

THE SCREAMS' PAWN

By Richard Paul

A screaming babe alone in the dark,
His butchered parents nearby;
Found by looters, taken as salvage,
Sold quickly, before he could die.

Snatched up for a song by the jailers,
Raised in the Tower of Screams;
He learned all the arts of chastisement
As his calling seemingly deemed.

A boy so alone and so far from the sun,
With naught in his heart but the tasks to be done.

A boy in the dark with a blade in his hand,
Serving a world he could not understand.

The Tower ne'er lacked for screamers,
Sent there by the spiteful courts,
Never a convict who did not die,
Once chastisement had been wrought.

The orphan boy and others like him,
Knowing naught but duty's call,
Smelt the blood and heard each shriek and plea
And paid no heed at all.

A boy so alone and so far from the sun,
With naught in his heart but the tasks to be done.

A boy in the dark with a blade in his hand,
Serving a world he could not understand.

Yet came the day and came the captive
On a winter's crimson night,
A woman so strange and with such eyes
To set a stone heart alight.

With practised dread, she looked to the boy
And stirred an imperfect sense
Of wrongness and guilt, the first he'd known
'Gainst which he had no defence.

A boy so alone and so far from the sun,
Felt all of his order come swiftly undone,
The boy with the knives could no longer find
The kind conviction of his once-tempered mind.

A sliver of the kind man he'd be,
If life had proven kinder,
Dropped the knife and loosed the bloody straps
Which held the strange prisoner.

She stood and smiled and snapped his neck,
A kinder fate than most would find
As through the Tower's shadows she slid
And upon the guards she dined.

A boy so alone in a heap on the floor
--*-- --*-- ---*--- --*---
Who knew nothing more than the powerful's chores;
--*--- ---*--- --*-- ---*---
So many must die now a monster is loose,
--*-- -*_ --*-- ---*---
She marked a blank canvas and put him to use.
---*--- -*_ -*_ --*--

None were spared in the Tower of Screams
---*--- ---*--- --*-- ---*---
To the youngest pupil, all dead;
---*--- -*_ --*---
And from that day the city nearby
--*--- --*-- -*_ -*_
Has known an unstoppable dread.
---*--- --*-- ---*---

For when the night comes, some luckless fool
--*--- ---*--- --*-- --*--
Will scream as they're dragged away,
---*--- ---*--- --*--
Nothing is found except blood red bones
-*_ ---*--- ---*--- ---*---
Gnawed clean and then cast away.
--*--- --*-- --*--

A boy unremarked, left to rot in the mound
--*-- ---*--- -*_ ---*---
Of the Tower of Screams that the fiend brought down,
--*-- ---*--- --*-- ---*---
No one knew his part, just as no one knew his past,
-*_ ---*--- --*-- -*_ ---*--- --*--
A tool had been lost and its use had passed.
--*-- --*-- -*_ ---*---

-*- = Suggested Stressed Syllables