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Calm and Commotion

The Sun sets off the coast of Australia on October 30, 2014, and astronaut Reid Wiseman is there to capture it.

The first thing we notice in this beautifully simple portrait of our atmosphere at sunset is the prismatic color gradient, with its narrow band of red on the horizon, prominent bands of yellow and blue, and finally, a diminishing swath of indigo fading gently as sky turns to space.

But hold on, what is this unwelcome disturbance that dares interfere with our tranquil scene? The anvil shape with its flat, overshooting top, tells us that it's a cumulonimbus cloud – a thunderstorm. This dramatic silhouette is an unambiguous reminder that our natural world can be just as dangerous as it is fascinating and beautiful.

