

Entry Five - Chel

by

Jordan Cobb

No Such Thing Productions

SCENE ONE

INT. The Gorgon's Den, NC1701-Delta - EVENING

We hear the distant sound of water dripping, echoing around a cavernous space. Chel turns on her recorder.

CHEL

I'm standing at the base of what can only be described as a pyramid. The complex of caves and tunnels Peter found by the initial site ends here. As we descended, the passages started to open up, until we found ourselves in this massive domed space. The high walls of the cavern slope far and away into the darkness, giving the room a cathedral-like appearance. The glossy, blue-black rock has been polished and smoothed down to a shadowed, mirror-like sheen. Everywhere I turn, I can see dark, distorted reflections of Peter and myself moving along the walls like wraiths. The intricate murals that adorned the walls of the tunnels leading here are gone. Instead, large, misshapen bands of the bio-luminescent paste have been flung in haphazard arcs across the walls. Imagine catching glimpse of the Milky Way from behind the rings of Saturn; thicker bands of light overlaying soft, bright dusty speckles. Yeah. It's a lot like that.

And in the center of it all is the pyramid. The peak easily reaches at least a hundred feet straight into the air. A mountain below the mountain. It rises out of the ground seamlessly, a spire of icy black stone. It's noticeably less polished and structured than the rest of the Den. Chipped, imperfect... all natural. And wrapped around it, twisting in a tight, imperfect spiral from base to crest are these... mounds, growing up out of the stone. They look like little twisted towers of inverted geode. Hollow, half-formed silhouettes of all shapes, distortions, and sizes.

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CHEL (CONT'D)

The mounds are pearlescent white, with overtones of green and purple, webbed with thin veins of iridescent black, they appear to be made of... some sort of opaque crystal. Almost all of them are broken. The ground is littered with thousands of glittering crystalline shards. It's... unsettling. This place is... old. But it doesn't feel that way. It feels empty. There's a hollowness to the space, as if the dust is only beginning to settle. The air is frigid, and still. I don't think anything's moved down here in... centuries. Millennia, even. Life was here. Once. The evidence fills the cavern, what little of it is recognizable, but it's scattered and fragmented as the crystals -- Whatever life was here, has long since gone. And all that's left are the shattered remnants of a refugee camp. This is a burial chamber. A lost and long forgotten tomb. And Peter and I have it all to ourselves.

She walks closer to the pyramid. Her footsteps crunch as she moves over the scattered crystals.

We must be miles under the earth by now, deep in the heart of the mountain. Who ever built this place, or... tamed it... it looks like they were here to stay. There are small alcoves around the perimeter of the cavern, possible sleeping nooks or spaces for food storage, but no other rooms. No windows, no passage ways... no way up and no way out but the way we came.

Peter's gone off to examine one of the alcoves. The Den, as we've decided to call it, for lack of a better word, is roughly circular, and about half the length of a football field. Though most of the central space is occupied by the pyramid. ...And Peter's not looking, so let's see if I can climb

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CHEL (CONT'D)  
this! Hold on a second.

Static.

So, on closer inspection -- and by closer inspection, I mean I'm walking around the base trying to find a good niche or toehold or something -- this is technically less of a pyramid than it is a cone. Pyramid implies sides, but as far as I can tell, this structure has none. It's not smooth, but it is basically curved all the way around. And there's some... discoloration here on the stone. It looks like a tidal lie of a pier, but instead of having seeped into the stone, it's crusted over it. Moss or rust might be a better description but that doesn't quite fit the texture. The discoloration line reaches up over my head, but I can't see if it effects the rest of the structure. I'm more interested in trying to figure out how all these crystal-mounds are attached? They're clustered together, each in a single unit. Some of them look like they're touching, but you can see the spaces between them-

Oh! Holy shit. There's... Okay, so, I'm standing on the far side of the pyramid, the side where, from here I can't see the door or Peter. Directly in front of me on the structure itself is this mound of crystal. It's tall and willowy, and sort of... arcing forward with these four branding rods set equidistant down each side, all curling inward. I stopped because... I don't know. The way it bends like that, it almost looks like... like a tree, clawing at it's own chest. Or... trunk. Like it's in pain. Anyway, so the middle of the mound has crumbled away. The insides of the structures are completely hollow. Smooth like an eggshell. And beyond it... well... THROUGH it to be more accurate... I can see a path.

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Static.

The trail crawls around the pyramid in a steeply sloped, uneven spiral. The path is narrow. I mean REALLY narrow. I'm walking with one hand on the pyramid and the other on the crystals I'm using as a makeshift railing, trying my damndest NOT to look down. I... have never liked heights. But, ironically, I do really love hiking. Back home, I used to go to the reservation, this local patch of forrest, with my dad every Sunday, and he'd take me on treks along the streams, up the sides of the little mountain, through the woods, you name it. Granted, I never had to look down the sheer, horrifying drop when I was walking with my dad. Or have to worry about taking one wrong step and facing to my untimely, unscientific, and supremely embarrassing death. I don't know if Peter would laugh at me or have a panic attack. No... No, he'd learn the science of re-animation, Herbert West style, just so he could give me a lecture about not wandering off. Speaking of which, he hasn't pinged me yet? I wandered off at LEAST twenty minutes ago, and he hasn't tried to reach me once. Wow. I think he might actually be having fun. Good. Maybe now he'll actually want to go outside more. First I take him halfway across the universe... next time, salsa dancing! Baby steps.

Static.

There's something... dark spread over the stone. The same substance that was covering the base of the pyramid. It's a deep forrest-y green. No sign of where it's coming from, but it's everywhere. Definitely a different composition than any of the other flora we've encountered so far. Almost liquid. Oily. That's the word. It's making my boots stick to the path. I feel like somebody's grabbing my

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CHEL (CONT'D)

ankles. Because walking on crystal wasn't hard enough.

Static.

I can't wait to share this with you. I wish you were here. I mean. You are. Somewhere. I can feel you in the room. I keep catching little glimpses of you; your exo-suit bobbing in and out of sight as you pick through the relics and wander in and out of the alcoves. I can picture the look on your face behind your helmet, that little frown, and the crease in your forehead. You are so focused on looking down. So intent on the minutia. From way up here, you look about small enough to fit in the palm of my hand. If I picked you up, and put you on my shoulder, you could sit here with me. I'm looking up now, and the way it's painted, you couldn't tell the difference between the ceiling and the night sky. It's so dark, and the light is so brilliant, bright, and blue. And you are... within arms length, and I don't feel the heat of you. I blame the suit.

Hold on... I bet I can...

Chel leans over the side of the pyramid.

Hey! Peter! (she waves) I see you! Up here! ... oh come on! WAVE! See me... I know you can...

There is a sound like cracking glass. Chel turns around.

Hello?

There is a loud, sudden crack as the mound of crystal Chel leans against suddenly snaps. We hear the chunk of crystal smash on the ground, dozens of feet below. Chel screams.

Static.

CHEL (CONT'D)

Oh god... Oh my god... It's a face. It's. fucking- There's a face in the  
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CONTINUED: (6)

CHEL (CONT'D)

crystal.

Static.

CHEL (CONT'D)

I... slipped. Leaned too far over the edge. And these things-... they're hollow, so... it didn't-... go well... And I thought... I heard a- And I know it must've been the crystal I was leaning on, but I could've sworn it was behind me. I'm okay. Bruised. Shaken. But-... I'm fine. I didn't tear my suit, I didn't fall, I'm alive, it's fine... but... When I looked up...

(steadying herself) They're... not mounds. They're statues. There are faces, carved into the crystal. Or formed from it. I can't see any visible marks from tools, or blemishes, besides where time has left them cracked and crumbling. It's like they GREW into these shapes. There are... bi-peds, and quadrupeds, things with so many legs and heads I couldn't begin to count them all. These... statues... represent what must have been the entire array of living creatures that once existed on this planet. And while a number of the... motifs are repeated, in various sizes and positions, and so far as I can tell each individual has its own... face... it doesn't seem to be the entire population. It's some sort of monument, or... mass grave marker. Every step up this mountain reveals a new shape, a new face, and there are... thousands of them. Stretching away in both directions, above and below as far as my eyes can see. There are limbs, twisting and curved into all sorts of strange and fantastic poses, arching in every imaginable paroxysm of pain. Every face is screaming. Every face contorted in... rage, and fear, and... so much pain.

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CHEL (CONT'D)

I can't-... Who would MAKE something like these? Why would you-...

(again, steadying herself) They're... screaming. Some of their faces are cracked. Most are missing limbs, and torsos, leaving them these long... empty, malformed shells. The greenish oil is spread over some of them. Congealed might be a better word. It... seeps out of the crystals like... blood. Oozing, viscous... spilling over the pearlescent casing...

There's... one statue. It's small, compared to the others. About the size of a loaf of bread? Reminiscent of the statue at the base of the mountain. A central trunk, with four branching appendages down either side. But this one is folded up in a kind of child's pose, the branching limbs arcing up, and back, like tentacles... or maybe wings. Well... at least we know what the locals looked like.

We hear the soft scraping of stone as she picks it up.

It's... clean. Unbroken. And surprisingly light. And it's the only one hiding its face.

There is a soft sound, like footsteps on broken glass. Chel looks up.

Who's there? ... Hello?

What was that? Chel waits, but whatever the noise was, it's now gone. She forces herself to take a deep breath.

Right. Okay, tiny statue. You are coming with me. Peter will want to meet you, and I'll be able to get a better read on what exactly you're made of back on the Adamantine.

We hear the comms line come to life, and a very anxious Peter.

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PETER

Chel? What are you still doing up there? Are you sure you're alright?

Was that the crack of crystal? Or static on the comms? Chel pauses to listen.

PETER (CONT'D)

Chel? Chel, are you-

CHEL

I'm... I'm alright, Peter. I'm on my way down now. Just... getting acquainted with the natives.

We hear her get up, and make her way slowly down the path. Her footsteps, heavy on the crystal strewn trail, fade away.

FADE OUT.

END.