

Those games of basketball had been good for Itachi. They had pleased Sasuke as well, allowing him to get a rare glimpse of the big brother he so loved and admired. Even on the ride home he was already reliving the moments on the court with his friends in the backseat. "Did you see how high Itachi jumped? His head was over the rim when he packed that tall dude." He and his friends didn't talk much about his play. They focused on Itachi, marveling at how amazing he was. The honest excitement Itachi felt coming from them tickled his senses. Their delight and admiration so sincere that he physically experienced a warm tingling sensation. In his eyes Sasuke's body glowed orange in the color that always illuminated happiness. Moments like these were good. This time the car was a safe space. Wearing his sunglasses he talked freely with the boys. If these moments were the only ones he would ever have to experience then life might be bearable. Hope was in a day like this. Things were difficult but perhaps not insurmountable. This episode wasn't the most severe and he eventually got over it. Driving home in the ambient pink and orange glow of a late spring evening life was possibly doable for him and subsequently his little brother who sat there unaware of the pain that lie in his future. Itachi laughed and talked with the boys. All the while behind his RayBans, blood red eyes darted back and forth like REM sleep catching every detail of the drive home. They hurt, but this, he could manage.

That night sleep came easy to Itachi and Sasuke was safe. The next night the same and so too the next. And hope returned for him. The synesthesia was still present and his perception remained heightened as always but not to the point that it was especially problematic. He stayed away from any strenuous activities and he continued to wear the glasses, convincing his teachers at school that they were prescription. He stayed mostly in his room at home so he was able to avoid those conversations with his parents for the most part. They chalked up his, at times odd behavior, to his age and the part of his condition of which they were aware. For the most part

didn't interfere in his daily business. Honestly, what would they see? Itachi was a talented student who without exception brought home fantastic grades. His father didn't particularly care for them to be involved in sports in the first place so he would have no incentive to dig into why he had quit playing. He just assumed that his son had gotten that out of his system. He didn't need sports for scholarships either. With his grades, test scores, virtuoso talent in art and music; he could choose any vehicle he liked to fund his prospective university studies.

Mikoto and Fugaku Uchiha, the boy's parents, knew partially of Itachi's condition. They took him to the doctor once for what they assumed was a panic attack when they found him panting on the floor after drawing a beautiful photo-realistic picture of the family dog, a sable coated german shepherd, at around age thirteen. When looked over by doctors in the ER for the incident, no real diagnosis could be determined. The doctors said he was fine and called it a panic attack. Numerous recurring incidents, a laundry list of tests and Itachi describing his symptoms to specialist after specialist and a year later he was diagnosed with an extremely rare condition referred to as synesthesia. The condition is characterized as a neurological phenomenon in which the stimulation of one sensory or cognitive pathway leads to an automatic and completely involuntary experience in a second sensory or cognitive pathway. From Itachi described to his doctors, he was diagnosed with extreme synesthetic perception. Where other synesthetes had a sensory pathway connections he experienced multiple connections with every pathway. It was such that different sounds had corresponding colors, feelings and bodily sensations all simultaneously. Different sensations of touch projected images in his sight and echoed precise sounds. And his perception was acute. His empathetic senses were strong and included in this condition. When people were angry he could see red. When they were happy he saw orange. And as the intensity of an emotion grew a humming sound like electricity running

through the wires of a thin wall sounded in his ears. And when feelings reached a certain point he would cringe at physical sensations that took hold in his body. Once when two boys at school were about to get in a fight, he suddenly felt the urge to vomit. Their anger was so strong that he felt as though he had suddenly been kicked in the stomach with an iron boot. His condition was concerning and at some point doctors decided that he should be medicated. As little is known about the way synesthesia works, he was given medication commonly prescribed for ADHD in the hopes that it would help him better focus these senses. The drugs had a positive effect in terms of decreasing the number of attacks he had but left him dull and lethargic. He also lost considerable amounts of weight as most of the drugs also suppressed hunger. Additionally they wrecked his sleeping patterns which left him with permanent creases under his eyes. His parents watched on as the energetic, soft-hearted genius they had raised turned into a shell of himself. It tortured them to see him "Doped Up" as they often lamented. Eventually they could lose no more of their son and so decided to take him off of the medication. A decision that he was happy about for about two years. Off of the medicine and using art, music, studying, sports and a yoga class to control his symptoms he felt that he had finally mastered his condition. He found that by expending intense concentration on certain things that he would deplete and dull the energy required for more major synesthetic episodes. And this worked well for all of two years. But in time the symptoms returned far worse and on a greater scale. And on a dark night just a year back, he received what he thought of as the most inconsiderate curse. He gained two eyes, in front of which nothing was hidden. He could see everything perceptible. Two red eyes like Pandorian boxes that pulled off coverings from reality and that he would kill to put back on.