

THE KING OF
LEGION



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HYPERION  CHRONICLES

To the inner child that still holds onto dreams and clings to hope, this book is dedicated to you. May it serve as a reminder that great things await you if you continue to dream.

Dream Chasers for life.

Long ago, in a time of ancient creation, the universe existed with a delicate balance between the forces of Light and Shadow. To carry on his legacy, Matakanui, the creator, sculpted two sons in his own image - one embodying the pure essence of Light, and the other representing the mysterious power of Shadow. Together, the two sons governed over The Great Mother, Hyperion. For thousands of years, this world flourished in peace, inhabited by the first beings - the Children of Mata and The Ogres of Kaz. However, tragedy struck when betrayal and deceit tore through the fabric of this harmonious existence. Hyperion became corrupted, plunging into eras of war and destruction that lasted over a millennium. In response to this darkness, Matakanui sent a cataclysmic flood and destructive earthquake to cleanse the world of the Shadow's influence. From the ashes of this cleansing, the world was reshaped, five nations were born, each with the purpose of reclaiming Hyperion and restoring it to its former glory. Yet, even with the world seemingly freed from the clutches of evil, the true source of darkness - the Shadow itself - remained hidden, persisting, and biding its time. The great adversary patiently waits, lurking in the darkness, for the hearts and minds of the people of Hyperion to grow weak and susceptible once again. It yearns for the opportunity to rise to power and destroy the Light, as it tried in the past. To safeguard against this threat, Matakanui created a Guardian, a beacon of Light, who remains in Hyperion, ready to defend against the return of the Shadow. The time will inevitably come when the two powers clash once more, and the fate of Hyperion hangs in the balance. But do not fear, for there is hope. The forces of Light, love, and friendship shall prevail, as they always have. Together, we can face this challenge and overcome any darkness that may arise.

Prologue

In the realm of Hyperion, Rangers of the Legion Nation are returning from the north after a special deployment.

“What a sight for sore eyes.”

Master Ranger Jensen Pupule let out a sigh of relief as his gaze landed on the outskirts of the Legion Nation territory. It felt like a lifetime since he had been home. Master Jensen arrived in from the north, accompanied by First Ranger Markell Cuevas riding towards a small tavern nestled at the base of a hill, with a forest looming in the background. The morning breeze provided a welcome coolness to their faces, while the soft tones of purple signaled the approaching sunrise in the west.

"A beautiful morning it is brother!" Markell yelled out, catching the attention of another Ranger who was riding up to them from the south. Markell, being young and full of enthusiasm, often felt that the older generation didn't fully appreciate his energy.

"Piss off, mate. It's too early and too cold fo ma arse to be ridin this far on this dreadful Stang," the Ranger grumbled, his heavy Cree accent evident. Raymond Combs hailed from the Southern Islands of the Cree Nation, coming from a lineage of former Cree Pirates who had become Citizens of the Legion Nation. Raymond never seemed to fare well in any weather other than his homeland, and he never hesitated to complain about it.

"Why coodn't I jus ride ma bloody Rova in meetin y'all here?" Raymond grumbled, not really expecting an answer but wanting to voice his complaints.

"A Rover would attract too much attention. You know that the Grand Reserve only permits its use on special occasions. Besides, most Rovers are down in the Capital for the celebration." Jensen replied, shaking Raymond's forearm in the traditional Legion manner. The three Rangers of the Legion Nation had planned to meet early in the morning at the outskirts of a small town known as Tavern Way just days before the celebrations. The town marked the northernmost edge of the Legion Nation territory.

"It's been ages since I last laid my eyes on home." Jensen remarked to his fellow Rangers. He was the oldest among the three, with long black hair and a square jaw with light stubble. Jensen was a Master Ranger of the Legion Nation and was responsible for overseeing the borders of the Shadowlands, a duty he had faithfully fulfilled for nearly three decades. His family had a long history tied to the region, tracing back to the earliest Kanui Rangers. The man riding with him was Markell, recently appointed as an Investigator under Jensen's command, he was a young man with his clean-shaven face and piercing blue eyes. Raymond, on the other hand, the man who stubbornly greeted them, stood tall with deep skin and distinctive dreadlocks that were twisted and coiled on his head. He had a straightforward demeanor, typical of the people of the Cree Nation. As a Master Ranger stationed in the Amber Dunes of the Emproyles Nation, he had gained fame for his victories against the Shadow-Beasts of the north known as Scorpious. However, his confrontational nature and lack of respect for others had made him somewhat of an outcast among his fellow Rangers.

While two of the men donned the traditional all-black hooded cloaks and leather tunics of the Rangers, blending into the darkness as was their custom, Raymond's attire was more suited to the Regulators of the Dunes. His light brown and tan linen tunic were designed to withstand the harsh heat of the Dunes, allowing him to blend seamlessly into his surroundings. The group

arrived on magnificent Stangs; majestic creatures bred in the east. These creatures possessed a combination of grace, strength, and speed, with their long necks, legs, and sturdy hooves covered in elegant fur.

For a thousand years, the Rangers had stood as vigilant protectors for the five nations against the forces of the Shadow. However, it had been nearly four hundred years since anyone had even seen Ogres. As time passed, the memory of those dark times and the threat of the Shadow had faded from the minds of most people, lulling the masses to sleep.

"Let's make a pit stop here, boys. Looks like it's the only tavern open. Hurry up, I'm craving some juicy lamb skewers." Jensen declared, trotting ahead of the group. The ground beneath them was muddy and damp as they approached the tavern, the aroma of smoke wafting from its chimney. From the looks of it, the tavern had just opened its doors. As they got closer, a prominent sign reading **"Almeria"** decorated the front. The three men stepped into a room permeated with the enticing scent of grilled meat. The tavern had an old-fashioned charm and could comfortably accommodate around twelve guests at full capacity. Their eyes stung as they entered, the air thick with smoke and the aroma of cooking meat. The tavern was relatively empty, except for a solitary figure seated to the far left, his face concealed beneath a cloak, quietly enjoying a cigar and rum. Another man, presumably the tavern owner, worked diligently to wipe down the tables. He had a strong build, with hands that seemed disproportionately large and a belly that could easily have belonged to three people.

"Hello there, fellars! What brings you down to my fine establishment this early in the day? Is the King in need of some of my Elk for the celebrations? I can whip up something special for him." The tavern owner, Bob Almeria, greeted the three men with a warm smile.

"Yes, sir! We'll take some to present to the King." Jensen replied, leaning over to Markell and whispering, **"Always say yes to people, Markell. It sets the right energy, especially when you're entering an unfamiliar place."** The three men settled down at the nearest table as Bob returned with drinks in hand.

"The name's Bob Almeria, but most fellars call me Butters," the man introduced himself, emitting a scent of freshly melted butter that seemed to justify his nickname. He continued,

"We often get Rangers down here. The food is on the house. Here's some hot tea to thank you for stopping by. The early bird gets the worm, you know. It's all about starting the morning right." The Rangers didn't seem interested in engaging in lengthy conversation even as the man began to rant, they simply waved their hands, signaling that they wanted to focus on their business.

"I'll leave you fellars to it, then. Don't mind me." Bob concluded, walking away while muttering to himself about not getting involved in people's affairs.

"So, Jensen, what's the purpose fo this here meetin? I was headed to Sandcreek Harbor to investigate some Scorpius sightins. Those buggars are real nasty, I tell ya," Raymond asked as they each grabbed their cups of tea.

"Lower your voice, Ranger. The eyes and ears of the Shadow are everywhere," Jensen replied, the Senior Master Ranger of the group. Jensen always spoke with conviction, commanding respect. Raymond quickly corrected himself, acknowledging Jensen's higher rank among the Rangers.

"Young Markell and I were sent by the King to investigate some mysterious disappearances," Jensen continued, catching Raymond's attention.

"Disappearances?" Raymond interrupted, eager for more information.

"Shh. Yes, and not your typical kind. Entire homesteads of people vanished without a trace, leaving all their belongings behind. Something seemed off right from the start. It made the Lord Ranger uneasy. Members of the Vantis Guard were sent in first to investigate the matter, but they never returned. That's when we were assigned to the task," Jensen explained, raising intrigue.

"Well, mate, did ya find anythin?" Raymond asked, unable to contain his curiosity.

"Markell, explain," Jensen instructed, giving Raymond a stern look, signaling him to refrain from interrupting again.

"There were no signs of anything at the homesteads we investigated. No footprints, nothing. We reached out to the townsfolk who knew these missing folks, but they hadn't been seen in months. Here's where it gets weird. When we arrived at the last known location of the Vantis Guard members," Markell began, Raymond appearing as though he wanted to interject once more, but Jensen's expression halted him.

"I noticed something strange. Small black markings scattered throughout the house, like burn marks or dust. And then, next to the staff of a Vantis Guard member, there was an inscription on the door. It read; THE SOURCE SHALL RETURN. And in one of the rooms, on the floor, there was another inscription— a word I've never seen before. It said Der..." Markell trailed off.

"That's enough, Ranger. We shall not utter that word," Jensen cut Markell off before he could finish speaking the name.

"But I don't understand, sir. What does it mean?" Markell asked, puzzled.

"What'd it say, Jensen?" Raymond couldn't hold himself back any longer, his curiosity getting the best of him.

"It was the name of the true enemy that the Ogres refer to as The Source, the ruler of the Shadow. A name so wicked, so malevolent, that it was deliberately wiped from the chronicles of history. A mere whisper of that name is enough to give power to the very essence of darkness itself. This is someone who, by all accounts, should have faded into oblivion." Jensen leaned in; his voice mixed with a palpable sense of fear.

"You see, my friend, there are truths. Truths, only known to a select few who have eyes to see and ears to hear. These truths are intertwined within the Shadow's wicked legacy. The Great Adversary." Jensen explained.

"Yeah, yeah, we know. We've all heard the stories growin up about the epic battles between Light and Shadow durin the times of the Children of Mata and the Ogre Wars. But most of it is just legends and fairy tales. No one believes in tha nonsense anymore." Raymond responded dismissively. Markell, however, was defensive on the subject and responded with conviction.

"It's not just a story. I've studied the Guardian Cycle, the spirit of Luehtaz passes down to a chosen person every generation to one of the five nations to defend against the Shadow. And sixteen years ago, the blue comet appeared in the sky, signaling the time of

the Guardian in the Legion Nation. I bet that's what this celebration in the capital is about—to announce who the Guardian is." Markell asserted.

"Hocus pocus mumbo jumbo. This talk of the Shadow isn't real. In this world, it's just life or death, and when I have my sword on someone, I become their God." Raymond declared, pretending to draw his sword. Jensen shook his head and continued.

"Both of you only know so little. I've spent three decades near the Shadowlands, and you'll see things that would make a grown man piss himself, Shadow-Hounds, Widows, Sirens, you name it." Jensen said. There was a long pause before he continued,

"I don't believe in coincidences. Strange disappearances, vanishing Vantis Guard members, the Shadow's true name, Scorpius sightings, and the celebration—it's all connected." Jensen took a sip of his tea.

"So, what's our next move?" Markell asked, just as fresh skewers were delivered by Butters. They waited until he left before continuing their conversation.

"We are to return to Stryder's Keep and inform the King of our findings. The Legion Order may decide to provide us with more men to continue searching our borders for this threat." Jensen replied with a hint of dismay.

"Mata help me. I was looking forward to spendin a lot of time at this celebration. I have a fine Rora waitin fo me," Raymond said, rubbing his hands together, thinking about the beautiful women known as Rora's in the Legion Nation. Raymond continued,

"But it looks like we won make it back in time." All three men raised their glasses in a toast and said in unison, **"For the King."** Just as they were halfway through sipping their tea,

a low raspy voice disrupted the air, uttering words that were considered blasphemy in the Legion Nation,

"F* the King."**

Raymond spewed out his drink in shock, and all three men turned their attention to the man sitting in the distance, whom they had noticed when they first entered the room.

"What did you just say, sir?" Markell inquired, his tone as if someone had insulted his mother.

"Choose ya next words wisely partna," Raymond warned, as the three men stood up from their chairs.

"I said, F* the King,"** the man in the corner repeated defiantly after a long draw on a cigar he had his mouth before putting it out.

"To disrespect the King is punishable by death. We are Rangers, and we have the right to King's Justice," Jensen declared loudly.

The man smirked from beneath his hood and responded,

"You three dare discuss the Shadow, claiming you possess an understanding of evil, as if you have truly tasted suffering, as if you have ventured into the depths of the Darkness itself." Taking another moment to savor a swing of a fiery amber drink in front of him,

"But let me assure you, neither you nor your King can comprehend the true extent of what lies ahead." he concluded with confidence,

"And what do you know?" Jensen snapped, his grip tightening on the handle of his sword.

"The world began in chaos and so shall it return. The true master of the Shadow is near." The hooded man stated as the three Rangers approached, their hands ready to draw their weapons.

"The Shadow is nothing to fear. The Light of Luehtaz always wins!" Markell said timidly.

"It's not the Shadow you should fear. It's who lurks within it." the man replied, standing up and throwing his hood back to reveal his face. He continued, **"You will see your King again, but not in this world."**

"It's you!" Jensen exclaimed shocked, but before he could react, the man swiftly kicked the table in front of him, striking Markell directly and then threw a small dagger into Raymond's throat. Jensen engaged him from the left, but after a few exchanges, he was quickly overpowered. Markell, injured and crawling on the ground, realized his leg was broken. He desperately crawled towards the door. The hooded man approached him slowly,

"You spoke of the Guardian. Where is he now?" He leaned down and grabbed Markell, dragging him closer before piercing a knife through his back. **"You shall join the Shadow now."** the man concluded.

"What's all the commotion fellars?" Bob questioned, reentering the room. The hooded man swiftly pulled out a Burner from his waist and blasted Bob, causing his lifeless body to crash to the floor. The man wiped the blood off his hands onto Markell's clothes, looking around at the four dead bodies before heading towards the door. **"You've made me late."** the man said with a chilling grin on his face.