

Yellow
by Terri Mullholland

There were rules about who could decorate their houses with yellow.

Yellow walls were for the privileged few, and only our Magnificent Leader of Light could wear yellow.

Ever since we had offended the sun and sent his light and warmth away from our planet, we lived in an artificially lighted and heated perpetual dusk.

Nobody was allowed to imitate the sun.

Except, of course, our Magnificent Leader of Light. He had stepped in as a caretaker of our planet after the sun's departure and had ended up ruling it with a rod of yellow. He was supposed to be our only rightful source of light and warmth now. But the truth was, his radiance never extended past the yellow palace gates. We had certainly never seen it.

I went looking for light regularly. Sometimes, in the gloom of our sunless days, if you could get far enough past the perimeter walls of our enclosure, you could see flickers of light on the horizon, still shining out from dying planets.

The only natural light now was at night; the cool, white glow of the moon.

There was a full moon on the night of my visit, government-approved, to salvage metal from one of the many scrap heaps of the former civilisations that bordered us. It was the moths who guided me there. I saw so few animals and insects now. They were flickering over something: something bright, something glowing.

Then I saw it, a flash of yellow among the debris. Two tiny yellow flowers.

I had heard of flowers that bloomed only at night, pollinated by moths in the moonlight, but I had never seen one. Flowers only grew in myths and stories.

I had them out of the ground and gently folded into my handkerchief before anyone else noticed.

When I got home, I placed them on the kitchen table and stood back in awe as the yellow petals sent blasts of warm light around the room.

My wife drew all the blinds.

I held one flower up to my wife's face and she held the other up to mine. I could feel the warmth spreading through my skin. I wondered if this was what the sun used to feel like.

We didn't dare leave the house. Afraid that our glow would show. It seemed far brighter and more powerful than anything our Magnificent Leader of Light could generate.

Already the yellow glow was seeping out from behind our blinds. People were gathering outside our house, drawn by the light, putting their hands and faces up to our windows to feel the heat.

We knew we didn't have long. It was only a matter of time before our Magnificent Leader of Light heard about it.

But by the time they came for us in the morning, the flowers were shrivelled up on the kitchen table; their light extinguished forever.

END