

Entry One - Chel

by

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No Such Thing Productions

PROLOGUE

We hear the sound of static filtering through a broken data pad. Occasionally we hear the quick stop and start of voices through the press of fog...

DECLAN

Data pad... cracked. ... Drive's been damaged-

PETER

-Look at me. Chel! Look at me!

DECLAN

-might be able to salvage-

SOMETHING

(screams)

AXEL

-plenty of time to get cozy.

CAPTAIN RORI

-Violet. Repeat. Code-

CHEL

Don't let go!

PETER

Chel!

CHEL

Peter don't let go!

DECLAN

-Hold on. Something's coming through-

The static overwhelms the jumble of voices and sounds.

FADE TO:

SCENE ONE

INT. Bridge, Starship Adamantine - NIGHT

The static of the blackbox filters away, and we hear a voice, mid-transmission.

CHEL

It's never been so quiet.

Chel sits alone on the bridge, her knees pulled up to her chest as she stares out of the massive bank of windows before her.

CHEL

Dark. There's something about the press of absolute silence, the whole, consuming blackness that leaves me a little... I don't know... breathless? Every second that passes, every instant brings me the farthest from home I've ever been. Sometimes I'll go and I'll stand at the stern of the ship, to be just a little bit closer to home. At this distance from Earth the difference is nominal... fractional at best. Most nights though... I'm here.

Peter's more of an early bird, so a lot of the time, I have the Adamantine to myself. You'd think I'd be sick of it by now. Sitting here. 287 days on a two-man shuttle, spending at least ten hours a day up on the bridge. But... well... That view.

We're just in sight of the planet now. NCC1701-Delta is a bright lilac dot no bigger than a dust mote on the upper left hand side of the Adamantine's view shield. She came up as a blip on the radar at 0200 hours this- uh, wow, sorry... yesterday morning, and she's been sliding slowly towards center for the past three hours, getting bigger all the time. They grow up so fast. According to Peter's calculations, we should be in orbit by 0700 hours. I double checked him with the shipboard computer- not that I needed to. Peter does the calculations faster - mostly because I think he's always thinking about them? And he always goes a few decimals further. But, you know. Protocol. But he said it, and now... I can't sleep! Too excited. Too... Everything. In a few hours, I'll be seeing my first truly alien sunrise, on a tiny little world under twin stars. NCC1701-Delta... God. We've got

to think of a better name. By the way, Peter, I get the reference. And clever though you may be, you're just... not funny.

I don't understand how he's still angry with me. I mean. I do. I get it. We wouldn't be out here if I knew how to take no for an answer, if I hadn't gone through his personal files, and found this site, and gone over his head to Axel to get permission for the dig... He has every right to be angry. I get it... But... How anybody could be angry with a view like that? We're spinning through the starways at a million miles an hour. Nebulae and supernovas are hurling color like gold dust across the sky, and we have seen planets and moons dancing on the dark strings of gravity, under the eyes of suns our world will never see. How could anyone want to be anywhere else? We're on the brink of the universe, and all he wants to do is go back to the lab.

Not... that it's fair for me to blame him. The Janus Initiative was never something Peter wanted to be a part of in the first place, even if it IS his discovery. Long trips make him anxious, and space makes him... well... uh... queasy. To his credit, he is doing MUCH better. And he's much more graceful in zero-grav than he admits. He's fluid. Economical. Like a dancer? If he danced. Which he does not, believe me, I've tried. But the list of things Peter doesn't do could fill one of his collected first edition encyclopedia sets. Dancing, skiing, karaoke, watching movies, dating, going outside... if it involves leaving the lab, you can bet he'll- oh god I can see him doing it now- That little thing Peter does, where he rests his chin on his knuckles and rubs his lower lip with his thumb? And raises an eyebrow at you in that "I'm not smiling, but I am

judging you" way of his. And then he'd shake his head, and go right back to doing whatever it was he was working on before you decided to test and see if he had a pulse. Not that he's boring. Or... cold. I just don't think he has time to waste on anything he doesn't love. And he loves his work. And he's so... GOOD at it. He has to be, it's why his brother built Aphelion Industries up around them. Peter finds the raw material - the resources, alien technology, all the lost secrets and treasures a dead world can provide, and Axel polishes it off, gives it a sprinkle of charisma, stamps the Aphelion logo on it, and suddenly you've got a multi-trillion dollar research and development company spanning an entire solar system, with their fingers in technology, medicine, historical conservation, you name it. Conquistador capitalism at its finest.

And there really shouldn't be a place for us. Not in a company like Axel's. A xenopaleontologist with a focus in biology, and Peter, a xenoarcheologist with a flare for anthropology. Which is ironic, because Peter is... not a people person. The only people he seems to understand, let alone tolerate, are the dead ones... I always thought THIS is what we should be doing. Boots on the ground, hands in the dirt, *digging*. But instead, Peter sends other teams out to mine the stars, and we sit in a lab and we synthesize. I find the swaths of color, and give him a landscape, and he draws in the minutia... Together, we get the whole picture... uncovering lost worlds... Working with Peter... He is... utterly fascinating. He's a brilliant man. A born storyteller, and possibly the best cook in the solar system. Discounting his chocolate chip cookies. It's the only thing I do better than he does. That and talking. I talk a lot. Like when I'm nervous,

and when I can't sleep, and when I'm trying to distract myself-... Peter could fill the silence just by walking into the room. He's brilliant like that. Naturally gifted. I wouldn't be here-... I couldn't do this without him.

And I'm not just saying that because you're mad at me. Not that he's listening. Well... maybe not. Not yet. He... listens to these sometimes. As my supervisor. For research and collaborative purposes. But I think he forgets that I can see the listener history on all of my logs, and my data pad sends up an alert when they're accessed from a different computer. And I'm not saying I don't take excellent notes and provide witty, vivacious and insightful commentary on all of my findings, but there's nothing anyone would need from old audio journals about dead alien societies in the middle of the afternoon on Christmas break. ... in case you are listening Peter, I missed you when I was on vacation too. But I hope you're not listening. Because I started this kind of mean, and I know you hate me teasing you, and I wouldn't want to embarrass you and rob you of the sound of my voice. You can listen any time. I'd probably listen to more of your logs too, if I could figure out all of your passcodes. You're kind of paranoid, have I ever told you that? Then again, I just admitted to going through your stuff, so maybe you have a point! Touché, Peter... Touché...

I'm doing it again. Talking too much. You can't blame me though, right? Nobody can blame me. This is huge. Relatively. It's a preliminary planetary survey. In the grand scheme of the universe... Not exactly a giant leap for mankind. Not even a small step. But for me? One giant leap... One huge, giant, breathtaking, earth

shattering flight for Chel. So, yeah. Talking too much. Unable to express... anything. But the joy of being here. Finally. After wanting it, and working hard, and waiting, and NOT waiting, and grabbing hold of my chance... I have earned this.

And I deserve everything that's coming to me.

Static overwhelms the transmission. Buried underneath it, we hear a sound like a scream. And then it abruptly cuts out.

FADE OUT.

END.