



Twilight of the Fifth Sun

by David Sakmyster



<http://www.dragoonmoonpress.com>

click here to order *Twilight of the Fifth Sun* from Amazon.com

A cry rings through the cemetery. Anguished and bitter, it challenges the longevity of the sturdy oaks and maples, curses the pristine appearance of lavish monuments, and refutes the celestial immortality of the constellations glimmering behind the leafy canopy. Nesting robins and sparrows, alarmed at the sound, nervously dance on their perches, many streaking off on erratic paths through the darkness. The orchestra of crickets falls deathly silent. A wind rises from the center of the cry and seems to whirl and strike out at the landscape, as if maneuvered by an unnatural purpose.

The shape kneeling beside the fresh grave sobs one final note of desperation, then its voice fades. Rising, the figure lifts its face against the brutal wind. Oddly enough, the wind seems to bypass this figure out of deference, as if it were an element not unlike itself.

A trickle of wetness traces from either side of the pale but well-defined face. Dark hair, long and unkempt, catches on the tears, and remains motionless before the onslaught of the wind. He is dressed all in black, from the leather boots to the velvet cloak hugged tight around his shoulders.

He clenches his eyes, and for a moment the surroundings are maintained in his vision. The final resting place: here the bodies, the shells, would remain; chemicals languishing where warm blood once pulsed, bacteria painstakingly achieving the grand purpose, aiding the return to dust. Motionless now, the heart that pumped life steadily throughout a miniscule life span. Lungs never more to rise and fall with the rich breath of fresh air. Muscles frozen for eternity as their reward for a lifetime of exertion. Here the husks lie, after a life of struggle and of misery, where happiness made only an occasional visit. What did it matter? Did the memories remain? Was it all worth it?

He begs of the cold earth an answer. Once again he calls on deaf ears. He can sense them all, and the fear comes again. The body, the life, is no more, hands never to grasp another, lips never to press gently against a lover's; eyes closed forever, in the sleep of eternity.

But what about the dreams?

The mourner shudders.

The wind howls and screeches, clawing at leaves and grappling with branches. A few cautious insects resume their nighttime chorus.

Hundreds of sewn-shut eyelids beneath his leather-clad feet...

What visions were displayed behind those formaldehyde lenses? What dreams?

The shrouded man shakes his head, and in a somber gaze, directs his attention through a pocket in the rustling branches overhead. In the ebony pastures above, one tiny star, isolated yet dignified, flickers brightly, surges in brilliance for the briefest of moments, then returns to its dull glow.

A thin smile plays along the man's lips. Blinking at the star before the wind tosses a branch in its way, he feels an ease settle upon his soul. He respectfully drops to one knee beside the fresh grave, peering into the marker's shadow cast by a distant streetlamp. A teardrop of joy leaks into the dirt, apparently passing through the surface without an impact.

Again the wind makes a grab for his cloak, but fails to elicit the slightest response. The figure bends low into the shadow and places a gentle kiss upon the soft earth.

What dreams came in that final sleep..?

He wearily lifts himself to his feet, and in the gnarled shadows, rises off the ground itself. Feeling the earth slip away, he closes his eyes, clears his mind, and awaits the dreams.

The rustling settles, and the crickets, as if on cue, commence their harmonic eulogy into the summer's night.