

AETHER TORRENT #8  
"TORI'S REASON"

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. CASTLE SHIITAKE - DINING ROOM - DAY

The dining hall in Castle Shiitake bustles with activity. Spare tables are set up around the long, dominant one.

All sorts of TROOPS and CIVILIANS gorge on massive quantities of fruit, vegetables, and grain products, including the fermented kind.

LADY SHIITAKE sits at the head of the main table and drains a glass of something surely alcoholic.

TORI, AVANI, and CIRRUS (human) sit and eat closest to her. Avani hasn't touched her food.

Avani looks up after a moment's contemplation.

AVANI

I don't want to go, Tori. I want to keep helping these people.

Shiitake, Tori and Cirrus look at her. Cirrus chews on a mouthful of roll.

TORI

But we've helped enough, haven't we? We can't stop now. With Cirrus, Klauser and food, we're just a couple days away from East Granbridge.

AVANI

That was your goal, Tori. I wanted only safety and people to instruct in proper Elementism. Here I have them.

Tori looks disappointed.

TORI

Well, I--

Shiitake suddenly SLAMS her hand on the table.

SHIITAKE

--Like *hell* you're staying!

The room goes mute.

LOUIE sits with TODD and the INNKEEPER. They look on.

SHIITAKE (CONT'D)

I've got my pride, Skirt. You grew all this food *and* planted more. I can take it from here.

AVANI

Well, I--

Louie rapidly grows anxious at Shiitake's second sentence. He makes a hasty neck-cutting motion at her, unseen by Tori, Avani or Cirrus. Shiitake takes the cue just in time.

SHIITAKE

--You're leaving. If you don't stick together, you might not be able to beat... the... uh, the, hardships. Of travel. Yeah.

AVANI

I appreciate your concern, but--

SHIITAKE

--But nothin'! I want you girls *and* your animals outta my polis tomorrow, capiche?!

Cirrus lowers her eyebrows, mouth too full for a reply. Tori pats her shoulder.

Avani looks disappointed.

EXT. OTEND INN - NIGHT

The lights are out in the Inn. KLAUSER, tied to the post out front, sleeps with his legs tucked under him.

INT. OTEND INN - UPSTAIRS ROOM - NIGHT

Avani lies on the floor beside the bed, among a few pillows.

AVANI

Is it sinful to wonder if  
Shiitake is really the best  
leader for this polis?

Tori lies on her stomach in the giant bed, reading her old book and wearing a tank-top and boxers. Cirrus (wind tiger) curls up on the rest of the bed.

TORI

(flips through pages)  
She's better than nothing. And  
as far as sin goes... ah, here.  
"If there be gods, they do not  
care for the goings-on of this  
world." So don't worry.

Cirrus's back rises and falls in a sigh.

Avani sits up, bringing her to eye-level with Tori.

AVANI

You're quoting that thing with a  
lot of faith, Tori.

TORI

So? I can have faith in reason.

AVANI

Did you learn all your atheism  
from that book? Let me see it.

Avani reaches up towards the book. Tori moves it out of range. Avani SWIPES at it and her hand HITS the sheets as Tori slides the book closer to Cirrus.

TORI

If you have a problem about how  
I think, you can take it up with  
my mom. That "place" I said we  
could stay at? It's hers.

Cirrus lifts her head, suddenly alert.

Avani straightens up and rests her elbows on the bed.

AVANI

Really? Your mother? What is she like?

TORI

(distant smile)  
You'll see.

CIRRUS (V.O.)

I know kind of where East Granbridge is from here. We can get there in a day and a half, if Klauser can keep up. But why didn't you mention your mom until now?

Tori looks down and closes her book.

TORI

Let's get some sleep. It's a long way to go.

EXT. EAST GRANBRIDGE - DAY

Tiny ocean waves break against something colossal and gray.

White fractal whorls etched into the gray thing's seamless surface increase in complexity as we rise.

We ascend faster. The whorls blend into a solid white surface which suddenly WHOOSHES down out of the way.

A light gray roadbed stretches about a mile wide, crackled like pottery glaze. The road extends over the horizon, bordered by white walls all the way.

The road rests on a giant viaduct, a multi-arched bridge on high supports, which spans the sea to an unseen far end. The farther we see, the more dirt has accumulated at the edges.

East Granbridge, an octagon with a citadel in the middle, sits at one end of the bridge. Its points are oriented to compass directions. The northern quarter-wedge is farmland.

The vast majority of the buildings within are colored white, black, and gray and constructed as though of adobe. The citadel in particular resembles real-world Arg-é Bam in Iran.

EXT. WATER DISTRICT - DAY

Light traffic made of BICYCLERS and electric automobiles flows down a crackled light-gray road of a residential/marketplace district.

Clear-flowing, man-sized fountains stand on every other street corner.

Human and raiza PEDESTRIANS on the white sidewalks look healthy, some of them carry groceries, and most of them appear at least middle-class by their clothes.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Is he a vagrant or something?

MAN (O.S.)

I don't know, let him by.

ADDANC staggers his way through the sidewalk traffic.

He looks like hell. Several scabby, untreated slash wounds mark his arms. The stubbly start of a beard marks his face.

He carries his stolen whip coiled in a loose grip.

The pedestrians begin parting more easily for him.

EXT. WATERGATE - NIGHT

The sun sets behind a huge doorless archway interrupting the gray and white city wall. Blue fractal whorls radiate into the wall from the edges. Streetlamps inside flicker on.

EXT. WATERGATE - DAY

The streetlamps flicker off. The sun rises behind us.

The sun moves to someplace unseen overhead.

Klauser's big claws trot to a stop. Cirrus's paws land gracefully. Tori and Avani's luggage and feet HIT the ground, in that order.

Tori STRETCHES and pounds her fists on her thighs. Her knife holster is clearly visible without her vest. Behind her, Cirrus ARCHES her back.

Avani sits in prayer position, MUMBLING indistinctly.

Tori rolls her eyes.

INT. WATER DISTRICT - DAY

The Water district is much quieter now than when Addanc came through.

A few human CHILDREN chase each other across the rooftops.

Cirrus, walking in human form, smiles and watches the kids.

There's no traffic. The party walks in the road, Klauser toting the luggage.

AVANI

Praise below. Such ancient construction. It's like something out of prehistory.

TORI

It *is* out of prehistory. People moved in for the free shelter and built from there.

CIRRUS

I came through here once when I was a cub. Seemed more lively back then.

TORI

(glances around)  
You're right. There should be more activity.

A black-and-white automobile rounds a corner up ahead.

TORI (CONT'D)

Oh, hey, the cops. Let me do the talking. They know me here.

Another two cop cars follow the first.

All three cars come to a stop in front of Tori, Avani, Cirrus and Klauser.

AVANI

Are you sure? How long have you been away?

TORI

Only a couple... four years.

Black-and-white-uniformed OFFICERS jump out of the cars --

UNSHEATHE blue-hilted curved swords --

And hold them threateningly at the party.

Over half of the officers are raiza. A slim brown-on-white raiza SERGEANT uses his car door as cover. His vocal depth is more in a human range than other raiza we've heard.

SERGEANT

Hold it right there, vagrants!  
State your origins! Now!

AVANI

Their weapons...

TORI

Water elementalists, I know.  
(speaking up)  
Take it easy, I'm from here. My friends and I just got back.

HUMAN OFFICER

A likely story. How do we know you're not with the vagrant who tried to kill the archon?

An unseen force slugs Tori in the heart. Her expression reflects this.

TORI

Is she all right? Tell me she's all right!

The Sergeant lowers his sword.

SERGEANT

Wait... is that you, Tori?

TORI

Who else would it be?! Now tell me what happened to Mom!

Avani and Cirrus do a simultaneous double-take.

AVANI

Your mother is the archon?!

The other officers lower their weapons.

Tori clenches her jaw tight enough to snap steel. Sudden tears well up in her gray eyes.

EXT. POLICE HQ - DAY

A few police cars are parked outside a domed building. The human officer leads Klauser around back. Klauser PECKS at him and misses.

HUMAN OFFICER

C'mon, boy, you'll like it in the stable --AGH! Quit it!

INT. POLICE HQ - LOBBY - DAY

Fabricated walls in the immense interior space suggest the police HQ simply moved into an existing structure. CLERKS go about their business. An OFFICER or two walks by.

The Sergeant leads Tori, Avani and Cirrus inside. A loft is visible from the main entrance.

AVANI

I must say, East Granbridge is very impressive, Sergeant... um...

SERGEANT

Just "Sergeant" is fine.  
(MORE)

SERGEANT (CONT'D)

I know raiza names are hard for other sapients to pronounce.

(disarming smile)

If you like the city, you should see the bridge. Some estimate it to be over nine thousand--

TORI

--Yeah yeah yeah. Now where's Mom hiding?

SERGEANT

(sigh)

The archon is in an undisclosed location. She worries about collateral damage, considering the scene yesterday.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. OUTDOOR CAFÉ - DAY

Several cops, the Sergeant among them, stand dispersed in an outdoor café full of tables sprouting patio umbrellas.

A teacup CLINKS gently on a saucer. We can't see its drinker.

Addanc, still haggard, KICKS over a table. Its occupants flee, as do a few of the other café patrons.

ADDANC

*Karen Mariana!*

The police surround a particular table and draw their curved swords. We very briefly see an indistinct shadow sitting there before the cops block our view.

Addanc lets his whip de-coil.

ADDANC (CONT'D)

Thanks for pointing her out, idiots.

He STRIKES his whip out.

It coils around a cop's sword and YANKS it free.

Addanc catches it --

The other police raise their swords --

Addanc SWINGS the stolen sword and water congeals above the cops, much of it FLYING out of café patrons' cups --

Addanc's whip CRACKS --

And the water mass EXPANDS AND FREEZES SOLID, CRUSHING the table and burying the police in large chunks of ice.

Addanc BREATHES HARD and raises his whip again, but the sight of something freezes him in fear.

END FLASHBACK

INT. EVIDENCE ROOM - DAY

The Sergeant opens a drawer. Addanc's whip rests there, bound into a coil and tagged. The diamond in the hilt is gone.

Tori and company look at it, knowingly. The evidence room is a hive of shelving units and drawers.

SERGEANT

The perpetrator dropped this  
when the archon drove him away.

(to Avani)

Tell me, do you know much about  
elementalism?

AVANI

(flat)

A little.

SERGEANT

Whoever the perp was, he knew  
that a flexible weapon like this  
in conjunction with a rock of  
adamant could summon Ice magic.  
That he took the rock with him  
proves he knows his stuff.

TORI

Addanc doesn't know a thing. He  
just exploits the right tools.

SERGEANT

You mean you know the perp?

AVANI

Yes. He has pursued us from  
Meddon out of hatred for Tori.

Tori's expression is equal parts anger and guilt.

TORI

It's my fault he's here. I told  
him once -- I forget why, but I  
told him Mom lived here. And I  
told him her name.

Avani takes Tori's hand sympathetically. Tori pulls it away  
and makes a fist of it.

AVANI

It's all right. All we need to  
do is catch him and you can see  
your mother again.

SERGEANT

(eyeing Cirrus obviously)  
Some air support would help...

Cirrus lowers her eyebrows again.

EXT. EARTH DISTRICT - DAY

East Granbridge is divided into quarters. Specks of FARMERS  
work the vast north-quarter field.

A farmer or two looks up at Cirrus (wind tiger) as she flies  
overhead.

Cirrus looking a little fatigued with Tori and Avani on her  
back. Avani carries Cirrus's red and white robe.

AVANI

Water district in the east,  
Earth in the north... I assume  
your southern and western  
districts are Fire and Air?

TORI

Yeah. The prehistorics built the basic structure of the city as a monument to the elements. It was full of squatters and religious crazies, then Mom took over and booted them out.

AVANI

Crazies?

TORI

(turns around)

Not like you. Mom told me they were full-blown fundies, real devoted types in robes and such.

AVANI

(offended)

Monks. Your mother evicted monks from an ancient holy monument.

TORI

Yeah. She's a little stern sometimes, but I love her.

Cirrus tilts her head back just enough to look at Tori.

CIRRUS (V.O.)

Then why didn't you mention her until we were almost here?

Avani crosses her arms around Cirrus's robe and looks away from Tori. Tori stares at the ground over Cirrus's shoulder.

TORI

I like to think of myself as, y'know, rare. Different. And yet the first thing I think about once I get the freedom to move again is running home to Mom like a little girl. It's just so damn embarrassing. Fleeing the bad guys across the wilderness is a lot cooler of a reason.

CIRRUS (V.O.)

I bet your mom misses you.

Tori swallows. Her voice wavers a little.

TORI

You smell him yet?

CIRRUS (V.O.)

Nope, sorry. Maybe Addanc just left the city entirely?

TORI

(thinking expression)

He wouldn't risk the wild again, so if he wanted to leave...

EXT. AIR DISTRICT - DAY

A vast business district stands in the western quarter-wedge. Most of the adobe-style buildings have been built on or over by more modern construction. The bridge connects here.

BRIDGE GATE

The bridge is blocked by a massive white wall, broken here and there by hinged gates.

A LURUTT, a stout humanoid tortoise wearing pants and a hijab-like neck covering, crosses his thick scaly arms over his bare armored chest. A gate stands behind him.

Tori, Avani and Cirrus (human) whisper to each other a short distance away from the gate.

CIRRUS

I dunno, lurutts creep me out. Something about their voices.

AVANI

They're harmless. My homeland is full of them.

TORI

Mom invited a bunch over when I was a kid. They integrated well.

The lurutt, GUARDER PAVISSIS, is about 4' tall, whereas Tori is between 5'9" and 5'10" in her hiking boots. Avani is 5'3" in her sandals and Cirrus is 6'2", barefoot as always.

TORI (CONT'D)

Excuse me. Has anyone tried to pass here recently?

Guarder Pavissis's low nasal voice contrasts markedly with his naturally-armored bulk. His shell is hinged so he can bend at the waist.

GUARDER PAVISSIS

None have pass-passed *any* gate under orders of Archon Karen.

(scratches chin)

But a messy human tried. He gave no name or title to Guarder Pavissis. Very-very rude.

AVANI

When was that?

GUARDER PAVISSIS

Maybe two hours ago. He had messy-messy clothes. Guarder Pavissis was polite and told him of a good-good clothing store.

TORI

Where.

INT. HUMANS' WEARHOUSE - CHANGING ROOM - DAY

One of Addanc's scarred arms slips into the sleeve of a dress shirt.

Addanc buttons the coat in front of a mirror. His hair is combed and his face is shaved. He looks downright respectable now.

STORE INTERIOR

A few human CUSTOMERS browse in a men's clothing store.

TAILOR ZIMURRUR, another lurutt, turns a diamond around in his bulky hand. He wears a neck covering too -- and a tie.

TAILOR ZIMURRUR

Are you sure you want something so common, sir? Adamant like this can get you much-much more! Tailor Zimurrur guarantees it!

CHANGING ROOM

Addanc's stolen sword rests on the little seating bench. He finishes fastening a leather belt.

ADDANC

No thank you. I *need* something common. All the better to blend in, like.

A door chime RINGS softly off-screen. Addanc slips on a suit coat and reaches for a tie. He STOPS COLD and GRITS his teeth once he hears Cirrus's voices.

TAILOR ZIMURRUR (O.S.)

Welcome! Tailor Zimurrur deals only in the finest male clothes. Are you here to buy gifts? Unless *you* are male--ow!

CIRRUS (O.S.)

Do I *look* male to you?!

STORE INTERIOR

Zimurrur rubs his head. Cirrus grumpily rubs her fist.

TAILOR ZIMURRUR

Sorry-sorry. What can Tailor Zimurrur get for you ladies?

Addanc KICKS OPEN the changing room door, gripping his sword.

Tori swiftly pulls her knife from its holster.

TORI

He'll do.

EXT. HUMANS' WEARHOUSE - DAY

The few other customers RUN OUT of the building. A sign reads "Humans' Wearhouse."

INT. HUMANS' WEARHOUSE - STORE INTERIOR - DAY

Tori and Addanc stare each other down. Zimurrur frets, much closer to Addanc than to Tori.

TORI (CONT'D)

Cirrus, find the cops. Avani,  
block the door.

Cirrus exits out the front. Avani lingers.

AVANI

I have my mythrill ingot with me.  
I could hold him in the floor.

ADDANC

Torrent won't let you do that.  
She's obviously playing this for  
dramatics, or else she'd attack.

Tori GRIPS her knife hilt hard enough that the tendons on the back of her hand are visible.

TORI

You tried to kill my mother.  
Beating you up and leaving you  
won't be good enough this time.

ADDANC

See? There she goes.

Zimurrur carefully backs out of the cross-glare.

TAILOR ZIMURRUR

Tailor Zimurrur goes too.

Addanc YANKS the diamond out of Zimurrur's hand and flees towards the restrooms.

Tori's gray eyes blaze.

TORI

Stay here.

AVANI

But--

Tori draws her knife and chases after Addanc.

TORI

--I *said* stay here, Skirt! Go  
*pray* or something!

She suddenly slows to a stop, catching her insensitivity.

Avani looks hurt.

TORI (CONT'D)

(doesn't turn around)  
I'll apologize for that later.  
Please stay here, okay?

MEN'S ROOM

Tori slowly pushes the door open and peers inside.

It's a reasonably classy restroom. A faucet DRIPS. Three stall doors are closed. Addanc is nowhere to be seen.

Tori enters. Tension builds.

TORI (CONT'D)

Pretty tasteless dueling field.  
It fits you perfectly.

No answer. Tori slowly approaches the stalls.

TORI (CONT'D)

Were you surprised when you saw  
Mom? You must have been if you  
ran away scared.

She KICKS OPEN the first one. Nobody home. She moves on.

TORI (CONT'D)

If you couldn't figure it out  
after those hints I gave you  
back then --

She KICKS OPEN the second. Nothing.

TORI (CONT'D)

You don't *deserve* to be my rival!

Tori intrudes on us as she KICKS OPEN the third stall door.  
Her expression shifts to surprise.

Nobody's there, either.

Tori turns her head.

The restroom door swings closed behind Addanc.

ADDANC

Wrong room, Torrent.

He points his sword at the dripping faucet --

The faucet BURSTS OFF in a RUSH OF WATER, follows Addanc's  
lateral SLICE --

And turns at a right angle at Tori with a THRUST of Addanc's  
sword.

Tori braces with her knife out --

And the stream DIVIDES, PUMMELING the wall to her left and  
right, drenching her with splash-back.

Addanc's free hand palms his diamond and SWEEPS his belt out  
of his pants.

AETHER-VIEW

Blue and white swirls in Addanc's silhouette WHIRL around the  
diamond, which is solid pale-blue. Pale-blue swirls flood out  
of the diamond and into the belt --

NORMAL VIEW

Which Addanc SWINGS and SNAPS out, yet failing to crack it.

It doesn't seem to matter. ICE forms rapidly down the watery line to Tori --

And creeps up her calves to her knees, trapping her.

The broken sink SPRAYS water in a small geyser. Addanc RAISES his sword --

The water from the sink and on the floor congeals and RISES into a wave at Tori.

It lifts off the floor --

Tori BREAKS FREE of the ice --

Addanc SNAPS his belt again --

And the wave EXPANDS and FREEZES into a huge ice projectile. Heat SHIMMERS off of it.

Tori evades into the third stall. The ice-mass CRASHES into the wall with deadly force, blocking Tori's escape.

Addanc BREATHES HEAVILY.

AETHER-VIEW

His silhouette is inordinately full of red swirls.

A few red swirls waft towards him from the air around the solid-pale-blue ice and enter his silhouette.

NORMAL VIEW

Tori hops up on the back of the toilet and LIFTS the water from the bowl with a SWING of her knife.

A stream of water curves over the stall door, flies out --

And COLLIDES with Addanc's face. He SPUTTERS and COUGHS ad-lib.

Tori climbs the stall and drops into the neighboring one. Another stream of water rises out of it and flies at Addanc.

It pummels him in the neck and shoulder. He SPUTTERS.

Addanc gathers enough breath to harmlessly SPLIT a third stream with his sword the same way Tori split his.

Tori exits the last stall, SPLASHING in the copious water on the floor.

Addanc rears back his sword, but a softball-sized water sphere SMASHES into his head.

Tori summons several round liquid projectiles from the floor, one after another, in a point-lift-swing process.

Addanc weathers a few of the hits, finally gripping his sword, belt, and diamond in a single hand. He throws a furious SLASH --

One of Tori's water balls FREEZES SOLID and HITS her in the shoulder before she can throw it. She YELLS OUT in pain.

The ice-ball CRACKS on the floor. Three water-balls rise from the water near it and FREEZE.

Addanc SLASHES UPWARDS --

The ice balls launch upwards, STRIKING Tori in the thigh, forearm, and chin.

The one that strikes her chin curves in midair and SMASHES into her head.

Tori drops her knife and goes down on her knees and elbows, clutching her skull and releasing a pained SQUEAL between her clenched teeth.

Addanc BREATHES SHUDDERINGLY, red and sweating even in his drenched suit. His arm goes limp but he doesn't drop his weapons. His free hand TREMBLES.

ADDANC (CONT'D)

Heh... heh-heh... what was that,  
Torrent? *What* don't I deserve?

Tori concentrates on her pain. She doesn't bleed, but it clearly hurts.

ADDANC (CONT'D)

When you left me in the field... I  
killed myself. That useless  
whining self I was. It was  
exhilarating. I was... alive!

(lifts arms)

Free for the first time, like!  
Untethered 'cause this is all we  
have! No rules, no limits, no  
bosses, no gods!

Tori's eyes slit open.

Addanc slowly, dangerously walks towards her. He stops  
sweating and his reddened face turns pale. He TREMBLES.

ADDANC (CONT'D)

So now I have a reason to live  
what *isn't* being useful for some  
boss. If I live, I can do  
whatever I want, 'cause nothing  
but me can stop me. And what I  
wanna do first is beat your ass  
for all the grief you gave me.

Tori's foot SNAPS out and KICKS Addanc in the ankle.

He falls toward Tori --

She ROLLS out of the way, snatches his weapons and STOMPS on  
his upper back.

His forehead HITS the floor and completes the unconsciousness  
which heat stroke already started.

The water on the floor retreats from one of the walls.

Tori uses the stolen sword to congeal a lot of the water on  
the floor around Addanc, except for his head. She pockets the  
diamond and tosses the belt aside.

TORI

If you want to live, you stupid  
jerk, don't give yourself heat  
stroke.

Addanc breathes shallowly. The water mass circulates around  
him, cooling him down.

EXT. HUMANS' WEARHOUSE - DAY

A white ambulance leaves the scene under police escort with many onlookers.

Zimurrur stands on the curb. Cirrus taps him on the shell and he looks up.

CIRRUS

Do you make anything in an X-L size?

Tori holds an icepack to her head. Her arm and chin are bruised where the ice-balls hit. Avani stands nearby. The rest of the crowd slowly begins dispersing.

TORI

Hey. Avani. What does your religion say about freedom?

AVANI

Oh, suddenly you're interested? This isn't going to be a lead-in to another insult, is it?

TORI

Look, I'm sorry I've been a bitch. I just want to know. Seriously.

Avani's eyes glance down a second, contemplating.

AVANI

Freedom is a gift from the gods. Specifically from Atmas, the Goddess of Air. It lets us move anywhere and be whatever we want, yet it can be dangerous if we don't have any direction.

A large black car pulls up to the curb closer to Tori and Avani than to Cirrus and Zimurrur. Zimurrur measures Cirrus's leg with a tape measure he presumably had on him.

TORI

Direction... yeah.

The car's driver-side door OPENS and the Sergeant steps out.

AVANI

Hello, Sergeant.

TORI

Hi. It's safe now, Mom can come out of hiding.

SERGEANT

(smiling)

I told her the instant we knew.

TORI

So are you here to take us to her?

The Sergeant opens the passenger-side door.

SERGEANT

No.

The car HEAVES with a shift in weight.

Cirrus and Zimurrur look up, awestruck.

Avani does too. Tori lowers her icepack.

AVANI

Archon Karen, I presume?

Tori's mother, KARRUN, is a raiza scaled up to seven feet tall. Her skin is navy blue on gray. She wears a long suit dress.

Karrun and Tori exchange a long stare. The Sergeant looks at Avani and gestures to Karrun.

SERGEANT

The archon's name is *Khrrnhmrhynnahrn*. You are free to add vowels and call her "Karrun Mariana," however.

Tori's eyes well up with tears.

TORI

Mom...

Karrun smiles. Her voice is a husky velvet earthquake that somehow manages to still sound feminine.

KARRUN

Tori.

Tori throws her icepack into the street, runs the short distance between her and Karrun and COLLIDES into her with a hug.

Karrun absorbs the impact without a flinch. She pats the back of Tori's head. Her hand is big enough to envelop it.

TORI

(muffled)

Mom... Mom...

KARRUN

Welcome home, dear. I've waited so long.

Avani and Cirrus are dumbstruck. They orbit around to the same side of the reunion and look to each other for an explanation.

CIRRUS

Uh, Tori...?

Tori and Karrun look at them, both smiling.

TORI, KARRUN

(simultaneous)

Adopted.

Avani and Cirrus seem to get it.

The mother and daughter continue to hug.

FADE OUT