

**SAGA OF THE SENTENIAL BOOK TWO  
FOR THE LAND THAT FELL  
WILLIAM ANTHONY SHEA**

**BAD DOG PUBLISHING**

All Rights Reserved

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form by photocopying or by any electronic or mechanical means including information storage or retrieval systems without permission in writing from both the copyright owner and the publisher of this book.

## Darkness

The might of Atainruin could not withstand the darkness. Whether in anger or panic, they fell before the chaotic hordes that overwhelmed all hope of defence by sheer weight of numbers, oblivious to moments of courage and heart. Mastk had brought forth evil, lurking in the depths of every well of despair throughout the land; malevolence that had been seeded or touched by the cauldron throughout an age of captivity. The very bowels overflowed with creatures of nightmare, real and imagined. They crossed the threshold of seclusion and abandonment to the call of this Master of terror, shattering the boundaries of the Abyss to swell from the wounds of Atainruin in unchecked chaos. A cloud of doom swept from every twist and turn of the land with an unbelievable fury, engulfing all in its wake. Every dark soul or malign entity Mastk or the cauldron had ever touched came forth. Evil pushed out from every corner, crawled out from under every rock, and plunged the world into disarray. In truth, the rise of darkness had been in motion for centuries moving carefully into the shadowy recesses of every land, awaiting the call of this ancient creature to lead them to victory. They had remained dormant, patient, and hungry to begin this new age of darkness that permitted the dominance of the night, awaiting whispered promises from the voice that called out from the shadows and pledged victory over the hated light that had kept them in subservience.

King Xavier III was ill prepared for the onslaught of the forces of Mastk. All was lost before it had truly begun. Atainruin could not rally in time, and the fragmented defences only served the machinations of the daemon. No one could have conceived an outright attack on the heart of the people and their King. Atainruin was doomed. As each soul fell to the sway of terror, they rose again in darkness to adhere to evil and prey upon the souls of the living. Each dark life taken from the ranks of the dead stretched the tide of wretchedness and aided the inevitable fall. Courage was not enough. The aging King lay on his knees in the courtyard of the palace of his forefathers. Blood and dirt stained his armour. Mastk had dragged him across a battlefield of hopelessness. His people fell before the evil, fodder to feed the depravity of this twisted daemon and his malicious minions. He could still hear the cries of the vanquished, and the last sounds of defiant skirmishes as the remainder of his knights fought valiantly to protect him from the rising evil. The burden of their failure could barely be contained as the anguish soaked up their resolve and consumed the last hope of a land in the throes of death. Defeat hung in the air like a tangible rebuke for the complacency that had cost them everything, but in truth they could never have expected to be equal to this rising darkness. The betrayal of the light had come quickly and without warning. For all the battles that had been won against the creatures of evil, they were nothing in the end. Innocence became victim to the longest night, waiting for a dawn that never came. Soon the silence would come, and the terrible realisation that Atainruin had fallen.

Mastk glided across the courtyard as if he were carried on a wave of ecstasy. Xavier knew his death was imminent. His hardened features sagged in defeat. Blood poured from a cut on his bald pate, the wound curving above his left eye and obscuring his vision. His white beard was stained red. The once furious vitality of his eyes had been dulled by the horror of his people's plight. The sweat clung to his body in desperation. Mastk stood over him. He could smell the taint of the daemon in the air. The size and viciousness of the fiend were enough to break the hardest of men. Xavier could feel the fiend's malevolence as if it was something substantial that flowed in the air with his coming.

'You were no challenge to me, King of fools,' spat Mastk venomously. The daemon's claws clutched the King by the throat, sinking into his flesh. Trickle of blood erupted from angry wounds. Xavier gagged on his own life fluids, spitting to relieve the flow filling his mouth. Mastk pushed him to the ground with brutal force and stood above the ailing King in triumph.

'Kill... kill me and be done,' rasped Xavier, the blood in his throat choking the words away as the effort offered only pain.

'Death will not let you rest,' hissed the daemon. 'Your land will suffer an eternity beneath my dominion as I crush the will to live from your people. Those that survive will be herded to feed the depravity and whims of all I survey. Even the dead will not find release as they rise to my call.'

Xavier could stand no more. If death was to come, then he would not die on his knees before this twisted monstrosity. The King summoned every reserve of strength. He fought back the pain and the anguish to rise before his aggressor. A futile gesture.

Mastk tore the head from Xavier's shoulders before he could take one step or utter another word in defiance. Atainruin screamed in terror as the light went out. Life gave way to death, and an eternal darkness. Mastk soaked up the elation of the moment. He discarded the King's body, roared in triumph, and licked the blood from the base of the King's head. He entered Xavier's fortress unopposed still clutching his prize. No one living remained to stand in his way, and the words of the dead lingered in lament...

*When the weight of courage is dead and done,  
And all falls to the wind,  
The tears of rain are rightly run,  
With blood and simple fears,  
Stand up tall and face the night,  
To brace against the woe,  
And fight for all that you hold dear,  
Against a mighty foe,  
And though you fail,  
And end,  
And die,  
You know that you died well,  
Take solace in the simple truth,  
You'll meet them there in hell...*

Somewhere between the realms of the living and the dead, an old man looked on. He was the epiphany of despair. Every hopeless lost moment of anguish concentrated in one single vessel of abstract misery. Failure wrung his heart, manifesting itself in every line that had been engraved by worry and strife until the loss was unbearably evident. Tears breached the cohesion between moments in time. Ghorrif Aryl cried for the souls of the damned. In truth, he cried for himself. Guilt overwhelmed him. Mastk was free. Atainruin lay decimated. Fire from the Abyss reformed this land into a creation so foul that it reeked of desperation. All that had come before would be lost if nothing changed and the daemon prevailed. An old man of sorrow could not see the light as the last hope of redemption began to fade. He had been so sure that the cauldron would see the fiend undone, but the moment had lingered too long and deceit had won a victory of devastating consequences. There could be no balance when darkness enveloped the light so completely. Dominance. The old man could not see the future, and the past only served to shred his soul to ribbons of melancholy until his heart shattered in the void of his own regret. He had brought the lands to ruin. His shame was complete. The cauldron had been destroyed and the daemon freed by the one soul who should have been able to recognise the truth in time to prevent this calamitous loss of life. The cost was yet to be measured in full, but nothing would undo the transgression of the lost guardian of a living dream that now lay in ruin.

Mastk wrought a land of darkness. A bastion of evil, with the daemon as Master of all he surveyed. History had come full circle. The fiend had won.

Nearby, Torinuine felt the icy tendrils of her sister reach out. Soon, she too would know the taint of Mastk. An ill wind carried an omen of doom.

Mastk walked the decimated Hall of Kings and climbed to the throne that had been created from the bones of the vanquished of Atainruin's finest souls. His delight in the devastation he had brought forth would have been unnerving, had there been anyone left to stand as witness to his malevolent pride. He placed Xavier's head on a spike of sharpened bone jutting out from the armrest of this macabre throne, prepared for him by the minions of his coup. The court of Atainruin was awash with blood. The forces of Mastk had murdered and raped their way across the land but this was merely a prelude of more to come. Soon the whole world would know the darkness. Nothing would stop him now...