



The Night Land

William Hope Hodgson

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The Night Land is a classic horror novel by William Hope Hodgson, first published in 1912. As a work of fantasy it belongs to the Dying Earth subgenre. Hodgson also published a much shorter version of the novel, entitled The Dream of X (1912).

H. P. Lovecraft's essay "Supernatural Horror in Literature" describes the novel as "one of the most potent pieces of macabre imagination ever written". Clark Ashton Smith wrote of it that "In all literature, there are few works so sheerly remarkable, so purely creative, as The Night Land. Whatever faults this book may possess, however inordinate its length may seem, it impresses the reader as being the ultimate saga of a perishing cosmos, the last epic of a world beleaguered by eternal night and by the unvisageable spawn of darkness. Only a great poet could have conceived and written this story; and it is perhaps not illegitimate to wonder how much of actual prophecy may have been mingled with the poesy."

When the book was written, the nature of the energy source that powers stars was not known: Lord Kelvin had published calculations based on the hypothesis that the energy came from the gravitational collapse of the gas cloud that had formed the sun and found that this mechanism gave the Sun a lifetime of only a few tens of million of years. Starting from this premise, Hodgson wrote a novel describing a time, millions of years in the future, when the Sun has gone dark.

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