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## *Childhood's End*

K. V. Skene

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July 31 - August 1, 2021 (Saturday and Sunday)

<http://www.mythsoc.org/mythcon/mythcon-51.htm>



## Mythcon 52: The Mythic, the Fantastic, and the Alien

Albuquerque, New Mexico; July 29 - August 1, 2022

<http://www.mythsoc.org/mythcon/mythcon-52.htm>

### Abstract

Each yesterday Ended when, quite magically, The streetlights blinked, and once again Bewitched the night.

### Additional Keywords

Poetry; Childhood's End; K. V. Skene

Carik tried to think of himself as a soldier making a report, not as a man about to die. He avoided looking at the ivory throne at the far end of the room, and looked at the walls instead. Anguished faces on severed heads looked back at him. Carik paled and turned away quickly. He took a long, shuddering breath to begin his story, then heard icy laughter that sent chills down his back. His tongue froze in his mouth.

"Welcome to Darkstone Tower, Carik of Lanthor! I hope you have had a pleasant journey here. But where is your friend Yorman the Doomed? Has he suddenly become shy? Or has he suddenly become wise, and fled?" Carik looked up into the mocking face of the old Arch-Sorcerer. The wicked humor in the cruel, gaunt face made his knees weaken. Only the fact that Rastengeld's black, piercing eyes held him frozen kept him from falling.

A ball of flame arced over Carik's head; the flame seemed a balled fist of living fire aimed at the sorcerer. Rastengeld lifted a thin, arched eyebrow, and calmly raised his long-fingered hand. The flame was sucked into his open palm and vanished. Rastengeld laughed.

"So he still remains! A brave youth, but a fool! Alas for Yorman, that I possess the Great Book of his father! Already I have mastered the simple tricks of fire!" Rastengeld laughed and rubbed his withered hands together.

Carik felt life flow back to his limbs as the spell of the old sorcerer's eyes was broken. He flung his dagger.

Rastengeld was swifter yet. His hand flew up, and the dagger vanished in a puff of black smoke. Rastengeld clucked his tongue, shook his skull-like head and smiled. With a scream of desperation Carik whipped out his sword and hurled himself at the Kaldaashan Arch-Sorcerer. Rastengeld pointed a long, thin finger, and the world around Carik vanished in thunder and light. When the swordsman finally reached the sorcerer, Rastengeld seemed to have grown a hundred times larger. Carik bounced off the old man's frail chest and fluttered about the room, a small black bird.

"Yorman!" called Rastengeld merrily. "Come see! Your friend has a form to match his brains!" Yorman burst into the room, his enchanted sword whirling and flashing like a thunderbolt. A bolt of red light sprang from Rastengeld's hand, and the sword exploded into a thousand glowing fragments. Yorman was flung against the wall. He lay there stunned as Carik fluttered about the room and cawed.

"Fear not, little bird," said Rastengeld kindly. The Kaldaashan held out his hand, and a small blue flame appeared on his palm. The fire grew into a blazing ball of flame. Rastengeld flipped it into the air and it immediately started chasing the bird. "You will not be a bird for long," laughed Rastengeld, "you will soon be ash!" Then he gave his attention to Yorman, who was stirring and groping feebly for his dagger. "As for you, rodent..." he began. Carik flew around the room once more, then bolted out the chamber's only window, flapping his little feathery wings as hard as he could. The ball of fire followed him.

Carik the Crow flew around the tower, looping and dodging in the air. The fire-ball grew ever closer. There were no trees he could hide in, and the lesser buildings of the

fortress were too far away to be of help. Fluttering madly, he flew around the tower and darted back in through the window.

Rastengeld stood before his throne, rubbing his thin hands together and laughing madly. A broom danced about the room by itself, swatting at a little, black mouse that ran helter-skelter across the floor. Carik flew directly at the sorcerer and scratched Rastengeld's smooth, bald head with his little clawed feet. Rastengeld looked up in surprise--and received the fire ball full in his face.

Rastengeld's head burst into flames--he shrieked very loudly, and only once. The sorcerous flame spread to Rastengeld's robes in an instant, even as he rolled about frantically on the floor. Finally he lay still and burned. The chamber filled with a foul, nauseating stench.

The mouse stopped well away from the burning Arch-Sorcerer. Squeak, squeak! it went. Caw, Caw! answered the crow angrily from its perch atop the ivory throne. Before the conversation could continue, armed men and krollin burst into the chamber, coughing and gagging in the smoke. The crow took a tiny, deep breath and swooped down, catching the mouse's tail in its clawed feet. Together they flew out the window, engaged in a violent cawing, squeaking debate.

## CHILDHOOD'S END

by K. V. Skene

*Each yesterday  
Ended when, quite magically,  
The streetlights blinked, and once again  
Bewitched the night.  
Dark Pony waited; when play was done  
I galloped my shadowy sleepmate  
Through Everland.  
The other side of life was real,  
Behind the day it hid. Nightlights  
Are bright enough  
To see with new wide opened eyes  
Clear down the road where ponies run  
To childhood's end.*

*But that was then.  
Now I endure long sleepless nights,  
Curse the dead beds, too tired to break  
The nightmare's hold.  
No magic lantern rescues me,  
I count each hour, wait and pray  
For morning light.  
Deliberately, I forgot that road  
Where ponies once ran, young and free,  
Long long ago.  
Dark Pony run, don't wait for me  
I grew too wise, closed both my eyes  
At childhood's end.*