

Unwritten - A Descendants Story
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by

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SCENE ONE

AXEL CRICHTON stands alone in the semi-dark. Before him, an empty spaceship sits on the asphalt -- both, waiting in the quiet.

Axel closes his eyes, trying to extend the moment -- can already feel it slipping... flexes his fingers... breathes.

CHEL
(offstage) Axel!

LIGHTS UP:

EXT. Launch Pad, Aphelion Industries - THEN

And there she is.

Axel opens his eyes as CHEL STADLER runs up to meet him, a bag over her shoulder. The Adamantine glitters in the light of the rising sun. Axel smiles.

AXEL
And here I was starting to think I'd spent all this money, and built you a spaceship, and you weren't going to show.

CHEL
And miss the adventure of a lifetime? You wish.

AXEL
(under his breath) You have no idea.

Chel glances up from looking through her satchel. She puts the bag down between them.

CHEL
Sorry?

AXEL
I said I think that's more Peter's line.

CHEL
I don't know, I think he's warming up to the idea. Or accepted it as an inevitability... We've stopped fighting about it anyway.

AXEL

Well, you could always surprise him.
Change your mind.

CHEL

What, and give him a heart attack? All
that planning gone down the drain. All
that anxiety for nothing!

AXEL

You telling me you've never done
something like that to him before?

CHEL

Not on this scale. I'm pretty sure
he'd strangle me.

AXEL

Chel, I'm serious. You don't have to
do this.

CHEL

Why shouldn't I?

beat. He can't bring himself to tell her.

AXEL

... No reason.

He looks at her. She looks at the ship. Enraptured.

CHEL

What's her name?

AXEL

The Adamantine.

CHEL

Sword of Perseus...

AXEL

That's right.

CHEL

She's beautiful.

AXEL

You should see her when she opens up.
Looks something like a lily, all
plated in silver-white... And when
those solar sails catch the sun,

they're going to glitter like burning gold. She's gonna light up the whole night sky. Like nothing you've ever seen.

CHEL

The whole universe at our fingertips.
... Thank you. For this.

AXEL

(flinching) Don't.

CHEL

I know it's been hard.

AXEL

Please stop.

CHEL

(but it's as if she cannot hear him)
And I never should have asked in the first place. It was SO out of line. But you-... This. Being here. Now. On the threshold...

AXEL

(half to himself) I don't want to hear this...

CHEL

I feel alive again. (she looks at him, then away) I didn't... realize it. That I was dying. Inside. That I'd been cutting little pieces of my soul away. Bound myself to gravity. It wasn't-... I'm not, unhappy but... there was a part of me... inside, that needed-... I've never had this. Space. Chances to wrap my fingers around the stars, and pull them into my chest. Hold them. Feel the heat of them, really FEEL. There are days I just can't feel anything. There's this numbness that creeps in, and I can't make myself fit into the world. There's no place for my heart in it. It pushes me out. There's a tightness in my chest and in my throat, and I feel like I'm being buried and all I want to do is scream. Run. To the darkest, farthest, undiscovered

corners of the universe. To touch something, anything. But this... (she looks at the ship. And for a moment, she is radiant) I can feel my heart beat again. I can feel the blood moving in my veins. I can feel the universe wrapping me in her arms, and she is dancing. (she looks at Axel) You gave me the stars.

beat. They recognize one another.

... You understand. Don't you.

AXEL

I do.

PETER

(offstage) Chel? Chel, are you coming?

CHEL

(she touches his arm) I will never forget this. Thank you. For this. For... everything.

She starts to move away. Axel grabs her hand. She looks at him.

AXEL

Don't go. I'm begging you. Chel, please. Don't go.

beat.

CHEL

Okay. ... And then what happens?

RORI

(offstage) Axel!

AXEL

I-... I don't-... Please-

CHEL

What happens next?

RORI

(nearer) Axel?!

CHEL

(moving away) Too late to change the

story now...

LIGHTS SHIFT:

SCENE TWO

EXT. Abandoned Lot, Beyond Shelter - NOW

Axel blinks. A battered, abandoned spaceshuttle, barely flight worthy sits before him in the shadowy half-light. Chel has vanished. In the distance, Gorgon song rings.

CAPTAIN RORI CASSINI steps out of the shadows. Her relief on seeing Axel is palpable.

RORI

Axel! You're okay. Where the fuck have you been?!

AXEL

I-... I don't know...

RORI

You can't just disappear in the middle of the night! I thought you were dead. Declan picked up a Gorgon proximity alert, and I couldn't find you and- (she stops, seeing his face) ... Axel? (gently) Hey. Where are you?

AXEL

Nowhere. I'm... I'm here. I'm fine, Rori.

RORI

Please don't... don't DO that again! I know you can't help it- I thought I'd lost you.

AXEL

I'm sorry.

Rori sees the satchel at Axel's feet. She reaches for it.

RORI

What is that?

AXEL

(quickly) It's nothing- Rori, don't-

Too late. beat.

RORI

...You packed? (when he doesn't respond) So you weren't just... wandering off in a fugue state. Chasing a hallucination... And so that's-... That's your shuttle, is it? Of course it is. A wreck, out here, you with your bag packed, that's a happy "coincidence." You found a ship. Doesn't look like it can even get off the ground... But... You weren't going to say anything? How long have you known this was here? You've BEEN planning this, so... (beat) You're leaving? ... You were just going to abandon us?

AXEL

I wasn't-

RORI

Bullshit. You were leaving us behind! You didn't even say goodbye!

AXEL

Rori-

RORI

We made a deal! I risked my fucking life trying to get you out of Aphelion! The lives of my crew!

AXEL

I never asked you to do that! I never asked for ANYTHING! I didn't tell you to hold out your hand, you gave it to me! I never asked for you to risk your life and be a hero! You made that decision on your own! I didn't ask for an alien invasion, and the end of the fucking world!

RORI

No, you just caused it.

beat.

RORI

... I didn't mean that.

AXEL

Yes you did. And hey. You're not wrong. I caused this. I sent them. Personally. Signed their death warrants. Peter and Chel both. The whole fucking world, and for what? I wanted to make something... make a difference... Tell a story the world would listen to! A legend. Something brilliant, and new, and mine! A story for the ages. I wanted to touch the face of the universe, wrap my fingers around the stars. But I didn't want to do the hard work. No heavy lifting for Axel. So I sent my brother and his girlfriend to mine the unknown for something like radiance. And they died. For what? For me. For NOTHING. I wrote them a tragedy. Made ink of their blood, and spread their story across the world. Set the stage for this *plague*. Those things, those... Gorgons, spreading through every colony in the solar system like wildfire, and the whole of the world is infected. Unwritten. Burning. For me.

But I can do something about it. I can change it. This story is mine for the re-writing.

RORI

What are you-

AXEL

That planet is still out there. Somewhere. I have the coordinates. I know where they are.

RORI

Jesus, Axel-

AXEL

Gorgons are hive-mind creatures, right? If I can just find them. Cut them off at the source-

RORI

Axel, are you hearing to yourself? This isn't a fairy tale! We're not

living in a fable! There's no such thing as heroes. You can't FIGHT these things. We've TRIED fighting these things. You're not Perseus. Swing the sword all you like, but you can't win a war like this by yourself-

AXEL

They killed my fucking brother.

RORI

They're consuming the planet. The whole human race. We have to stick together, run together, protect one another or we're not going to survive.

AXEL

We were never GOING to survive this, Rori! Don't you get it?! There is no cashing out this time. This is the end of the line! We're done. We haven't seen another living, breathing human being in... what? Three weeks? Four? We move from town to abandoned town, from one ruined, empty building to the next. This world is barren. Our species is dead. They have stripped us of EVERYTHING. And it was NOTHING to them. There IS no surviving this! You fight, and you die screaming. We lost the game!

RORI

THIS IS NOT A FUCKING GAME!

Somewhere, too close, we hear a sudden burst of Gorgon song, and a high, rasping cry. Instinctively Axel and Rori move, standing back to back. They tense, scanning the darkness.

They wait.

The song fades.

Breath returns.

beat. Axel looks around at the darkness.

AXEL

... This is my legacy, Rori. This is the story the universe will tell of me. This... ruin. Everything I ever

dreamed of... and it's like ashes in my mouth.

RORI

I know.

AXEL

... I have to make this right.

RORI

Then stay. Axel... we're here. We're breathing... Help us.

AXEL

She's haunting me. Her blood's like ink trapped under my fingers.

RORI

I know.

AXEL

I can't get her out of my head.

RORI

She'll forgive you, someday.

AXEL

I don't want her to forgive me, I want to be punished. ... Why won't she blame me?

Rori reaches out, gently.

RORI

Not everyone does. ...We should go back. It's not safe out here.

AXEL

It's not safe anywhere.

RORI

I know. ...Please. Come inside. (beat) Axel, I need you.

AXEL

... you know I love you, right?

RORI

I-... Axe, you know I'm-... I don't... Sex. Not-... men, women, anybody...

AXEL

I-... I know. But... I don't- I just-
... you know. Don't you?

RORI

... I know. ... I love you too.

AXEL

Okay.

RORI

I mean it. ...Come back inside.

AXEL

Okay. ...Rori? Don't-... The others...
I-... Please, don't... tell anyone.

RORI

Never.

She takes his hand.

RORI

Hey. We're going to make it through
this. I promised. You're my priority,
right? We promised. Just...stay with
me.

AXEL

I know. You're my priority.

RORI

You stay?

AXEL

By your side, at all times, captain.
... I stay. I promise.

He gives her hand a squeeze. She leads him back towards
shelter. They disappear together into the shadows.

In the distance, a Gorgon sings.

FADE TO: BLACKOUT.

END.