

10th Anniversary Episode

Narrator: Varak Kaloustian

I can see them from here. They can't see me yet, but I still can't believe this'll be the last time I see them like this.

"Ugh..." V holds his head. "What the hell? Where are we?"

Vizor's the first to stand. Not surprising, given his warrior spirit. "I knew we should've killed Vanessa when we had the chance."

"But... we did?" Griff isn't sure how to answer that. Not surprising. Even *I'm* not sure how that last battle happened. But it did. And it was my job to write it down, no matter how much it hurt them.

The confusion is this white field. It was their battleground with Vanessa, and it'll be ours too. I want them on their guard as much as possible. They're going to need it in a battle with their creator. ...Can I really do this, though? These are the friends that have defined the last 10 years of my life, at least canonically. Technically, you could go back further. *The Solar System's Prophecies* took four years to write. If you count that, it's almost 15 years.

Shit, this doesn't even count the fourth book that no one will ever know about. Yeah, did you know that? *The Legend of V* technically has four books in the series now. It's written. It's edited. It's complete.

It's just not published.

And if I go forward with this, it never will be. It's the only book for Creation that I completely wrote and never released.

But there's a reason. I haven't been stalling because of the herculean task ahead of me. I've actually been spending all this time planning, nurturing the mistakes I made in the past so that I might correct them in the future.

And that future is now.

No... the change isn't what I'm afraid of.

It's *them*.

Will they even allow something like this? Or will they intervene right in the middle of it?

"Okay, Vanessa, this wasn't funny the first time, and it certainly isn't funny now." Azilez makes her annoyed face. You know the one. One side of her lips is puckered.

I... want to give them a little more time.

I... want to give *me* a little more time.

Just to watch them. One last time.

"You know, I always wondered," Z starts. "How do we know where the floor begins here? Everything's white."

"See that stuff you're standing on? That's the floor." V smirks. Yeah, I'd totally say that. Dumbass Z. Doesn't he know the floor is made of floor?

"See these knuckles on your head? That's called a noogie." I won't lie: the Z in real life never really gave me noogies. I could count those occasions on one hand. In hindsight, though, I deserved *way* more of them. I'm making up for that in fiction.

That's really the root of this monumental change. It's not that I'm going away from *The Legend of V*, but the way it was written before was... primitive, I think is the word I'm looking for.

You have to understand this: the story that this series begins is my life's work. It's the thing that will encapsulate my very being, even long after I'm dead. That's the beauty of writing: it's immortal, unlike the author.

I'm not retconning everything my younger self did because I'm disrespecting him. I'm doing it because I'm proud of him. He's done all he could with the resources he had. 10 long years of hard work... all leading to this.

This white space will serve as an obelisk for his accomplishments. And after today, he can rest in peace and let me take the reins for the rest of it.

It's time. If I wait any longer, I might change my mind, and that's the last thing I want.

"Enough." Hopefully, that echo shook them. But not too badly. Just enough to set the tone.

"V? Was that you?"

"I couldn't make that echo, even with a megaphone, but that *did* sound exactly like me." Makes sense.

He's based off me, after all. "Well... close." And finally, I take physical form in my own mind.

Azilez slumps. "Great. There's two of them."

"Okay, but which one is Vanessa?" D clutches his pickaxe, not sure what to do with it.

Oh, for fuck's sake. This is getting in the way now. They can't know who I am yet, but they should also know I'm not Vanessa. With the snap of my fingers and the click of my keyboard, Vanessa appears in a chair next to me, tied up, completely powerless.

"How did you do that?!" Azilez is legitimately frightened now, ascending into her divine form.

"You can't know. Not yet."

"You have to be Vanessa! There can't be two of me."

"If I was Vanessa, I'd need this, wouldn't I?" Another snap and another click, and her staff appears from the ground next to her.

"And how do we know the staff is real?" God damn it, Vizer. Stop making sense.

You know what? This'll be a lot easier if they just forgot who Vanessa is.

Aaaaand, there we go. None of them know who Vanessa is anymore.

“Why did V kidnap an innocent girl?” Oh, that’s right. I forgot to erase her beforehand. Don’t worry. It’s not painful or anything. She’ll just cease from this existence.

Snap!

Wait, why am I worried about that for Vanessa of all people?

“Okay, I don’t think I can do that.” V snaps at Z, but it doesn’t work the way he hopes it would.

I cut him off with a fiery shockwave. Azilez does a good job protecting them, but they’re still sent back quite a ways.

“Who are you?” Azilez crosses her arms.

The memory of my final fight in Foreverland flows within my three pairs of scarlet-stained glass wings. The afro on my head takes on the same color, but my eyes take on Shahe’s favorite dark blue, a testament to our reality-transcending eternal bond.

If they weren’t scared before, they certainly are now.

“The truth, incarnate.” I crash headfirst into Azilez. Her shield can’t block me anymore, but her hammer can hit the ground hard enough to distract me. The rest of Team TLOV ascends into their divine forms.

A simple jump and spin summons a fire tornado strong enough to repel them.

“Finally! You’re taking this seriously.” I chuck a meteor into the sky, summoning a fiery rainstorm.

D and Azilez rush me. I jump to clear them. Z meets me with a volley of golf balls. I chuck a piece of my wing at each one and clear the way.

The ensuing storm of glass shards forces D to cover Azilez and himself with a giant tree.

Griff challenges my firepower with the jets on the bottoms of his feet. It’s not too tough to match.

Until V backs him.

And Vizor.

I could just beat them whenever I wanted to, but not yet. I'm not sure if I'm in the cle-

Wait.

No.

I see Her.

In their blast.

I force the beam war to subside, but She's not there. My panicked face confuses them.

The only way to know for sure is to keep fighting.

V lands a hit in with my confusion. I tumble to the ground, locked in a pummel fight with my fictional counterpart. This time, there's no mercy from my end.

I can see Her eyes in his.

How do I know?

Because no matter what I write on this page, it doesn't affect Her.

I didn't create Her.

But my greatest fear morphed Her.

V kicks me right in the stomach, shattering a pair of my wings cleanly off my back.

Azilez's now-zig-zag mouth scoops up nearly every shard, but I light the few that remain, sending them at Azilez and V.

The literal mirror shards in their souls reflects the truth of the deity possessing them, setting them free from Her grasp.

They turn to witness Her shadowy horror. Zig-zag mouth. Curly hair. White freckles. Two pulsating eyes. One unforgettable gaze.

"Timeo."

"How many worlds do I need to destroy to teach you?"

“As many as I can think of.”

Her mouth aims at Azilez and V.

V fortifies Azilez’s rainbow shield with fire.

But even with just two pairs of my wings, it’s enough to stop Her from even touching them.

V and Azilez look up, unsure of what to do next.

I can’t let my guard down yet. Timeo’s brother isn’t here yet.

The others catch up, watching me stare at my greatest fear.

“Despite knowing about their inevitable demise, you fight to protect them?”

“We are only human. We’re stubborn like that.”

Her bite darkens my sight, and I don’t bother dodging. I’m in Her mouth. I spin into a ball, but She swallows before I can release my big move.

Visions not yet seen by anyone else pass my eyes as I descend into the belly of the beast. The friends that I’ve always had, but don’t know about yet. A world that has already been lost, but not yet forgotten.

Not as long as I’m still here.

Her memory ignites the wings inside me, growing back to their full three pairs.

I find Timeo’s mouth and shatter through it.

“It’s not their time yet.” I declare.

“That is *not* for you to decide!”

Her slashes are usually hard to see, but the white background makes them nearly impossible to miss now.

Despite that, Her speed inevitably causes one slip-up.

And that’s all She needs.

Just as fast as I grew them, She crushes all six of my wings in the palms of Her hands.

I'm bleeding already... shit. He's not even here yet!

"Finally! I'll finish what I started." No, Timeo... I can still fight... my parries are weaker... but they're still fast enough. "I kill you here, and your perfect reality will never be--!"

Hold on. These aren't my attacks.

Team TLOV is helping me parry Timeo.

"What are you doing?! Run away! She'll kill you!"

The flurry of blows has the two sides at a standoff.

"You best listen to him, fools. He's made this mistake before."

Team TLOV isn't sure what to say, so Azilez tugs on my shoulder and asks me again: "Who are you?"

Silence.

This should summon Him.

"I am Varak Kaloustian. I am your creator."

Out of the ground between the opposing sides, a golden serpent erupts next to Timeo. He appears analogous to the Queensrÿche band symbol.

"Uluntu."

"You know the rules, Varak."

"You want my Creation? You're going to have to get through me first."

"At least you'll have the satisfaction of being buried beneath your own ship."

With Team TLOV by my side, our final battle together begins.

Uluntu spins across the sky, dropping shackles from his wings.

Z hits as many golf balls as he can to counter.

But they're not enough.

Until a silver dragon scorches the skies. Hazy!

She lands on the spinning serpent.

One backhand in her divine form is enough to ground Him.
 But His wings catch her during the fall, forcing her to land under Him.

Barely scathed, she and Vizor slash at Uluntu until He's in the sky again.

Two synchronized slashes later, and He's sent into His sister.

At Her side again, Uluntu aims a repeated, red-eyed gaze.

Each time it lands, it summons a cage.

"I've seen this before. These things will only break if He touches it, whether by His own will or not."

Wordlessly, we scatter.

Uluntu's attack gives D an idea. He twirls his scythe, summoning weeds. He whacks them into the ground near the two deities.

V spins into a ball. Z knocks him into the sky with a five iron. I decide to add to it by triggering another meteor storm. Even Timeo and Uluntu can't stomach the resulting fireball.

But that only causes their destructive hunger to grow.

Timeo vomits my scarlet wing shards She ate earlier, forming a coliseum of mirrors with only one reflection.

Her gaze.

The fear paralysis is too much for Team TLOV to handle, even after all that Vanessa put them through.

But I'm not as apathetic as I was in Foreverland.

I not only *can* protect them.

I *will* protect them.

I jump into Timeo's bite before it can reach them. She shatters my wings again.

Before She can advance, I run into Uluntu's gaze, trapping me in His cage.

“Wait for me, guys.”

I close my eyes. The wing shards slowly pull into my back.

Timeo grabs Her brother to smack the cage, but Vizor parries the strike perfectly, causing Timeo to stumble back.

Hazy skydives in her dragon form.

Timeo catches her arm blade in her mouth.

Shattering it.

But Hazy slashes her other one.

Shattering Timeo’s teeth.

Timeo’s own gaze paralyzes Her.

Just in time for D’s trap.

The weeds spring into full-on walls, trapping Timeo inside.

It doesn’t take a wild imagination to see that Team TLOV has their way with Her.

At least until they forget about Uluntu.

His gaze traps them all, except for V, who Griff bicycle kicks into the sky.

V sees his line.

It’s a perfect shot.

Just in time too. My wings formed again.

He dodges Uluntu’s gaze.

Knocking another spinning meteoric strike into His chest, forcing Him into my cage.

Shattering it on impact.

V and I play leg tennis with Uluntu’s entire body.

Eventually creating enough force for V to send Him into the rest of the cages.

Setting the rest of Team TLOV free.

Sadly, that means Timeo is free too. “Enough!”

Timeo and Uluntu fly into the sky.

This is the moment I was waiting for.

My ultimate trump card.

The two deities fuse, forming the majestic draconic Ultimus, the single most powerful being I have ever fought.

And today, I won't even have to touch it.

Because Ultimus is currently impossible to summon.

"Wait...! Where-?" Timeo is confused. "Where is our announcer?!"

I summon the book. The one none of you have read yet. *The Legend of V – Book 4: Witch's Wonderland*.

Uluntu and Timeo scan through it.

"You didn't...!"

"Did I?" I felt like V saying that. I probably smirked like him too. "You should've killed me back in Foreverland. Now, it's going to cost You."

"...Impressive, Varak." Uluntu closes the book. "I never imagined you would use your own world's demise like this."

"Most who experience our crushing doom have no more motivation to try a project as vast as yours again. And none of them certainly had the gall to do something *this* heinous."

"No amount of despair you can inflict is comparable to the despair I gave myself."

The two understand... "But you cannot leave it like this."

"I know. You two can stay to watch it happen."

Timeo and Uluntu stand by and wait.

I walk back to Team TLOV.

"That... was as fun as I always remembered it." I close my eyes and smile.

"And how long would that be?" Hazy asks.

“10 years.” I summon the three books currently published in the series, *The Solar System’s Prophecies*, *Triangle Corruption*, and *Psycho Star Showdown*. I memorialize them. Three spiring obelisks emerge from the ground, a treasured space inside my own mind that will always remind me just how far I’ve come. I toss each book into their respective trophy case.

“Can’t we read them?” Griff asks.

“You don’t have to. You already know what happens in each one.”

“So... what’s next? You must’ve told us you were the creator for a reason, right?” V... always asking the tough questions.

“Oh my God! Varak, are you crying?”

There’s no going back now. Either I go through with this, or Timeo and Uluntu will flood Creation. And it’s much too soon for that.

“Yeah... I am.”

“But we’re finally together! What’s there to be sad about?”

“This... was our last battle together.”

They’re shocked to silence. That could mean a lot of things coming from me. Timeo salivates in the background. She can smell their fear.

“What are you going to do?” Vizer asks, preparing to reach his blades as if it’ll help him.

“You guys... are growing up.”

“What?” Azilez asks.

“*The Legend of V...* is being reborn. Remade. Revitalized. And in order to do that, I want you guys grow up with me... because I also need to erase your past selves from existence. This way, I can respect the story you came from... while still moving forward with all I’ve learned as a result from writing your trilogy.”

“I can’t say I understand any of this, but I suppose we don’t have much of a say in the matter, do we?” V asks.

“No...” I open my arms. “You always do.”

V’s the first to hug me.

Then Griff.

Then Azilez.

Then Z.

Then D.

Then Vizor.

Then Hazy.

One by one, the members of the original Team TLOV fade away, their spirits embedded into the obelisks that house their stories.

They’re back in their world now, completely oblivious to this encounter. All characters who were previously at least 13 or older are now at least 18 (so, everyone except D, basically).

To confirm with Timeo and Uluntu that Team TLOV’s new selves have no memories of this encounter, I allow them to look down at the revitalized Creation I’ve been spending the last few years working on.

“V, I’m gonna fucking kill you! Stop eating all the ladyfingers.” Azilez chases him, to no avail.

“Stop leaving them defenseless.”

“I was gone for five minutes to take a piss. *Five minutes.*”

Griff walks down from the top story of the treehouse.

“Why are you even making dessert this early in the morning anyway?”

“Says the dude who eats Kit Kat for breakfast. At least there’s coffee in mine.”

“Yawwwwn... it’s too early in the morning for this shit.” Griff walks back upstairs to go back to bed. This time, with earplugs.

Back inside my mind... “So, they swear now? That’s your idea of ‘growing up?’” Uluntu asks.

“You have no idea how corny ‘darn it’ sounds until you publish it. ‘Fuck’ just sounds so much more natural. And that’s something my 15-year-old self didn’t really know at the time. Among other things.”

“Well, we can at least see the souls of the people here. Thank you for keeping your word and erasing all their memories.”

“Of course.”

“Don’t think this is over, you peasant. Because you kidnapped Ultimus’s announcer, we’ll be lurking within the shadows, waiting for the perfect chance to strike.”

“Wouldn’t have it any other way.”

Thank you so much to everyone who has made my journey with *The Legend of V* possible. You have no idea how much I have lived and learned as a result of it. Hopefully, this new series will be testament to just how far I’ve come.

And to how much further we’ll go together.

One story at a time.

Happy 10th Anniversary to my Creation!