

## Luminiferos: The Omen of Light

**Yana Metro**

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(384pp)

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*Luminiferos is an atmospheric fantasy novel in which a capable heroine is driven to protect two worlds from utter destruction.*

An orphan deals with visions of a mystical forest and a loving family and discovers a portal to another realm in Yana Metro's fantasy novel *Luminiferos*.

Lilly endured years living in a harsh orphanage. She still struggles to find her place in the world. At eighteen, she's adrift and unable to maintain a job or a place to live. She finds solace in her vibrant dreams of vast, living forests, unusual creatures existing in harmony, and a cozy cottage where her family lives.

The contradictions between Lilly's everyday life and her magical dream world come to a head when she is visited by a gargoyle who gives her a key and an invitation to the spirit world. Lilly, deciding she has no real ties to the human world, accepts the invitation. She's soon caught up in a war between light and darkness; an ancient evil seeks to unite the fantasy realm and contend with cruel, power-hungry humans.

Built on rich fairy-tale lore, the story reveals its important details in time as Lilly enters a new world, explores it, and becomes an important player in its war. A girl who sought solace in books, she is prepared for the fantastical elements that she encounters. Still, she devours new information and is accepted into a school in the fantasy realm. New creatures are introduced through her, and the key players in the war are revealed and developed in turn.

At the same time, Lilly herself evolves: no longer unhappy and lost, she becomes a capable warrior in her new land. She has opportunities to escape the spirit world and return to the mundane one but rejects them in favor of standing up to severe threats with consistent kindness. She's driven to better both worlds and acts with the knowledge that she will not be the only one impacted by her decisions. She confronts evil creatures, falls in love, makes friends, and discovers truths about herself—and she remains an engaging, sympathetic, and endearing heroine throughout.

Sometimes the narration breaks from Lilly's perspective in order to round out the spirit world; it maintains its fairy-tale atmosphere regardless. As the novel works toward its cliffhanger conclusion, having ably established the bounds of the spirit world and the stakes of its war for future series entries, it also introduces an exciting new quest: Lilly has to collect artifacts that are crucial to the task of stopping the darkness.

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JOHN M. MURRAY (February 8, 2023)

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