

# SPECTRUM

A person is captured in mid-air, jumping on a sandy beach at sunset. Their arms are outstretched horizontally, and their body is silhouetted against the bright, glowing sun. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a long, shimmering reflection on the wet sand and the ocean's surface. The sky is a mix of blue, yellow, and orange, with a few scattered clouds. The overall mood is one of joy and freedom.

by F. Raushawn

## SPECTRUM *Short Story* by F. Raushawn

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*Debut story by our first TEEN Writer, F. Raushawn.*

Hello. My name is Damon Fitzpatrick, and I'm a spectrum. In case you don't know what that is, to sum it up, it's a super human given powers by sunlight. See, I wasn't always like this. About year ago, my life was perfectly normal. I had tons of friends, a sexy girlfriend, and a great family. I guess maybe I should tell you what happened, but brace yourself... it ain't pretty.

It all started my sophomore year in high school. I remember it was Wednesday. My brother Tony and I caught the bus to school. I was wearing my American Eagle shirt and a pair of shorts. Although it was winter time, it had been strangely hot for the past couple of months - so hot some days that we couldn't even go to school.

Anyway, when we were getting on the bus, I noticed my brother wasn't feeling too well. So, when we got to school, I took him to the nurse.

While she was checking him out, the bell rang, and the nurse told me to go to class. "You go on now," the chubby, smiling nurse said. "It looks like your brother will have to stay here until your parents pick him up. I'll take good care of him 'til then."

I was a little protective of my brother. After all, he was sick, and he was only a freshman. "Can't I just hang out here with him?"

"That won't be necessary. You better get to class."

"I don't know when they'll be able to get him. It's hard to reach them at their jobs."

She gave me a stern look, and I shrugged.

Seeing that she wasn't going to let me have my way, I went on to Mrs. Livel's math class. It wasn't long before I got bored. I started talking to Nancy, this hot senior. "Hey, girl," I said. "What's up?"

"Hi, Damon," she said with a wink.

"I, uh—" All the sudden, her face grew blurry, and I had to brace myself on my desk to stop the room from spinning. I figured I must've caught whatever my brother had.

"You okay?" she asked.

"I don't know," my voice cracked. The bell rang, so I rushed out of class and headed to the nurse's office when suddenly a giant flash blinded me, the entire school, the whole world. After about ten minutes of blinding light and the burning, there was only pain - so intense I can still remember it. The flashes began to fade, and my eyes started to focus in the darkness. I almost wished they hadn't because the first thing I saw was that everybody around me was dead.

At this point, I was in complete shock, and I couldn't believe what had just happened. The smell of burning flesh was... man, it was sick. My stomach bubbled and gurgled like I was going to throw up, and then it dawned on me - that my brother may be dead as well.

I stumbled, and tears rolled down my cheeks as I choked back vomit. "Tony!" I called him. For some reason, my eyes couldn't adjust to the light. The colors had changed. What used to be bright, wonderful colors were now dark, vicious flashes. When I stumbled to the nurse's office, hoping to find my brother, I got the sense something was off, like someone was following me, *hunting* me.

At this point, I was sure I must've been going crazy or in serious danger, so I started to run. Before I could get a single stride in, I was attacked by someone - or more like something. The breathing, the harsh sound of something hungry and crazed burned in my mind. He looked human, sort of, but didn't act or even have the slight sense of being human. This thing jumped on top of me, and drool dripped on my cheek as it snarled. He looked at me like I was his morning snack. *A weapon! Where the heck is a weapon when you need one?* I looked around frantically while I pushed the creature back by the neck. There was nothing, not a stupid thing in sight that I could use to get him off of me.

The dead bodies all over the stank floor didn't help much either. I struggled to get him off me, but the thing took a huge chunk out of my arm. "Ooooh!" I screamed.

It hurt, but I got a surge of strength to kick the creature off of me and ran for my life. How the heck it ran so fast, I don't know. From nowhere, it jumped back on top of me from behind and knocked me forward onto the floor so hard that I literally bounced. This time, I got angry. Something happened then - something I can't explain. A fiery anger exploded from me, and I used all my

strength to throw him off of me. And trust me, I had a lot. My body was on fire, or at least it felt like it.

Finally, I was able to get back up. At the time, I didn't realize I hadn't just pushed him off of me, but I had completely torched the thing. His body was on fire as he sat there rolling and screaming.

"Uhhhh, oooh, grrrr!" it wailed as it tried to crawl toward me on the floor. What was left of my clothing was burnt as well. *What the hell just happened?* Then the realization of what I was hit me, and a slight grin ran across my face. *I've always wanted superpowers, and now I have them!*

The feeling of euphoria ended, and my slight enjoyment went away as the fear that my brother and family may still be dead. I began to pick up speed and ran to the nurse's office, praying my brother was like me, praying he had somehow survived.

This time, more open to my surroundings, I was relieved I made it there without running into trouble. When I finally got there, I could already see the door was locked. I hoped that meant nobody had attacked him and he'd gotten away. Slowly, I made my way to the door. As soon as I got my hand on the door, *smack!* I saw light between my eyes and shook my head to recover as I fell back on the floor.

Tony had hit me straight in the face with the door. "Damon? Where you been? I'm so glad it's you!"

I recovered and stood up. "It's me. You okay, lil' bro?" If it were any other day, I probably would've punched him in the arm, but right then, I was just happy to see him alive and well.

"Hurry! Get in here. It's safe." Tony pulled me by the arm.

"I don't know what happened, but—"

"I do. The news said they were videotaping the sun and some weird rays were flickering off and on it. They said the sun was poisoned by a meteor that hit it. After that, everything went bright."

"How did we... why did we survive?" I mumbled to myself.

"I don't know." He slumped down against the door.

I locked it and then took a chair to brace against it. Things were starting to make a little more sense, but I still wondered why the rays didn't kill everyone, why they left us alive. I guess I will never know. It was still unclear how my

brother and I had survived the deadly attack, and why there were things – or people – trying to eat us.

“We gotta jack a car and check on Mom and Dad.”

Tony looked up at me. “You think they’re still alive?”

“If we are, there’s a good chance they are too,” I assured him.

“Um, you got blood on your arm.”

I looked down and realized the bite mark had completely closed over, but dried blood remained. “Something bit me.”

Tony looked at me, concern and fear on his face. I felt the same way his face looked. I didn’t know what to do.

*One year later.....*

“All humans ever do is eat, sleep, and die. That’s their role in life, but it is finally clear to me that my role is different. I have a true purpose – to extinguish the world of scum and bring the balance back,” Tony said with conviction.

“Really? You don’t look much like an angel to me, at least not while we were running those things down to get home.” I turned away from him, lost in my thoughts. Of course it didn’t really make much sense at the time, but now, I truly saw what he was rambling about.

It’s been a whole year since the incident, and I’ve found out a lot about what happened that day, as well the extent of my powers. My brother’s powers complement mine, but there are those out here there that can outsmart us if we’re not on top of our game. Yes, there are others like us too – a whole group of spectrums just like us, only with different powers, are roaming around, looking for others to join forces with them.

Tony, for instance, can slow down time, making all of his movements crisp and precise. I, on the other hand, have a diverse power from anybody in my group. I can change powers based on the colors I see. Red is fire, blue is ice, yellow is super speed, green is super strength, and my last power is silver. I’m not quite sure what that one does yet, but I hope to use it eventually.

“Hey, you wanna get some feeders tonight?” Tony asked.

I smiled at the thought. Feeders are the ones who like to eat off living flesh. The flash caused them to go insane, somehow twisting their brains.

“Cool. I’ll call the others. You sure you ready for this? I could go in your place.”

“No way. I’ve done this before. Besides, you are good backup. Just drop me off up ahead, and I’ll get us some supplies. The gang will be here soon to back us up.”

“I don’t know. I got a bad feeling about this, bro, but I’ve got your back.”

I watched him sneak into the abandoned train station, dialed backup, and sat. Too much time had passed since the others called me back, but finally a call came through from my best friend Enox.

“Damon, there was an ambush. We couldn’t save them all. Only two of us can make it to you. The others are going to save Mike and Stacey.”

A few minutes later, Enox and Leann pulled up next to me. “What’s up?”

“He’s been in there too long. His telecom is off. He texted me about ten minutes ago and said he hit a hive but was dealing with it.” Although this was a dangerous mission, I was pretty sure Enox, Leann, and I can handle it. Enox is made of pure energy and is as big as a truck. Leann shoots deadly crystals from her hands and can make some massive force fields.

“Let’s go.” I grabbed a mini- bomb from the back seat of my car and led the others down into the deserted subway station.

We made it in without a hitch, and the moment we hit darkness, the bastards came at us. They’d grown huge over the several months, and the more they ate, the bigger they’d become. There were hundreds of them. *Where the heck are you, Tony?*

“Kill them all!” I yelled.

“Ain’t nothin’ but a word!” Enox called out and started blowing the crazed feeders up like popcorn.

Yellow light formed in front of me as I headed down the path of dead feeders Enox made for me. When I saw yellow, my super speed kicked in, and I whizzed through the salivating drones to search out my brother. “Tony? Tony!”

He was trapped, surrounded by over fifty of them. He was fighting, but there were just too many of them for him to kill.

Enox came out behind me, while Leann cleaned up the remaining feeders that blocked our exit.

"Enox, make a hole through them, and when you do, be prepared that all hell is going to break loose."

"Got it! Just say when," he said.

"Leann, I need you to make a barrier around me so I can get to Tony."

"On it, but they're coming fast - from everywhere."

"NOW!" I called out.

Enox started firing them down, the smell of burning rotten flesh filling the room.

Tony yelled out, "Get off me!"

He'd been bitten. I grabbed the neck of the feeder that took the chunk out of Tony's arm and saw red. Fire came out of me and burned the feeder to ashes.

"Crap! Where the hell are they coming from?" I yelled as more seemed to come at us. Leann's force field was weakened.

"The hive's... too big," Tony forced out, weakened from the loss of blood.

"Full power, everyone! Get to the sun and don't look back!"

Leann made her way to us. "I'm giving it all I got!" She put her force field around us.

"Enox, blow the joint! We're safe!" I called out to him.

Enox smiled. "Damn, I love my job! Brace yourselves! Here I go!"

I grabbed Leann's arm and threw Tony over my shoulder and willed yellow to show. *Yes!* Super speed was on, and I ran us out of there just as Enox incinerated the place.

We cleared the hive and made it to the car. I kept running as I watched for Enox to come out, and then the entire place collapsed.

"Oh God! He's not gonna make it!" Leann cried.

Tony rested his head on the window, and I held back a sob... and we waited.

Hours passed as we sat there and waited for him. Grudgingly, I pulled off.

In the end, Tony, Leann, and I made it out safe. Although Enox didn't make it, we knew we had made our first step to turning the world back to its normal state. Enox didn't die for nothing, and as spectrums, it is our job to clean up the mess the world had become.