

ANDREA'S WORLD

Written by

Christopher "Michaels" Andre

The Prequel to "ANDREA BATTLES GIANT INSECTS"

Christopherandre25@gmail.com
(847) 707-3073

FADE IN:

EXT. APARTMENT - DAY

TITLE: BOULDER, COLORADO.

ANDREA REFUGUE (16) stands tense at the curb, her breath hitching as she studies the old apartment building.

The foothill air is dry, wildfire haze thinning the sunlight, yet a tremor crawls along her neck. Something under her skin pulses.

Beside her JACK REFUGUE (12) swallows, eyes glowing with fear as he watches the building sag.

A gust of Chinook wind barrels down the street, rattling loose gutters and hammering the warped street signs. The light twists. A massive shadow rolls across the facade, swallowing the apartment windows one by one. Something moves above—slow, deliberate. Broad, damp wings unfolding with the sticky sound of wet paper.

A cluster of giant moths drifts into view, each the size of a compact car. Their wings shimmer with leftover snowmelt and dust. They press against the building's glass, abdomens pulsing as they feed on the heat bleeding from inside, their proboscises unfurling like black threads.

Andrea's stomach tightens.

ANDREA
(whispers)
It's so dark, and yet the sun is
shining.

The snowfall slants downward—thin, dry flakes.

JACK
(shivers)
It's the mi-middle of July.

Heat surges in Andrea's throat. Foam threads from her mouth—metallic, mineral, alive with microscopic flickers of motion. She smears it across Jack's forearm. The instant it touches his skin, warmth floods through him. His shaking stops.

Lightning bugs—larger than they should be, each glowing like a small Christmas bulb—rise from the cracked pavement. They form a wavering path toward the apartment entrance, their bioluminescence trembling as though sensing her. Andrea's antennae slip through her hair, faint and instinctive.

ANDREA

Why do we have to start fresh—and
what kind of start is this?

Andrea and Jack groan in unison, though Andrea's sound fractures into a dry, clicking rattle—more beetle than girl.

The Colorado sun hangs sharp through the wildfire haze, bleaching the foothills behind them.

DOCTOR PHILIP EVILTON (35) tailored suit immaculate, handsome in that manufactured, plastic way steps across the front walkway.

PHILIP

Do you remember, Andrea, why you're starting over?

CARSON REFUGE (70, tall and knotted from years of tension) moves up behind Philip and tugs at his shirt as though the fabric itself won't settle.

CARSON

Thanks for checking in, but we're fine.

NANCY REFUGE (69 long-haired, her face lined with the kind of restless sleep) approaches with a severe stillness.

NANCY

Are we?

(She points at Andrea)

We're here to make sure she can function.

Something brittle flickers behind her eyes. She leans toward Carson.

NANCY (CONT'D)

(whispering)

You better be certain she doesn't screw up again. Otherwise Philip can have her.

Jack inches closer to Andrea, chin lifted.

JACK

I got your back, 'Drea.

(louder, to the adults)

She's functional. It's fine.

Philip chuckles. He sets a hand on Jack's shoulder, fingers resting too lightly, like he's measuring something.

PHILIP

It's always tough to adjust to new environments. But with the exercises we did -

Carson jumps in eagerly.

CARSON

Exactly.

He flashes a tight smile at Nancy.

CARSON (CONT'D)

This will be the fresh start we need.

A gust sweeps down from the foothills, rattling dry brush along the walkway. Nancy shivers.

NANCY

Look, after what she did, I'm sure the town wouldn't stick us in a complete shit hole. Isn't that right, your royal highness?

She sneers at Andrea, whose jaw clicks once more—quiet, involuntary.

Andrea steps closer to the apartment and shivers hard, her skin flushing red before blanching toward a cold, bluish pallor.

She scans the lot. Praying mantises—towering, tree-tall—pivot their triangular heads in perfect, synchronous angles. Some groom their limbs with slow, scraping strokes; others pause to study the family with unblinking compound eyes that refract light into trembling shards.

ANDREA

Does that apartment have heat?

PHILIP

At sixteen, they can do so much.

NANCY

Jack was twelve. So much potential.

PHILIP

I can see a little of Andrea in Jack.

Andrea turns to Jack. For a moment his face hollows—cheeks sinking, eyes going matte like a dead insect's—before reality folds and he snaps back into place.

JACK

(sad)

Why are we starting fresh? This is dumb. Let's go back home.

Jack steps toward Nancy, shoulders hunched in a childish pout, but she doesn't acknowledge him—not a glance, not a breath.

Andrea's head tilts. Something inside her clicks once, soft but sharp. She stares, stunned.

Jack runs up to Carson and latches onto his hand, trying to pull him toward the car. His grip trembles, heat rising off the asphalt like thin mirages.

JACK (CONT'D)

Come on, Papa. Let's go. Let's get out of here.

CARSON

Oh no. People died to get us here. We're staying.

FLASH TO

EXT. GRAVEYARD - FLASHBACK - DAY

Long shadows stretch across cracked headstones, the Colorado foothill wind moaning through skeletal trees. Andrea staggers forward—strong, but trembling—cradling a lifeless body. Beetles clatter across the stone, their shells clicking a slow dirge.

FLASH TO

EXT. APARTMENT - PRESENT - DAY

Outside the apartment, the wildfire haze turns the sun copper. Carson faces Philip, his outline wavering like a heat distortion.

CARSON

We left Colorado Springs because of everything. We can start over in Boulder.

Jack stands unraveled. Andrea shivers, something under her skin twitches.

ANDREA

We're too far from home. What is
this place?

Carson just stares, hollow-faced, like a man already halfway
buried.

NANCY

You're lucky I agreed to leave the
Springs.

Carson takes Nancy's hand and tries to dance with her. Their
steps falter; for a moment, they bend wrong, as if gravity
forgets them.

CARSON

This gives us so much hope, doesn't
it? As long as we have each other.

Nancy's anger bubbles through her teeth, sharp and insect
like.

NANCY

Maybe you can spend some of that
time reversing these insects you
dragged into this world.

ANDREA

(whimper)

Ninety miles from home... too far to
feel real.

Jack yanks Carson toward the car, dust rising from the
cracked Colorado pavement like something breathing beneath
it.

CARSON

(snaps)

Stop!

His voice fractures the wildfire haze. He meets Philip's
gaze—shame flickering behind both men's eyes.

ANDREA

Stop, Jack.

Andrea reaches for him, my fingers trembling with a faint,
insectile rhythm.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

We'll give this a small chance.
Then... we can always go back later.

Jack refuses to release Carson's hand. Moth wings blossom from his spine—thin, trembling sheets of dust-soft gold—then warp, glitch, and fold back into him like bad memory.

JACK
I already gave this place a chance.
It smells wrong.

The wings fade entirely.

CARSON
(irritated)
Just go inside. I'm sure it looks nice.

Philip's mandibles push faintly against his cover-smile; he hides them with a hand, pretending it's a cough.

PHILIP
Yes. We should head inside.

Jack stomps hard, the ground echoing too loudly—as if the soil beneath is hollow.

JACK
I'm staying outside.

Andrea rolls her eyes, though my skin twitches, shifting color.

NANCY
Don't you want your own room?

JACK
(mutters)
No.

Andrea and Jack share a glance. The moths swarming the building shift in one trembling wave, wings scraping like paper caught in dry foothill wind. The structure groans, long and low, as though something inside it is trying to breathe through the walls.

Andrea's throat tightens.

PHILIP
(to Carson)
So... how long were you in the Springs before Andrea, ah-hem the incident?

Carson hesitates. The sunlight flickers.

CARSON

Twenty-one years. Almost all of
Nancy's and my married life. Jack,
Andrea, and Heather too.

Philip cackles, a sound that rises and splits, like a hornet
nest cracking open.

PHILIP

Moving is tough, Andrea. But trust
me—this town is a good place to
start over. Make friends. Be...
normal.

Andrea flinches at the word. Her skin pulses once beneath her
shirt, a faint trembling ripple. Carson, Nancy, and Andrea
follow Philip toward the house. Jack doesn't move—his shadow
refuses to shift with the others, lagging behind by a second.

JACK

Do you kill those kids you study,
Mr. Philip?

Philip squints, then smiles, teeth catching the smoke-light
in a way that feels wrong.

PHILIP

Rumors can be cruel. None of that
is true.

Nancy clears her throat, brittle.

NANCY

Give it a chance. For my sanity.

JACK

(smiles)

I'm just trying to get answers.

Jack stays rooted in place, the moths around him folding
their wings at the same time he refuses to move.

Carson scratches his head, flakes of foothill dust drifting
from his sleeve.

CARSON

We had to pack everything up so
fast. I hope we grabbed everything
important.

ANDREA

We'll make a killing once the house
sells.

(MORE)

ANDREA (CONT'D)

(to Jack)

Give it a shot?

HEATHER REFUGE (22) drifts toward the house, her long skirt whispering across the linoleum, still damp from snowmelt that smells faintly of wildfire ash. Her retro curls are pinned too tight.

HEATHER

You're all acting like I didn't exist.

The family nods—too quickly, like insects responding to a shared signal.

ANDREA

(nervous)

I promise we didn't forget.

HEATHER

Hello, cramped apartment. I'm sure I'll meet the love of my life here.

Heather laughs. Nancy only frowns, eyes narrowing.

JACK

Come play with me instead. Forget going inside.

CARSON

It would be nice if you could—

HEATHER

You better watch it with your booger brain.

PHILIP

Let them play. It's always good to have some imagination.

Heather chases Jack across the cracked Boulder foothill pavement, wildfire haze drifting around them like low ghosts. She stops abruptly and turns toward Philip.

HEATHER

I'm curious—what happened to my papa's stepchild?

NANCY

Inappropriate. Stop.

CARSON

(to Philip)

Honestly, I cheated. Had a kid.

(MORE)

CARSON (CONT'D)

But you can ignore that question—we
shouldn't be so rude.

Philip watches Heather with a stare sharp enough to peel bark. The dry Colorado wind whistles through the gutter behind him.

PHILIP

It's alright. There are many
questions about Inception Heights
Rehabilitation. Everything we do is
within the law.

Heather pulls a notepad from her jacket. Jack snatches it and sprints. She tears after him. For a breath, Andrea sees Heather dissolve into a column of mosquitoes—wings humming like power lines—before snapping back to her normal shape.

JACK

You're not done playing with me!
You can have it when you're done!

Heather catches him and rips the notepad away. Andrea's skin prickles, something fluttering beneath it like folded wings.

HEATHER

Alright. I'm going to take a walk
around here.

PHILIP

Okay. We should head inside. Let me
show you the place.

Philip opens the front door. Andrea steps in, foothill dust swirling at her ankles.

JACK

I want to see what Heather's doing.

Carson is going to protest—

CARSON

Fine. Stay outside. Little shit,
I'm so happy you're—

JACK

I really want to stay with Heather.

INT. APARTMENT - LOBBY - DAY

The lobby's paint peels in curled strips like shed insect skin.

Cockroaches the size of small TV screens drift slowly across the wall, their shells catching the dry Colorado light leaking through dusty windows. Nancy watches Jack; Carson watches Jack; Andrea shivers as the air thins around her, wildfire-haze sharp. Philip smiles, pupils briefly fracturing like a moth's.

Nancy rests a hand on Carson's back.

NANCY
He'll be fine.

INT. APARTMENT - STAIRWELL - DAY

The lobby opens into an outdoor stairway. Andrea looks at Nancy—her neck bends at an angle that shouldn't exist, joints clicking like tiny mandibles. Andrea blinks. Nancy is normal again, breath frosting in the foothill chill.

NANCY
(apologetic, to Philip)
I'm really sorry about Heather. She
should know her place.

PHILIP
Not a problem. A minor annoyance.
At the top of the stairs is your
place.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Inside, a lamp flickers. Shadows warp across the wall, stretching like insect wings and refusing to return to their original shapes. Pipes overhead exhale, then grind upward in a strained, rising whine, as though something is migrating through them.

Andrea looks around. This is a small space.

INT. APARTMENT - FIVE MINUTES LATER - DAY

PHILIP
That's all there is to know about
this place. You all should be
fine—as long as you take your
medicine, Andrea.

ANDREA
(excitedly)
Is that my bedroom to myself? Where
will Heather and Jack sleep?

EXT. APARTMENT STAIRWELL - DAY

Andrea rushes up to Philip. The wind around the stairwell whistles like something alive, brushing her skin in tiny antenna-like strokes.

ANDREA
Is this place haunted?

PHILIP
(laughs)
Take the medicine, Andrea. Then
you'll remember. We can do this.

EXT. APARTMENT - DAY

Andrea stands outside with Carson, Nancy, and Philip. Foothill wind cuts through her jacket, carrying the dry, metallic scent of wildfire haze. Something skitters at the edge of her vision.

ANDREA
I—I thought I saw something.

NANCY
Probably just a shadow. With all
the death we've dealt with lately.

Andrea rolls her eyes as enormous translucent pincers drift through the sunlight like passing clouds.

EXT. APARTMENT - BACK - DAY

The back of the building sags, its paint curling like shed insect skin. Bugs fall from the sky like ash, tapping softly against the parched Colorado dirt.

Philip appears behind her without sound.

PHILIP
Don't you remember, Andrea? None of
this is real. Remember what you did
to your family.

Time stalls. Even the falling insects freeze midair. Andrea tilts her head, the movement sharp, involuntary. The ground reddens, cracks open like a molting seam—inviting her downward.

END SHORT