

Synesthesia

By Meep Laurens

Dan hurried down the sidewalk. He kept his head down and tried not to look at anything but his feet racing along the cement.

He rounded the corner and ran into a soft, warm wall. Except, walls weren't soft or warm. Dan looked up into bright blue eyes.

"Sorry!" The person exclaimed and Dan gaped. The other guy had hair like a cloudy night sky and eyes that were the color of the sky just before twilight. His voice was a beautiful shade of pink, a soft color with a tinge of silver bells and dark blue cashmere at the edges.

"I-I-I-you're pink!" Dan exclaimed and turned bright red. "Sorry!" He slapped a hand over his mouth and ran off, leaving the amazing person looking after him in confusion.

You idiot, he thought. *"You're pink" is literally the stupidest thing we could have said. We should have just kept quiet.* Dan shook his head to clear the cobwebs sticking to his thoughts and took a gulp of the coffee he was holding.

He entered the art studio and took his place behind the easel in the back of the room. Other students filed in quickly and took their places. Miss Angelica entered and addressed the class.

"Everyone, I want you to finish up your projects today. Please turn them in by the end of class. If you think you need more time, please come talk to me now. Begin."

Dan grabbed his brush and paints. He clamped his headphones over his ears and turned up the volume of his music. He took a moment to study his canvas.

They had been given three class periods to paint anything they wanted and Dan had so far spent two class periods staring at the blank expanse trying to think of something to paint.

The man he had run into entered his mind. No. He pushed the thought away.

He tried to think of something else but gave up when nothing presented itself in his mind. Dan grabbed the white and red paints and began mixing them, trying to find the right shade of pink.

Almost an hour later, at the end of the period, Dan had completed his painting. The background of light pink was streaked with metallic silver. Deep, dark blue was blended into the edges, creating an almost frame like effect that smoothed into the pink. Hints of sky blue billowed around the silver, and small dots of jet black paint lay in patterns across the canvas.

Miss Angelica swept through the room, inspecting peoples easels. She stopped at each person, writing down a grade on her clipboard. The purple with hints of green and pastel orange woman approached Dan and he nervously held his breath.

"Ah yes. Daniel Howell. The new kid." She said, running her pen down and

tapping his name. "Alright let's see your first work in here," and she stepped around to look at the drying paint.

Her eyes widened as she took in the swooping colors. "This is...wonderful. What was your inspiration?" She scanned the canvas again and marked down an A next to his name.

Dan shrugged. "I just...like the colors." He said, thinking back to the pink man.

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"Mmmm this is good." Dan muttered to himself as he took a bite of the orange spice muffin. It tasted like autumn mornings, with colorful leaves and cool fog, and a hint of rain. He took a drink of hot chocolate to wash down the pastry. The brown liquid, that tasted sweet, like the color fushia, ran down his throat and burned it slightly.

"Hey didn't I run into you this morning?" A silver and pink voice said behind him.

Dan shifted around in his seat to face the blue eyed beauty. He nodded and the other man smiled. "Hi I'm Phil." He held out a hand to shake and Dan stared at it.

Phil looked awkwardly away and put his hand back in his pocket. "Sorry, I can go now." He said as the smile fell from his face.

Dan quickly shook his head. "No, its okay. You can stay." He said quietly. Phil sat down on the other side of the small cafe table.

"Are you shy?" Phil asked bluntly and Dan blinked in shock and then let out a quiet chuckle. "Yea, I guess I am." He muttered just loud enough for Phil to hear.

Phil nodded politely and continued talking. "So what did you mean by 'you're pink' this morning?" He asked and Dan turned bright red.

"It's a little complicated to explain...." Dan began and Phil motioned encouragingly with his hands. "I- uh- I see things differently than other people. Its strange, but its me. If you were to ask me to describe something, I would probably use color and other senses to describe it. Your voice is pink with some sliver, and a bit of dark blue. "

"Fascinating." Phil said, looking wide eyed at the person on front of him. Dan shrugged. "I guess so." He glanced down at his phone and suddenly stood up. "Sorry to leave, but I have something I need to be at. Goodbye."

He grabbed his bag, with his art supplies, and slung it over his shoulder. Dan waved as he left the small cafe and hailed a taxi cab to take him to his friend's house.

In the car ride over to her house, Dan thought for a while. He wondered why Phil had accepted his weirdness. Most people left him once he slipped up and said something wrong. He sighed as he paid the driver and stepped out onto the street.

Louise, his friend, walked down the driveway to him. He smiled as she, with

her red and blue and sparkles of white and green personality, approached him.

"Heya Danny." She said with a grin and he scoffed. "Whatever Red." They laughed and went into the house.

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Dan and Phil had run into each other again and exchanged numbers. Over the next month, they became close friends, texting each other into the late hours of the night.

"Urgh that person has a gross color." Dan shuddered.

Phil turned around to look at the shop. "Who is it?" Dan pointed to a woman standing about 10 feet away from them.

"She has a green color, like pea soup green, and orange like neon and burnt umber mixed together and splatters of brown like a...a...muddy dog." Dan said, gesturing his hands a little. Phil wrinkled his nose.

"She sounds horrible." Dan nodded. "Yea she's making me feel slightly sick."

They moved down the aisle, looking for Oreos. Phil grabbed a package off the shelf. "Found them!" They made their way towards the checkout.

A slight pain began behind Dan's eyebrows. His eyes widened. *Oh shit. I forgot to take them this morning.*

"Hey Phil? Let's hurry back to my place."

Phil looked at him curiously but made no comment as they paid and left the store. They got into Phil's car and Dan leaned his head against the window.

The pain was intensifying and his skin was starting to tingle. He took a deep breath and tried to keep from panicking. *I'll be okay. I'll be okay. I'll be okay.*

They pulled up at Dan's house and he jumped out. "Phil, you can just head into the living room. I'll be there in a moment." He called as he entered the house.

He quickly moved down the hall to his bedroom. Dan opened his dresser drawer and grabbed the small bottle. He twisted the cap off and stared into an empty container.

His hands shook as his vision blurred. A few tears fell down his face as he dropped the pill bottle. "Phil!" He cried out and fell to the floor.

The pain was beginning to feel like stabs of bright yellow in his brain and waves of orange washed over him. "Dan?! Dan what's wrong?!"

Phil knelt beside him. "Call 911." Dan choked out. Phil nodded and dialed the number on his phone. It rang once, twice, and then "911 what is your emergency?" a smooth, female voice answered. Dan grabbed the phone.

"Connie? Hey its Dan. I don't have owww I ran out of medicine. I haven't shit shit shit I haven't taken it since yesterday morning." He rushed out.

"Oh no. We'll see you in 5 minutes. Hold out until then. Okay?" Dan nodded and then remembered she couldn't see him. "Yea-yea I think I can. Thanks Con."

"No problem. Would you like me to stay on the line? We have Tanya working the other line right now so I can." Connie offered.

"Thanks but no. I ahhh I have a friend here. I'll be okay."

"Okay. See you soon. You'll survive, you always have. Bye." The line clicked and went dead. Dan dropped the phone and looked up at Phil, who had been staring at him in concern the whole time.

"Sorry about this. We can finish the Sherlock marathon later." Dan said with a weak chuckle. Phil gave him a look of...of...Dan couldn't quite describe it. It felt purple and blue, with tingles of pink. It was a nice feeling.

A stab of yellow buried deep into his brain and for a second, everything was higher definition. Dan could count each eyelash on Phil's eyes. He could hear the siren a few blocks away. He could feel every thread in the carpet below him. He could smell the sweat on his forehead. And then everything went black.

Dan woke up a few hours later in a hospital bed. Louise and Phil were sitting in chairs near him, talking quietly. "Ah so you've finally met each other." Dan croaked out and they both looked over.

"You have cancer???" Phil exclaimed and Dan winced. "Not so loud, my head still hurts a bit."

"Sorry." Phil whispered. Louise stood up and walked over. "Dan why didn't you pick up more medicine yesterday?" She asked.

"I may or may not have forgotten." He said with a sheepish look. Louise laughed and rolled her eyes. "Of course you did. Well, at least you're alright."

A knock sounded throughout the room. The looked over to see Dr. Parks at the door. "Daniel, Daniel, Daniel, what am I going to do with you?" The doctor sighed in mock dismay.

Dan grinned. "Well for starters, you could get me some more medicine." Dr. Parks let out a small laugh and sighed.

"Unfortunately the medicine isn't working all that well. Its slowing down the process, yes, but the tumors are still growing."

Dan bit his lip and looked down. "Oh," was all he said.

"I'm sorry. We can try a different medicine, but it is doubtful it will work. The one you have been taking is supposed to be the best one but it appears that your body is rejecting it."

Dan sighed and Louise grabbed his hand, trying to comfort him. They had been friends since the beginning, and they both knew what it meant when the medicine failed.

Phil cleared his throat. "What else can be done?" He asked. The doctor shrugged. "We could try chemotherapy-"

"No." Dan cut him off. "I'm not doing that again." He shuddered. "That was horrible."

Dr. Parks sat down in a chair. "Dan, I'm so so very sorry." He looked down at his hands and Dan knew immediately. He and Louise exchanged glances.

"How long?" Louise asked, tears glistening in her eyes. Phil looked between the two on the bed and the doctor. "Wait, is Dan going to...?" He trailed off.

The doctor nodded. "Given the current state of the tumors and how much the medicine is slowing the growth, I'd say about 2 months, 3 if you're lucky."

Dan nodded slowly. He'd known this was coming, from the very first day when he'd been diagnosed with Stage 2 brain cancer. The inevitable, that white and red with dots of purple word, had happened.

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A month later, and Dan was still in the hospital. He lay in the white bed and watched the TV. He looked up to see Phil standing in the doorway.

"Hey." Phil said, smiling at Dan. "How're you doing?"

Dan smiled back. "Today's been a good day. The colors are here."

With the cancer slowly consuming his brain, he'd been losing some abilities. Some days, he could barely talk, others he lost the colors and everything was black and white. Today was better, he had his colors and everything was working properly.

Phil came into the room and sat next to him. "So what are we watching?" He asked with a grin and nudged Dan.

Dan giggled, much to his manly shame. "We're watching Sherlock." He said and nudged him back. They spent the day binge-watching the whole series.

The next week was bad. Dan lost the colors and was having difficulty moving. That Saturday, he woke up and couldn't remember when he and Louise had met. A few days after that, and he couldn't remember what the colors looked like.

Every day Phil visited, even after Dan could no longer remember who he was and couldn't speak.

The one day, it happened. Phil arrived at the hospital and the doctors were surrounding the bed. Dr. Parks walked up to him. "He's fighting. Barely. You should probably say goodbye." and walked away.

Phil approached Dan. He grabbed his hands and the brown eyes fluttered open. Dan smiled up at him.

"Heya Danny. Its okay. I'm here. You can let go." Phil whispered, tears rolling down his cheeks.

Dan opened his mouth to try and speak. A few strangled noises came out and he frowned in frustration. Phil choked on tears as Dan continued to attempt speech.

".....y-y-you're"

A gasp escaped Phil's lips as Dan spoke.

"Y-you're p-p-p-pink" Dan struggled out and then relaxed. "P-pink." He said with a smile and his eyes began to dull.

Phil let out a sob as the sound of a flatline rang throughout the room. He couldn't bring himself to think the word. That single word that had taken Dan from this earth.

He felt hands on his shoulder and looked up to see Louise crying above him. Phil stood up and the two clung to each other for god knows how long, numb to the emptiness that would come soon, in the absence of their best friend.