

# The Richard Compton Creative Writing Competition 2015

## A Day In The Life Of Fear - Zoe Huppert

Time isn't real.

I bet you didn't know that.

Time is a fabricated concept, built to be manipulated. Built to aid those not of the waking world in their daily misdeeds.

Creatures of Illusion; that is the name given to these tricksters.

To the world they are known as something different: Fear, Anger, Jealousy, Invisibility. Perceived as emotions, these creatures are given free reign over the world of the living, feeding from the reactions they get.

Time is their device of choice. The stretching and squashing of seconds into minutes create necessary distractions and allow them to work in singular heads and singular imaginary moments.

There are many realms in which they don't bother with a unit of measurement for the universes continuous happening. One such realm is the home of these creatures.

It was a dark place - no, not just dark, it was opaque. An opaque place, filled with an utter emptiness that radiated a harsh silence. There were many residents dwelling in the realm, though none knew one another. None ever saw each other through the haze, and no one spoke - after all, is it really possible to speak where there is no air?

The strange void-like place buzzed with its silence, so loudly that it could almost be considered electric. Fear didn't move from where he had been standing for an amount of time that he didn't know. There was only one reason he would move, and that would come soon, but not yet. Now was to allow the universe to stretch itself out a little more, before the exact location of a temporal shift could be activated.

With a rush of energy, Fear reached in front of him, watching with the eyes of a hawk as they disappeared before him, reaching into something that resembled fabric. His sharp claws tensed, wiggling independently to his scaled fingers, and tore viciously at the material of the universe, scraping a breath of the oxygen that soared in through the gap.

He had torn a gap in the universe.

Fear allowed his three eyes to adjust to the light streaming in, then began to observe the scene that befell him. It was a busy New York street - his favourite - with the hustle and bustle of morning commuters dancing their way through holes in the crowd like flies avoiding being squashed.

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The light was just rising above the skyscrapers in a yellow and orange haze, painting the reflective windows like Van Gogh artwork. Fear finally shifted his feet, lazily stretching them out until his gnarled and sharp toes touched the cold, rough sidewalk.

People wandered along the street, wrapped up in their own world, unaware of the portal that hung, dark and heavy in the air, and they swarmed through it, passing completely through Fear with no lingering effects other than the pressing thought of 'oh no, I'm going to be late for work'.

Fear pulled his entire hunched body through the rest of the portal and landed amongst the throng of folk, searching, choosing and sniffing out a victim.

It didn't take him long. The stench was too strong to ignore. It was what had lead him to there at that exact moment. The unrest of the young boy in the crowd. The fear.

Andrew Woller, 17 years of age. A socially anxious teenage boy.

Perfect.

Fear moved, his feet echoing the deafening silence of the void when they touched the ground, though he was the only one to hear it. The crowd parted for him, streaming around him, darting this way and that, but never truly crossing his path.

It wasn't long before he reached the boy standing alone on the corner of the street, pressed into the wall, desperate to blend in with the glass. The signs were all clearly there, he was bundled in a tight coat, despite the morning only being a measure of temperature that Fear didn't understand - what he did recognise, however, was that no one else wore a coat. His ears were stuffed with Apple headphones, his iPhone held with a white knuckled grip.

People passed him by without noticing that he stood there; for the time being he was effectively invisible, just the way he chose it to be for fear of rejection or ridicule.

But not for long.

Fear began his work, subtly at first, pulling seconds together, intertwining them into minutes that stretched onwards and onwards into what would have felt like hours but remained the smaller measurement. He spun his web of moments into a paradox, cautiously weaving two separate realities into one another until they were barricaded into a reality consisting of the rest of the world, and a reality containing Andy and only Andy.

The threads of Fear began to wind themselves around, dancing off of each and every person in his puppet show just for the boy. Gold and black and red strung itself from limbs, holding up arms and faces, clinging to jaws and knocking them up and down, and up and down like ventriloquist dummies.

The scene was set. The characters all in place.

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Time began to move. Slowly at first, then more quickly as seconds unravelled from the great ball of yarn-like time that Fear had woven.

Andy hunched against the wall, his cold, numb hands feeling for the pause button on his iPhone, trying to stop the music so that he could prepare himself for the bus to High School. He had awoken that morning feeling anxious; the usual butterflies battling in his stomach for a way out of his throat.

"Come down for breakfast," His mother had told him, putting her arm around his shoulder. He hadn't had the heart to tell her that her touch wasn't comforting, that instead it felt like the guiding hand to the guillotine. She had placed a bowl of cereal in front of him, but his stomach had refused it, forcing his mouth to reject the vile taste of dry, bland nutrition.

He had told his mother he had eaten it. She had told him that he was good, and that he mustn't be late for school. He agreed.

Standing on the corner of the road, he watched the people going past - they looked so busy. Far too busy to notice Andy. Or so he hoped.

Fear smiled. It was a grotesque thing that I shan't describe, to save your poor thoughts the difficulty of comprehending the way his features moved.

He gently began to manipulate his puppets.

A businessman out of the corner of Andy's eye leered at him. Andy flinched, just a little. Telling himself calmly that it wasn't directed at him.

A woman to the left began to laugh. Andy looked at her sharply. She was gazing straight back at him.

Andy's hands began to quiver, his iPhone tapping against the metal buckle of his school bag as they did so.

"It's so warm out here." muttered a shopper to her friend, casting a glance at Andy, her eyebrow raised.

Fear yanked on a golden thread that he held in greasy fingers and time slowed infinitely, allowing the words to rocket through the air towards Andy as though he were hearing them whispered in his ear a thousand times over. "*Why is he wearing a coat? What an idiot!*" Whispered Andy's own thoughts, reading between the lines of the comment fearfully.

His breathing shallowed, lungs tightening, constricting his throat painfully.

Very, very slowly, the crowd began to laugh. Their jaws moved in unison, eyes all flicking towards Andy at the same moment. The high pitch of the teenage girls laughs pierced Andy's mind the most, echoing through his ear drums in a painful reminder of the way he was treated at school. The freak, the odd one out; the scared-y cat.

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Tears began to form behind his eyes. His breathing was slow and painful and almost non-existent. His hands and whole body was practically vibrating with terror as the people around him laughed and took careful steps towards him. They moved with a puppeteer's grace, not lurching, simply gliding. Closer.

And closer.

And closer.

Until they stopped. Andy curled in on himself, frightened and pained. Crying and unable to breathe.

Fear let the threads fall softly from his fingers, feeling the unreal concept of time slip away once more, until the paradox unravelled itself, flowing into one continuous time stream again.

The boy lay on the floor in the foetal position, fear radiating from him in tangible waves.

Fear fed. The emotion soaked into his scaly flesh, engorging his body with a blissful feeling of power. He smiled again, his belly becoming bloated with the feeling of a successful scare.

The true forms of the people passed Andy, paying him no attention whatsoever, none the wiser that they were the instrument of the boy's distress.

Feeling full, he trudged his way back into the void, falling into its emotionless embrace and allowing it to feed from the energy he collected. He stood motionless, allowing the universe to pass him by for however long it would take before the hunger set in once more.