

A Whispering Luminary

by Jake Lane

to be performed by Emma Badger

Complete Darkness. Then IRIS, an agoraphobic woman wearing a massive puffy winter coat, comes into the frame. She looks incredibly tired. She's sitting at her laptop, talking to the screen.

She's not even filming a video, just trying to interact with something.

IRIS. I wish it was snowing. I've always thought that if it's going to be cold, it might as well be snowing, because cold and an empty sky together are just numbness and mystery, neither of which I care for.

Mother used to always tell me that it couldn't snow inside. She told me I'd grow up to have many problems if I refused to accept that, but I've grown up now and I don't have any problems and it snows whenever I want it to. Except now.

I sometimes think I'm losing my power, but then I take another happy pill and I remember the way I was raised and the way I'm different from that. I remember it for a moment and then I forget it.

(She watches as that thought travels away from her.)

The world outside isn't the real world. It's a stupid, baffling, germ-and-hate-filled enigma and this one I have in here is so much better and so much bigger.

The electricity's gone out. I'm sure you've noticed.

Today is the day when Lilly is supposed to come to my house. Tuesday. She's supposed to come on Tuesday and bring me the things I need, the things I can't get from just inside the house, the things she has to buy. But she didn't come and bring them and it was dark all day, and I have a choice to either believe that the entire world has fallen into darkness or that Lilly is just forgetful. She never called.

Don't you think you should call someone if you're going to shatter a routine? If you're going to cause an abnormality that ruptures someone's universe? She should have. I think she should have.

Maybe the world is just dead, though. I wouldn't know.

I think I find regularity in my loneliness. Regularity. That's a perfect word. It rolls off the tongue; there's a balance to the syllables and the letters. Saying it is like a dance. And it's scientific. As soon as I find self-pity in my loneliness, it's no longer scientific. I'm no longer just in solitude either. Once I bring in

words like sadness, nothing is willful. I'm abandoned, not independent. I'm pathetic.

(She shivers, then notices a fairy floating next to her)

Hey, there. Have you got a message for me today?

(She watches the fairy fly away.)

She's probably going to get her friends. Sometimes these luminaries bring me messages. They do. They adore me, just because I let them live in my world. It pays to be welcoming.

(She speaks earnestly, yet slowly, believing every word she says and savoring the magic of each syllable)

One time, one said to me, "Iris, living rainbow, descendant of all things whole and good, your gift to this world is yourself. Nothing you do will ever erase you." And I thought, what's so special about me? My aversion to the real world?

I've been to programs designed for people like me. People whose worlds have cracked and branched off from this Earth. At one of them, they said I could be a lawyer. What a thing to say. "Many people live a healthy, successful life despite their agoraphobia. Some examples of those who have completed this program are lawyers, and...."

(She trails off.)

I zoned out at that point. What if I don't want to be a lawyer? What if I just want to be a woman? That's never enough, though, is it?

There's a new day coming. I feel it, yes, but I'm told of it, too. My friends here, the luminaries. They tell me. They tell me all worlds will be torn apart but my own.

My father used to tell me I was born in a submarine. Maybe that would explain things. Fear of open spaces. Nervousness out on land, amidst people. Mother told me when I was six it wasn't true, though. So, I don't know where fear comes from.

I imagine it sometimes, though. My birth. Except every time I see it, I see it from above. And it's more like a memory than imagination.

(Suddenly, she's deflated. Exhausted.)

I think one day I was swept up.
A wave came and it tore everything apart.
It submerged the earth in darkness.
I couldn't see my own hand in front of me.
And I had to swim. I had to push my body forward and upward.
And the luminaries guided me.
They took my breath and made it shimmer.
And I followed my breath to the surface.
And they gave me a small but muscular seed.
And from that seed sprung a new world.
A world all my own.
And I was crowned ruler.

I saved the world.

But what now have I become? An oil puddle of fear?

(She becomes aware, once again, of how cold she is and the darkness that is nearly swallowing her. She's unsure of what she said or where she was just a moment before but notices the computer battery is low.)

Anyways, this thing's about to die. I've got about two minutes of battery left, probably, and then. . . who knows?

(She starts giggling. It grows into a hearty, guttural laugh. Tears well up in her eyes. It's incredibly sad.)

Maybe the luminaries will come, and they'll finally give me my wings.

It *is* snowing.

Am I okay?

(The computer dies.)