

Primordial Deep
Episode Four - "Serpentine Rains"

by

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No Such Thing Productions

PROLOGUE

Pen scratching on paper. Marella, alone.

MARELLA (NARRATING)

I feel as if I'm drifting through a dream. More and more, lately, the feeling swims up and wraps her arms around me -- cool, siren-like and inviting. I stop, and look around, and suddenly remember where I am. How... impossible it all is, how dazzling. I used to dream about a future like this. And of course, now that I've stopped dreaming, now that the world has told me "No" so many times, "You can't," "Stay put" so many times... Now that I've grown up, and given up the wanting of it all...

I find myself standing in the middle of a fairytale. The Tiamat becomes a castle, there's wonder beneath the waves, and monsters lurking in the shadows... I think my inner child might have loved this, if I hadn't gone and lost her. But there's a razor thin line between a fairytale and nightmares, and no one tells you that you have to be the knight in shining armor, and the princess all in one...

"Save yourself!" I find myself thinking. There are dragons in the dark. And there's a reason that we call these stories Grim.

FADE TO:

SCENE ONE

INT. Marella's Laboratory, The Tiamat - DAY

The sound of pen scratching on paper continues as the sounds of Marella's laboratory begin to fade in. We can hear soft clicking and shrieks of the two eurypterids in their terrarium, as well as the soft whirl of a scanner.

Marella flips a page in The Creatures Beneath, scratches down another note, flips another page.

Behind her, the door opens.

DESTAN

Marella!

MARELLA

Ah!

Marella jumps, knocking her book onto the floor with a loud thump.

MARELLA

(irritably) Destan!

DESTAN

(grins sheepishly) Whoops...

MARELLA

Don't sneak up on me like that!

DESTAN

Sorry...

MARELLA

(flustered, trying to cover up her work) You're not supposed to be in here!

DESTAN

No, it's okay! Captain decided it was about time for a break. Thought I'd just come down and check in on you...

MARELLA

That's not what I- (sighs, amused)
When are you NOT checking in on me?
(and then, serious) I mean it, Destan,
you really can't be in here.

DESTAN

Oh... Sorry, did you want me to lock the door?

MARELLA

(picking up her book) There's no point -- you're the only one who ever comes down here.

DESTAN

What are you working on?

MARELLA

Nothing!

DESTAN

Seems like a whole lot of notes for
"nothing..."

MARELLA

Destan.

DESTAN

Is it research?

MARELLA

Destan!

DESTAN

You don't have to tell me what it's
about! I'll be good, I won't even
offer to help. You just have to say
"Yes, it's research, and I'm busy,"
and I'll go aw- ... What on earth is
that?

He reaches past her and pushes some papers aside, picking up
the scale and turning it over in his hands.

DESTAN

... Is this a scale?

MARELLA

"It is research, and I am BUSY!" Give
me that!

DESTAN

Where did you get this?

MARELLA

I... I found it.

DESTAN

You found it?

MARELLA

Yes.

DESTAN

Where?

beat.

DESTAN

You're a really terrible liar.

MARELLA

You're really not supposed to see that.

DESTAN

Did Kiran give this to you?

MARELLA

No.

DESTAN

Then where did you find it?

MARELLA

I-... I'm not supposed to say. According to the rest of the crew, I don't even have it. It's not even supposed to exist.

beat.

DESTAN

Okay. ... (suppressing his eagerness)
Can I-

MARELLA

(sighs) Yeah, sure, you've already seen it so... go ahead.

DESTAN

YES! Thanks!

Destan pulls up a chair and sits examining the scale.

DESTAN

It IS a scale, isn't it?

MARELLA

As far as I can tell.

DESTAN

Jesus, it's massive. It's bigger than my head.

MARELLA

How are the system repairs coming?

DESTAN

(distracted) Oh fine... fine... We took the data from the Basilosaurus attack and we've recalibrated the sonar and radar systems. Echolocation shouldn't be a problem anymore. We've been running into issues trying to update the communications arrays, but Loire thinks we'll have it sorted by the end of the week.

MARELLA

You boys work fast.

DESTAN

Three whole days of ship-wide repairs, and we've only really managed to sort out two of the systems. Well... Three, if you count the water units, but really you and Spinner took care of that. (indicating the scale) So... is this the reason you haven't been up top working on repairs?

MARELLA

I assume so. That InTerraGer sealant Loire had me develop didn't take long, and he knows it. I think he just wanted to give me an excuse to look into this...

DESTAN

I wondered about that. I mean... no offense, but you're not exactly a chemist...

MARELLA

But I do know my way around the lab. And Asherah's team DID need the sealant for all the structural work they've been doing on the hull.

DESTAN

Who'd've thought one whale could cause so much trouble.

MARELLA

Well, Captain Ahab for one.

DESTAN

(looking up) Was that a joke?

MARELLA

... Sorry.

DESTAN

No, it's-... (smiles) I liked it. That was funny.

MARELLA

You didn't laugh.

DESTAN

You never tell jokes!

MARELLA

Must've caught it from you.

DESTAN

(proud) I've been known to be a bad influence.

MARELLA

(snorts) On who? Bunny rabbits?

DESTAN

(laughing) Two in a row!

MARELLA

Ugh, I think I've been cooped up in this lab too long. (stretching and letting out a sigh) I've been staring at these scorpions, and that tooth, and that... STUPID scale for three whole days. And I've got *nothing*. I've run tests, looked at it under every microscope I can find... nothing! As far as I can see, they're JUST scorpions... it's JUST a tooth. It's... just a really REALLY massive scale. They're all the same color, but beyond that, they all behave just like normal, everyday bio-matter. There's nothing wrong with them.

DESTAN

Why does anything have to be wrong with them?

MARELLA

Are you kidding?

DESTAN

Just because they're not normal,
doesn't mean there's anything "wrong."
They're just... differently-normaled
than what we're used to.

MARELLA

(thoughtful) A little left of
center...

DESTAN

Exactly... (frowning) What's this
pattern on it here?

MARELLA

What?

DESTAN

The ridging on the back of the scale.

MARELLA

Oh, that. It was pulled out of the
side of the mini-sub, it's bound to be
a little banged up.

DESTAN

Doesn't it seem a little deep for
that?

He starts scratching at it with his nail, then abruptly
stands and moves over to the sink and starts running water
over the scale.

MARELLA

What are you doing?

DESTAN

Do you have a pen?

MARELLA

I-... Here. Destan, what-

DESTAN

Oh... OH wow... Oh this is so-

MARELLA

What?!

DESTAN

I've seen this before.

MARELLA

You what?

DESTAN

I mean, I think I have. I'm almost positive... (very pleased with himself) OH, Nature LOVES a pattern!

He starts drawing on the scale.

MARELLA

What are you doing?! Stop drawing on my scale!

DESTAN

Can I borrow this?

MARELLA

No! Not until you've explained-

DESTAN

I know I've seen this kind of pattern before! Somewhere... I think I have a book that might help! I'm SURE I have the book, I just have to make sure that I brought it. I'll have it back to you by tomorrow morning, I swear it! ... Please, Marella? Pretty please? I swear I'll take extra special care of it, I won't drop it or lose it or-

MARELLA

Destan, it's not a dog! ... Yes. Fine. Go. It's not like I've had any luck with the damn thing. Just... bring it back, okay? Soon? Loire's gonna kill me if he finds out you have it.

DESTAN

He won't, I promise! I need to head back up to the comms room, but I'll explain everything later... You wouldn't even BELIEVE me if I said- (grins) Ooh! I can't wait to see the look on your face! I'm just gonna go put this in my room!

He practically races out of the door, then pops his head back in.

DESTAN

This is going to be fun! We're gonna make a great team.

MARELLA

(unable to stop herself rolling her eyes) We're not a team, Destan.

DESTAN

Right! Secret project. Got it...
Secret partners, solving secrets!
...I'm gonna like working with you!

He leaves, closing the door behind him. Marella shakes her head, laughing under her breath.

MARELLA

(to herself) Idiot...

She returns to her work, and we hear the scratching of her pen on paper resume.

FADE TO:

SCENE TWO

INT. Communications Room, The Tiamat - DAY

Loire sits monitoring the structural repairs over the comms. Outside, we hear the dull thrum of an engine, and the high motorized whine of a mechanical arm in motion as one of the Tiamat's exploration units, The Tigris, moves a large metal sheet through the water.

MATTI

(via comms) A little higher,
Spinner... Okay, that's it! Bring her
in!

There is a heavy boom as the sheet connects with the side of the Tiamat.

MATTI

(via comms) Lieutenant, we're all
lined up.

ASHERAH

(via comms) Okay. Applying the
sealant.

There is a fizzing and popping sound as the sealant connects

with the metal.

MATTI

(via comms) That should do it.

Destan enters the communications room reading, and absently shuts the door behind him. Loire glances up.

LOIRE

Doc! There you are... I was starting to think you'd gone out with the tide.

DESTAN

Sorry, Captain! I was just-... I went to see Marella, and then I got caught up looking for a book. Not... this book... a different book... and then I saw this one and-

LOIRE

You got distracted. I get it. It happens. Just... when I say "take a 15," let's try to keep it to 15, alright?

DESTAN

Yes, Captain.

LOIRE

You okay to take over up here?

DESTAN

Absolutely!

LOIRE

Okay. And do me a favor, will you, keep an eye on those knuckleheads outside. It's bad enough Spinner's got his hands on the wheel of one of the Explorers, but I think I'm about to lose a bet with Asherah about who's team is gonna be done with repairs faster.

DESTAN

What does she get if she wins?

LOIRE

Satisfaction. So do a guy a favor, yeah? Get Spinner talking or SOMETHING.

DESTAN
(laughs) Sabotage?

LOIRE
Hey, all's fair.

ASHERAH
(via comms) I heard that!

LOIRE
(grimacing) Crap... Well, it was a good dream while it lasted. I'll head back to the bridge and start re-wiring things. Let me know once you start seeing green lights again down here.

DESTAN
Aye, aye Captain.

Loire heads for the door.

LOIRE
I tell ya, doc, if I knew echolocation was going to be such a pain in my ass, I would've told Kiran to soundproof the place.

DESTAN
I'm... not sure that's how it works, sir.

LOIRE
No, it's not, but it would've made me feel better.

Laughing, Loire shuts the door. Destan settles himself into a chair, and reaches for the comms.

DESTAN
Everybody doing alright out there?

MATTI
Hey doc!

SPINNER
Well, look what the cat dragged in.

ASHERAH
Welcome back, doctor. I hear you'll be attempting some covert sabotage of my repairs crew.

DESTAN
Yup, that's the plan.

ASHERAH
(snorts, amused) I'd like to see you try.

SPINNER
Well I for one would welcome the company, doc. I'm always happy to hear the dulcet sound of your voice...

DESTAN
(embarrassed) I-... Thanks?

SPINNER
So... what are you wearing?

DESTAN
(confused) A lab coat?

SPINNER
Oh yeah? And what's under that?

DESTAN
(more confused) My uniform?

ASHERAH
Spinner!

SPINNER
Hey, I have to entertain myself somehow, don't I? Destan, you don't mind, do you?

DESTAN
Uh... no?

SPINNER
See!

We switch perspectives to...

INT. Explorer "Tigris", Open Ocean - CONTINUOUS

... the voices inside of the two explorers can be heard more clearly now, while Destan can be heard through the comms lines.

SPINNER
I still don't understand why I have to

be all the way over here, BY MYSELF in the Euphrates, while you gals get to cozy up together in the Tigris.

MATTI

I thought you WANTED to drive your own Explorer? You kept going on and on about getting to drive your own little round sub-

SPINNER

I did! (playful pouting) But I'm lonely... And you two could be talking about ANYTHING over there.

MATTI

Oh sure. You just missed our NASCAR picks and the pillow fight.

SPINNER

Ah hell.

ASHERAH

(grinning) Aww, Spinner, don't tell me you're jealous of me spending time with Matti? Scared I'm gonna steal away your new best friend?

MATTI

(teasing) He SHOULD be scared. I can already feel us becoming bosom companions.

ASHERAH

Utterly inseparable.

SPINNER

Matti can do whatever the hell she wants! I'm just saying, if anyone has earned the pleasure of getting to sit shotgun in close, personal proximity to you, it SHOULD be me, LT.

MATTI

There it is!

ASHERAH

(smirking) Matti talks less.

SPINNER

(seductive) I can be very good at not

talking.

ASHERAH

Really? You seem like a screamer to me. And, to be frank, I'm a little more woman than you can handle.

SPINNER

You wound me, lieutenant.

ASHERAH

See what I mean? I haven't even gotten started.

MATTI

Are you two *flirting*?!

SPINNER

Yes.

ASHERAH

(snorts) Hardly. (checking her instruments) Doc, how many more of these sheets do we need to place?

DESTAN

Looks like... ten, from our original estimate. Fourteen if we want to be extra safe.

SPINNER

Struts are done, battering to the underside of the hull and Tia's legs are almost all straightened out or replaced... I'd say the old gal's about ready for a new coat of paint.

ASHERAH

The damage wasn't nearly as severe as it could've been... Critical systems are all in the green, hull integrity is on a steady rise... She's almost good as new.

SPINNER

You'd never even notice she'd been bitten by a whale.

ASHERAH

That's the idea.

MATTI

What are we going to do with all these discarded plates?

ASHERAH

We'll collect them later. Kiran says we should just load them up onto the next incoming supply carrier, they'll be recycled, and InTerraGer will send us a series of replacements on the shipment after that. Marella wants to take a look at them first, see if she can glean any new information... but once she's done with them, they're not really our problem.

MATTI

(hopeful) You don't think *I* could get ahold of one of them, do you? I've never worked with this sort of poly-metal before, and there's SO MUCH I could learn from working with it. It'd give me a chance to see what the Tiamat's REALLY able to do!

ASHERAH

Talk to the Captain.

DESTAN

I'm sure he'd let you, Matti. He's more than reasonable about that sort of experimentation.

ASHERAH

(sharply) What makes you say that?

DESTAN

I-... Oh! Well... I mean... that's... what we're here for isn't it? You can't exhume the secrets of the earth without getting your hands dirty.

SPINNER

Here here!

DESTAN

And he seems like an explorer... An adventurer! Science is... just another kind of adventure.

ASHERAH

... I suppose.

MATTI

Just with less treasure, and less interesting hats. Pirates get all the perks.

SPINNER

What about archeologists?

MATTI

Touché...

DESTAN

We're all here to discover new things. Experimentation is part of the deal.

MATTI

Think you could tell him that, doc?

DESTAN

Me? Oh... wouldn't you rather have Asherah do it?

ASHERAH

(raising an eyebrow) Why me?

DESTAN

Well... you're his best friend, aren't you? I mean you've worked together a long time...

ASHERAH

You could say that.

MATTI

How about it, LT?

ASHERAH

Hmm... Break me off about a foot and a half of one of those plates, and you've got a deal.

MATTI

Done.

DESTAN

What are you going to do with a foot and a half of metal polymer?

ASHERAH

Whatever I like. There's a price for everything. If you're on top, you get to decide what that is.

MATTI

Why do I get the feeling you didn't learn that in the Navy?

ASHERAH

Who says I didn't? Come on! If we push, we might even wrap this up by late tonight. I'd like to be living in a research station that isn't coming down around our ears, and I don't want to spend any more time out here than we have to, so let's get a move on! Sooner we get this done right, the sooner we get done for good.

SPINNER

Copy that.

FADE TO:

SCENE THREE

INT. Explorer "Tigris", Open Ocean - CONTINUOUS

We hear the motors of the two explorers kick into gear as the Tigris and Euphrates pilot their way around the Tiamat.

As the crew converses, we can hear the sounds of the explorers removing a section of metal plating from the Tiamat's hull.

MATTI

It's nice to finally see some actual fish moving around down here. Wish they'd slow down... I'd love to get a picture...

SPINNER

You want the fish... to slow down...

MATTI

Shut up! Not everybody's been to the ocean before.

DESTAN

(via comms) What, never?

MATTI

Nope. Water doesn't get much bigger than a lake, or a bad rain storm, back where I'm from... Makes the world feel a whole lot bigger, all of a sudden, when you're standing on the shore.

DESTAN

I know the feeling...

MATTI

I promised my dad I'd take pictures. Kiran said he'd send them on for me. I want my parents to see this... How wide it all gets, when you leave home. I know pictures aren't the same... even videos probably can't capture it, but... still. Maybe they'll see me out here, and sense the feeling... Maybe they'll have an adventure themselves... What about you, Asherah? Ever been on an a proper adventure?

ASHERAH

Plenty. I've got stories that could make your hair curl.

DESTAN

(eagerly) Really?

ASHERAH

Oh yes... Like you said, doc, Loire and I go WAY back. This isn't our first rodeo. Remind me to tell you some dark and stormy night...

DESTAN

I will.

MATTI

What about you, Spinner?

SPINNER

I wrestle big cats for a living. Sure, I've got a story or two.

MATTI

Doc?

DESTAN

(almost apologetic) Me? Oh... No, I

mean... not REALLY. I've seen a few things... been a few places... I once spent a season tracking Yetis in the Himalayas, but that's all... It's a shame we lost all that footage in the snow...

As Destan speaks, we hear something mid-sized moving through the water.

MATTI

I'm sorry, what?

SPINNER

Hey, I got a question for you, doc...

MATTI

Wait! No! Go back to the Yeti hunting!

DESTAN

It's a LONG story... I'll tell you tonight! We can all swap. ... Go ahead, Spinner.

SPINNER

What do you call a snake with two back legs?

DESTAN

(perking up) Oh, is this a riddle? Um... Gee I don't know... What DO you call a snake with two back legs?

SPINNER

(slightly tense) I don't know either... But the little fucker is staring at me through the windshield.

DESTAN

... what?

SPINNER

Ah... he's... I don't know... silvery blue... striped... Fangs about as long as my middle finger... Aaaaand he's got legs.

DESTAN

(under his breath) Pachyrhachis...

The snake lets out a watery hiss.

SPINNER
 (sighs) God... damnit, I was having
 such a nice day...

ASHERAH
 How big is it?

SPINNER
 About three feet? HEY!

The Pachyrhachis suddenly darts forward and slams into the glass front of the Euphrates with a thud. The snake chitters and then lets out another hiss as Spinner jerks the explorer's robotic arm, trying to wave it away.

ASHERAH
 Watch it!

DESTAN
 Spinner, are you alright?

MATTI
 Hey! Watch the arm controls! You're
 gonna hit us!

SPINNER
 (through gritted teeth) Cocksucker
 just tried to break the glass! It
 won't-... GODDAMN YOU, get outta my
 face! PISS OFF!

The arm of the Euphrates swats at the Pachyrhachis, missing. The snake hisses angrily and rams into the side of the Euphrates' mechanical arm.

SPINNER
 No! GET OFF! Get off of there! You-
 Motherfucker! Motherfucker, don't you
 dare-

SNAP! We hear the whirring of the Euphrates' metallic arm as it spins, releasing the heavy metal sheeting, which crashes into the Tiamat, then plummets to the ocean floor.

As the sheeting hits the side of the station, we hear the sound of tearing metal as the replacement panelling rips open the side of the hull is torn open. The panel hits the ground, and a chorus of hissing and angry chittering can be heard as a swarm of Pachyrhachis swim up from the disturbed seabed.

SPINNER

Holy shit!

MATTI

They're everywhere!

ASHERAH

That's what happens when you drop a
giant metal panel on a nest of snakes!
God DAMNIT!

There are a series of little thuds as the Pachyrhachis slam
their little bodies against the two explorers.

ASHERAH

Fall back! Fall back! Clear the swarm,
and get back to the station!

We hear the motors of the two explorers kick into gear as
they retreat a ways. The hissing of the angry snakes dies
down, but can still be heard in the distance.

ASHERAH

Is everybody okay?

MATTI

Yeah... I think so...

ASHERAH

Spinner?

SPINNER

Yeah. Did you see that?! That little
cocksucker just wrapped around the
Euphrates arm and snapped it off! Like
it was a goddamn twig! Like it was
nothing! Jesus I hope that's not
coming out of my paycheck.

ASHERAH

So long as you're okay. What about
you, doc? Bet you didn't think things
were gonna get THIS exciting, did you?

MATTI

Did we scare you?

But Destan doesn't respond.

ASHERAH

Doctor?

SPINNER

Jesus, did we give him a heart attack?
I know he's a rabbity little guy, but
still-

ASHERAH

Doctor, are you alright? Can you hear
me? Doctor?!

MATTI

Oh no...

ASHERAH

What-

MATTI

Look...

SPINNER

... Jesus...

ASHERAH

Oh please god no...

The comms lines crackle into life.

DESTAN

Lieutenant?

SPINNER

Destan?! Destan, are you alright?

ASHERAH

Destan, get out of the comms room,
NOW. Do you hear me? You need to go-

DESTAN

I... I can't.

ASHERAH

Destan?

DESTAN

Um... S-sorry...

The sounds of the comms room begin to fade in.

CUT TO:

INT. Communications Room, The Tiamat - CONTINUOUS

An alarm blares. We hear the soft hiss of water pouring through a crack. Destan stares at the rush of water, dazed, as if watching from somewhere far far away.

DESTAN

The pressure door came down... I didn't-... I didn't have time to think... it happened so fast.

SPINNER

Fuck!

ASHERAH

Okay. Don't panic. I'm going to call the Captain. We're going to get you out of there, don't worry. I'm gonna stay right here with you, it's going to be okay.

DESTAN

It's leaking...

ASHERAH

What?

DESTAN

The-... the wall... There's a hole in the metal, about the size of my thumb... It's getting bigger... the water's coming in...

There is a thud of something hard striking glass. Destan looks up to find himself staring at a Pachyrhachis. The snake hisses. There is another thud as another snake crashes into the glass. Then another... and another...

ASHERAH

No... no, no no...

MATTI

They're swarming... Look at them all...

ASHERAH

Destan... Destan just-... Hold on! It's going to be okay.

DESTAN

They're attacking the glass...

The hissing continues to rise, a malevolent and furious

storm, half drowning out Asherah's voice.

ASHERAH

I know. I see it. Just focus on me,
alright, doc? You're going to be fine.
We're not going to let anything happen
to you.

DESTAN

(backing away from the windows)
They're going to get inside...

Asherah falls silent. The rain of serpents continues.

FADE TO:

SCENE FOUR

INT. The Bridge, The Tiamat - DAY

Loire stands at the console, listening to Asherah over the
comms. Marella paces back and forth in the background,
listening hard, but saying nothing.

ASHERAH

The panel gouged out a massive section
of the outer hull. From the sound of
things, the inner layerings of the
walls are holding, but it did puncture
all seven layers, which set off the
pressure doors in the communications
room.

LOIRE

So we have no way of reaching him from
inside.

ASHERAH

Correct. Once the station's computers
senses even the slightest drop in
pressure from a hull breach, it locks
down the affected area, to preserve
the integrity of the rest of the
structure. The Tiamat will be fine,
it's the doctor I'm worried about.

LOIRE

How bad is it?

ASHERAH

The breach is small, but growing.

Water is coming in fast. And... then there are the snakes.

MARELLA

Pachyrhachis.

ASHERAH

Yes... The swarm seems to be concentrated around the observation glass around the comms room. Either they're sensing the change in pressure, or they don't like the sight of their own reflections, but either way, they've been attacking the glass nonstop, and with the damage to the surrounding structure, I can't guarantee how long it'll hold.

MARELLA

How's Destan?

ASHERAH

If the glass doesn't break, he should have enough oxygen to last another twenty... maybe thirty minutes at the most. But I think he's in shock. From what I gather, he's not injured just... unresponsive. Understandably anxious... (beat) He keeps asking for you.

MARELLA

(surprised) Me? Why?

ASHERAH

Looking for someone to talk to. I can patch him through to you, if you like?

MARELLA

(turning to Loire) Is there anything I can do?

LOIRE

We're going to have to do a manual extraction from the outside. Probably tear open the breach, so Destan can swim out to one of the explorers, and they'll bring him around to the airlock.

MARELLA

He'd never survive a maneuver like that, even if the water pressure doesn't kill him instantly, he'd drown!

LOIRE

Not if we can keep him calm throughout the proceedings. We have a window of survival -- it's tight, but workable. We just have to get him out of there before the glass breaks. (then, gentler) The best way you can help him right now is to talk with him. Get him focused, keep him calm. Let him know that help is on the way... Panic is what will kill him. Don't let him give up.

MARELLA

... Lieutenant. I'll be downstairs, outside of the communications room. I'm taking one of the Walkies. You can patch me through to the doctor anytime.

ASHERAH

Understood.

Marella heads to the door, then pauses and looks at Loire.

MARELLA

You're sure about this?

LOIRE

I am. I promise, I'm not going to let anything happen to him.

MARELLA

Captain, I hate to say it... but it's a little too late for that.

She turns and walks out of the room, shutting the door hard behind her. Loire sighs.

ASHERAH

Clarion? Are you alright?

LOIRE

I will be... Soon as he is... (he takes a deep breath) Okay. This is how

this is going to go. We have a 60-second window to get ahold of him while he's able to hold his breath. Once he starts taking in water, we have three minutes to get him inside and start CPR. You and Spinner need to position the explorers...

His voice fades away.

FADE TO:

SCENE FIVE

INT. Corridor, The Tiamat - DAY

Marella sits on the floor outside of the Comms Room, her back against the door, with the walkie-talkie in her lap.

MARELLA

They said you were asking for me.

DESTAN

Was I? Oh... I-... I'm sorry...

MARELLA

No, you don't have to be-... I was just... surprised. I mean I'm not exactly the warm and fuzzy kind of crisis councilor.

DESTAN

(laughs) No, not exactly. But everybody keeps on insisting it's not a crisis, so I don't suppose I need one! (beat) It's bad though... isn't it?

MARELLA

... It's not good. But Loire and Asherah seem fairly confident they'll be able to pull off their rescue mission.

DESTAN

And you?

MARELLA

I-... I'm... a realist. Maybe even a pessimist. But even I can't conceive of the alternative. Honestly I'm just-

DESTAN

Angry. ... I can hear it in your voice.

MARELLA

Aren't you?

We switch perspectives... Inside the comms room, we can hear the snakes hissing and thudding outside, almost rhythmically, as the water rushes in. Destan sits on top of the communications array, watching the swarm.

DESTAN

Not really... I feel like there's a rock under my chest, pressing up against my rib cage, squeezing down on my lungs... But other than that, it's sort of peaceful. I can't do anything, I can't go anywhere... I just have to wait. Listen to the water pouring in. Watch the Pachyrhachis swarm... I'd read my book, but my hands are shaking...

MARELLA

Asherah says you're in shock.

DESTAN

She might be right about that... But at least I've stopped crying. (checks, lets out a breathy half laugh) Oh... no... no, I don't suppose I have. Sorry.

MARELLA

You don't need to apologize.

DESTAN

(softly) I know it's because I'm not... quite breathing right... I know it's the light-headedness getting the better of me... spots in my eyes, and trying to find the light in the dark, but... It really is... almost lovely. Like looking through a window, and seeing a little universe. I can see stars. Rivers. Little black holes. The Pachyrhachis are circling around one another - little planets, making up their own orbits, swirling, and shifting around one another in a

little chaotic storm. I can see lightning in the way they flash. Waves in the way they twist and roll. They keep circling back and circling back, endless and undulating, making all the same little shapes, and they can't even see it... they don't even know... I'd draw it for you... but... my hands... and besides I know you've already seen it... Nature loves a pattern...

The filter of the comms fades away, indicated only by a low occasional crackle of static in the background. For the moment, the connection is enough that it seems the two are in the same room.

DESTAN

Are you really right outside?

MARELLA

Yes. I'm right here.

DESTAN

Loire says they're going to have to pull me through that hole.

MARELLA

You'll have to swim through it, yes.

DESTAN

Through the snakes.

MARELLA

They'll likely be more interested in continuing to attack their reflections than you. You might get a nip or two...

DESTAN

Guess I'll just have to bite them back!

MARELLA

You sound like Spinner.

DESTAN

How is he?

MARELLA

Spinner? Ah... I don't know. Fine, I

suppose.

DESTAN

Is he still out there? I can't see anything beyond the swarm...

MARELLA

They're all out there. It's just a matter of time now.

DESTAN

Marella? About-... About the book- and the scale- the one in my room... if... If I don't make it out-

MARELLA

(firmly) You ARE going to make it out, Destan. I promise. The captain promised. We all do. You're going to be okay. Nothing's going to happen to you.

DESTAN

Something already did.

MARELLA

Now you sound like me.

DESTAN

I know... Are you gonna be okay?

MARELLA

I'm fine. Just waiting on you to swim back home, so you can wow me with your big revelation. You said you wanted to see the look on my face, right? Gotta stick around for that to happen. I want you to surprise me.

DESTAN

Right. I will. (beat) Water's getting pretty high...

MARELLA

You've still got plenty of oxygen left.

DESTAN

It's probably up to my waist... nearly touching the console now...

MARELLA

What about the breach?

DESTAN

It's bigger... about the length of my forearm now, but still... thin. Too thin to swim through. You should hear this metal groan. Sounds like she's singing. A lonely song. I don't suppose the Tiamat gets to sing terribly often.

MARELLA

I don't suppose she does.

DESTAN

At least I got to hear it. Just once. ... But it's going to be okay...

MARELLA

It is.

DESTAN

You don't believe that, do you?

MARELLA

(surprised) Of course I do.

DESTAN

You promise?

The comms unit crackles into life. We are brought back into communications room. Asherah's voice over the comms array is static-y, and starting to break up.

ASHERAH

Doctor, we're in position now. We're going to come in slow. Spinner's going to start clearing the snakes, while Matti and I work on opening the gap. Start taking deep breaths. Move away from the breach.

We hear the whirring of the Tigris and Euphrates. A moment later, there is a scratching, scrabbling sound, and the water at the breach starts coming through in more sporadic bursts.

DESTAN

W-wait! Wait, I haven't moved yet.

MARELLA

Destan? Destan, what's wrong?

DESTAN

They're going too fast!

Destan leaps down into the water, and starts sloshing away from the opening.

DESTAN

You have to let me move away from the breach first!

SPINNER

Calm down, doc, we're not there yet. We're still clearing through the swarm.

The scrabbling around the breach intensifies, and we begin to hear a hissing.

DESTAN

Oh... Oh no...

ASHERAH

Doctor? Are you alright?

DESTAN

(very softly) They're inside.

Sure enough, we hear something plop into the water, and a rattling hiss fills the room. The Pachyrhachis knifes its way through the water, thrashing violently -- behind it, we hear more scrabbling, and another plop.

DESTAN

They're getting inside!!

MARELLA

Get back on top of the comms array!

DESTAN

I-... I can't-

MARELLA

NOW, DESTAN!

Destan, panic stricken, sloshes through the water. The serpents hiss and chitter as they thrash in the water. A Pachyrhachis rears back and strikes at Destan, who cries out and stumbles.

MARELLA

Destan!

More snakes strike at him. Destan, coughing and spitting out water, sobs desperately as he drags himself up onto the console.

DESTAN

Marella!!

MARELLA

It's okay, Destan, just hold on. Help is coming.

ASHERAH

Destan, it's alright. I can see you. Look, our headlights should be shining through to you now.

DESTAN

Marella... I-... I don't-... I can't-

MARELLA

I'm right here. I'm right here. Just take deep breaths, Destan. Deep breaths. I promise, everything is going to be o-

Crack.

For a heartbeat, everything seems to stop. Destan slowly looks up. Above him, a thin crack has appeared in the observation bay window. Destan lets out a soft, terrified whimper.

DESTAN

(sobbing, a terrified half-prayer) Oh Jesus...

A Pachyrhachis inspects the fracture, chittering and hissing. Then it rears back and strikes the glass.

The fracture widens.

It strikes again.

The glass begins to spiderweb.

DESTAN

M-Marella...

MARELLA

Destan. Listen to me very closely. You have to get back in the water. Take a deep breath. Get back in the water, now.

DESTAN

(dead terror, half prayer) It's okay... It's okay... It's okay...

MARELLA

(increasingly panicked) Destan, that window is about to come down on you, and a whole wall of water with it! You have to dive. Take a deep breath and dive, right now!

DESTAN

(he shuts his eyes) It's okay... It's okay...

MARELLA

(half begging) It's the only way the water won't crush you when it comes down! Destan, dive! You have to dive!

DESTAN

Marella-

MARELLA

DESTAN PLEASE!

DESTAN

It's o-

The window shatters. Water roars into the breach. The chittering and hissing of serpents. A soft, sharp gasp.

Bubbles.

Silence.

MARELLA (NARRATING)

There are things that shouldn't be broken. Things that cannot be fixed. The dream goes bad. The Earth falls out from under your feet, the sky goes black as hell. The heart stops. The breath stops. And you're still standing. You never realize how much space a body can take up, until it's

vanished... Absence leaves you reeling, and you say to yourself, "No. This can't be it. No. I'd like to wake up now. Restart the story, tell it different, tell it better... this can't be how it ends. It's so... grim."

SPINNER

(over comms, dully) My god...

LOIRE

(over comms) What the hell was that?!

MATTI

(over comms, sobbing) The window... The window shattered... It shattered! It burst!

LOIRE

(over comms) What the hell are you waiting for?! Get him out of there-

ASHERAH

(over comms, quietly, voice breaking) There's no need, Clarion. I see him. ... it's alright... It's over. He's gone.

MARELLA (NARRATING)

I am drifting in a dream. Nothing but a dream. And I'm going to open my eyes. And this will go away. I will wake up. And he will be unbroken. The story will be untold. This... can't be real. I promised... And there's always a happy ending.

FADE TO:

SCENE SIX

INT. Marella's Laboratory, The Tiamat - NIGHT

Marella sits alone, unmoving, staring into space. There is a knock on the door, and Loire stands uncertainly in the hall, watching her.

LOIRE

Marella? ... May I come in?

She doesn't answer. Loire hesitantly steps into the room.

LOIRE

How are you feeling?

She doesn't answer.

LOIRE

They-... We've... managed to recover Destan's-... Destan. He's... laid out in the airlock. If you'd like to see him.

MARELLA

I don't need to see it.

LOIRE

To say goodbye then?

MARELLA

Did you need something, Captain?

LOIRE

... no.

MARELLA

Yes you do. I can see it needling away under your skin. You just think it isn't an appropriate time to ask, because you think I'm grieving. Seeing as we'd both rather not be having this conversation, I suggest you spit it out quickly, so I can return to my own thoughts.

beat.

MARELLA

Well?

LOIRE

Marella... I-... We don't-... (forcing himself to get it over with) You're the closest thing we have to a doctor.

He looks at her, hoping she'll understand without him having to say it. When she says nothing, he forces himself to go on.

LOIRE

You are... as of this moment... the only member of this crew, the only

person on this station who... who knows enough about human anatomy... to perform an autopsy.

... I'm sorry. I didn't-... You don't have to look at the body. I would never make you-... it's purely for record keeping purposed on Kiran's end of things. We just need an official statement.

beat.

She stares at him, blankly.

MARELLA

He was pulverized. Crushed and drowned by the full force of the ocean, impaled by a thousand shards of razor-sharp diamond glass, and ripped apart by sea serpents. He doesn't need an autopsy. Is that what you want me to say? I *know* how he died. I was there. I stood there, and listened to it happen. Felt the station quake, as it happened. He didn't even have a chance to scream. A chance to think. He just... gasped, and... He doesn't need a fucking autopsy. Unless you want to hear me say he was murdered.

LOIRE

Marella-... I didn't-

MARELLA

Get out. Before I say something... unkind.

LOIRE

Okay... Okay...

He starts to leave, then hesitates.

LOIRE

... We'll... hold services tomorrow. Around eleven... Air Lock 2. I-... I'm... sorry, Marella. I'm sorry for your loss.

Loire leaves, closing the door behind him with a soft click.

Marella stares after him for a moment, then turns to look at the space beside her lab bench. Destan's chair sits empty, just where he left it that morning.

Marella sniffs. Attempts to steady herself with a breath...

FADE OUT.

END.