

Primordial Deep
Episode Six - "With Gently Smiling Jaws"

by

Jordan Cobb

No Such Thing Production

PROLOGUE

The Tiamat, broken, abandoned, creaks and groans.

Marella, alone.

MARELLA (NARRATING)

Listen... Can you hear it?

It's that sensation creeping in at the corners of your eyes. The heavy, empty void, spilling open in your chest...

Look at your hands... Notice anything different? ... That's what I was afraid of.

The chill is so thick you can almost taste it. There's a shadow resting its teeth on the back of your neck. We're floating in the place we have never been, and isn't it all so... familiar? Uncanny...

I think they call it a refraction... or maybe dread...

You know how this one ends, don't you. I think we've been here before...

In the darkness nearby, something lets out a hissing growl.

FADE TO:

SCENE ONE

INT. The Bridge, The Tiamat - DAY

Loire and Asherah stand together before a console. Kiran, ever smiling, observes them over a video call.

KIRAN

Well, it certainly sounds like you've been having such a difficult time of it down there. But that doesn't explain why you're calling me. On the Black Line, of all things.

LOIRE

I was under the impression that's what we were required to do in the case of

an emergency.

ASHERAH

And the Black Line is our only existing method of communication-

KIRAN

Where's the emergency?

ASHERAH

Sir?

KIRAN

Where's the emergency? From what I hear you've had a few nasty run ins with the locals and have some rather substantial repairs to the communications room that you *should* be working on, but it's nothing you can't handle. This is precisely why I chose you. ... or am I mistaken?

LOIRE

We're operating under... some extraordinary circumstances.

KIRAN

I know! It's exciting, isn't it?

ASHERAH

(under her breath) That's one word for it.

LOIRE

We're on a field mission and we don't have a licensed doctor onboard the station!

KIRAN

Of course you do. From what I read of your report, you yourself *personally* assigned Dr. Morgan to take over Dr. Seychelle's position. My condolences, by the way.

LOIRE

That was... for an autopsy. She's not qualified-

KIRAN

Which is why I sent along unit 41711

to act as her assistant.

LOIRE

(through gritted teeth) Yes. That's another thing... the... Physical Health Droid...

KIRAN

Brilliant bit of genius, isn't he? Anybody can be a doctor with a P.H.D. It's been programmed with medical intelligence and curatives from around the globe. Highly intuitive, not to mention adaptable... the closest thing to a medical artificial intelligence that money can buy. Don't you like it?

LOIRE

(quiet anger) You sent a droid to replace a human being.

KIRAN

And? ... Transition is a difficult thing, captain. But it slows down discovery. I understand you might be... disappointed. But think of it this way; it's one less person you have to worry about. One less mouth to feed. And it seems like you have quite a lot on your plate already.

LOIRE

Some of the crew have expressed... concerns about the viability of this mission.

KIRAN

Oh? And... you allowed that? I thought a man of your calibre would have been able to keep his crew under control.

LOIRE

Everything IS under control!

KIRAN

Then why are we having this conversation?

LOIRE

I'm-... It's-... They want to go home.

Kiran laughs.

beat.

KIRAN

(amused) You're serious. ...
I'm... sorry. I didn't realize there'd
been a misunderstanding.

No.

LOIRE

Sir?

KIRAN

No, I'm sorry, it's out of the
question at this time. You're not
going anywhere.

ASHERAH

Sir-

LOIRE

Kiran, you've seen the reports! I know
you're going over the files, you KNOW
what's been happening down here, the
things we've encountered- People are
dying!

KIRAN

Accidents happen. It's why you signed
a liability waiver. And such...
liabilities, however unfortunate, are
not sufficient clause to terminate
your contract.

ASHERAH

You can't mean that.

KIRAN

I assure you lieutenant, I do. You
really need to learn to read the fine
print.

LOIRE

But going on with this mission is
suicide!

KIRAN

(in a flash, all trace of amusement is
gone) **You work. For me.**

That air you're breathing? Belongs to me. The food you've been eating? Purchased at my expense. The fact that the full 9,000 pounds per square inch of pressure where you're sitting right now hasn't crushed you into oblivion, is thanks to my more than generous benevolence and good grace. If I say "jump," the ONLY question I expect you to ask is "how high?" If I tell you to throw yourself out of the airlock? You will take a running start, in the vague hope that it might make me smile.

But I'm not asking you to do all that. I'm asking-... No. I'm telling you... that this is a once in a lifetime opportunity. And you will document it. Meticulously.

... or maybe I was wrong after all. I am nothing if not a dreamer... and it seems I have misplaced my hopes. Maybe... this isn't the mission for you.

Kiran makes a few adjustments offscreen. We hear the clicking of a dial, a few beeps from a computer.

And on the Tiamat, the air stops filtering. We hear the groan of metal beams, and a warning klaxon begins to blare.

TIAMAT'S COMPUTER

Warning! Atmospheric pumps have been disengaged! Warning! Internal pressure rising! Warning! Atmospheric pumps have been disengaged! Warning! Internal pressure rising!

ASHERAH

Clarion!

KIRAN

It looks to me like you're cracking under pressure.

LOIRE

What are you doing?!

KIRAN
Terminating our contract. That IS what
you wanted, isn't it?

LOIRE
NO! (coughing, fighting for breath)
No, stop! STOP! You haven't-... You're
right! You win! Just-... Stop! Please,
Kiran! Please... don't... don't hurt
them... Please...

Kiran studies him for a minute.

KIRAN
When I say jump?

LOIRE
H-how... how high, sir?

Kiran twists a dial. The intense groaning of the Tiamat's
hull ceases.

KIRAN
Throw yourself out of the airlock.

LOIRE
(grimacing) Would you like me to take
a running start?

Kiran smiles.

KIRAN
Not this time, I think.

He makes an adjustment on the computer. The klaxons stop, and
the air begins to filter through the station once again.

KIRAN
Do we understand one another, captain?

LOIRE
Perfectly, Mr. Flint.

KIRAN
Good. (beat.) I don't want to have
this conversation again. Ever.

LOIRE
Understood, sir.

KIRAN

Excellent. ... Lieutenant Asherah.
You've been awfully quiet. Anything
you'd like to add to the conversation?

ASHERAH

No, sir.

KIRAN

Are you sure?

ASHERAH

Yes, sir.

KIRAN

Alright... Well! This has been fun.
But I'm sure you have a lot of work to
do... It's a big ocean... I'd hate to
think I was... distracting you.

LOIRE

Not at all, sir.

KIRAN

And, for future reference, let's try
to keep this line for true emergencies
only, shall we?

LOIRE

Yes, sir.

KIRAN

Oh, call me Kiran, please. We're all
friends here.

LOIRE

... Kiran.

KIRAN

Now! You have an ocean floor to map. I
look forward to seeing what you find.

Happy sailing.

He signs off.

beat.

ASHERAH

Anxious, isn't he.

LOIRE

Yeah.

ASHERAH

... are you alright?

LOIRE

No. (beat. very softly) Talise?

ASHERAH

Yes, captain?

LOIRE

Remind me to kill him.

FADE TO:

SCENE TWO

INT. Explorer "Tigris", Open Ocean - DAY

The whirring of the Tigris and Euphrates' engines rumble low in the water. The crew (the women in the Tigris, the men in the Euphrates) chats over an open channel.

MATTI

What do you mean it was "nothing to worry about?"

ASHERAH

Just the computer running a brief systems check.

SPINNER

So it shut off the air?!

LOIRE

A bug in the system. It's been corrected.

MARELLA

And we're sure of that?

LOIRE

Positive. It won't happen again.

SPINNER

(sighs) I swear this station is cursed.

ASHERAH

It's not cursed.

SPINNER

You only say that because nothing's
tried to eat you yet.

LOIRE

(amused) That's not true.

SPINNER

No? When's the last time somebody
tried to take a bite out of you, LT?

ASHERAH

I'm fairly certain YOU tried it this
morning.

SPINNER

(grins) I don't count.

MARELLA

Did Kiran have anything to say?

LOIRE

What?

MARELLA

You said you were going to call him...
after...

SPINNER

After he shafted us.

MARELLA

Yes, that. Did you?

LOIRE

We spoke. He's not in a position where
he can be of any assistance.

MATTI

(bitterly) Funny how rich folks always
seem to say that.

SPINNER

We're not going home then.

LOIRE

Not yet. He seems fairly keen we see
out our contract.

ASHERAH

He seems fairly keen we see SOMETHING, that's for sure. What exactly it is he's looking for, he's been slow to say.

MARELLA

And that's why we're out here?

LOIRE

We're out here because that's the gig. There's a whole lot of ocean to search, and we can't do it all from the Tiamat.

SPINNER

Anybody else thinking we should just take the Explorers and get out while the going is good?

ASHERAH

Even traveling light with two people to a unit, we'd lose power and run out of oxygen before we were two thirds of the way up. Besides, the Tigris and Euphrates aren't built for that sort of sustained travel, and they're not fast enough. And if we can track them from the Tiamat, I'm sure Kiran can do the same from wherever he is.

MATTI

He's tracking us?

ASHERAH

How else would we be receiving food shipments and supplies?

MARELLA

You seem to have put a lot of thought into that answer.

ASHERAH

It was bound to cross somebody's mind.

LOIRE

Look, I'm with you, it's... not ideal, but our best course of action is to stay on track. We get this mission done quickly, we stick together, we watch each other's backs just like we

have been, and we'll be home before you know it.

MATTI

You mean, if Spinner doesn't take a bite out of somebody first.

SPINNER

I only bite when asked, and I've never had any complaints.

LOIRE

We stay the course. We're in this now... might as well treat it like an adventure. It IS a once in a lifetime opportunity, after all.

MARELLA

(observing) You sound like Kiran.

LOIRE

(sighs) Yeah. I know.

Something on the Tigris' dashboard starts to beep.

ASHERAH

Captain? I'm picking up an object about three clicks to the East.

SPINNER

Aw hell.

LOIRE

Confirmed. We're picking it up too.

MATTI

Is it coming this way?

ASHERAH

Seems to be stationary. But very large. It does take us closer to that mountain range you wanted a look at... Could be worth checking out.

LOIRE

Alright. We'll give it a quick look over. If it's interesting, we'll tag it, maybe bring the Tiamat around for a better view. If it's alive, we keep moving.

SPINNER

Sounds like a plan.

ASHERAH

Setting new navigational path... I'm adjusting our trajectory, and sending the new directions to you now... Channel 2.

LOIRE

Received. Setting path, and adjusting now.

SPINNER

Ladies first.

MATTI

You big baby.

LOIRE

By your leave, Lieutenant.

The two explorers move on through the water.

MARELLA (NARRATING)

A forest of coral rolled itself out beneath our feet. It looked as though someone had carved a thousand little trees of pure marble, then left them scattered along the sand. Crabs, bright as jewels skittered around their broad, bleached trunks, and the tails of silver fish flashed in and out of sight. Anemones and sea grass swayed with the current, their branches beckoning as if to wave us on... further and further forward, into the drifting dark. Once or twice, I thought I saw a shark -- huge and black, with eyes of living obsidian -- but then the shadows would shift, and the moment passed. The sea rolled on.

And then...

ASHERAH

Oh my god...

MARELLA

That's... that's not possible...

SPINNER

Are you seeing this?!

LOIRE

Yeah... I see it...

MARELLA (NARRATING)

The derelict station sat like a woman on her hands and knees, half collapsed into the sandy earth, with corals starting to creep up over its spine. The black skin of her hull was mottled with streaks and swaths of grey, like bruises and half-healed scars. The diamond-glass windows still glittered under the beam of our headlamps, but inside it was dark, as though the last of the station's vitality had bled away into the surrounding waters. As we watched, she seemed to sigh, then sing -- a low, aching sound of creaking metal, rippling through the water -- a keening, mournful cry.

As if called, pulled inexorably on, the Explorers moved closer, and the twin beams of our lights caught the face of the scarred giant, making the gold-lettering tattooed across her side flash like firelight.

LOIRE

I'll be damned...

MARELLA

It's the Tiamat...

SPINNER

It can't be.

MATTI

But it IS! Hell it says so right there on the side!

SPINNER

But it CAN'T be.

ASHERAH

Captain, I'm still reading the Tiamat right where we left her.

LOIRE

So am I.

SPINNER

So what the hell is THAT then?!

MATTI

(frowns, squinting) It looks like an older model. Same basic design, but... maybe... eight? Ten years older than what we've got at least.

ASHERAH

It would have to be... Look at how far those corals have come up over the base.

SPINNER

Why's it slanted like that? Where'd its other legs go?

LOIRE

Must've had some sort of an accident.

SPINNER

Jesus... It's like looking through the wrong end of a mirror...

ASHERAH

I think the word you're looking for is "uncanny."

MARELLA

(urgent) Captain!

LOIRE

Marella? What is it? What's wrong?

MARELLA

There's a light on.

LOIRE

What?

MARELLA

There! I-... it's... it's gone now... But there was a light shining on one of those upper decks.

SPINNER

You think somebody could still be

inside?

LOIRE

No... Not if it's been down here a decade.

MATTI

Her hull looks basically intact. Just something's been at her outsides.

ASHERAH

I'm picking up a few vague heat signatures coming from inside the station... *Something's* definitely in there.

MATTI

Well what are we waiting for?!

ASHERAH

Matti, we don't have any idea what the hell is inside that thing.

MATTI

But what if it's the crew? Somebody could be injured! They could be starving!

SPINNER

And what if it's something that ate the crew?

ASHERAH

There won't be people in there, Matti. A disaster like this and the station would have been abandoned.

MARELLA

How do we know somebody wasn't left behind.

ASHERAH

Kiran wouldn't-

MARELLA

Are you sure about that?

beat.

LOIRE

Okay. ... Okay. We'll take a turn

around the exterior, and see if we can find any functional docking ports.

ASHERAH

Clarion-

LOIRE

(ignoring her) We're in there for thirty minutes. No longer.

ASHERAH

(darkly) This is a bad idea.

LOIRE

I wouldn't want to leave somebody in a station like that, would you?

...Best case scenario, we'll salvage some supplies, and have a little extra material to repair the comms room. Worst case... Well. It's only half an hour.

Alright. Everybody suit up.

FADE TO:

SCENE FOUR

INT. Corridor, The Derelict - DAY

The old station creaks and groans -- a song of abandonment echoing through the cavernous, empty halls.

Something bangs against the door to the airlock; the sound seems to ring through the station. And again. And again.

BANG! The door to the airlock is forced open, and the rusted hinges scream in protest as they move for the first time in a decade.

ASHERAH

Okay. We're in.

MARELLA

Hello? ... Anybody home?

SPINNER

Jeeeeesus it's hot in here!

The Tiamat crew steps inside. There are a series of loud

splashes -- water fills the hall up to their shins, and sloshes with every step.

MATTI

Ugh, gross!

LOIRE

Watch your step.

Asherah dips a gloved hand into the water. Her suit begins to scan the atmosphere, then lets out a soft beep.

ASHERAH

I'm reading atmosphere. Filters aren't working at full capacity, but it's perfectly breathable. Structure is reasonably secure, and hull pressure is well within safety limits.

LOIRE

So what's with all the water?

Asherah's suit beeps again. She frowns.

ASHERAH

It's freshwater...

SPINNER

Meaning?

MARELLA

Meaning there isn't a leak.

ASHERAH

She flooded from the inside.

LOIRE

(pulling off his helmet) Well, in that case.

ASHERAH

(admonishing) Captain!

LOIRE

You said it's breathable... I trust you. ... Look, I'm still alive! It's okay.

Asherah glares at him, then removes her own helmet. The rest of the crew follows suit.

ASHERAH
(under her breath) One of these
days...

The station lets out another wailing groan. Something out of sight slithers softly along the ground, and slips into the water.

MARELLA
(suddenly alert) Listen... Can you
hear that?

MATTI
Marella?

MARELLA
I thought-... never mind.

SPINNER
This is the part where we head back to
the explorers, right?

LOIRE
Not without our answers.

SPINNER
(sighs) Aw hell. (under his breath)
This is the most white folk
bullshit...

LOIRE
Thirty minutes. If my guess is
correct, this should be the same basic
layout as our station, so this won't
take us long. Talise, Marella, Matti,
you check out the sleeping quarters
and the mess -- see if you can locate
any members of the crew, and work out
if a medical transport is necessary.

Spinner, you're with me. I want to
take a look at the equipment in the
comms room and up on the bridge... see
if we can find out what went wrong.

ASHERAH
Copy that. (setting a timer on her
suit) Thirty minutes... starting...
now.

LOIRE

Good luck. Stay safe, and stay in touch... And for the love of god, stick with your group.

FADE TO:

SCENE FIVE

INT. Communications Room, The Derelict - DAY

Loire and Spinner slosh through the halls.

SPINNER

Is it just me, or is it getting a helluva lot hotter?

LOIRE

Must be something wrong with the habitation controls. But at least it means some parts of the station still have power.

SPINNER

So why the hell are all the lights out?

LOIRE

Maybe the bulbs blew. Or the wire was cut. Not a fan of the dark, huh?

SPINNER

Dark I can handle, but if the station's runnin' there should be lights. This is just WEIRD.

LOIRE

(teasing) You don't think it's romantic?

SPINNER

I get liking 'em warm and low, but we've got to have a serious talk about your notion of romance, Cap. I'd be more than happy to give you a little private education.

LOIRE

(laughs) I'll keep that in mind.
(sighs) It WOULD be nice to see what we're stepping in.

SPINNER

Seriously, it's like a goddamn swamp down here. (beat) Think they'll find anyone?

LOIRE

I don't know... You've got water... air... heat... I don't want to think about what you'd have to be eating, but... it's possible. And Marella did see that light. Something's been surviving down here.

Spinner suddenly stops in his tracks.

SPINNER

(wrinkling his nose) And something definitely didn't... You smell that?

LOIRE

Yeah. (blanching) Christ... what is that?

SPINNER

Decay. Somethin' died down here. Two, maybe three weeks ago.

LOIRE

How do you-

SPINNER

Sometimes a cat'll kill something, and never get around to finishing it. Too big, or the cat gets sick, or scared off... The meat just lies there, rotting. Gets so bad sometimes, even we can smell it half a mile off. Gets so the fetid rot of it sinks into the earth, your skin, the trees... Death clings... But you get used to it after a while.

LOIRE

Should... Should we go take a look?

SPINNER

No. ... Whatever it was, it'll be unrecognizable by now. Water'll have swollen the corpse, it'll be black with blood... coming apart at the seams... Nothing we can do. Might as

well press on.

LOIRE
... okay... Comms room should be right
through here...

They walk on a short ways, and Loire forces open a metal door. Water spills onto the dry comms room floor.

LOIRE
Whoah!

SPINNER
Shit. Looks like they had this place
closed off before the flooding
started.

LOIRE
Help me get this shut, will you?

Spinner and Loire position themselves against the door as water continues pouring in.

LOIRE
One... Two...

The two men strain and slam the door shut.

SPINNER
... That's gonna open again, right?

LOIRE
No reason why it shouldn't.

SPINNER
Thanks Cap, I was wondering which of
us was gonna jinx it.

LOIRE
(laughs) Anybody ever tell you you're
a little dramatic?

SPINNER
Anybody ever sit you down to watch a
horror movie? You should be worried!
Gentlemen of our complexion don't just
walk out of these kinds of stories
unscathed!

LOIRE
Oh my god.

SPINNER

I'm serious. We have all the makings of a glorious death. Creepy abandoned copy-cat station. Strange lights in the window. We already know everything's trying to eat us. The only thing we need now is-

CRACK! Both men instinctively freeze. Spinner forces himself to look at what he's stepped on.

SPINNER

... the dismembered skeletons of the crew.

LOIRE

(softly) Fucking hell...

SPINNER

(grimly) I told you so.

Spinner crouches over the remains.

SPINNER

Well, at least we know where one of them ended up... Poor bastard. Where's the lower half?

LOIRE

O... Over here. Or... part of it, anyway.

SPINNER

Captain... take a look at this... Bones've been crushed. Here. See? Where the arm's supposed to be. Something pulverized the bone, and you can see where it's been just... ripped off... And these marks here... These blunt, conical indentations... Looks like it crushed the skull, and tried pulling off the head like a corkscrew... that's why the neck's broken like that...

(beat) Something was in here with him.

LOIRE

You think it might be-

SPINNER

No... Nothing in here left to eat.
Skeleton's been picked clean...

He crosses the room to examine the other part of the skeleton.

SPINNER

Looks like your half's been
regurgitated. Do those toe-bones look
melted to you?

LOIRE

You know anything that could do
something like that?

SPINNER

Rip a man apart? Sure. Spitting back
up what it can't digest is even pretty
common... Crushing the bones like that
though... No. And I don't think I want
to find out.

LOIRE

Then let's get what we came for and
head back to the station. There should
be a System's Log somewhere in this
console. It'll have all their incoming
and outgoing communications stored, as
well as any records the crew kept,
like a Black Box chronicle of the
whole trip.

SPINNER

Okay. What's it supposed to look like?

LOIRE

A data cube. A metal square of data
chips, about the size of your palm...
It'll be labeled "Log" or "Backups" or
something equally innocuous...

SPINNER

(laughs) Like finding a needle in a
haystack.

LOIRE

Come on...

They move over to the console.

SPINNER

This might be a helluva lot easier if we could see what we're doing... Where the hell is the light switch? Ah!

He finds it and clicks it on. The lights don't come on, but the console whirs and beeps into sudden life.

SPINNER

Whoah!

LOIRE

What did you do?

SPINNER

I just hit the switch... They have power then. Still no lights.

LOIRE

This'll have to do. Jesus, how is anybody supposed to find anything on this console?

SPINNER

That screen there looks like it might be an interface... Where's the keyboard?

LOIRE

Looks like they just used this microphone... God, I haven't seen one of these in years. Computer?

The screen beeps into life.

SPINNER

Hey! Now we're cookin' with gas!

LOIRE

Computer, export all available System's Logs.

The computer makes a noise like a dialup modem as it struggles to follow through the command.

SPINNER

I don't think she likes that, Cap...

LOIRE

It's a lot of information, and this station has been offline for a long

time.

A section of a console slots open and something clicks as it is pushed through the small hole.

SPINNER

Is that it?

LOIRE

That's it.

He unzips a part of his suit and shoves the data cube into his pocket. The console continues to buzz and click.

LOIRE

There! That wasn't so bad. One down.
Now we just have to head up to the
bridge for the computer drives, and-

COLLIN

(heavily muffled by static, via comms)
Hello?

Both men freeze.

SPINNER

Uh, Cap? Did the computer just-

LOIRE

That's coming from the console.

Again, we hear a man's voice -- DR. COLLIN GHARIAL -- thickly muffled through the static and faulty connection.

COLLIN

H-hello? Hello?!

SPINNER

This can't be real. That has to be a
recording-

COLLIN

Is someone there? Can anybody hear me?

LOIRE

Jesus Christ, somebody's alive down
there. (reaching for the comms) Hello?
Hello! Yes, I can hear you.

COLLIN

Hello?!

LOIRE

Hello. This is Captain Clarion Loire.
Can you hear me?

COLLIN

I can hear you! I can hear you,
Captain... it is so good to hear your
voice. I haven't heard another
person's voice in... Oh this is
marvelous! Simply marvelous!

SPINNER

I don't believe it...

COLLIN

Is someone there with you?

LOIRE

That's Spinner. He's a member of my
crew... We're here with a search and
rescue team.

COLLIN

A rescue team? You mean... Here? There
are people onboard? Here?

LOIRE

That's right. (gently) Can you tell us
what happened here? Where are the rest
of your crew?

COLLIN

They're dead... They're... They're all
dead now, I'm afraid... Or run away...
Please... W-will you help me? They've
all left me, I-... I'm afraid I really
do need your help... I've been down
here quite a while...

LOIRE

It's alright. It's alright, don't
worry, we'll help you. I promise.

COLLIN

Will you really? Oh- Thank you...
Thank you, thank you! Good... yes...

LOIRE

Where are you?

COLLIN

In the laboratories. On the lower decks. I'm afraid I-... I can't... come up... I'm-... trapped, as it were. My legs don't work quite the way they used to... Please, Captain, you must hurry. I don't mean to rush you, but-... Well, what can I say? I'm rather anxious to meet you. It's been so long...

SPINNER

There's an access shaft at the far end of the hall. If it's the same layout as our station, the lower deck labs can't be far.

LOIRE

Okay. We're on our way to you now, alright? Don't panic. We'll be there soon.

COLLIN

Oh thank you! Thank you captain, thank you!

LOIRE

Of course. Just hold on, okay? ... What's your name?

COLLIN

Collin... My... my name is Collin...

FADE TO:

SCENE SIX

INT. Corridor, The Derelict - MEANWHILE

We hear the creaking of rusted hinges as a door is forced open. Asherah sticks her head in and glances around.

ASHERAH

Clear.

MATTI

Well, at least this one looks like used to be lived in.

ASHERAH

That's a start.

Marella steps forward and starts snapping a few pictures.

MATTI

You don't think that's a little-

MARELLA

What?

MATTI

I don't know... Disrespectful?

MARELLA

No. It's evidence. We're not coming back here -- I want to make sure we don't miss anything. Besides... It's important to document who these people were.

MATTI

(sighs) Okay... How many rooms have we searched so far?

ASHERAH

This makes thirteen. But I'd say less than half of those were occupied at any given time.

MARELLA

We have a crew of six-... five. It's most likely that they did as well... Assuming they're using the same model as we are, they wouldn't have more than eight, maybe nine people onboard at any given time.

MATTI

That still means we're missing a few.

MARELLA

It'd be easier if we had a crew manifest... that way we might know who we're looking for.

ASHERAH

Yeah, well, if wishes were horses-

MARELLA

We'd likely be trampled by a stampede.
(lowering the camera) Okay. I'm done.

The women move into the room and begin to search.

ASHERAH

Keep an eye out for any recording equipment or journals.

MATTI

I've got a laptop here... Don't see a charger anywhere though.

Matti shoves the laptop into her bag.

MARELLA

I'm not surprised. Do you think it was this much of a mess before the station collapsed?

ASHERAH

Minus the water -- oh yeah, absolutely.

MARELLA

How do people LIVE like this?

MATTI

It's not THAT bad.

MARELLA

Remind me never to visit your room.

MATTI

You just need to know where to find the order inside the chaos. Like... see? It's all sort of grouped under the posters. Jimmi Hendrix, Bowie, Michael Jackson -- pile of sheet music and guitar! Craftsy pinboard -- probably the chair with the still good laundry.

MARELLA

(noticing) Giant claw marks in the wall -- blood stains on the sheets.

MATTI

(paling) Holy shit.

ASHERAH

Okay. Back into the hallway, now.

Marella climbs up onto the bed to get a closer look -- the bedsprings creak in protest.

MARELLA

(examining) These half to be at least an inch and a half deep... (she starts snapping pictures) What could do something like that to solid metal?

ASHERAH

Hallway! NOW, doctor, that's an order.

MARELLA

But-

ASHERAH

No, I don't like this. We have the laptop, and there's no one here. Which means we have what we came for and we need to press on.

MARELLA

I-... Yes, lieutenant.

The women head back into the hall. Asherah shuts the door, moves down the hall, and yanks open an access shaft.

ASHERAH

Come on. Through here. We'll cut across the station using the maintenance catwalks. I'm sick of walking in all this water, and my feet are fucking frozen.

They head into the maintenance shafts -- a hollow, cylindrical shaft at the center of the station, ringed with catwalks and ladders. Pipes hiss, water drips, and there is a low, distant rumble of some sort of engine far below.

MATTI

(peering over the edge) Funny, I thought it'd be a much further drop.

MARELLA

Looks like the lower levels of the station are all completely flooded. The water must be trickling down from somewhere up above us...

ASHERAH

Well, it's not our problem, assuming you both can swim... Either way. Watch your step.

We hear the door to the main station boom shut behind them. The crew's footsteps echo and clatter on the catwalk as they make their way across.

MATTI

(quietly) They're dead, aren't they.
The crew.

ASHERAH

Yes.

MARELLA

No! Not... not all of them.

ASHERAH

You really believe that?

MARELLA

I saw light in the window!

ASHERAH

(not unkindly) I'm sure you think you did.

MARELLA

What's that supposed to mean?

ASHERAH

You see something like this, of course you want there to be survivors.

MARELLA

So what are you doing here, if you don't think there are any?

ASHERAH

I trust my Captain. Even when I know he's being optimistic and chasing after fairy tales.

MARELLA

But someone IS down here.

ASHERAH

Maybe. But then they'd have been alone for... what? Almost a decade? Ten years is a long time... are you sure you want to meet them?

There is a moment's uncomfortable silence.

MATTI

Do you think something got in?

ASHERAH

Seems like it.

MARELLA

But it can't have, can it? The station would be flooded with salt water if something had forced its way in.

ASHERAH

Maybe it didn't have to force anything.

MARELLA

You think somebody opened the doors and let it in?

ASHERAH

People have made worse decisions. You'd be surprised the kinds of monsters people adopt, just because it bats its big watery eyes.

MATTI

Hey now! I know he bites, but Spinner is just as much a part of the crew as anybody!

MARELLA

As soon as he starts carving chunks out of the wall, I think you ought to consider getting him a muzzle.

MATTI

You think the guys have found-

ASHERAH

(suddenly alert) Quiet!

MATTI

Asherah? What's wrong?

ASHERAH

Did you hear that?

They all freeze, listening. Pipes rattle and hiss. Water drips. Was that something slithering, or just a burst of steam?

MATTI

I don't hear-

ASHERAH

Listen.

They do. Very softly, something rattles against the metal rungs of a nearby catwalk.

ASHERAH

(realizing, very softly) It's above us...

MATTI

What is?!

ASHERAH

(unholstering her gun and clicking off the safety) ... back. Back the way we came. Move quickly, but move now.

MARELLA

Asherah-

ASHERAH

There's something on the catwalk-

BANG! Something crashes down onto the catwalk, behind them. Marella lets out a cry of surprise as something wraps an arm around her neck. She looks up and finds herself staring into the dark, calculating eyes of a woman -- SIRENA.

MARELLA

Get off! Let go of m-

She is choked off painfully, and we hear the sharp swish-click of a switch blade being drawn. Sirena holds the blade tight to Marella's throat.

SIRENA

Don't move.

MATTI

Marella!

SIRENA

(sharply) Take another step, and she dies. (to Asherah) You, big woman with the gun. I see you so much as twitch, I'll have this one's jugular sliced open before your brain tells your

finger to pull the trigger. Drop your weapon.

ASHERAH
(dropping the gun) Jesus fuck...

MARELLA
(trying not to panic) Lieutenant-

ASHERAH
It's okay, Marella. It's okay. Just breathe. You're going to be fine.

SIRENA
Do you always make promises you can't keep? (tightening her grip) Kick it over here. You too, Beta. Disarm, and kick your weapons here to me.

MATTI
What did you call me?

SIRENA
NOW.

Matti unholsters her weapon and kicks it across to Sirena. Asherah, glaring, does the same.

SIRENA
Good. You... pick them up. Put the weapons in the bag, nice and slow.

MARELLA
(doing as she's told) O-okay... Okay... We... we came here to help you, you don't have to-

SIRENA
Be quiet.

ASHERAH
Okay, we're disarmed. We're not moving. We can't possibly hurt you. What do you want?

SIRENA
(to Marella) You have a ship?

MARELLA
I-... Y-yes.

SIRENA

Show me.

ASHERAH

Okay-

SIRENA

Not you! This one. You two stay here.

ASHERAH

You're NOT taking her.

SIRENA

You follow, she dies.

Somewhere in the complex, metal groans and something heavy slithers. We hear a low, watery hiss.

MATTI

What the hell was that?!

SIRENA

... They're awake... (half to herself)
You made too much noise.

ASHERAH

Matti, get away from the edge!

MATTI

Lieutenant... There's something down there!

SIRENA

(sizing Asherah up) You're the pack leader?

ASHERAH

I'm Lieutenant Commander Talise Asherah. I-

SIRENA

(cutting her off) You're in charge of the-... (struggling to find the right word) the harem. These two women. Do you want to get out of here alive?

ASHERAH

I-... Yes.

SIRENA

Then I suggest you tell your pack-mate

to stop thrashing. They like the way
it makes the water dance.

With one swift movement, Sirena darts forward and sends a high kick into the center of Matti's back. Matti screams and plummets from the catwalk. We hear a splash as she lands in the pool below.

ASHERAH

MATTI!

MARELLA

No!!

SIRENA

You! You're coming with me. (grabbing
Marella arm) MOVE IT.

MARELLA

Let go of me!

SIRENA

Move, or I'm throwing you over next!

MARELLA

Asherah!

SIRENA

Remember! You follow, I kill her!

ASHERAH

You fucking- Marella, just... stay
calm. Don't worry. Just do what she
says. I promise, it's going to be
okay!

SIRENA

I'd worry about the one in the water
if I were you. There are much bigger
problems on their way. She hasn't got
long.

Something below hisses. Matti screams. Asherah, torn, shifts closer towards the edge.

ASHERAH

Marella-

MARELLA

No... No, no, no, no please- please
don't leave me-

ASHERAH

I swear, I will find you.

SIRENA

Jump to it.

Asherah climbs up onto the railing, and jumps over the side of the catwalk. Air whistles past as she falls, and there is a loud splash as she hits the water.

For a moment, the world is silence and bubbles...

Then Asherah breaks the surface, gasping. Nearby, Matti, panicking, is thrashing, shrieking, and trying to keep her head above water.

ASHERAH

Matti?! MATTI!

MATTI

No! NO! Get away!

ASHERAH

Matti! Matti, stop it! Calm down!
STOP! It's me!

MATTI

(panicking, shocked) I can't breathe!
I can't breathe! (then, rising anger)
WHAT THE FUCK!

ASHERAH

Are you hurt?

MATTI

(furious) She KICKED ME! That bitch!
She could have killed me!

ASHERAH

It's alright! Put your arms around me.
Hold onto me, tight. I'm gonna pull
you to the ladder. You're alright.
I've got you. Come on. We have to stop
that woman before she does something
to Marella. We need to find the
captain. Move.

MATTI

(starting to calm down) Okay... Ok-

Without warning, Matti is violently yanked under the water.

She barely has time to scream, before she disappears and the water begins to froth and roil with bubbles.

ASHERAH
Matti? MATTI?!

Somewhere nearby, we hear something large slide into the water. Asherah twists in the water.

ASHERAH
Oh Jesus... Oh... Jesus...

Just as quickly, Matti breaks the surface again, coughing and shrieking.

MATTI
GET IT OFF! GET IT OFF!

ASHERAH
Matti!

MATTI
My leg! Oh... god, it hurts! My leg!

ASHERAH
Hold onto me! I've got you! I've got you!

MATTI
It touched me! S-something bit me! M-my leg-

ASHERAH
Shit, that's a lot of blood...

MATTI
It touched me! It touched me! Asherah, I felt it! Jesus fuck- There's something in the water!

Very nearby, something large breaks the surface of the water, and we hear a low, gurgling hiss.

FADE TO:

SCENE SEVEN

INT. Utility Room, The Derelict - DAY

Sirena drags Marella down the hall. She gives Marella a sharp tug, making the other woman whimper in pain.

SIRENA
Your ship! Where is it?

MARELLA
Docked! A-at the airlock.

SIRENA
Which airlock?

MARELLA
Five! A-and the other Explorer is
docked at six.

Sirena stops dead in her tracks.

SIRENA
The other what?

MARELLA
The-... The other Explorer. The second
ship-

SIRENA
You brought two of them?

MARELLA
Yes.

SIRENA
No... NO! God DAMNIT! You *fucking*
idiots.

MARELLA
(bewildered) Well there are five of
us! We had to split up-

SIRENA
Who sent you?

MARELLA
I- No one sent us...

SIRENA
Liar! Somebody sent you! You knew we
were here. You came here for It! For
him!

MARELLA
We came here to help! We came here to
rescue you!

SIRENA

I don't NEED your rescue.

She kicks open a nearby door and shoves Marella inside.

SIRENA

In here.

MARELLA

But the airlock is that way...

SIRENA

You're not going to the airlock. (half to herself) He can't get off this station.

MARELLA

What?

SIRENA

You want to help me?

Sirena picks up a length of chain. Marella eyes her warily.

MARELLA

I- Yes. What are you-

SIRENA

Stand there. (she shuts the door)
There are creatures on this station
that can't be allowed to leave.

MARELLA

Creatures?

SIRENA

You'll find out. Hold this. (tosses her one end of the chain) Throw the other end of the chain over that pipe, and pull it tight.

Marella does.

MARELLA

Like this?

SIRENA

Tighter. Both hands, put your back into it. ... Perfect. Hold it steady.

She moves across the room, and we hear her open a metal

cabinet and slide a bucket out of the cabinet, across the concrete floor. Marella watches her as Sirena works.

MARELLA

So... Am I just supposed to call you "The Woman," or do you have a name?

SIRENA

(coldly) I have a name.

MARELLA

... Are you going to tell me what it is?

SIRENA

I-... (flustered) Just... give me a minute!

MARELLA

.... don't you remember what it is?

SIRENA

Shut up! (turning away) You don't need names down here. Your end of the chain is slack. Pull it tighter!

MARELLA

(noticing) You're limping.

SIRENA

What?

MARELLA

Your leg...

SIRENA

Oh. That. Old break... No doctors down here. I couldn't fix it on my own.

MARELLA

I... I'm sorry.

SIRENA

Why? You didn't break it.

She snaps open the lid of the bucket. Marella recoils as Sirena lifts the bucket and the contents slosh thickly.

MARELLA

What is that?

SIRENA
Crocodile blood.

MARELLA
How did you-

SIRENA
Very carefully.

MARELLA
Why on earth would you need a bucket
full of-

Wordlessly, Sirena hurls the contents of the bucket into Marella's face. Marella gasps, splutters, and screams.

SIRENA
They like the smell of it.

MARELLA
What the fuck are you doing?!

SIRENA
Setting a trap.

Sirena grabs the chain and loops it around Marella's wrists, then snaps a lock into place, chaining her to the pole. Marella struggles, but is unable to free herself.

MARELLA
Let me go!

SIRENA
Good. Keep screaming, they like that.
Struggle as much as you like. The
vibrations will keep them interested.

She yanks on the chain and Marella shrieks as she is hoisted off the ground.

MARELLA
PUT ME DOWN!!!

SIRENA
I wouldn't advise it. If I leave you
standing there, they'd be at your legs
in a matter of minutes. This way at
least, you have a fighting chance...
if you have any semblance of upper
body strength, and your arms don't
give out too fast. I'd try wrapping

yourself around that pole, if you can reach it.

MARELLA

Please... d-don't do this! Why are you doing this?!

SIRENA

I need a distraction, and live bait will keep them entertained for hours. You said you wanted to help.

MARELLA

This isn't what I meant!

SIRENA

I know. It's... nothing personal. I heard you and your pack moving around as soon as you came onboard. So I followed you. I need your ship. Then I saw you, and- You're pretty.

MARELLA

Pretty?

SIRENA

I-... (flustered, trying to explain)
You were the easiest to separate from your pack. The pretty ones never have any fucking clue what they're doing. It was nothing personal.

MARELLA

So you're just going to leave me here?!

SIRENA

Of course. That's what bait is for. You people might have no idea what you've walked into, but there is no way in hell the things on this station can be released out into the wild. If you'd only brought the one ship-... but you didn't, and now your death will buy me the time I need to destroy the other ship before I go. Nothing else can leave this place alive. I'll make sure of that.
Thank you for the ride home. I just have one final bit of business to

attend to, and you... will make a very lively distraction. He'll like you. I- ... I'm sorry. It will be a slow death. ... but if it's any consolation, it's for a good cause.

Down the hall, we hear a low, gurgling hiss.

SIRENA

... They're coming. I have to go.

Sirena pulls open the door, and moves to leave.

MARELLA

Wait! Wait wait wait, please! I don't- ... I don't understand- What's- WHAT'S coming? Who else is on the ship?

Sirena pauses in the doorway.

SIRENA

He called them Baurusuchus. Not... that it matters... Just... think of it as a big crocodile. Though you won't have to think about it for long.

MARELLA

No... No, please PLEASE! Don't! Just-Help me down. Unchain me, and I'll help you get out of here! You don't have to destroy the Explorer! My crew-

SIRENA

Your pack-mates are dead. The lucky ones anyway. (beat) ... Did you have a name?

MARELLA

M-Marella...

SIRENA

Marella. ... I hope for your sake they don't play with you too much.

MARELLA

You can't do this! PLEASE! Don't do this! Don't leave me! We came here to help you!

SIRENA

(shutting her eyes, forcing herself to take a deep breath) ... I'm sorry.

MARELLA

What about your crew?! There must be others on the station! You MUST know where they are! We can help you! We can escape! If you let me down, we can save them! What about the other people?!

Sirena stares at her blankly.

SIRENA

There aren't any others.

Marella stares at Sirena in wordless horror. Sirena studies her for a moment, then sprints out of the room.

Out in the hall, the ground shakes as something heavy makes its way down the corridor. Stomp. Stomp. Stomp.

A long, reptilian snout pokes around the doorway... and we hear the low, watery hiss of an enormous crocodile.

Marella screams.

FADE TO:

EPILOGUE

INT. Laboratories, The Derelict - MEANWHILE

We hear the sound of a door being forced open on long rusted hinges. Spinner and Loire struggle to shift debris out of their path as they slosh through the water.

LOIRE

Collin? COLLIN, are you there?

SPINNER

Shit, he really wasn't kidding about being trapped down here. Look at all this crap.

Spinner shoves a heavy chunk of metal away from the door.

SPINNER

Looks like somebody was trying to build a barricade.

LOIRE

Yeah, on the wrong side of the door.

SPINNER

Maybe they didn't realize anybody was still down here. They might've thought he was dead.

Something in the shadows slithers. We hear the faint clicking of claws on the floor.

LOIRE

What was that?

We hear the something in the shadows slip into the water.

Silence.

LOIRE

Maybe it was just a fish...

SPINNER

(sighs) Jesus Christ, how do I always get stuck with the optimists?

LOIRE

Thanks for that.

SPINNER

Skeptics die sooner. So we can't warn the rest of you about how stupid you're all being.

LOIRE

Lucky me. You want any particular flowers on your grave?

SPINNER

Lillies. Arranged in the shape of a great big middle finger, so I can tell the universe to kiss my ass, long after I'm gone.

LOIRE

(snorts) Who ever knew you were such a poet.

SPINNER

I know my way around a word.

LOIRE
 Come on. Help me shift this. One...
 Two... Three!

Spinner and Loire strain to push a massive beam away from the door. It crashes to the ground.

LOIRE
 (wincing) Oof. I'm going to feel that
 in the morning.

SPINNER
 Uh, Cap? Those look like scorch marks
 to you?

LOIRE
 What?

SPINNER
 There... on the door. Looks like
 somebody tried to melt it with a blow-
 torch.

LOIRE
 Shit. (moving to examine the door)
 Well... looks like most of the damage
 is just cosmetic. Either this person
 didn't know what they were doing, or
 they ran out of time. I think if we-

The door slides suddenly open with a hydraulic hiss. Spinner and Loire exchange a look.

LOIRE
 Ooooookay.

He steps inside.

LOIRE
 Collin? Collin, are you there?

SPINNER
 (following him) Hang on a second, cap.
 This doesn't sit right.

A shadow nearby shifts, rearing up and revealing itself as a huge crocodile. It thrashes its tail in the water, hissing.

SPINNER
 HOLY FUCK!

LOIRE

Get back!

SPINNER

What the fuck kind of a demon
crocodile is that supposed to be?!

LOIRE

Spinner, GET BACK!

Behind them, the laboratory door snaps shut.

SPINNER

Loire-

LOIRE

God DAMNIT!

Loire throws his shoulder against the door. Another crocodile lifts its head from the water. Then another, and another. A chorus of hissing and snapping jaws fills the room.

SPINNER

(backing away) Shit... Shit, shit...

LOIRE

I... I'm sorry, Spinner.

SPINNER

(attempting a smile) Don't be. We're
still breathing.

He pulls out his gun, racks, and takes aim. He fires off three quick shots -- the chorus of hissing rises in violence and fury.

SPINNER

Fuck me.

COLLIN

Well, I suppose that's one way to make
an introduction.

Crunch. Crunch. Crunch. Something huge and reptilian moves slowly out of the shadows, sending the comparatively smaller crocodiles scurrying out of its path. As it steps into the light, it is revealed to have most of the upper torso of a human man, and the lower torso of an enormous black crocodile.

LOIRE
(stunned) Oh my god...

SPINNER
(mingled terror and disbelief) What IS that thing?

LOIRE
(realizing, sick) Its Collin...

SPINNER
B-but his legs- the whole lower half is- It's a crocodile! That's- He's a-

LOIRE
It's what's left of him.

Collin surveys Loire and Spinner through brilliant yellow eyes. His claws crack against the floor, his heavy tail swishes, and he smiles, revealing mismatched human and reptilian teeth.

COLLIN
You must be Spinner, and Captain Loire. Such a delight. Such a delight! My apologies for the discourtesy of our meeting. I would have been up to greet you as soon as you arrived, but my evolution is not yet complete, and as I said before, I have been trapped down here for quite some time.

But you are welcome! Very welcome. We could smell you coming, you see, and my children are all rather excited. It's been such a long time since we've had any new playmates, isn't that right my loves?

(grinning) My name is Dr. Collin Gharial. Welcome to the Nest. So glad that you've come to join us. We've been so starved for company, haven't we my dears?

FADE OUT.

TO BE CONTINUED...