

Praise for *Bright of the Sky* Book One of The Entire and the Rose

“At the start of this riveting launch of a new far-future SF series from Kenyon (*Tropic of Creation*), a disastrous mishap during interstellar space travel catapults pilot Titus Quinn with his wife, Johanna Arlis, and nine-year-old daughter, Sydney, into a parallel universe called the Entire. Titus makes it back to this dimension, his hair turned white, his memory gone, his family presumed dead, and his reputation ruined with the corporation that employed him. The corporation (in search of radical space travel methods) sends Titus (in search of Johanna and Sydney) back through the space-time warp. There, he gradually, painfully regains knowledge of its rulers, the cruel, alien Tarig; its subordinate, Chinese-inspired humanoid population, the Chalin; and his daughter’s enslavement. Titus’s transformative odyssey to reclaim Sydney reveals a Tarig plan whose ramifications will be felt far beyond his immediate family. Kenyon’s deft prose, high-stakes suspense, and skilled, thorough world building will have readers anxious for the next installment.”

Publishers Weekly Starred Review

“. . . a splendid fantasy quest as compelling as anything by Stephen R. Donaldson, Philip José Farmer, or yes, J. R. R. Tolkien.”

Washington Post

“. . . a bravura concept bolstered by fine writing; lots of plausible, thrilling action; old-fashioned heroism; and strong emotional hooks . . . the mark of a fine writer. Grade: A.”

Sci Fi Weekly

“Kay Kenyon’s *Bright of the Sky* is her richest and most ambitious novel yet—fascinating, and best of all, there promises to be more to come.”

Greg Bear

Hugo and Nebula Award–winning author of *Quantico* and *Darwin’s Radio*

“[A] star-maker, a magnificent book that should establish its author’s reputation as among the very best in the field today. Deservedly so, because it’s that good . . . a classic piece of world making. . . . [H]ere is another of those grand worlds whose mere idea invites us in to share in the wonder. *Bright of the Sky* enchants on the scale of your first encounter with the world inside of *Rama*, or the immense history behind the deserts of *Dune*, or the unbridled audacity

of Riverworld. It's an enormous stage demanding a grand story and, so far, Kenyon is telling it with style and substance. The characters are as solid as the world they live in, and Kenyon's prose sweeps you up and never lets go. On its own, [it] could very well be the book of the year. If the rest of the series measures up, it will be one for the ages."

SF Site

"The author of *The Seeds of Time* imagines a dystopic version of our own world. Reminiscent of the groundbreaking novels of Philip K. Dick, Philip José Farmer, and Dan Simmons, her latest volume belongs in most libraries."

Library Journal

"In a fascinating and gratifying feat of world building, Kenyon unfolds the wonders and the dangers of the Entire and an almost-Chinese culture that should remain engaging throughout what promises to be a grand epic, indeed."

Booklist

"With a rich and vivid setting, peopled with believable and sympathetic characters and fascinating aliens, Kay Kenyon has launched an impressive saga with *Bright of the Sky*."

SFFWorld.com

"Kay Kenyon has created a dark, colorful, richly imagined world that works as both science fiction and fantasy, a classic space opera that recalls the novels of Dan Simmons. Titus Quinn bestrides *Bright of the Sky* in the great tradition of larger-than-life heroes, an engaging, romantic, unforgettable character. The stakes are high in this book, the characters memorable, the world complex and fascinating. A terrific story!"

Louise Marley, author of *Singer in the Snow*

"Kenyon writes beautifully, her characters are multilayered and complex, and her extrasolar worlds are real and nuanced while at the same time truly alien."

Robert J. Sawyer

Hugo and Nebula Award-winning author of *Rollback* and *Mindscan*

"Kay Kenyon takes the nuts and bolts of SF and weaves pure magic around them. The brilliance of her imagination is matched only by the beauty of her prose. You should buy *Bright of the Sky* immediately. It's astounding!"

Sean Williams, author of *The Crooked Letter* and *Saturn Returns*

Praise for *A World Too Near* Book Two of *The Entire and the Rose*

“One of the most imaginative creations in recent science fiction history.”

SF Site

“Kenyon’s latest has it all—plot, character, action, science, and the sense of wonder that all the cynics say can’t be done anymore. A remarkable achievement.”

Mike Resnick, Hugo-winning author of *Starship: Mercenary* and *Santiago*

“The fate of two universes hangs in the balance in this intricately plotted sequel to *Bright of the Sky*. . . . Tangled motivations, complex characters, and intriguing world building will keep readers on the edges of their seats.”

Publishers Weekly Starred Review

“Kay Kenyon continues to offer some neat adventures for her protagonists in this really alluring offbeat universe she’s created. . . . All the characters continue to be fascinatingly complex. . . . Every minor character is endowed with exceptional depth and reality. . . . The artificial universe known as the Entire remains a great conception and playground for adventure.”

Sci Fi Weekly

“. . . continues the promise shown in book one. . . . The Entire is a marvelous parallel universe . . . [and] the details of [the main character’s] quest make for stunning adventure fiction, while the mysteries revealed about the Entire are completely mind-blowing. . . . It is epic fantasy and world building on a grand scale. It would be criminal if this novel didn’t make year’s best lists at the end of 2008.”

Realms of Fantasy

Also by Kay Kenyon

BRIGHT OF THE SKY

Book One of The Entire and the Rose

A WORLD TOO NEAR

Book Two of The Entire and the Rose

CITY

WITHOUT END

CITY WITHOUT END

KAY
KENYO

BOOK THREE *of* THE ENTIRE AND THE ROSE



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For my husband, with love

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PART I
**THE
LITTLE
GOD**

PROLOGUE: THE ENTIRE



*Beside the storm wall, Abnenboon,
Across the war plains, Abnenboon,
Over the armies, Abnenboon,
Around the Repel, Abnenboon,
Under the grave flags, Abnenboon.*

—a marching song

HE STILL HAD DIRT UNDER HIS FINGERNAILS FROM HIS GRAVE. His massive hands with their knobby joints sported thick fingers, now grimed with soil. He had hoped for burial in a cloth sack. When he came to consciousness in a box with the sounds of shovels and light welling through the slats, he knew he'd have to work quickly. As dirt started hitting the lid, he blessed Wei who had given him a knife for ripping the planks.

And rip them he did, enough to get a shoulder free, covering his mouth to protect a pocket of air. With the burial detail eager for their warm beds in the barracks of Ahnenhoon, they'd dug the grave hastily and mercifully shallow.

Next to the looming outer walls of the fortress, Mo Ti quickly refilled his grave. In the distance he heard the sounds of the army's defensive guns. The Paion must be hitting hard, their zeppelins budding out of the sky to rain ichors on the army of the Entire. Good. Death was a fine distraction on a night like this; it might be just the advantage that would save him.

Though it was Deep Ebb, the darkest phase of all, the slumbering sky still burned lavender, throwing a bruised light on him. He must seek the hiding places of the hills. With his massive girth and height, he had never

been one easily overlooked, nor, with his face like a tree bole, easily forgotten. Even weak from blood loss, Mo Ti could dispatch a soldier or two, but he had little chance against the terrible lords, thin and vicious, or the Paion, lurching through the grass inside their foul machines. Do not look upon me, Miserable God, he silently prayed. King of Woe, I am beneath your notice, a beetle in dung.

Before loping away, he spared a moment to read his grave flag. *Monster of the Repel*. Mo Ti smiled. Yes, I am a monster to you, high Tarig lords. He bowed his misshapen body in mock obeisance to the Repel, the lords' inner keep, where it bulked above the concentric defenses of the fortress. You will see me again, *gracious lords*.

He held much against them, but not burying him alive. That he had arranged himself. Once in the lords' custody, Mo Ti needed, above all, to escape Tarig questioning. In his cell he had removed the bindings on his wounds from the sword fight. Blood welled up, spilling onto the floor. Then he mixed waters and dyes to create a scene of death. Finding him an obvious suicide in their dungeon, the Chalin servants had given him a proper burial, it not being a custom of the *gracious lords* to appear unnecessarily cruel.

He drank deep from the water bladder that had been taped to his leg. Wei had done what she could to help him. But she was a stupid girl not to give him food, too.

Moving swiftly away from the fortress, he took what cover he could in the long grasses. In the distance, the storm walls swayed, sending their dark shadows across the field of contest. Three Paion dirigibles hovered over the killing grounds, their sides pulsing with the weird light of their alien homeland. Before disappearing into sphincters in the sky, they would throw down their poisonous gouts on the ranks of soldiers. Mo Ti hoped the sentries would be inattentive to the Repel's close vicinity. Soldiers often watched the wrong things.

As did the Tarig. For one thing, they were insensible to the dreams. Even if they could not dream, they were insensible to other sentients' dreams—dreams that might be spoken of if the Tarig cared whose sleep was troubled. The Inyx mounts spoke heart to heart and now turned the Entire's dreams to excellent propaganda. How delicious that the young girl the Tarig blinded—

his beloved Sydney, for whom he would give his life—had been the first one to see their fatal weakness. How fitting she would be the one to sweep the mantis lords from their sky city.

But now that carefully wrought future was in doubt. Because of the newcomer. The spider. A small, fierce human without a shred of pity for the worlds she would set to the torch. Titus Quinn must stop her, though he didn't know it yet.

The Rose spider, Hel Ese, came to ally with Sydney. To Mo Ti's alarm, she had succeeded, displacing him with powers and persuasion. Sewn into her clothes and brought from her world was a small god that Mo Ti did not understand and therefore feared. But the spider had made a strategic mistake. She had allowed Mo Ti to overhear her plans. Impressively cruel plans for a woman. For any sentient being.

He bent over in pain from the wound in his side. It was still two days' walk to the River Nigh where he would seek passage from the navitar. Rising, he looked into the waxing silver sky, the fiery river that warmed the Entire and his bones. The bright give me strength, Mo Ti thought. The bright bring me home.

He drove his body through the crumpled hills edging the plains of Ahnenhoon. He must find this man, Titus Quinn, the man for whom he had sacrificed himself yesterday during the fight. There had been no time then to tell him of the Rose spider who stalked them all. During that brief skirmish Mo Ti and Titus Quinn had fought off the guards who came in the first wave of defenders. When Mo Ti saw that he could fight three at once, he urged Titus Quinn to flee. He granted the man his life for one reason: instead of destroying the Repel and the land around it, Titus Quinn had repudiated his terrible weapon, sparing the land. And therefore Mo Ti spared *him*. Then the lords arrived, striking Mo Ti senseless. It was his good fortune the high lord's human captive, Johanna, was suffering a beating from the Tarig, an undertaking that distracted them from his immediate interrogation.

Thus had Titus Quinn escaped. Wei informed Mo Ti of this fact as he lay in his cell deep in the fortress. Wei was a common servant sent by Johanna to help Mo Ti. It was a fine gesture from a dying woman—a woman who, it was rumored, loved her Tarig lord.

He spit in the dust, thinking of it. Far better dead, Mo Ti thought, than in such an embrace.

A shadow fell over him. From nowhere, a zeppelin scudded above the hill, moving breathtakingly close to Mo Ti's position. He fell into a deep crouch, nearly blacking out from the pain in his gut. The fat-bellied conveyance motored over the next ridge.

Mo Ti stayed low, listening. Silence. The sounds of the airship motor had bled away. From the plains came distant reports of guns. He was just rising to an upright position when he saw it: silhouetted against the sky, a figure on the near ridge. Standing on two short legs, a Paion mechanical, its two multi-weaponed arms cocked at the elbow and ready. The machine almost looked like a man, but it was headless, giving it the nightmare look all children feared. In the hump on its back rode the passenger that drove it. A Paion.

He froze in place. But it was too late. The Paion turned to face him. Mo Ti had no cover; he was exposed to the alien's view.

Mo Ti ran down the length of the gully. Had the airship disgorged its battalions in the next basin behind the hill? If so, he was a dead man. Reaching the near slope, he forced himself to climb, putting distance between himself and the Paion ranks. Looking back, he saw that the Paion was following. It raised a carapaced arm.

Mo Ti flattened himself against the hill, and the beam went high but near. He admired such accuracy from a running soldier.

Another singular fact stood out. The creature was alone. The Paion always fought in masses, their glowing white shells forming tight knots of offense. But so far, this one was alone. It stalked forward, aiming again. Mo Ti twisted away, rolling sideways on the hillside, escaping the blasts even as he groaned from the exertion.

Forcing himself to his feet, he switched directions, loping toward the war plains. There, in the confusion of the larger conflict, he might divert this lone Paion to other targets. He topped the ridge, his inhalations coming hard and fast, each breath a slice of pain. On the grasslands in front of him, cannon smoke drifted, forming a curtain over hot spots from flaming equipment and bodies. Behind him, the foul creature lurched after him.

Mo Ti ran toward the mayhem, toward the flash of war engines spouting

fire, toward the rallies and sorties of battle. He had no weapon to meet the Paion in arms, no chance against the streaming fire of its hand armament. Mo Ti cursed the Paion and cursed Titus Quinn, too, for whose sake he was fleeing for his life. It was good to curse, to keep one's strength up, to fend off the pain each footfall brought him.

Looking behind him, he saw the Paion closing on him.

There was no time to run. Mo Ti turned to fight.

Staggering closer, the Paion raised its arm again. By the creature's gait, Mo Ti thought it was damaged. He saw the weapon corkscrew out of the carapace, bypassing the robotic hand. Fire spurted. Mo Ti lunged to the side, falling heavily and driving the breath from his lungs. The pain nearly knocked him senseless. He lost precious intervals forcing himself to his knees. He was untouched. Trying to stand, Mo Ti saw that the Paion's hand armament was smoking, hanging useless. It had backfired along the creature's arm, which now slapped at its side as the Paion advanced.

Encouraged, Mo Ti rose to his feet.

In its milky white casing, the Paion advanced, wobbling on its jointed legs. In height it came to Mo Ti's chest. It raised its other arm.

No ichors streamed out. The creature's hand was a blade. So, it would be a knife fight. That was good news for Mo Ti. He advanced, drawing his blade, a short but infinitely sharp knife. He blessed Wei for the supplies of his coffin.

They fell at each other, striking. Mo Ti parried the Paion's first jab, but the second slashed his belt, scoring the braided leather instead of Mo Ti's gut. Having overreached, the Paion staggered forward, giving Mo Ti time to come at the creature from the back. Raising his arm in a last-ditch blow, he struck at the hump, sending the Paion staggering. Moving in, Mo Ti knew his knife would have little effect against armor. Instead of striking, Mo Ti used his one undoubted advantage: his size. He fell on the Paion. In the force of his sheer weight, he split the mechanical's carapace in a grinding tear. He brought his fist up and hammered at the bulge again and again as the creature lay face down.

When he could raise his arm no more, Mo Ti collapsed, still lying on top of the mechanical. Fumes of the body inside came to his nostrils. The Paion

could not endure exposure to Entire air. The biological entity within was disintegrating, leaking out of the rents in the armor.

Mo Ti rolled off the Paion. He lay panting on his back, fighting to remain conscious. At last he dragged himself to a sitting position. One hand of the mechanical was spinning round the wrist as though trying to sort out which weapon to bring up next.

"It is over," Mo Ti whispered. "Go to your gods." He had seen dead Paion mechanicals before, in his soldiering days. Even dead, they were ugly and unnatural. It was said the headless things took their vision from senses spread over the full carapace. And that no one could win against them one on one.

The hand produced another blade, this one long and thin. Then, satisfied it had done its best, the machine let its forearm clink to the ground.

Mo Ti rose to his feet and looked down at his adversary. Yellow blood seeped out of the hump where the Paion had ridden. Mo Ti looked to the ridge to check for further pursuit. The hills were quiet, feeding halfhearted echoes from the battlefield.

He stepped on the Paion's wrist and hacked his blade at the offered weapon. You never knew when an extra would be needed. He was, he reminded himself, still a long way from the Nigh. The blade separated from the wrist, and Mo Ti slid it into his belt.

He began his painful march once again. Rest was impossible. Once he lay down, he would sleep for days. Somehow, as the hours passed, he managed to keep his purpose before him: The River Nigh. Titus Quinn. Must tell him, and soon. Hel Ese, the spider, coming in for the kill.

Although Titus Quinn was a lifetime journey away from Ahnenhoon, Mo Ti did not despair. By the River Nigh, all places were near.