



Orange

FICTION BY
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CONFIDENTIAL POLICE FILE

(Third Subject's Responses
to Investigator's Written
Questionnaire)

1. Jemma Glorfindel Petula Ramsey.
2. 17 on June the 9th.
3. The last five years. Before that we lived in Leesburg (Florida). Before that, Kalamazoo (Michigan).
4. I don't know. I think he's in magazine publishing now. He doesn't talk to us anymore. The divorce was pretty bad and Mom wound up paying him a lot of money. Which seems sort of wrong to me. But maybe it was worth it just to get free of him.
5. An inventor and entrepreneur. She invented the Stuffed Muffin™, and started the Stuffed Muffin chain. I used to like them when I was a kid, but you can get kind of sick of stuffed muffins for every meal, especially because Mom used us as guinea pigs. The Complete Turkey Dinner Christmas Stuffed Muffin was the worst. But she sold out her interest in the Stuffed Muffin chain five years ago, to start work on My Mom's Colored Bubbles (not actually™ yet).
6. Two. My sister Liliias, who was just 15, and my brother Marshall, 12.
7. Several times a day.
8. No.
9. Through the Internet. Probably on eBay.
10. She's been buying colors and dyes from all over the world ever since she decided that the world was crying out for brightly

colored Day-Glo bubbles. The kind you blow, with the bubble mixture.

- 11.** It's not really a laboratory. I mean, she calls it that, but really it's just the garage. Only she took some of the Stuffed Muffins™ money and converted it, so it has sinks and bathtubs and Bunsen burners and things, and tile on the walls and the floor to make it easier to clean.
- 12.** I don't know. Liliias used to be pretty normal. When she turned 13 she started reading these magazines and putting pictures of these strange bimbo women up on her wall like Britney Spears and so on. Sorry if anyone reading this is a Britney fan ;) but I just don't get it. The whole orange thing didn't start until last year.
- 13.** Artificial tanning creams. You couldn't go near her for hours after

she put it on. And she'd never give it time to dry after she smeared it on her skin, so it would come off on her sheets and on the fridge door and in the shower leaving smears of orange everywhere. Her friends would wear it too, but they never put it on like she did. I mean, she'd slather on the cream, with no attempt to look even human-colored. She thought she looked great.

14. Tangerine Girl. Go-Mango. The Oompa Loompa. Orangina.

15. Not very well. But she didn't care. I mean, this is a girl who said that she couldn't see the point of science or math because she was going to be a pole dancer as soon as she left school. I said, nobody's going to pay to see you in the altogether, and she said how do you know? She's a sort of squarish shape, for a start.

- 16.** German measles, mumps, and I think Marshall had chicken pox when he was staying in Orlando with the Grandparents.
- 17.** In a small pot. It looked a bit like a jam jar, I suppose.
- 18.** I don't think so. Nothing that looked like a warning label anyway. But there was a return address. It came from abroad, and the return address was in some kind of foreign lettering.
- 19.** You have to understand that Mom had been buying colors and dyes from all over the world for five years. The thing with the Day-Glo bubbles is not that someone can blow glowing colored bubbles, it's that they don't pop and leave splashes of dye all over everything. Mom says that would be a lawsuit waiting to happen. So, no.
- 20.** There was some kind of shouting match between Liliias and Mom to begin with, because Mom had come back from the shops and not bought anything from Liliias's shopping list except the shampoo. Mom said she couldn't find the tanning cream at the supermarket but I think she just forgot. So Liliias stormed off and slammed the door and went into her bedroom and played something that was probably Britney Spears really loudly. I was out the back, feeding the three cats, the chinchilla, and a guinea pig named Roland who looks like a hairy cushion, and I missed it all.
- 21.** On the kitchen table.
- 22.** When I found the empty jam jar in the garden the next morning. It was beneath Liliias's window. It didn't take Sherlock Holmes to figure it out.
- 23.** Honestly, I couldn't be bothered. I figured it would just be more yelling, you know? And Mom would work it out soon enough.
- 24.** Yes, it was stupid. But it wasn't uniquely stupid, if you see what I mean. Which is to say, it was par-for-the-course-for-Liliias stupid.



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25. That she was glowing.
26. A sort of pulsating orange.
27. When she started telling us that she was going to be worshipped like a god, as she was in the dawn times.
28. Marshall said she was floating about an inch above the ground. But I didn't actually see this. I thought he was just playing along with her newfound weirdness.
29. She didn't answer to "Lilias" anymore. She described herself as either My Immanence or The Vehicle. ("It is time to feed the Vehicle.")
30. Dark chocolate. Which was weird because in the old days I was the only one in the house who even sort-of liked it. But Marshall had to go out and buy her bars and bars of it.
31. No. Mom and I just thought it was more Lilias. Just a bit more imaginatively weirdo Lilias than usual.
32. That night, when it started to get dark. You could see the orange pulsing under the door. Like a glow-worm or something. Or a light show. The weirdest thing was that I could still see it with my eyes closed.
33. The next morning. All of us.
34. It was pretty obvious by this point. She didn't really even look like Lilias any longer. She looked sort of smudged. Like an after-image. I thought about it, and it's... Okay. Suppose you were staring at something really bright, that was a blue color. Then you closed your eyes, and you'd see this glowing yellowy-orange after-image in your eyes? That was what she looked like.
35. They didn't work either.
36. She let Marshall leave to get her more chocolate. Mom and I weren't allowed to leave the house anymore.
37. Mostly I just sat in the back garden and read a book. There wasn't very much else I really could do. I started wearing dark glasses, so did Mom, because the orange light hurt our eyes. Other than that, nothing.
38. Only when we tried to leave or call anybody. There was food in the house, though. And Stuffed Muffins™ in the freezer.
39. "If you'd just stopped her wearing that stupid tanning cream a year ago we wouldn't be in this mess!" But it was unfair. I apologized afterward.
40. When Marshall came back with the dark chocolate bars. He said he'd gone up to a traffic cop and told him that his sister had turned into a giant orange glow and was controlling our minds. He said the man was extremely rude to him.
41. I don't have a boyfriend. I did, but we broke up after he went to a Rolling Stones concert with the evil bottle-blond former friend whose name I do not mention. Also, I mean, the Rolling Stones? These little old goat-men hopping around the stage pretending to be all rock and roll? Please. So, no.
42. I'd like to be a vet. But then I think about having to put animals down, and I don't know. I want to travel a bit before I make any decisions.
43. The garden hose. We turned it on full, while she was eating her chocolate bars, and distracted, and we sprayed it at her.
44. Just orange steam, really. Mom said that she had solvents and things in the garage, if we could get in there, but by now Her Immanence was hissing mad (literally), and she sort of fixed us to the floor. I can't explain it. I mean, I wasn't stuck, but I couldn't leave or move my legs. I was just where she left me.
45. About two feet above the carpet. She'd sink down a bit to go through the door, so she didn't bump her head. And after the hose incident she didn't go back to her room, just stayed in the main room and floated about frumpily, the color of a luminous carrot.
46. Complete world domination.
47. I wrote it down on a piece of paper and gave it to Marshall.
48. He had to carry it back. I don't think Her Immanence really understood money.
49. I don't know. It was Mom's idea more than mine. I think she hoped that the solvent might remove the orange. And at that point, it couldn't hurt. Nothing could have made things worse.
50. It didn't even upset her, like the hose-water did. I'm pretty sure she liked it. I think I saw her dipping her chocolate bars into it, before she ate them, although I had to sort of squint up my eyes to see anything where she was. It was all a sort of great orange glow.
51. That we were all going to die. Mom told Marshall that if the Great Ompa Loompa let him out to buy chocolate again, he just shouldn't bother coming back. And I was getting really upset about the animals—I hadn't fed the chinchilla or Roland the guinea pig for two days, because I couldn't go into the back garden. I couldn't go anywhere. Except the

bathroom, and then I had to ask.

52. I suppose because they thought the house was on fire. All the orange light. I mean, it was a natural mistake.

53. We were glad she hadn't done that to us. Mom said it proved that Liliias was still in there somewhere, because if she had the power to turn us into goo, like she did the firefighters, she would have

done so. I said that maybe she just wasn't powerful enough to turn us into goo at the beginning and now she couldn't be bothered.

54. You couldn't even see a person in there anymore. It was a bright orange pulsating light. Sometimes it talked straight into your head.

55. When the spaceship landed.

56. I don't know. I mean, it was bigger than the whole block, but it

didn't crush anything. It sort of materialized around us, so that our whole house was inside it. And the whole street was inside it too.

57. What else could it have been?

58. A sort of pale blue. They didn't pulse, either. They twinkled.

59. More than six, less than 20. It's not easy to tell if this is the same intelligent blue light you were just speaking to five minutes ago.

60. Three things. First of all, a promise that Liliias wouldn't be hurt or harmed. Second, that if they were ever able to return her to the way she was, they'd let us know, and bring her back. Thirdly, a recipe for fluorescent bubble mixture. (I can only assume they were reading Mom's mind, because she didn't say anything. It's possible that Her Immanence told them, though. She definitely had access to some of the Vehicle's memories.) Also, they gave Marshall a thing like a glass skateboard.

61. A sort of a liquid sound. Then everything became transparent. I was crying, and so was Mom. And Marshall said "Cool beans," and I started to giggle while crying, and then it was just our house again.

62. We went out in the back garden and looked up. There was something blinking blue and orange, very high, getting smaller and smaller, and we watched it until it was out of sight.

63. Because I didn't want to.

64. I fed the remaining animals. Roland was in a state. The cats just seemed happy that someone was feeding them again. I don't know how the chinchilla got out.

65. Sometimes. I mean, you have to bear in mind that she was the single most irritating person on the planet, even before the whole Her Immanence thing. But yes, I guess so. If I'm honest.

66. Sitting outside at night, staring up at the sky, wondering what she's doing now.

67. He wants his glass skateboard back. He says that it's his, and the government has no right to keep it. (You are the government, aren't you?) Mom seems happy to share the patent for the Colored Bubble recipe with the government, though. The man said that it might be the basis of a whole new branch of molecular something or other. Nobody gave me anything, so I don't have to worry.

68. Once, in the back garden, looking up at the night sky. I think it was only an orangeyish star, actually. It could have been Mars, I know they call it the red planet. Although once in a while I think that maybe she's back to herself again, and dancing, up there, wherever she is, and all the aliens love her pole dancing because they just don't know any better, and they think it's a whole new art form, and they don't even mind that she's sort of square.

69. I don't know. Sitting in the back garden talking to the cats, maybe. Or blowing silly-colored bubbles.

70. Until the day I die.

I attest that this is a true statement of events.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Neil Gaiman's story "Orange," printed here in a version slightly modified from the original, was first published in The Starry Rift by Jonathan Strahan (Viking 2008), and also appears in the just-released My Mother She Killed Me, My Father He Ate Me: Forty New Fairy Tales, published by Penguin Press. Gaiman has written acclaimed books for both adults and younger readers. His novel The Graveyard Book was the only book to win both the Newbery (US) and Carnegie Medal (UK). His New York Times bestselling books include Coraline and Stardust (both made into films), and American Gods and Anansi Boys.