



# Compulsion

Encanto (2021) · Not Rated · 3589 words

*by Arukir*

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*Bruno remembers when he and his sisters got their Gifts. The day 'normal' went out the window for them forever.*

*The day he had his first vision.*

His hermanas, his darling hermanas, liked to insist it was perfectly normal. He just believed a bit more strongly in superstition than most, that was all, according to them.

God, he loved them.

But he knew it wasn't normal. He knew that superstitions were only supposed to go so far. They were supposed to be a conscious, purposeful decision.

Not a... *Compulsion*.

He knew because he remembered how it was before he had them. Not well, but he remembered. And he remembered when they started.

The day the first Gifts were bestowed was a good one. The bad stuff mostly came later. There was a little bad in it, however. He remembered that clear as day.

He remembered his Mama being entirely distracted with the task of calming Pepa, who had already been grumpy because she'd managed to skip her nap and whose mood had not been helped by the little storm forming above her head. Julieta had wandered off to the kitchen while Mama was distracted, wanting to find out what the food on her special door meant.

Bruno wanted to follow Julieta.

Bruno wanted to help Mama.

Bruno wanted to cheer up Pepa.

Bruno did not get what he wanted.

Instead, fear had washed over him. He *had* to open his new door, or else something bad would happen. He wasn't sure what, but he had to all the same.

He glanced at his Mama, a whimper caught in his throat. He didn't know where the new fear came from and he wanted her to make it go away. But Pepa was crying so badly, and she didn't know how to get her cloud to go away, and she needed their Mama more than he did right then.

Because he knew exactly how to make his fear go away.

Casita pushed him, gently, towards his door. He breathed a little easier at that. Casita made the door, was telling him to go towards it, so it couldn't be too dangerous. Casita was like Mama, always protecting him, comforting him. *Safe*.

So he pushed open the door, taking a deep breath as he stepped inside. He was greeted by sand, running down like a waterfall, blocking his way.

He could feel the sand. He wasn't touching it, but he could feel it. Was that normal?

Was anything about a magic door in a magic house normal?

Stop, please, Bruno thought, and the sand complied, clearing his way. Another bolt of fear shot through him, and he hurried forward. There was still more to do.

His room had been slightly different, back then. The floor was even with the entrance, with a nice clear space for his bed and a desk and other stuff that typically belonged in a room. No stairs or temple yet, but the desert was already there.

He stared at it in wonder. He'd always loved playing in sand, and now he'd get to play in it whenever he wanted to!

"Look, Ratito." He whispered, pulling the pinkie out of his pocket and holding him up to see. "This is ours, now."

Ratito sniffed the air and squeaked, which Bruno took as a sign of approval. He was glad. He'd rather sleep somewhere like the kitchen floor than in a room his little friend didn't like.

Bruno slipped out of his shoes, padding along the dunes to the large, circular stone in the center. It would rise and grow into his vision cave someday, but for now it rested right in the middle of his desert.

He stood in the center of the stone, looking around, holding Ratito close to his chest instead of sticking him back in his pocket. *What next?* Bruno thought, not sure if he was asking himself or something else. Was that it? Was the fear just to get him into his room?

But, no, it returned a moment later. He had something new to do, or else something *very bad* would happen.

He didn't know what.

He just knew he had to move the sand.

Setting Ratito carefully down on the stone, letting the rat shuffle around and explore, Bruno cupped his hands and scooped up some sand. He put it on the stone. He repeated this action a few times, until he had a pile, which he shaped just so.

*This is going to take a while.* Bruno lamented, making the next pile. It wasn't that difficult, but it was a lot of work for a five year old. Ratito did his best to help, pushing his furry body against the piles of sand, trying to shape it. The rat was doing more harm than good, with Bruno having to fix the piles over and over again, but the help was appreciated nonetheless.

Bruno didn't know what he would do without his favorite furry little friend.

After the piles came the circle. Bruno used his hands to carefully spill the sand just right around the stone, making many trips and often stopping to fix something that wasn't exactly right. *This needed to be exactly right.*

For a second, just one, Bruno nearly messed up the circle on purpose. It wasn't out of some spiteful desire, however, nor really a conscious choice. He had simply thought, for a moment, that something had been sitting in the way and he'd have to go around it.

But there was nothing there, and the feeling faded, and he went back to work.

Bruno dusted off his hands, looking around carefully, eyes squinted as he inspected his work. He nodded, satisfied that it was *just right*. The fear wasn't gone, though, still telling him where to go and what to do next or else.

He turned to Ratito, pointing sternly at the rat. "Don't mess up my sand." He told him firmly. Ratito blinked at him, sitting up, and Bruno sighed. He didn't want to upset his friend, but he needed him to understand how important this was. "Behave, Ratito."

With that, Bruno carefully stepped off the stone, sliding down a dune. He laughed as the sands shifted like waves under his feet, gently helping him to his destination. He didn't know how, but he *knew* this wasn't Casita. Casita wasn't in here. Which was silly, since the room was *part* of Casita, but...

No, this was something else. Something special. Something *his*.

He found a drawer hidden in the stone walls of his room (his room was pretty much a big cave full of sand, and he loved it). Inside was a bag was a lot of funny smelling stuff. After a second, he recognized the smell.

It was the same incense Mama used.

Next to the bag was a box of matches.

Bruno froze, hesitating. The fear pulsed through him, over and over again, growing more insistent each time. But he still didn't grab the matches.

Bruno had helped his Mama light the incense before. He loved helping her do it. The fire was so pretty, and he felt so grown up, and the smell was wonderful even if it did make him sneeze sometimes.

But Mama had told him so many times that he wasn't allowed to use matches without her. It was the *rules*. It was dangerous, she told him, something grownups needed to be there for. He could burn himself, or Casita, or someone else.

Bruno did not want to break his Mama's rules. He did not want to risk burning himself, or Casita, or Ratito. He was a good boy, Mama was always telling him so.

But he just *knew* that something very bad would happen if he didn't use the matches. And what if that something didn't just happen to Bruno, what if it happened to the rest of his family as well? Bruno did not want something bad to happen to his family. He loved his family.

So he grabbed the matches.

The fear lessened a little as he made his way back to the stone, the dunes shifting beneath him once more. It was just as fun as the first time, but he didn't really feel like laughing. He was too nervous.

"Ratito!" He whined when he saw that the rat had been digging in one of the piles, spreading sand *everywhere*. Ratito looked up at him with wide eyes, and Bruno felt the anger drain from him. He couldn't stay mad at his furry friends, especially not his favorite one. "It's okay, Ratito, I forgive you and I still love you. Just don't do it again." He repeated the words his Mamí said when he made a mistake, setting his bag and box down carefully so he could fix the sand.

"This is going to be dangerous." Bruno warned Ratito, after he'd placed the incense just so, putting some on every pile and the rest in its own pile in the center. He picked the rat up, putting him in his pocket. "Stay here so I can protect you, okay?"

Carefully, Bruno pulled out a match, lighting it just like his mama showed him. The fire was as pretty as always, mesmerizing him with its flames. He giggled, feeling a strange sort of glee at doing this *all by himself*, even with how scared he was. He lit the center pile first, then went to light one of the others—

NOPE! He nearly dropped the match at the wave of fear that crashed over him, but he managed to hold onto it, shaking the burnt stick to put it out like Mama always did. Okay, he couldn't do that, but he *had* to light the other piles...

Biting his lip, he pulled a long piece of incense out of the middle pile by a part that wasn't burning. The fire was a bit too close to his hand, and he winced from the heat, but he continued to light the incense in each pile slowly and carefully.

He'd have to be more prepared next time, he decided. Make sure he had a nice long stick or something that was only partially—

Wait, next time?

Oh. Bruno blinked, pausing just long enough to almost get burned. With a yelp, he threw the stick back in the center pile.

Next time.

There was going to be a next time, and a time after that, and one after that. He knew it like he knew his name, and his sisters' smiles, and his mother's hair color.

Bruno did not know how he was supposed to feel about that. He was entirely sure, however, that joy was not it. Too bad his stupid brain didn't particularly care what he thought, because joy was exactly what he felt. For all the fear, there was something finally whole inside of him. Something warm, and bright, and singing out in utter glee. Whatever he was doing, he knew it was what he was meant for.

His purpose.

He kneeled in the sand, breathing deep, and checked on Ratito one more time. *Let's do this*, he thought, looking deeper into that warm place.

He still felt the warmth, but he knew the air around him was getting colder. The fires were getting brighter, but the room was getting darker. The smoke and the sand began to swirl together, wind whipping around him.

Bruno knew he should be afraid.

He wasn't.

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Pepa was finally calmed down, her raincloud replaced by a snowcloud. Luckily, she'd managed to focus and make it disappear before she started a blizzard.

Now Alma just had to find Julieta and Bruno. She was fairly certain Julieta had run off to try to figure out her own powers (dios mio, her ninos had powers), but she had a hard time believing Bruno would do the same. Her good boy, he would never run off without telling her.

"Brunito?" She called, looking around. Before she could get too worried, she heard her son's voice.

Her son's voice, *cackling like a madman*.

Pepa clung to her, eyes wide and cloud beginning to reform. "Mama? Was that *mí hermano*?"

"I—" Another cackle interrupted Alma's reply. Green light was visible behind Bruno's new door, flickering and shifting like a living thing. "Come on, *mija*."

Picking Pepa up, Alma carefully opened the door. She gasped as she stepped through the entrance.

Her son was standing in the middle of a desert, smoke and sand swirling around him, his face showing a look of pure joy. His hands were spread out to the sides, palms open, eyes darting between blurry images Alma could just barely make out in the sands. There were *hundreds* of them, the source of the green light.

Alma was too stunned to speak.

Pepa had no such problem. "Bruno?"

Bruno blinked, eyes (*glowing green, why were they glowing green?!*) moving to look at them. "Pepa?" He asked, squinting. His face lit up even more than before. "Pepa! Look what I can do, hermana!"

It was then that he saw who was carrying his sister. "Mama!"

"Bruno! Are you alright, mijo?" Alma yelled. He looked alright, but this was... She didn't know what this was.

"It feels so funny, Mama!" Bruno laughed, cackled, giggled. He squirmed and hopped around, looking at the images in the whirlwind. "Mama, I can see *everything!* Oh..."

"What's wrong, Brunito?" Alma asked, more worried than before as his smile dropped.

"I can see Juli." Bruno answered, sounding distracted, focusing on something she couldn't see. "She's lifting something. No, wait... Eating? Cooking! Mama, Julieta's cooking without you!"

Bruno was pointing at the smoke, looking at her as if he expected her to do something about this. Before Alma could decide what to say, the whirlwind collapsed, making her scream and run towards him.

But the dust was already settling, and her son was perfectly fine, sitting there and holding something above his head. She didn't know what it was, and she didn't take the time to see, kneeling and scooping him into her arms.

"Mamí, careful, you're gonna squish Ratito!" Bruno complained, twisting so he could be held without risking his friend. He gasped when he saw the tears on Alma's face. "I'm sorry, Mama, I didn't mean to make you cry..." Now he was tearing up, which was making Pepa tear up. "I'm sorry I used my power and lit the incense without telling

you, Mama, but I had to! Something bad would've happened otherwise. Please don't be upset, Mama, I won't do it again. I promise!"

"Oh, mijo, it's alright." Alma whispered, hugging both the children tightly. "Nothing bad is going to happen, Bruno. This is a Gift from Casita, after all."

And Alma had to remember that. Casita had done so much for them. She had to believe that whatever had just happened was something good. She had to.

"What's that?" Pepa asked, trying to grab something from Bruno. Alma saw it was a glass tablet, shining the same mystical green as her son's eyes now were.

Bruno held it close to his body, looking unsure.

Wiping her tears, Alma smiled at him. "Do you want to show Mama what you made with your power, mijo?"

Shyly, Bruno held out the tablet, letting her see it. She had to shift it around a bit before she could make out the image.

It was all three of her bebés, their faces covered in crumbs, laughing together.

"No fair!" Pepa complained. "I get rained on and Bruno gets to make pretty pictures?"

"It's not just a pretty picture." Bruno told her. "It's... It's..." He paused, looking to his Mama for help, but she didn't know what to say. "I saw it, Pepa. I saw... A lot. I saw seconds, and, and felt years, and..." He continued rambling, his words tumbling over each other, face scrunching up as he got more and more upset with his lack of ability to explain.

"You're not making any sense, mijo." Alma said gently, brow creased in worry.

Bruno frowned. Then he shook his head, eyes glowing again for just a brief moment. He smiled softly. "It's okay, Mama. You're never going to understand it. That's alright."

Alma wasn't sure what to do with the quiet confidence in her son's voice, the way his eyes shone, this time with a little too much *knowledge* rather than the light from before.

Pepa was tearing up again. She'd always been an emotional child. "Bruno, you're scaring me."

"Lo siento, hermana." Bruno muttered, frowning at her. He pressed his head into Alma's shoulder.

Pepa's eyes went wide when she realized her words had upset him. "It's okay, hermano. I'm not *that* scared. And it's a really pretty picture. I... I'm sure Juli will like it."

Julieta. Right. Alma had nearly forgotten, distracted as she was with Bruno. "Pepa's right, Julieta loves pretty things like this. Let's go find her and show her, alright?"

Alma hauled herself to her feet, lifting both children with her. She winced as her hand scraped against the stone, cutting her slightly. It wasn't a bad wound, barely counted as a wound at all really, but the sight of blood immediately sent her children into panicked fits.

By the time Alma made it to the kitchen, she was drenched in rain, but at least she'd calmed them down again

"You look funny, Mama." Julieta giggled, standing in the middle of the messy kitchen, flour covering her face and hair.

"So do you, hermana." Pepa laughed, pointing, Bruno quietly chuckling with her.

Alma sighed. She knew she needed to scold her children for... So *many* reasons, at this point, but she barely cared. They were all safe, and she was tired, and she still hadn't seen whatever nonsense Casita had provided for her girls' rooms.

...her son was going to sleep in a *cave filled with sand*.

She made a mistake somewhere, she was sure, she just didn't know what it was.

Five minutes later, the entire family was cleaned up and eating Julieta's cupcakes. 'Cupcakes' being what she called them anyways. She hadn't used the oven (something Alma had praised her for, causing Bruno to cry over lighting the incense by himself. She still wasn't entirely sure how to deal with his claim that he *had* to), and couldn't reach half the ingredients, yet somehow they'd still ended up fairly cupcake-shaped and solid.

And they didn't taste too bad, Alma decided. Then again, she didn't think she could hate the taste of *anything* that healed her scrape the moment she nibbled it.

Alma laughed to herself. One of her daughters could heal people with a half-made cupcake. The other was filling the kitchen with sunshine that came from nowhere and everywhere at once. And her son...

The sound of laughter drew her attention. Her children were standing next to each other, their faces covered in crumbs, laughing over their new rooms and powers.

Alma blinked. Why did this look so familiar..? Then she realized; the tablet. They looked *exactly* like the tablet.

Food. Storms. Prophecy.

Dios mio, *Casita*, you have got to be kidding me. Alma sighed, rubbing the bridge of her nose. She loved her children, so much, but they were already a handful *without* superpowers.

Her children kept laughing. Alma looked up. They were dancing in the snow of Pepa's newest cloud, holding hands and twisting in a circle, looking so *happy*. *Casita's* floorboards shifted and flipped under them, bouncing them around, making sure they didn't slip and fall.

Alma smiled. Whatever came of these Gifts, good or bad, they would deal with it. So long as she had her family, she could handle anything.

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The compulsions started the day after. They started simple, getting worse as Bruno got older, but they were manageable for the most part. They only got really bad when he was nervous.

When he reached his teens, they started getting bad around the townspeople, leading to worse mockery than before.

But Bruno didn't care. Not really. He wasn't ashamed of his compulsions.

He could literally *see the future*. If *anyone* should listen to their brain telling them to do random, nonsensical stuff or else, it was him. He'd learned that with his first vision.

So he knocked on wood. Held his breath and crossed his fingers. Threw salt.

He broke a mirror on purpose once. It was to prevent a fire, though no-one believed him.

No one ever believed him at that point.

Bruno was not normal, no matter what his familia tried to tell him. None of them were, actually. *Nothing about them was remotely normal.*

So, no, he wasn't normal. He was a Madrigal.

And he was a *prophet*.

And, if he was being very, very honest with himself...

He was proud of being *both*.

— end of "Compulsion" —