

Descendants
BOOK ONE - INHERITANCE
ii. Slip the Mind

by

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No Such Thing Productions

SCENE ONE

INT. Closet, Aphelion Industries - DAY

Axel and Rori crouch inside the closet, hardly daring to breathe, their voices barely above a whisper as they hide.

COMPUTER VOICE

Initiating Quarantine, Stage One.

Repeat: Quarantine, Stage One.

We hear a slithering right outside the door, and a high ethereal ringing. The Gorgon growls.

AXEL

It's outside...

The Gorgon hisses, and lets out a terrible rasping cry.

RORI

Don't move. Just- stay quiet. It's-

She stops abruptly as the Gorgon squelches closer. We can hear it burbling and hissing as it inspects the door. Axel and Rori tense... waiting...

Not breathing.

Not moving.

They wait...

And the Gorgon lets out a low, rasping hiss... before slowly moving off down the hallway. The sound of ringing fades.

beat.

AXEL

... Is it gone?

RORI

I don't know...

The comms unit crackles softly, and we can hear Mol and Declan on the other side.

MOLLY

(via comms, quiet, urgent) You guys okay?

DECLAN
(via comms) Y'know, they wouldn't be talking if they weren't.

MOLLY
Shut up, Declan.

RORI
We're fine... Just... stuck in a closet.

AXEL
So what do we do?

RORI
We need to get back to the stairwell. There's got to be another way out of the building, we just have to get past that thing.

AXEL
How?

MOLLY
Your best bet is to wait until it's distracted. Make your way past it if you can.

AXEL
WHY do I remain completely unassured by this "plan."

MOLLY
Well, I suppose there's always the Butch Cassidy way...

AXEL
I wouldn't be opposed to that.

RORI
No! No hero bullshit. Just stay behind me. We're gonna get out of here, just... trust me, okay?

AXEL
... Okay.

RORI
(thinking) We need to be absolutely silent. I'm gonna turn off my comms now. Just in case.

DECLAN

Okay.

MOLLY

Be careful!

Rori switches off the comms. Takes a deep breath.

RORI

Stay close...

AXEL

I'm right behind you...

Rori tenses, and with painstaking slowness, pushes open the closet door open, and steps out into the hall.

It's unnervingly silent.

She motions to Axel, and they begin creeping softly down the hall, toward the stairwell.

AXEL

It's so quiet-

RORI

Shh...

We hear a burbling growl. Axel stops.

AXEL

Rori!

RORI

I hear it!

They pause, looking around. We hear the soft hiss of moving air. Rori crouches down beside the vent. We can hear distant, echoing ringing, and the sound of the Gorgon slouching away from them into the ducts.

AXEL

...What is it doing?

RORI

Looks like it's already back in the vents...

AXEL

But where is it going?

RORI

I don't know... But it's not our problem anymore... Come on. We've gotta go.

She stands, and moves off down the hall. Axel hesitates for a moment, then reluctantly follows her, as the Gorgon's song begins to fade away, leaving only a ringing echo... then silence.

FADE TO:

SCENE TWO

INT. Stairwell, Aphelion Industries - DAY

We hear a door open, and Rori and Axel enter the stairwell, their voices and footsteps echoing slightly in the space. Rori flicks her comms unit back on.

RORI

Mol? Declan? You there?

MOLLY

(via comms, delighted) Captain!

DECLAN

(via comms, relieved) Oh thank god.

MOLLY

Are you alright?

Rori can't help but start pacing.

RORI

We're fine. The creature's in the vents. We're back in the stairwell. I need options. Now.

DECLAN

If you can get to one of the sealed off doors, I'll bet we could find a way to jimmy it open and get you out.

RORI

No, if we can't find a way to seal it off again, that'll break the Quarantine. We can't risk these creatures getting off the premises.

MOLLY

Well what about other exits? Drainage pipes, exhaust tubes-

AXEL

(quietly) There's a tunnel under my brother's laboratory.

beat. Rori stops, and stares at Axel in disbelief, colored with something that might be amusement, might be anger.

RORI

What?

AXEL

When I had the building designed, I wanted to be sure that if there was ever an emergency... Petey would... have a designated, foolproof way out. Something that wouldn't get clogged up, or shut down if the building was on lock down. So I had a tunnel built, directly under his lab. The door is coded to read certain patterns in DNA, and the tunnel leads to a safehouse about a mile and a half away.

DECLAN

Oh that's so cool!

RORI

Why didn't you mention this before?!

AXEL

A certain somebody told me she had everything under control.

MOLLY

That's so unethical! What if the building was on fire? He's the only one who could get out?

AXEL

He's my brother. Frankly, if there's an emergency, I don't give a good god damn if anyone else gets out. First and foremost, HE has to be okay.

RORI

Can you access the door lock?

AXEL

Yes. Privilege of a close genetic structure.

RORI

Then we need to get moving. Mol, Declan, we're going to need help-

MOLLY

Already on our way.

There's a soft crackle of static. A woman's voice glitches and filters through the static.

CHEL

Hey... You okay?

RORI

What the hell was-

AXEL

(shaken) Chel...

DECLAN

Shit... Sorry about that. The program filtering through the logs on the Adamantine must still be running. Can't exactly get back to the computers to shut it down... You might experience a little bleed through, as the entries start coming through.

RORI

At least we can start piecing together what happened.

CHEL

Hey... Hey... You okay?

AXEL

(uneasy) Yeah... I-... Right... (to Rori) Can we get going?

DECLAN

We'll find transportation, and rendezvous at the safe house. Uh, Mr. Director-

AXEL

Axel. Please. Come on, you people are saving my life. I think we've reached

that point.

DECLAN

Axel. If you can give us the coordinates to the safe house, we'll be there waiting when you get outside.

MOLLY

Just input them into the captain's data pad, it'll uplink to the ARC Juno system automatically.

AXEL

Mind if I-

RORI

Go ahead.

Axel inputs something into Rori's data pad. The machine lets out a soft bleep of confirmation. The tracker beeps once... twice... then goes quiet.

AXEL

Done.

RORI

See you on the other side.

MOLLY

Stay in touch!

DECLAN

And Rori? ... please be careful.

The connection cuts out, and Axel and Rori are left to stand in the sudden silence.

RORI

(quietly) Yeah... You too.

A soft rising tide of static.

FADE TO:

SCENE THREE

INT. Air Duct, Aphelion Industries - MEANWHILE

We find ourselves somewhere small... echo-y... An air duct. Something large forces its bulk through the metal tubes. It slithers... sloshes... growls...

And then... a soft rasping cry...

We push forward, opening into a larger space...

FADE TO:

INT. Bio-Chem Laboratories, Aphelion Industries - MEANWHILE
Static fades. A familiar voice, mid-transmission.

CHEL

I can see him. Framed by the shadows,
sitting in the semi-dark. Still as a
statue. Poised. Calculating.

The sounds of the laboratory fade in. SIMON MEDLIN listens to the transmission as they go about their work, mouthing along quietly to the recording. It's a message they've played and re-played a hundred thousand times....

SIMON

(quietly, with the recording) *-in the semi-dark. Still as a statue. Poised. Calculating.*

(laughs sadly) Same old Peter.

They break off and sigh. Pause in their work, struck by a sudden, overwhelming sadness.

SIMON

... Chel... Damnit, where are you?

A noise from behind. Simon looks up, frowning.

SIMON

Hello?

CHEL

His eyes move, sharp, detached,
tracing patterns and lines I'll never
see.

Something is moving inside the walls. Simon stands and crosses the lab.

SIMON

Is someone there?

It's in the air ducts. Something large and wet, it slithers... hisses... growls...

SIMON

What the hell-

The Gorgon in the air duct lets out a deafening roar. There is a squelching spray of greenish goo as it launches itself from the air duct, bursting apart the metal grating. Simon screams.

There is a crash as Simon stumbles backwards away from the Gorgon into a lab table. Beakers shatter. Scientific instruments clatter to the ground. Simon continues to yell, and the Gorgon roars and shrieks as it grapples with its prey.

Over it all, we can still hear the recording of Chel. A letter home, with no one to hear it...

CHEL

And then, without warning, he shifts. Strikes. Calculate swipes at the pages, then pulls back, lips pursed, surveying what he's done.

He draws like... no one I've ever seen. Knows exactly how to breathe life into the page, raise cities from the ashes of time and the smudgy blurs of photographs anyone else would throw aside. You should see him working. So enraptured by these worlds he creates, he can't even see the lights are fading... doesn't hear that he's been singing under his breath for... hours... doesn't even realize I'm here.

Doesn't even know where he is, because he keeps sticking out his hand and reaching for you, waiting for you to hand him a fresh pencil, or the next picture. Frowning, and shaking himself when his hand has been outstretched for four seconds and there is no pencil...

The sounds of struggle of cease. A thick, heavy sloshing of liquid fills the air as the Gorgon continues to pour itself out of the air-duct in a seemingly never-ending stream. The creature lets out a soft, rasping cry, and from somewhere on the ground, Simon lets out a soft moan.

Quarantine alarms begin to blare.

He misses you, Simon. We both do. But don't worry... In spite of all Peter's predictions of doom, I know we'll be seeing each other again. So don't miss us too much. We'll be home soon.

Static. A rush of sound. The world seems to shift...

FADE TO:

SCENE FOUR

INT. Stairwell, Aphelion Industries - DAY

Rori and Axel make their way down what seems like an endless flight of stairs, their footsteps echoing through the stairwell.

RORI
How much further?

AXEL
Peter's lab is in sub-basement 10.
We're nearly there.

There is a burst of static, and we hear Chel's voice echoing from the data pad.

CHEL
H-hey. Are you okay?

AXEL
(irritably) Can't you shut that thing off?

RORI
Sure, if you want to lose contact with the only two people in the world who know we're stuck in here.

AXEL
Alright! Alright.

CHEL
Hey... Hey... Axel- ... Are you okay?

AXEL
Christ I'm sick of that question.
(only half joking) Can't you say

anything else?

CHEL
(voice still filtered, as if coming through the transmission) What do you want me to say?

AXEL
(startled) Jesus- fuck!

RORI
Axel?! What is it, what's wrong?

CHEL
(filtered) Sorry, was that too much?

RORI
Axel?

AXEL
You didn't hear that?!

RORI
Hear what?

AXEL
Her! Chel!

RORI
The recording?

CHEL
(filtered, not unkindly) She's not hearing what you're hearing. Consider this a sidebar. It's high time we had a conversation, don't you think?

RORI
Axel?

AXEL
I-... it's nothing. (to himself) This isn't happening. I'm fine. I'm fine. This is fine. I'm just... hearing things.

CHEL
(filtered) You're right, disembodied voice talking to you through a speaker is a little weird.

There is a sound somewhere between a shimmer and a flicker of static as CHEL appears in the stairwell. The ambient sounds of the real world fade. Her voice is not tethered to any one specific space -- she floats, speaking from anywhere and everywhere -- it is extremely unnerving.

CHEL

(less filtered, but still not wholly "there") We always did better talking things out face to face.

AXEL

Chel?

CHEL

(smiling) Hi Axel.

AXEL

... No.

CHEL

Sorry?

AXEL

No. This-... You're-... You are dead. This-... Are you a ghost?

CHEL

A little. I am what you remember me to be. You're coping. Or... trying to. I figured you could use somebody to talk to.

AXEL

(realizing) It was you... back in the closet, that voice- but... no. No. That would mean- (disbelieving) You're saying- What, I'm hallucinating?!

CHEL

I mean, your mind and body are under extreme duress. You're *literally* running for your life-

AXEL

NO! I don't hallucinate. I'm not scared. And I sure as shit don't buy into this-... magical realism
BULLSHIT!

CHEL
(wryly) What about remorse and terror,
do you buy into that?

AXEL
People like me don't hallucinate!

CHEL
It can happen to anyone.

AXEL
Not me! I'm fine!

CHEL
Tell that to your heart rate.

AXEL
I don't have to tell you anything!
You're not real!

CHEL
Doesn't mean I can't help you.

AXEL
(scoffs) Oh is THAT what you're doing?
Helping? By, what? Following me
around, talking to me through
recordings. (mimicking her) Are you
okay? Are you okay?

CHEL
No one else is asking.

AXEL
Everyone is asking.

CHEL
Because you always lie when you
answer!

AXEL
I'm fine!

CHEL
Are you-

AXEL
You know I'm not!
Everyone keeps- I can feel them.
Everyone. All of them. Wondering. All

the time. But they have to know, don't they? It's not-... I'm not-... I just want to go back.

There are moments when I close my eyes, and for a moment, just a moment, I wonder if when I open them again, I'll be ten. One breath, an accidental slip, a blink, and the past twenty years will just... vanish. A long and fevered dream. I will open my eyes, and there will be the smell of rust and dirty water, my voice echoing in the dark... the sounds of footsteps... distant crying... different decisions. A life un-lived. You know I wish I'd never met you?!

(beat) I-... I don't mean that. I didn't mean that. I just... wish we were... Before This.

(pause, realizing) I don't know where I am.

CHEL

It's okay. Breathe. Focus on your surroundings.

AXEL

I can't-

CHEL

You can. Tell me what you see.

AXEL

I see Rori. We're in a stairwell. We go deeper into the building, down and down and down, and she is saying... something, and-... I can't hear her. My head is full of static. Your words. A jumbled mess about Peter and the sky. Screaming. And I can't tell what is real. I close my eyes and... I'm with you. Or you are with me. There are cracks in the walls. I can see them. Tracing the jagged lines with my fingertips, and I can't... feel them? I don't know where I am. The holes in the concrete are so dark. And I can feel them staring at me. Into me. They

know what I did. I let you go. Let you walk away. I put you on that ship, and...

CHEL

I died.

AXEL

She did. ... and I can't stop thinking about it.

CHEL

You don't think about-

AXEL

I can't. It's too-... So I think about you. (beat.) It's been like this for months. I can't sleep. I can't... focus. You keep hovering over my shoulder. I see you... Her... And I know it's not real, but-... There she is... There you are... Standing in front of my desk. Sitting beside me. Two places at once. At my side and unburied... lost... And now-... with these... monsters, those things-...

Sorry. I'm... I feel... unraveled. I can't do it. How did you do it? It's too much to hold. These moments. I need-... I have to-...

CHEL

Talk to me...

AXEL

(relieved) Yes. (beat, then, wary) No. (beat) You're... You're not-... You never wanted to talk to me before. I've seen you. Every day since we first lost contact with the ship-... You didn't show up. I realized... it was the last time I'd ever see you, that I had-... and suddenly... You were everywhere. Right there in the corner of my eye. Like a ghost.

CHEL

That's just the guilt talking.

AXEL

I could never catch a glimpse of your face. Why now? Why today?

CHEL

Like you said. It's too much to hold. And I've been through this before.

AXEL

No, Chel has been through this before. You're a hallucination.

CHEL

No shit, Sherlock, but I'm familiar. I'm comforting, as far as guilty manifestations go. I've been here with you for months. It's only today you decided you needed me.

AXEL

(shaking himself) No, this- this is bullshit. I'll blink and you'll be gone. I don't have anything to say to you.

CHEL

(a voice a little more real than recorded) You've been avoiding me.

AXEL

(trying to drown her out) You're dead. You're not real. This is all inside my head. I'm talking to a ghost. You're not real... Are you? Chel?

CHEL

How real do you want me to be?
(fading, mixing with something else)
Axel? Axel?

A rush of sound. Something shifts. And we find ourselves in...

SCENE FIVE

INT. Bio-Chem Laboratories, Aphelion Industries - CONTINUOUS

The real world comes flooding back in. Axel blinks. Rori is staring at him from the bottom of the stairs, concerned.

RORI
Hey... Are you okay? Axel? Axel?

AXEL
(covering quickly) I'm fine.

RORI
You sure? Stay with me, okay? Now's
not the time to panic.

AXEL
I'm not panicking!

RORI
You sure? Because you've been talking
to yourself for the last 15 minutes.

beat.

AXEL
Sorry. I-... I'm fine...

RORI
You sure?

AXEL
I said, I'm fine!

RORI
Hey. I promised you I'd get you out of
here, didn't I?

AXEL
I-... Yes.

RORI
You're my priority. You know that,
right?

AXEL
... yes.

RORI
Okay. Then don't fucking snap at me.
Things are bad, I get it. You're
scared-

AXEL
I'm not-

RORI

-Or you're not! Doesn't matter. Take that energy, and channel it into staying alive. Keep your eyes open. Stay focused. Do what you have to, but I'm on your side, okay? So don't channel it at me.

beat.

AXEL

I'm sorry.

RORI

It's okay. Like I said, I get it.

AXEL

Right.

RORI

You wanna open this door, Mr. Magic Genes?

AXEL

(cracking a smile) That's Director Magic Genes, to you, Captain.

He moves over to the door, and keys in a code. There is an electronic whirring, and the door slides open.

AXEL

Okay. Let's-

RORI

Oh absolutely not. Get behind me.

AXEL

What? No! I can take care of-

RORI

Not without stealing my gun again, you can't. And the last time you did that, all you managed to do was blow holes in the ceiling. Is that what you want to do? Play hero, blow holes in the ceiling, and get us killed? Or are you going to trust me, and let me do my job?

He steps back.

AXEL

FINE. Fine... Ladies first.

RORI

Mmm, probably should have less to do with the fact that I'm a lady, and more to do with the fact that I'm armed.

AXEL

Hey, you're in charge here.

They start to head down the hallway. The labs are eerily silent.

RORI

Wow, you really aren't used to people talking to you like that, huh?

AXEL

Funnily enough I don't tend to get yelled at a lot.

RORI

Because you're the boss.

AXEL

And here I thought it was because I was so tall, and charming.

RORI

Doesn't hurt.

AXEL

It's not exactly useful.

RORI

Yeah, well. That's why you hire people like me. To keep big brave idiots like you from doing something stupid.

AXEL

(bitter laugh) I thought you said no heroes?

RORI

I said there's no such thing as heroes. They're not real. Bravery though, THAT'S something you can count on. Never said you couldn't be brave.

AXEL
(half to himself) Yeah, well... I'm not. (skeptical, to Rori) You seriously don't believe in heroes.

RORI
Never have, never will.

AXEL
So what do you believe in?

RORI
(considers for a moment, then) People.

There's a sound from further down the hallway. A slithering? A moan...

RORI
Stop. (she listens, then, quietly) ... There's something up ahead.

AXEL
That's coming from Peter's lab.

RORI
Okay. Stay here.

AXEL
Absolutely not.

RORI
I told you-

AXEL
No, I've seen those things. You find yourself facing one of those things on your own, and you're dead.

RORI
You're not armed.

AXEL
I have hands and feet don't I? I know how to throw things. And two people on lookout are better than one.

RORI
Fine. But if I tell you to run, you run.

AXEL
What, and just leave you?

RORI
I'll be fine.

AXEL
Will you?

beat.

AXEL
We stand our best chances together.

RORI
It's not safe-

AXEL
And there's no way I'm making it out
of here without you.

beat.

RORI
Fine. FINE! Just... stay behind me.

AXEL
I got your six.

Rori looks at him, surprised, but grateful.

RORI
Thank you.

AXEL
No problem.

They move slowly down the hall together. The moaning grows louder. Something inside the lab clatters to the floor.

RORI
Stand back.

She charges her gun, then reaches out and keys a passcode into the door. The door hisses open, and Rori immediately brings her gun up to bear on her target.

Simon, shaking and splattered in blood, struggles to hold themselves upright against one of the lab tables.

SIMON
Help... H-help...

RORI
Oh my god.

FADE OUT.

END.