

Be the Light

She had waited eons for her moment to shine. When just a tiny thing others declared she had the makings of a very fine dancer. The inherent, early promise passed down from her mother was clear, that same rare talent to bring light to others. Nurtured and raised on fairy-tales and fables, she was at first a plump and somewhat plain young one. She seemed trapped in that pudgy, infant stage for far too long. It was sometimes grim living in the grotto as it was difficult to appease her voracious appetite for protein.

As time went by though, she bloomed, until eventually no-one could deny her potential. The initial chubbiness gave way to a lean, supple body and strong, slender legs. She knew she was born to dazzle. She resolved to fulfil her deep-seated purpose and abandon the depravities committed in those dark, early years. Her mission was to practise and rehearse and refine each complex move of every dance ever known. In short, she yearned to leave her audience agog. She ached for every man to want her. But most of all she hankered for that glistening crown, to wear the ancient diadem as Empress of The Dance.

Utilising her gaudy dance moves had already proven diabolical. It seemed the iniquities of the past were a hard habit to break. And when you don't even know your real name, the truth gets a little murky.

This femme fatale, armed with the ability to lure males outside her clan, mimicked their come-hither signals and enticed them into close proximity. One lovesick male had already been duped. Poor, gullible fellow was keen to consummate their union, not knowing he had in fact met his nemesis. She extinguished his light, devoured his essence and swallowed his spark. In short, she ate him. Munching through every soft portion and leaving the hard bits behind, she ate him in one grisly sitting. 'Consumed by love' had heightened meaning. Bright lights cast deep shadows.

An innate sense of understanding overwhelmed her when she finished the meal. Replete and somehow fuelled by the chemical intake, her primeval desires surpassed reason. She felt fortified after the bloody episode and understood for the first time that toxic place within herself. Had she stepped closer to enlightenment? Release from her shady past seemed unattainable.

For the first time too, procreation was on her mind.

Her own mother had wooed her father with dancing. Her parents had shared more than one waltz. They'd partnered in every way from that first meeting and after a short romance they'd had a family of their own. When she was born her mother was still around for a short time, but memory of any maternal love is vague and illusory. When her mother faded from her life, she committed even more time to her training. She longed to ignite the world's stage. She'd be a star. She'd glisten brighter than gold. She would have no equal and redress her violent past. She'd continue to seek the light but she must exercise patience.

She had many friends and just as many rivals, each one trying to outdo the other with their thrilling pirouettes and pleasant repartee. Life was a competition, or so it seemed, survival of the fittest or rather the loudest and brightest. The quieter, softer ones hid in the half-light and never thrived. She set her mind and her body the task of radiating confidence and sought perfection in all she did, never tiring of the daily routine of twirls and whirls, turns and spins.

She would sing too, at first solo and later with her social network. Her soprano trills blended seamlessly with the serenading chorale. Together their ethereal tones inspired and ignited imaginations. Sometimes their incantations combined with choreographed routines to produce a glimmering spectacle, attracting crowds never seen before. Collective happiness increased when shared in the warm yellow light.

Most of the time they met at dusk and usually in a conifer grove on the hilltop, close to where they lived. The forest's canopy created by the pine trees blocked the celestial nightlights so as not to interfere with their colourful, communal rituals. Soft needles falling to ground created a perfect fragrant carpet. The only light they needed was generated from the swarming throng. Exquisite synchronicity between each body and voice was a joyful, shimmering spectacle, a rhapsody for the senses. Patterns and patter continued till dawn.

Daylight inevitably follows a black night and the revellers go to ground. The group effortlessly defy the darkness of night-time, but the light of day weakened their intensity and rest was crucial.

With daytime's respite done momentum builds for another glittering evening. There was unfathomable frenzy at the meeting place. It was late summer on a moonless night and

the horde was ripe for frolicking in the woods once more. It started with a small flickering at sundown in the underbrush, a pinprick of light rising from the ground. Then another. And then another. Until there were thousands of flashing bodies airborne and organised. The darker the darkness the lighter their light. Conditions were warm and still, a perfect night for pairing. It was just the right place at the exact right time. The atmosphere was an electric, whining, monotone of sound, clean air abuzz with mating opportunities.

She was amongst their number, animated and shining brightest in the firmament. There was no darkness when she was there. The moon and the stars were no competition for her intoxicating luminescence. She was incandescent, phantastic and phenomenal. It was in this ethereal splendour she put her mind to attract a mate. He was in the crowd and she noticed him dipping in her direction. Of course, she wasn't the only one seeking a lover; many in the circle had attracted male attention. She was, however, immediately drawn to him and he to her. It was as if they knew each other's secret code. There was lightning between them, exchanges of luminous yellows and greens. He'd signal a bold pattern and she would respond in kind, a twinkling conversation back and forth. A language of light, a language of love. And then the whole group understood each other and flashed their heart shaped lanterns in unison; bioluminescent harmony.

She was stationed on a leaf in the lower section of the woodland and he was hypnotised by her flashing beacon. Their coupling was inevitable. She lit a flame within him. He knew that to love beauty was to see the light. He was overwhelmed by her brilliance and oblivious to any darkness within.

It was over in a matter of hours. A majestic crescendo of mass copulation reached its zenith, the fever pitch only fractured by the break of day.

Within days of the merriment, she had laid hundreds of eggs in the same damp cavern where she had begun her own life. Her spawn glowed, succulent and safe. She'd pass down strong genes and characteristics of her mother's generation. The poison sapped from the unwitting, amorous donor she'd eaten days before would protect her brood from predators. Hopefully this would be enough for her young to survive, flourish and move towards their own metamorphosis, after they'd feasted for months on earthworms, snails and slugs in the half-light. They would be authors of their own cold light, luciferase inherited. Her legacy was guaranteed.

With habitat diminishing each new season and the light of industry stealing the darkness, who knew if all offspring would fulfill their glowing destinies. Fear grows in darkness but so too does life.

And the world at large would continue the erroneous lies, labelling her faction as do-gooder fairies and blameless fly-by-nighters. Nations were seduced by outward beauty and deceived by false goodness, choosing to believe in a spectral, luminescent gathering of beings so pure it hurt to look directly at them. The world craved evidence of heaven here on earth and thought they'd found it by merely observing a host of flying, fiery beasties.

Her kind were indeed a conundrum, choosing always to light the way rather than curse the darkness of untruth. It was not her obligation to live up to the misnomer, her calling was more noble than that!

She wasn't offended by falsehood, rather she'd accepted her unique, true identity. She was not a fly, but merely a humble beetle, albeit a bug with skills. She finally understood that there is light and dark in all things. She was proof of this fact throughout her vibrant, short life.

Her earthly body was tiring. Soon she would be borne into the darkness once more. Her life flashed before her eyes.

And then, after a while, a light went out on the mountain.