

First Place, Prose
Grades 10-12

“The Story,” Isaac Lubin

The boy sat in his room staring at his computer waiting for thoughts to inspire him. His mind was blank as he sat in the darkness. The only light coming from a small reading lamp on the corner of his desk. Its dim luminescence flooded the keys of his computer, and if he got really close and unfocused his eyes a bit, he could see his reflection in these black squares. The boy imagined what it would be like to escape. From his chair, his room, and his mind.

The boy's sight gently blurred as the light around him began to fade. His mind was beautifully empty as he imagined himself on an airplane late at night. He could smell the artificial air of the plane and the navy blue leather seats. He looked to his right and peered through the thick plastic window. The clouds, illuminated by the moonlight, were a silver-like color. They gently parted revealing the skyline of a city he'd never seen. He stared at the starlike windows in the buildings as he passed them. He tried to wonder what stories these windows guarded behind them. Thoughts of men in suits holding briefcases awaiting elevators and then taxis playfully danced across his mind.

The boy's vision of the building quickly evaporated with his curiosity to further explore the airplane itself. He turned his head to his left, and his gaze was met by a young man in a suit. He politely made his way past him into the aisle, stepping over a briefcase as he did. He glanced down at his own feet and was surprised to see that he was barefoot. The boy didn't think much of it because, after all, this was only his imagination, and things didn't have to make sense here. The carpet was a solid blue only a shade or two darker than the seats and he enjoyed the velvety feeling on his naked feet. He began walking towards the front of the plane, excited to see the view from the cockpit.

The boy paid close attention to the other passengers as he went. A woman with scarlet lipstick and a red hat kindly met his stare. Her eyes were partially covered by the shadow of the brim of her hat, revealing only a sliver of dark green. He nervously picked up his pace and continued on his path to the back of the plane. Suddenly he was disoriented and struggled to remember his path. *Was I headed*

towards the front or the back, the boy wondered, as he decided to go walk towards the back of the plane?

At the end of the aisle there was a curtain the same color as the woman's eyes. The boy did not look at any other passengers this time. He felt drawn towards the mysterious curtain, wondering what other surprising scenes lay in the back of his mind. Hesitantly, he stuck his hands out and ran his fingertips down the curtain, admiring its wonderful shade of green. As he brushed it once more, the overhead lights of the plane began to flicker, and he figured now was a good of a time as any to pass through.

The first thing he noticed was the sensation of rain cascading down from dark grey clouds and landing cheerfully on his arms and his hair. His eyes adjusted to the darker atmosphere. He looked down at his feet and was glad to know they were still bare. The dark cobblestone street that lay below him was smooth and damp, like the rain had just started.

His eyes lingered upwards and noticed dim streetlamps lining the edges of the avenue along with dark awnings of shops and restaurants. The refreshing smell of rain had brought back many happy memories of his. The sound of the raindrops landing sharply on the ground was comforting as always. He stayed in this peaceful scene for quite some time before noticing he was standing in the middle of the avenue in the rain. A man and a woman were sitting on a small wooden bench together, smiling as they shared a cup of tea. The steam from the tea drifted upwards to the awning before fading into the rain.

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A man glances down at his watch and is delighted to see it display his favorite time. He places both his hands above his head and stretches like he always does after a long day. He takes his briefcase as he makes his way through the depressing and faded cubicles towards an elevator. He cracks his knuckles as he presses the button and a refreshing grin spreads across the man's tired face. He steps into the elevator, admiring its marble floors and polished golden handle.

Continuing to crack his knuckles, the man anxiously views the dial displaying the decreasing floors. The doors are a silver-like color illuminated by the overhead lights of the elevator. They gently part, revealing a marble floor, its veins

spreading throughout the lobby of the building. Grabbing his briefcase off the floor, he heads towards the glass revolving door. Eagerly grasping the golden handles, he pushes through. He makes his way onto the street and patiently waits for a taxi. The last event in his day before he gets to see her.

Every night a man meets a woman for a cup of tea. It was what helped the man through his endless days of work. Every night they would meet at a small wooden bench, and every night the smile that would spread across her face was enough for the man to sit through however many hours of work he had that day. The woman was what made his days worth living, and the man was what made hers. A glimmer of yellow coming towards him sparks joy in the man, as he quickly raises his hand, signaling the taxi driver.

As he steps inside the cab, it begins to rain. He lets out a sigh and slouches into the black leather seat of the car. Rain gathers on his window in a mesmerizing pattern that hypnotizes the man. His relaxed state is only broken for a moment as he sees the distant lights of a plane passing over him seem to flicker. As the man looks upward, he wonders what stories lie behind those windows, as the cab halts to a stop on a cobblestone street.

He steps out and frantically looks around, and then he sees her beautiful green eyes somehow shimmering within the darkness of the rain. She waits underneath the red awning, its color matching the hat she wears. They greet each other with a warm embrace. A nice contrast to this chilling rain, the man thought, as he smiled.

They grab their tea from the shop and make their way back into the rain, finding their spot on the small wooden bench. They each have one hand on the cup keeping their hands warm. The woman's eye wanders to a young boy standing in the street. She looks back at the man and nudges him slightly so his eye also lands there. The man playfully nudges her back and leaves the bench walking cheerfully towards the boy. The man had just finished work and wasn't eager to go back into the rain, but he felt drawn to the boy.

“What are you doing?” asked the man as he approaches.

The boy, startled, responds with, “I am writing a story.”

The light fades back into the boy's room as his vision returns clearly. He slowly lifts his head and stares at the screen. His eyes dart back and forth as he begins to read a story about a man, a woman, and a boy's imagination.

Isaac Lubin is in 10th grade at Eden Prairie High School. He likes to play piano and hang out with his friends.