

Descendants
BOOK ONE - INHERITANCE
iv. Lusus Naturae

by

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No Such Thing Productions

PROLOGUE

EXT. Launch Pad, Aphelion Industries - THEN

The woman stands in the holding room, arms wrapped around herself, staring through a window at the Adamantine, glittering in the sunlight.

COMPUTER VOICE

Now starting penultimate checks.
Launch of Janus Initiative in T-Minus
3 hours. Now starting penultimate
checks. Launch of Janus Initiative in
T-Minus 3 hours.

Behind her, a door slides open, and Axel strides into the room.

AXEL

Now how did I know I would find you in
here?

CHEL turns and smiles.

CHEL

Did you really think I'd be anywhere
else?

AXEL

No... Not really. (beat) Where's-

CHEL

Down there. On the tarmac. We're not
allowed on board until we start making
final checks, but that's not going to
stop him from walking around and
around the hull until he makes himself
dizzy.

AXEL

Looking for cracks? Chipped paint?
She's brand new, I promise!

CHEL

Actually, I think he's just...
admiring it.

AXEL

And what are you doing?

CHEL
Breathing.

AXEL
Oh?

CHEL
Well... trying to.

AXEL
Right. (beat) She really is beautiful.

CHEL
Yeah.

AXEL
Nervous? ... You don't have to do
this, you know. I'm just saying...
Last chance to change your mind.

CHEL
Last chance to come with us.

Axel laughs.

CHEL
We could always use an extra pair of
hands.

AXEL
Someone to hold your glasses while you
make calculations?

CHEL
A handy-man is never a bad thing to
have.

AXEL
Oh, but then who would you have to
write all your letters home to?

CHEL
Mom and dad. Unless there's something
you're not telling me? ... Axel. I'm
serious. You should come.

Axel starts to reply, then stops, frowning.

AXEL
... No.

CHEL

No?

AXEL

No... This-... This is wrong. This isn't how it went...

CHEL

No. ... would have been fun though. We'd have made a great team.

AXEL

We do. Don't we?

CHEL

I wish that we'd been friends... (her voice, still "real," glitches like a computer) I'm sorry.

AXEL

No! No, no, wait, please, wait, I just need- Just give me a minute. Please, I- I can't... be dreaming again. You're... you're talking to me- Is this real?

CHEL

For now. This was the safest place we could think of. But I can't let you stay. I'm sorry. (and again, glitching, a burst of static) I- I- I wish you were here.

AXEL

What does that mean? I'm here.

CHEL

No, you're not. (beneath her voice, a whisper of Rori) Axel... Look at me.

AXEL

I keep drifting here... I keep falling into this moment, this frozen memory. ... Can I touch you?

He reaches out and takes her by the hand. She doesn't resist.

AXEL

There... Can you-... Jesus, you're so... real, this time... In the stairwell you were like paper... pale

and thin... Now-

AXEL AND CHEL

I can feel you in the room.

AXEL

How?

CHEL

You're reaching. Me, this place... but now isn't the time to disappear in yourself. Axel... We have to go.

AXEL

No. Stay. Please. Just-... just a little longer. Talk to me. Don't make me go back. You said it's safe here! I don't understand-

CHEL

You're in danger. I don't have a choice.

AXEL

Why not?! If we stay- I can call off the launch. You won't leave, this never happens, and I won't be in danger anymore!

CHEL

That isn't how this works.

AXEL

It could be, if you let it! If you would just- stay here! Talk to me- I can fix this! I can stop it. I can make this go away, if you just give me the chance to make you understand! We can stay here. I can fix this! If you stay- I-... I-I can do this, you don't have a fucking clue who I am. I can do anything-

From somewhere beyond, we hear the distant rasping cry of a Gorgon, and the muted voices of Rori and Simon, distorted and spilling into the dream-sphere.

CHEL

(sadly) The world's already changing, Axel. The moment's passed.

AXEL

No. No, not if I say so.

CHEL

There's nothing left here to fix.

AXEL

You have to let me try! Just... talk to me. Please. Just-... Give me this moment.

CHEL

I'm already dead. You're not. I need you to focus-

AXEL

I need you to stay!

CHEL

I know. But not now. We don't have the time-

AXEL

(disintegrating) I DON'T HAVE ANYONE BUT YOU! I NEED YOU TO TALK TO ME! You can find the time to hover over me, day after day, filling up every shadow, the air I can't breathe, every empty space in my head...

AXEL AND CHEL

It's so dark...

CHEL

Axel-

AXEL

You see me. (willing the world to change) This isn't happening. This isn't real. I can make it not real, I just need you to-... You can't-... (and then, breaking, almost a child) ...Don't go.

CHEL

I'm not. I'm here... You see me.

AXEL

Don't-... I can feel you sliding through my fingers, don't you fucking dare-

CHEL

I'm with you. You can do this. But we're running out of time. You have to come back.

AXEL

Please don't leave me here.

CHEL

Wake up. (fading) You have to wake.

AXEL

Wait!

CHEL

Now, Axel! Please!

AXEL

(looking around) I don't know where I am...

CHEL AND RORI

Axel!

A rush of sound. A burst of static. A familiar voice... a recording.

FADE TO:

SCENE ONE

INT. Secret Passageway, Below Aphelion Industries - NOW

Axel starts violently. The sudden return of darkness is suffocating. He's holding Rori's hand, and unsure of when he took it.

CHEL

(full static) With- with- with- within arms length, and I don't feel the heat of you...

RORI

Axel! Hey! Axel, can you hear me?

SIMON

What's wrong with him?

RORI

It's okay. He'll be okay... Axel? Hey... Come on, Axel, please...

AXEL

I-... Wh-what? Where-

RORI

You okay? Hey, I've got you... I've got you.

AXEL

Rori... You're... Why are you holding my hand?

RORI

Can you feel me?

AXEL

I-... Yes. What-... We-... we're in the tunnel... What-

Somewhere, alarmingly close, we hear a Gorgon hiss.

SIMON

Uh, Captain?!

RORI

Axel, I'm sorry, we have to go. You have to trust me now, okay? Can you walk?

AXEL

I-I think so.

RORI

Good. Come on. Move.

SIMON

Where?!

RORI

Back the way we came.

SIMON

You want us to go TOWARDS that thing?!

RORI

They've got us penned in on both sides. But we know the layout of the tunnel behind us. And that's our only definite way out. If we move quickly, we might be able to take it by surprise.

SIMON
And if we can't?

RORI
You let me worry about that.

SIMON
Is he going to be okay?

AXEL
(somewhat dully) I'm fine. Just... a
headache.

SIMON
(softly) Your eyes aren't focused.

AXEL
Shut up.

RORI
Here, lean on me.

SIMON
No, I've got him.

RORI
You're barely standing!

SIMON
You're the only person here with a
weapon. You need your hands free.
Just... promise you won't leave us
behind.

Behind them, closer still, a Gorgon shrieks.

RORI
Stay close to the walls, and keep
quiet. We stick together, no matter
what. Move. Now.

They run. The sound of the Gorgon behind them fades away.

RORI
(softly) Stop! Against the wall. Now!
Shh, shh, shh...

They listen. Sounds of the disused tunnels. And something
moving in the distant dark.

RORI
Everybody okay?

SIMON
(grimacing in pain) I've been better,
but I'll live.

RORI
Well, that's the plan, anyway. Axel?
Still with us?

AXEL
Yeah. ... Thank you.

SIMON
Don't mention it.

RORI
I think we've lost it. One of them,
anyway.

SIMON
We must be nearly back to the ladder.
That thing can't be much further
ahead...

AXEL
Captain?

She thinks a moment.

RORI
Did anybody get a good look at that
creature?

SIMON
As a matter of fact.

RORI
The one we saw in the suites it didn't
have a definite shape. Moved quickly,
but it was...

SIMON
Snake-like. Ophidian. Very fast.

RORI
What about its face?

SIMON
I-... It didn't-... have one. Not one,

anyway. It... opens, and pulses, and grabs, but there's no one... part of it that acts as a face. The whole thing is malleable. Moving.

RORI

How did it know where you were? When you were trying to get it off you, how did it strike?

SIMON

I-... I don't-

RORI

It's eyes, doc. Where are its eyes?

SIMON

I don't know. I didn't see them. As far as I could tell, it didn't have any.

beat.

RORI

Okay... Okay. Doc, I need you to get on Axel's shoulders.

AXEL

You what?

SIMON

Ooh, I don't think that's a good idea... I don't do balance...

RORI

Unless you want Axel to get on top of you?

SIMON

Not opposed, but I hardly think this is the time or the place.

RORI

Look, that thing HAS to be tracking us somehow, and if it can't see us, then my best guess is that it has to be using some sort of echo-location or tracking the vibration of our movements.

SIMON

What about our heat signatures?

RORI

Could be. But I don't want to think about that, because frankly, in that case, we're dead.

SIMON

Oh...

AXEL

So what's the plan.

RORI

We need to make them think we're moving in a different direction. Get it moving towards some place we're not. It's gonna take a little slight of hand... but we have to get it onto the ceiling.

AXEL

WHAT?!

RORI

Look, it's sticky! It doesn't have feet, or form! We don't know how much it can change its size, if it can block up the whole passageway. But I'm betting it can climb up onto the ceiling, and that's the one place we physically cannot access. The one spot we can't ever be. I'm going to move further up the tunnel. I'll make a lot of noise, and vibrations, moving from the floor to the wall. Axel, you'll start making sounds moving a little higher up, and then Simon, you're up on Axel's shoulders, making sounds higher still. We're gonna get this thing to think we're moving in a curve, up over our heads. And if I'm right, it'll follow "us" up onto the ceiling.

AXEL

And then?

RORI

...We have to walk underneath it.

SIMON

Are you out of your mind?! What if it falls on us? What if it DOES have eyes, and it can see us perfectly fine?!

RORI

Well, given I'm the front-man, I'll be the first to find out.

AXEL

This is insane.

RORI

Do you have a better plan? Does anyone have ANY plan?

beat.

AXEL

Fuck.

RORI

(very softly) I need you to trust me. This won't work if we don't trust one another.

Axel and Simon exchange a look.

AXEL

Doc?

SIMON

(sighing) I knew today wasn't the day to wear a skirt... Alright, Mr. DeMille, I'm ready for my close up.

AXEL

Just how close are we talking here?

RORI

Are we ready?

SIMON

... Yeah. Yeah, we're ready.

RORI

We have to stay absolutely silent for this to work. Walk as softly as you can, and for the love of August Wilson, watch where you step! Can't

have you knocking into a pipe or crashing through a puddle. As soon as the path is clear, I'll head for the ladder, and get the trap door open. As soon as you see light, you start moving, okay?

AXEL

Rori? Please be careful.

RORI

You're not getting rid of me that easy. I'll see you on the other side.

Rori disappears into the darkness, her footsteps fade into the sounds of the tunnel.

SIMON

(very softly) She's not going to leave us here, right?

AXEL

She's not the type.

SIMON

What about you? Are you the type?

AXEL

... I used to be. You?

SIMON

Never had to find out.

AXEL

(grins) Oh, we're gonna get on just fine.

From further down the tunnel, we hear a slow, muted bang. And then another. And another. A steady drumming begins.

AXEL

That's our cue.

SIMON

Pick me up.

Axel lifts them.

SIMON

Please don't drop me?

AXEL
Wouldn't dream of it.

SIMON
Good luck.

The drumming moves closer, back along the tunnel towards them. And from somewhere just out of sight, a thick, viscous slithering.

Rori backs into sight. She stomps her feet along the ground. A moment later, the Gorgon slithers around the bend.

Rori starts to bang low on the right side of the wall. The Gorgon twists, letting out a hiss as it senses the shift in the sound. Rori starts to drum her way up a little higher. And a little higher. She looks at Axel.

Axel picks up the rhythm. The drumming echoes and vibrates through the tunnel. Rori stops her drumming as The Gorgon slithers nearer. The creature hisses again, and then, sloooooowly begins to slither up the side of the wall.

SIMON
(whispering) It's working!

AXEL
(whispering) Shh! It has to move past Rori...

Axel drums a little harder on the wall, stepping backwards slowly, drawing the creature away from Rori, who stands silent, motionless, watching.

AXEL
(whispering) She's clear! Simon, go!

Simon picks up the rhythm. The Gorgon is now incredibly close, and making horrible squelching, sticky sounds as it creeps up the wall, stalking the sound. We hear it moving up, almost over our heads-

When Axel's foot catches a pipe.

AXEL
SHIT!

Axel crashes to the ground, hard, bringing Simon down with him, splashing into a small puddle of stagnant water as they hit the ground. The Gorgon growls, stretching down from the ceiling to investigate.

RORI
(half whisper) Axel!

AXEL
(urgent whisper) Stay where you are!

Axel and Simon lay frozen. The Gorgon drips down from the ceiling, its song ringing and growing louder as it descends. It hovers over Simon.

AXEL
(very softly) Simon...

Simon whimpers, breathing very fast. The Gorgon lets out a rasping cry. They are inches from one another. Face to "face"... The Gorgon hisses...

And then, suddenly, the creature withdraws. It pulls away, and we hear it slither down the left side of the tunnel wall, and away further down the tunnel. Its rasping cry is answered by another Gorgon, off in the darkness. And then all is silence.

AXEL
What the fuck-

Simon rolls over and vomits in terror.

RORI
Simon?!

AXEL
Easy, doc. Hey, you're okay... I'm sorry. My foot caught- Jesus, you're one lucky son of a bitch.

SIMON
He was looking at me.

AXEL
You're okay.

SIMON
He was looking at me. He was looking- Looking... Looking for-... He SAW me.

AXEL
(slightly unsettled) It couldn't have... There's no way.

SIMON
(half to himself) He saw me... Why
didn't he kill me?

There's a pneumatic hiss, and Axel and Simon both jump. Rori is at the top of the ladder, beckoning to them from the now open trap door.

RORI
Come on!

AXEL
Doc, you have to get up.

SIMON
It's coming back...

AXEL
All the more reason. Up.

He drags Simon to their feet. Down the passage, Gorgon song can be heard.

RORI
Hurry!

Simon and Axel move back up the ladder, into the lab.

CUT TO:

SCENE TWO

INT. Bio-Chem Laboratories, Aphelion Industries - CONTINUOUS

Rori slams the trap door shut.

RORI
Is there any way to seal this thing?

AXEL
It IS sealed! That's a Grade A bio-lock, and the seal on that door would hold up under a nuclear blast! It's Aphelion's top of the line!

RORI
Then how the hell did that thing get into the tunnel?! Simon? You don't have another jar of that-... Orion... Black Belt-... whatever, do you? ... Simon?

Simon doesn't respond. They're staring at the remains of the door. The room is strangely quiet. Something's missing...

AXEL

Doc? What is it? What's wrong?

SIMON

It's gone...

AXEL

Yeah, Doc, we've established that!

RORI

Did you hit your head again?

SIMON

I- No, the Black Orion-... (coughs)
Nev-... Nevermind...

RORI

Let's get out of here.

AXEL

Where?! That tunnel was our ticket
out!

RORI

Then we find another way.

AXEL

HOW, Captain? The building's sealed!

RORI

We THINK. We can't reach the fire
escapes, the tunnel is blocked. What
do we do?

SIMON

(softly) Captain?

Axel and Rori look around.

RORI

Doc?

AXEL

What's wrong?

SIMON

Come and see...

Axel and Rori share a glance, then follow Simon out into the lab. We hear them stepping over the broken remnants of the door.

We hear Rori gasp sharply.

AXEL
What the hell-

SIMON
I know I hit my head pretty hard...
But... Those things weren't standing
there before, were they?

Two large, black crystalline figures stand by the door to the lab.

AXEL
No... They definitely were not.

SIMON
I didn't think so...

AXEL
What the hell are they?

SIMON
They look like... statues...

Rori steps closer. Her footsteps crunch on thin shards of crystal.

AXEL
(sharply) Rori, back up.

RORI
That's the crystal from the
Adamantine...

AXEL
What?

RORI
We found residue of crystals on the
Adamantine, covered in that dark green
goo... The crystal was like these
but... It was... white. Full of
color... These are mixed with too much
black... but you can still see the
same hues, just as vivid just...
deeper... darker... Strains of purple

and greens, threaded through...

SIMON

It's beautiful... The way the colors swirl together...

RORI

It's wrong...

She reaches out a hand.

RORI

What are you?

AXEL

Rori, DON'T!

Too late. Rori's fingers brush against one of the crystal figures... and it crumbles to pieces in her hand. She steps back, alarmed, and the crystal pieces shatter against the ground.

AXEL

Rori!

RORI

Did you see that?

AXEL

Don't-... TOUCH that. Jesus, you don't know what that thing might've done to you.

RORI

(to herself) It's so brittle...
Hollow...

AXEL

(starting to rant) Don't just TOUCH the weird mystery crystal! You could've died! It could've ripped your hand off! Have you never seen a horror movie? Jesus Christ!

SIMON

What is that?

RORI

(refocusing) What?

Simon has stepped past her. They crouch down, and pull

something out of the pile of crystal.

SIMON
... It's acid.

RORI
What?

SIMON
It's a bottle of hydrochloric acid...

RORI
That's brilliant. We could use that to
break the quarantine seal, and get out
of here!

SIMON
We might ACTUALLY be able to make it
out of here!

A sound. Rori and Simon jump. Axel is rummaging through a
drawer.

RORI
Axel? What are you doing?

Axel quickly shuts the drawer.

AXEL
Nothing.

RORI
What is that?

AXEL
I- Nothing. Just a diary.

A rustle of crystal. Simon has pulled something else out of
the mass on the floor.

SIMON
(very softly) Oh god...

AXEL
Doc? What's-... Is that cloth?

SIMON
(softly) It's a lab coat.

AXEL
(stricken) What?

SIMON

It's... (coughs) I-it's got a name...
on it... .. Cerise-... I can't read
the rest...

beat.

AXEL

It's... I-... No... No. Those-...
Those things did that? To-... Are
these-... Were those people?

SIMON

I think I knew her...

RORI

We have to get out of here.

AXEL

Is that what happened to my brother?!

Down the hall, we hear a Gorgon's rasping cry. But it's
different... somehow, stranger...

RORI

Stairwell. Now.

AXEL

Those were people...

RORI

NOW.

They move out into the hall. Lights flicker. It is eerily
silent.

SIMON

The alarms have stopped...

AXEL

We can't have been down in that tunnel
for more than half an hour... Forty-
five minutes tops... Those two-...
They CAN'T have been people. There's
nothing that could do that to a person
in less than an hour!

RORI

I don't know, Axel. I'm sorry.

AXEL

You're sorry! What the fuck are you
sorry for? (beat) ... What are you
sorry for?

RORI

Forget it.

AXEL

No. Say it. You... That's what
happened to Peter, isn't it. To Chel.
They-... Both of them. Those things
got to them, and turned them into-

They have reached the door. Rori avoids Axel's eyes and keys
in her code.

RORI

Axel, please. I need you to calm down-

AXEL

Don't tell me to calm down!

The door swings open. Simon screams.

Another of the black crystal figures stands, frozen in the
doorway, its arms extended, face twisted.

Axel instinctively grabs Rori and yanks her backwards, away
from the figure.

AXEL

Rori!

SIMON

Statue! Statue!

RORI

(low, urgent, breathless) Back! Back!!
BACK!!!

They all stumble away from the door. They stare at the
statue.

AXEL

Are you okay? Doc?

SIMON

(wheezing) NO! No! I am NOT okay!

AXEL
You're fine.

RORI
Where the hell are these things coming from?

AXEL
Looks like this one was trying to make an escape... Like he was trying to break down the door...

RORI
You can let go of me now...

AXEL
What? Oh... (he releases her) I-...
Sorry...

RORI
Good instinct. Could've saved my life.
At least it's just a shell.

AXEL
Just... returning the favor.

Behind the statue, something thick drips down from the ceiling.

SIMON
Did you see that?

RORI
Where?

SIMON
Behind the statue. Something just-

Another drip. Liquid splatters thickly onto the concrete floor.

AXEL
I saw it that time.

SIMON
What is-

Drip... Drip... Splat... Something lets out a hissing growl. The trio looks up, in time to see a huge Black Gorgon slithering down the wall.

AXEL
Oh... my god...

The Black Gorgon lets out a rasping cry. Its song buzzes with a strange, electric energy.

RORI
... run.

AXEL
It's HUGE!

RORI
Run!

SIMON
It's black...

RORI
RUN!

They run. Sprinting down the hallway, but as they near the lab, they hear the sound of cracking crystal, and another Gorgon's cry rings out to join the first.

SIMON
Shit!

AXEL
Elevator! Elevator!

They sprint to the metal doors at the end of the hall. Axel slams his fist into the call button, and the doors slide open.

AXEL
Going up!

They pile inside. The Gorgon song swells.

AXEL
(stabbing the door close button)
Close! Close! GODDAMNIT CLOSE!

The doors ding shut. Everyone breathes a sigh of relief.

AXEL
Well! ... All things considered, I
think that went rather-

BANG! The whole elevator lurches violently, and all three of

them are thrown to the floor. The lights flicker and die. Simon starts coughing. BANG! A Black Gorgon screams its rage.

RORI
Axel, tell me these elevator doors are gonna hold?!

SIMON
THAT'S what you're worried about?

RORI
How much further down does this elevator shaft go?

AXEL
Gee, Captain, I don't know! Let me just pull out my handy-dandy elevator schematics, from when I built this building with my own two hands, ten years ago!

BANG! The elevator swings wildly.

RORI
Give me a boost.

AXEL
Why?!

RORI
Shoulders! Now, Axel!

SIMON
WHY?!

RORI
You ever seen Jurassic Park?

SIMON
You mean the movie based on the book where everybody dies?

SCREETCH! There is a sound of rending metal. Rori has pulled the emergency hatch on the ceiling open.

RORI
Come on! Everybody up! Through the emergency hatch. We've gotta get up into the air vents.

SIMON

(backing away) No... No no no, those things came out of a vent, there is no fucking way- Wh-what if there are more of them? They might be just lurking in there, waiting for us!

RORI

I'd rather take my chances with the one that "might" be in the vent, than against the one that's DEFINITELY about to be in this tiny metal box!

AXEL

Good point. Come on, Doc, I'll give you a boost.

SIMON

Can you even fit in the vent?!

AXEL

I'll make it work.

Rori clammers up into the elevator shaft. She holds out her hands for Simon.

RORI

Doc, give me your hands.

SIMON

(reaching for her) Oh I hate this... I hate this... I hate it...

Rori helps Simon up. The banging has given way to an earsplitting sound like stone scraping against metal.

AXEL

Chin up, sunshine. At least you're not dead.

SIMON

Yet. Give me your hands.

AXEL

Don't drop me.

SIMON

Who me? Wouldn't dream of it.

Simon strains, and with some effort pulls Axel up. Axel slams the emergency door to the elevator shut, while Rori pulls the

vent off of one of the air ducts. There is a clatter and another screech of twisting metal.

RORI
Jesus, this is just not my day...

AXEL
No shit.

RORI
Come on. Just... Stay with me.

She climbs into the vent.

AXEL
Doc, you first.

SIMON
B-but-

AXEL
I've got your back.

Simon hesitates, then follows Rori into the vent. Axel takes a deep breath, then follows suit. The grate to the air duct slams shut behind them -- the sound echoes and rings in the darkness...

FADE OUT.

END.