

FROM : <https://www.aftertheboardgame.com/>

## **Legion (fiction) :**

Legion is the piece of fiction written to accompany Legion (character). It was first posted on the Temple of Lore on February 9, 2008.

LEGION

by "Chris Pflanz and Laurence J Sinclair".

Flickering torchlight illuminated the confined rock cavern, more for comfort against the dark than for the necessity of sight. The trio of dwarves descended warily, for while they neared the end of their weeks-long pilgrimage the walls about them had echoed to the sounds of war not so long ago. Hands sat uneasily on their weapons' hilts.

The two younger dwarves had taken to muttering between themselves. Although he couldn't make out specifics, Balance still heard them, and the chances were that so did any monsters that still lurked in the World Below. "Aye, if'n ye both want to live long enough to see the memorial, ye'd do well to hush!"

The assassin nodded silently within her hood, but her companion raised his hands before him and laughed. "My apologies! We'll try and keep it quiet from here on, aye?"

Balance was about to launch himself into a lecture but instead tightened his grip on the walking staff and set off again. He could only hope that Chant would maintain a level of decorum at their destination. It was a holy place, perhaps the most holy now that the long war was ended and the Abyss sealed, and with Kor's grace perhaps the noisome cantor would be awed quiet, if only for five minutes.

"If we're almost there," Chant offered, four minutes later, "why don't we break for food now, aye? Can't do to be meeting famous heroes on an empty stomach!"

Balance sighed, looking to Spiteful for her opinion. She shrugged, and so he removed his pack and brought forth more of their dwindling rations. At least Chant would be hard-pressed to say much while he ate.

"Let's not be forgetting the drink that goes with yer food!" Chant said, brandishing a well-worn bottle.

Meal concluded, Balance led the party toward the crumbled archway that marked the threshold, whatever carvings that may once have decorated its stone eroded away. Chant was managing a hushed reverence as they crossed, and Spiteful was as quiet as ever. He worried about the assassin, and not just in the suspicious manner that all dwarves felt around the murdering caste. Her pain and grief was clearly visible to the cleric; she didn't seek to mask it beneath bluster as Chant did. Was she here to gain hope from the sacrifice of her ancestors, he wondered, or to make some final peace?

"Well met, pilgrims," came a solemn voice from up ahead. There, standing beside a towering column with chisel in hand, was a well-muscled dwarf, dark hair and beard kept short despite his venerable age.

"Saul Tombcarver, as I live and breathe," Balance smiled. "Good to see that Kor has not claimed ye yet."

"Sometimes I wish that he had, in place of these others," Saul said, standing back to admire his work and wipe sweat from his brow.

Balance looked to the column, plain in comparison to the others with no statue or even relief to indicate who lay there. Just a single word was carved, and once he read it he understood.

There was nothing more that needed to be written, as every dwarf already knew in their heart exactly what he had stood for.

Xod.

Spiteful moved forward to kneel before the obelisk, sitting in what Balance assumed was silent contemplation, until he heard her muttering.

"The King is dead. Has our sense of duty followed him?"

Balance thought better of trying to comfort her, moving away as quietly as he could manage, sparing a nod to Saul in recognition of his handiwork. He paced past the elaborate and gory dedication to the legendary Lasan Warbreaker, stone imitations of slain Abyssals lying at the warlord's graven feet.

Chant was standing just beyond the statue, looking up at the bronze plaque that adorned the door to a separate tomb. It was the epitaph of another great Abyssal hunter in dwarven history, Gris Ironfist.

"When hunting the Abyss, be careful not to stare into it too long," Chant intoned aloud in his melodic voice. "For when you peer into the heart of evil be warned; it looks into you as well."

"This is what ye came to see?" Balance asked.

"What, ye thought that I couldn't be serious? The things I've seen in the World Above, philosophy like that is starting to feel more relevant."

Balance nodded; the upworlders were almost as alien as the Abyssals. Then he froze, looking over his shoulder. Saul and Spiteful remained where he had left them, but there was something else...

He wandered out into the tunnels, mumbling prayers and wards as he searched for the cause of that uneasy feeling. As he neared the cave-in where the nation had lost a king, Kor answered him.

Spiteful and Chant jumped to their feet as Balance ran back into the memorial chamber. "Run. NOW! Don't ask why and don't stop until you see the sun!" he roared.

They quickly grabbed the gear as a thundering boom sounded from further down the cavern. Their worst fears were coming true...

Glowing magical orbs hung from the rafters of the room, illuminating packed shelves and the ancient tomes and scrolls they contained. Two men nearly slumped over the volumes open on the table before them, but still their fingers traced over the lines as their eyes slowly tracked from side to side, the knowledge that yet more of the Accordlands' tellers' libraries awaited their scrutiny when they were finished.

One researcher looked up suddenly, the light reflecting from his bald head and its many piercings. "Brother, the summoning rituals here mention certain rites that concern the Abyss. Should I bring them over for you to see?"

The second pushed his long, black hair back as he looked up with eyes sunk deep into his pallid flesh. "Yes, Bek'tor, immediately! I don't care whether it concerns creatures or items born of the Abyss, or even stories of the heroes who battled them - I need an exhaustive list of all things concerning this evil. We must be prepared."

With a languid stretch, Bek'tor pushed his chair back, pacing across with book in hand, page carefully marked by a chain. "Here it is then, Stenis," he sneered, allowing the weighty volume to thump down before his elder brother.

Stenis raised an eyebrow, but was too exhausted to rebuke the younger Elshemeer. He scanned quickly to the relevant passage of text, and a few moments reading led to a second eyebrow raised.

“Brother, these are no ordinary rituals. I think you may have found mention of the Madrigorian!” With renewed energy Stenis turned the page, dislodging a manuscript that had been nestled underneath. The scroll cracked like dry leather as he carefully took up the parchment.

It spoke of an ancient tome that had been penned in the blood of great sinner on the tanned skin of Celestials. This tome allegedly held the true names of the Abyssal lords, allowing a wily summoner to call upon them. The author also suggested that it would hold even more power should it fall into the hands of an actual Abyssal, but could only speculate at this power.

“A fine find indeed, brother, but we are not yet finished here.” With a wave of his hand Stenis drew Bek’tor’s eyes to the far corner of the room where hundreds of books still waited to share their secrets. With a great sigh Bek’tor retrieved another stack and continued their work. The hours melted away like the wax of a candle, and still the brothers worked and compiled notes. Storm clouds began to gather along with the eerie feeling that the brothers were digging into something better left buried. They ignored the signs as they ignored the empty feeling in their stomachs and continued their search until another clue was unearthed, drawing Bek’tor to wander once more to his brother’s side.

“The Staff of Damnation,” Stenis said. “In this tome, a Deverenian summoner claims to have seen it! Its power captivated him, and the item was banished when his fellow guild members found him becoming... ‘corrupted’. Hmm. It contains the Darksoul Gem, itself a source of strength for Abyssals. A shame that it was ‘lost to the Abyss.’”

Stenis began packing up his notes and all the material he’d assembled. “Come Bek’tor, it is time to move on.” The brothers began their spell of teleportation, but even as the last syllables fell from their parched lips a vaporous blast of mist from the books they carried enveloped them, transporting them far from their desired location...

Thunder booms in the distance...

Red lightning rips across the acrid sky...

Heat emanates from all around...

A grin slowly spreads on his infernal visage...

And above his minions work to further his will...

Ter-Soth surveyed the battlefield, and saw that it was good. Amongst the tangled ruins, his legions of Abyssals tore at the cluster of robed cultists with a ferocity that even they had not demonstrated before. Rendered mortal, ‘kill or be killed’ was finally registering as a tactic in their dull brains.

And mainly they killed. The last few humans were clustered together as demons surrounded them, so Ter-Soth descended from his vantage point to begin the final ritual. In the short time that it took him to glide from the dessicated watchtower, the cultists were all dead, their flesh fuel for the fire.

It had been so generous of Abraxas to have them congregate together there, he thought. Silent commands sent the lesser demons around him scurrying into activity again. Rather than sate their hunger they began to drape the carcasses at specific points around the area, all in accordance with the grand design.

Ter-Soth himself mounted the corpse-built dais at the focal point of the grotesque symbol, nodding in approval as his minions fell to their knees, willing sacrifices to fuel the magic, howling in anticipation and terror.

All was in readiness, the moons themselves hiding from the sight behind blood-red clouds. A fluttering pair of tiny, smoking imps held a steaming book before him, and he began the incantation.

« Duratu asoloth virunm. Rietcumus Domianisal Oretus! »

« Duratu asoloth virunm. Rietcumus Domianisal Oretus!»

« Duratu asoloth virunm. Rietcumus Domianisal Oretus...”

As he concluded each line and verse, the selected sacrifices impaled themselves on wicked blades, their demonic ichor adding to the growing pool of blood in the center of the ritual site. Few Abyssals besides Soth himself were still able to witness the culmination when it came. A rush of air from the circle, and everything went quiet and still in the void remaining. The charnel cesspool pulsed with energy, before coalescing into a shape, dragging itself through the rift with titanic claws.

The shattered husk of Castle Blackthorn rang to noise again, the remaining Abyssals adding their chants of worship alongside the roar of their lord as he was finally released from his imprisonment. Scalding heat radiated from the plated armor of his skin, and tremendous fangs spread a grin across his powerful, horned skull of a head.

Ter-Soth fell to one knee before the dread Legion, whose very presence proved his theory correct. The Abyss may well have been sealed, but the pacts of the many foolish mortal summoners down the centuries had built up quite the reservoir of power, just waiting to be tapped. Tapped, and poured into a suitable vessel.

Now was truly chaos' time...

Legion stepped forth, the Accordlands screeching at his presence. It had been an age and more since last he had walked the world, and so he spent a moment taking it all in, quite oblivious to the lesser demons being born from his form, their sacrifice rewarded with a rebirth from the Abyss that he had become.

His surroundings were familiar, but time had not been kind to them, a once grandiose fortress reduced to a withered ruin. The mortal Blackthorn, for his duplicity, had been lain low.

Legion smiled at this thought, but it was tinged with regret at the lack of personal involvement he'd had in that revenge.

The paladin had been so promising at first, as well. Oh, the blood and souls that had been offered! Legion would have to find others willing to supply him so eagerly, and his memories were providing plenty of candidates.

Reaching a decision, he looked down at Ter-Soth, the brullakha prostrating himself as humbly as his arrogance permitted, offering up his staff and tome. "What are your wishes, my master?"

"Find me the Medusan Lords..."

---