

Entry Four - Peter

by

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No Such Thing Productions

INT. Caves, NCC1701-Delta - DAY

We hear the distant dripping of water ore stone, and the high, whistling keening of the wind. Peter clicks on his suit's headlamp, and then his recorder as he studies his surroundings.

PETER

A series of caves are connected by a network of long, dark, narrow tunnels. The caves are open, high ceiling-ed spaces beneath the mountain, their rough, glassy walls distinctly biological; the results of the natural shapings of time and decay, rather than any hand or tool. The tunnels connecting them are natural too, it seems. Oddly shorter ceilings, and significantly tighter walls than the spaces they open onto. It makes walking in the exo-suits significantly more difficult; struggling to maneuver the bulk of the units into halls that are sometimes only half a foot wider than my shoulders and frequently require me to duck for several meters at a time. The process is made all the more difficult because we have to be careful not to catch or snag ourselves on the rocky shelves and spires of stalagmites jutting up from the walls and ground.

Static. The transmission abruptly cuts out.

FADE TO:

INT. Caves, NCC1701-Delta - Continuous

We hear Peter's footsteps echoing around the cavernous space. He speaks softly -- a personal addendum to his scientific findings.

PETER

I have vivid memories of tunnels like this from childhood. An abandoned subway station back on
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PETER (cont'd)

Earth. Dark, like this. Also freezing. Squeezing through rusted grates and climbing over padlocked gates, desperately chasing after Axel and his friends late at night, trying to keep up, trying to prove I was... or wasn't-... I don't know. The fear tasted just as acrid then too. That hot, softly sour sensation at the very top and back of my throat, the hole that suddenly opened in the bottom of my stomach. I've never liked the dark. Too many unknown, unquantifiable variables. Everything pressing in, suffocatingly close. Anything even remotely familiar suddenly and inexplicably far. Just... vanished. It's an illusion, of course. The mind suddenly expanding in the dark new vistas of imagination, grasping at any shape and fighting to make sense of it, of the change. For an unimaginative person, my mind can do wonders in the dark. I can create all kinds of monsters.

beat.

I fell off a half crumbled concrete ledge and broke my ankle on the metal tracks. Running from something I thought I saw. Axel had to carry me home. I remember I could hear our mother screaming at him all the way from the kitchen, while I lay in bed waiting for somebody to take me to a hospital. I remember thinking how stupid he was to lie to her; that she would know we hadn't been home by the blood and the dirt on his clothes, and the fact that she hadn't heard me screaming. I was eight. Axel didn't take me anywhere with him after that.

beat.

The recording momentarily cuts out. Static. It's getting-... Hold on. Chel. Come over here. Shine your light- There! Just there. Hold it steady-...

(CONTINUED)

Static.

FADE TO:

3

SCENE THREE

3

INT. Caves, NCC1701-Delta - Continuous

A continuation of Peter's notes.

PETER

On closer inspection, the walls of the tunnels aren't totally blank. There are etchings; shallow carvings similar to the ones marking the entrance to the caves. The designs - if that's what they are - are unclear, but the style is unmistakable. At first glance, they look like cracks in the stone -- whitish silver and spiderwebbing though the walls like veins of precious metal in a mine. But if you look harder, you can actually see it's... some sort of fungus or paste packed in to the needle thin slits in the stone. The cuts are deep. Maybe an inch and a half, but Chel's managed to dig out a few flakes of the paste. It's long dried now, little more than dust, but she says she has enough to make a decent examination. I can't help but speculate as to what these people, whoever they might have been, felt the need to decorate these carvings. There's no immediate light source available, and the tunnels are distinctly sloping, slowly but surely downwards, deep beneath the mountain, where even the considerable light of the binary star cannot penetrate. I wonder if-

Chel's voice suddenly breaks through over the comms line.

CHEL

Did you see that?

PETER

Chel?

(CONTINUED)

CHEL
Turn your light off!

PETER
But-

CHEL
Shut it off!

There is a mild scuffle.

Static.

FADE TO:

4

SCENE FOUR

4

INT. Caves, NCC1701-Delta - Continuous

The quiet background hum of the headlamps has faded.

PETER
The etchings are alive with light. They fill the tunnel with a pale silvery-blue radiance, strong enough to see by without help from the exo-suits headlamps. The fungus-paste acts as some kind of bio-luminescent, pressed into the tunnel walls like a natural string of fairy-lights, leading the way ever downward.

We can see the carvings clearly now. They are images, etched in long, unbroken loops that spiral and curve in and around one another, weaving a panoramic mural of hieroglyphs. It might be a history... possibly a mythology-

Static.

The recording briefly cuts out, then in again. -each cavern holds a different set of murals, that connect and trail through the tunnels. It looks as if each cave represents an era, each tunnel a period of transition. We had to back track a ways to be sure. The ones nearest to the mouth of the caves are large, sweeping maps of the celestial bodies. They

(MORE)

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PETER (cont'd)

must be thousands of years old. There are stars and planets shown in the carvings that aren't on any existing map today. Further along, there are spiraling towers and cities, similar to the satellite images the probe sent back. There are some images that are almost recognizable; flowers, and animals, pictorials of the rise and fall of great cities, side by side with many indecipherable hieroglyphs and swirling designs. The deeper into the caves you go, the stranger and more intricate the images become.

There's a repeated motif, hard to spot, but always present if you know where to look for it. It first appeared in a mural about... 4 miles beneath the surface, well into the planet's history. An image of an amorphous, snake-like being. It shifts slightly from carving to carving. It's presented as almost a liquid, seeming to pour out across the mural, sweeping over the images of the planet's flora and fauna, congealing in pools, or dripping out of cracks. But it's always there, always recognizable amongst the other images, woven in amongst them, but distinctly separated. Everything else is connected. Every image, from the largest planet in very the beginning of the tunnels, to the smallest flower in the image I'm standing in front of now, every single image is connected. Except these... snakes. And the deeper we go, the more frequently the motif appears. And the more violent the imagery becomes.

Chel is having a field day. The current theory is that the snake motif is a god, or a symbol for death. That as this world fell to chaos and ruin, the motif of the death-snake, pouring out of the plants and animals all around became more and more prevalent.

(MORE)

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PETER (cont'd)

It's... a disturbing image. The snake bursting out of the stomachs, chests, sometimes the mouths of the other images. Usually, these sections of walls are covered in etchings of what are unmistakably skeletons. It's like looking at a feverish nightmare of war... Bones litter the ground, and the few living creatures that are depicted seem to scream as the snake-like thing bursts from them, often ripping the host, for lack of a better word, apart in the process.

It must have been a plague. A sudden, uncontrollable wash of death. Something unlike any illness these beings had ever known. The original inhabitants of this world must have tried to escape down into these tunnels... But I doubt they found much, if any refuge. I doubt they found anything at all. If they did... there's nothing left of it now. Just dust, and barren decay, like everything else on this world. The snakes swallow everything.

Static.

FADE OUT.

END.