

The Dark of the Stars

William Hamilton

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In William Hamilton's posthumously-issued novel *The Dark of the Stars*, two teenagers enter a mythical realm, where they band together to survive.

Robert is an orphan who is planning to go on a holiday with his friends. Instead, he is visited by a suspicious milkman, Karl. He learns that he and Karl have been charged with a grand quest: they are to save the people of Santania, who are beset by a mysterious illness.

In Santania, a famed naturalist has died, and his alleged fortune in diamonds is missing; an impressive and power-hungry doctor needs the population to remain sick in order to enact his greedy plans. But Karl and Robert work against the doctor, seeking to deliver medicine into the right hands before all of Santania falls. Meanwhile, Karl hides compelling secrets from Robert; these feed into his desire to overcome Santania's dark forces.

From tropical rain forests to moors, settings play a powerful role in the story: the lands hide people, but also serve to reveal them, exposing their weaknesses and affording them few places to hide. Each landscape boasts distinctive features: there are ants who stitch flesh, to trees whose abilities are used to ease people's pain; Indigenous remedies become a source of respite. Still, though a host of locations are named, not all are described in the same manner; some locales are hazy.

The story undulates: the reaches of its villains and heroes prove to be broader than first thought. But Karl and Robert endure to the end, trying their best to save the world from rapacious villains—and helping to make *The Dark of the Stars* a thrilling young adult quest.

CAMILLE-YVETTE WELSCH (March / April 2022)

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