

FALSE LIGHT

Written by

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INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - EVENING

A semicircle of chairs faces a small podium at the front of a dimly lit classroom. Behind the podium, a haphazard bookshelf spills over with weathered texts. A dozen or so young adults loiter in robes, MURMURING, sipping from mismatched mugs, or adjusting candles.

LITHIA and MASON enter the room. Lithia gazes around and turns to MASON.

LITHIA
(with an edge of worry)
What is this meeting about again?

They both move toward seats at the far end of the semi-circle and sit, side by side.

MASON
Oh, it's like a spiritual thing,
but I just come for the community.
It's gonna be really weird for,
like, 20 minutes, but the snacks
are usually good at the end.

Beat.

The door SWINGS open, and the room falls silent as LUX (24) walks in barefoot, clad in only a golden robe. He holds a covered lamp in his arms as though cradling a newborn.

LUX
Bring me my chalice!

All of the robed figures but one take a seat in unison. CULTIST 1 hands Lux a cup filled with red Kool-Aid.

Lux walks past Lithia and Mason. He places the cup on Lithia's desk.

LUX (CONT'D)
Newcomer. Drink the blood of our
god. Join us. Mason, don your robe.

MASON
(whispering, to Lithia)
I wouldn't drink that.

Lithia's eyes trace Lux -- up and down. Lithia smirks and chugs the Kool-Aid. Mason side-eyes Lithia and scoffs.

LITHIA
 (whispering, to Mason)
 Oh? You didn't tell me this was a
 sex cult?

CULTIST 1
 Shhhhh... it is starting.

Lux reaches the center of the room and uncovers the lamp,
 allowing warm, artificial light to flood the dimly lit room.

LUX
 (with authority, speaking
 into the lamp)
 Behold the power of our deity -
 Solara. This conduit is a catalyst
 for her power! An icon of her
 divine authority!

The cultists stare at the light in awe. Lithia tilts her
 head.

LUX (CONT'D)
 Newcomer. Retrieve the texts. We
 must pray to our goddess.

MASON
 (Whispering)
 I'll show you where they are.

Lithia and Mason rise and walk to the small bookshelf behind
 the podium. Mason points to a small stack of Ikea instruction
 booklets on the bottom shelf. Lithia takes a step forward,
 reaching for the texts, when --

She steps on the cord for the lamp, pulling the plug from the
 wall.

The room darkens. The lamp flickers for a moment before dying
 out.

The room falls into complete darkness.

Beat.

CULTIST 1
 (screaming)
 NOOOOOOOOOOOO.

Cultist 1 wails as the others begin to hum - low and
 dissonant, in a broken hymn.

Beat.

Lux strikes a match, lighting a candle and holding it near his face.

The room falls silent again.

LUX

We have lost the favor of Solara. A trial must be held. We must reveal who has brought this darkness among us.

Lux pauses.

LUX (CONT'D)

Newcomer ... You shall stand
tribune first. Approach the podium.

Lithia warily steps forward. Everyone's eyes follow her. She stops beside Lux. Mason turns, lighting the remaining candles on the bookshelf before returning to his seat.

Lux grabs Lithia's hand and pulls her toward the lamp. He forces her fingers around the it.

LUX (CONT'D)

Feel her silence. Bear her
judgment.

Lithia trembles, gripping the post. She closes her eyes,
INHALING slowly.

LITHIA

(wavering)

I.. I just stepped on ... on the
cord, and the light went out, I
think the electric --

LUX

BLASPHEMY!

ENTIRE CULT

(In sudden unison)

BLASPHEMY!

Lithia jolts.

LUX

Our goddess does not rely on the
mundane powers of electricity!

Her eyes dart around the room-- everyone glares back at her. She turns to Lux and locks eyes with him for a breath.

Then, her gaze drops to his washboard abs, glistening in the candlelight.

Lithia's gaze glides back up to meet Lux's eyes.

LITHIA
(Jabs her finger at Mason)
He... He doesn't believe!

Mason stares back in shock.

A collective GASP echoes through the room.

LUX
Mason, you have been called to
trial.

Mason rises out of his seat and joins Lithia by the lamp, staring down.

LITHIA
(under her breath)
I.. I'm sorry.

Mason refuses to meet Lithia's eyes.

LUX
One of you has brought darkness,
while one of you seeks light. Only
one shall remain.

A pause.

MASON
I .. I believe in this community. I
love it here, please.

LITHIA
I came here looking for something
to believe in. If Solara is so
powerful, let her choose.

A pause. Lux steps closer, circling them like a lion. Face flickering in candlelight.

LUX
She has chosen.

Lux stops moving. He faces lithia and points to the door.

LUX (CONT'D)
Newcomer, rid us of the non
believer, and you will have earned
your rank among us.
(MORE)

LUX (CONT'D)
Strip him of his robe and cast him
from the room.

Lithia pauses, then with shaking hands reaches towards Mason.
As her hands comes to his shoulder to remove the robe. His
eyes final lift to meet hers, a plea within them.

Beat.

LITHIA
(quietly, but with force)
If Solara as truly spoken, then why
is the room still dark?

Lux opens his mouth - then freezes. The cultist glance among
themselves, and for the first time Lux looks uncertain.

Lithia kneels by the lamp cord, studying it.

LUX
Don't touch -

Lithia reaches down and plugs the cord back in. The lamp
flickers then glows again.

The cult GASPS.

CULTIST 1
She has restored the light.

Lux stares, trembling.

LUX
No- That's not--

CULTIST 2
(awed, pointing to Lithia)
Solara speaks through her.

The cult slowly bows. Lithia turns to Mason.

LITHIA
(to Mason, whispering)
These people need help. They need
community.

Mason nods. He grabs the lamp from the center of the room and
hands it to Lithia. Lithia turns to face the cult.

LITHIA (CONT'D)
(soft but firm)
Solara is with is again. Her light
now shines and speaks through all
of you.

MASON

Now, let's bring out the snacks!