The Space Invaders (Short Story Sample)

A storm was on its way, and only one man had the foresight to point it out. By then, of course, it was far too late. The wheels of destiny were in motion; the bolts were sliding into place and the nuclear winter was already beginning to fall, littering the south east in a fine layer of ashen flakes.

Nobody, save for the Prophet, noticed this. It was summer, after all, and everybody that could was fleeing for the beach and the cool embrace of the sea, lapping contently against the golden pebbles that ringed the small, coastal town of Eastbourne. In the distance, the slopes of the south downs rose and fell, like waves of jade, shimmering with pleasure at the sun's scalding touch. It was not the sort of weather that hinted at storm clouds.

"There's gonna be a falling out."

The Prophet announced this, quite unprompted, whilst perched on a small mound of pebbles beside his wife. He was a man in his early sixties, with thick, pink skin and a ponderous, grey chin - chins, I should say, for there were several of them. The Prophet's head was bare and pink. His nose was broad and crooked, veering two inches too far to the left; a remnant of his rugby days. His back was hunched, his shoulders huge and stooped and his long, hairy arms dangled, limply, in the folds of his lap. He was wearing a colourful Hawaiian shirt that his wife had ironically bought for him, six birthdays ago. At first, the Prophet had worn the shirt with equal irony; now he wore it with genuine love. He loved the way it made him look old and young at the same time. He loved the way it firmly hugged his broad belly and loosely dangled beneath his pink, crinkled neck. The shirt was a paradox and the Prophet enjoyed how it turned him into a walking, wrinkled paradox.

Beside the Prophet, nursing a plastic cup of wine, shifting and twitching upon her bright orange folded chair, was the Prophet's wife, Bev. She was a tall woman, almost as tall at the Prophet, though not nearly as pink. Her skin was a mottled brown; she was covered in millions, possibly billions, of freckles. Her hair was short, wavering just below her two, small ears. At the exact moment that the Prophet made his announcement, it was a bright crimson, the colour of overripe strawberries. In the past decade or so, it had gone through almost every colour that could be found on the spectrum. It had been blonde, then black, then blue, then green, then back to blonde before finally

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settling upon its current shade of blood red. Bev's eyes quivered behind a pair of enormous black sunglasses that made her resemble a huge, freckled fruit-fly. She was tapping her long, pink fingernails against her cup of wine. Bev always tapped things when she was nervous.

Hoping that her husband would elaborate, Bev reached into the cool bag and removed a chilled bottle of beer. She twisted off the lid and passed it to the Prophet.

"Who are you talking about, dear?"

The Prophet accepted his beer and took a long sip. Bev watched his grey Adam's apple bob up and down, up and down, as the beer rushed down her husband's throat. A small part of her hoped that he wouldn't elaborate at all, that he would keep on drinking until the sun withered away and the moon leapt up to reclaim its place. Unfortunately for Bev, the Prophet was not that much of a drinker. Indeed, these days, he largely drank out of politeness.

"I'm talking about Golden Boy," muttered the Prophet. "Your nephew. There's going to be a falling out. I can see it
coming. If your sister doesn't let him go, there's going to be a falling out." The Prophet licked his chapped, rubbery lips with a thick, slimy tongue. He rubbed his bloodshot eyes with the back of his knuckles. He released a long, knowing sigh. "He's starting to lose his patience with her. Him and his girlfriend. They're getting fed up."

Synopsis

The Space Invaders is an experimental short story that explores the anxiety facing Generation Z (and beyond) regarding living space. The story weaves together two narratives, one depicting a frustrated adolescent who stays with several friends in an attempt to get away from his older brother. The second narrative focuses on the narrator's cousin, "Golden Boy," who has recently bought a flat with the help of his wealthy parents...but now finds himself completely at their mercy as they constantly invade his living space. *The Space Invaders* explores the impact that the class divide has on the ability of young people to live freely and poses the terrifying question: what happens when you don't even have the space to breathe?

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