

Primordial Deep
Episode Two - "The Goddess Claw"

by

Jordan Cobb

No Such Thing Productions

PROLOGUE

The sound of pen on paper. Marella, alone.

MARELLA (NARRATING)

There's a moment between heartbeats,
where the world seems to hold its
breath. It's just before you reach the
tipping point... somewhere within the
calm, an instant before the storm... I
can't tell you precisely when... Down
here, there is no such thing as day,
or night. Only moments. One heartbeat.
Then the next. These resting points --
these little islands between breaths
-- these pre-beats of peace...

And then someone starts screaming.

FADE TO:

SCENE ONE

INT. Loire's Quarters, The Tiamat - DAY

Quiet. The soft sounds of gentle breathing. A moment's
peace...

Abruptly shattered by the sound of an alarm clock. Covers
shift, and someone groans.

LOIRE

(still half asleep) Turn it off...

Beside him, Asherah makes a small sound of discomfort, then
rolls onto one side and neatly switches off the alarm clock.
Loire and Asherah both sink back into the pillows.

a sleepy beat.

LOIRE

It's still dark out.

ASHERAH

It's the bottom of the ocean.

LOIRE

(rolling over) Mmm... Five more
minutes...

ASHERAH

Clarion...

She pulls off the covers, and we hear the bed creak as she sits up.

LOIRE

Ten more minutes.

ASHERAH

Clarion.

She reaches over and pulls the covers off Clarion, who wraps his arms around Asherah's waist.

ASHERAH

Don't you have a ship to run?
(laughing) Get off!

LOIRE

Well, alright, if you insist... Twenty more minutes... (seductive) Let's see what we can do...

He kisses her. After a moment, she relents, and Loire pulls her back down to the mattress. They hold one another for a while, before Loire rests his head on Asherah's chest, sighing contentedly.

ASHERAH

(amused) That's it? That's how you wake me up, and now you're just going to sleep on me?

LOIRE

You're comfortable.

ASHERAH

(rolling her eyes, affectionate)
You're a jackass.

LOIRE

(sleepy, teasing) You can't talk to me like that, I'm the captain...

ASHERAH

(snorts) Not with me you're not. If you want to be the captain, you'd better put some clothes on, and go to work. Either way, you're not going back to sleep.

She pushes him off. Loire groans.

LOIRE
What time is it?

ASHERAH
4:30.

LOIRE
Fuck... And we're sure we're alright
after yesterday?

ASHERAH
Well, we didn't drown in our sleep, so
at the very least the hull is intact.

LOIRE
Remind me to tip the architect. (beat)
And... what about the... you know...

ASHERAH
The scale?

LOIRE
Yeah.

ASHERAH
Locked up in my quarters, where we
left it.

LOIRE
Good. I want to bring it by the labs
today, see if we can't get Marella to
identify it, where the hell it came
from...

ASHERAH
Maybe I should take it to her. This
kind of thing requires... discretion.
We don't want the rest of the crew
getting excited.

LOIRE
You don't think I'm discrete?

ASHERAH
(shrugging) Well...

LOIRE
I can be discrete!

ASHERAH

Clarion, you have a big mouth.

LOIRE

(leaning towards her) Mmm, you like my big mouth.

ASHERAH

(pats him on the cheek) Only when it's not talking. (she rolls out of bed)

LOIRE

Thanks for that. (sits up, musing) ... Maybe we just shouldn't tell them at all...

ASHERAH

That's a bad idea.

She opens up a drawer.

LOIRE

Why not? (teasing) Prove I can keep a secret! Shower?

ASHERAH

All yours. (tosses him a uniform) Hiding things from the crew... never ends well...

LOIRE

(smirking) Oh, you mean like us?

ASHERAH

That's different, and you know it. Bad things. Dangerous things. It's our job to protect them, but they have a right to know something is out there.

Loire moves to wrap his arms around Asherah again.

LOIRE

But like you said... why cause a panic? We don't have any information yet, just a scale. Something's always going to be out there. (trying to calm and distract her, again playfully seductive) Right now, I'm more concerned with what's - (he kisses her) in - (he kisses her again, she laughs) - here!

He moves to kiss her again-

-and from somewhere in the darkened station, a woman screams.

LOIRE
(instantly on alert) Was that-

ASHERAH
Matti!

Another scream echoes through the dark.

MATTI
HELP! Shit, SOMEBODY HELP ME!

FADE TO:

SCENE TWO

INT. Corridor, The Tiamat - DAY

A door slams open, and Matti, screaming, stumbles out into the hall wrapped in a towel. We hear the pounding of running footsteps as the rest of the crew races to find her.

SPINNER
Matti?! Matti!

MARELLA
What is it? What's wrong?

LOIRE
Are you hurt? Lieutenant, get the doctor-

MATTI
(sobbing, hysterical) There's something in the fucking toilet!

ASHERAH
... What?

MATTI
(still crying) There's something in there! Something touched me!

SPINNER
(laughing) Oh my god...

MARELLA
(exhausted, a little relieved) Jesus

Christ...

LOIRE

Matti-

MATTI

I'm serious! It was a crab or a- a scorpion! I was just sitting there and it just reached up- It had this big, black claw! It tried to grab my leg! And now it's just crawling around in the bowl-

MARELLA

Are you sure you weren't just having a bad dream? Or-

MATTI

(angrily) It's in there!

Sure enough, in the background, we can hear a sort of sloshing and scrabbling as something tries to claw its way out of the toilet bowl.

MATTI

(whimpers) Oh Jesus...

LOIRE

(calming) It must have just gotten sucked into the water filtration unit, and gotten a little turned around. It's probably just as scared as you are.

SPINNER

Cap, I think I've got this one under control. (grinning at Matti) Don't worry, Mat. I've squished many a spider, and wrestled dozens of widdle mice in my day -- you're safe with me.

He laughs, pushing the door open.

SPINNER

And here I thought you were the tough gal -- my kinda woman, takes no shit! Didn't take you for the type to be scared off by a little-

There is a loud sound of cracking porcelain and something massive and heavy drops wetly to the ground. The three foot

long scorpion's legs skitter on the tile, and it raises its tail, snapping massive claws and hissing.

Everyone jumps back, and Spinner instinctively grabs his gun.

SPINNER
JESUS FUCKING CHRIST!

Without thinking, he aims and fires off three rapid shots. The scorpion lets out a hissing scream, claws scrabbling wildly as it thrashes, before it curls inwards, and topples to the side. Spinner fires off two more shots, just in case... and then there is only the sound of his heavy breathing, an awed silence, and water dripping out of the damaged toilet.

SPINNER
(dazed) Holy shit... Hoooooly shit...

MARELLA
Is it... is it dead?

Spinner shoots the scorpion again. Matti shrieks and covers her ears.

SPINNER
Yeah. It's dead.

MATTI
You're a fucking asshole!

SPINNER
(still deeply shaken) Yeah. Jesus. I-
... Sorry. (and then, noticing) You're
bleeding.

MATTI
What?

She looks down. A dark red stain spreads across her towel, along her leg. Spinner crouches at her side.

MATTI
Oh fuck...

SPINNER
Must've gotten your leg after all.

MATTI
(grimacing) It stings...

SPINNER

Here... put your arms around me. Let's get you down to sick bay.

MATTI

What, so you can laugh at me?

SPINNER

Me? I'm never laughing at another thing you say ever again. You are the most singularly un-funny woman I have ever met, and I am at your disposal. Come on. (lifting her) Upsi-daisy.

ASHERAH

Have Destan report back to us after he gets her all patched up.

SPINNER

Rodger that.

Spinner turns, and carries Matti off towards the med-bay.

LOIRE

Marella...

He gestures somewhat helplessly to the scorpion.

LOIRE

He's all yours.

FADE TO:

SCENE THREE

INT. Marella's Laboratory, The Tiamat - DAY

Pen scratches on paper. Marella, again, alone.

MARELLA (NARRATING)

It was a scorpion. Three feet long, with a shell so black, it looked as if it had been hewn out of a block of jet. Its carapace had a strange, wavy pattern rippling across it, like metal that had been folded in on itself over and over, the way a blacksmith forges a sword. The bullets had left jagged, silvery tears in the creature's back, that oozed a thick, purplish liquid that smelled strangely sweet. Compound

coal black eyes stared dully out of a mask of curving razor sharp chelicerae. Every now and then, one of its thin, bristly legs would twitch, and the corpse seemed to gasp and sag.

We sat together in the laboratory, staring at one another in silence. Even dead, I had a hard time keeping my eyes off the thing for more than a moment. Still -- a brief turn through Kiran's copy of *The Creatures Beneath* gave me what I needed. It was a Eurypterid. A breed of ancient, carnivorous arthropod, that hadn't scuttled across the ocean floor since the days of the late Devonian. And a mercifully small one at that.

It stared at me. And I stared at it. And as its fang-like pincers glittered and dripped under the lights of the lab's fluorescents, I could almost hear its hissing, chittering laugh. This creature -- this thing that had crawled out from the shadowed side of understanding -- was laughing in my face. Laughing at science... at the bounds human comprehension... all of which suddenly felt as thin and malleable and meaningless as a skein of silk. And all I could do was stare. Stupid. Paralyzed.

Kiran was right.

The sounds of the lab begin to fade in. We hear the door open, and Marella turns to see Destan standing in the doorway.

MARELLA

Doctor. Can I help you?

DESTAN

Actually, I was about to ask you the same question. I hear there's a monster afoot... so I brought tea!

MARELLA

I don't drink tea.

DESTAN

Oh... uh... Well, I suppose I could go and put on a pot of coffee-

MARELLA

No, I-... That's alright. ... How's Matti?

DESTAN

All patched up. Walking's going to be uncomfortable for a while, and she's... understandably upset. I gave her something to help her calm down. Spinner's sitting with her now. He seemed rather keen to keep her company... keep her mind off things.

MARELLA

I'll bet he was.

She goes back to scratching out her notes and Destan puts down the two cups of tea.

DESTAN

(slightly awed) Is that it?

MARELLA

Yes...

DESTAN

That's a Brontoscorpio, isn't it?

MARELLA

(surprised) I'm... not sure. It's some sort of eurypterid, but I haven't had a chance to identify exactly which breed.

DESTAN

(observing) Given its bulk, and then the positioning of its forelegs... and I'd judge that stinger to be roughly the size of a light bulb, which puts it at the right size... I suppose it could be a juvenile of some sort, but if that's the whole of it there, I'd say Brontoscorpio at a glance.

MARELLA

You've seen these before?

DESTAN

Only in pictures... Fossils... I used to go on digs with my cousins and my uncle, but at a certain point, you have to pick medical school or paleontology, and broken bones won't mend themselves.

MARELLA

Yes they will. That is... exactly what broken bones do. Rips, tears, fractures -- they'll all knit themselves together again, or the body will tear itself apart and decay, as nature intended. The body doesn't need our help.

DESTAN

(laughs) I wish you'd told me that BEFORE I'd gone to medical school!

MARELLA

... sorry.

DESTAN

(cheerful) That's alright.

MARELLA

(wincing, trying to apologize) It's not that I don't- I mean... (blurring helplessly) Surgery was an incredible scientific development... vaccines... eye exams...

DESTAN

I've always been a fan of the part where you get a lollipop at the end. Stickers for a job well done.

MARELLA

Is that a joke?

DESTAN

No. ... Yes. Sorry. I'm not... terribly good at those.

MARELLA

(half to herself) You're not the only one.

DESTAN

(thoughtful) No, they were saying you don't have much of a sense of humor.
(beat, realizing) I-... sorry.

MARELLA

It's fine.

DESTAN

No, I-... It wasn't-... I mean nobody said in those exact words-

MARELLA

(cutting him off) But the general consensus on board is that I am, in essence, a frigid bitch.

DESTAN

NO! Well- That's not-

MARELLA

Don't worry about it. I've been called worse.

DESTAN

We're all just... starting to get to know one another. We've only just met. I'm sure given time-

MARELLA

Is that what you're doing? Paving the way? Giving it time?

DESTAN

Is that such a terrible thing?

MARELLA

Only if you think your time has value. Otherwise, you can do what you like.

She turns away and starts flipping through her book. Undeterred, Destan pulls up a chair.

DESTAN

What are you reading?

MARELLA

The Creatures Beneath.

DESTAN

Oh! Is it any good?

MARELLA
It's a reference book.

DESTAN
Ah. Researching?

MARELLA
... Brontoscorpio.

Destan grins.

DESTAN
I have some books in my cabin that
might help, if you'd like a second
opinion?

MARELLA
... Thank you.

DESTAN
(smiles) Happy to be of assistance!
You know what they say about teamwork.
Two heads are better than-

He stops abruptly in mid sentence as he stands. Marella turns
to glance at him.

DESTAN
... none...

MARELLA
Well that's a new one.

DESTAN
... Marella?

MARELLA
What?

DESTAN
I thought you said it was dead?

MARELLA
Of course it's dead. Spinner put six
bullets into its spine. Its very, very
dead.

DESTAN
So where is it?

MARELLA
(suddenly alert) ... it's on the
table.

DESTAN
It's isn't.

MARELLA
(jumping up) Shit!

DESTAN
Was that door always open?

MARELLA
Didn't you close it?!

DESTAN
I don't know!

CRUNCH.

Both of them instinctively freeze.

Marella looks down, and slowly picks up what she stepped on.
As she does, three discarded bullets clink to the floor.

DESTAN
... is that-

MARELLA
An exoskeleton.

DESTAN
It molted?!

MARELLA
Playing dead...

From somewhere far too close, we hear the sound of legs
skittering across tile.

DESTAN
Oh... oh god...

MARELLA
Its loose...

FADE TO:

INT. Bathroom, The Tiamat - MEANWHILE

The sound of shower water running. Asherah, alone, singing.

ASHERAH

*(sung) For quarters! For quarters!
The saucy pirates cried,
Blow high! Blow low! And so sailed we.
The quarters that we showed them
Was to sink them in the tide.
A sailing down all on
The coasts of High Barbary*

We switch perspectives, to outside of the bathroom, where the song and sounds of water are both slightly muted.

ASHERAH

*(still singing) But oh it was a cruel
sight
And grieved us for sore;
Blow high! Blow low! And so sailed we.
To see them all a-drowning
As they tried to swim for shore.
A sailing down all on
The coasts of High Barbary*

The eurypterid crawls forward -- its clicking gait heavier than when we first heard it. Its pincers snap, and the scorpion lets out a low, menacing hiss.

FADE TO:

SCENE FOUR

INT. Med Bay, The Tiamat - MEANWHILE

Spinner sits with Matti, who lies curled up on a cot, half asleep. After a moment, she stirs, stretching, and sleepily tries to reorient herself to her surroundings.

SPINNER

Well... Welcome back to the land of the living.

MATTI

What happened?

SPINNER

Well, doc patched you up just fine, but you were acting pretty jumpy, so he figured he better give you something. Think he must've given you a little overdose though, 'cause you

just went out like a light.

MATTI

Where is he?

SPINNER

Left. Went to take a look at the bug.
Never seen a guy so excited over a
corpse.

MATTI

You're still here...

SPINNER

That's me... Still here. Dependable
Spinner. 'Sides, somebody had to make
sure you didn't roll off the bed.

Matti groans.

SPINNER

Well I WOULD have left, but we were
having such wonderful conversation...

MATTI

Oh no...

SPINNER

(grins) Oh yes. Who's Gurty?

MATTI

My turtle.

SPINNER

Ah... That explains SO much. ... You
feelin' alright?

MATTI

Mmm... thirsty...

SPINNER

(pushing himself up) I'll get you some
water.

He starts looking through cabinets.

SPINNER

Doc's gotta have a cup or something
around here somewhere...

MATTI

Has anybody figured out where the hell
that thing came from?

Spinner finds a cup, and dumps a bunch of utensils out of it
onto the counter. He shuts the cabinet and rinses the cup as
he speaks.

SPINNER

Cap's looking into it. Working theory
is still that it just got sucked into
the pipes as an egg, or a baby, and
it's been feeding on the algae or
whatever else has been moving through
the tubes. Got too big to crawl out,
or too disoriented, and then we came
along, turned the station on, and woke
it up.

MATTI

And I just had the bad luck of sitting
on the crapper.

SPINNER

Maybe he liked your perfume.

The sink lets out a strange, rattling cough, and the water
stops flowing. Spinner smacks the side of the faucet.

SPINNER

God... damnit.

MATTI

Need a hand?

SPINNER

I got it.

MATTI

I AM an engineer.

SPINNER

And believe me, nobody would be
happier to let you work your magic
than me. But doc said not to let you
move on that leg, til he gets back.
Shit... Been here ten minutes, and
this place is already falling to
pieces.

The sink rattles again, and something drops into the half

filled cup of water.

SPINNER

What the hell-

The scorpion hisses and clacks its pincers and claws. Spinner yelps, dropping the cup, which shatters on the counter, and starts smacking his palm down onto the scorpion, trying to crush it.

SPINNER

FUCKING! SCORPIONS! IN THE! PIPES! Get back here and DIE you stupid-

The scorpion draws back its tail, and with a lightning sharp movement, drives its sting into Spinner's hand.

SPINNER

Fuck!

MATTI

Spinner?!

SPINNER

(through gritted teeth) Stung my hand!
(cradling his hand) You little son of a-

There is a loud sound like cracking plastic. The scorpion lets out another screaming hiss -- but the sound is changing, slightly lower as the eurypterid begins to grow.

SPINNER

(taking a step back) What the fuck...

MATTI

(alarmed) It's getting bigger!

SPINNER

Jesus, it's skin is coming off!

Spinner grabs his gun and fires two rounds into the scorpion. It's hissing intensifies, and we hear it fall from the counter to the floor, carapace still cracking, its heavy limbs clattering along the floor.

Behind it, the sink starts to rattle again. Another scorpion drops into the basin. Then another. And another. They come pouring out of the pipes and up through the drain, hissing and snapping and screaming -- hundreds of them, with no sign of stopping.

SPINNER
Matti, we've gotta go!

MATTI
But-

SPINNER
NOW!

He runs over and starts pulling down her IV bags.

MATTI
What are they doing?! Oh god, why are they MOVING like that?!

SPINNER
You really want to sit around and find out? Here, you just... uh... fuck, I don't know, hold the IVs!

MATTI
Can't you just unplug me?!

SPINNER
Not a doctor, Mat, just keep 'em in your lap, and hold onto me tight.

He scoops her up.

MATTI
Don't drop me!

SPINNER
Wouldn't dream of it. Come on!

Spinner and Matti race for the door. The scorpions continue to pour out of the sink in a screaming tide. They snap and sting, but Spinner kicks them away, crushing them under foot, until he reaches the door, which he kicks shut behind them.

We hear scorpions of various sizes throwing themselves against the door frame, hissing and scratching in their frenzy.

MATTI
That won't hold them long.

SPINNER
I know.

MATTI
You're bleeding...

SPINNER
What? (looks down) Oh... It's nothing.
Just a couple scratches.

We hear running footsteps down the hall, and Spinner tries to grab for his gun as Marella and Destan run into view.

DESTAN
Spinner! Matti!

MATTI
Doc!

SPINNER
'Bout damn time.

DESTAN
What happened? Are you alright?!

SPINNER
We've got a problem.

FADE TO:

SCENE FIVE

INT. Bathroom, The Tiamat - MEANWHILE

Asherah hums to herself (Shenandoah), as the shower runs. There is a scratching, almost tapping at the door to the bathroom.

ASHERAH
(calling out) Occupied.

She goes back to humming. The scraping tap comes again... more a thumping scrabble this time.

ASHERAH
Clarion, if that's you, you can wait.
I'll be done in a minute. Nothin' you
haven't seen before, no need to break
the door down.

Something slams into the door. Asherah, startled, nearly slips.

ASHERAH
 (angrily) Stop it! What the hell do
 you think you're-

There is a high pitched hissing scream. The eurypterid's legs clatter against the floor, and its tail strikes hard against the door. We hear the sharp crack of wood.

ASHERAH
 (realizing) Shit!

Crack! Crack! The scorpion lets out a watery growl, then strikes the door again.

Asherah rips back the shower curtain and jumps out. She searches vainly for a weapon. There isn't one.

ASHERAH
 Come on... Weapon... gotta find-...
 Come on... think...

The scorpion screeches again. The door groans, and lets out another splintering crack.

With a grunt, Asherah yanks the shower curtain and rod down. The rod clatters against the floor, and we hear her tearing the fabric. She picks up the rod, smacking it hard against the wall to test it, weighing it in her hand.

ASHERAH
 Shower rod! (grimly) This'll have to
 do. Okay... high ground... let's
 see...

We hear her put down the toilet seat, and climb up onto the sink counter. The shower rod knocks a few items off the sink to the floor. She pads along the counter, and presses her back to the wall.

ASHERAH
 (to herself) The door comes down,
 blind it with the curtain... and then
 we play the gladiator game...

BANG! The eurypterid slams into the door. Splinters fly.
 BANG! The door is on its last legs, the wood protesting.
 BANG! The giant scorpion's claws snap menacingly.

Asherah fights to steady her breath.

ASHERAH

Come on in, you son of a bitch...

She slowly reaches out, and opens the door.

The eurypterid pauses. Asherah watches it, her breath coming in a low, steady rhythm. The scorpion hisses, and then slowly starts to move into the room.

Click... Clatter click... Its spidery legs skitter across the floor. Asherah's breathing quickens. She tries to master it.

Click... Clatter click... We can hear its pincers snapping...

ASHERAH

(whispering, barely audible) Closer...
Just a little closer, you oversized
lobster...

Click... Clatter click... The eurypterid lets out a low, viperous hiss...

Asherah hurls the shower curtain over the scorpion, which screams and begins to thrash in its confusion. Leaping down from the counter with a yell, Asherah brings the curtain rod up, and slams it down hard on the scorpion's back. It screams, and we hear its carapace snap. She brings the rod up again, down again, up again-

BANG!

Loire is standing in the doorway, gun raised.

ASHERAH

Christ almighty!

LOIRE

Are you okay?

ASHERAH

(angrily) You could have shot me!

LOIRE

Are you okay?!

ASHERAH

I'm fine, Clarion! I had it under control!

LOIRE

What the hell were you going to do?

Stab it with the curtain rod?

ASHERAH

As a matter of fact-

She does. The scorpion's carapace shatters, and it lets out a terrible liquid-y squeal as it shudders and dies.

LOIRE

(holstering his gun) Guess you didn't need me after all.

ASHERAH

How did you know where to find me?

LOIRE

Heard the water running. You've never used that much hot water in your life.

He steps past her, and switches off the shower.

We hear the sound of running footsteps, as the rest of the crew arrives.

DESTAN

We heard gunshots! Is everyone-
(seeing Asherah and stopping abruptly)
OH!

ASHERAH

(cooly) We're fine.

SPINNER

Lookin' good LT.

LOIRE

(pulling a towel down from the rack, quietly) Lieutenant. Do you... maybe want to cover up? Dry off?

ASHERAH

(amused) Why? Am I making you uncomfortable?

But she takes the towel anyway.

ASHERAH

Destan, you can uncover your eyes now... Doctor Morgan. My eyes are still up here.

MARELLA

(flustered) Oh! I-... I wasn't- I-I
didn't mean-

ASHERAH

(turning to the others) Status report?

MATTI

The pipes are full of scorpions.

DESTAN

Eurypterids, actually.

LOIRE

English, doc.

MARELLA

Prehistoric sea scorpions.

LOIRE

This job just keeps getting better and
better. Is everyone alright?

DESTAN

Spinner's got some nasty stings, and a
few bad cuts-

SPINNER

(rolling his eyes) I'm fine.

DESTAN

You've got a hole in your hand! And I
don't recommend Matti stay on that leg
for too long. I'd take them both down
to the med bay-

SPINNER

But it's overrun with the little
bastards. They're comin' up through
the pipes faster than I can count.

MARELLA

Can't be all that fast then.

SPINNER

Very funny, Frost, coming from the
woman who managed to LOSE A CORPSE.

MARELLA

Wouldn't have lost it, if it had
actually been dead.

ASHERAH

Lucky for the both of you, I just found it.

She pulls the shower curtain off the dead scorpion.

MARELLA

Is that-...

DESTAN

It can't be...

MATTI

Holy fuck, is THAT the thing that grabbed me?!

SPINNER

Can't be. It's twice the size of the thing I killed this morning. That thing's gotta be at least five, six fucking feet long.

LOIRE

No, look... See those marks there? Six marks in the carapace for six shots... Placement seem right to you?

SPINNER

(under his breath) Holy shit...

DESTAN

But the legs... the placement of the pincers... the appendages on the tail- it's all wrong! This isn't a Brontoscorpio, this is a Megalograptus... It's just-... too big-

MATTI

The ones in the med bay kept growing every time we tried to kill one. And they kept... doing this weird twitching thing. Jerking around... Convulsing...

ASHERAH

Like they couldn't get their footing?

MATTI

Like they were dancing... In pain or something...

MARELLA
(quietly) They're evolving.

Everyone stops and looks at her.

LOIRE
Say again?

MARELLA
Nothing that big could come out of our pipes. But we've seen these things put down... extemporaneously molt... expand right before our eyes. A Lernean Hydra, reshaping itself every time we take a swing at it... getting bigger... faster... meaner... We're watching a thousand years of evolution roll by matter of minutes. Spontaneous Evolution.

LOIRE
But... why?

MARELLA
I don't know... But something's causing these animals to mutate... And if we don't do something about it, this station is going to be overrun... And we're going to be dealing with something much much worse. (beat. then, to herself) It must be excruciating...

ASHERAH
Alright, so what do we know about these things?

SPINNER
Well, their stings hurt like a motherfucker.

MARELLA
They seem to be drawn to running water. Ancient instincts maybe? Using the currents to seek out fresh prey, minimize the energy expended to move...

DESTAN
And every time we crush them, they get bigger.

ASHERAH

This one hasn't.

MATTI

(grimly) Give it time.

LOIRE

Doc, how bad is this going to get?

DESTAN

What do you mean?

LOIRE

I mean how big are we talking here?
Species wise.

DESTAN

Maybe... eight and half... nine
feet...

SPINNER

You gotta be shitting me.

DESTAN

It's called Jaekelopterus. But if one
of those was on board...

LOIRE

... Go on.

DESTAN

(hesitantly) If one of those were on
board... well, either we'd already
know about it, or...

LOIRE

... or it'd be trapped in the water
filtration unit.

DESTAN

Scorpions aren't usually hive-
creatures. They don't like to live in
groups but... (weakly) It... might be
why we're seeing such an... abundance
of the eurypterids. One or two of
these mutated scorpions might have
initially been sucked into the
system... but this... I'd say there's
a strong case for the possibility...
that there's a very large female, a
Queen, for lack of a better term,

trapped down in the pipes... and she's laying eggs.

There is a moment's stunned silence.

ASHERAH

(looking to Loire) So what do we do?

MARELLA

If Destan is right, it won't be enough just to lure these smaller eurypterids out into open water. We have to get rid of the Queen, and her eggs.

SPINNER

I'll do it.

MATTI

Are you crazy?!

SPINNER

Monster hunting is pretty much my official gig on this station. I've tangled with big, dangerous animals before, if anybody's qualified to take care of the situation, it's me.

MATTI

But you can't just go down there on your own-

MARELLA

I'll go.

SPINNER

No!

LOIRE

No, I'm with Spinner on this one. Absolutely not.

MARELLA

Captain, with all due respect, I'm the only other person who COULD go. Marine biology is my life's work. If there is a specimen down there, I know enough about working with underwater species that I'm probably the only person Spinner's going to find useful.

SPINNER

God... damnit... She has a point, Cap.

LOIRE

I can't risk both of you on something like this. If something happens down there-

MARELLA

Well I suppose you could always send Destan.

DESTAN

(pale) Oh please don't!

Loire glares at Marella. He's been backed into a corner, and he knows it.

LOIRE

(through gritted teeth) Can you do it in twenty minutes?

SPINNER

Swim through a maze of pipes, squish some eggs, and Sigourney Weaver our way through kicking some arthropod ass? No problem.

LOIRE

I mean it! You get twenty minutes to flush the Queen and the eggs out of the Tiamat's systems, or I'm pulling the plug and we find another way. And if anything, ANYTHING goes even remotely sideways, you abort mission, and you get your asses back up here, am I absolutely clear?

MARELLA

As crystal, captain.

SPINNER

You just worry about killing the infestation up here. Frost and I will take care of ol' Queenie.

LOIRE

Asherah. You're running point for this. Take care of them.

ASHERAH

Aye, captain. (sighs) I suppose I should probably go change.

LOIRE

Destan, Matti -- you're coming with me.

MATTI

Please be careful.

DESTAN

Both of you.

MARELLA

We will.

SPINNER

'Course we will! Got the Dream Team on the case... Careful's our motto, ain't that right, Frost?

Loire, Destan and Matti leave the room.

Spinner glances around at the others, and claps his hands together, grinning.

SPINNER

Okay! First things first: I'm gonna need a flamethrower.

FADE TO:

SCENE SIX

INT. Water Filtration System, The Tiamat - DAY

The sound of pen on paper as Marella narrates.

But underneath, we can hear soft sounds of Marella and Spinner swimming through the pipes in their diving suits -- bursts of bubbles, their breath rattling through the breathing mechanisms, the occasional sloshing of displaced water.

MARELLA (NARRATING)

He did not get his flamethrower. Asherah argued it was too unwieldy, too dangerous to maneuver around the sensitive inner workings of our only supply of fresh water. So we took a

leaf out of her book, and grabbed a couple of javelins instead.

Spinner also opted to bring three knives, and a specialized hand gun that Kiran's friends at InTerraGer had designed to Spinner's own exacting specifications. He handed a second one to me-

SPINNER

You ever used one of these before?

MARELLA

Of course.

MARELLA (NARRATING)

He gave me an odd look. Like he knew I was lying, and he couldn't decide if he was impressed or just thought I was stupid. But he didn't say anything. Just handed me a knife and told me to strap the weapons to opposite sides of my body.

We had to enter the Filtration Unit from the maintenance hatch outside of the Tiamat. There was no way a full grown human could have squeezed through the inner pipings that snaked through the station's walls... but we figured by that same logic that the only thing we would've found there -- awful as the concept remained -- would have been eggs, or the smaller eurypterids waiting to push their way into the station. The maintenance shafts, on the other hand, were built -- if not for this exact purpose -- for human usage.

The tunnel was thin and winding. Red emergency lights dotted our path, twinkling like eyes between the long, interminable stretches of black water. Thick pipes, and oddly coated boxes protected by cages of metal wires jutted out from various intersections of tubing. These, I guessed, were the systems that pulled the ocean water into the Tiamat, filtered out toxins

and bio-matter, and churned it into a chemical cocktail that turned salt water fresh and infused it with vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients that would hold us together for the duration of our mission. It was a miracle of science. But all I could think of was what it would be like to find yourself lost in a complex system like this... swimming around and around in circles, unable to distinguish grey metallic tunnel from grey metallic tunnel... moving helplessly through the dark, emergency light eyes winking as your oxygen dwindled away... water, water everywhere, but not a drop to drink...

As if reading her mind, Spinner reaches out across the suit comms.

SPINNER

You okay back there, Frost?

MARELLA

Yeah... I... I'm fine...

SPINNER

Creepy down here, isn't it?

MARELLA

I thought you would've said I should feel right at home.

SPINNER

Nobody would feel at home down here... (beat) Listen. I know you said you've used a hand gun before-

MARELLA

I-

SPINNER

(cutting her off) But this one can be a little tricky. You're gonna want a two handed grip. Biggest problem is the kickback can be a little nasty underwater like this, so keep your eyes open and try not to hold it too close to your face. Also, the safety keeps sliding back into place every

couple of seconds, so if your trigger jams, just slide your thumb up the side of the grip to knock that shit out of the way, and keep plugging. Okay?

MARELLA

I-... Okay... (pause) Thank you.

SPINNER

No problem. Kiran said there'd be a testing range somewhere around the armory. Once we're through here, we might as well see if we can find it... get used to these things. Seein' as we'll probably be doing a lot of this, you and I.

MARELLA

Fine.

SPINNER

... You know you didn't have to do this. You don't have to be down here.

MARELLA

Yes, I do.

SPINNER

(snorting) No you don't. LT could've done this, easily. Or Cap. Hell, even Matti. You don't like me. And you don't seem the killing type... So what the hell are you doing here?

MARELLA

Same as you... I needed to see...

There is a soft beep, and we hear Asherah on another comms line.

ASHERAH

You should be coming up on the door to the central water housing unit now. I've turned all the systems off, so there's no need to worry about the filtration units turning on and hacking you to pieces or anything like that.

SPINNER

Well, I WASN'T worried about that, til you just said it. Thanks LT.

ASHERAH

No problem. I'm setting the system now. Remember, you've got fifteen minutes to kill the Queen and dislodge all of the eggs from the walls of the housing unit, before the computer runs the purge and the whole system is drained. I've got my finger on the kill switch just in case. If you're still in the housing unit when it goes, you'll be crushed when the purge walls come down and start forcing the water out of the system.

MARELLA

Guess we'd better not miss our cue then.

SPINNER

There's the door.

ASHERAH

Maintenance code is 1-1-2-1-8.

Marella punches in the code, and we hear a click of locks sliding out of place. Spinner grabs the door handle, and spins it, the giant wheel clattering as it shifts the mechanisms inside. And then it stops. Spinner and Marella look at each other.

SPINNER

You ready?

MARELLA

As I'll ever be.

ASHERAH

Fifteen minutes... Starting... Now.

We hear a soft, musical ticking, as an electronic timer comes to life. Spinner yanks on the door, which squeals open, and we hear a deep, hissing growl.

FADE TO:

SCENE SEVEN

INT. Air Lock, The Tiamat - MEANWHILE

Loire, Destan and Matti all stand together around the airlock.

LOIRE

Okay. Let's go over this one more time. Doc.

DESTAN

I'll be at the far end of the hall, to open the door of the med bay, and let all the eurypterids out, when you give the signal.

MATTI

And I'll be in the airlock, sitting on top of the shark cage, running water into this bucket to get their attention.

DESTAN

I still don't understand why we need the dead fish.

LOIRE

It's bait. It'll lure them into the cage.

MATTI

I'm just excited we have a shark cage!

LOIRE

Yeah, well... We were supposed to see many breath-taking and miraculous things on this trip. If we survive, maybe we still will.

SO! Destan lets the scorpions out, Matti lures the scorpions in. I will be running the emergency systems, and keeping this hall on lockdown, so they have absolutely no choice but to funnel their way from point A, to point B. Then, Matti will drop the gate to the cage-

MATTI

Somebody will come and help me down.

LOIRE

Then we shut the airlock, and hit the purge button.

MATTI

What if we can't get all the scorpions into the cage?

LOIRE

That's why we're doing this in the airlock. Worst case scenario... this goes from being a lobster cage to the inside of a bag of popcorn.

DESTAN

I really don't like this. What if they get through the holes in the cage?

MATTI

That's what I tied all the towels around it for!

DESTAN

(skeptical) And we're just going to drop those into the ocean? Are towels even bio-degradable?

MATTI

Oh my god, pick up a briefing, doc. EVERYTHING down here is bio-degradable!

LOIRE

HEY! I love that we're all living so eco-friendly here, but do you two maybe want to focus on the giant carnivorous scorpions?

We only get one shot at this. So let's make it count.

DESTAN

Yes sir.

MATTI

Aye, captain.

LOIRE

Alright then. To your stations... Good luck.

Destan walks down the hall, and Matti climbs up onto the cage. Loire steps to one side of the airlock, and keys a code into the computer system.

LOIRE

Okay... Here we go.

He hits the "Engage" button. A klaxon alarm fills the hall.

TIAMAT'S COMPUTER

Warning! Emergency lockdown systems engaged! Stand clear of the closing doors. Warning! Emergency lockdown systems engaged! Stand clear of the closing doors.

All along the hall, doors slam shut.

TIAMAT'S COMPUTER

Warning! Emergency lockdown systems engaged! Level 003 Doors secured.

LOIRE

Now, Destan!

DESTAN

(scrambling up onto a chair) Oh god... Okay... I can do this... I can do this...

Destan yanks open the door, and a tide of snapping, shrieking scorpion come pouring out into the hall. They hiss and scuttle around in momentary confusion.

LOIRE

Matti, go!

Matti starts pouring water. For a second, nothing happens, and then, as if with one mind, the eurypterids turn and begin to skitter down the hall towards the air lock.

MATTI

It's working... Holy shit! IT'S WORKING!

The scorpions race towards the sound of running water, pincers and claws snapping at one another in their haste.

MATTI

Oh... my god... uh... Captain?!

LOIRE
Stay where you are!

MATTI
But there's like, a thousand of them!

LOIRE
I said hold your position!

The eurypterids thunder into the cage. The metal shakes violently, and Matti screams, trying desperately to hold onto the shifting platform.

DESTAN
Matti! Captain, we have to get her down from there! Matti, close the gate!

LOIRE
NO. They're not all inside the airlock yet.

DESTAN
She's gonna fall!

LOIRE
She'll hold! Just a few more seconds... (half to himself) Come on... Come on...

The sounds of the scorpions is almost overwhelming as the massive tide forces its way into the airlock, climbing over one another and snapping.

LOIRE
NOW! Drop the gate!

Matti manages to unlatch the gate, which crashes down and clicks into place. An angry, hissing and screaming starts to emit from the makeshift trap.

LOIRE
Destan, get her out of there!

DESTAN
Jump, Matti!

With a squeal, Matti hops down from on top of the cage, crashing into Destan, who drags her upright and out of the air lock.

MATTI
 Captain! Clear!

Loire hits a button on the keypad, and the door to the airlock snaps shut. The sounds of the scorpions is muffled.

LOIRE
 Is everybody okay?

DESTAN
 Barely.

MATTI
 I think so...

LOIRE
 Matti? You want to do the honors?

Matti reaches out and hits the button to engage the airlock.

MATTI
 Sayonara, motherfuckers!

TIAMAT'S COMPUTER
 Airlock 003A, cycling.

There is a whirring and a hissing. The eurypterids start letting out high pitched shrieks and screams of distress... there are a few sharp popping sounds... and then the outer door to the airlock hisses open, water floods in, and the shark cage goes flying out, clattering out into the darkness. We can hear the scorpions screaming... then fading... then nothing.

FADE TO:

SCENE EIGHT

INT. Central Water Housing Unit, The Tiamat - MEANWHILE

The door creaks open, and Spinner and Marella swim inside.

SPINNER
 Hoooooooly-

MARELLA
 Fuck...

MARELLA (NARRATING)
 The walls of the water housing unit were covered in eggs. They hung in

luminous blue-white casings from the ceiling, and bubbled up from the walls... the floor was buried under a series of large, squirming, slithering mounds, the eggs sliding over one another in the faintly swirling waters, while inside, tiny black shapes twisted and writhed.

And there she was... in the center of it all. Her huge, sleek body the same blue-white as the eggs, practically glowing in the dark space. The Jaekelopterus was easily ten feet long, her body bent at near impossible angles, her razor sharp claws resting high against the walls as she twisted in the confined space to look at us. Her tail thrashed, and she stared up at us through milky blue eyes. Even crushed and twisted into that metallic prison, I could feel the vitality emanating off of her... I could see her thinking, sizing us up... And she was the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen.

The Jaekelopterus lets out a low, almost musical hiss.

MARELLA

... Spinner... I-... We can't...

SPINNER

Yeah... I know... We have to get her out of here...

MARELLA

How?

SPINNER

You're the expert. I'm following your lead, so just... tell me what to do.

Marella thinks for a moment.

MARELLA

Do you think you could clear the eggs out of here by yourself?

SPINNER

What, all of them?

MARELLA

Yes. The system purge will chemically cleanse this place once we're done, but you'll need to scrape the egg sacks off the walls and ceiling so they're floating free.

SPINNER

Uh, Frost. I hate to break it to you, but Queenie down there is never gonna let me do that.

MARELLA

She's not going to be here to see it.

SPINNER

What are you-

MARELLA

Hold the door open for me. As soon as I grab some of her eggs, you need to get the hell out of my way.

SPINNER

WHAT?!

MARELLA

I'm gonna lure her towards the maintenance hatch.

SPINNER

Are you out of your mind?!

MARELLA

Give her a good sharp jab to get her going after me, will you?

SPINNER

No! Wait! Bad idea! Bad-

MARELLA

Wish me luck.

But Marella is already diving down into the unit.

SPINNER

FROST!

Marella's boots touch down with a dull thud on the bottom of the tank. The Jaekelopterus twists, its body scraping against the metal sides of the unit, its legs clicking, and lets out

another musical hiss.

MARELLA

Hey girl... Easy... It's okay...

The Jaekelopterus snaps its pincers, tail thrashing.

MARELLA

I'm gonna get you out of here, okay...

SPINNER

You're a fucking psychopath, you know that?

Marella clicks on her comms.

MARELLA

Lieutenant... Lieutenant, can you hear me?

ASHERAH

Marella? Yes I can hear you. What's your status? Is everything alright?

MARELLA

I'm gonna need you to give me directions back through the tunnels towards the main hatch. As quickly as you can. Can you do that for me?

ASHERAH

Yes... Marella, what's going on-

MARELLA

As quickly as you can! On my mark...

She kneels down and scoops up a bunch of the eggs -- they squelch in her hands. The Jaekelopterus lets out a bellowing roar of fury.

ASHERAH

What the hell was that?!

MARELLA

(yelling at the creature) You want 'em? Come get 'em!

She kicks off the floor, just as the eurypterid whips its stinger down to strike the place where she was standing. Marella swims for the door as the scorpion lets out a shrieking hiss, and there is a great sloshing of water as she

rises up from her nest and starts swimming after Marella, tail and limbs crashing against the sides of her enclosure.

SPINNER

(leaping clear) Holy shit!

MARELLA

Asherah! HELP!

ASHERAH

Turn right!

She does, and the eurypterid follows, hissing and snapping, the bulk of its body crashing against the sides of the tunnel.

MARELLA (NARRATING)

Have you ever had a nightmare, where you're running through a tunnel? It's dark. You're alone. Only... you're not alone. There's something... living... just beyond the boundaries of your sight. You might see it out of the corner of your eye... hear it moving, thrashing behind you. And you know that if you stop... if you trip... if you lose your way, or hesitate for even an instant... you die...

ASHERAH

Left!

MARELLA (NARRATING)

The water seemed to thicken around me, until it felt as if I were moving at a crawl. With one arm full of the bright, slippery egg casings, I floundered, twisting in the water, and wondered which wrong turn, which ill-timed shift would be my last. I could hear her moving behind me. Saw flashes of her white-blue carapace in the corners of my eye. I had counted on her bulk tangling her up in the tight corners and the twisting vines of piping that snaked down from the walls. I hadn't expected her to move with such a lithe, undulating grace... or such speed... I hadn't counted on her rage...

The Jaekelopterus screams again.

ASHERAH

Left! Now dead ahead! The door is just at the end of the hall. The locking mechanism is on the right.

MARELLA

(breathless) I'm not gonna make it.

SPINNER

Yes you are, doc. COME ON. Keep swimming. You're nearly there.

Marella crashes into the door, and it nearly knocks the breath out of her. She fumbles with the keypad, her free hand shaking as she tries to punch in the code.

MARELLA

One... One... Two... One... Eight...

In her haste, she accidentally hits an extra key. The keypad lets out a low, angry buzz.

MARELLA

God- Damnit!!!

SPINNER

Come on, doc!

MARELLA

One! One! Two- FUCK!

Behind her, we can hear the Jaekelopterus scuttling closer and closer. It lets out a hissing scream, its pincers chittering and snapping.

The keypad lets out another angry buzz.

ASHERAH

Marella!

SPINNER

Do something LT! Get her out of there!

The eurypterid is barely a few feet away. It hisses, rising up onto its back legs, preparing to strike-

Marella slams the code into the keypad, and the locks slide back with an audible clunk. She barely manages to dodge the scorpion's tail, whipping past her to chink off of the metal

wall, and yanks the door free, leaping into open waters.

MARELLA

I'm out!

SPINNER

Lose the eggs!

The Jaekelopterus lets out another terrible scream.

MARELLA (NARRATING)

I threw them.

They scattered like stars. As I sank, it was as if some invisible hand caught the tiny blue-white bulbs and lifted them, spinning them through the dark threads of the water so that they spiraled and danced. They glittered, forming pinprick constellations above the undulating sea bed, winking as they drifted through the dark.

Her shadow moved over me then. She cut through the water with such power and speed, it was all I could do to remain still and watch in silence as she gathered up the constellation of children in her many arms. A pale luminescence filled the water around her, and I knew then, it had been no trick of the light... She glowed... Brilliant and ghostly, like moonlight trapped below the waves. She writhed, revolving, and seemed to stretch, extending herself to her utmost limits, and for a moment, she seemed to fill the whole of the ocean's sky...

And then... just like that... she was gone.

A moment.

The door behind Marella swings open, and Spinner swims down to meet her.

MARELLA

... Did we do it?

SPINNER

Yeah. We did it. (beat) Nice work, Rey.

MARELLA

You too. ... Did you just call me my name?

SPINNER

Don't get used to it. (beat) Think we'll ever see it again?

MARELLA

No... She's been caged once... I don't think she'll make that mistake again.

SPINNER

(half lost in thought) So long, and safe travels... ... Here.

He presses something into her hand.

MARELLA

Are these-... Eggs?

SPINNER

Souvenir. Or... I don't know... pets. You're supposed to be studying this shit, right? Just don't squish 'em... you should be fine.

MARELLA

Yeah... Two, huh?

SPINNER

(grinning) Here's hoping they don't breed. You can name one Sting, and the other-

MARELLA

Despoina.

SPINNER

I was gonna say "Pince," but alright... I'll bite. Who's Despoina?

MARELLA

The goddess of mysteries... I'd say she's got her eye on us... wouldn't you?

They float together in silence, staring out into the dark waters. Somewhere in the distance, we hear a eurypterid's hissing cry.

FADE OUT.

END.