

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

Stolen Destiny Fiction :

Stolen Destiny - Part 1 is a official Warlord CCG fiction as written by the Story Team. It was posted to WarlordCCG.de on May 1, 2008.

It reads:

Each of the hooded figures was chanting, but no two of them were doing so with the same words, or even to the same rhythm. The tumble of blasphemous verses clashed discordantly, yet still the monster at the centre of the ring smiled and hummed along.

His hands - one a brutal, metal claw - were held before him, clenched tight around a twisted brass rod, its head crowned with a slowly revolving cluster of eyes, each one dripping tears of blood into the mystical sigils inscribed in the stone at the monster's feet.

From the crowd, a silver robed elf slowly strode, his head held low in deference as he offered up a chalice, almost bubbling over with crimson liquid. The monster stooped to allow it to be poured into his mouth, greedily slurping it down. With a roar, he reared up to his full height again, screaming to the heavens and sweeping his arms wide. The elf scuttled backwards, but too slowly, as the monster brought its claw forwards, spearing several taloned fingers through the ribcage.

"I thank you for your help," the monster grated, watching the elf twitch its last moments.

In the moment of the murder, the ceremony had abruptly ended, the cultists awaiting the next order of their master. One of their number followed the trail the elf had walked, throwing back its hood to reveal a face all mandible and darkness. "Was it really necessary to kill Rigel?" Jautya Syne chittered.

The larger monster looked downward, jeweled eye glinting in the light of the Nexus. "Now he shall share his formula with no other. The Silvered Fount is mine alone to relish, as is the Channeling Rod of Bascaron."

Some of Syne's eyes darted to the weapon, observing the orbs rotating about it. "...Whose bearer also met an untimely end," Jautya whispered. "My lord, this wholesale slaughter is wholly unnecessary. It lacks finesse. Observe how I dealt with the two humans earlier. Their destiny was to slay you, and it was a simple matter to thwart this fate by helping them, directing them onto another course. Death does not change destiny, it merely -"

"I am Malrog the Destroyer," the other rumbled. "Destiny will do what I tell it to, and so will you if you want to live."

"Indeed, master, but these brutal examples are counterproductive to our campaign. My cohorts are finding it ever harder to tempt the destined to join us. If we don't gather the requisite number in time -"

Once more Malrog cut the shapeshifter's speech short. "I have had my fill of associates and toadies, Syne. My first vision of dominance was centred around a group of near-equals, together powerful enough to crush the nations of the Accord beneath our collective heels.

"But the more members one invites, the more strained the links between them, and the greater the chance of our enemies finding a weakness. K'hallaek even thought to snare an angel from the heavens - shall we see how well that turned out?"

Malrog gestured, and it took all of Jautya's years of practiced deception to hide his surprise at the increasing ease with which the NoThRoG manipulated the energies of the Nexus. The pillar of light darkened, revealing a glimpse into the Accordlands, yet this time not of a possible future to be stolen, but the past.

The scene was indistinct, but perhaps that was because the principal players demanded such attention themselves. The Celestial that Malrog had mentioned was sweeping an obsidian sword through ranks of elves and undead, the brilliance of his halo almost blinding. His glow was matched by the warrior that faced him, an ethereal knight with death in his eyes. The angel laughed, preparing to strike down the spectre, but then a net - a simple fisherman's net - dropped onto him from behind, binding his wings and dragging him to the ground with its weight.

A previously unremarkable cleric gestured for the knight to strike, sharpened teeth drawn back in a smile. Elves closed upon the fallen angel, and the scene froze.

"I could save him," Malrog said. "I could step in now and alter his fate, preventing the fall of that fatal blade. And I could do the same for any number of other Medusan Lords. But I shan't. They are not worth the effort, being of no use, save as a distraction to potential enemies. I believe K'hallaek's sad little band can manage that most admirably."

"So the Destroyer fears nothing and no one? What of the expedition to the Isles of Light and Shadow? Anyone could stumble upon the Ark, and all of this would be for naught."

"The Free King's adventurers? Pah. They seek a different treasure, and in the unlikely event they should cross the cohorts, I have agents in place to deal with them. Zevil and Skrim are expendable, trusted men."

"Oh, I didn't mean them specifically. But they could be a problem. As could a certain pair of heroes with a thwarted destiny waiting to reassert itself..."

"You would threaten me?!? A foolish move, Syne. I could crush you right here and now."

"The cohorts obey me first and foremost. And the chest responsible for your miraculous resurrection is currently in their possession."

Malrog raised his claw momentarily, but flexed and lowered it. "Do not forget your place, or I may forget to control my temper. This detestable alliance need not last much longer."

"The Destroyer does not resort to violence? Truly a miracle. A pity that this change of temperament came too late for Rigel, or even that poor old man..."

"Hah; he was fortunate. His death was quick. The gods will find their ends only after a century of torment. Revenge, Syne: it is the sweetest -"

Uproar from the cloaked cohorts broke through the air, and Malrog turned to face the disturbance, Syne springing for safety in the opposite direction. An armoured man, his long black hair braided tight at the back of his skull, was charging through the cultists, scything them down with his sword.

Stolen Destiny - Part 2 is a official Warlord CCG fiction as written by the Story Team. It was posted to WarlordCCG.de on May 2, 2008.

It reads:

"Ah yes, surprise interventions by unlikely heroes," Malrog chuckled. "I remember them well. Even the Plane of Secrets respects tradition, I see. Well boy, what is it that brings you to your doom?"

"You killed my father," the man replied, having finally cleaved his way through the crowd to stand before Malrog, determination personified.

Malrog closed his eye, tilting his head back. "Thank you, Nexus. Yedraw's brat. Kerebrus, is it? Another betrayal Syne will have to answer for."

"Silence," Kerebrus said. "Just die."

He leaped forward, sword raised above his head, and neatly sliced stright through Malrog's right elbow. The iron claw thudded to the ground, and Kerebrus landed neatly behind the NoThRoG, his blade spinning into a defensive stance.

Malrog roared, the Channeling Rod of Bascaron fuming and blasting a molten cascade of energy at the human. Throwing his hand up, Kerebrus spoke a prayer, the baleful magic splashing from a protective aura.

The Destroyer bellowed again, but then looked to his stump. While his enchanted prosthetic had been removed, the still-living flesh was pulsing and writhing, bones and flesh clambering over each other in a coil to recreate a fist, flexing fingers forming a hand. Malrog considered it.

“The Silvered Fount. Hah. Know you now, oh mighty Kerebrus, that you face a being that cannot die! I am immortal!”

At these last words, his newly grown hand rose to his face, nails clawing at the edge of the metal plating that had given rise to the Ironface name. A single tug of his augmented muscles ripped it free, a brief spurting of blood and brain fluid scattering through the air before a new skull slid into place, all too soon clothed in fresh, green flesh, with an angry red eye staring directly at Kerebrus.

“Carve off all you want, ‘hero’. I shall regrow it. I’m guessing that you can’t boast the same.” Malrog pounded toward Kerebrus, who stood unflinching. Yet the giant’s first blow was faster than anyone could have imagined the brute capable of, slamming into his opponent’s chest and hurling him a considerable distance across the chamber, crunching down only slightly shy of the blazing Nexus of Secrets itself. His scale-mail had not softened the blow at all, and the broken bones within him slowed his rise to his feet. But rise he did, silently bearing the pain.

No sooner had he regained his feet than Malrog was upon his again, kicking him to the ground with savage fury and following up with a foot crunching down upon his sword arm, shattering it.

“The Nexus tells me all your secrets, Kerebrus,” the NoThRoG laughed. “Last of the Avendeen. Unwitting pawn of a duplicitous god. Principled, devout. Yet all your rules, your petty dreams and standards, came to nothing in the end, did they?”

Malrog paused to grasp Kerebrus’ broken arm, raising the warrior by it and savouring the defiance on his face. “Blackthorn bested you. Blackthorn. To me, to Malrog Ironface, he is almost nothing. Against me, Kerebrus, you have no hope of victory.”

Once again Kerebrus was slammed into the ground, but Malrog withheld the killing strike.

“Your pathetic clinging to the tenets of Law has brought you nothing. A leader of sellswords, too pious to actually sell their swords. Your men loathed you, and the sundering of their brotherhood was a release.

“Whereas I? I have killed thousands, grown in power beyond your comprehension. This rod that I hold is the very embodiment of Chaos. And yet it is chained to my will, unleashing my every desire. The last surviving memory of a dead species, that I crushed myself. That is an achievement, Kerebrus. My enemies lie dead and their mechanisms serve me. Now prepare yourself to join the Medusans in extinction.”

“Kasugoan will judge me just.”

Malrog sneered at the words, and the Channeling Rod began to glow, the eyes speeding their cycle about it as the power built. The final discharge snaked through the intervening space to Kerebrus instantly.

Yet instead of obliterating the fallen hero, instead the energy was reforming into another cloaked humaoid shape, light cascading from beneath the hood. The woman’s fingers arched into mystical gestures, and the rod disintegrated in Malrog’s hand.

“How?” was all he could gasp as the newcomer backed away from him.

“You courted Medusa’s heritage, damned one, and so here I am.”

“No...”

Stolen Destiny - Part 3 is a official Warlord CCG fiction as written by the Story Team. It was posted to WarlordCCG.de on May 3, 2008.

It reads:

“Yes, I am Sorscha, last of the true Medusans. It was I that arranged your first death, and so too shall I orchestrate your second and final one. This time, face to face.”

She tipped the hood back, revealing the visage beneath, source of the glow. Tentacles writhed about her scalp in place of hair or ears, a disturbing counterpoint to the beautiful face that matched her perfect body. “I knew that you could not resist claiming the rod, and so I laid this trap. You have fallen right into it, beast.”

“You’re too late!” Malrog screamed. “Even without the rod, I am immortal! I will tear you apart!”

He stormed toward her, but a simple movement of her hand brought a torrent of beasts forth from the ether, monsters of claw and wing, every twisted variation of Bascaron’s influence. The sheer weight of flesh bore Malrog downward, but each wound they gored or bit healed almost instantly, while he crushed them one at a time with his immense hands.

Kerebrus stood at Sorscha’s side, his shattered frame swaying. “That won’t finish him.”

“No. He has indeed grown too powerful for me. But without the rod, perhaps there is a chance for you.” One hand slid the hood back into place, while the other gestured to the Nexus, its once focussed facade now cycling wildly through futures foretold and false, familiar faces at war and in death.

Kerebrus approached it, weakly raising his broken hand to caress the energies. “Kasuguan...” he whispered. The divine answered, the feeble spirits of the Plane of Secrets no barrier. The Nexus ceased its chaotic tumbling, returning to an ordered array of information to Kerebrus. “I see,” he said, flexing his healed hand.

Malrog rose from the mound of corpses, holding the last Brine Fiend aloft, its jaw working over a torn mass of his flesh. He brought it down across his knee, snapping the creature in half before approaching Sorscha again.

“Your turn, sorceress. I thank you for giving me a chance to finish what I started, all those years ago. It makes my final victory so much more satisfying.”

“Kill me then. But the final victory shall belong to me, and my butchered people.”

Malrog shrugged.

“No,” Kerebrus said. “She will live to see her victory.”

As Kerebrus moved to stand beside Sorscha, unarmed, Malrog smiled. “Two of you. Both the last of their race. Pathetic.”

“The Nexus tells me all your secrets, Malrog,” Kerebrus said, slowly and calmly. “You weren’t always this terrible harbinger of death. There was a time when you were a simple NoThRoG, the last of your legion to be killed by Deathbile.”

“I did not die there. I was reborn in the dragon’s blood!”

“Look again.”

Malrog gazed into the Nexus, and saw his own corpse, melting into nothingness within the digestive acid of the dragon’s gut.

“That’s not how it happened! I carved out its heart! Feasted upon it! What have you done? You dare to steal my destiny?”

“It’s simple when you know how,” Sorscha purred, as Kerebrus swept his hand through the nexal energies once more. “And you don’t have your rod anymore, do you?”

“Your will is no match for mine!” Malrog snarled, thrusting his own fist into the light.

“It’s not about will, Malrog,” Kerebrus said, withdrawing his limb. “It’s about faith. Something you are somewhat lacking in.”

The Nothrog's eyes widened, but it was too late. The Nexus latched onto him with tendrils of slicing light, drawing him closer to its core, his silhouette eventually invisible against the pure glare, his bellowed demands and threats lost to the returning whisper of secrets and false promises.

"But he's not dead," Kerebrus said, turning back to Sorscha again.

"No. We have merely restored him to where he belongs, restoring destiny to its correct course. Malrog died in Deathbile's gut, yet a newer, more powerful Malrog will rise from the ashes, a new sense of purpose within him."

"Yet weakened sufficiently by the dragon's blood so as to be mortal?"

"Of course. Once again he can look forward to his death, and once more lay out a plan to return from the grave and steal destiny itself."

"So you didn't get your revenge."

"It was never about revenge," Sorscha said, slowly pacing away from the Nexus, becoming lost in the shadows of the Plane of Secrets in the time it took Kerebrus to blink.

The templar, alone amongst the dead monsters and cohorts, sank to his knees finally, tears forming. He could hear Jautya Syne scuttling away, but let him. This was more important.

"Father," he said. Then he lowered his head. "Kasugoan. I promised you that I would never fail. But I did not arrive in time to save him, and you spared my life. Is this what you truly want? It will not be easy to change, but if it is your will..."

A full minute of silence passed, before a slim hand touched the warrior's shoulder. "Are you done here?" a woman's voice asked.

"Yes. My business with Sorscha and Malrog has been concluded. But the Nexus showed me more. A coming battle, with everything at stake. Let this be an end to my travels. It is time to return to the Accordlands. I will not be late again."

He rose, facing his companion with his jaw set into its familiar grim expression. "And your faith?"

"Tested. It holds. But I am beginning to realise the wisdom of your sermons on flexibility. I learn."

Kerebrus smiled.
