked home lost in thought. I was silently muttering to myself a speech that was part battle cry, part pep talk, and part damage assessment. Even as I was alone, I felt judged by something. Maybe it was the strangely intelligent way Alfred looked at me or the clouds that seemed to be lost in the uncanny valley between creepy and harmlessly odd.

Wednesday was a disconcerting limbo, where the pages of my day, filled with the ink that detailed my thoughts, were flooded with water from the downpour of confusion. The clouds were almost gone by the time I walked home, and I savoured the light. Alfred was happy for most of the day, except he ran annoyedly around as sunset fell, heralding the return of the clouds.

Thursday was over quickly. The clouds threw a foul wind and bitter rain at me as I marched abjectly home. I was so tired. Late at night, I fell asleep, letting my homework papers drip their way slowly to the floor. Alfred roused me with a thundering purr and the tense excitement of the storm in the hills. A bolt of lightning lit up the room, while distant thunder rolled gently around me.

Finally, it was Friday. I ran home from school, and the clouds seemed to part. The rain fell gently, and I could swear that just behind the school, a rainbow formed. But fog began to fall down, twisted by the light wind into huge beastly clumps that seemed to chase me home. I ran through the wet grass in a euphoria that disregarded the clouds.

Alfred was calm and happy for almost all of the weekend. As I stressed, looking out the window at the new storm coming towards me, I felt the thunder pounding in my ears stop as I saw what was falling. Not rain-- snow. Tiny little pawprints of snow. It piled up with intense speed, icing over the road as if it were a cake. Sending tiny lines of ice, like snakes, across my window, and hiding the clouds. Alfred, for the first time this week, climbed onto my lap and fell asleep as the snow seemed to sparkle like a tiny Aurora Borealis lighting up the Sunday night.