

Convergence
A Janus Descending Mini-Episode

by

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No Such Thing Productions

SCENE ONE

INT. Lobby, Conference Center - DAY

We hear the sounds of crowds, moving in and out of the various conference rooms.

DR. PETER CRICHTON walks out of a conference hall, heading towards the cafe, when from far behind... A voice...

VOICE

Excuse me! Excuse me... Sorry...
Sorry, if I could just- DOCTOR
CRICHTON? Sorry, if you could just-
LET ME THROUGH! DOCTOR CRICHTON!

Peter turns. DR. CHEL STADLER is fighting her way through the crowd. She pops out of a knot of people, stumbling and grinning.

CHEL

Dr. Crichton? Dr. Peter Crichton?

PETER

Yes...

CHEL

HI! Oh, wow! You walk REALLY fast, I didn't think I was going to be able to catch you in time! I was just in there! At the panel? You were discussing the development of new strategies of inter-solar-system travel and colonization, and the potential of actually bio-engineering colonies, using some of the new research that's been coming out of Aphelion Industries!

PETER

Yes, I was there.

CHEL

RIGHT! Of course you were. You were giving the talk. I couldn't decide between seeing this discussion, or the one Mr. Crichton- Your brother, Axel, I mean, is hosting over in conference hall A, about the practical applications of reverse engineering xenotechnology, but ultimately I

decided on seeing this one, because it's just SO much more relevant to our development as a species. They really should have given you the bigger conference hall. People need to hear this sort of thing! But I suppose I understand. I mean I've been following your work for YEARS now, since undergrad, and the things you write about probably go straight over most people's head. To be honest, sometimes it goes straight over mine, but you're writing is so intensely lyrical. Poetic. You really have a vision of everything you talk about. It's inspiring really. I'm a huge fan.

PETER

I-

CHEL

It was a brilliant talk. Really it was. Your theories on how we might be able to actually GROW colonies, like coral reefs or bacteria, and within our lifetimes?! Brilliant. It's absolutely stunning. And totally feasible. Only your methodology is wrong.

PETER

... Excuse me?

CHEL

It's wrong. The theory is correct, but the way you're going about it-... I was sitting there, listening to you outlining your experiments and your plans for the future and I just panicked. I'm sorry, I understand that this is COMPLETELY inappropriate-

PETER

So you decided to just walk up and do it anyway.

CHEL

Well, you're the VP and Chief Scientific Officer of a multi-bajillion dollar company. I thought I could save you a couple of cents and a

whole lot of time.

PETER
(unamused) Did you?

CHEL
I'm sorry. That was-... I thought maybe if I made it a joke I wouldn't sound like as much of an asshole-... I'm making it worse-... I just... I had to tell you. But the bacteria culture you're basing your experimentation on? You have to stop.

PETER
Excuse me?!

CHEL
What you're doing is extraordinarily dangerous.

PETER
I think we have it under control, thank you. We're developing-

CHEL
Are you having trouble with the rate of acceleration?

PETER
... What?

CHEL
The rate of acceleration. You can get the bacteria to build say, a brick or even a whole building, but you can't make it stop. It just keeps going faster and faster. Spreading out of control.

PETER
How did you-

CHEL
You said in your presentation that you were using the xenobacteria the Black Orion, right?

PETER
That's right.

CHEL

And you chose them because of that paper that came out two years ago, right? Dr. Fabian Buller's piece on microbial lifeforms of the Great Red Spot on Jupiter. It was a monumental piece... to find out that such an incredibly iconic planetary landmark was the result of bacteria in the atmosphere. But that's what you based your research on, right?

PETER

Yes, why-

CHEL

Did he tell you it's eating the planet?

PETER

... What?

CHEL

The Black Orion is eating Jupiter. From the outside in. Dr. Buller completely ignores that part of the bacteria's life cycle in his talks and his paper, even though almost all of his research hinges on it-

PETER

Doctor Buller has been working at Aphelion Industries for YEARS now, why would he-

CHEL

I've been studying the Black Orion species since that paper came out. It's a voracious parasite. You're seeing that rapid growth, because it's moving through the developmental systems you've built the same way a virus moves through a body. And it won't stop because it actually pulls from the atmosphere to perpetuate its life cycle. It replicates initially by pulling methane out of an atmosphere. But once it starts running out of methane, it develops a taste for other gasses... other building blocks, anything it can find. It's why the Red

Spot has been spinning for so long. Theoretically, it would make for a great self-sustaining, self-repairing building material. But there's no real way to contain it. If you integrate it into the building blocks of a colony, and just shoot it off into space, you risk completely destroying the entire existing ecosystem, not to mention causing some pretty horrific deaths for any humans you send to out there colonize.

PETER

I-... I'm sorry, who are you?

CHEL

Oh! Oh my gosh. Did I not-... My name's Chel! Chel Marietta Stadler.

PETER

You.

CHEL

Yes! Me. My dad keeps trying to get me to go by Marietta, and my mom keeps saying "Mari", my sisters say I need to start introducing myself as Dr. Stadler, but honestly, please, just call me Chel.

PETER

You're Dr. Stadler. Chel Stadler.

CHEL

... Yes?

PETER

Dr. Chel Stadler. The xenopaleontologist.

CHEL

You say that like you've heard of me.

PETER

I have. I've read your work.

CHEL

Seriously?!

PETER

Yes, all of it. I try to keep up in all fields. I didn't realize you were so interested in modern xenobiology.

CHEL

I am! It's a passion of mine. I've been studying it on the side for as long as I can remember. I like to get a whole picture... uncovering lost worlds, y'know? Seeing exactly HOW these creatures and people moved through their worlds.

PETER

I know the feeling.

CHEL

Really?

PETER

Recreating the structure of a life long since lived. Finding and sketching out an existence you can barely even imagine...

CHEL

Breathing life and color into it. Diving into the shadows, and weaving out a universe of possibility...

PETER

Watching it take shape, and reform the world around you...

CHEL

Like watching the birth of a star...

PETER

Changing the future, through the past...

A beat. They observe one another for a moment, an unspoken moment of heat, mutual love of the unknown.

CHEL

... You should write that down... I-in... In one of your papers.

PETER

You think so?

CHEL

Why else do we do this? Open up tombs and try to bury ourselves in them, trying to find old life? Moments like that. When we find it. The way you phrased it... it's...

PETER

Yes?

CHEL

It's all I've ever wanted to do.

beat.

PETER

Would-... Do you-...

CHEL

Yes?

But he loses his nerve.

PETER

... We should... talk more about this.

CHEL

Really?

PETER

You sound surprised.

CHEL

Yes! I-... I mean, no! I mean- Well, I mean, I'm-... And YOU'RE-...

PETER

(raising an eyebrow at her) I'm-...?

CHEL

I mean, you're Peter Crichton.
(realizing) Oh... My god... I am...
an... IDIOT!

PETER

(taken aback) What?

CHEL

I'm sorry! Oh... Oh my god, I'm-...
I'm sorry. I'm sorry! This was-... I
am so stupid. I shouldn't have-... I

know this is the worst. The ultimate no-no... Cornering you like this- And you probably have somewhere to go! And your research! And I just- But I was just... so excited to meet you, and hear your talk, but then I heard you talking about the Black Orion and I just-... I didn't want-... Your career has just been... an insane inspiration to me, and I didn't want-... You can do so much more, and I didn't want Buller's shortsightedness and ego to wreck your career. And look, since I can't possibly make this any worse anyway, can I get you a coffee?

PETER

... I-... S-sorry... What?

CHEL

A-... A coffee... To-... apologize? Or-... because-... I-I don't know... Sorry... Um... I-... NOPE! I just-... I'm so sorry. I'll just... go! Sorry!! And stop using the Black Orion!!!

Chel rapidly starts to back away into the crowd, her voice fading.

PETER

Wait, hold on!

CHEL

Try Kerberan Plutonis! It's harder to get your hands on, but it SHOULD give you the same structural stability and initial acceleration rate, without the whole murdering an entire planet issue!

PETER

How do you-

CHEL

I have to go! I can't BELIEVE I just-... I'm sorry! Stupid! STUPID! UGH! You IDIOT!

PETER

Wait!

But she has vanished into the crowd. Peter stares after her, nonplussed.

AXEL

Who was that?

Peter's brother, AXEL CRICHTON steps out of the crowd, smirking knowingly at him.

PETER

(still staring somewhat dazedly after Chel) I-... A... A colleague.

AXEL

Did you ask her out for a coffee?

PETER

What?! N-no!

AXEL

Well did you at least get her number?

PETER

Axel!

AXEL

Hey, I'm just saying... She must've been cute.

PETER

What makes you say that?

AXEL

Well, she disappeared a solid minute ago, and you're still staring.

PETER

I-... No I'm not.

AXEL

Uh-huh. You can make eye contact with me any time, you know.

PETER

Shut up.

AXEL

Whatever you say, Petey.

PETER

Peter.

AXEL

Petey. So. Good talk?

PETER

I... yeah... It-... Yeah. (and then, shaking himself back to reality) Come on... Let's... I need to get back to the lab.

AXEL

Already?

PETER

Yeah, I'm done with this. And there's something I want to test out.

AXEL

What?

PETER

Just a theory... Come on.

He walks off into the crowd. Axel glances back the way Chel went, smirks, shrugs, and follows Peter into the press.

FADE OUT.

END.