

Primordial Deep
Thanksgiving Special - "Her Castle Below the Sand"

by

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No Such Thing Productions

PROLOGUE

The familiar sound of a pen scratching on paper. Marella, alone.

MARELLA (NARRATING)

We're foreigners in this kingdom of night. Strangers in a strange sea. We crawl across these pristine sands, and watch dark shapes shiver across a jewel-black ocean sky... and we call them strange. Unusual. Uncanny. Makes you wonder what they have to say about us... all those eyes, in the dark.

But every now and then, we get a glimpse. The veil lifts. The ocean opens herself to us, allowing us to see... the flicker. There. Did you catch it?

Look closer, and you'll find it... Beyond the blue... the things that cast the shadow...

FADE TO:

SCENE ONE

INT. Kitchen, The Tiamat - DAY

We hear the soft, enticing sounds of a kitchen. Loire half hums, half sings to himself as he chops up some vegetables, and then scrapes them from the cutting board into a bubbling pot on the stove. He checks the oven, makes a small noise of satisfaction, and shuts it again.

Marella walks into the kitchen, and opens a cupboard, grabbing a cup.

MARELLA

Morning, captain.

LOIRE

What are you doing?

MARELLA

Uhh... nothing?

LOIRE

Really? Because it doesn't look like

nothing... It looks like you're in my kitchen.

MARELLA

I'm getting a cup of coffee-

LOIRE

(smiling, wry) Doctor, do you remember that meeting we had last week? I know we have a lot of meetings around here -- it does come with the territory, given that we're living in a big metal bubble on the bottom of the ocean floor, and so maybe this particular meeting may have slipped your mind! The one where I told you that on Thursday, November 26th, the kitchen would be strictly off limits, due to some VERY important and delicate work that I would be doing for the duration of the day. Do you remember that meeting?

MARELLA

(trying not to roll her eyes) Yes, you needed the kitchen to prepare Thanksgiving dinner. But I was just-

LOIRE

Doctor, what day is it?

MARELLA

Thursday, the-

LOIRE

(cutting her off) Thursday, the 26th of November. And where are you?

MARELLA

(smirking) On the Tiamat?

LOIRE

The kitchen! You are- (takes a deep breath, calming himself) You are in the kitchen. My kitchen! The off limits kitchen!

MARELLA

(pacifying) I'm just going to get a cup of coffee...

She tries to step past him, but Loire blocks her.

LOIRE
(laughs darkly) I don't think so.

MARELLA
But-

LOIRE
That's how it starts! Oh sure, where's the harm? It's just one cup of coffee! And then somebody wants to make a sandwich! And then it's people trying to taste the mashed potatoes, and your little sister spilling the gravy all over the floor! And then you forget to make the glaze for the asparagus, the turkey burns, and everybody has to eat lukewarm SPAM out of a can, sitting on the curb, while the fire department hoses down the east wing! NO! (ushering her out the door) No distractions! There are specially baked muffins and assorted fruits up on the observation deck! OUT! Dinner will be ready at four!

MARELLA
But I'm thirsty!

LOIRE
(scathing, distracted) There's a whole ocean outside, and a portable purification unit in storage, I'm sure you'll figure something out!

He neatly shuts the door in her face. Marella protests, then sighs irritably, and heads off in search of muffins.

FADE TO:

SCENE TWO

INT. The Observation Deck, The Tiamat - DAY

Matti, Spinner and Destan lounge together up on the Observation deck. Spinner is standing on a chair, precariously placed on top of one of the tables, trying to attach something to the ceiling.

SPINNER
Just a little higher... almost... got
it... aaaaand... perfect!

MATTI
Spinner, what the hell is that?

SPINNER
Mistletoe!

He jumps down from the table.

SPINNER
Like it?

DESTAN
It's Thanksgiving.

SPINNER
It's tradition! Can't have a holiday
without mistletoe... What do you say,
shortstack? Want to help me give it a
test drive?

MATTI
(laughing) In your dreams!

SPINNER
Don't I know it. How about you, Doc?
Are you in a holiday mood?

The door behind them swooshes open, and Marella stomps in.

SPINNER
Whoah! The dragon's up! Look alive
Matti, she looks like she eats little
hobbits like you...

Matti punches him in the shoulder.

MATTI
Oh you think you're just SO witty,
don't you?

SPINNER
OW! Hey! You can't hit me!

MATTI
Really? (she punches him again,
grinning) Huh... It SEEMS to work just
fine!

SPINNER

You're a monster.

MATTI

(sweetly) You bring out the best in me!

DESTAN

Marella, are you alright?

MARELLA

(irritably) I'm fine. Spinner, where's your flask?

SPINNER

(all innocence) My what?

MARELLA

Flask, Spinner. Your little titanium magic maker you keep forgetting up on the bridge after poker night.

SPINNER

(still a perfect angel) Marella, I don't know what you're talking about! I am a professional, I would never, EVER-

MARELLA

Cut the crap, fly boy. It's too early, I just want a drink. Give.

SPINNER

(chuckling) OH! We're being FUN today! Well why didn't you say so?

He rummages in his vest and tosses her the flask. Marella unscrews the top and takes a swig. She winces.

MATTI

(surprised, amused) And a very happy Thanksgiving to you too!

MARELLA

Jesus, is this supposed to be bourbon? What did you buy this for, twelve dollars?

SPINNER

(laughing) Eight actually. Don't knock a good man's liquor! It's cheap and it

gets the job done.

Marella tosses back the flask, snorting in amusement, before flopping heavily into an armchair.

MARELLA

Remind me to buy you some class for Christmas.

SPINNER

(snickering) Well fuck, Frost, who pissed in your coffee?

MARELLA

(smiling, DEEPLY bitter) No one! No one pissed in my coffee, because we're not allowed to *have* nice things like coffee, because APPARENTLY Thanksgiving is one of the new High Holy Days!

DESTAN

(sympathetic) You tried to go in the kitchen, didn't you?

MARELLA

I would have been in there for thirty seconds!

Spinner starts laughing.

MATTI

(sitting up, excited) What is he making?

MARELLA

(sighs) I don't know... Something about... glazed asparagus and SPAM.

MATTI

(wrinkling her nose) Oh...

Spinner leans over and passes the flask back to her.

SPINNER

Here. You CLEARLY need this more than I do.

MARELLA

Danke.

SPINNER
(breezily) De nada, baby.

MARELLA
Y'know, I think I preferred Frost. ...
is that... mistletoe?

SPINNER
It's tradition!

MARELLA
I don't even want to know.

The door swooshes open again, and Asherah strolls in.

SPINNER
(cheerfully) LT on deck!

ASHERAH
Get that chair off of the table. Who
the hell put up mistletoe?

MARELLA, MATTI AND DESTAN
Spinner.

ASHERAH
(smirking) Tradition?

SPINNER
Yup.

ASHERAH
That explains so much.

MARELLA
Am I missing something here?

MATTI
This can't POSSIBLY be a Thing?!

ASHERAH
Do I smell cheap liquor? Dr. Morgan, I
know I don't see a flask in your hand.

MARELLA
I'm off duty!

ASHERAH
(chuckling) We give you one day off-
... You really are a bunch of sailors.

SPINNER

Frost tried to go into the kitchen
this morning.

ASHERAH

Ahhhh... Carry on.

Marella hands Spinner his flask back.

MARELLA

Is Loire ALWAYS like this?

ASHERAH

Every Thanksgiving, Christmas, and
Juneteenth. (smirks) You could be
sitting on the stove, wearing nothing
but a bow in your hair, and all he'd
tell you to do is get the hell out of
his workspace. The man's serious about
a good meal.

SPINNER

And... are we speaking from
experience?

ASHERAH

(chuckles) Mmm... You'd have to try it
out and let me know...

SPINNER

I've never said no to a challenge.

ASHERAH

(sincere) I would pay money to see you
try. (to Marella) It's true...
Captain's a bit of a dictator around
the holidays. But trust me, the food's
worth it.

DESTAN

(around a mouthful of muffin) If these
muffins are anything to go by, I'll
take your word for it! (ascending into
Muffin Heaven) Mmm!!

ASHERAH

So, is this the plan for the day?
Lounge around passing a flask back and
forth until we're all allowed back in
the kitchen?

MATTI

Spinner and I were going to take a couple of suits out, and maybe go for a walk... There's this gorgeous coral reef we passed the other day, Spinner thought it might be cool to check it out!

MARELLA

(smirking) Did he really?

SPINNER

(a little embarrassed) Yeah, well... (covering) Doc says Mat's got to get a little physical therapy in. For her leg! And walking is a good way to do it, and it's... more fun with a friend...

MARELLA

I think that's an excellent idea!

SPINNER

Come again?

MARELLA

(not so perfectly innocent) A walk around the coral reef sounds like a wonderful way to spend the day. What do you think, Destan?

DESTAN

Oh! Uh, I'd be delighted!

SPINNER

Wait, you're coming?

MARELLA

Well I can't just sit around here all day! Besides... it's Thanksgiving! Think of it as... group bonding time.

SPINNER

(pointedly) You hate bonding.

MARELLA

Mmm... must be the holiday spirit.

SPINNER

(through gritted teeth) Must be.

MATTI

Great! I'll go prep the suits!
Asherah, you coming?

ASHERAH

You all go ahead. I've got a few
things I need to take care of around
the station.

MATTI

But it's our day off!

ASHERAH

It's YOUR day off. The luxury of
authority means my work is never
really done... Besides, long walks
under the beach aren't really my
style.

MARELLA

Do you need any help?

ASHERAH

Thank you, doctor, I can handle it.
You all have fun. I'll see you later.

Asherah waves, and heads out of the room, the door whooshing
shut behind her. Matti turns excitedly back to the group.

MATTI

You guys ready to go?

MARELLA

Oh! Let me just get my kit.

SPINNER

Frost, it's a walk, not a science
fair!

MARELLA

Never know what you might find... Just
what sort of a coral reef are we
talking about here?

FADE TO:

SCENE THREE

INT. Kitchen, The Tiamat - DAY

We hear the door to the kitchen swing open, and Asherah slips

inside. Loire, still busying himself with cooking, doesn't even bother to look up.

LOIRE

Out!

ASHERAH

Relax, it's just me.

LOIRE

(glancing around, smirking) Oh, I'm sorry, was that not a direct order? Since when do you get special privileges?

Asherah slips her arms around his waist and kisses his neck.

ASHERAH

Since always... Helps that I'm bigger and smarter than you.

LOIRE

(surprised, trying very hard not to melt) Talise! What are you-

ASHERAH

The kids are out of the house... We have the whole station to ourselves... And it's my day off.

LOIRE

(laughs, trying to extricate himself) Aren't you the one always telling me "not in public?"

ASHERAH

Who's in public? The kitchen's off limits. All day.

LOIRE

I have a meal to prepare!

Asherah crosses and sticks her finger into one of the bowls on the counter.

LOIRE

Ah! No, no, no, don't-

ASHERAH

Mmm... Sweet... What's this for?

LOIRE
 (sighs) -put your finger in there!
 It's the honey and lemon glaze...
 That's so-

ASHERAH
 Tempting?

LOIRE
 (unable to help a smile) Unsanitary.

ASHERAH
 (musing) It's missing something...

LOIRE
 (anxious) What? What do you mean?

ASHERAH
 (teasing) I don't know, Clarion... I
 can't quite put my finger on it...

She dips her finger into the sauce again. She holds it out to him.

ASHERAH
 Come... Taste...

Loire, as suspicious as he is genuinely concerned about the dish, walks over to Asherah. He tastes the sauce.

LOIRE
 ... It's perfectly fine!

ASHERAH
 Really? Maybe I should try it again.

She leans forward and kisses him, then pulls back, slowly.

LOIRE
 (defenses crumbling) Talise...

ASHERAH
 (smirking) I think it could use a
 little spice.

LOIRE
 (very weakly, but trying oh so hard
 not to melt) ...I-... I-I have to
 watch the apple filling on the
 stove... or it won't... uh...
 caramelize...

Asherah, turns down the burner.

ASHERAH
So we let it simmer...

She picks up an egg timer, and turns it with near maddening slowness.

ASHERAH
That gives you... what? Fifteen?
Twenty minutes?

She sets the timer down and moves to wrap her arms around Loire's waist again.

ASHERAH
I promise not to let anything burn...

FADE TO:

SCENE FOUR

EXT. The Coral Reef, Open Ocean - DAY

We hear the sound of bubbles escaping as Marella, Destan, Matti and Spinner descend into the waters beyond the Tiamat.

MARELLA (NARRATING)
I keep thinking to myself... I will never get used to this. The moment of The Dive.
You step into the airlock, and slip into your suit, fighting with the soft, strangely pliable but still too rigid fabric as it scrapes across your uniform and bare skin. You hear the click of the helmet, but still find yourself wondering whether or not you've done it right, even as your own breathing reverberates in your ears, your heart beating a rapid staccato pulse inside your throat. Will there be enough air? Will the seal hold? What if... What if... What if... Too late now, as the airlock hisses, depressurizing, and you gasp instinctively as the world around you grows tight and small... invisible arms wrapping around your torso as the water floods in, dark and cool, the

ocean pulling you into her dance...
and then...

Silence.

Perfect. Silence.

You are submerged, floating, falling,
for an instant there is nothing, and
you are nothing, and there is no
boundary between yourself and the sea,
and you think... Is this what it is to
die? Or to live? This moment of...
pure and terrifying bliss... And it's
everything you were ever meant to be.

Then the suit turns on. Light, and
oxygen, and the soft hum of the
internal heaters, and you become aware
of the world around you... Bubbles,
and scales, the gentle brush of the
current, and the dark ocean sky... A
sunken, forgotten paradise envelopes
you in its skeletal, glittering
arms... Where you were alone...
suddenly... there is life again.

I will never get used to this.

We hear the muffled crunch of footsteps along the sand. After
a moment, Matti stops, making a small sound of discomfort and
rubbing her leg.

The suit-to-suit comms array crackle, and there is an
underlying hum of static, but when the divers speak to each
other, it is as if they are standing in the same room.

MATTI

Ah... [cursing under her breath in
Spanish] *Shit*...

DESTAN

Matti? You okay?

MATTI

(grimacing) Yeah, fine! Just...
(winces) my leg, is all... It's just
twinging is all. I'm gonna drop back a
bit... Can't keep up the pace...

SPINNER

If you need somebody to lean on, I've been told I'm incredibly sturdy...

MATTI

(blushing) I-... Just... for a second... I'll be fine in a minute...

She takes his arm. They fit together like a hand and glove.

SPINNER

(smiling) Oh, of course! Just... for a minute...

MARELLA

(teasing) You know, we could all slow down...

SPINNER

No, no! Don't let us spoil the afternoon... You and Doc feel free to go on ahead... I'll just hang back, make sure Squirt here doesn't bleed out and die quietly in the background...

MARELLA

(snorts) If you insist...

She and Destan walk on.

MARELLA

(smirking) Subtle, isn't he?

DESTAN

Aw, I think it's cute!

MARELLA

Are you kidding me? Matti's practically a baby! And she's so... sweet. She can't possibly have any idea-

DESTAN

That he's hitting on her?

MARELLA

Yes!

DESTAN

(chuckles) She knows. She's sweet, not

stupid!

MARELLA

If you say so...

DESTAN

(trying not to smile) Marella...

MARELLA

I'm not being mean! And don't for a moment think it's something stupid like jealousy or because I care. I've never seen the appeal in unwashed men. I just... don't see anyone down here as being the mothering type, and you can't stick a bandaid on a broken heart. And Matti... is... sweet... But she's old enough to do what she likes, so it's none of my business.

DESTAN

(laughing) I'll be sure to pass on the memo.

MARELLA

(smiling faintly) Oh, shut up. (a beat) ... I suppose, in the right sort of lighting they are... sort of cute.

DESTAN

Was that a note of approval I heard? Be still my beating heart!

MARELLA

NO it was not!

DESTAN

(teasing) Next thing you know, you'll be giving the toast at their wedding.

MARELLA

I will bury you, and I will make it look like an accident!

DESTAN

You'd miss me too much.

MARELLA

(laughs) You haven't grown on me THAT much yet, doctor! I'd kill for a little silence, now and again.

DESTAN

What, and sit around in that big empty lab of yours, day in and day out, like a hermit?

MARELLA

I happen to like being a hermit, thank you very much. Hermits are the only people who get anything done.

DESTAN

(chuckles) I'll be sure to slide a few books under your door, whenever you're feeling bored.

MARELLA

That's all I ask.

DESTAN

How much further do you think it is?

MARELLA

Matti said the coral reef was about three and a half miles south-east of the station. We should be nearly- ... Oh...

They stop, staring out across the water.

MARELLA (NARRATING)

We came over a rise in the sands, and found ourselves staring down at a sprawling oceanic citadel. It was like slipping into a dream. Coral bloomed up from the white sands in a twisting spray, glittering as if we had stumbled into the birthplace of color itself. Great domes and elegant spires rose into the dark oceanic sky, rich pinks and pale yellows, emerald and sapphire, and purples as deep as the night. Brightly colored fish flitted in and out of palatial arches and through great forests of algae and sea grass. And in the center of it all stood the castle.

There was no other word to describe it. Black as ebony, towering high above the rest of the underwater city, the coral castle stood beautiful and

imposing, a cold and natural goddess
poised formidably above her subjects.

Something bright flickered above her
turrets, a bioluminescent torch
lighting her striking features.

DESTAN

(stunned) Are... Are those-

MARELLA

(stunned) ... sharks...

MARELLA (NARRATING)

They swarmed around the top of the
reef. Hundreds of them. We were too
far away to identify the species, but
as they cut through the dark waters, I
could see the telltale flash of the
strange and familiar blue-white
luminescence, marking them as
predators out of their time...

MARELLA

(to herself) They're beautiful...

We hear the crunch of footsteps on sand as Matti and Spinner
finally catch up.

MATTI

(grinning, Ta Da!) Here it is!

SPINNER

Hooooooly shit...

MARELLA

(deciding, determined) Come on! I want
to see what's down there.

MATTI

Oh, hell yes!

DESTAN

(nervously) Ah, does that seem
entirely wise? I mean, given the
sharks?

MARELLA

Sharks are woefully misunderstood
creatures, and one of the most
beautiful animals on this big blue

earth... Besides... take a look at those marks... I swear that's the second time I've seen that coloration pattern since we've been down here. Looks like it's spread over some of the coral too. I need a closer look.

SPINNER

Leave it to you, Frost, to turn a day off into a field expedition.

MARELLA

(snapping) Leave it to you, Spinner, to have no concept of why we're down here in the first place. I don't need your help. Stay if you want to, and keep up if you're coming with me, but I'm going down there.

Marella starts off down the slope. Destan is quick to follow.

DESTAN

Oh no, you're not going down there on your own! (smiles) I'm not going to be the one explaining to the Captain how you managed to get carried off by Jaws!

MARELLA

Destan, you worry too much. Leave them alone, and they'll do the same for you.

SPINNER

Pretty sure that's what the Mayor said back on Amity Island...

MARELLA

Just be sure not to do anything stupid, and you'll be-... Well. The rest of us should be fine.

They move off. Spinner glances at Matti.

SPINNER

(sighs) Should we-

MATTI

No offense, but I didn't come all the way out here to take notes on all the fishes...

SPINNER
(grinning) Race you to the castle?

MATTI
You read my mind!

She takes off, laughing as she swims away.

SPINNER
(yelling after her) HEY! You little- I
didn't say "Go" yet!

He races after her, laughing, his voice fading into the distance.

SPINNER
No swimming! That's cheating!

FADE TO:

SCENE FIVE

INT. The Coral Castle, The Coral Reef - DAY

A school of fish scatters in panic as Matti speeds through them, laughing. She barely manages to stop herself from crashing into the base of the coral castle, smacking the side of it and going into a little victory dance as she whoops and cheers for herself in Spanish.

MATTI
[in Spanish] *And the winner of the
Atlantic Underwater 500 iiiiiiiiiiiiiiis
MATTI COBURN! I don't believe it
folks! Spinner is just too slow! And
the crowd goes wild!*

Matti starts making fake crowd cheering noises, chanting her own name, as Spinner swims up behind her, smirking and panting slightly.

SPINNER
Y'know, I'm starting to think that leg
of yours isn't really busted.

MATTI
(sweetly) Spinner, you wound me! Would
I really have made you carry me up all
those stairs this week for nothing?

SPINNER

(smirking) Well. Maybe not for nothing.

MATTI

I'm small and injured, you have to be nice to me!

SPINNER

What, like letting you win races?

MATTI

(laughs) Sure. "Let me." (looking around) God... look at this place...

She swims a little higher, floating in silence for a moment, admiring the view.

MATTI

Hey! There's an opening up here! I bet we can get inside!

SPINNER

After you, Princess.

Matti wriggles inside of the coral castle, with Spinner following close behind.

MATTI

(smirks) Let me guess, that makes you the white knight?

SPINNER

(snorts) White nothing! I'm just here to wrestle some dragons.

MATTI

Oh is THAT what you and Marella call it!

SPINNER

Y'know, you're pretty mouthy for somebody so easily mistaken for a footstool.

MATTI

Wow, a three syllable word! That's a lot for you! Does your head hurt?

SPINNER

Y'know, it does! Maybe you should come

and kiss it better...

MATTI

I'm pretty sure that's Destan's job.
I'm just here to keep the engines
running.

SPINNER

Lucky engines.

Matti stops abruptly, distracted.

MATTI

Oh...

SPINNER

(embarrassed, covering quickly) Oh,
shit, hey-... That came out-... Look,
I didn't mean-

MATTI

(still distracted) Spinner, look!

He does, and his jaw drops.

SPINNER

Holy...

MATTI

Yeah...

SPINNER

This thing is HUGE!

MATTI

It's glowing...

SPINNER

(marveling) It's like a fucking
cathedral...

MATTI

Look at all the shells!

SPINNER

(uneasily) Are those... moving?

MATTI

OH! I know what those are! Those
are... um... ah... nautiloids!
Straight shelled nautiloids!

SPINNER

Jesus that's a lot of tentacles... How did they get in here?

MATTI

They must have swum through the hole, like we did, and gotten stuck... God, look at them glitter!

SPINNER

(sighs) Frost is gonna want to see this, isn't she?

MATTI

Yeah, probably...

SPINNER

(reluctantly) Guess I can call her...

MATTI

Well, wait... I mean... she's... probably busy, right? There's a lot of reef to explore... Maybe we can just... bring one back for her? They're floating traffic cones, can't be THAT hard to catch...

SPINNER

(smirks) Just the two of us?

MATTI

Hey, you are supposed to be the expert on this sort of thing. This is what they're paying you for, right?

SPINNER

Hmm... (cracks his knuckles) Okay. Here's what we're gonna do. This is a classic herding maneuver. We'll need to scatter the shoal. You're gonna dive bomb, straight through the middle of them, and make yourself look as big and threatening as possible... The big, healthy ones aren't gonna bother with you, they're gonna high tail it out of there as fast as their little flippers can carry them, leaving the younger and the weaker ones exposed. Get as close to one as you can, and try to flush him towards that hole where we swam in. I'll be waiting at

the entrance, to grab ahold of him when he comes by.

MATTI
(skeptical) What if he gets by you?

SPINNER
(grins) Please. You're looking at a professional, kid. Just get one of those oversized clams headed my way, I'll take care of the rest.

MATTI
(laughing) Oh I can't WAIT to see this.

She swims away, positioning herself high above the cluster of nautiloids.

MATTI
Is this high enough?

SPINNER
Perfect. You ready?

MATTI
To watch you get your ass kicked by an oversized conch? Oh absolutely.

SPINNER
(chuckles) I'm gonna make you eat those words, short-stack. On my mark... Three... Two... One... NOW!

Matti dives into the shoal of nautiloids. The nautiloids hiss and squeal, sending jets of bubbles in all directions as their tentacles whip through the water in their frenzy. But they don't scatter. Instead, one huge nautiloid darts straight towards Matti, squawking and clacking its powerful beak. We hear the crunch of impact as the two collide, and a dull snapping sound. Matti screams.

SPINNER
Matti?! MATTI!!

FADE TO:

SCENE SIX

EXT. Inner Reef, Coral Reef - MEANWHILE

Destan and Marella listen incredulously as Spinner relays his story over the comms.

MARELLA

You WHAT?!

SPINNER

(filtered) We were trying to collect a specimen, but-

MARELLA

(scathing) Let me guess, you didn't happen to notice that the enormous predatory cephalopod swims BACKWARDS?!

DESTAN

Matti, are you alright?!

MATTI

(filtered, grimacing) I-I'm fine, doc... Just a bit shaken. That stupid squid-thing just came flying right at me! Hit me in the stomach... Tried to take a chunk out of my leg, but I guess the suit's so thick he didn't manage to do much more than nip at me...

SPINNER

(filtered) Since when do squid bite?!

MARELLA

(furious) Since ALWAYS, Spinner! They have beaks for a reason! In this case, to crush eurypterids! Orthoceras are apex predators!

SPINNER

(filtered) Well how was I supposed to know that?!

MARELLA

You learn how to read, and pick up a book!

MATTI

Marella, it's my fault-

MARELLA

Oh, I'll get to YOU in a moment-

DESTAN

(under his breath) Not the mothering type, eh?

MARELLA

Shut up! (sighs, runs a hand over her visor) Where are you now?

SPINNER

(filtered) Still inside the castle. We had to wait until those nautiloids stopped swarming... and I figured we should probably give you two a call... make sure Matti was okay to move.

MARELLA

The first sign of intelligence you've shown all day!

MATTI

(filtered) Marella, calm down! I'm FINE!

DESTAN

Can you walk at all?

MATTI

(filtered) Yeah, he just pinched me, I can- AH!

We hear a slight, filtered rustle as Matti tries to stand, and her leg goes out from underneath her.

DESTAN

Matti!

SPINNER

(filtered) I gotcha! I gotcha...

MATTI

(filtered, through gritted teeth) SHIT! Oooooh... FUCK that STINGS!

MARELLA

Spinner, what's happening?

Above them, but still distant, we begin to hear the frantic, thrashing movements of the sharks circling above the coral castle.

MATTI

(filtered, still grimacing) Nothing!
Just... think that Squid-boy gave me a
little more than a pinch... Right on
my new stitches... I-... Hold on...
Spinner, hold onto my sleeve will you?
I've got to take off this suit.

Matti starts struggling with her suit. Meanwhile, the sounds
of thrashing, churning water are growing louder... closer...

SPINNER

(filtered) What?!

MATTI

(filtered) Not OFF off, just...
gotta... get my arm loose... There!
(beat.) ...oh... oh...

MARELLA

Matti?

DESTAN

(suddenly anxious) Uh... Marella?

MATTI

(very quietly) I'm bleeding...

DESTAN

(very urgent) Marella! Look!

MARELLA (NARRATING)

I looked, and wished I hadn't.

The swarm of sharks were descending on
the castle like a cloud. Thousands of
them. They moved with quick, elegant
precision, beautiful and deadly as
they soared through the water, their
glittering jaws spread wide. Pulsating
faintly with a blue-white light that
seemed to glitter in lines like veins
beneath their skin, the dark shapes
cut circles around the castle, sleek
dragons in armored grey, their hard,
black, beady eyes rolling ceaselessly
as they searched, scenting blood on
the water.

As they came closer, Destan and I were
forced to press ourselves down against

the coral. The sharks were so near now, that I could make out individuals in the endless swarm. One opened its mouth, and I saw what looked like a buzz-saw jutting out of its lower jaw... teeth, ragged and sharp, swirling up in a great whorl that stretched from the front of the creature's snout, down and away into the red-blackness of its throat...

DESTAN

(stunned, quiet) Helicoprion...

MARELLA

Oh no...

SPINNER

(filtered) Oh no? What's oh no?

MARELLA

(grimly) You've got company.

DESTAN

They shouldn't be able to get in... That one there's got to be, what? Twenty five... thirty feet long at least!

MATTI

(filtered) WHAT?!

DESTAN

(awed) Look at them all swarming... (softly, to himself) That... almost looks like...

MARELLA

Matti, you need to put as much pressure on that wound as possible. Do whatever you can to stop the bleeding.

Spinner. Listen to me very carefully, you need to take Matti, and find a well defended area. A crevice, an alcove. ANYTHING. We don't know whether or not there are other entrances than the one you found, but you need to be prepared just in case. If one of those sharks gets through-

SPINNER
(filtered, sighing) Oh shit...

MARELLA
(firmly) If one of them gets through,
you're going to have to fight. I'm
assuming you're armed?

SPINNER
(filtered) What is this, amateur hour?

MARELLA
You're going to need to put up a
fight. Aim for the eyes, the gills,
and the snout. Don't take your eyes
off him for a second. Sharks are
intelligent, and they don't give up
easily. You've got to keep her safe,
until we come and get you.

SPINNER
(filtered) Roger that.

MARELLA
Destan... We're going to have to clear
a path.

DESTAN
(quietly, so the others won't hear,
but incredulous) HOW?

MARELLA
(quietly) I don't know... But I have a
very bad feeling we're going to need a
LOT of blood.

FADE TO:

SCENE SEVEN

INT. The Coral Castle, Coral Reef - DAY

Spinner and Matti sit together in a sheltered corner of the
castle. Outside, we can hear the thrashing swarming of the
Helicoprion.

SPINNER
You holding up okay?

MATTI
Yeah... (winces) Didn't get me too

bad... But that's gonna bruise come morning... (looking up) You know... They're not so bad from a distance... The nautiloids, I mean... Bet you could get a great sound out of 'em.

SPINNER

What?

MATTI

The shells! If you got a small one... Carved it right... Would probably make for a hell of a flute...

SPINNER

You play?

MATTI

Since I was eight. I wanted to bring mine down here but... it just... didn't seem practical. What am I supposed to do with a flute all the way down here, y'know?

SPINNER

Tell ya what, I'll get you the shell, and we'll make you the prettiest little pitch pipe this side of the Midnight Zone.

MATTI

(smiling weakly) You mean if we get out of here?

SPINNER

Yeah... I'm sorry Matti.

MATTI

What for? It was a good plan! You're not the one who didn't realize the stupid thing was a predator...

SPINNER

But I shouldn't have sent you in there at all! You're not trained. It was stupid. I could have gotten you killed.

MATTI

But you didn't. Now I've just got a really good story to tell.

SPINNER
(fighting a smile) Yeah... I-... I
guess...

Matti sighs and leans her helmet back against the coral.

MATTI
What's that light up there?

SPINNER
Hmm?

MATTI
That light... Way up at the top of the
castle... Looks almost like daylight,
doesn't it?

SPINNER
Somebody left a light on in the
turret... How far up do you think it
goes?

MATTI
(dazed) Looks like forever...

They float together for a moment, staring around the dazzling
inside of the coral reef.

MATTI
I used to have dreams like this...

SPINNER
No kidding?

MATTI
(a little embarrassed, but then
warming, wistful) Far off places.
Weird sights no one else would ever
see. My family... We never really had
the money for big things like
travel... vacations... But I had this
great-aunt on my dad's side, who spent
her whole life galavanting around the
solar system. She'd go back and forth
across the Empire, and come back with
all sorts of stories... Romance, and
adventure... everything from pirates,
to bar fights, to watching the moons
rise over a world made of oceans and
ice... She and my dad didn't really
get along, so I didn't see her much.

But every time I did, she always had more stories. More scars. And I would have these... vivid dreams of what it would be like... standing in the places no one else had ever stood.

(looking away) My life was always going to be practical though. Plain. I had a head for math, and my hands were made for holding things. Too many callouses for... delicate things, like dancing with dukes, or tracing through starlight. Not that I minded! Just... this... wasn't for me. Or at least, it wasn't supposed to be. That's what everybody said. And I believed them. And now... we've only been down here what feels like a heartbeat, and...

She stares down at her hands.

MATTI

... I'd pinch myself, you know? Cause I know I must be dreaming... but... I don't want to break it. I'm used to handling... firmer things than this. Feels like my hands are too big for something like this. Too clumsy. Adventures... dreaming... 's not really the sort of thing for a girl like me...

... Guess that sounds sort of stupid, yeah?

SPINNER

Doesn't sound stupid to me.

MATTI

(looking up at him) No?

SPINNER

No. Hell, I get it. Feels... almost out of body, yeah? All these sleek, skilled science-y types, all moving together in this... complicated dance. They're quick. Graceful. Meanwhile, I'm standing in the middle of the floor with two left feet, just trying to keep up the pace... wondering if I'm ever going to figure out the

fucking steps.

I gotta tell you, Matt, this sort of thing really isn't my scene. Walls, and aiming not to misbehave. I need space. Something like the wild. I don't mind moving fast, but I tend to pull other people down to my level... keep things simple... on my terms. Figure if the natural world can make sense of the chaos, the rest of us can stand to loosen our collars a bit. (chuckles wryly) Can't say everyone agrees with that philosophy. And it sure as shit doesn't seem to have a place down here... but... I figure... that's why they need us, y'know? Folks like you and me. So you've got a few callouses, and my boots are still dirty, so what? We made it this far. We're alive, aren't we? Still breathing. I figure that entitles us to a little adventure. If the beautiful life was only meant for the people who "fit" in it, God wouldn't have made beautiful people who look like you and me. You've got a right to keep dreaming.

MATTI

... Thanks, Spinner.

SPINNER

(shrugging) Don't mention it.

MATTI

(teasing) Aww, scared I'll ruin your reputation?

SPINNER

(laughs) I just don't do great with the mushy crap. ... I just... I get the feeling. Not... having a place in all this. But it's bullshit. You shine just fine.

Matti smiles. They are quiet for a moment. The uneasy thrashing of the sharks continues outside.

MATTI

... They sound pretty worked up out

there... Do you think the others are gonna make it okay?

SPINNER

The docs? They'll be fine. You've got the smartest brains on the sea-floor looking out for ya, kid. We'll be out of here in no time...

MATTI

What if they don't come?

SPINNER

Well, then you've got the brawniest, most daring, and devilishly good looking knight to haul you to safety!

Matti laughs.

SPINNER

There's that smile! Don't worry... It's gonna be fine. The eggheads have it handled. And I'm not going to let anything-

We hear a faint thrashing from outside. Something large strikes the side of the castle.

MATTI

What was that?!

SPINNER

Just... stay beside me. Keep your head down... I've got you...

Matti presses into Spinner's side, as he pulls his gun out of its holster, and primes it. He wraps his free arm around her, his eyes trained on the swirling waters above.

SPINNER

... It's gonna be oooookay...

FADE TO:

SCENE EIGHT

EXT. Edge of the Reef, Coral Reef - MEANWHILE

Marella and Destan crouch behind a mass of coral, staring out at the edge of the reef. We hear the faint squeaks and the sound of bubbles and water moving as a group of Orthoceras

prowl along the edge of the reef.

DESTAN

This is insane.

MARELLA

Have you got a better plan?

DESTAN

We could call for help!

MARELLA

And if the Captain doesn't arrive in time?

Destan moans quietly.

MARELLA

It'll be fine. This will work.

DESTAN

That's not exactly what I'm worried about.

MARELLA

(calmly) Destan, I'm not going to let anything happen to you.

DESTAN

(trying to smile) You sure about that?

MARELLA

You're the only one down here I... tolerate.

DESTAN

Uh... Thank... you?

MARELLA

Oh you know what I-... You-... Serve a certain function, keeping the others at bay while still forcing the bare minimum amount of socialization necessary for basic human survival... (very grudgingly) You... keep me sane.

DESTAN

And if I die, you finally get your peace and quiet back?

MARELLA

Precisely. Now get out there and just make that face.

DESTAN

What?

MARELLA

That face! You know... That... Big sad wet puppy face you make... with the ridiculous smile! The one you save for when you know you're bothering me... The helpless one.

DESTAN

(highly amused) Marella-... Have you categorized *all* my facial expressions?!

MARELLA

(embarrassed, indignant) Just the stupid ones! You make a lot of faces! Just! Go-... limp around at the edge of the reef! Drag your leg so it kicks up a lot of sand! Make that face, and try to look like a victim!

DESTAN

And when the Orthoceras decides I look like an easy meal?

MARELLA

I'll be there. You just... have to trust me.

DESTAN

You know I do. (takes a deep breath)
Okay... Let's just hope this works.

Destan steps out into the no-man's land beyond the reef.

MARELLA (NARRATING)

The barren sand wastes beyond the reef seemed to stretch on endlessly. All around us, the waters were dark, barely illuminated by the pale pulsing luminescence of the reef. I lay crouched against the corals, and watched as Destan made his way slowly across the bone-white sands...

DESTAN

(filtered, nervous and trying too hard not to be) Okay... Here I am... All injured and alone... Not panicking. Not panicking... See? Just a perfectly good... normal... delicious snack! Wandering along the edge of the reef... All by myself... Sure hope there aren't any Orthoceras lurking about!

MARELLA

(filtered) Destan, you don't have to talk to them. They're fish, they can't understand you.

DESTAN

(filtered) Cephalopods, and they are some of the most highly intelligent creatures in the animal kingdom! You're the one who said I should make myself alluring!

MARELLA

(filtered) A lure, Destan. Not allur-

DESTAN

(filtered) What was that?

MARELLA (NARRATING)

The Orthocera came jetting into view with unbelievable speed. Fourteen feet long, its enormous conical shell looked like some lethal jousting spear, cream white and striped with streaks of coral. Odd splotches of that same eerie blue-white as the Helicoprion flecked its face and tentacles, like crusting patchy scabs. It moved through the water in almost perfect silence, except for the faint, rhythmic expulsion of bubbles as its siphon pulsed regularly, sending the creature racing backwards with all the force of a jet engine. And then it turned, rising in the water, its long, black shadow falling over Destan as its tentacles spread wide...

DESTAN

(filtered) Uh... Marella?!

The nautiloid squawks and dives. Destan yells and tries to run, but is knocked to the sand. He kicks and struggles, still yelling as he tries to extricate himself from the hissing nautiloid and its mass of tentacles.

MARELLA (NARRATING)

For a heartbeat, I wasn't sure I would make it in time. I felt my body move before I realized I was swimming, my fingers wrapping around the handle of the pliers before I realized I had opened my pack. It was... instinct.

The pliers were weighted, oversized and red, meant for the difficult but precise maneuvering of taking samples underwater. The black, coated-metal of the pincers was nearly as thick as my hand, and it cracked the nautiloid's shell easily as I landed on top of it, swinging my fist down, and sending shivering fractures winding up the conical casing like a spider's web. Shards of broken shell flew up and hit my visor. The cracks deepened. Widened. I could hear Destan shouting. I brought the pliers down, and down, and down, and then...

We hear the nautiloid hiss and scream, as Marella yells, bringing down the pliers again and again. Until...

MARELLA (NARRATING)

It burst.

The shell shatters and the nautiloid shrieks in pain.

MARELLA (NARRATING)

The shell flew apart, the tip snapping off as a great ragged hole appears in the side of the nautiloid's protective encasement. A gout of glowing blue blood rose, blooming like an inky flower, into the sea...

The nautiloid, squealing, releases Destan and swims away. Marella pulls him to his feet.

MARELLA

You alright?

DESTAN

Yeah... I-... Did it work?

MARELLA (NARRATING)

But we could already hear the thrashing tails of the Helicoprion beating the water. Even as we turned, we could see the swarm of sharks rising...

DESTAN

Oh... no...

MARELLA

Run.

DESTAN

Uh, Marella-

MARELLA

Destan, listen to me. Sharks can scent blood from a quarter of a mile away, and they will almost always go for the easier meal. They're not coming for us, but what exactly do you think is going to happen if they find us standing here?

DESTAN

... Run?

MARELLA

Run.

They take off, back towards the castle, moving as quickly as their suits will let them.

DESTAN

Do you think Matti and Spinner will be alright?

MARELLA

So long as nothing got inside!

FADE TO:

INT. Coral Castle, Coral Reef - Continuous

Spinner and Matti crouch, still listening. Something is scrabbling at the entrance to the castle. We hear small pieces of coral being dislodged, as something pushes its way

through the opening.

MATTI
(quiet, anxious) Spinner...

SPINNER
(quiet, sure) I got it...

He takes aim.

SPINNER
(softly) Come on out... That's it...
Just a little more...

He fires.

Destan yelps like a scalded cat as the missile barely misses his head.

DESTAN
WHAT THE HELL!

SPINNER
Doc?!

DESTAN
What did I do to deserve THAT?!

MATTI
Destan!

SPINNER
Jesus, Doc! You scared the hell out of us!

DESTAN
I scared *YOU*?!

SPINNER
(shrugging, holstering his weapon)
Thought you were one of the sharks.
Figured a warning shot might be enough
to make them think twice before
breaking the door down. You alright?

DESTAN
I think I'm having a heart attack...

SPINNER
You're fine.

Spinner helps Matti to her feet.

MATTI

Guess that's our cue to go...

SPINNER

Where's Queenie?

DESTAN

Outside, collecting shed teeth.

SPINNER

(rolling his eyes) Figures!

MATTI

What's that?

DESTAN

What? Oh!

He holds up a bit of the nautiloid shell for Matti to see.

DESTAN

We had a bit of a run in with our friend the Orothoceras... This is ah... a souvenir.

MATTI

(half laughing) You've got to be kidding me!

DESTAN

(seeing her interest) Do you want it? I think Marella has a piece already... It's a bit sharp, but-

MATTI

(grinning) It's perfect.

Destan hands it to her, smiling.

DESTAN

Dare I ask?

SPINNER

Matti's planning to start the first underwater orchestra.

DESTAN

(chuckles) You'll have to play for me sometime...

MATTI

Just say when, Doc!

DESTAN

Right! I hate to cut things short, but we don't have much time... Shall we?

SPINNER

Yes. PLEASE.

Matti starts to giggle.

SPINNER

What are YOU laughing at?

MATTI

(still laughing, quietly) Don't tell Marella... But I think this might be the first time the dragon saved the knight from the castle!

SPINNER

(groans) Oh DON'T start... It's bad enough I almost killed you, I'm never gonna hear the end of this!

Matti's laughter seems to fill the castle -- bright, and full of life...

FADE TO:

SCENE NINE

INT. Mess Hall, The Tiamat - EVENING

Hours later, the crew has gathered for Thanksgiving dinner. The soft, warm banter of the group fills the room.

Loire taps a fork against his glass, and stands up as the others quiet.

LOIRE

(smiling) I know we're all starving, so I promise, I'll be quick.

First, I uh... want to apologize about the state of the sweet potatoes... I got a little... (clear his throat) Uh... distracted...

MARELLA

(under her breath, exasperated) You have got to be kidding me, I was in the kitchen for THIRTY SECONDS!

Asherah laughs, barely managing to turn the sound into a cough. Loire clears his throat again.

LOIRE

... I'm sure if anyone had asked us at the beginning of the year, none of us could have predicted that we'd be sitting around this table. Things have... changed. More than words can express. This isn't the world we expected to inherit... This isn't the way we expected our lives to change... We're all a thousand miles away from shore... our families, and loved ones... our homes... Which is why it means all the more to me to have you here. I know it's not the same. I know maybe this isn't exactly family... It sure as shit isn't normal. But right now, with you... this... feels like home. And I'm grateful to have found you, down here in the dark. I'm grateful to be sitting here with you.

... Happy Thanksgiving.

Murmurs of "Happy Thanksgiving," roll around the table. Loire claps his hands.

LOIRE

OKAY! I don't know about the rest of you, but I am starving! Let's eat!

The crew breaks up into cheerful conversation. Plates are served, laughter and conversation fill the air again.

Loire takes his seat. Asherah holds his hand under the table.

LOIRE

(quietly) This is my favorite part of the day?

ASHERAH

(quietly, teasing) You sure about that?

LOIRE
 (laughs softly) Mmm... Maybe a close
 second... (so only she can hear) Happy
 Thanksgiving, love...

ASHERAH
 Happy Thanksgiving...

As they rejoin the swell of conversation, we...

FADE TO:

EPILOGUE

INT. Laboratory, The Tiamat - NIGHT

We hear the warm background glow of the continued
 conversation in the Mess Hall, as Marella slips away from the
 table.

DESTAN
 (calling after her) But where are you
 GOING?

MARELLA
 (calling back) I just have to make a
 call... I'll only be a minute...

LOIRE
 (calling after her) Well hurry back! I
 can't keep Spinner away from the pie
 forever!

Marella laughs, as the door slides shut behind her. She walks
 a little ways down the hall, and slips into an empty lab. She
 sits at one of the computers, and turns on the external
 comms...

It rings... and rings... and then...

KIRAN
 (smirking) Dr. Marella Morgan...

MARELLA
 Evening, Kiran.

KIRAN
 (chuckles) This is a surprise...

MARELLA
 I'm not interrupting, am I?

KIRAN

Not at all. I'm... working late this evening. Is something wrong?

MARELLA

No, I-... Just... Wanted to reach out. I thought, maybe-... I wanted to wish you a happy Thanksgiving.

There is a pause. Kiran is as surprised as he is genuinely moved.

KIRAN

(a little shaken) Oh...

MARELLA

It's just... that time of year.

KIRAN

(recovering, smirking) You mean November?

MARELLA

(grimacing faintly) The holidays. Cloying, Hallmark, cheerful family time... For months on end. And you know what they say... You-... We... shouldn't be alone.

KIRAN

(raising an eyebrow) What makes you think I'm alone?

MARELLA

I would be.

beat. A moment of silent, mutual understanding.

KIRAN

(softly) Well... I appreciate you calling.

MARELLA

(uncharacteristically kind) Any time.

KIRAN

... You should go. I'm sure the others-

MARELLA

Right. I just... Thought you should

know someone was thinking of you.
Goodnight, Mr. Flint.

KIRAN

Kiran.

MARELLA

Kiran. ... Goodnight.

KIRAN

Goodnight... (and then) Marella?

MARELLA

Yes?

KIRAN

... Thank you. ...Happy Thanksgiving.

MARELLA

(smiles) Happy Thanksgiving.

Kiran disconnects the call. Marella sits for a moment, lost in thought. Then, finally, she stands, and crosses back toward the Mess Hall.

We hear the door swing open, as she steps from the cold, quiet hallway, back into the warm, laughter-filled glow in the room with her crew.

FADE OUT.

END.