

AETHER TORRENT #9
"TORI'S MOTHER"

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. CITADEL - DAY

The white and gray citadel stands at the axis of octagonal East Granbridge.

INT. CITADEL - THRONE ROOM - DAY

TORI sits in a high-backed chair. The room is made of warm wood, cool tile and plenty of arches. Cords on electric lamps snake out the nearest exits.

TORI

Not much else to say, Mom. I found work in Meddon and stayed there 'til I rescued Avani from a loan shark who bankrupted her temple. She needed a place to stay, so I took her here.

AVANI and CIRRUS sit in similar chairs, arranged in a slight curve facing something we can't see. They glance sidelong at Tori and go along with her fibbing.

AVANI

Yes. That is exactly how it went.

TORI

And we met Cirrus along the way. She was a mail courier who up and decided to travel with us.

CIRRUS

Yeah. Real tough place, that post office.

KARRUN, 7' navy-on-gray raiza, sits deep a high-backed couch. Her tail, unrestrained by the skirt of her suit, takes up much of the seat. Her voice is deep and smooth.

KARRUN

You've gathered some interesting friends, Tori dear. Now I'm sure they have questions about *me*.

Avani and Cirrus simultaneously lean forward.

AVANI

You're her mother?

CIRRUS

(simultaneous)

You're really her mom?

Tori smiles a little. Karrun looks at her.

KARRUN

None other. She has been my child her whole life. Her biological mother was a friend of mine who died in childbirth.

Cirrus cringes slightly, inhaling through her teeth.

CIRRUS

I'm so sorry. And her father?

TORI

Came and left. Never met him.

KARRUN

Probably for the best.

Avani and Cirrus absorb that.

AVANI

Then... if your only family is here, why did you leave?

TORI

I graduated high school. Instead of going to some ordinary college, I decided to bum around for a few years like Mom did.

Karrun's tone and posture layer on the motherly guilt.

KARRUN

I did not "bum around," young lady, I traveled.

TORI

(smirk)
And so did I.

KARRUN

(deliberate sigh to Cirrus)
Like the force I named her after, my Torrent moved as she willed. She didn't even send her poor mother a postcard.

Tori sinks back in her chair. Cirrus leans over at her.

CIRRUS

How *could* you, Tori? Your poor mother was probably worried sick!

KARRUN

(chuckling)
Worried? Not with the way I trained her. She knows her four "D"s.

AVANI

Four "D"s, Ma'am Archon?

Karrun lowers her hairless eyebrows.

KARRUN

Did they teach you nothing in that temple of yours? The four "D"s are the aspects of elementalism.

ILLUSTRATIVE SPACE

A simplified image of Tori stands on a surface somewhere.

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

They're very simple. There's
Distance, how far away you can
summon an element...

"Tori" points her knife. A ball of water forms in midair at
the other end of the surface, falls and SPLASHES.

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

Depth, how much of an element
you can summon until fatigued...

Tori raises her knife above her head and summons an expanding
water ball. It quickly gets huge and Tori TENSES to keep it
up, but she drops her arm and the water DRENCHES her.

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

Detail, at which Tori excels...

Tori SWINGS her knife around. The water on and around her
flies off and forms an airborne stream which does several
intricate loops and knots.

THRONE ROOM

Karrun clenches a fist at the word "will."

KARRUN

And Desire, the *will* to summon.
Tori has nothing to impede her
Desire, so I knew she would be
fine on her own.

(laces fingers together)

But I wonder how fine she could
really be after four years'
absence from home cooking. Can I
interest you ladies in dinner?

CIRRUS

Yes ma'am you can.

EXT. MOUNTED POLICE STABLES - DAY

Wooden signs bearing dire kiwi profiles flank the garage door
of a low yet official-looking building behind Police HQ.

INT. MOUNTED POLICE STABLES - DAY

Two rows of stables stretch the length of the building. Only about half are occupied by DIRE KIWIS.

KLAUSER, saddle-free, is by far the tallest one. He paces around in his enclosure.

Two human officers, tall blonde COR and short TOM, enter the stables. Their badges read "CORVUS" and "SERVEAU," respectively. Cor tilts up his hat at Klauser.

COR

Look at 'im, Tom. A majestic runner like this guy shouldn't be crammed in here. You think I can let him out to stretch?

TOM

No way, Cor'. He might die.

Cor gruffly tilts his hat back down.

COR

Sheesh, Tom, I'm not so bad that I'd kill him.

Klauser gives up pacing and pecks at his food trough.

TOM (O.S.)

You wouldn't. But the airship's coming back tomorrow, remember? If he gets away from you and runs outside of the walls before we can snag him again...

Cor SNAPS his fingers.

COR

Oh *yeah*, the scavenger monsters.

TOM

Right. And you can bet Archon Karrun would find out if her daughter's bird got eaten. She knows everything.

INT. CITADEL - STATE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Tori, Avani, Cirrus, and Karrun sit at a long dinner table in a room decorated much like the Throne Room. Everyone present has a full plate of food. Some SERVANTS leave the scene.

Karrun's plate contains a whole roasted turkey. She begins cutting off a drumstick, then pauses to glance aside.

KARRUN

Something wrong, miss Avani?

Avani has her head bowed and her eyes closed over a huge vegetarian pita. The position of her arms suggests her hands are folded under the table.

Cirrus's plate is full of assorted fruit. She notices Avani praying, hurriedly puts down a softball-sized apple and copies the pose. Avani looks up.

AVANI

Not anymore. Any meal benefits from a prayer.

Karrun raises an eyebrow. Tori's plate has a large serving of drool-worthy lasagna, which she busily eats.

TORI

(mouth full)

Avani prays a lot, Mom. It's just what she does.

KARRUN

Mm, yes. Interesting process, that "prayer." It blithely assumes that the grand plans of the invisible law-giving super-beings being prayed to are so unimportant that they can be changed at the mere request of insignificant mortals.

Karrun forks the drumstick into her mouth and politely chews the whole thing with horrible muffled CRUNCHING sounds.

Avani and Cirrus pause eating. Both are clearly distracted by the bone-crunching. Avani is clearly offended.

AVANI

I always give thanks for the blessing of food.

Tori takes a drink of water. Karrun finishes crunching.

KARRUN

Let me tell you something. Nature takes a blind course and smiles only upon the clever and strong. Those who command the indifferent elements of magic give themselves more blessing than any god could bestow.

Karrun peels off the second drumstick and gestures at the ceiling with it. Tori eats while paying rapt attention.

KARRUN (CONT'D)

And self-blessing has a very wide radius. This polis was a low-tech squatter's haven until I civilized it by putting the elements to work for me. Where do you think our electricity comes from? How do you think this food was cooked? *Prayer?*

Avani moodily eats her pita.

AVANI

At least the food came straight from the gods.

Karrun CHUCKLES a low rumble and CRUNCHES the second drumstick in her teeth.

KARRUN

(eating)

Not in its current form. Magic lets us produce so much, our exports can feed whole cities.

Avani stops short of taking another bite. Cirrus stops short of a final bite of her apple.

Tori addresses Karrun, who carves off one of the turkey wings. Avani and Cirrus look at each other, then Karrun.

TORI

And I've really missed it, Mom.
The closest thing I've had to
citadel food in four years was
when the three of us were in
Rannom a couple days ago.

Karrun's hand suddenly stops cutting. She TWISTS the wing off the rest of the way after a pause.

KARRUN

Rannom? And so recently?

Avani and Cirrus watch Karrun suspiciously. Tori looks at her mother in perfect innocence.

TORI

Yeah. It was a mess over there.

Tori takes another bite. Karrun stares at Tori and speaks very evenly with a fake smile.

KARRUN

Well, you have good timing. Had
you lingered there any longer,
you might have missed the
airship coming tomorrow.

Tori COUGHS in surprise with her mouth full.

KARRUN (CONT'D)

Small bites, Tori dear.

EXT. OCEAN - NIGHT

Somewhere over the ocean, a HUMMING dome eclipses the moon.

An AIRSHIP, a wide, flattish blimp resembling a sea turtle in design and paint, hums above the waves. Its engines emerge from the rim of the "shell." We get a good long look at it.

INT. TORI'S ROOM - NIGHT

An off-screen light TURNS ON, illuminating an identical model airship on a desk.

Clothes, books, and old newspapers lay about in perfect disorder on dressers, bookshelves, desks and the floor itself. Curiously, a queen-sized bed is immaculately clean.

Tori CLAPS and SQUEEZES her hands together, almost giddy.

AVANI

I could've foreseen this.

CIRRUS

What *happened* here?

TORI

Nothing! Mom didn't touch a thing!

Tori navigates her clutter to a window large enough to stand in. The rounded-edged window hole is sculpted into the wall.

TORI (CONT'D)

I'm telling you, the airship's so cool. If you squint, you can see the landing site from here.

Avani steps over to a cleaner part of the floor. Cirrus cranes her neck out the door, checking for eavesdroppers.

AVANI

Tori, we need to talk.

TORI

Okay, I'm sorry I lied about how we all met, but I didn't want to worry Mom.

AVANI

She mentioned exporting food.

Tori opens her window. A fresh BREEZE hits, kicking up some papers and dust.

TORI

Yeah, so? It's what a big organized polis does.

Cirrus COUGHS quietly at the dust. Avani steps forward in a flare of righteous indignation.

AVANI

Tori, the people of Rannom were forced to rely entirely on imports for their *god-given right* to food. This polis has a massive food surplus *and* an airship for easy delivery. Isn't that very... convenient?

Tori stares off-screen at Avani. A convenient LONG BREEZE hits her, blowing her hair softly yet dramatically.

Cirrus looks toward the breeze and flicks her wrist at it.

The breeze dies. Tori speaks very evenly, very controlled.

TORI

There are other food sources in this part of the peninsula.

AVANI

But none are "big and organized" enough to keep a foreign polis alive while suffering no shortages at home, are they?

Tori looks to Cirrus for backup. Cirrus looks away.

TORI

Can you believe this crap, Cirrus?

CIRRUS

Tori... the last thing I want to do is get between a mother and daughter, but Avani has a point.

SERIES OF PHOTOS

Cirrus narrates her argument over a few illustrative black-and-white photograph shots. The presentation is a reference to flashbacks in the *Phoenix Wright* video game series.

1). Tori speaks about stopping at Rannom in the last scene.

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

During dinner, Karrun reacted strangely to the word "Rannom."

2). Karrun's nostrils flare. We didn't see this before.

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

When she heard that, she inhaled sharply like she was surprised. I only noticed it because I can feel all the air around me.

3). Tori speaks to Karrun in the Throne Room. Avani and Cirrus sit within sight.

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

She didn't do that *before* dinner when you told her that you once visited Rannom years ago. So, the *time* and not the *place* was what surprised her.

4). SIR BEAU stews in his tiled prison cell.

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

And no wonder. Even if we hadn't overthrown him, Sir Beau and his men would've been hard to miss.

INT. CITADEL - TORI'S ROOM - NIGHT

Cirrus gestures at Tori, off-screen. Avani stands to Cirrus's right.

CIRRUS

Your mother must have reacted because she reasoned that, since we were where he was last week, we at least knew about him!

Tori THRUSTS an index finger at Cirrus, continuing the *Phoenix Wright* references.

TORI

Hold it! So what? Maybe she just heard about Sir Beau and was concerned for us.

Avani scratches her chin.

AVANI

Then why did she immediately change the subject instead of expressing that concern? I think it's because she didn't want to bring up Sir Beau at all.

Cirrus holds her fists to her hips, arms akimbo.

CIRRUS

Right. Even if you ignore the orichalcum-for-food issue, knowing the exact travel schedule of a mobster and his cronies is pretty suspicious!

Tori draws back and clutches at her right arm.

TORI

Sh... shut up...

AVANI

You're smart, Tori, and your mother knows it. If she thought you knew about Sir Beau, then she must have thought you might suspect her of being his boss!

(thrusts finger)

That's why she reacted!

Tori REACTS as if struck. She leans on the window ledge behind her and CLENCHES her teeth.

Tori stays by the window, the floor clutter forming a gulf between her and her friends.

TORI

Mom has been nothing but nice,
and this is how you thank her? I
can't believe you two.

Cirrus looks away again.

CIRRUS

Look. I'm only concerned that
your mother might not be now who
you knew her to be then. Why
don't we back off to the guest
room and let you get used to
being home?

Tori turns around to look out of her window, sour.

TORI

Whatever. See you tomorrow.

Avani and Cirrus exit. Cirrus runs a hand through her short
hair-tendrils, visibly frustrated.

Tori stares out her window. We see her from behind.

Tori's expression is hardened, yet her chin QUIVERS subtly.
She turns her head and SQUEEZES her eyes shut, squeezing out
a couple tears in the process.

TORI (CONT'D)

Just no way...

Tori's room is high up in the citadel, judging from how far
we can see. Outside the walls sits a large paved circle and
three large hangars connected to the city via a thin road.

INT. KARRUN'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Our view of the circle has changed in angle and altitude.
Karrun's muscular hand leans on the frame of a huge window.

We see her from behind -- naked, sleek, and inhumanly strong
at a glance. Her pose recalls King Leonidas in his bedroom in
the movie 300.

KARRUN

What a contemptible coincidence.
Of all the times to return, of
all the routes to take, she
chose *then* and went *there*.

The rest of the room is surprisingly bare, save for two
dressers, a massive wardrobe, and a raiza-sized Jacuzzi.

Two male raiza, her consorts SOMER and ROFUN, recline in the
water, also naked. They're gray-on-white twin brothers, but
Rofun somehow looks more mature.

ROFUN

What will you do if Torrent
suspects you?

SOMER

Yeah, hon, what? I mean...
(subtitled raizan)

**If she doesn't love you, then
she might not do it when you
finally ask her.**

KARRUN

(turns around)
Tori does love me. Her heart
won't suspect me, but given what
she surely knows, her brain may.
(thin smile)
Therefore, I need to make her
heart override her brain.

EXT. EAST GRANBRIDGE - FIRE DISTRICT - DAY

The sun is up. The southern quarter-wedge of East Granbridge
is mostly a tapestry of wires hanging between switching
stations and red brick buildings.

A slick black limousine, vintage-styled yet electric-powered,
drives down a lonely street in the district.

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

I already invited Tori and her
friends to the landing site.

KARRUN'S LIMO

Tori and Karrun sit together in the back of the limo. Avani and Cirrus sit together across from them and pay attention to the windows. Tori's shirt has a bulge in the left side.

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

If her friends should happen to die there tomorrow, then I will comfort her heart as only a mother can and keep her undivided love.

Somer drives, wearing what can only be a chauffeur's uniform.

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

Somer. Rofun. You will assist.

Karrun looks right at him in the rear-view mirror.

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

That is, *if* you want to keep *my* undivided love.

Somer keeps his eyes on the road, smiling conspiratorially.

EXT. FIRE DISTRICT PRECINCT BUILDING - DAY

A large number of OFFICERS -- mostly human, some raiza, a couple lurutt -- stand outside a precinct building in the Fire District. A few dire kiwis stand among the parked cars.

Tom and Cor SALUTE someone off-screen.

TOM

Mounted Officers Serveau and Corvus reporting from Central HQ!

COR

When can we start culling the scavengers?

The brown-on-white raiza SERGEANT dismissively waves at them.

SERGEANT

Not just yet. We're waiting on--

HUMAN OFFICER (O.S.)

--It's Chief Rofun! He's here!

Rofun disembarks a police car from the driver's side. He wears what can only be a police chief's uniform.

Every officer in attendance takes notice and SALUTES him.

Rofun waves them down and SHOUTS his orders militarily.

ROFUN

Listen *up!* New strategy, Archon Karrun's orders! You are all to take *defensive* posts in the event that the monsters hit the city. The airship crew will handle them at the landing site, so under *no* circumstances will you approach it! Is that *clear?*

EXT. FIRE DISTRICT GATE - DAY

Karrun's limo passes under a majestic red-and-orange-painted archway in the southern wall of East Granbridge.

The road cuts through tall grass to reach the landing site. Three wide hangars border the site like fat, stubby fingers off a hand.

The turtle-shaped airship is visible far in the distance, if only the size of a dot.

INT. LANDING SITE FIELD - KARRUN'S LIMO - DAY

Tori excitedly clenches her left hand over her right fist. The limo abruptly SLOWS to a stop, jostling everyone inside.

Somer CLENCHES the wheel.

SOMER

Uh, Ma'am Archon? Got a problem.

KARRUN

What is it?

LANDING SITE ROAD

Two strong-looking LION-MANED WOLVES stand in the way of the limo, staring right at it.

KARRUN'S LIMO

Everyone has repositioned to see them through the windshield. Somer HONKS the horn, to no effect.

TORI

Lion-wolves?

KARRUN

Lately they've equated cars and the airship with food. We'll have to destroy them.

AVANI

Kill them? But they're only hungry!

KARRUN

And we are made of meat.

The lion-wolves begin stalking towards the limo.

KARRUN (CONT'D)

Miss Cirrus, if you could, take miss Avani and put down any around the landing site. Tori and I will clear the road.

Cirrus stares at Karrun for a moment.

LANDING SITE ROAD

A passenger door BLOWS OPEN. Cirrus (wind tiger) LEAPS out and FLIES up, Avani clinging tight.

One of the lion-wolves circles around to the open door. Karrun's arm greets it with a powerful PUNCH.

The poor animal STUMBLES backwards. Karrun disembarks and KICKS it in the throat, knocking it off-screen.

She steps towards the other lion-wolf, CRACKING her knuckles. Tori and Somer leave the limo.

KARRUN

Search the grass, please.

Karrun RUSHES the lion-wolf. It LEAPS at her.

FIGHTING SOUNDS come from off-screen. Tori lifts her shirt and pulls out her knife strapped to her side, which had been the bulge, before running off into the grass.

Once Tori leaves, Somer sneakily pulls a long, curved dagger with a navy-blue hilt and back from his coat. He holds it in his teeth and begins unbuttoning the coat.

LANDING SITE

Cirrus flies low towards the paved circular landing site.

Cirrus lands near the rim. Avani hops off her back.

Two more LION-WOLVES stalk out of the grass around the rim.

Avani pulls her pale green mythril ingot from a skirt pocket.

AVANI

They're innocent. No killing.

Wind begins to whip around Cirrus.

CIRRUS (V.O.)

You're no fun sometimes.

Wind WHIRLS OUTWARD with a FLAP of Cirrus's collarbone wings.

Avani STRIKES the ground with her flat mythril ingot.

One of the lion-wolves gets BLOWN AWAY into the grass. The other gets KNOCKED AWAY by angular RISING EARTH.

Four more lion-wolves enter the other side of the site between two hangars and begin RUNNING towards us.

Avani and Cirrus turn around, ready for them. Avani HITS the ground with her ingot --

An angled ridge BURSTS UP in the middle of the site, too far away to knock the lion-wolves back but close enough to block another wind blast from Cirrus.

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

Hey, they're not *that* close!

AVANI

I -- I tried! That's as far as I
could summon it!

The lion-wolves JUMP over the ridge. A wind blast KNOCKS them
into it and rolls them back over it.

CIRRUS (V.O.)

Fine. I'll take the ones outside
your range.

Cirrus FLIES UP.

Somer's extended dorsal fin pokes up above the tall grass. It
submerges and he peeks his head above the grass, still biting
down on his dagger.

Cirrus flies above and around the landing site, summoning
down blasts of wind to knock away the animals. The airship
has grown to the size of a golf ball in the distance.

Somer takes the dagger and points it at Cirrus.

Cirrus, up in the air, begins SWEATING. Her wind blasts take
most of the sweat with them.

Somer presses the back of the blade with his free hand.

KARRUN (V.O.)

They're very simple. There's
Distance, how far away you can
summon an element...

Avani's ingot STRIKES the ground --

Summoning a PILLAR underneath a lion-wolf and knocking it off
its feet.

Avani stands up. Another lion-wolf LEAPS at her and CRASHES
into a perfectly-timed RISING EARTH WALL.

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

Depth, how much of an element
you can summon until fatigued...

Avani stands barefoot on her ingot, her sandals lying nearby. She grabs an edge of the ingot in her toes and passes it up to her hand --

Just in time to STRIKE the earth wall and summon another PILLAR to knock away the first lion-wolf.

LANDING SITE FIELD

Tori stalks through the tall grass, knife in hand.

TORI

(muttered)

Attacked by monsters and she takes it in stride. They're wrong. Mom hasn't changed.

Tori freezes at the sound of RUSTLING. She FALLS TO HER STOMACH just in time to avoid a lion-wolf LEAPING full-speed at where her head was.

Tori grips her knife.

The lion-wolf lands. The grass all around it spontaneously WITHERS. The lion-wolf turns around and a STREAM OF WATER goes straight into its nose and mouth.

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

Detail, at which Tori excels...

The lion-wolf CONVULSES, drowning in the dry grass.

Tori kneels, pointing her knife. Her hand TREMBLES.

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

And Desire, the *will* to summon.

Water STREAMS out of the lion-wolf's mouth and SMASHES into its side, knocking it down.

Tori stands up, walks over to the lion-wolf and taps at it with the toe of her hiking boot. It breathes shallowly.

AVANI (O.S.)

(distant)

Cirrus!

Tori looks toward the landing site.

LANDING SITE

Cirrus plummets. Her skin is slick with sweat.

Avani SPRINTS towards her, still barefoot. She halts a short distance away and STRIKES the ground with her ingot.

The ground RUMBLES and a large section of pavement CRUMBLES into gravel, which Cirrus squarely HITS.

Far off in the grass, Somer slowly pushes his knife as if driving it into Cirrus's heart.

Cirrus breathes shallowly. Some of the gravel sticks to her.

CIRRUS (V.O.)

Must be... getting old...

Avani runs the rest of the way to her. A lion-wolf pursues.

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

(lifts head)

Avani! Behind you!

The lion-wolf LEAPS at Avani.

LANDING SITE ROAD

Karrun reclines on the hood and windshield of her limo, shins crossed and hands behind her head, clothes ruffled but otherwise fine.

Avani SCREAMS in the distance. Karrun smiles.

KARRUN

And nature takes its blind
course, smiling upon nothing but
the clever and strong.

LANDING SITE

The lion-wolf has Avani pinned to the ground with her left forearm in its mouth, yet has drawn no blood. The lion-wolf GROWLS, not unlike wrestling for a chew toy.

Avani glares up at it, teeth clenched. Her right hand GRIPS her ingot tightly.

AVANI

This meat is too tough for you,
isn't it?

Cirrus's breathing is labored. She has stopped sweating.

The lion-wolf slackens its jaws and BITES DOWN HARD, finally piercing Avani's skin.

Avani YELLS OUT in pain and STRIKES the lion-wolf in the shoulder with her ingot.

A loud, muffled SNAP comes from the lion-wolf's body and it falls limp on her.

Somer scowls in the grass. He re-aims his knife.

Avani gets to her feet. The remaining lion-wolves, six of them, surround her and Cirrus.

AVANI (CONT'D)

Forgive me, all of you. If you
don't leave this place, I'll...
I'll be forced... to...

Avani sways, light-headed. She looks down.

A suspiciously large amount of blood drains from the light puncture wounds in her left arm.

Somer pushes his knife forward.

Avani sways again, takes a few wobbly steps and collapses.

The lion-wolves close in.

One of them suddenly YELPS from the impact of a WATER STREAM against its ribs.

Tori walks casually towards the circle of lion-wolves.

TORI

Sorry, pups, but my traveling
buddies aren't for eating.

Somer frowns and lowers his dagger.

The lion-wolves collectively GROWL at Tori. One or two inch towards Avani and Cirrus. Tori keeps walking.

The lion-wolf that Tori struck suddenly charges her.

Tori swings her knife --

The leftover puddle springs to life, rising up as a stream --

Which BLUDGEONS the charging lion-wolf over the head.

Tori directs the stream to drench the lion-wolf and SHOOT OUT at another one larger than before.

Tori directs the stream to SMASH non-lethally into the rest of the lion-wolves, one by one. It grows in size and width each time, suggesting it dehydrates what it hits.

Cirrus watches from the gravel. Her breathing normalizes. She looks up.

The airship is now softball-sized.

Cirrus drops her head to the gravel, exhausted, as heavy SPLASHING and GROWLING and other battle sounds continue. She blinks and looks at something.

Off in the distance, Somer ducks back into the grass.

Tori holds her knife at a swirling man-sized blob of water, her summoning being the only thing keeping it upright.

TORI (CONT'D)

Had enough yet?

The lion-wolves PANT furiously.

Tori twists her knife and the blob LURCHES forward.

The lion-wolves turn and plod away.

Tori releases the blob and lets it SPLASH. Dozens of gallons of water rush across the partially-broken landing site.

The water hits the lion-wolves' feet and they run away, WHIMPERING.

The water also hits Avani and Cirrus. Cirrus laps some up.

AVANI'S P.O.V.:

Avani opens her eyes. The world is blurry. Tori looms.

TORI (CONT'D)

(overdramatic sigh)

You insult my mom and yet I save
your life. You're lucky you're
so rare.

(crouches)

Here, you're bleeding all over
yourself, give me your arm.

Avani groggily looks at her arm as Tori seizes it and touches
her knife blade to the puncture wounds. The blood dries.

AVANI

Tell your mother...

Tori looks from Avani's arm to Avani's superior smirk.

AVANI (CONT'D)

As I fell, I prayed for rescue.

Tori smiles back.

TORI

Dare you to tell her that
yourself.

Karrun and Somer watch from the rim of the landing site,
unseen by Tori. Karrun seizes Somer by the arm and YANKS him
towards her. They speak raizan, always **subtitled**.

KARRUN

**Exactly why did you flee instead
of finishing them?**

SOMER

I, I thought Tori would notice!

Karrun SQUEEZES Somer's arm. Somer bends sideways.

SOMER (CONT'D)

Ah, ow, ow, I'm sorry!

KARRUN

**We are going to discuss this
very thoroughly later.**

SOMER

(puppy-eyed)

Do you still love me, ma'am?

Up in the sky, the airship has come close enough to be about the size of a basketball.

On closer inspection, the airship's sea turtle face is smiling.

FADE OUT