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Opening extract from  
**Dark Lord:  
The Teenage Years**

Written by  
**Dirk Lloyd  
Jamie Thomson**

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**DARK  
LORD**



**THE TEENAGE YEARS**

*I dedicate this book to the greatest person I have  
ever known – to wit, myself: Dirk Lloyd*

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*Part One:  
Arrival*



# *The Fall*

‘**A** AAaaaaaaaarrrrrrrrrrrrggggggggghhhhhh!’  
His fall seemed to go on forever. It felt like bits of him were being stripped away, as if he was changing into something else as he fell. After a long time his cries of rage and fear faded and he sank into a kind of sleep, all sensation lost, falling silently in an immense void of nothingness for what seemed like an eternity. Then, suddenly

KA-RUNCH!!!!

Pain, so much pain... Then it faded away and he took in a great shuddering gulp of air. He coughed and spat out a glob of black mucus. He watched as the mucus formed a small puddle of shiny black oil. He lay for a while, just breathing.

The ground felt like hard gravel. He could barely move. He couldn’t think properly and he felt weak and listless. The sky above was blue, painfully blue.

He hated blue skies and sunlight.

He needed help. He called out for his lieutenant, Dread Gargon, Hewer of Limbs, but his voice caught in his throat. He tried again.

‘Gaa... Gargon, to me!’ he tried to bellow in his most commanding tones, but it only came out as a little squeak, high pitched and boyish. Where was the dark, imperious voice that sent forth his Legions of Dread to bloody war and pitiless plunder?

He tried once more, but again it came out as a high-pitched trill. He groaned and tried raising his head, but couldn’t. He wondered whether his Helm of the Hosts of Hell had slipped off again – if it wasn’t balanced just right it could catch his neck in an uncomfortable pinch.

He reached up, but there was no Helm at all. He couldn’t feel any horns either, or knobbly ridges of bone, only what seemed like a brown mop of hair on a rather small head. And his teeth! They didn’t feel right either – no tusks or yellowed fangs to inspire terror and dread. Instead his head felt like a little human head, just like the ones he usually kept impaled on those iron spikes over the Gates of Doom, or the ones that Gargon wore hanging from his belt.

What was going on and where was Gargon?

There was something else as well. Too much harsh sunlight usually fried his undead flesh like an egg in a pan, but he couldn't feel the usual sunfire burns. Not only that, the sky actually seemed rather beautiful. White clouds drifted serenely across the bright blue canopy of the heavens, and birds sang songs of joy in nearby trees. The sun warmed him nicely and a feeling of...hmmm, let's see now, something he hadn't felt in aeons, a sense of... *peace* came over him! Yes, that was it. A sense of peace. How could that be? He'd spent years trying to perfect a spell to cover the sky in The Black Vapours of Gloom but now the bright blueness didn't seem to bother him.

A wash of pain came over him again. That's better, he thought. He didn't want to feel a sense of peace. It just wasn't the sort of thing he should be feeling. After all, he had his reputation to consider...

With a great effort he was able to turn his head a little and take his eyes off the sky. He saw a low building of dull grey stone on his left, squat and unsightly. Excellent. At least someone was making ugly stuff around here. Maybe it was of Orcish design.



You could always rely on Orcs to make ugly stuff.

He saw some kind of banner flying over the building. Runes were written on it, in a strange language. To his surprise he realised he could read them. ‘Saveco Supermarket’ it said. A market. That didn’t sound Orcish. Orcs tended to prefer pillaging to shopping. And Saveco – was he the local overlord, perhaps? Lord Saveco, Smiter of Foes, the Pitiless One? Something about it didn’t sound right.

He looked the other way. What he saw was even stranger to his eyes. Several rows of oddly shaped metal boxes gleamed in the sunlight. They were of all kinds of different colours, and glass plates had been set into their sides. They rested on four wheels, thickly encrusted with some kind of black resin that looked like the hard-set mucus of the Giant Spiderbeasts of Skorpulos. One of the boxes suddenly shuddered into life, rattling away with a terrible noise like the coughing shriek of the dragon before it discharged its fiery breath.

He tried to bend the box to his will. If it was a thing of evil, it should instinctively follow his command. ‘Beast of Steel and Mucus – I command you in the Name of the Dark Lord and by the

Power of the Nine Hells!’

But his voice came out as a querulous squeak. The metal box moved away as if he hadn’t even spoken. Then he noticed what looked like a human woman inside the box, peering out through the glass panels. Of course! It was some kind of horseless chariot, driven no doubt by magic. The woman must be a potent witch indeed to command such a thing. The wizardry of mortals was getting sophisticated and powerful. He’d have to watch them more closely.

Then he heard a voice – another human by the sound of it – shouting, ‘Hey, are you all right, lad?’

His interest sharpened. A lad’s lifeblood would help to perk him up. He looked around for the boy the human was talking about, but couldn’t see any children. Instead he saw two men running towards him, both dressed in curious dark blue uniforms and helmets. They looked like a typical pair of ignorant, dim-as-dormice human soldiers; though their uniforms didn’t look very useful for war, and their helmets wouldn’t stop a sword or axe, let alone a Goblin pike or Orc arrow.

He tried to laugh maniacally and tell the humans to flee for their lives or be utterly destroyed, but all

that came out was a cough. He tried unsuccessfully to sit up. He was still too weak. The human soldiers stood over him.

Surely his life couldn't end like this, lying helpless, waiting to be killed by a couple of ordinary humans? But then an odd thing happened. One of the warriors bent down and cradled his head. Was he trying to help him?

'Better call an ambulance, Phil.'

The man who had spoken leaned closer, looking him over. (Stupid human. Didn't the fool realise who he was dealing with?) Immediately, he tried ripping the man's throat out with his iron-taloned Gauntlets of Ineluctable Destruction, but it was no good, he just didn't have the strength. Then he noticed he wasn't wearing any gauntlets, or even gloves. His hands were pink, pallid and pudgy, with neat little white nails, like those of a wretched little human boy! You couldn't even rip out the throat of a rat with those hands, let alone a fully grown human warrior. He groaned in despair.

The other human whispered something into a little black box attached to the front of his uniform. The black box crackled and spoke back to him! It

must have some kind of sprite or minor demon bound into it to do his bidding. That would have taken powerful sorcery. Perhaps they were more than just ordinary human soldiers. Or more likely they served a mighty human wizard king, maybe even the White Wizard himself, Hasdruban the Pure. Hmm, he'd have to bear that in mind.

The human called Phil said, 'OK, ambulance called in.'

The other one said, 'Don't worry, son, we're police officers. I'm PC Smith. You can call me John. That's PC Phil Johnson. The ambulance will be here soon. Take it easy. Best not to move until we know what's wrong with you.'

Well, the police officer was right – there certainly was something wrong with him. He couldn't move properly even if he wanted to and his body felt smaller than it should.

The one called Phil said, 'Have you got a mobile, lad? We should call your mum or dad.'

Mo-bile? Mo'bile? Was the puny human asking if I have more bile or something? What was this cretinous manling going on about? And what curious names! Jon? Jon the Smith. Had he made

the strange black box in his blacksmithy? And Fill. Fill the land with their dead? Fill your heart with hate, perhaps? What did it mean?

Either way, it was time they knew who was master here. He tried blasting them with the spell of Agonizing Obedience, but he couldn't shape his hands properly, and nor could he put the right syllables together. It was as if his tongue wouldn't obey him. He couldn't believe what was happening. Where were his powers of domination and destruction?

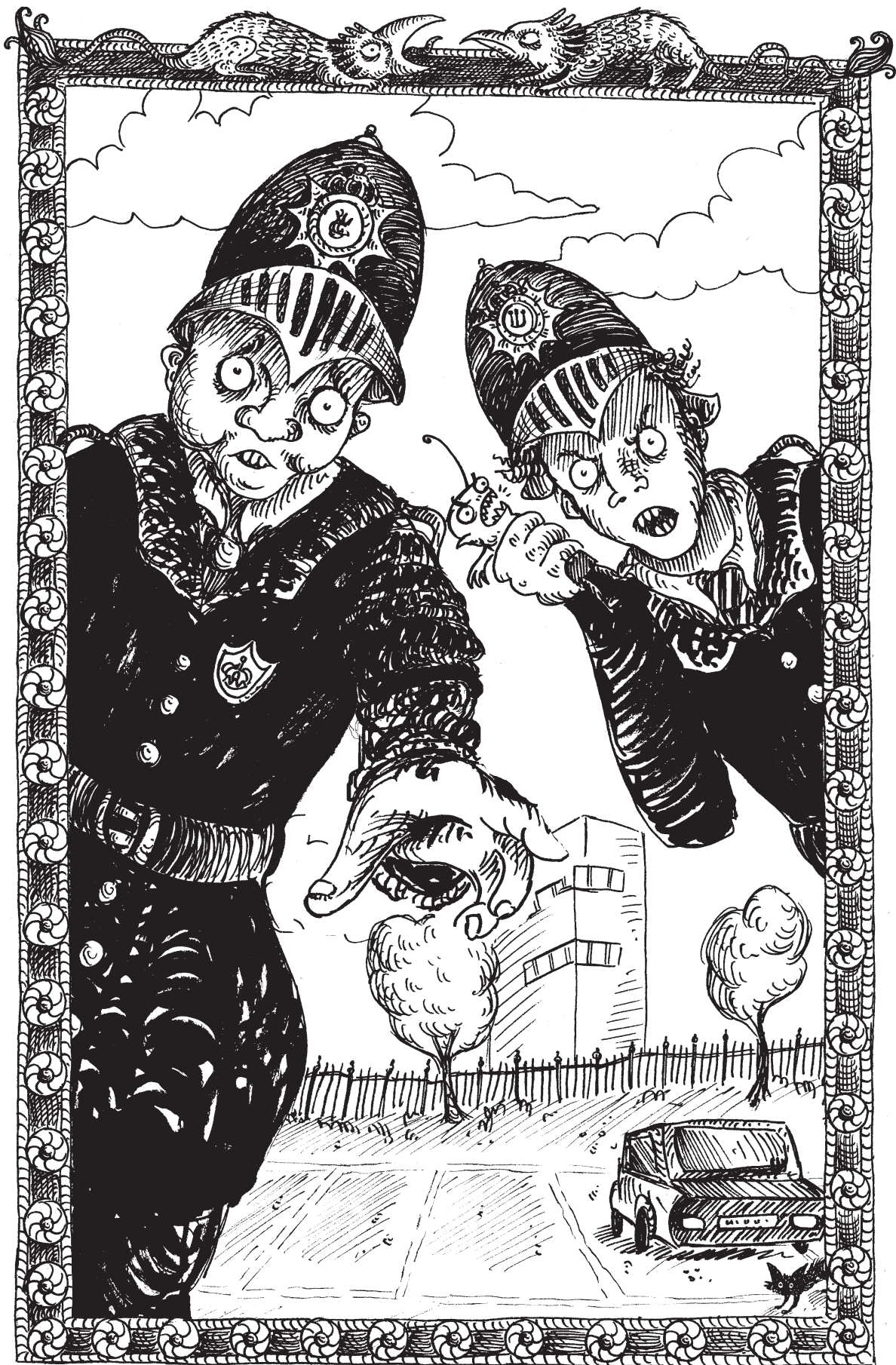
'What's that he's wrapped in?' said PC Smith.

'I dunno,' said PC Johnson. 'It looks like some kind of oversized blanket. Black blanket though – that's odd. All those weird red shiny patterns all over it as well. Looks foreign.'

'My nephew's got something like it. I think it's from some fantasy game or film with wizards and dragons and stuff,' said PC Smith.

His robes! So he was still wearing his Cloak of Endless Night. Excellent. They didn't realise those 'weird red shiny patterns' were Blood Glyphs of Power. Each Glyph was a mighty spell. Now he had them!

He managed to crane his neck, focusing on one



*Puny humans! Oh, if only I had my Gauntlets of Destruction!*

of the Glyphs. It was the Glyph of Domination. All he had to do was read it out loud and all the creatures within a hundred metre radius would be his to command. But he couldn't read it. It didn't make any sense, it seemed completely meaningless. Why could he not understand the Glyphs? After all, he had created them! Had they been stripped of their power somehow? What was happening?

The humans were still blathering on, blissfully unaware of his attempts to destroy them.

'Does he speak English? What's your name, kid?' asked PC Johnson.

The kid, for that's what he looked like, thought for a moment. He couldn't remember his name. No matter how hard he tried, he just couldn't. But he could remember what he was, and his primary title.

'Daa...(cough, cough). I am the Dark Lord,' he said. To his horror, he realised his voice really did sound like some kind of do-gooding Elf woman or a human boy-child!

'Dirk? Did you say Dirk?'

'No! NO! Dark! Dark Lord.' But his voice came out wrong, weak and raspy and even more boyish than before.