

Descendants  
BOOK ONE - INHERITANCE  
Prologue: Blood in the Water

by

Jordan Cobb

No Such Thing Productions

PROLOGUE

INT. Axel's Office, Aphelion Industries - DAY

AXEL CRICHTON sits alone in his office, head buried in his hands. A transmission plays faintly in the background... an audio transmission... Familiar voices filter through the static...

CHEL

I love standing here. It's a small window, and it's set fairly high up so it's not necessarily the best for just... stargazing. Unless you're Peter-height, which, I am not. There are better views on the ship, but this one... I get to pass it every day, walking from the bridge to the mess... I can linger here... Holding myself in this place between work and rest, catching glimpses of the universe in motion... like a dream you can still taste as you just come into waking...

AXEL

(under his breath) Yeah, I know the feeling.

CHEL

Speaking of work... We are coming into the mess hall now... Or as I like to call it, ground zero.

PETER

Ha ha, very funny.

CHEL

Well, if you didn't leave your whole life lying around on the table... We might actually be able to have dinner sitting down sometime.

PETER

What are you doing?

CHEL

Recording a message. Guess who for! Go on, guess! Guess who I'm talking to...

PETER

Chel, come on, I'm trying to-

CHEL  
I'll stop bugging you as soon as you  
guess! Come oooooon...

PETER  
Is it your mother? Hi, Rhea...

CHEL  
Nope!

PETER  
Great. Then I have no idea-

CHEL  
It's Axel! Well. It will be. I'm  
giving him a tour of the ship! Say hi!

PETER  
Chel, we JUST hung up from a video  
transmission with Aphelion less than  
an hour ago-

CHEL  
He's your brother!

PETER  
(sighs) Hi Axel.

CHEL  
Oh come on, you can do better than  
that!

PETER  
Chel-

CHEL  
Peter loves you! And he misses you!  
And he's going to call you very very  
soon!

PETER  
Not that soon...

CHEL  
But soon.

PETER  
I... Yeah. Sure. Soon. (a beat) ...  
What?

CHEL  
Well go on...

PETER  
(playing dumb) Go on and what?

CHEL  
You have to say "I love you!"

PETER  
(teasing) Why? You already said it for me.

CHEL  
Peter!

PETER  
He already knows I-

CHEL  
Peter... .. Come on... It's not that hard... three little words... "I love you, Axel!" See? If I can say it-

PETER  
You are IMPOSSIBLE, you know that?  
...Fine! Fine... (sighs) Axel-

The phone rings.

Axel lets out an impatient sigh.

AXEL  
God-... damnit! ...Pause message.

Axel's data pad lets out a soft beep, and the message stops.

And then, to no one... a shadow of his imagination, hovering ever just over his shoulder...

AXEL  
Don't look at me like that. (trying and failing to psych himself up) This is going to be good news. I'm... fine. This is going to be good news. ... Right? (deep breath) Okay.

He reaches across his desk and presses a button for the intercom.

AXEL  
(barely covering his nerves) Is she  
here yet, Andrea?

ANDREA  
I'm sorry sir, I've got a reporter  
here who wants to speak with you. He's  
been bullying security for almost two  
hours. Says he won't go until he can  
speak to you.

AXEL  
I-... (sighs) Right. Fine. Fine, send  
him-

Axel doesn't have time to put down the phone before the door  
slams open, and DAMIEN WILDE strides in.

AXEL  
EY! Who the fuck-

WILDE  
Well! So that's what it takes to get  
an audience these days. Four days of  
phone tag, two hours of pacing the  
lobby and your personal receiving  
room, and I finally get to speak to  
somebody important.

AXEL  
You certainly work fast, don't you.

Wilde sits, uninvited, grinning.

WILDE  
That's my job. First to scent the  
blood in the water is the first one to  
the kill. Or so they say.

AXEL  
Do they.

WILDE  
Axel Crichton, I presume. Course you  
are, we've all seen your pictures in  
the paper one time or another. I'm  
here on behalf of The Empire Post.

AXEL  
Oh, you're THAT reporter. Listen,  
now's not a good time for an

interview. I've got someone coming in in a couple of minutes. If you'd like to check back with my secretary, say some time closer to September-

WILDE

No, September isn't going to cut it. I'm working on a new piece on the Janus disaster. Sorry. "Tragedy." I'm looking to get a fresh take from your perspective. Being top dog, and so... connected to the story.

AXEL

(rehearsed) I have no further comments to offer about the Janus Initiative. I already made my comments on the project, in a full statement to the press. (icy steel) Several months ago.

WILDE

I know! I read them. Little stilted don't you think? I'm guessing your secretary wrote them for you. But you can do better than that.

AXEL

I'm sorry, what?

WILDE

I came all this way, just for you! Your tragedy, your story! The mystery of it all. We're all just dying to know what happened.

AXEL

Pity. I'll have Andrea send out a wreath.

WILDE

I mean, come on... level with me here. Man to man. Your... alright, I'll throw you a bone, we'll call it a "statement"... A little hard to believe, don't you think? I mean... You lost a ship. A whole ship, almost half a year ago now... Technicians have been getting nothing but radio silence since just before the craft reached its destination -- a destination the company still has yet

to disclose. No one's seen hide nor hair of the crew since they launched, and you have no further comments? My friend, I hate to tell you this, but I smell bullshit.

AXEL

(tightly) As a matter of fact, I'm MORE than aware the crew of the Adamantine are five months overdue for their return.

WILDE

(almost smirking) Oh, that's right. Your brother is... WAS the captain, wasn't he? Condolences. Still. Bit spooky, don't you think? A real mystery... Two scientists and a VERY expensive space ship, just... vanished. Not even a smoking gun. I've heard everything from alien abduction to elopement. But that's Aphelion's official stance, is it? No new word on the disappearance? Not going to cave in and start calling it a disaster?

AXEL

No.

WILDE

You really don't have anything else you want to share? No tearful stories of goodbye with your beloved brother? No scintillating backstory between him and that biologist?

AXEL

Xenoarcheologist. And nope, I'm good.

WILDE

So that's it. Still holding on hope?

AXEL

...Yes.

WILDE

Really?

AXEL

... I-

WILDE

Even though you finally have found a body. (beat) ... Or... hadn't you heard the rumors?

AXEL

If... you're referring to the statements about the Rosseter colony-

WILDE

I am. You certainly keep your ears to the ground...

AXEL

Yes, we have heard the rumors circulating. "A ship crash landed on the outskirts of the Rosseter moon colony three days ago." I'm sorry to say it's nothing but that. A rumor.

WILDE

Rosseter was recently purchased by Aphelion Industries, wasn't it. After you started one of your research digs. A few months ago, it was nothing but a backwater mining colony on the dark side of the moon, nobody in the empire had even heard of! But now I hear you've been making some rather astounding leaps and bounds in your "new" artificial intelligence facilities on that particular spot.

Axel stiffens imperceptibly, suddenly on alert.

AXEL

(coolly, suddenly interested) Yes, Aphelion owns a substantial piece of that colony. My, you've certainly done your research, mister...?

WILDE

Wilde. Damien Wilde.

AXEL

Damien Wilde. (a decision.) Right. (and then, as though nothing has happened) Pleasure. Yes, well. Three days IS a long time. If there had been any foundation in the claims that a ship had crashed, let alone if it was



the Adamantine, you can be assured I would have made a statement by now. As it is, we don't have any further commentary to offer.

WILDE

Shame.

The two men size one another up -- scenting blood.

The phone rings. Axel breaks away, pressing the intercom.

AXEL

Go ahead, Andrea.

ANDREA

Mr. Crichton, Captain Rori from the ARC Juno team is here to see you.

AXEL

Just a minute.

He switches off the intercom. Looks at Wilde, who is still staring at him. They smile at one another, venomously cordial.

AXEL

That would be my appointment.

Wilde stands, offering his hand.

WILDE

Is it really. Shame. Well. I still have a little more... digging to do on this story, but it should be in the Post by the end of the month. If you change your mind, or find anything new. Here's my card. Feel free to give me a ring. Any time.

AXEL

I certainly will do that, Mr. Wilde. Have a pleasant day.

WILDE

Don't be a stranger.

They shake hands. Wilde moves towards the door, then pauses.

WILDE

Axel... I'll be in touch.

He leaves. Axel shifts, releasing a breath he didn't realize he was holding. He calculates, then reaches for the phone.

AXEL

Andrea. I need you to do something. That reporter. Damien Wilde. Works for the Empire Post. Dig something up and bury his career with it, will you?

ANDREA

Yes, Mr. Crichton. Is something wrong?

AXEL

Not yet. But... He's good. Very good, and he's poking around the crash site. And I don't want him getting too close and breaking this to the public. Not yet. Alright?

ANDREA

Of course, sir.

AXEL

Good. You can send the captain in now.

Axel moves to seat himself behind his desk again, composing himself. The door opens, and CAPTAIN RORI CASSINI enters. She carries a jar of dark green goo.

AXEL

Captain Cassini. I-... What the hell is that?

RORI

I-... It's... a sample for the laboratory. I was just heading down to have it analyzed when you called-...

AXEL

... What is it?

RORI

I-... I'm sorry, director, I wish I had better news... The ship they found crashed, out by the Rosseter colony... We have official confirmation... We found the Adamantine.

FADE OUT.

END.