

The Day of the Dust Devils

by Javed Hayat

The main street has turned into the lowland of dust devils, with the red sun scorching, continuing to serve the living like a giant blood pentacle.

It looks like a heathen ritual invoking an ugly looking God with wings or horns, but beneath the whirlwind of rising dust, there are men standing on the pavements, and out into the streets. Their faces pale as their eyes wander, wearing white brimmed Stetson hat rounded with wind strings, and the sight of Colt .45 in their hands. Their expressions wary and somber, attuned to that low soundless music we hear when death makes its dominion in our little worlds; their sole distraction the buzzing clot of flies, little mourners in legion paying their final respect.

Their minds are attentive to the thousand hoofs of horses with grim riders, and the sight of blood running across the street in a singular narrow stream. A lonely blind head emanating from the body of a self styled Billy the Kid, his eyes looking for holes in the heavens, lacking interest and a twisted grin. The little winged demons singing to him the secret song of the vermin, while offering secretions that harm the living, but suit the dead.

Deep into his eyes stays the remnant of an image last seen; a reflection of a horse with head painted in shades of deep red, and a half naked bronze skinned rider in a headgear of crane feathers.

The horses began to stir, put into motion by men half naked with the skins of animals and rawhide helmets bearing the horns of a ravaged buffalo. Their faces made of brimstone, howling in a barbarous tongue, riding and closing down like a horde, like mad sand-moths driven by an illusion of a lone tree burning in the desert.

