**ALL MY LIFE**

*Some writers claim it is extremely hard coming up with an ending to a story, others say it is the beginning that is troubling. I agree with both views. Waking each morning to view a blank page, so many possibilities, so many stories to create with various formulas, skills and unique ways of telling a story. Here I attempt to answer some of the hardest questions encountered when writing. Who will I become? What is the message I am trying to get across? And how do I start this fucking thing? Here goes.*

The year is 2007. It was summer and hot as hell. From what I can remember, I had walked out of my math class with the promise to return. However, I had no intention. Never liked math to be honest: never understood it. That, and I didn’t feel like being in a class where I am considered a freak. ‘Long-haired spastic’, they called me. Why did people see a disability like a disease? Kicking a can along the foot path, I wondered why people hated me so. I never ran my mouth and never fought; I was a standard wall flower. Yet I was labelled and branded a freak of nature before anyone got to know me.

I sat down to have lunch. I peeled the plastic back from my vegemite and cheese sandwich. That time of the day was the only time I could eat without being harassed and bullied by my own peers. Halfway through the odd tasting combination of a sandwich, I heard a high pitched scream for help. The cry was blood curdling. It sounded like a girl. I finished the last of my food, crumpled up the plastic covering and placed it in my pocket. I sat for a while in a daze until another scream rang out: “*FOR GOD SAKE HELP ME!*” I jolted to my feet and headed over to the direction of the noise, not knowing what I would find.

What I found pissed me off. Three grade twelve boys beating a girl from my English class. I had never liked violence. Was and always have been a pacifist. One of the boys had her by the head, pushing it down into the dirt while another kicked her hard in the ribs. The third boy stood hurling horrible words at her.

“Cheating cunt,” he said “You are nothing but a whore. You are mine. Don’t you forget it,” he hissed as the others kept up their assault on the young girl. I stood watching the vicious attack. *Don’t get involved,* a voice in my head urged me. *Just turn around and keep walking,* the voice pleaded. I clenched my hands into fists so hard that my nails pierced the flesh of my palms.

I found them between two buildings. It was a tight squeeze. Still, I know if I were to intervene, the time would have had to be then. The largest of the three boys, whom was kicking the girl, stood back facing me. I slowly started to move in until I was almost on top of them. The screaming continued. The girl was now coughing up blood into the dirt, which was being mixed into her knotted hair. I snuck up on him. Placed my back against the larger boy, wrapped my arm around his neck and flipped him over my shoulder. He landed with a heavy thud on the ground. The shouting stopped almost instantly. The other two boys stood still like a deer in the headlights.

“Who the fuck are you?” the ringleader said, spat into the dirt and glared at me.

“Icarus. And I don’t know what is going on here but I need you to stop,” I replied meeting his glare.

He walked towards me. Fresh anger spread across his face. “You fucking her too, huh?” he said stopping inches in front of me.

“Never met her before in my life. I just heard the screams,” I replied. I stepped back a little uneasy. The voice in my head now screaming, ‘*RUN NOW. AS FAST AS YOU CAN’.*

He spat again. “I know you, freak show. You shouldn’t have stuck your nose into this,” he said, swiping at my face with his fist.

He struck me twice, hard. Blood pooled at the corner of my lip. “What the fuck is your problem freak show. Fight back,” he jeered, launching another strike.

I lowered my head. His blow struck my forehead then twisted awkwardly. I heard the bones and his wrist snap. “Why do I need to fight back against you, friend? Keep throwing insults. You are too weak to do anything else,” I said, smiling as he screamed out in pain. He cradled his broken wrist like a hurt dog. “Let’s get the hell out of here man,” the large boy said. He got to his feet in a daze, pushing his friends away from the girl and me. I dropped to the girl’s side, lifting her head from the dirt to see if she was breathing. I helped her sit up. She was dazed and confused, looking around. White lines parted the dirt and bloody muck on her face. “Where is Brett?” she asked, panic in her voice.

“He’s gone. You are safe now,” I said, placing a hand on her shoulder to comfort her.

“What did you do to him? Did you hurt him?” she asked shaking.

“Did what I had to. I stopped him,” I replied, baffled as to why she was so worried. She glared at me (an odd look, yet, it was all too familiar. Everybody who met did a look of disgust and hatred). She then slapped me hard across the face.

“HOW FUCKING DARE YOU! DON’T TOUCH ME YOU FREAK!” she screamed, “Don’t you ever touch me or him again.” She pushed me to the ground. I landed awkwardly with a thump and sat there confused as she ran off screaming profanity and hurtful words back at me.

I sat quietly for a while trying to understand what had taken place. The heat of the day slowly subsided. I looked up to the sky; it had gotten so dark so quick. I didn’t even realise the storm clouds. The rain was cool on my face and took some of the heat away from the injuries I sustained. *That is just the way people the way people treat me,* I told myself. People fear what they do not understand and I fit in to that category. A *thing* that people didn’t understand. They didn’t even try to. I sat in the rain for what seemed like hours; in reality it must have only been thirty minutes. The bell for lunch. I got up and find shelter from the storm.

I ended up in the school’s library. It’s the only place I knew I could go and rest. Somewhere where I didn’t have any one trying to pick a fight with me. My sanctuary. I found a bean bag and rested. The swelling to my face had only just began. I held a juice box to my face to dull the pain. I laid back in the bag and shut my eyes for a moment.

“You’re bleeding.” I heard a voice say so quietly, almost like a whisper. I opened my eyes to look around. The small cut I received when Brett had made when he broke his wrist on my forehead had started to bleed. “I know. Thank you,” I replied and rubbed the back of my arm over the cut and I shut my eyes again.

I heard footsteps so I sat up right and opened my eyes. “What happened to you?” a young girl asked. She stood a foot away from me, looking at my injuries. I recognised her from one of my classes. An extremely pale girl with hazel eyes; her hair was jet black. She wore black skin-tight jeans with a hole in one of the knees with frayed edges and the maroon school T-shirt. “Life happened to me,” I said, relaxing again in my seat.

“Yeah but, like, what happened? You look like you went ten rounds with a lawnmower,” she laughed. I smiled at that. She seemed skittish at first. She handed me a tissue and I wiped my face clean. “I stuck my nose into someone else’s business I guess,” I said after she sat down. I hadn’t spoken to another person this long before. I enjoyed it but I was cautious as well. I told her the whole story and she listened to me until the bell rang for classes to restart.

“Why do people treat you the way the way they do?” she asked. “I don’t know. Perhaps I’m just different,” I responded. “That’s bullshit,” she said, standing and offering her hand to help me to my feet. “It’s sad but it’s true. Many treat autism spectrum disorder like it’s the plague and I’m punished for it and I don’t know why.” I accepted her hand and got to my feet.

After my class had ended for the day, I emerged from the room. The pale girl was waiting for me, sitting on a seat near the room I was in. “Hey. What are you doing here, stranger?” I asked.

“Waiting for you,” she replied.

“Why? I don’t know you and I don’t even know your name," I replied.

“I know but I’m a good judge of character. I know what it is like to be alone. To be different. My name is Lilith Thomas.” she reached out a hand.

“Lilith Thomas? What an odd name,” I said and smiled. “I’m Icarus Cumenheimer. Pleased to meet you,” I said, shaking her hand.

“Right and you think I have an odd name?” she quipped.

The more I got to know the young woman, the more I got the feeling we were not that different. We sat out the front of the school deep in conversation.

“Even my family members look down on me. My father hated me. I was a mistake to him,” I said, looking over to her. She seemed to hang on my every word.

“I know what that is like. My father was a drunk. He used to beat my mother and cheat on her every other day,” she said, looking down at her feet almost ashamed.

“Did he ever hit you,” I asked.

“Once. Or twice,” she replied.

“I won’t let anyone hurt you or anything happen to you.” I felt the anger burn in my belly once more.

She laughed, “You can’t protect me from everything. Besides, you and I have only just met.”

“True but I haven’t really had a friend before and I think this is how it feels to have one. Someone that just doesn’t despise me for no reason.” I said, grasping her shoulder. A few moments passed and I was enjoying her company. I hear a voice from behind us.

“S’cuse me.” It was a girl’s voice. It sounded rather ashamed. I turned to see the young girl I had helped earlier that day.

“You were that guy, right? That I hit?” she asked.

“Yeah, that’s me.” I dropped my head, waiting for more abuse.

“I just wanted to say I’m sorry for what I did and everything I said. I didn’t mean to. I was just angry,” she said.

“It’s fine,” I said as she walked away. I looked back to Lilith and smiled I knew this would be the start of a long friend ship.

*What a picture perfect ending, right? If I left it here, you’d compare this to some adolescent story of woe with a happy ending. Yes, this chapter ended happy but it’s exactly that; a chapter. The beginning of Lilith and Icarus. And what a difficult beginning it was. But later, Lilith’s story ended leaving Icarus alone again to fend off the wolves. As difficult as their beginning may have been, that is not an ending that I’m strong enough to write about. I guess story endings are more difficult.*