



Luminosity

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The history and character of the Twilight world are intact in Luminosity up to the point where the story begins, with one exception: Bella's a rational self-awareness-junkie with a penchant for writing down everything that crosses her mind in a notebook. She maintains many of the traits and dispositions of canon - and Luminosity is a Bella/Edward story - but she's a distinctly different character.

Luminosity is a work of fanfiction. It is set in the universe of Stephenie Meyer's novel Twilight (and its sequels and companion works). The first several sections of Luminosity are very similar to canon in terms of the events that occur, although aspects of Bella's character, and her internal monologue, differ strikingly.

A few thousand words in, the plot is unrecognizable.

<http://luminous.elcenia.com/>

Luminosity Details

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From Reader Review Luminosity for online ebook

Brian Finifter says

Well that was certainly a ballsy way to go with the ending, but I'm not sure what the point of telling that story was.

Ben Pace says

HpMoR is Eliezer Yudkowsky's Rationalist Fiction, and Luminosity is Alicorn's. There is much less emphasis on the teaching of rationality here, although still some useful hints and tips of a more practical nature than HpMoR, but this adaptation is still way above the level of most fiction. It doesn't feel like a natural ending, but perhaps the story is just very realistic. Things do go wrong, and plots really easily don't work. I'll be reading the sequel soon.

Yulia says

Now, it pains me to say I have a bit of a weakness for Twilight. I *know* it's not a good book, neither stylistically nor when it comes to its values - but I'm a sucker for teen stories and that's what it is, at the core. Just a fun American high school paranormal romance. Still, I always quit reading somewhere before the last third. The more intense the relationship gets, the more abusive it becomes and I'm really not interested in how Meyer deals with adventure plots. Still, I will never lose that weakness. I grew up with the book series and I will never quite forget it. And really, it's not the characters's fault that their creator didn't know what to do with them.

So this is where I really liked this book. It's fun to see how Alicorn actually sat down and dissected the world building, prodding and poking at the parts that never quite made sense. Also, there were some parts I'd never even clocked as problematic about Twilight because Bella took them in a stride - like, uh, of course most people would be creeped out by mind reading? Why did I never question this before?? Sometimes the fic does get a bit too analytical/philosophical for my own tastes, but I could deal with it. Also, I loved how this gave Bella a reason of her own to become a vampire and it hit really close to home, because it's one that appeals to me so much as well - learn and experience as much as you possibly can.

Now, I read somebody else's opinion that Bella just got turned into a more annoying Mary Sue here and I gotta say, I kind of agree. I didn't mind it, but book!Bella does have a charm of her own (mostly pandering to our hidden insecurities and weaknesses) and that really isn't a thing here.

I would have been totally content to just have this story end at this point, or read about the Cullens travelling the world forever and doing boring stuff like enrolling in high school after high school (I can never read too much about high schools), but yeah. Bella apparently has to mess with everything, and while I totally understand the desire to change the world and I also recognize that how the book dealt with the Volturi was not optimal/satisfactory.... Sigh. Some of the things Bella did were beyond stupid. (view spoiler)

So yes. Now I need to review the sequel.

David Rutter says

I've never read the canon series, but I can infer enough from the Wikipedia synopsis and the excerpts I've heard to guess that this fanfic is far better written and more interesting. Furthermore, I'd guess that it downplays to a large extent the subject of love and romance, focusing more heavily on the aspect of personal choice. This is not surprising, considering it is written by a member of the Bayesian Conspiracy with the intention of illustrating concepts of rational introspection and decision-making. Although the first few chapters resemble the plot of the first Twilight book rather closely, it takes off in a completely different direction when Bella persuades Edward to turn her into a vampire. In other words, the main plot starts with Bella planning to become, and then actually becoming an immortal. And then it swerves off into the ditch. I couldn't put it down, and it ended on such a cliff-hanger that now I'm going to have to immediately start on the sequel.

Now, I suspect that this story is going to draw more HPMOR fans than Twilight fans, so I should compare its writing to that popular fanfic. rational!Bella is every bit as believable and three-dimensional as rational!Potter, but her story is far more coherent. Luminosity is the movie to HPMOR's TV series. And the best part is: it's finished. There is no sitting around and waiting for a year for the author to add another chapter. (To any future person who didn't start HPMOR until after it was finished, I just want to let you know how jealous I am.) Finally, I want to say that Alicorn's writing embodies all the best qualities of Eli's writing: she assumes the reader is intelligent, and makes sure to show more than tell what her characters are thinking and feeling, and, while she does take the occasional shot at Meyer, she treats the Twilight universe with a surprising amount of respect.

I'm going to go as far as saying that anyone considering reading a rational fan-fic should pick this one up before HPMOR. I think it did a great job of driving home the lessons it is intended to illustrate (the author's lesswrong instructional sequence on luminosity among others) while remaining a thrilling and unpredictable link-clicker (which is what we have in the post-dead-tree-book society when there are no pages to turn).

Yasiru (reviews will soon be removed and linked to blog) says

Finally took the plunge and tried this in spite of my disdain for the source material (unlike the case with HPMOR). Bella here could certainly be said to be an improvement over the original, but being rational for her too often involves belabouring the obvious and her sense of righteous entitlement ensures that she's never quite the final agent she imagines herself to be in the workings of power, such as they are. HPMOR's Harry exhibits a similar attitude, but the setting there allows him enough outs that combined with his resourcefulness let him get away with it. Bella doesn't quite appreciate her predicament enough to see that her ability to 'game the system' is very much dependent on whims and affections she takes for granted rather than her mastery of the system's structure.

Perhaps I'll have more to say later, after going at the next volume.

Kalibaatje says

Started out really well, but got tired of Bella's know-it-all attitude after a while. For being so 'rational', she sure has some major irrational thoughts too. The farther into the book the more egoistic she became -while still thinking of herself as being a world saviour-. Narcissist might not be a bad description of Alicorns Bella. Turning people into vampires left and right and wanting to turn everyone who's willing... with the rate she alone is sucking dry killer whales and other animals, the world would be pretty empty of animals -and thus food- within a decade or two.

I actually really love the thought that Bella uses a bit of wit and intelligence. In too many romantic fantasy books the female character misses logic and/or backbone. But this Bella takes it a step too far and loses herself in overconfidence -barely listening and certainly not caring about what others think and thinking her logic and opinions are superior. It feels like the author is overcompensating.

Ankit says

Very well written reinterpretation of a modern trainwreck of a novel series. Unlike source material (with which I have the misfortune of being acquainted) the protagonist has brains, tries to make sense of the Twilight universe *rationally* and even though her grand plans for HPMOR style world optimization don't pan out, it seems like a natural consequence of 'experiment gone terribly wrong due to certain (un?)foreseeable oversights'. Some phenomena from the original are explained via evolutionary constraints, anatomical scenarios are more realistic, the superhumans with supermemory and super-experience manifest those explicitly in a lot of situations, plotting and counterplotting is fun to keep up with. Overall quite enjoyable, though closer to 3.5 than 4 since doubts about re-readability.

Lilamedusa says

I was not surprised by liking this fanfic/book. I've heard a lot about it before hand and it sounded awesome. I devoured it as I devour almost everything I read.

I, however, am not in love with it.

First, I strongly disliked Bella. I'm willing to admit some of it is that I'm simply not used to characters like her, she knows what she wants and she goes after it, and that is, potentially a good thing, but I didn't like it. So maybe part of it is ingrained social conditioning that won't let me act like her because I'm a woman -all the feels- and which makes me strongly dislike someone who won't do the same.

But that would be just part of it.

Mostly I disliked Bella because I believe her to be incredibly self-absorbed and not as incredibly different from the original Bella as I had heard she was (I also know that women, and by extension female characters, have a much lower threshold of tolerance for selfishness than male characters -not to imply that female/male is a dichotomy, but ignoring the spectrum, because the book worked in this dichotomy-) and that maybe part of it too).

Yes, she was very... aware of her own emotions and wants. And that was great.

But she was seldom aware that other people's emotions and wants were not the same as hers. She never considered that the things she considered good/acceptable/moral/desirable for her, maybe not be the same for others. And maybe that's acceptable for her, as a human. But how could she think that changing species would not involve a shift of paradigm? How did she not comprehend that she wasn't the end-all/start-all of all things? And it's not that I understand her point of view, as a vegetarian (vegan in the making) for four years I know what she's feeling? Honest, is not lack of empathy on my part. But I do feel there's a lack of empathy from her towards the rest of the...well, world.

And I can get behind the whole "no murder" thing. But her insistence that humanity as a whole should be immortal was just.... exasperating. and she thought she could impose on others with this point of view -- namely, the Cullens and the Quileute -- but God forbid anyone would impose on her their point of view, even when it wasn't "threatening" towards her personally (and, honest, I love the idea of attending to college for thousand of years and learning forever, but what, exactly is so bad about dying? Which is specially annoying to me because she doesn't even GO to college! He goes on directly to rule the whole world forever! what...?).

I also forgot to add that consent is not great, is NECESSARY. Enthusiastic consent is elemental. BUT, again, change of species, change of paradigm. It's obvious that with a greater amount of power, comes more responsibility (a la Spiderman). But, also, with change of responsibilities, also come different rights. I wouldn't expect a fish to live by the laws of a human (or viceversa), so obviously the same applies to both vampires and werewolves (even if it's not a perfect allegory, I think it still stands). So I don't know how I feel about the hard time she gave Edward, Alice and Jasper. As if they were doing it on purpose or something (though I see her point). I feel it was completely unnecessary and overboard. But that's... just feelings. I don't feel confident with the alternative either.

And... well, yeah, I obviously still enjoyed it very much and I definitely love it more than Twilight (which I hate with the fire of a thousand burning sons, to quote that friend of Kat's in 10thay).

Jason Kleinberg says

I really couldn't put this book down once it got going, which is basically where it departs from the cannon story. While there is a LOT of bad fanfiction, this is a rare exception. It's much better written than the cannon story, with characters that are richer, and more real, yet true to original , other than Bella who instead of merely being a passive one-dimensional plot device, is a well-rounded strong protagonist.

Kit says

For all her flaws, particularly her habit of ruining other people's lives, I absolutely adore this incarnation of Bella. She's an interesting, engaging narrator and reading her words doesn't make me look down on her, it makes me appreciate the intelligence that never shone in the original series. I loved how she dealt with James - not so much with the Volturi, but we got there in the end - and after Luminosity and Radiance I don't think I'll be able to go back to Twilight.

I don't think this should be thought of as a Twilight fanfic. Independent of its source material, it retains all its

qualities. There are no painful coincidences, overly dramatic surprises or random plot twists. Everything is logical and streamlined: it's all a direct consequence of an earlier action, and this quality makes it incredibly satisfying to read. You can truly say that the characters brought things on themselves and it even gives you a little bit of pleasure to watch them reap what they sow.

The best thing about Luminosity is how deeply the world is thought through. The logic holes, contradictions and plain mistakes that Meyer made are worked out and addressed. Perhaps in doing so Bella gets quite heavy on the exposition, but you can forgive it because it's in her nature. Perhaps I will be able to reread Twilight after all, if I assume what you've laid down is unmentioned truth and the mistakes are just the characters misinterpreting. You can't blame them, because they lack the crux of Luminosity: a capable, interesting Bella, who improves the whole story around her, and is supported by a wealth of original characters that explore and extend what Meyer laid out.

(view spoiler)

Eneya Vorodecky says

This is surprisingly good.

I can't believe it but it is the ultimate proof that the "Twilight" could have been readable... if it was written by someone who was more intelligent than a garden variety stone.

This is a fanfiction based on the Twilight series books. I am so not going to call it "saga" because that word doesn't mean what the author thinks it means.

This interests me deeply because I love reading books and I have some observations about our culture and how it treats and views its authors. On one hand we have this huge backlash towards the books and the movies (well... they suck... huh, look, a pun!) but... for all the wrong reasons.

I have heard more times people complaining how teenage girls are stupid and buy such shit but at the same time this doesn't start a discussion of "why" it is bought up and what about an icy, abusive popsickle is attractive for so many people.

Even more, i find problematic how it is defined by gender, not to mention my ever-hated construct of "chick lit" which basically means "anything written by a woman/possibly not aimed only to men" regardless of topic.

So, ok, I can't stand Twilight. The purple prose, the boring characters, the non-existing plot, the stupid "love" triangles, the way relationships are constructed and presented, the irritating and preachy "abstinence only" way, the abusive and unpleasant main "protagonist", the non-existent individual that our main heroine is... it's just... too much.

On the other side... actually there are some cool ideas, which are never developed. And the fact that whoever is writing this fanfiction has taken the ideas and began rewriting it in such a way that it is obvious that this could be a good read and entertaining... well... that's just swell!

So... Twilight doesn't suck because it is written by a woman, it sucks because it is written badly. Twilight doesn't suck because it has a female protagonist, it sucks because the characters are boring and unimaginatively written. Twilight doesn't suck because it has weird vampires, it suck, because again, the characters are one-dimensional and there is nothing in them to clash, to develop. They are perfectly perfectly

perfect from start to finish and there is nothing that happens with them, to let them grow or develop.

Huh.

I didn't expect this review to go here, but there you go. :)

GVR says

I had such strong and unexpected opinions about the first twenty thousand words of Luminosity, I decided to review that first 20K, even though I gave up at that point and have not read any further.

The basic premise of Luminosity is that it's a re-imagining of Twilight, except instead of being judgmental, overly emotional, and careless with her well-being, Bella is rational and well adjusted. This sounds like something I would love, both as a long-time feminist and as someone who can be a bit hyper-rational myself. But surprisingly, after sticking it out for 20K, so far I'm nothing but bored and unimpressed by this fic.

THE WRITING:

Yes, Alicorn's writing is better than Meyer's on a technical level. However, I actually find Meyer's writing superior, for the simple reason that it's more captivating. Yes, it's weak, but at least it puts you in the story. Meyer's writing has the clunky but well-balanced simplicity of a novel absolutely BEGGING to be made into a movie. Luminosity, on the other hand, simply drones along through the ins and outs of Bella's mental processes. Many inexperienced writers go in for scenery-chewing, but in Luminosity's case there's actually a *dearth* of descriptive detail (apart from things Bella observes so the author can show how observant and aware she is), which leads to a complete lack of narrative atmosphere - something Twilight actually establishes reasonably well. Meanwhile Luminosity goes in heavily for paragraph after paragraph of mental-exposition chewing. The sentences are more complex than Meyer's sentences, both conceptually and linguistically, but there's no spark in the writing. All the intrigue and angst and atmosphere of the original story has been squeezed out, and in its place Alicorn has substituted Bella's endless level-headed navel gazing.

Which brings me to Luminosity's central point of interest: the characterization of its protagonist.

BELLA'S CHARACTERIZATION:

The trouble, in my opinion, is that Luminosity takes Bella from being one form of Mary Sue and simply makes her into another, less appealing form of Mary Sue. "Id appeal" can be extremely potent, and Twilight's Bella has that appeal for many readers. She has angst and self-worth issues that perhaps make her a less-than-robust role model, but they also make her a relatable and cathartic figure for many girls and women. Twilight's narrative also imbues Bella with a sense of ambiguous "specialness" that again makes her appeal to the id of many female readers, who would like to feel "special without knowing it" the way Bella is special but doesn't realize it. And while I personally don't like the dismissive, judgmental attitude Twilight's Bella exhibits towards most of the people in her life, I do think there's something loosely relatable there too, in that she's essentially going through the motions outwardly, without feeling like she truly fits into her own life. Many girls and women know that feel.

Meanwhile, Luminosity's Bella has, in my opinion, none of that id appeal. She is, at least in theory, a better role model, but she's also so level-headed it's boring as hell. I don't want to call her smug *per se*, but I do feel

there's a smugness to the author's tone in writing her. My impression is that this girl is going to go on to become an accountant or a GP or whatever (something practical, respectable, and routine), and she'll have only the minimum amount of angst or internal conflict when choosing her career path, and she'll have only the minimum amount of dissatisfaction once she makes it into her chosen career. There is nothing about this Bella that begs for adventure, romance, or intrigue. Her life is like a running track and the events in it, whether good or bad, are hurdles. She's a character without much inner conflict, which in addition to making her boring, makes her kind of unrelatable. Yet at the same time she strikes me as her own kind of Mary Sue, perhaps because she's just so *average*. She's very level-headed, yes, but I'd say she's level-headed in the way of a smart but bland twenty-five year old. There's nothing remarkable about her capacity for clear-headed thought, unless it's that she seems too mature by a decade (in a pat, uninteresting sort of way). And really, if I wanted to have the experience of a young-ish female person describing her well-reasoned but unremarkable thought processes for each new occurrence in her life, I wouldn't have to read fic because- OH HEY, that's happening in my head *all the time*.

BELLA'S CHARACTERIZATION Pt. 2 - HER REACTIONS:

I feel like in an attempt to have Bella react to Edward in a more feminist approved way, Luminosity tends to go overboard. When Edward looks at Bella like he's furious with her in Biology class, Bella immediately becomes "scared out of [her] wits." She begins "trembling" with fear, describes him as "terrifying," and rationalizing that because he appears furious he is therefore dangerous and very possibly a violent threat. Now if I were, say, riding the scarcely populated night bus home at 3 a.m. and a full grown, male fellow passenger looked at me like he hated me, I would probably react with...about half as much fear as Bella reacts with, there in her crowded 11th grade biology classroom.

I understand the desire to teach girls that "threatening" does not equal "sexy," but Bella's reaction in Luminosity comes across as completely over-the-top. In fact, Bella's reaction in the book makes a lot more sense: she's confused, hurt, and angry, because her gorgeous male classmate apparently hates her for no reason; sounds about how most people would react in her position.

Then Luminosity's Bella is creeped out when she thinks Edward is following her to one of her classes. As if he were following her to her parked car in the middle of the night or something. Like, Bella, this is *high school*; he's probably just hoping for a chance to talk to you without several of your male friends around.

And then there's her telepathy freak-out, in which she acts like it's her right and responsibility to forbid the only known telepath on earth from using his powers. I mean, okay, is telepathy invasive? Definitely. Is it unethical? That has yet to be established and is therefore a matter of individual opinion. Is Bella's chastising reaction an enormous buzzkill on what is otherwise an extremely mind-blowing revelation? YES. It's also a bit ridiculous and presumptuous and naive of her, because seriously? This is a person's *superpower* we're talking about. Unless that superpower is destructive to people's well-being in an immediate way, the person with the superpower is going to keep using it, because it's a fucking SUPERPOWER. Wouldn't you?!

Like, damn, I'm all for having Bella exhibit a bit more regard for her own well-being and a bit more concern for the kind of guy she's getting personally involved with, but in Luminosity she just seems paranoid and a bit unreasonable. She makes the most incredible revelations (Vampires! Superpowers!) feel like nothing more than aggravating conceptual hurdles for her to surmount. She makes everything seem mundane and just a tiny bit smug, and I'm not sure how such a dull story could ever be considered superior to the original, despite the original's many flaws.

Irene says

What the hell did I just read??!!

More to the point, what have all other reviewers been reading??!!

I'm as little a fan of the original works as most around here, and I did appreciate the first few chapters, where Bella finally grows a backbone and exhibits some critical thinking. But once the story diverges from the original path... damn, was this an awful trainwreck!!

SMeyer's Bella has no personality, no preference, no independence of thought, and nothing making her even remotely interesting. Her love for Edward had no substance and no foundations. Her drama was completely fabricated. Her man was an entitled abusive stalker.

Alicorn's Bella is an idiot. A judgemental, self-centered, entitled idiot. And her man is a useless sop.

The one redeeming quality about Twilight is that SMeyer created a very interesting vampire world (bar the sparkling, which wouldn't have been half as bad if Edward hadn't brooded so much about being a killer disco ball). Her concept of vampires retaining all their human qualities and making their most prominent feature their core power is fascinating. The Volturi hint at a complex and intriguing vampire society, and harbor some really cool characters (Aro and Caius especially).

The idea that vampires may be sustained by animal blood alone is also interesting. Anne Rice's Louis did try to live a few months on rats, and I don't really remember how well that was working for him. But the Cullen's "vegetarian" diet may not be an automatic solution to the conundrum of sentient creatures having to kill people to survive. After all, a human cannot receive blood donation from animals, so if a vampire feeds on human blood to substitute that which he has lost, animal blood may not suffice. It does in SMeyerverse and that's interesting.

Unfortunately, Twilight only briefly touches all of this, therefore losing much of the advantages these snippets of good concepts offered.

In a way, Alicorn takes all this and expands it, continuing to keep it interesting.

Unfortunately, the story is still centered around Bella and Bella is still not working. She's completely different from her former self but just as bad, and then some.

She thinks of herself as this grand, astute thinker, schemer, and strategist, while all and every plan she concocts backfires and leaves a lot of people ruined and unhappy. She spends her time thinking about "what do I want" and "how do I get it" and defending her privacy and agency tooth and nail, then leaves everybody else no privacy and no agency whatsoever. She rushes into things, with complete disregard for the opinions and wishes of others and she rams her reasoning onto everybody around her. What's worse, Word of God makes everyone end up bowing to her supposedly "superior logic", while all Bella's logic does is ruin their lives.

Finally, all Bella's assholery catches up with her, and I honestly couldn't muster a single ounce of pity for her. Everything she gets by the end of LUMINOSITY she very well deserved, having brought nothing but loss, destruction, and misery to everyone around her.

All in all, definitely not a "better" version of Twilight, not even with regards to the writing style. Simply a very different helping of awfulness.

Adam Smith says

Bella Swan is a quick-witted rationalist with an obsession with critical thinking. When she moves to the small town of Forks, she begins noticing strange things about a certain family in town. Their eyes change colour, they don't seem to eat, and they never appear in daylight. The Cullens are hiding something big. It's not long before Bella finds herself engulfed in a world of vampires and danger, and she has only one goal. She's going to take it over.

Twilight as a series was readable, but a far cry from the literary genius that some of the more rabid fans would claim. It's interesting to see how things would play out if Bella weren't so lovestruck, and more capable of plotting and planning.

Luminous Bella easily avoids many of the traps and pitfalls her cannon counterpart fell victim to. She dodges love triangles easily, avoids needless self-sacrifice, and a hundred other minor issues. She's clever and devious, plotting the destruction of the Volturi and world domination from day one. Of course, this doesn't mean that's she's better off. Sometimes clever thinking can be overdone.

Luminosity covers the scope of the entire series with major deviations along the way. The world is fleshed-out and expanded upon seamlessly, adding a whole new dimension to the tale. The ending itself caught me completely by surprise.

A fascinating retelling of the Twilight story that should appeal to many readers even if they hated the main series. I enjoyed it so much that I dove immediately into the second one without a moment's hesitation.

Rita C says

The Bella in this version is more rational, but she comes across as almost robot-like. She also comes across as a kind of Super-Intelligent MarySue with entitlement issues. She gets so many people hurt or killed by the end of this book, and causes so much emotional destruction from her choices. It's just painful.

For all the many flaws of the original books, they were somewhat more upbeat in tone. So this book is an improvement in the technical writing ability and in erasing some the more obvious personality flaws in the characters of the original books, but the original books had the happier overall story.

When I finished this book and before I read Radiance, I would have given it 1 star. Radiance redeems the story a tiny bit.
