

Torth-Viesh

By Richard Paul

FIRST OF THE ACCOUNTS FROM THE WAR OF THE
SEA OF NOTHING.



*"But I, who sees all, such powers shall give,
For in the end I see, this world must not live."*

Torth-Viesh

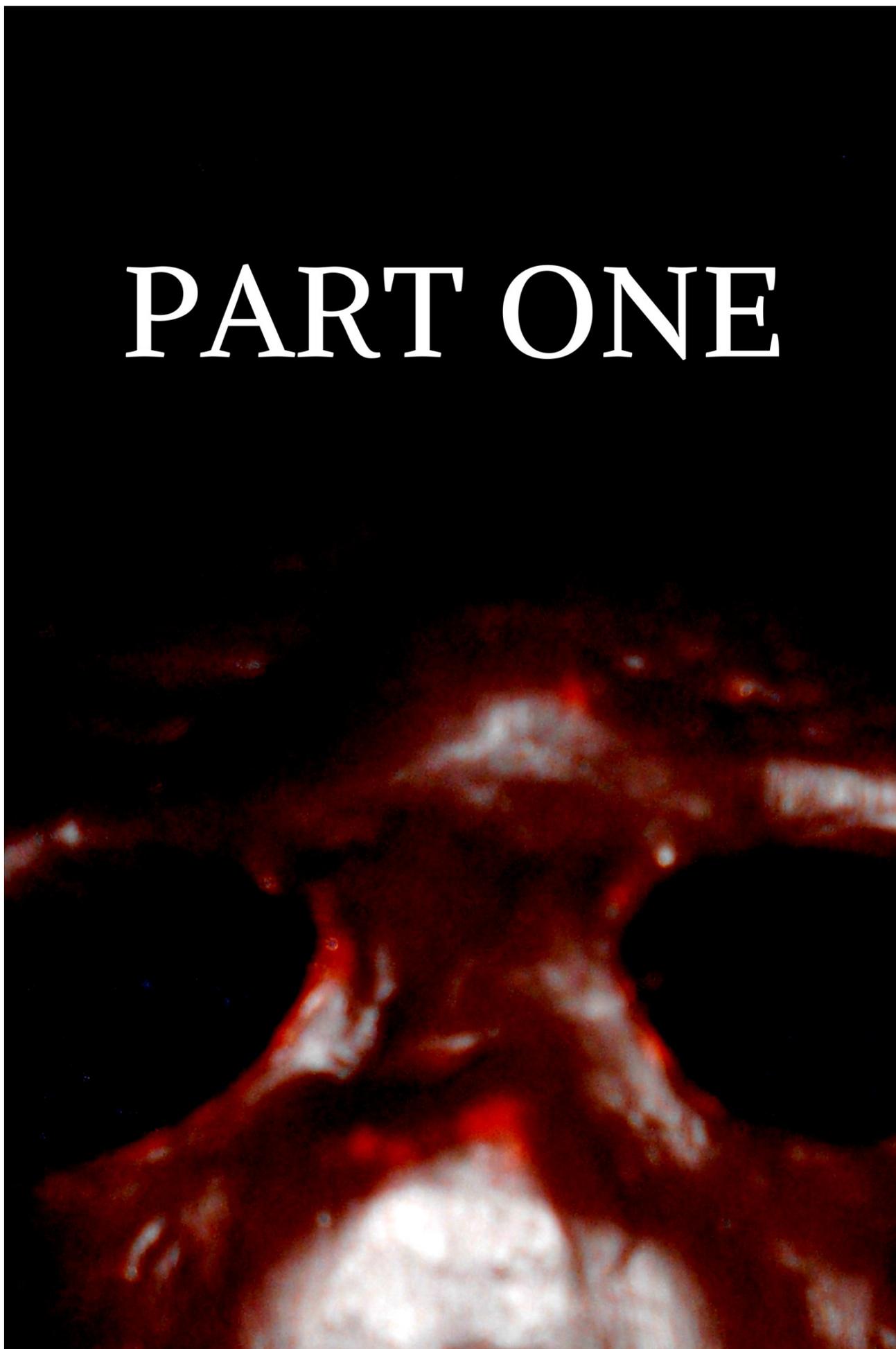
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(PREVIEW SEGMENT)

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PART ONE



Part One - Prologue

To the Left is Told the Tale of the First War

'Hear me, my Vieshkryl, servants of my scorn!
You whose hearts I have overrun with hate!
Your flesh I have twisted! There you stand reborn,
Blessed travesty to moribund fate.
Rejoice now, if you can, and do not mourn,
For our purpose is mighty, our strength great.
Now starts the quest to see all weakness shorn.

Take up now your swords and spears, your sinew-bows;
Unfurl your claws, prepare your maws for meat.
We'll sweep through all the lands and bring them low.
We'll laugh to hear terrified peasants bleat.
More folk I'll twist to monstrous shapes and grow
My army whilst the Traitor-Queen knows defeat.
She'll see her bright world die ere her gold blood flows.

With haste shed your last tears, their use has passed.
Weep till thoughts of flesh within your grasp grow fair.
With the setting sun we arise at last
From what was my betrayed home and now our lair.
From here we'll spread, fearful to behold, and fast
Shall be our dreadful pace, none shall be spared.
Weep now and doubt not such folly you'll outlast.'

*So spoke the Torth-Viesh to start the first Dark war
Not knowing he was destined for far more.*

To the Right is Told the Tale of the Second War

'Hear me, my people! Listen to your King!
Our prison stands open! Follow my voice
You spectres who were once beasts of my making.
Once again war comes, and I give you no choice.
You can do naught but follow the shouting
I now make in this nothingness, yet rejoice!
Our nightmare's done. Now to war we're waking.

There are none of you now who remember
The death and ruin wrought in our crusade,
How we laughed to bring un-thought of horror,
How we fought so fiercely 'gainst the Lack's fade.¹
Only I, cursed ere we fell, know what we were,
And for our crimes, for crimes they are, I have paid.
In this place, undiminished, I have suffered.

But I have watched as well, peering through the dark.
For full three thousand years I have beheld
New travesties upon the world we marked
With our purpose; The Traitor-Queen, impelled
By a force beyond imagining, arcs
Her eyes to new Worlds, which then are quickly quelled.
For her aid, our world remains un-remarked.'

*So spoke the Torth-Viesh to the husks of his slaves,
Calling them back to the world they now must save.*

The tale of the Torth-Viesh and all his dread hosts
 Starts at the blasted waste where once his home had lain;
 A place where, fool-rumours told, dwelt the ghosts
 Of those from the mages' village, Tahbamey.
 Of sorcerous skill its folk had cause to boast,
 Till this skill was sniffed out on one toothsome day
 Of fateful bargains and blood to the utmost.

Iskalaelen, Queen of Angels and heir
 Of all the world since her forebears' suicide,²
 Felt the shrieks of Tahbamey and hastened there
 To find that in a ring of dark flame did bide,
 The village, now transformed to a hellish lair
 For creatures seeming human to the eye,
 Save for the writhing entrails to serve for hair.³

Clad in the flesh of villagers cruelly flayed,
 Lengthening their locks with entrails wrenched free,
 They were as cheerful as children at play
 As they strode from their prize to meet the Queen.
 They left her with a choice; let them bear away
 The village and all its luscious soul-meal,
 Else they would bring all this world fire and pain.

*And as she could not tell what power these
 Creatures held to wreak such woe, she agreed.*

The Torth-Viesh and his minions had been thrown
 Three thousand years ago into the dark,
 The realm of nothingness in which, disowned
 By life, condemned villains were left in stark
 Emptiness, overwhelmed, forgetting, foregone.
 Yet, the world did not forget, and by his hark
 To one grave wish, the Torth-Viesh was employed.

From the Lack, none had ever been called back,
 Indeed, of the heinous villains cast there
 No one ever felt lessened for their lack
 And none more heinous than the Torth-Viesh was snared
 Within and yet, all knew the bargain and sack
 His foe, their Queen, had wrought. How it did wear
 On each generation, To permit such wrack.

And in the end, all it took was one girl,⁴
 Outraged at the sacrifice demanded
 Of innocent worlds, to the foul Void hurled,
 Who wondered at the Torth-Viesh, represented
 As a Demon Lord, bane of all the world
 Which now, she deemed, made him lesser in dread
 Than the Queen and wished him come, war to unfurl.

*This wish was as a light in the Lack's dark
 And through it the Torth-Viesh saw the dark depart.*

From taken-Tahbamey, only one remained,
 A youth, hight Viynon, an apprentice of note
 In the village of mages. On the day
 Of its doom he'd risen early, donned his coat,
 Made for the windmill with a barrow of grain,
 A whole morning's task as the mill was remote,
 Then returning he heard screaming through black flames.

Through day and night he stood petrified and stared,
 Unable to aid yet unwilling to flee.
 The fire he could not breach, had he strength to dare,
 Each shriek he heard bore familiarity.
 For it was his kin and friends and wife who blared.
 Never did he ever forget their screams
 Nor pleas, the day fixed horror in his brain.⁵

But despite the horror that held him still,
 How sweet the relief to see the Queen come then;
 Shining, radiant; all his pain, her sight killed.
 Surely the beasts who'd done this, she would rend,
 Surely these flames would vanish by her will
 Surely her subjects torment she would mend
 But he saw he was wrong; his heart and mind chilled.

*The boy ceased to be after this betrayal,
 Now on his mind and soul, others prevailed.*

Free from the Lack, memories and souls returned
 To the Dread King's servants; soldierly beasts.
 The old fury once more began to burn
 And yet they felt its hold on them decreased.⁶
 Their master, and the rage he gave them, had turned
 From a will to twist the world, yet had not ceased.
 The Torth-Viesh he remained, yet some malice was spurned.

**'For all you have suffered, I am to blame.
 From all the anguish of your creation
 To the Lack's dying-life from whence we came,
 And I cannot now change your sad station.
 I could order you, yet implore you, tame
 Your hearts and trust in this cause; salvation;
 For now the cause of right is ours to claim.'**

For such sentiment, few of his horde could care
 And trust, to most, came from design, not choice.
 All the same, his twisted people were prepared
 And as it went long before, to his voice
 They would listen and 'gainst his foes they would dare
 Match their fierceness and cunning, and rejoice
 To avail themselves of war's princely fare.

*Soon was to begin a second dark war,
 This time all hope resided with the Dark Lord.*

The youth watched the flames withdraw, heard the screams fade
 And saw the bright Queen calmly stride away.
 A smouldering ash pit was all that remained
 Of his village, sold to keep monsters at bay.
 Long he stood; his mind, like his home, unmade
 And from the wind, ghastly whispers seemed to say:
'A debt, a beastly, bloody debt must be paid.'

He wandered, though he knew not why,
 O'er the windy grasslands till at last he came
 To the river Tahb's edge, and there espied
 A fisherman of ancient years, gaunt and lame.
 He marked Vynon's robes and snidely he cried;
 'Back with you, unnatural turd, whence you came!
 And then, to unnatural spells, he died.⁷

Knowing not these spells, nor wondering with what ease
 He wrought such darkness, death and devastation;
 To make all drops of the fisher's blood flee
 From out his skin in every direction,
 Nor how from the soul he wrenched memories.
 To brutal murder he gave no reflection,
 Nor why he sat and dined on the Fisher's spleen.

*This was the first death the future Torth-Veish brought
 To the world whose doom was now his only thought.*

He came to where his old holdings had lain,
 His mighty force of travesties behind.
 There was a city where once stood Tahbamey
 And the Torth-Viesh, who all the world had long-scried,
 Knew it for Cshadak, which in bygone days
 The Queen had ordered built, her bargain to hide
 Behind a veil of life, all judgement to stay.

Clad in steel and ash, the King went alone
 Through the gate and o'er the city's stone streets,
 Scorning the screams and arrows, for all had known
 From tale, portrait and nightmare who'd come to greet
 Them, doubtless leading monstrous beasts new-grown;
 But the Torth-Viesh, bane of all, had come to treat
 And through speech and counsel, make Cshadak his own.

'Hear me!' He cried, his voice sounding everywhere
 In the city. 'From the Lack I have come
 Bringing a new war, and armies few dare
 Look upon, but know this; my vengeance is done
 For the selling of my home, I cannot care
 Now for such small stakes, lest more worlds be undone.
 For such worlds, and ours, new war I bring to bear.

*'Join me! Lend me your strength! Let us unite
 Fair and foul, and the betrayal set aright!'*

From town to town, along the river's bank,
 Dread-Viynon raged till everyone lay dead.
 Behind him, his army marched in freakish ranks,
 Shaped by the strange spells whispered in his head.
 The corpses he defiled, the blood he drank,
 Thereafter he raised more ghastly life from the dead.
 For the fate of his home, such was his thanks.

The Angel Queen, high ruler, heir to the light,
 Knew full-well and soon what fate befell her lands
 As surely as she'd felt Tahbamey's plight,
 She saw the last of the mages, saw the hands
 Which guided him as he unfurled his blight
 And knew her bargain had been betrayed. The band
 Who'd ta'en her people, now wrought ill out of sight.

Her vengeance on them would begin with their pawn.
 She called her forces to her banner of gold,
 All her thought of what had passed before was shorn
 And to her people, in dread tones, she extolled
 Words of the evil that had cruelly torn
 Tahbamey from her realm, then proud and bold,
 Pledged to crush this evil utterly ere dawn.

*A thousand Angels, armed for war, took flight.
 For the sake of peace and silence they'd fight.*

The people of Cshadak, for terror, agreed
 To serve the will of the Torth-Viesh. With heads bowed
 They waited and hoped the Queen would see them freed
 Before their use expired. Days passed and, cowed,
 They did their labours, expecting to feed
 The stomachs of the monsters who loudly prowled
 In an endless circle outside the city.

Though through the fear, a few souls dared to believe
 The words of this ancient Demon King were true,
 That redemption and repentance he'd achieved
 Within the Lack, his evil he'd overthrew
 And perhaps in this new war he'd succeed;
 Defeat the Queen and her servants, make them rue
 The slaughter of worlds which had become their creed.

As it was before, Viynon had scant time
 Before the waves from his deeds reached the Queen's soul.
 Terror shook her, to feel providence-malign,
 Not of itself, the Torth -Viesh's parole,
 But the threat he posed to the delicate twine
 On which her vital deal hung, the whole
 Of her cares. Her great bargain might unwind.

*If the Void King was not given worlds to burn
 Then He would turn his rage on hers in turn.*

The whispering will warned Vynon to run,
 For the Queen and her soldiers came with haste
 To see some shadow of holy justice done
 With all his new-grown hellish-host laid to waste.
 He brought his slaves for a fight not to be won,
 To a cliff-side, there bloody death to taste.
 Whilst he, through new magic, vanished with the sun.

The Angels came with the sunrise, kingly-clad
 In shining helms and hauberks, their swords upraised,
 Vynon's demons quailed to behold them, mad
 Already through their mutilation, phased
 Now by this holy sight. They knew they had
 No chance, and yet also they knew they were saved.
 Their tortured lives were ending; most were glad.

Their leader meanwhile, who left them to die,
 Drove down deep through the lightless sod and stone
 To find what the whispers bade him to find,
 A fort beneath the surface, from rock-grown;
 Through its gate he passed as if through air, inside,
 Bound to a titanic obsidian throne
 Sat this world's last God, Torth-Byin, The Heavy Eyed.⁸

*For denying counsel in ancient days,
 The Gods of Old set him forever in chains.*

As the sun set over trembling Cshadak
 A thousand-strong troop of Angels appeared
 Over the horizon, rendering black
 The sight of the red, setting sun, and fear
 Could not help but come, threatening to crack
 The heart of the Torth-Viesh, but still he sneered
 At the Angels, and promised his subjects wrack.

Not the Queen, but her consort once more led
 The attack on her reborn foe of old.
 The Queen instead sought out new worlds; all dead
 For the Void King saw what she saw, and though bold
 Or stout or wise, they would be stormed and bled.⁹
 No world ever survived, none could ever hold
 Back his armies; he drowned all worlds in dread.

Caladir, Angelic General, cried out loud,
 'Traitor! Ingrate! Beast of Children's bed-tales!
 What could you hope to gain now? How are you proud?
 And how have you crawled from the Lack? Fool! The gale
 Of our coming shall sweep you back there, to shroud
 You forever from decent sight! You will fail!
 Tonight we'll slaughter all your traitorous crowd!'

*For those who had prayed for liberation,
 This vow drove their loyalty beyond question.*

**'For twenty thousand years, here I have sat
Unmoving, the tedium drives me insane,
Yet I, who've seen all things, since Csha begat
The world, who has seen our future profane
And the part you blithely play, wretched brat,
Delights not to have cause to speak again
For you are buried, your brain steered by rats.'**

**'Reville not the sight of me; sad, failed God.
Has time withered all your rage? Are you dead
Within if not without? Here beneath the sod
Are you content to linger, with your head
Pointed forever towards that wall? You clod!
Here I stand, to render vengeance in your stead,
Make me your inheritor, a demigod!'**

**'You would receive the power I have to grant?
You, who would see the world's peerless beauty burn?
A child whose heart is gone, whose soul is scant,
By the whispers of infernal imps turned?
I see you behind this poor boy's eyes; ants
I name you, unworthy of life. I fain spurn
This demand, and Viynon's true nature replant.**

***'But I, who sees all, such powers shall give,
For in the end I see, this world must not live.'***

The Angels followed their Captain o'er the wall
And if any of them had heavy hearts
For the slaughter of Cshadak, verily all
Who lived there were condemned to die, no part
Of remorse nor mercy however small
Did they show. Stoic, they sliced their wards apart,
Losing few in their rush to see Viynon's fall.

Caladir sought through the chaotic clash
For the unwholesome shape of the Dark Lord.
He found him commanding innocents to dash
For the shelter of a temple, then he roared
A challenge to the approaching Angel, rash
In his renewed fury, he would see gored
This wasteful swine, he'd see his smugness smashed.

The Angel Prince with shining sword advanced,
His armour glowing like a winter's sun.
The Torth-Viesh, in his black steel, took up a stance
Ready to see ironic justice done.
Awestruck crowds watched the two champions dance
With flashing blades and failing armour, till one
Blow took Caladir's sword arm, spoiling his chance.

*The Angels' aura once o'ercame him,
Yet was different now, more wintry and dim.*

With a heavy heart, the Old God gave his heir
 Flesh; terrible, tall and boiling, dark and strong.
 Within the darkness and silence of his lair
 He granted power and sorcery, though wrong
 All the while it felt, none would be spared
 At all, years hence, after this doomed world's song
 Was spent. Thus such travesty he must dare.¹⁰

Forged by the will of Torth-Biyn, two black blades¹¹
 Set within hilts carved from an ancient spine,
 Were gifted to Viynon, and then was made
 Armour of black metal, fit for those divine.
 When Viynon arose, in dark blessings arrayed,
 His benefactor bestowed one final sign;
 'The Heart of War', 'Torth-Viesh', he was renamed.

**'Now, craven creature, you have what you desire,
 Power and terror to unleash on all life.
 Your destiny I have seen Viynon, such ire,
 A score of wars, unceasing years of strife,
 More than your fool-quest to set this world afire...
 But now, my son, tell me; with that black knife
 Will you drain my blood, and let me expire?'**

*The voices bid Viynon to scorn this deed,
 But Torth-Biyn's words cut deeper; those he did heed.*

A bloody hand and shining sword struck the floor,
 Caladir howled and staggered back, shaking.
**'Neither you, nor I, shall murder any more
 Of the weak or helpless. I am making
 An end to all the death this world has caused.'
 'Death is our kind gift, fool, and its unmaking
 On this world will, in the end, torment you sore.'**

Thus Caladir spoke, and thus he spoke his last.
 The Torth-Viesh took his head with one last slice.
 At once all Angels; Queen to serf, knew he'd passed;
 The Prince of Angels slain by the Prince of Vice,
 None could tolerate this fate, it was too crass
 To bear, so utterly improper; now thrice
 This upstart marred their pride. They must slay him fast.

The Prince's guard, whom had been bid to wait
 And watch their master's triumph instead beheld
 The Dark Lord deliver him another fate
 And though they tarried for grief, they upheld
 The oath sworn so long ago, and with a great¹²
 Roar they charged the Torth-Viesh. They would see him felled,
 But their strike was in vain, it came too late.

*Out of sight, Viynon's mage pupils wove a spell
 To turn this battle's tide, to halt Cshadak's knell.*

The Torth-Viesh grabbed tight his gifted knife, 'Death's Voice'
 And wordlessly tore open Torth-Biyn's throat.
 The chained God died so gleefully, he rejoiced
 As the blood flowed down his chest, his dying gloat
 Mocked the name of Csha, Father of Gods, whose choice
 It was in ancient years not to see him smote
 But chained for all time, in darkness and foist.¹³

Long the Torth-Viesh stared at the lifeless frame
 Till voices in his new skull made urgent sounds;
 '*Go back, ascend, the power now is ta'en.*'
 Viynon grinned and with the power endowed
 To him, he found the link within his brain
 To where the Whisperers once kept his will bound
 And made a tunnel, and through it sent a chain.

Seven of ten he snared, three managed to flee.
 Pinioned he brought them to Torth-Biyn's domain.
 They mocked him and told how Tahbamey still screamed,
 Told how his wife would ever know peerless pain,
 For pain was their delight and their mastery.
 How then did he hope to bring to them dismay?
 '**Pain you will wish you could feel.**' Replied he.

*He left each one sealed within the stone.
 Unable to move, nor die, always alone.*¹⁴

Within and without the Torth-Viesh and his folk,
 Something changed, their souls grew hard, their eyes turned dark,
 Their fear diminished, their fervour was stoked,
 An aura to match the Angels' own marked
 The turn of the tide, and then King Viynon spoke;
 '**Avenge our fallen! Bright for us, for them stark
 Shall this day be!**' So it was; Fell hope evoked.

The Angels' prey fought suddenly and with zeal,
 Monster's claw and peasant's pitchfork struck true.
 Fear struck the Angels' hearts and thus their steel
 As well. At once their ruthlessness they rued
 And ere dusk all but one hundred did feel
 Their lives rent down; wings were hacked, sweet flesh chewed.
 The new power of Viynon stood revealed.

The Torth-Viesh heard then a sound he had not thought
 E're to hear directed at him; joyful cheers.
 All Cshadak praised him with shouts and thanks; they brought
 Tributes of metal and jewels, gone were their fears
 And that night a feast for victory hard-fought
 Was held, humans and hell-shapes quaffed strong beer
 And slurring-spoke of the future Viynon sought.

*The Torth-Viesh watched his people revelling
 And strange though it felt, he bore a kindly grin.*

Back to the surface Viynon ascended fast,
 Grinning vilely for all he had won;
 Power beyond his dreams, silence at last
 Behind his eyes, and sweet vengeance upon
 Those who had wronged him, in stone forever cast,
 Save those who fled, he would tack them down anon,
 But first he would return to a prize more vast.

He'd come to the rock-strewn shores of Alave,
 Half a world away from the Traitor Queen.
 He took shelter inside a cliff-side cave
 And long therein he sat and pondered schemes.
 A holy city, Vrelor, nearby lay,
 A meet target, though a hard one Viynon deemed.
 To take it, he'd need to fashion worthy slaves.

His mind held power now of creation
 But his store of wisdom was yet a man's.
 He discarded many abominations
 Given life by his mind, but scarce did they stand
 Ere they were condemned as weak abortions.
 He could build no match for the Angel's grand
 Prowess, and nought to destroy their nations...

*Till practice and persistence at last unfurled
 The first of the Vieshkryl, who would haunt the world.*

In Cshadak, the temples were all torn down,
 Banners of their Angel-Duke cut to shreds.
 The ruling symbol, an old, oaken crown¹⁵
 Was given to the Torth-Viesh, and a bed
 Stuffed all through with Angel feathers he found
 New made and gifted to him by those who'd shed
 Three thousand years' folly. They had purpose now.

Tahmath-Biyn the city was then renamed.¹⁶
 Capitol of the Torth-Viesh's new Empire.
 He sent forth heralds in pairs to proclaim
 With pride and vigour, what had transpired
 To nearby towns and villages, and the same
 News all heard from men and monsters; afire
 Were set the gossips, and wide spread Viynon's fame.

Few would support him, fewer openly.
 The Angel Queen, if not loved, was held in high
 Esteem for the peace she purchased by many
 And feared by more who did not wish to die.
 For those who sought change, plenty were forced to flee
 From hearth and home to the Torth-Viesh's side.
 One amongst them had a mighty fate indeed.

*A young woman, fled from home and full of fear;
 Would come to prove far more than she appeared.*

Most of the Vieshkryl were birthed from Vynon's brain.¹⁷
 Built for battle, they were strong of limb, long clawed,
 Terrible to the view, born all but insane
 By the rage and urge to feast their Lord instilled
 Within them which brought them beastly pain
 As their greedy stomachs, impatient, complained.
 They rarely wished for aught, save to eat and kill.

Yet even now, Vynon was not fully pleased.
 He still delighted in his whispered teachings,
 Though the teachers he'd cursed eternally,
 And realised constructing matched not corrupting
 For pleasure and, with Godly eyes, looked to see
 What wayward mortal strays were wandering
 That he might snatch and twist for his army.

Merchants bearing goods to Vrelor harked a cry
 For help from an unseen woman in the mists.
 Hunters heard a wistful lure, and though their eyes
 Could not see from where, they heeded its promises.
 Two youngsters fleeing to save their love, denied
 By their families' demanding other trysts,
 Were led to a cliff-side cave by a false guide.

*All strode into the Torth-Viesh's waiting arms,
 And he turned them to Vieshkryl through deeds of harm.*

Tahmath-Biyn knew well its time must run short.
 The Queen must surely gather her full might
 For her bane was not as weak as was thought,
 And her husband had died through this oversight.
 Where once was outrage, now fear blossomed in her court.
 Trusting their fate to the Angel Queen of light
 As they had long before, her ruling they sought.

Tahmath-Biyn was strengthened and manned with sentries.
 From the forges came new-wrought armour and blades.
 All who could be spared were trained hastily
 With bows, flaming swords and newly cut staves.
 Food was stockpiled for the coming siege.
 Wards of protection about the wall were laid.
 Ere-long all was as ready as it could be.

The Torth-Viesh walked often through his city's streets,
 Lending reassurance and encouragement
 Where he could, and thus it was he chanced to meet
 A woman whose soul carried a foreign scent.¹⁸
 He bid her halt. A weed in his field of wheat
 She seemed yet to see her belied no sorcerment,
 Just a girl of Tahmath-Biyn defying defeat.

*A strange secret lay beneath her pale skin
 Which Vynon would learn. He bade her walk with him.*

Vynon made caves all o'er the cliff. There would bide
 His army which grew by scores each new day.
 He knew it must be soon that the Queen would find
 The coastline whereon the nesting Hell stayed.
 He knew his beasts, again, would be swept aside
 Unless a horde of immense size he raised
 To envelop the world beneath its tide.

Oft he listened for beating of wings
 Or the thundering noise of marching ranks,
 And like his Vieshkryl, he grew impatient. King
 He was, yet dwelling in a cave which stank
 Of rotting crab meat, all but cowering
 From those who, by right, he should see duly thanked
 With a gift of their own entrails unwinding.

At the end, no army came. Instead, the Queen
 Herself did, striding within Vynon's lair.
 Only she, and now he, too, by Gods had been
 Gifted power to move at once anywhere
 They pleased. Now the focus of Vynon's hate seemed
 As summer's sun in his dark nest, and none dared
 Do aught but shrink from the holy monarch's sheen.

*'Evil you have done Vynon, and yet the fault
 Is scarce yours, for your mind fell to grave assault.'*

The Torth-Viesh led the woman to his hall.
 She followed, intrigued, yet nervous all the while.
 Something inside her soul screamed to him and all
 The world it also felt like, and yet no guile
 Had this woman used to keep behind tall walls
 Her unknown secret, nor did she seem beguiled,
 Not her hand, nor another's, held her enthralled.

King Vynon wove a spell of clarity,
 An ancient spell from Tahbamey, outlawed
 With the rest by the Traitress. In fear did she
 Forbid all mortal magic. 'Nevermore,'
 she said, 'would reckless spells see horror unleashed
 As had been done once by the mages who brought
 Demons forth through arts bearing misery.'

His spell sought through the maze of the woman's thoughts.
 Chaotic they were and yet cunning too,
 Seeking to outfox him, slipping free when caught.
 He wondered, perhaps, if he and she might rue
 When they discovered the answers that they sought.
 But this mystery he could not leave, he knew,
 Lest he risk its strike when the battle was fought.

*An hour passed before the magic was done.
 Her spell of origins forgot was broken.*

The Torth-Viesh fumbled blindly for his sword
 Whilst his creatures fled the cave with beastly shrieks.
 Iskalaelen sighed and softly stepped toward
 The Demigod Viynon who fell still and meek.
 She placed a hand upon his brow and no more
 Did he feel the rage, now he just felt weak,
 And the Dark Lord's knees dropped to the wet floor.

Sweet music played inside his mind; a voice
 Like a mother's in the darkness spoke fair
 And soothing words to him; human eyes grew moist
 And human heart in human fashion dared
 Sink with grief, scorning hate, yet in part rejoice
 That his dread-quest, once everything, ended there,
 Lost in that cave; fitting felt the shame and foist.

*'Your sins go beyond precedent young one,
 Daring even to counter great Csha's decree
 And slay Torth-Biyn. Endless was his fate to run!
 And yet all your crimes were contrived
 By fiends who found you through your kith's spells. For fun
 Alone they moulded you, yet all but three
 Have met justice by your hand, my wayward son.'*

*'Return with me to the Holy City,
 Iskae, and find penance through worthy deeds.'*

The woman with the foreign soul stood still,
 As stiff as stone, while her body slowly changed.
 Subtle transformation for an hour till
 She was in alien shape rearranged.
 Her memories returned as well, foul and shrill.
 The strongest of them screamed at her, deranged,
 And she shook and wept and cursed despite her will.

*'Fool!' she finally cried, 'You've drawn his eye!
 The King who dwells in the sea of Nothing!
 King of the Void who'd see the multiverse die!'*
 She paused and sat on the floor, barely breathing.
*'I am Giritar, Queen of Gith-Hakain Isle,
 And here I and the remnant of my Kainings
 Seek safety on this slave-world. Here we hide.'*

*'For centuries, Gith Hakain gave the King war,
 Sailing our Isle through the darkening realms,
 Striking where we could until there was no more;
 No worlds within our reach not yet overwhelmed,¹⁹
 And then his hosts, far fouler than yours, my Lord,
 Turned their sights on my land, and underwhelmed
 I knew the King would be in taking our shores.'*

*'With the remnants of our power, we fled,
 Leaving poor Gith Hakain to die in our stead.'*

*At the Queen's Command, Vinyon slew the Vieshkryl.
She smiled to see his loathsome constructs killed.*

*When it was done, they left for fair Iskae
Where the Torth-Viesh would learn anew the Queen's way.*

*Yet still in their hellish realm and out of sight,
The three fiends left craved vengeance for their fright.*

*The Queen of Gith Hakain despaired not long,
What was done was done and now she must fight on.*

*She told the Torth-Viesh of more Kaining exiles,
A thousand-strong who, like herself, fled the isle.*

*She pledged allegiance to the Torth-Viesh's cause,
Though hope seemed scant, even if he won his war.*

Whispers of Darkness – No. 4

From the pen of the poet Jhaen, tutored by the Angel Sanatehir who was herself chief scribe to Torth- Ceaha, 'The Heart of the Soul'. This is one of fifty similar poems which form the only lasting record of the Torth-Viesh and his depredations.

Vynon the sly one,
Vynon the false son,
Torth-Viesh, heart of blights,
Dreadful to the sight,
Hating light and by light shunned,
Hating even Queen Iskalaelen.
He's gone now to endless night,
Sent there, pinioned tight,
Him and his demons.

You are far too young,
We are all too young
To have seen the pain
And smelt the profane.
Now only through songs are spun
The tales of the ancient evils done,
Of those ta'en and chained, or slain
If some luck remained,
Inside his Kingdom.

Legends tell of pits,
Foul pits of crucet,
Where victims were sent.
Form and soul both bent,
Sanity ravaged and split,
Pain past measure, that was the start of it.
Anything human was rent,
Out all goodness went,
Bit by shrieking bit.

Legends tell of beasts
And of vulgar feasts,
Twisted bones and skin,
Grotesque souls within
Made all from those made deceased
In Vynon's pits where his sick ranks increased,
Reborn to evil, these kin
To evil's true King.
They're gone now, at least.

They're gone now, at least.

Notes for Part One

1. The realm known as the 'Lack' is a place of consuming nothingness, driving out all memory and sensation until only a ghostly husk remains.
2. The Gods who made the world and its peoples ruled both for twenty-five thousand years. Then, without explanation, ended their lives en-mass, bequeathing the world to their chief servant Iskalaelen who became the Angel Queen.
3. A tribe of Sithiba, also known as the Chaos imps or trans-dimensional demons. Grisly artisans, they seek out worlds often by sensing energies emanating from them, either technological or numinous, and invariably sow chaos, discord and death on them before retreating back to their pocket realities. They found Viynon's world by sensing Tahmabey's spell casting.
4. Kenlia, daughter of the the Mayor of Naosatri.
5. The Sithiba knew Viynon was there. Among other depredations, they moulded his mind to make the memories of what he saw and heard on that day perpetually vivid.
6. As all his servants were initially compelled to share to his rage, when it diminished in him, it was likewise diminished in them.
7. The arcane practices of Tahbamey's folk were looked on with suspicion and disdain, largely because Queen Iskalaelen disapproved, viewing the use of sorcery by humans as inappropriate.
8. 'Heart of Eyes'
9. At the time this story takes place, over 15,000,000,000,000,000,000 inhabited worlds had been conquered and, in almost all cases, destroyed by the Void King. The nothingness in which he sits is formed from unmade reality.
10. Torth-Biyn saw all things, including possible futures.
11. The longsword 'Death's Glory' and the dagger 'Death's Voice' (Hanirn Sakan and Kvaai Sakna in the native tongue).
12. An oath of loyalty to their Captain, specifically in this case to avenge him should ever he fall.
13. Torth-Biyn denied his Father/Brother (Accounts vary) Csha and all his court knowledge of the future, saying that they'd only cause more harm if they knew what fate awaited them in their efforts to forestall it.
14. Denied utterly any form of physical sensation ever again.
15. Wood was the loftiest material allowed to human nobles and officials.
16. 'Memory of Eyes'
17. Constructing Vieshkryl from nothing was a delicate process. Viynon could only make roughly a dozen a day.
18. Only Viynon could detect this 'scent' in her soul, which marked the woman as being from another world.
19. Gith Hakain was one of four hundred nomadic Island-Dreadnoughts originally built by the God 'Fajiban', Divine King of 1000 worlds. All fell to the Void King after many centuries of war. Gith Hakain was the last piece of his Kingdom to be overrun.