

DUSK : A Vampire's Tale

Book 1

"The Dying of the Light"

By Matthew S. Thomas

"Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage, against the dying of the light."
-Dylan Thomas

Introduction.

The first drops of rain hit your face like tiny needles of ice. The black storm clouds have been brewing all day, and now, under the dim red glow of the sunset against the horizon...it has come. The storm has come at last. Backpacking across Eastern Europe had seemed so glamorous to you when you came up with the idea. Now, the crooked cab-drivers, the rat-infested hostels...and the rain... all seems just a little too much.

The thunder rolled on, and the raindrops fell harder. Ahead, against that last sliver of darkening red along the horizon, there was shelter - least, of sorts. The hazy outline of an old castle, a ruin perhaps, not on the map, looming in the distance.

Your feet hurry across the well-worn, muddy path. A shock of lightning flashed behind the silhouette of the castle, momentarily illuminating it in the waning light of dusk. Not a ruin: an old castle, poorly kept up to be sure, but someone seemed to live there. A lamp was glowing gently in the upper window.

Moving quickly past a fallen gate, across cobblestones so old they looked like dirty polished glass, you find that the door... is open! Above the door, you notice a strange star-like symbol. Shivering from the rain, you gently step inside. From a higher room, the lamp casts flickering shadows, and the thunder rattles the old windows. The small foyer seems empty.

"Hello," you call. "May I come in for awhile? Until the rain passes?"

There is no answer. Perhaps whoever lit the lamp isn't home?

You take two more steps into the muted, red-tinged darkness. And then... you are not alone.

The hands that grab you are so cold...cold as death.

One impossibly strong arm, wrapping around your torso, pinning your arms to your sides. One freezing cold hand across your mouth... turning your head to the side. A blinding pain in your neck...quickly followed by something out of a misty dream. A warmth flowing...out...and yet, seeming to flow back in too. Then real darkness coming.

Laying on the floor, the last thing you remember hearing is a hollow voice that seems to come from another world: "I'm so sorry. I was so hungry."

And you die. And yet ... you are also born - at dusk.

You died, and were born... at dusk.

* * *

The people at the hostel seemed to understand right away, when you woke up - at dusk, of another day. According to the newspapers, not just one day, but 5 days had passed. And this hostel was in Austria...hundreds of miles from where you last remembered being...with the voice, and the cold hands, and the darkness.

But these people knew. Soon, so did you.

Vampires had been "out" for some time now. They'd gained popular acceptance with the announcement of a breakthrough in skin-cancer prevention. Vampire scientists had been studying the "daylight problem" for years, and had at last discovered an injectable genetic modification of their own DNA crossed with human DNA. This resulted in "curing" their own intolerance to daylight, and preventing most human skin cancers. This simultaneous announcement of their presence and their cancer cure came at the same time as world governments introduced a slate of new laws that made killing (or discriminating against) vampires illegal, while at the same time explicitly forbidding vampires from ever taking blood involuntarily from any human. Special blood banks were opened up to vampires, and such banks paid donors handsomely... but blood slated for vampires had virtually no restrictions on who could give it. Quite an industry began.

All this you knew because it was old news. What was new news was; now you were one of them. What happened to you is not supposed to happen: it's illegal. But sometimes it does. The vampire that did this to you could be prosecuted... if you could remember where that castle was. Somewhere between Hungary, Yugoslavia and Romania, on some road not on any map. Good luck.

So, with the help of the US Consulate office in Vienna, you travel back to the States to start your life over again, in a new city...as a vampire. Even though it's illegal to discriminate, it happens all the time. Most of your old friends won't talk to you. Your old job won't want you back. So vampire "Newbies" are generally told to start over again in San Francisco. The community there is more accepting than most, encouraging diversity. They were the first to start vampire outreach efforts.

* * *

The sight of the Golden Gate bridge, on that first day back on US soil gives you hope, for some reason. A bridge... from one place to another... from one life to another. From being one way to being...another. And of course, it is only fitting that you stand there at dusk, staring at that gleaming length of bridge, watching the long-set-sun's last traces of dark ruby light, as the color seems to drain from the sky.

Dusk. At last.

Time to begin anew.

But something is troubling you. Something you cannot get out of your mind. Your vampire "Father". Who was he? Why did he do this to you? Why not just kill you, or just bleed you even...why turn you?

Who is he...this mystery "Father" of yours.

There must be a way to find out...only...how?

End of Introduction to DUSK: A Vampire's Tale
BOOK 1
"The Dying of the Light"