

AETHER TORRENT #19
"TORI'S TRUST"

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. NEWSREEL THEATER - DAY

SOMEWHERE IN THE WORLD, A BLACK-AND-WHITE NEWSREEL FLICKERS ONTO THE BIG SCREEN OF A 1920S-ERA THEATER. DRAMATIC MUSIC SWELLS AS A BARELY-DISTINCT AUDIENCE READS THE TITLE CARD: "WAR? EAST RAGLOA'S VICIOUS ASSAULT!"

SERIES OF SHOTS:

1. A FLICKERING IMAGE OF A FLOODED TALUS FILLS THE SCREEN.
2. SOLDIERS ASSIST RANDOM CIVILIANS OUT OF FLOODED BUILDINGS AND INTO PATROL BOATS.
3. AIRMEN SHOUT AND RAGE SILENTLY FROM MULTIPLE LEVELS OF A PRISON CELL BLOCK.
4. SOLDIERS EXAMINE THE BURNT WRECKS OF THE THIRTEEN AIRSHIPS.
5. A PANNING SHOT OF TALUS FROM VERY HIGH UP.

NEWSREEL NARRATOR (V.O.)

Flash! Talus, once-great city and naval shipyard, remains flooded in the first pictures the world sees of East Ragloa's devastating attack. The assault, claimed to be justified by Dorn's unregulated elementalism, left eleven thousand dead. And yet only eight soldiers in the army's elementalists or L-M division captured a number of East Ragloan airmen, destroyed the entire attacking fleet and drove off the Imperial Dragon Prince. Are such autonomous L-M units the key to our national security, or a liability to it? Being covert, no L-M soldiers could be found for comment.

EXT. STOLEN YACHT - DECK - DAY

A 100-foot yacht sails upriver. Waving trees show it sails against the wind. VIOLIN music plays a traveling theme at *moderato* tempo.

AVANI (O.S.)

Three days out and I still feel
like a sinner. We could've
stayed and done so much more.

CIRRUS (wind tiger) stands tense at the aft with her wings
fanned out. Powerful wind blows over her and fills the sails.
TARASSAS looks off-screen and panics as his fedora flies off.

TARASSAS

Maybe. But L-Ms don't stay put
after a mission's--*agck!*

AVANI sits in front of the helm, hugging her knees. Tarassas
catches his hat in the background.

AVANI

What a terrible policy. If
taking this abandoned craft and
traveling to your base didn't
bring us nearer to our goal...

TORI momentarily STOPS playing her Carmine Special violin.
She lies prone on the deck in a navy blue tank-top and with
her pant legs rolled up, propping her ankle on her knee.

TORI

See, that's your problem.
Everything you think is based on
your religion. Just look at
things as they are and you'll
see this is a really sweet deal.

(points violin bow o.s.)

Even Klauser's happy.

KLAUSER stands at the bow of the yacht, flapping his useless
wings as the boat sails along. He looks blissful.

Avani scoots 90 degrees away from Tori. Seen through the helm
window, GREEN mans the wheel, still in his green medieval
tunic. Tarassas approaches, tightening his neck bandanna.

AVANI

I think for myself, thank you. I
simply choose to think ethically
as a Teizenic Elementist should.

TARASSAS

Then remember-ember your
promise. You have to tell us
exactly where you're going if
you want our supplier's help.

TORI

We will. As soon as we're ready.

Tori twists a peg on her violin.

TORI (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Who knows how far Mom can reach.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Further downstream, five AIRMEN speed through a dense forest,
LEAPING and SWERVING with wind assistance.

The tall one in the lead, CAPTAIN TIERCEL, wears a tight blue
flight jacket. His long blonde hair spills from a brown
leather flight helmet complete with goggles.

CAPTAIN TIERCEL

I don't care, Staff Sergeant!
Even if the colonel abandoned
us, we still have our target!

The STAFF SERGEANT, an airman with an army mustache, follows
him with the other three. All carry aluminum nightsticks.

STAFF SERGEANT

But the army surely knows about
it by now, Captain Tiercel!

CAPTAIN TIERCEL

So what?! Regulars can't stand
up to the Tiercel family!

Captain Tiercel LEAPS over a long-dead fallen tree --

Grips his nightstick, pulls back his arm --

CAPTAIN TIERCEL (CONT'D)

Tier... cel... PUNCH!

And PUNCHES A TREE DOWN with a short-range AIR BOMB. The bark CRACKS and the tree falls, making room for the airmen.

EXT. ALMAHOOK CITY - DAY

The yacht passes under a tall stone bridge at the edge of Almahook City, a very large hub of commerce. A few buildings of twenty stories or more dominate the distant skyline.

EXT. HUB AIRPORT - DAY

An enormous airport shaped like an octopus spreads out by the river. Long concourses and hangars stretch from a control tower hub into thick, ink-drip projections of tarmac dotted with airships of all sizes. There are no landing strips.

A large art-deco hotel borders the river. Several docks stick out into the water. The yacht is moored at one.

INT. BLUE RING HOTEL - DAY

The art-deco stonework of the lobby stretches up to the second floor, where a long frieze between the floors depicts entangled octopi. Two indoor waterfalls drop from that height to a single fountain pool filled with decorative koi fish.

AVANI (O.S.)

Praise below...

CIRRUS (O.S.)

This is their base?

Tori, Avani, and Cirrus (cloaked) take it all in. The tile floor is a gigantic mosaic of all manner of sea life.

TORI

Man. The floor alone must cost a million cennars.

RANDALL'S MOTHER approaches the four. In the background, Green, Tarassas, NAUR (cloaked) and RANDALL carry the entire group's luggage to a birdcage elevator.

RANDALL'S MOTHER

Close to it. Why don't I give you all a tour while the boys handle our bags?

"The boys" cram in. The doors open and close mechanically by button-pressing. Part of Naur's cloak gets caught in them and the elevator rises out of sight.

RANDALL'S MOTHER (O.S.)

There's a lot of this new modern architecture here. Our supplier owns the airport *and* hotel, so she can afford it all and more.

Tori looks up at the frieze. It's interrupted only by the waterfall spouts.

TORI

Maybe as loaded as Mom, then...

RANDALL'S MOTHER

Beg pardon?

TORI

Nothing.

Avani tugs at Tori's shirtsleeve.

AVANI

I can understand not mentioning your mother, but can't we at least tell them about Djittor?

Tori turns Avani away from Randall's Mother by her shoulder.

TORI

(hushed)
Shh! It's too soon.

AVANI

Is it? You trusted *me* faster.

TORI

But you aren't military. And if Cirrus's husband got into East Ragloa's, then maybe Mom--

The glass doors of the lobby suddenly SHATTER and BLOW INWARD from the force of a LOUD BLAST outside.

Some incredibly unlucky HOTEL GUESTS get peppered with glass shards and SCREAM OUT.

Tori, Avani, Cirrus and Randall's Mother brace against the wind.

Captain Tiercel stands in the main doors, nightstick clenched in his extended fist. His airmen LAND on either side of him.

All five men walk in and AIR-BLAST aside any wounded hotel guests in their way. The other guests REACT ad-lib.

CAPTAIN TIERCEL

Listen up! *Somewhere* in this hotel is an elementalist supplier!

Tori looks sidelong at Avani, Cirrus and Randall's Mother. They all nod.

CAPTAIN TIERCEL (CONT'D)

(twirls nightsticks)

No good can come of lazy Dornans summoning the elements. You're just not responsible enough to handle their power!

Tori reaches for her knife. Randall's Mother reaches for her necklace. A voice stops them.

RIN (O.S.)

I'll show you power!

RIN, a bleach-blonde Japanese businesswoman in her early 30s, stands at the banister above the frieze and between the waterfall spouts. She's about Avani's height, 5' 3".

Rin rests her hands on a cane topped with an octopus head made of petrified wood. She wears a blue ring on each finger.

RIN (CONT'D)

You have no idea who you're dealing with, Nexus scum!

Tori, Avani and Cirrus look shocked. Randall's Mother looks relieved and holds her arm back at them, cautioning.

Captain Tiercel points upward.

CAPTAIN TIERCEL
Target sighted! Launch!

The four airmen LEAP at Rin.

Rin drops her cane, reaches into the coat of her black suit-dress and WHIPS OUT two long, blue-hilted daggers.

She points them at the waterfall spouts and SLASHES them out to make an X of her arms. The spouts SPEW OUT two long drilling streams each --

Which HIT the airmen with fire hose velocity --

And SMASH them against the tiled floor.

Captain Tiercel grips his nightsticks, GRITS his teeth and AIR-LEAPS up.

Rin's cane lies on her foot. She KICKS it up --

Drops her daggers, grabs the cane by the octopus hilt, UNSHEATHES the long blade it concealed --

Tiercel reaches her height and pulls back his fist --

CAPTAIN TIERCEL (CONT'D)
Tier... cel...!

Rin CHOPS the wooden banister with her blade.

About fifteen feet of banister suddenly ERUPTS into long wooden spikes --

Most of which IMPALE Captain Tiercel through the arms, legs and non-vital organs. He YELLS OUT in obvious pain.

Tori, Avani and Cirrus look up at him, utterly amazed.

TORI
A straight blade. Flora magic!

Randall's Mother stands by the four airmen, three of whom are encased in ice up to the neck. She WHIPS the fourth with her chain and ice imprisons him to the floor.

AVANI (O.S.)

How can she channel enough to
make dead wood do *that*?

RANDALL'S MOTHER

That's Rin for ya.

Captain Tiercel hangs suspended by the spikes.

CAPTAIN TIERCEL

You... really... showed me your
moves...

Rin glares at us and yanks her blade free of the banister.

The spikes SNAP OFF under Captain Tiercel's weight.

He SPLASHES into the koi pool.

EXT. BLUE RING HOTEL - ROOFTOP GREENHOUSE - DAY

A greenhouse of high arched glass stands on the hotel roof.

INT. ROOFTOP GREENHOUSE - DAY

Cirrus slowly and luxuriously SNIFFS the air of the well-
stocked greenhouse. Edelweiss flowers grow nearest to where
she stands. All flowers are important in this scene.

Tori examines some red poppies. Avani smells some lavender.
Cirrus keeps indulging in what must be a sea of scents.

TORI

All these species in one place
is a rare sight. I'm impressed,
miss... what was your name again?

Orange lilies grow around a set of garden furniture. Rin sits
down in a round-backed chair, leaning heavily on her cane.
Green, Tarassas, Randall and his Mother sit after she does.

RIN

Hyoumondako. But call me Rin.
It's short and potent, like me
and my flowers. Each one has its
own meaning, you know.

Naur (uncloaked) hesitantly reaches out at an amaryllis. He touches it and it BURSTS INTO FLAME.

RIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

In fact there's a whole language of flowers. It's the only piece of pre-con Dornan tradition to survive *only* in human culture.

NAUR

Oh! Sorry, so sorry!

Cirrus makes a beckoning motion and the fire SNUFFS out. Naur lowers his head. Avani takes his hand and pats it.

RIN

It'll grow back. Now you four take a seat so I can brief everyone at once.

Tori, Avani, Cirrus and Naur find open seats. Luckily there are just enough in the greenhouse for nine people.

RIN (CONT'D)

This L-M unit is autonomous, but I still have my superiors. This morning they told me the Talus attack was planned by "the Nexus." Ever hear of it?

TORI

In passing.

Rin rests her hands on her cane. She looks too young to need one already.

RIN

It's an underground crime group that spreads elementalism by any means. They've infiltrated East Ragloa's elemental military. The wind tiger in Talus, the one who declared war, was a Nexus agent.

This does not surprise Tori, Avani, Cirrus, or Naur.

CIRRUS

I had assumed.

GREEN

(dramatic fist-clench)

This Nexus is a threat to all of Dorn. What else is known? And how may we strike back?

RIN

(sly smile)

I'm getting there, Green.

INFORMATIVE SPACE

KARRUN, heavily shadowed and with solid blue eyes, stands before us in dark surroundings.

RIN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

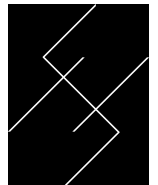
According to intel, the four Nexus leaders are trying to one-up each other for some reason.

Three FIGURES stand behind Karrun, obscured to the point of being nothing but vague black shapes with solid-color eyes. One is tall and thin with white eyes, one is average-sized with red eyes, and one is short and stout with green eyes.

RIN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Each one sent agents to sabotage the others' plans. Nexus agents are strong elementalists. Attacking Talus was a plan.

The NEXUS INSIGNIA, as shown, takes up the background. The three figures morph into sinister shadows of Cirrus, Naur, and Avani. Karrun morphs into Tori.



RIN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And four strong elementalists recently helped save Talus.

ROOFTOP GREENHOUSE

Tori SLAPS the armrests of her chair and stands up. Cirrus stands up too.

TORI, CIRRUS
(simultaneous)
What are you implying?!

Naur stands and makes "calm down" motions at them. Avani remains seated, looking dazed.

NAUR
Please you two, do not lash out.

Naur looks at Rin and the L-M unit. Green, Randall and his Mother look at the traveling party with heavy suspicion.

NAUR (CONT'D)
Surely our new friends do not believe we are criminals.

TARASSAS
I don't... but you were evasive-
asive when we asked where you're
from and where you're going.

RANDALL'S MOTHER
And when we met, you said you
wanted to go to Talus.

GREEN
The airman leader bore his hate
for you with strength suspicious
toward mere travelers...

RANDALL
Almost as if he knew something.

Rin regally STRIKES the floor with her cane.

RIN
Stop, everyone. There's enough
to suspect, but not to accuse.

Avani finally stands too.

AVANI
That's right. There's no proof.

Rin leans on her cane to stand. The unit stands with her.

RIN

And since I can't accuse, you remain my honored guests. So make yourself at home. But for your own safety...

Tori's eyes stare off at nothing. Several shades of doubt mingle in Tori's face.

RIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Do not add to our suspicion by leaving your suite tonight.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. CITADEL - INNER WALL - DAY

Back in episode 11, Karrun turns dramatically to face Tori. The sun hangs between late afternoon and early evening.

KARRUN

That cannot be coincidence! She used you to harm the Nexus! And the monster is her accomplice!

END FLASHBACK

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Captain Tiercel, wearing layers of bandages over his arms, sits secured to a wheelchair at a table in a small, dim room.

CAPTAIN TIERCEL

Colonel Levanter said we would hit here next. So I did. I don't know what else he planned, and I don't know any Nexus. Okay?

A sword slowly UNSHEATHES off-screen. Tiercel's eyes widen.

A MYSTERIOUS MAN with a chin curtain beard smiles toothily. We see nothing past his mouth and neck.

MYSTERIOUS MAN

Oh, but you know it *now*, like.

EXT. BLUE RING HOTEL - BALCONY - NIGHT

Cirrus stands out on an upper-floor balcony, looking at the lights of the airport and distant city.

Tori closes the sliding glass door between the balcony and a suite. She's vestless and barefoot.

TORI

Cirrus? Can I ask you something?

CIRRUS

No, Tori, I'm not a Nexus agent.

TORI

I wasn't going to--

CIRRUS

--Yes you were.

TORI

Okay I was. So you're not?

CIRRUS

I'm not. And I know you aren't.
Not after... everything.

TORI

Good. 'Cause I'm not.

CIRRUS

Good. Naur's not either.

TORI

But that priest thought he--

CIRRUS

(turns head)
--He's just not, okay?! I know
him! He's too innocent!

TORI

Okay! Okay.

Tori and Cirrus look off in different directions.

TORI (CONT'D)

When the Nexus sent you after
Avani. What did they say?

Cirrus stares at the lights.

CIRRUS

The Beast of Air told me to
bring her back to her temple.

(closes eyes)

As a favor to the Beast of Earth.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tori leaves the sliding door open as she enters. Naur counts
paper money on a bed. PIANO MUSIC plays somewhere nearby.

LIVING ROOM

The piano music issues from the wide horn of a phonograph,
which plays off a 7-inch shellac record.

Avani sits at the edge of a couch, her intense expression of
deep thought not matching the music at all.

Tori walks in. Her expression is deadened, unreadable.

Avani looks at her.

AVANI

You still trust me, don't you?

Tori's knife sticks out from a back pocket of her pants.

TORI

Your temple was a Nexus front,
wasn't it.

AVANI

Please forgive me, I...

Tori DASHES the few strides to the couch --

And SHOVES Avani against the back of it, holding her there by
the shoulders. We've never seen Tori this livid.

TORI

(deadly stare)

Avani Lahar you are *this* close
to making me admit Mom was right
so think very carefully about
what you say next!

INT. ROOFTOP GREENHOUSE - NIGHT

Rin waves one of her daggers back and forth over some orange
lilies, sprinkling them with summoned water.

RIN

The feds confirmed those four
are Nexus agents. The girls can
be captured. But the monsters...

Green pats his mythrill sledgehammer. Randall and his Mother
share a look of grim determination. Tarassas holds his hat
and looks less than enthusiastic.

GREEN

We'll try not to awaken sleeping
guests.

There's something sinister about Rin's smile.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Naur bites a knuckle. Cirrus walks in and Naur holds a hand
out to stop her.

TORI (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Were you using me just to attack
the Nexus? Answer. Now.

Tori keeps Avani pinned. Avani keeps herself from looking
Tori in the eyes. The phonograph keeps playing off-screen.

AVANI

The Air Force in East Ragloa,
your mother's black market group
in Meddon... what Rin said is
true. The Nexus was wherever I
was sent to preach. One part
used me against the others.

TORI

I don't care. Did you use me?

AVANI

No! I swear, I didn't realize my temple was Nexus until today!

Tori reaches back to her knife and grips the hilt.

TORI

You expect me to believe that?!

Avani finally makes eye contact. She starts crying.

AVANI

I know you can't believe me. I thought over everything I've done since we met. It can all be used in *some* way as proof that I manipulated you. I swear I didn't use you. But I, I've done nothing to make you trust me...

Tori's anger begins evaporating.

FLASHBACK:

INT. HUMANS' WEARHOUSE - DAY

Back in the clothing store in episode 11, Tori looks up from her Carmine Special violin at Avani and Cirrus (wind tiger), who just gave it to her. (Cirrus had a line here -- skip it.)

TORI

I... just... why? Why give me a treasure like this? I mean I barely even know you two.

AVANI

To show that, despite our differences, we understand you.

Avani hit a nerve. Tori bites her lower lip and stares into the Carmine Special's glossy finish.

END FLASHBACK

INT. HOTEL SUITE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Tori bites her lip in the same way.

She lets go of her knife and of Avani, in that order.

Cirrus and Naur SIGH in quiet relief. Cirrus glances back toward the bedroom and SNIFFS the air twice.

Tori walks to the phonograph and turns it off. Avani SNIFFLES and rubs her nose.

TORI

You're wrong. You got me a priceless treasure because you thought it'd be nice. That's rare generosity. You wouldn't have that at all if you used me like Mom would, for useful ends.

AVANI

Then... then you trust me?

The record slows to a stop. Tori smiles a little.

TORI

Yeah. Sorry I snapped.

AVANI

(stands, wipes eyes)

Thank you... I couldn't bear the thought of you casting me out. You were sent to reveal my path, so it would be a holy damnation.

TORI

(chuckle)

Come on, I wouldn't kick you to the curb. You worked for the Nexus *without* knowing it. Cirrus was in it way deeper than you.

(blink)

And wasn't she just here?

Naur looks to his left and right.

BEDROOM

Cirrus sniffs the air by the open balcony door.

BALCONY

Nobody's on the balcony.

Two floors directly above, Green and Tarassas fix grappling hook claws to the roof and begin repelling down the wall. Green's mythrill sledgehammer is slung on his back.

BEDROOM

Cirrus looks back at Tori, Avani and Naur.

CIRRUS (V.O.)

Stay quiet. Our "friends" are coming. Armed. Meet me outside.

INT. BLUE RING HOTEL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Tori, Avani and Naur (cloaked) exit into a hall. Tori and Naur carry their respective bags and Avani carries Tori's hiking boots. They head for a stairwell.

AVANI

Tori, your shoes?

TORI

Crap. Give 'em here.

Randall and his Mother enter the hall from the stairwell. Tori's boots SMACK into Randall's Mother's face and chest.

RANDALL'S MOTHER

Going somewhere--*ghah!*

RANDALL

Mother!

Tori, Avani and Naur flee the other way.

TORI

Screw it they were old anyway!

Randall's Mother rubs her face. Randall clenches his one fist and CHARGES after them --

The floor CRUMBLES under his feet --

Sending him CRASHING down to the next floor with ten feet of hallway's worth of debris.

Avani lifts her mythril ingot from the floor.

EXT. BLUE RING HOTEL - BALCONY - NIGHT

Green and Tarassas repel down to the balcony on either side of the open door and release their ropes.

TARASSAS

(whispered)

You do it. I might miss and set
the place on fire-ire.

GREEN

We have our orders. Show some
backbone, man.

Tarassas pulls a sharp-pointed orichalcum rock hammer from his leather jacket.

TARASSAS

My back *is* bone, Green Knight.

Tarassas moves to the door first. An AIR DRILL hits him --

Knocking him to his back and ROLLING him until he HITS a banister. His hat flies off the edge.

Green grips his sledgehammer --

Lifts it high, faces the door --

GREEN'S P.O.V.:

Cirrus (wind tiger) LEAPS at us from the bedroom, ROARING like a tornado.

INT. BLUE RING HOTEL - ELEVATORS - DAY

Tori and Naur rapidly press two Down buttons. They and Avani wait in front of three of four birdcage elevators.

A down-arrow light DINGS above Naur's. Naur turns around. The doors open behind him.

NAUR

Here! This one.

Rin's hand unsheathes her cane-sword --

And Rin SLASHES Naur's back through his cloak.

Naur makes a CHOKED GRUNT through his clenched teeth, staggers a few steps and falls to his knees. Rin steps out.

TORI

Naur!

RIN

I told you not to leave.

Tori whips her knife out of her back pocket. Avani steps forward first.

AVANI

Don't risk it, Tori.

TORI

What are you--

Avani runs at Rin.

AVANI

--*Trust me!*

Rin lifts her sword --

The blade CHOPS only an eighth of an inch into Avani's blocking arm, yet still draws blood --

Rin FLINCHES in absolute surprise --

Avani PUNCHES her in the sternum and KICKS her in the pelvis. Something CRACKS both times.

Rin COUGHS SHUDDERINGLY and stumbles backward into the elevator, where she falls. She clutches her chest.

RIN

H-how did, how did you know....

Tori lifts Naur's cloak, points her knife at his long slash wound and dries the SIZZLING blood coming out.

AVANI

If you can't control both parts of a combined element, the magic takes one from your body. I wondered why you needed a cane...

Rin glares at Avani as she reaches in just far enough to hit the top-floor button.

AVANI (CONT'D)

Summoning so much Flora magic without proper knowledge of Earth leaves one with the bone strength of an octopus.

Rin stays put as the doors close. She smiles mysteriously.

RIN

Don't be so smug. You don't know it yet, but you're already dead.

Naur's wound has scabbed into a hard and shiny red line.

TORI

You okay, Naur?

NAUR

Fine... but dizzy.

Tori helps him up. Avani puts pressure on her cut.

Another elevator DINGS and opens. It's empty.

HALLWAY

Randall's Mother looks over the gaping hole in the floor.

RANDALL'S MOTHER

Randall honey? Say something!

Randall leans against a wall with his one arm, roughed up from his fall and dirty from the debris around him.

RANDALL

Failure.

EXT. BLUE RING HOTEL - BALCONY - NIGHT

Green and Tarassas are tied up with their own ropes. Tarassas rolls back and forth on his back.

TARASSAS

I'll never forgive her. I loved that hat.

EXT. RIVER DOCK - STOLEN YACHT - NIGHT

Tori looks up at a flying airship.

TORI

Damn it. We could've gotten her to fly us right to the treasure.

Avani helps Naur onto the stolen yacht. Tori, Cirrus and Klauser are already there.

NAUR

Following the river as far as the boat will fit is fine... ugh...

AVANI

Let's get the first-aid kit.

NAUR

(trembling)
Where is it...?

AVANI

It's inside, don't you remember?

Naur steps away from Avani and sways, disoriented.

NAUR

I don't... feel well...

CIRRUS

Naur?

Naur collapses. Cirrus moves fast enough to catch him.

CIRRUS (CONT'D)

Naur! Damn it someone get the
med-kit. Naur!

Tori runs to a hatch behind the helm. Avani, petrified, grabs her arm below the cut.

INT. EXECUTIVE SUITE - NIGHT

Rin opens the door to a more expensive-looking suite than the one we saw. She leans on her cane and grits her teeth.

RIN

They... they got away. My plan
didn't work, and my unit was
useless. I only got two of them.

A familiar navy-on-gray hand in the sleeve of an ivory pantsuit drums its black-clawed fingers on the armrest of a high-backed chair in front of an indoor fireplace.

KARRUN

Which two?

Rin practically drags herself across the thick art-deco carpet. Two other high-backed chairs flank Karrun's.

RIN

The Tergaian girl and the
cloaked raiza. But they got away
with your daughter.

ADDANC, the man from earlier, sits beside Karrun. He wears black slacks under a half-buttoned denim shirt and unbuttoned black blazer. He has a two-week-old chin curtain beard now.

ADDANC / MYSTERIOUS MAN

I told you, didn't I? Torrent's
nothing to trifle with. You
shoulda had *me* take her, like.

YOUDAI sits on Karrun's other side, wearing a white and green silk kimono with dragon designs on it.

YOUDAI

Aww, don't tell me you're into girls, handsome.

KARRUN

Stop hitting on my prisoner.

You dai pouts. Karrun rises from her seat to face Rin. Addanc SNORTS derisively at Rin's title.

KARRUN (CONT'D)

I knew you would not fail me, Rin the Venomous. I didn't make you my regional manager for nothing, after all. Are you certain you killed them both?

Rin leans on her cane for dear life. She's sweating a bit.

RIN

Sure as I stand, Cirein Cròin the Whale-Eater.

EXT. RIVER DOCK - STOLEN YACHT - NIGHT

Tori dabs a big cotton swab on Naur's slash wound. The slash is already puffy and discolored.

RIN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

No one's more detailed at Flora magic than me, and not even a monster is immune to a blood infection.

Naur CLENCHES his jaw tight. Cirrus holds his hand tighter.

Avani grips her arm, clearly terrified. Her cut is puffy.

RIN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

By this time tomorrow they'll have suffered the consequences of harming the Nexus.

FADE OUT