

Primordial Deep  
Episode One - "Tiamat"

by

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No Such Thing Productions

PROLOGUE

A moment's silence. The sound of a pen, scratching on paper.  
A voice.

MARELLA (NARRATING)

There is a question. The only one that matters. It hasn't been asked, but it hovers, like the smell of salt in the air. Promising. Sharp. Inevitable.

And when you get the call... the one that matters... when he finally asks...

I find myself poised on the edge of New York City. I find myself standing between the sand and the sea. Somehow, inevitably, I find myself waiting. Hating the naivety of the thought that maybe this time, the promise will be fulfilled. That this is the call you tell yourself you've stopped waiting for. Maybe this time, I will receive more than a mouth full of salt water and air. Maybe this time the universe really will open its arms... Maybe this time there really is a question.

Because it's the only thing standing between me... and the answers...

SCENE ONE

EXT. Coney Island, New York - DAY

Waves crash against the beach. Seabirds wheel and cry out overhead, and somewhere further down the beach, children laugh and scream as they play in the surf.

DR. MARELLA MORGAN watches a wave break on the shore -- and sighs.

MARELLA

(to herself) ... I fucking hate the ocean.

KIRAN

(from behind) Oh, now that doesn't seem too terribly scientific.

Marella gasps and whips around. KIRAN FLINT stands on the pier behind her.

KIRAN

Still... Here I was, thinking I'd be fighting the breakers for your attention. But it looks like I have the pleasure of the advantage.

Kiran looks her up and down, appraising.

KIRAN

So! ... You're the infamous Dr. Marella Morgan.

MARELLA

(raising an eyebrow) Don't you mean "famous?"

KIRAN

(laughing) I don't think so. (offering his hand) Kiran Flint. Pleasure to finally meet you in person. Shall we take a walk?

Marella eyes him dubiously, then nods.

CUT TO:

INT. Freak Show, Coney Island - CONTINUOUS

A man breathes fire into the air. We hear the crowd shriek and cheer as they draw back from the roaring flames. Marella and Kiran sit towards the back of the audience, apart.

MARELLA

You called me to fly all the way out to New York, to see the Coney Island freak show?

KIRAN

I called you because, according to some, you're the brightest marine biologist in the business. I took you to the freak show, because... times are strange... and things are a little bit easier to explain in a place where the only difference between reality and a dream is a skeptic.

MARELLA

I thought there was some sort of emergency.

KIRAN

Something like that.

MARELLA

I assume you work for the government.

KIRAN

Why in the world would you assume a thing like that?

MARELLA

(skeptical, challenging) How else would you have gotten my number?

KIRAN

Maybe I have friends in high places.

MARELLA

You're wearing a suit. At the beach.

KIRAN

You don't think it looks nice?

MARELLA

And your voicemail was... cryptic.

KIRAN

(amused) Oh, I prefer "intriguing!" "Mysterious..."

MARELLA

A waste of my time.

KIRAN

(sudden, unnerving shrewdness) And yet here you are. ... Why is that I wonder? (beat. and then, just as suddenly, genial again) Do you like carnivals?

MARELLA

(hesitantly) ... Not really, no.

KIRAN

(amused) Do you like anything?

MARELLA

(dryly) Clarity of purpose.

KIRAN

(laughs) I deserved that... (sobering)  
 Tell you the truth, I didn't used to  
 like carnivals either. Once you've  
 been on all the rides and made  
 yourself sick on cotton candy, it's  
 just a nightmare of funhouse mirrors  
 and wondering how the shadows got so  
 dark and so long... But my sister used  
 to LOVE this place. She used to say it  
 was the world on the border between  
 the weird and the wild... And I know  
 what you're thinking... In the  
 daylight it's... kitchy. Commercial.  
 The beach is full of needles and  
 glass, and the coasters are waiting to  
 fall back into the sea... But this  
 place.... If you stand still in it  
 long enough -- if you hold your  
 breath... you can feel it. There's  
 something buzzing, just below the  
 surface. Beyond the bizarre... beyond  
 the blue... My sister could feel it...  
 like it was always there for her. I  
 had to search for it... push through  
 the dark... I'm wondering if you're  
 the type... if you might feel it  
 too...

Marella shivers in spite of herself -- unnerved, and unsure  
 as to why...

MARELLA

(trying to change the subject) What  
 happened to your sister?

KIRAN

She chased it... She died...

MARELLA

I'm... I'm sorry.

KIRAN

(smiles) Don't be. She found what she  
 was looking for. (beat) Can I show you  
 something?

MARELLA

I thought that's what we came here for?

KIRAN

Yes. But not this. Not... quite this. I just needed to be sure. Don't get me wrong, doctor, I'm not here to waste your time. It took me a very long time to track you down, and we have a lot to discuss... Things I think you might even like. But I'd like to show you something else before we begin. Because I'm not sure you'll understand what I'm talking about unless I do...

MARELLA

Where are you taking me?

KIRAN

To the edge. If we're going to be working together, there's a line you'll need to cross that's not quite reality, not quite nightmare... It lives in the place my sister found. I need to give you a taste of a... stranger reality. (he stands and looks at her expectantly) Well?

Marella doesn't let herself move.

MARELLA

I want answers.

KIRAN

You'll have them.

MARELLA

You're a conman. I don't want your words. I want proof.

KIRAN

(smirking, again suddenly shrewd) Of what? I haven't even told you what you're asking for, yet.

MARELLA

... Everything. Whatever it is you're selling.

Kiran smiles.

KIRAN

Well... Then I guess you'd better come with me. That is... unless you're enjoying the show?

He offers her his hand. And after a moment, Marella takes it.

FADE TO:

SCENE TWO

INT. Backstage, Freak Show - CONTINUOUS

We hear an old, wooden door creak open, and Kiran pulls a string to illuminate a bare bulb and a long staircase. Somewhere in the distance, we hear the sounds of the freak show fading...

KIRAN

Watch your step.

MARELLA

Are we allowed back here?

KIRAN

The benefits of having friends in low places. Just don't touch any of the props, and you'll be fine.

MARELLA

So this is it? A warehouse full of creepy old throwaways, under the stage of a carnival act?

KIRAN

Where better to hide an oddity, than in a house dedicated to the strange?

MARELLA

(sardonic) If it's something worth hiding, I'd put it in a safe.

KIRAN

Well if you want to be pedantic about it.

He pulls back a large, heavy tapestry, revealing a huge metal door.

KIRAN

(dryly) I assume the enormous, secret

vault more to your tastes?

MARELLA

Whoah...

KIRAN

Whoah indeed. You might want to stand back.

He begins to key a code into the door. Marella watches, taking it all in.

MARELLA

(pointing) What's that?

KIRAN

Hm? Oh, the image? A three headed crystal snake, swallowing its own tail...

MARELLA

That's not a government emblem.

KIRAN

No, it is not. The security is new, but don't let that fool you. This building is very very old...

A heavy series of locks slide back, and the door swings open with a hiss of hydraulics and a sudden rush of cold air.

KIRAN

Welcome to the borderlands, Dr. Morgan. Care to cross over?

Marella moves forward, her footsteps echoing in the metal passage.

MARELLA

What is this place?

KIRAN

My office. Do you believe in secret organizations?

MARELLA

No.

KIRAN

(laughs) Then this is about to get very complicated.

You've heard stories, no doubt...  
 backroom gatherings, shadow  
 brotherhoods, dedicated to the  
 pursuits of their own ends, be it  
 money, influence, sex, power. All to  
 be acquired by whatever means  
 necessary. Ours is, and always has  
 been -- knowledge.

By now, they have reached another door -- Kiran grins at  
 Marella, and he indicates the words carved into it.

KIRAN

You see that there? *Sapientia ianua  
 vitae...* "Wisdom is the gateway to  
 life." The Syndicate of Vis has always  
 understood this -- they are the words  
 we thrive by. As such, it is our  
 mission to uncover the mysteries of  
 this universe, and discover the nature  
 of its essence.

MARELLA

Knowledge is power.

KIRAN

Knowledge is *everything*! Imagine all  
 that we could do with this world, if  
 we only understood it!

MARELLA

And let's say, hypothetically, for  
 arguments sake, I believed you -- If I  
 didn't just think you were rich, and  
 bored, and out of your mind -- Why  
 would you tell me ANY of this? Cults  
 and secret boys clubs, weird super spy  
 syndicates, IF they exist at all,  
 operate on the utmost secrecy. And you  
 just broke that. Why?

KIRAN

Because you wanted the answers. Just  
 like me. Are you bored, Dr. Morgan?  
 Are you out of your mind?

MARELLA

(uneasy) No.

KIRAN

And yet all the same, when this is

through, I'm going to ask you a question... and you're going to say yes.

Kiran presses his hand to a scanner pad. The door hisses open. We begin to hear sounds of a laboratory -- voices in low conversation, occasional blips and beeps, the soft hiss of chemicals.

MARELLA  
(softly) Oh my god...

KIRAN  
(gesturing) This is one of Vis's offsite laboratories. As you can see, we're running on a minimal staff. This newest endeavor of ours is already well underway, so we can keep things here to the essentials.

MARELLA  
Did you hit a snag?

KIRAN  
(chuckles) Not at all. We're just... missing a piece.

MARELLA  
So you called me?

KIRAN  
I like to save the best for last.

He takes her over to a covered lab table, and with a flourish, pulls back the tarp to reveal the body of a huge, dead fish. Marella instinctively takes a step closer.

MARELLA  
What on earth-

KIRAN  
(observing her, smirking) Now there's something you don't see every day...

MARELLA  
What the hell kind of a fish is that?

KIRAN  
You don't recognize it?

MARELLA

Should I?

KIRAN

Not necessarily... It's called a Xiphactinus.

MARELLA

(stunned) It's twenty feet long...

KIRAN

Twenty two, actually... the largest specimen ever recorded...

MARELLA

(crouching to get a closer look)  
Jesus... just look at those fangs...

KIRAN

I wouldn't get too close. He's very dead but we've found it has a reflexive, and rather forceful bite.

MARELLA

Where did you find this?

KIRAN

Someone pulled it in off the pier three days ago.

MARELLA

That thing was swimming in the bay? Here?!

KIRAN

It was. There've been rumors of something large and carnivorous circling these shores all summer... now we finally have some hard proof.

MARELLA

(increasingly excited) I thought you were calling me in to take a look at a sick dolphin, or to consult on a new habitat for the aquarium, but this! A new species-

KIRAN

It's not.

MARELLA

Sorry?

KIRAN

It's not a new species.

MARELLA

Then... it's migrating? Or a new, invasive species- I'm sorry, I just don't understand why you'd need a marine biologist-

KIRAN

I called you, because this species of fish hasn't existed since the Late Cretaceous. Xiphactinus is extinct.

beat. Marella stares at him.

MARELLA

... What?

KIRAN

And we think there might be more of them.

MARELLA

What?!

KIRAN

Doctor, we are standing on the precipice of something entirely... new. This isn't the first evidence we've found of extinct species making their way back into the natural world, but in this case... the Syndicate has particular reason to be... concerned. We have no idea whether this species has re-evolved naturally, or if it never actually died out in the first place... but we'd like to find out. And I'd like you to be the one to help us do that.

MARELLA

Me?

KIRAN

Who better to study a fish, than a marine biologist?

MARELLA

A paleontologist?! I don't know ANYTHING about these things! It's behavior, it's hunting style, its habitat...

KIRAN

We have paleontologists on site, looking into these creatures. But I need someone on the ground, pulling in fresh data. Someone brilliant, and capable-

MARELLA

You mean out there.

KIRAN

Yes. ... A team has already been assembled. There's a station, deep down in the heart of the sea, waiting for you to arrive and fill it with light... to banish the mystery! There is a world of wonder, waiting to be uncovered... reclaimed... The adventure of a lifetime...

MARELLA

But why me?

Kiran hesitates, and for the first time, can't think of anything to say.

MARELLA

(realizing) ... your sister.

KIRAN

... It was one of the last things she asked of me. We have been planning for something like this for... a very long time. We had a chance once... and we missed it. I won't let that happen again.

MARELLA

Did I-... know her? Or-... I'm sorry I don't remember...

KIRAN

You wouldn't. She never met you. But she'd heard of you, studied your work, and that was enough. (smiles) I think

you two would've gotten along very well. She wanted you as a part of this... And so do I. Here. Take this.

He picks up a book from a nearby lab table and hands it to her. Marella takes it, running her hand over the cover.

MARELLA

(reading) The Creatures Beneath -- A Complete Guide to Prehistoric Sea Monsters... by Ursula Syntyche...

KIRAN

I hope you'll find it useful.

MARELLA

Mr. Flint, I-...

KIRAN

Kiran, please.

MARELLA

Kiran... This all sounds... incredible.

KIRAN

(disappointed) You don't believe me.

MARELLA

I'm sorry. I just don't know that I'm the right person for this.

KIRAN

None of us do. Unless we try. What do we really know, until we go out there and make the discovery? This world is much bigger than you can imagine, doctor. It's wilder. Stranger. And it's waiting for you. Time to make the answers. ... So?

Marella looks at him... and then...

MARELLA

... When do we start?

SCENE THREE

Marella, writing.

MARELLA (NARRATING)

When do we start...

If only somebody had warned me. If Kiran had smiled that wickedly knowing tease of a smile, and told me we had started the moment I'd taken this book. From the freak show. From his invitation. If I had known that I was already on my way -- no time for a change of clothes -- that the only place I'd have to collect my thoughts would be here, crushed into the margins of this book of ancient life. You're starting at the end of the treasure map, kid, and tracing your way back. Xiphactinus marks the spot.

EXT. The Launch Pad, Open Ocean - DAY

A large, cherry red motorboat cuts through the surf. Gulls wheel and call overhead, and the sea spray crashes against the side of the craft.

MARELLA (NARRATING)

Before I knew it, it was as if someone had reached out, and peeled all the colors out of the world, unraveling every yellow and white and green, until I was surrounded, free falling in an endless sphere of rolling blue. It took hours to reach the drop off point -- hours of watching the shoreline grow wasting thin, then blacken, and shrink into the sea. Waves licked up the sides of the old motorboat, ocean spray leaping high to kiss our cheeks, as the wind danced its fingers through our hair. As I watched Kiran at the helm, I could almost understand how you could love this... But then my eyes caught the dark undulation of the waves, and my mind sank through the endless, abyssal depths. And I have to wonder if I've gone insane. People claim that ANYTHING could be down there. I know for a fact they're right. I used to be able to say with confidence that I knew what lurked in that primordial deep... And even then, what I was sure

of was only a fraction, a glimmer, a nothing of a fact... Today, the world is... bigger. Darker. Full of teeth.

And there I was at the edge of it.

The sound of the boat's motor dies away. Waves lap against the side of large floating platform. A miniature submarine hangs like a pendulum from the side of the platform, creaking slightly in the wind. CAPTAIN CLARION LOIRE stands to one side, studying the mini sub, while his first mate, LIEUTENANT COMMANDER TALISE ASHERAH stands beside him, making final adjustments.

LOIRE

(admiring) So this is the little beauty, that'll be taking us all the way down...

ASHERAH

Don't even think about it.

LOIRE

I'm not thinking! I'm just saying... There's a whole lot of ocean out there, Sherah... We could use a sub.

ASHERAH

(snorts) That's a whole lot of paydays going to something The Cherrystone can't even tug. It's one or the other, sir, and I know you're not leaving Cherry behind. You'd rather die.

LOIRE

(grins) You may have a point there.  
(straightening with a sigh) Killjoy.

ASHERAH

Pirate.

LOIRE

I resent that!

We hear footsteps approaching as Kiran and Marella make their way across the platform.

ASHERAH

Captain.

Loire groans under his breath, and fixes a smile on his face.

LOIRE  
Here comes trouble.

ASHERAH  
Tenth of a share says this one's the  
last one.

LOIRE  
Done. (calling out) Ahoy there!

KIRAN  
Ahoy yourself, captain.

LOIRE  
Mr. Flint. Pleasure as always.

KIRAN  
Lieutenant.

ASHERAH  
Mr. Flint.

KIRAN  
May I introduce Dr. Marella Morgan,  
marine biologist. She'll be taking  
point on the scientific end of this  
endeavor.

LOIRE  
Pleasure.

ASHERAH  
Doctor.

KIRAN  
Marella, this is Captain Clarion  
Loire, and Lieutenant Commander Talise  
Asherah, both formerly of the U.S.  
Navy.

MARELLA  
I didn't realize this research project  
was going to be so... heavily armed.

KIRAN  
You'll be heading into unpredictable  
waters, doctor, I want to make sure  
you all come back in one piece.

MARELLA  
You mean-... You're not coming with

us?

KIRAN

(coldly) No. (and then, amiable again)  
Someone has to collect all the data,  
and pass it up the food chain. Don't  
worry, you're in good hands.

LOIRE

Are we waiting for anyone else, or...

KIRAN

I believe the entire crew is now  
officially accounted for. I'm sure  
you're all itching to be on your way,  
so as soon as your final checks are  
complete, it's full steam ahead.

MARELLA

Wait, we're just leaving? Just like  
that? I haven't even got my bag- I  
need to send back to the university  
for my equipment, my research-

KIRAN

I already had someone sent around to  
your hotel to pick up your things,  
they're waiting for you onboard.  
Anything else you need that isn't  
waiting on the station will come  
through on the first supply shipment.

MARELLA

And when will that be?

KIRAN

In one week's time. Cheer up, doctor!  
The best beginning is an unexpected  
dive! Your answers are waiting...  
Don't tell me you've changed your  
mind?

MARELLA

I... no. Of course not.

KIRAN

Then I suggest you get yourself  
introduced to the rest of the crew.  
It's a long way down. Doctor... I  
expect strange things. Captain? A  
word, if you don't mind.

LOIRE  
Of course, sir.

The two men move down the platform, leaving Marella standing somewhat helplessly next to Asherah.

ASHERAH  
(sizing her up) Ever been on a boat before?

MARELLA  
Of course.

ASHERAH  
Sub's different. Except for the part where you know not to touch anything, unless I explicitly give you instructions otherwise. (somewhat gentler) Come on, let's get you inside. I'll introduce you to the crew.

Asherah heads into the mini sub. Marella hesitates, then follows her inside.

FADE TO:

INT. Cabin, The Mini Sub - CONTINUOUS

The sound of waves is slightly muted inside the small cabin. DOCTOR DESTAN SEYCHELLES, and MATIRA "MATTI" COBURN sit together around a small table, laughing as ADEN "SPINNER" DAVIT finishes telling a story.

SPINNER  
- And she starts up, all in a huff --  
(mocking voice) "Well! I never!" -- to which I reply, "Congratulations sweetheart, there's a first time for everything!"

The others laugh, as Asherah and Marella enter the cabin.

SPINNER  
Look alive, gents! Looks like we've got some new blood on board.

ASHERAH  
Everyone, this is Doctor Marella Morgan. She'll be representing our scientific division.

SPINNER

I'll say she is. What's your major, beautiful? Please tell me it's chemistry...

DESTAN

Don't mind him. He's a bit of a flirt.

SPINNER

I am? What was your first clue, doc? The wink, the one liner, or the hand on your thigh?

DESTAN

(glancing down, surprised) What? Oh!  
(embarrassed) I-... uh... that's-

SPINNER

(laughing, removing his hand) Ah, don't worry. I tease, but I don't bite hard. Aden Davit. Everyone calls me "Spinner." Been hunting cats out in the Savannah these past couple years, you'll excuse me if I'm not quite house trained yet.

MARELLA

What's a big game hunter doing on a field expedition?

SPINNER

He showed you the fucking fish, right?

ASHERAH

And this is-

DESTAN

Doctor Destan Seychelles! Wonderful to meet you. Good to see they decided to bring another doctor on board -- I was starting to worry I'd have run of the whole station to myself! What a disaster that would've been! I'm a medical expert, myself, not science. Though I DO have a bit of a soft spot for dinosaurs. I don't suppose I need to tell YOU that.

MARELLA

Actually, I'm a marine biologist.

DESTAN

(cheerful) Are you really? Oh you'll be right at home then! I suppose I'll be deferring to you, when push comes to shove. Do you prefer Marella, or Dr. Morgan? I don't mind people calling me "doc," but I'm happy to go by Destan to avoid confusion.

SPINNER

(smirking) Doc's happy with ANYTHING always.

MARELLA

Marella is fine. And... you are?

MATTI

Matira Coburn. But it's such a mouthful, call me Matti. Engineer! Not that anyone's let me do any engineering, not even on that rusted excuse for a tub we rolled out here on-

ASHERAH

Cap's already told you, you keep your tools off the Cherrystone.

MATTI

I'm just saying, that motor could run a helluva lot smoother-

ASHERAH

We don't need you playing around and messing with our ship. Cherry runs fine, just the way the Captain likes it. He wants you to fix something, he'll say so.

MATTI

Okay! Okay... (under her breath in Spanish) *Don't blame me if the damn thing sinks.*

SPINNER

(leaning closer) So! Marella the Marine Biology Queen... Where'd you come from? Did the sea foam spit you out, beautiful, or have you just been hiding from me?

MARELLA

(overwhelmed, irritable) I'm sorry, are you going to be doing this the whole time? Attempting to establish some pseudo-hierarchy of sexual dominance, and sleazing your way to the top to fulfill some underdeveloped sense of masculinity? Because it's exhausting. Have you all just been putting up with this?!

Dead silence. For a moment, everyone just stares at Marella in dumb shock.

And then Asherah starts to laugh.

MATTI

(grinning) Wow...

DESTAN

(avoiding eye contact, under his breath) Well, this should be fun...

SPINNER

Are you always such a-

MARELLA

(embarrassed, defensive) Yeah! I am.

Above and somewhat muffled, we hear Loire calling to Kiran.

LOIRE

(calling, muffled) You take care of Cherry for me now, Mr. Flint!

KIRAN

(calling back, muffled) As if she were by own. Happy travels, captain.

LOIRE

(calling, closer) We'll try not to get eaten!

The hatch of the mini sub slams shut, and we hear Loire make his way down the ladder and into the cabin.

LOIRE

Lieutenant Asherah.

ASHERAH

(snapping to attention) Sir.

LOIRE  
Take the helm for final checks.  
Everyone, I assume you've all met Dr.  
Morgan?

SPINNER  
Yeah. We've met.

LOIRE  
(to Marella) Doctor, I suggest you  
strap in. We're about to begin our  
descent.

We hear the controls of the mini sub begin to whir into life,  
as Marella sits down and clicks on a safety restraint.

ASHERAH  
Final checks. Security locks... in  
place. Initiating automatic  
depressurization.

We hear a series of bolts slide into place, a computerized  
chime, and a pneumatic hiss of air.

ASHERAH  
Releasing holding clamps.

LOIRE  
Everybody hold tight!

There is a wheezing of shifting metal, and the mini sub  
suddenly drops with a heavy splash. Marella gasps. Matti and  
Spinner whoop and laugh, and Destan lets out a short,  
startled yelp.

ASHERAH  
(unaffected) On your mark, captain.

LOIRE  
Take us down.

ASHERAH  
(adjusting controls) Beginning  
descent.

LOIRE  
Next stop, the abyssal plane.

FADE TO:

## SCENE FOUR

INT. Mini Sub, The Abyssal Plane - DAY

We hear the hiss and whir of the sub's rotors, and the occasional burst of bubbles, as the mini sub drifts ever downward.

MARELLA (NARRATING)

Do you think you know the dark?

You've seen it. Experienced it. The black and creeping veil that swallows everything, until the world you thought you knew is nothing but vague, half-formless shadows that twitch and leer and grasp... The familiar is lost; melted into a writhing, Stygian morass -- and you find yourself facing a twisted universe. If you've ever had a nightmare, ever woken screaming in your bed, and watched the world around your warp and grow strange, then this is the part where you shiver, and say that "yes, you know the dark."

You're wrong.

We drifted through the Twilight Zone, and watched as the world around us turned from sapphire, to navy, and then to a flat, dull grey.

And still we sank.

The sun vanished. Entirely. At first, the world looked like night... silver scales flashed, and bubbled winked in the black, dancing around us in a vortex of stars. But one by one, the bright sparks died. The sub descended deeper, and deeper, and I was reminded that even on the blackest nights, when even the moon will hide its face, the promise of the sun's light still lingers in the atmosphere; we're never truly banished from its glow. Except down here.

And still we sank.

There is a color beyond black. A deep and inky darkness, I can only call... ocean. Our headlights couldn't cut it. There were no shapes, no shadows. But we could hear the calls of the things that lived there... We could hear them moving.

And still... we sank...

Inside the cabin, the crew shifts uneasily. The temperature inside the mini sub has plummeted -- everyone is shivering.

MATTI

Jesus, it's freezing down here.

Spinner pulls off his jacket and tosses it to Matti.

SPINNER

Here.

MATTI

(surprised, but grateful) Thanks...

SPINNER

I'd offer to let you slide over here and bunk with me, but I think Her Majesty might object.

MATTI

(snorts) There it is!

MARELLA

(under her breath) I'd wash that if I were you, Matti. No telling where it's been.

SPINNER

(winks, playfully) You don't mind a little frost, do you, Marella?

MARELLA

Not at all. It's predictability I can't stand.

SPINNER

Then I'll be sure to keep you guessing.

LOIRE

Will you two chill out?

MATTI  
(giggling) Too late.

LOIRE  
There'll be heat and specialized uniforms waiting for us down on the station.

MATTI  
(wry, but good natured) Doesn't exactly keep us warm NOW though, does it?

Before Loire can respond, we hear a muffled sound from outside of the submarine. Everyone tenses, straining to hear. Was that the creaking of metal? A whale, crying out? Impossible to tell... A moment later, something very large seems to move past the submarine...

Silence.

LOIRE  
(forced calm) Lieutenant, what's our progress report?

ASHERAH  
We're approximately 5,500 meters below the surface and falling.

DESTAN  
(surprised) That's nearly at the ocean floor.

ASHERAH  
We should be coming up on her any-

MARELLA  
(leaning forward) I see it.

Everyone shifts, moving closer to the port-holes of the sub to look.

MARELLA (NARRATING)  
She came floating up out of the gloom. At first, indistinguishable from the ocean surrounding it, but then the twin beams of our headlights slid over her glittering carapace, and we caught our first glimpse of the station. She looked something like an enormous jeweled crab; a huge, obsidian and

bronze dome, resting squatly on six curving legs. The frosted eyes of the many windows of laboratories and observation decks peered up at us through the dark, and three huge, half moon towers stretched up to greet us like elegant outstretched claws. And for the first time since that morning, I found I couldn't help but smile.

LOIRE

There she is... home sweet home...

MARELLA

(to herself) Beautiful...

ASHERAH

Adjusting descent vector. Beginning initial docking approach.

MARELLA

What's she called?

LOIRE

The Tiamat.

SPINNER

(appreciative) Holy shit.

MATTI

(excited) Is that diamond-glass?!

ASHERAH

Yup.

MARELLA

Diamond glass?

MATTI

Experimental new technology. It's specifically designed to withstand the stresses of interplanetary travel! So the astronauts don't have to rely on external technologies to get a view of what's around them... I didn't realize it was already being put into use.

ASHERAH

Technically, it's not. This whole station was built as a "generous donation" on behalf of InTerraGer Bio-

Industries.

MATTI

(quoting) "Building better worlds."

ASHERAH

Seems Mr. Flint does indeed have friends in high places.

DESTAN

Why is it dark?

ASHERAH

Systems haven't been brought online yet.

LOIRE

Come on doc, they built us a station! Can't have them doing all the heavy lifting, can we? Where's the fun in that? We'll be getting all the systems live after we dock.

DESTAN

(nervously) You mean the station doesn't even have any air?

ASHERAH

Life support systems should already be in place, just running at minimal power. Captain, as a precaution, I'd suggest everyone suit up, before we dock... in case they forgot to leave the oxygen running.

LOIRE

You heard the lady. Check the compartment just there... Everything should be labeled.

There's a bit of shuffling as people begin pulling on diving suits.

MARELLA

(frowning) How did Kiran manage to get these all in our sizes?

SPINNER

He didn't just ask you over breakfast?

MATTI

You're joking...

SPINNER

(grinning, noncommittal) Sure.

MARELLA

I didn't even know I was going to be here until this morning...

DESTAN

(shrugging) He said he'd put a lot of research into assembling this crew. I met him thanks to a mutual colleague. I don't suppose it's unreasonable he had access to things like background checks, employment files, medical histories...

MARELLA

And that didn't set off any red flags?

MATTI

Frankly, I'm happy just to have a job. I kept applying to internships, and night school programs, and trying to find a spot in a lab somewhere so I could get some practical engineering training.

MARELLA

(alarmed) You don't have practical engineering training?

MATTI

Oh believe me, I've got PLENTY of training. Been pulling things apart and putting them back together since I was four, and working in a garage since I was fifteen, BUT big companies like Aphelion want me to send them a little piece of paper with a fancy university sticker to prove it. And I haven't got that kind of cash. I kept applying though. And then Kiran reached out. Guess he just pulled me out of the slush pile. -- said his people would pay my way into whatever school I liked AND put in a good word for me with the people at InTerraGer's engineering department if I took the

gig. It was kind of a no brainer.

MARELLA

What about you two?

LOIRE

Got his card in a bar, from an old Navy buddy of mine.

ASHERAH

And I go where the Captain goes.

LOIRE

As if I could've stopped you.

ASHERAH

Somebody's got to keep you out of trouble.

SPINNER

What about you, Queenie? What brings you down to our level?

MARELLA

I got the call...

SPINNER

And?

MARELLA

He took me to Coney Island.

An alert begins to chime through the cabin.

ASHERAH

Proximity alert. Getting us aligned for initial docking...

Asherah makes some adjustments. After a moment, we hear two heavy clamps lock into place.

ASHERAH

Alignment achieved. Docking clamps are in place.

A muffled, mechanized whirring echoes through the cabin. And from somewhere outside, the same strange, muffled sound of something large moving and calling out.

ASHERAH

(studying the screen) Airlock bridge

is extended.

A lighter, metallic clicking as the bridge ratchets into place.

ASHERAH

We have connection, Captain. Preparing to pressurize on your mark.

LOIRE

My mark.

ASHERAH

Ha ha. Pressurization sequence initiated... Cycling up... The bridge is live, sir.

LOIRE

Okay. Let's-

WHAM! Something huge slams into the side of the mini sub, sending the Tiamat crew crashing to the floor. There is a sound like the rending and tearing of metal. A hiss of water being forced through a small aperture. Alarms begin to blare.

Something large makes its way through the dark waters outside.

DESTAN

Is everyone okay?!

SPINNER

What the fuck-

LOIRE

Talise?!

ASHERAH

That WASN'T me. (forcing herself to her feet, checks the controls) Something's knocked us off our alignment, Captain! Docking clamps 2 and 4 are compromised. The bridge is losing integrity.

MATTI

Um... Guys?

Everyone turns. Matti is staring at a thin crack under the mini-sub's door. Water is pouring into the cabin at an alarming rate -- already a quarter of an inch covers the

floor.

LOIRE

Shit.

ASHERAH

I'm not reading any structural damage to the sub's hull.

LOIRE

Well, I'm seeing it! Everyone, helmets on, now. Lieutenant, get us out of here.

As everyone scrambles to find and put on their helmets.

ASHERAH

Switching to manual overrides.

LOIRE

(muffled via helmet comms) Helmet, lieutenant! NOW.

Asherah pulls her helmet on, and we hear the crew speaking through the suit to suit comms.

SPINNER

This place really knows how to roll out the welcome wagon!

DESTAN

(terrified) Jesus we're gonna drown.

ASHERAH

Belay that talk, sailor! We are not going to die here.

LOIRE

Lieutenant, how soon til you can get that door open?

ASHERAH

Any minute now, sir!

LOIRE

Everyone, line up. As soon as that door opens, we're going to have to move onto the bridge, as quickly as we can.

DESTAN

You mean the flooding bridge?!

LOIRE

Unless you know of a second one, doc.  
Don't worry. We do this orderly, we're  
all going to be fine. Matti.

MATTI

Yes sir!

LOIRE

There should be an emergency screen  
between each of the three segments  
that make up the bridge. As soon as  
everybody's in, you and I are going to  
pull them down, stop any more water  
from getting in and weighing us down.

MATTI

Aye, sir.

LOIRE

Lieutenant! I want you in front,  
leading the charge, and getting that  
main entrance open. That's an order.  
I'll take up the rear.

ASHERAH

(tightly) Aye, captain.

LOIRE

(gentler) You alright there, Marella?  
You're looking a little pale.

MARELLA

(weakly) Fine, captain.

ASHERAH

Captain! I have manual controls.

LOIRE

Okay. On my mark. Remember; keep it  
fast, keep it orderly. NOW,  
lieutenant!

ASHERAH

Brace yourselves!

Asherah yanks open the door and a torrent of water floods in.  
The crew is temporarily forced back, then begins to push

their way forward onto the bridge.

ASHERAH

Come on! Keep moving. Hold together!

LOIRE

First screen's compromised! We'll have to move on to the next one!

MATTI

Is that everyone?!

LOIRE

It better be! Get ahold of that lever there! Pull hard to release the screen.

Matti does as she's told and we hear the scrape and slide of metal on metal.

LOIRE

Get it down! One! Two! Three!

The two strain and pull the screen down. We hear the submerged locks click into place.

LOIRE

Okay! Next screen! One! Two! Three!

They repeat the process. Loire turns to Matti and grins.

LOIRE

Okay... That should buy us some time.  
(claps her on the shoulder) Nice work, kid.

MATTI

(deeply shaken) Thanks.

LOIRE

Come on.

They slosh through the water towards the others.

LOIRE

Everybody alright?

ASHERAH

They're fine.

LOIRE

You sure about that?

ASHERAH

I'll have us inside in a matter of minutes. Everyone can stand to be a little cold and wet until then.

LOIRE

(amused) Aye aye, lieutenant.

SPINNER

So is anybody going to explain what the hell just happened?

ASHERAH

Docking procedure was compromised.

SPINNER

Yeah, I got that part! But what the hell WAS that? Felt like we got slapped by the pissed off end of a whale.

MARELLA

Whales don't dive down this deep. The pressure's too great.

SPINNER

Alright then, Queenie, what was it? Cause there's something fucking out there!

MARELLA

I don't know. Stop calling me that!

SPINNER

You're the boss, Frost.

LOIRE

Alright! ENOUGH! If you two can't play nice, I'll put you both back on the sub and you can figure out how to get yourselves home!

As if in response, there is a huge, metallic creaking and tearing as the mini sub finally breaks free of the docking clamps. The whole bridge shudders, and a moment later, we hear the remnants of the sub crash to the sea floor.

LOIRE

(sighs) Tell me we just didn't lose the sub?

ASHERAH

Better than losing the crew.

LOIRE

(running a hand over his face) Okay... (takes a deep breath) Okay. We are okay. We're all in one piece. We'll be inside soon. We'll get all the systems turned on... and it's business as usual.

SPINNER

Let's just hope Kiran packed a little spare underwear into that first supply shipment.

There is a slightly submerged chime and the sound of the door mechanism spinning.

Water splashes onto the floor of the Tiamat, and the crew stumbles in off the bridge. As soon as everyone's in, Asherah slams the door shut, and forces the locks back into place.

LOIRE

Well. We made it.

ASHERAH

I'm reading atmosphere and internal pressure levels at standby mode, sir. We can pull the helmets if you-

LOIRE

No. I want everybody suited up until this place is up and running. Don't want any more surprises.

ASHERAH

You heard the captain! Suits stay on.

LOIRE

Spinner, Matti. You two start heading down to Engineering. Get the power online. Doc, I want a medical inventory to the lieutenant by this evenings. Marella, if you'd start getting the laboratories set up, we'll be underway. Sherah, with me. We'll

get the bridge and basics online, and then I want to take a look at the damage.

ASHERAH

Aye, sir. You have your orders.

LOIRE

I know we've had a bit of a rocky start. Some of us have come into this on the wrong foot. But so long as we're down here, we've got no one to rely on but ourselves. From what you all showed me out there, just now, I think we're going to do just fine. From here on in, we take care of one another. That's priority one, regardless of any contract you may have signed that says otherwise. We are in this together. We get through this together. (grins) And, if we pull this thing off, then we solve a little mystery, and we get very very rich, together.

Consider this the adventure of your lifetime... Welcome to the Tiamat.

FADE OUT.

EPILOGUE

EXT. The Tiamat, Open Ocean - NIGHT

We hear the squeal then click of the airlock bridge's emergency screen being pulled down and shut.

Asherah and Loire, in suits, survey the damage.

ASHERAH

Airlock secured. ...Think we're going to be able to get back in?

LOIRE

You did your job right, didn't you?

ASHERAH

Of course.

LOIRE

Then we're fine.

Asherah snorts. She turns, bubbles bursting in the water around her as she looks down at the mini sub.

LOIRE  
(indicating) There's the sub.

ASHERAH  
Jesus... what a mess...

LOIRE  
And you say everything was fine?

ASHERAH  
All systems were in the green. The radar was clear.

They swim down to get a better look at the sub.

LOIRE  
Any way we can salvage this?

ASHERAH  
Maybe. ... Clarion... Look at this...  
(she points) The docking clamps are shattered...

LOIRE  
Impact damage?

ASHERAH  
Looks like.

LOIRE  
Something definitely hit us, then.

ASHERAH  
Maybe...

Loire runs a hand over the side of the sub.

LOIRE  
(wincing) Oof... look at that dent...

ASHERAH  
Gonna take more than a little elbow grease to get those scratches out...

LOIRE  
(to the ship) Poor baby...

ASHERAH

I'm going to take a few pictures of these. Hold there for size comparison.

We hear the buzz and snap of several pictures being taken, before Asherah abruptly stops.

ASHERAH

What the hell?

LOIRE

Sherah?

She swims past him and starts pulling at something on the side of the hull.

ASHERAH

Clarion, give me some light!

LOIRE

Talise?

ASHERAH

There's something embedded into the side of the sub here... You see it?

LOIRE

What is it?

ASHERAH

I don't know, but it's as thick as my thumb, and about the size of a dinner plate. And it won't... come... LOOSE!

She manages to yank the object free of the metal. Loire swims closer.

ASHERAH

Holy shit...

LOIRE

What the hell is that?

Asherah holds the glittering disk up to the light.

ASHERAH

It's a scale...

FADE OUT.

END.