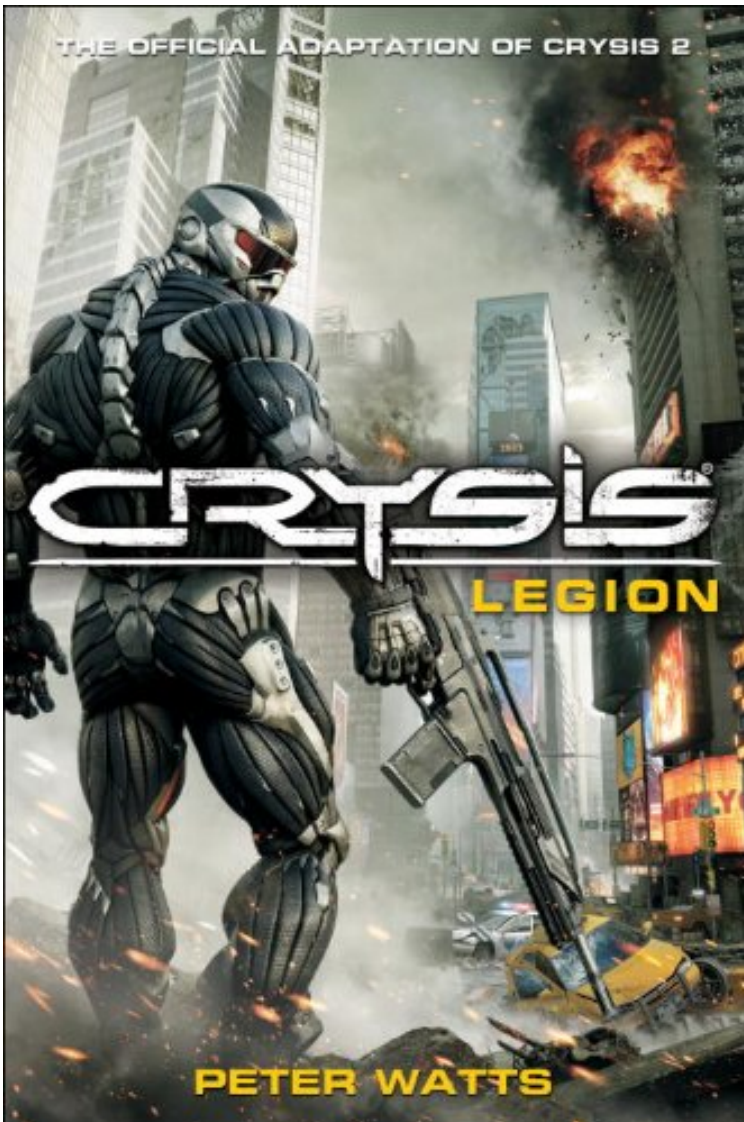


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Crysis: Legion



Par Peter Watts
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurMANHATTAN IS UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT. THEYRE NOT FROM AROUND HERE. Welcome to the Big Apple, son. Welcome to the city that never sleeps: invaded by monstrous fusions of meat and machinery, defended by a private army that makes Blackwater look like the Red Cross, ravaged by a disfiguring plague that gifts its victims with religious rapture while it eats them alive. Youve been thrown into this meat grinder without warning, without preparation, without a clue.Your whole squad was mowed down the moment they stepped onto the battlefield. And the chorus of voices whispering in your head keeps saying that all of this is on you: that you and you alone might be able to turn the whole thing around if you only knew what the hell was going on.Youd like to help. Really you would. But its not just the aliens that are gunning for you. Your own kind hunts you as a traitor, and your job might

be a bit easier if you didn't have the sneaking suspicion they could be right. . . .From the Trade Paperback edition.Extrait!The thing is, I thought it was all our fault.It's not that far off from what the Greens have been whining about since the last goddamn century. Global warm--sorry, anthropogenic climate change. Tidal waves, rising sea levels, half the planet's population wandering around looking for a place to crash since their homes got flooded out. There's malaria in the Baltic now, did you know that? A tropical disease. In the fucking Baltic. And somehow South America turned into bloody Siberia when no one was looking, something about melting icepacks short-circuiting the ocean currents. The whole world's fighting over fresh water like a pack of starving dogs with one stripped bone among them, and then Brazil started shooting all those sulfates into the stratosphere and--well, it was turning out just like the environazis said, only way worse and way fucking faster. None of the really nasty stuff was supposed to happen for another forty or fifty years, right?So we're fucked, and it looks like we fucked ourselves, and all the alarmist whitecoats we shat on before are telling us it's too late now, it's all planetary thermal inertia and unstable breakpoints and big ships turn slowly. There's no way to keep the place from blowing up but maybe we can at least contain the explosion a bit, you know? Try to keep the peace, share whatever's left of the loaves and fishes, keep the worst of the riots from hitting the good ol' US of A. Maintain some kind of order.That's why I signed up. That's why all of us did. We'd fucked things up by snarfing pork rinds and playing video games while the world turned to shit, and joining the marines was-I don't know. Penance. A chance to make amends.Except it wasn't us after all, not really, not yet. It was these fuckers from outer space, it was that bloody cryo weapon of theirs, that secret run-in way over in fucking China. We may have primed the avalanche, but Ling Shan was the snowball that started it rolling. And that was just a skirmish, that was so small they even managed to cover it up. A presidential directive or two, a few strategic pulse bombs to fry seismo and satcam, maybe a handful of surgical kills to take care of any Koreans out fishing in the wrong place at the wrong time. All you're left with is a few fuzzy rumors so whacked that not even Fox News would stoop low enough to run with them. Then when the whole world starts listing to starboard a couple of months down the road, you blame it all on greedy shortsighted humans and their damn fossil- fuel economy.But it was just a skirmish, Roger, and you know what?So's this.-N2-2 Alcatraz/Prophet (tentative desig.-awaiting update),excerpted from Manhattan Incursion Debrief27/08/2023PROPHECYVoice-mike intercept, Forensic Debrief, Manhattan IncursionSubject ID: Unknown (code name Alcatraz)27/08/2023Laurence Barnes, I think. Prophet.Alcatraz, then. Whatever. It doesn't matter. Of course I know the stats: I'm dead, not senile. Name, rank, serial number. Doesn't mean shit. That's not who I am anymore.I'm the guy being debriefed by a low-level functionary because his bosses are too chickenshit to risk being in the same room, that's who. You expect me to think you volunteered for this gig? You think the higher-ups wanted to bring you into the loop, you think they wouldn't be in here themselves if they weren't afraid I might go off the reservation again given half a chance?You're lying.No, that's an empirical fact. Your skin conductivity just went up 13 percent. Your eye saccades increased by 24. And you don't want to get into your vocal stress harmonics. You may think you sound pretty solid, but believe me: In the upper registers you're squealing like a little girl.I can tell stuff like that now. It's not the augments--it's not just the augments. I'm not reading numbers off a tactical overlay or anything, it's more--integrated. I just know this shit. I know a lot of things I'm not supposed to.But you've got nothing to worry about. Really. If I had any interest in killing you, you'd have been dead before you got through the door. You must realize that.Doesn't help much, does it?How do you want to do this?From the top, then: They put us out to sea the moment the media blackout came down. I mean the moment-- Chino was watching Body-Swap Boxing when the Emergency Broadcast Signal cut in. One minute after that MacroNet starts talking about some kind of massive explosion in New York, and literally three minutes after that we're hauling ass down to the water. There's a Swordfish surfacing off the dock, hasn't even finished blowing its tanks before we're piling inside. Haven't even checked our gear. We are mobilized, man, we're moving just this side of outright panic and we don't even know why. They barely get the hatch closed before we're back underwater.We strap in. You can hear the screws turning through the hull. The Swordfish is basically a troop carrier with a big drive and a few missile tubes thrown in so it won't feel like such a pussy around the hunter-seekers, but even a Sword has the usual stealth options so you can get in and out without a fuss. They're not engaged. Wherever we're going, apparently we can't even afford a lousy 6 percent cloaking deficit.Then it's a classic case of hurry up and wait. For eighteen hours. Nobody tells us shit, and the shit they do tell us keeps changing. First we're going to be docking with one of those big inflatable jellyfish down in the mesopelagic, keep us safely off the game board until we're needed. I'm thinking that's okay, at least there's decent headroom in those things, at least they're big enough to let you get

away from the-but no, now suddenly we're heading back inshore. And then we're circling off Christ-knows-where for fuck-knows-how-long. Some of the guys try to catch a few winks but the CO handed out the usual stims at the six-hour mark so everyone's boosted on GABA and tricyclics and that supernephrin stuff that makes your joints ache for two fucking weeks post-engagement. I keep a forty of tequila in my kit- you know, strictly for medicinal purposes-and I crack it to take the edge off. Offer it around but nobody else wants any. They say it makes a bad mix with all the neurotropes. Pussies. Anyway, we're strapped in, we're wired, we're climbing the walls. And suddenly the whine of the screws picks up, the night-lights kick in, and the whole compartment turns bloody red, like one of those Asian necro parlors where they use longwave to make the corpses look prettier. It doesn't take an AI to figure out we're deploying to New York but the CO won't even give up that much. Says we'll get briefed on-site. So we're sitting there in our camo, cheek-to-jowl, and everybody's making up these fairy tales to fill in the gaps. Syntheviral attack, moho nukes tunneling up under Broadway, some kind of coup at CENTCOM. Leavenworth--you know Leavenworth?

No, of course you don't--Leavenworth weighs in with his usual crazy-ass theories, says he heard some Venter Biomorphs went all Skynet and turned on their masters, and he won't listen to half the squad pointing out that the Venter labs are way the hell over in California and if we're really heading into the replicant wars don't you think they might, you know, airlift us instead of taking a submarine through the Northwest fucking Passage? I don't think Leavenworth believed that shit half the time himself. I think he just liked yanking our chains. I'm really going to miss him, if I ever get that part of my brain back. Every now and then you can hear chatter drifting back through the forward hatch; turns out there's at least six other boats deployed, under orders of some Colonel Barclay I've never heard of. And yeah, big surprise, we're all headed up the East River for Upper Manhattan. Except suddenly we aren't. Suddenly we're detached from the main group and diverting to Battery Park. Secret rendezvous, CO tells us. Maybe a rescue mission. I don't know if he's giving it up or making it up. So everybody's making these wild-ass guesses and Chino even starts a pool for chrissake, right there in the sub, and I'm sitting there and all I can think about is--You know I was afraid of water, right? I mean, of course I didn't tell anybody--I worked through it like you're supposed to, even came in third in the open-water trials last year. It's not a problem. But I almost drowned back when I was eight. Kinda stuck with me. You must have known. There were all these tests. You must have sniffed it out during the psych workup. Thought so. So everybody's jammed in there with their theories and Chino's got his pool going, and it's been eighteen hours now and I've been white-knuckling the bench for at least ten of 'em. Parchman figures I'm hungover but all I can think about is: a measly seven centimeters of biosteel between me and the whole Atlantic Ocean and I don't care how strong they say it is, a bunch of threads squeezed out of some engineered spider's ass is not gonna keep an ocean out forever. Probably the last time I was right about anything in this whole shitstorm. Finally some voice comes over the comm, tells us it's time to saddle up. And that's when we hear a ping-not sonar, not our sonar anyway, just a single, solid beat resonating throughout the hull. Everybody falls silent for just a second, and Behrendt looks around and says, "Anybody hear that?"-And something kicks us hard in the side. No alarms, nothing coming over the comm link, just one ping and a giant boom and the whole boat's rolling to port. We don't even have time to scream; there's one microscopic whatthefuck moment and the hull opens up like some giant took a can opener to us. The far side of the compartment just crumples: snaps Behrendt's back like a toothpick, turns her into a rag doll right before my eyes, and then a crossbeam or bracket or some fucking thing tears free of the forward bulkhead and squashes Beaudry like a bug. We're going down, now--the deck's at some crazy-ass angle, there's water flooding in from the bow, the whole damn hull's groaning like a humpback whale. Now the alarms kick in. Or maybe it's just everybody screaming. There's blood everywhere and you'd think it would blend in with the night-vision redlight but it doesn't, it jumps right out at you, it's solid shiny black. By now the water's not even gushing in, it's rising--like a tide, like a liquid floor sliding up to crush us all against the ceiling. Except the ceiling's a wall, and the rear bulkhead is the roof, and--And--Look, you--you know this shit. The sub went down. Period. Why do you need the details? You're not making a fucking documentary. I know, it's just that--Fine. So it's every man for himself. I barely even have a chance to take a breath before the ocean closes over my head and I'm diving down, pushing buddies and body parts out of the way, and I'm fucking scared, man, I can't see anything except bloody backlight and blue sparks as the electronics short out. The sub's still groaning around me, it's crumpling into a paper ball and at least the screams stop underwater but you can hear metal grinding on metal as though it were right inside your fucking head. We get through the forward hatch, it's still black and blue and red everywhere except there's this jagged tear off to the side, this blue-black crevice seething with bubbles. I push through. I look up and there's pale dim light, and I look down

and there's this great dark wall of metal sliding past, gashed to shit and bleeding rivers of air. Somewhere down there the bow's already hit bottom because there's a big honking cloud of black mud boiling up from below, engulfing the hull like something live. Like something starving. And all that matters, in that moment, is that I get to the surface. There's no Semper-fucking-fi down there in the deeps, let me tell you. Maybe if I'd had my rebreather on. Maybe if I'd had more than one lousy lungful of air to get me thirty meters to the surface. Maybe if I wasn't fighting off flashbacks from fifteen years ago. But no: I don't try to free the trapped or assist the wounded or carry the unconscious to safety on my back. I don't even think about it. There are things in my way: Some are sharp and hard and some are soft and gooshy and I don't fucking care, man, I bull through them all without prejudice or favoritism. I'm an eight-year-old kid again, and I'm dying, and I know what that feels like. Not again. God, not again. So I'm fighting my way to the surface. Didn't even have the presence of mind to grab a pair of fins, you know, I'm just kicking at the ocean with these stupid little ape feet and all I know is it's dark in one direction and a little less dark in the other and my chest is so tight it feels like it's going to burst, like somehow I've got a whole roomful of air jammed in there ready to explode. And it almost does, I almost suffer a fucking embolism before I remember that that last gulp of air I took, it was under pressure: the closer I get to the surface the more it expands, the harder it pushes to get out. So I open my mouth. I open my mouth and I vomit all that precious air into the sea and I follow the bubbles as fast as I can, I pray to God the air doesn't bleed out of me faster than it swells up inside. I'm kicking and clawing at the water and suddenly the light overhead has texture somehow, that dull greenish glow resolves into distinct shafts of light and they're dancing, I swear to God they're dancing. Suddenly there's a roof over my head, like a writhing mirror, like mercury, and I break through and I feel like I could swallow the whole fucking sky and I'm so glad to be alive, man, you have no idea. I couldn't care less about Behrendt or Chino or even poor old conspiracy-crackpot Leavenworth. I'm so glad to be alive I don't even notice the hellscape I've dragged myself into--Oh, that. Yeah, I am a bit more eloquent than I used to be. Sometimes. Writhing mirrors and dancing lights. Never used to talk like that before. Now I just, you know. Switch back and forth. Don't even notice it half the time. Presentation de l'diteur MANHATTAN IS UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT. THEYRE NOT FROM AROUND HERE. Welcome to the Big Apple, son. Welcome to the city that never sleeps: invaded by monstrous fusions of meat and machinery, defended by a private army that makes Blackwater look like the Red Cross, ravaged by a disfiguring plague that gifts its victims with religious rapture while it eats them alive. Youve been thrown into this meat grinder without warning, without preparation, without a clue. Your whole squad was mowed down the moment they stepped onto the battlefield. And the chorus of voices whispering in your head keeps saying that all of this is on you: that you and you alone might be able to turn the whole thing around if you only knew what the hell was going on. Youd like to help. Really you would. But its not just the aliens that are gunning for you. Your own kind hunts you as a traitor, and your job might be a bit easier if you didnt have the sneaking suspicion they could be right. . . . From the Trade Paperback edition.