Here Be Dragons - Episode Five
"Perfect Stranger"
by
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Black Lace and Laser Beams
Productions
SCENE ONE

INT. Corridor, U.S.S. Rusalka - DAY

Pip is crouching outside of Sick Bay, staring intently at the door.

PIP
Come on... Come on...

Harper rounds the corner, nose buried in Legends of the Deep, and promptly trips over Pip.

HARPER
(overlapping) What the-

PIP
(overlapping) Ow!

The girls disentangle themselves.

HARPER
Pippa, what are you doing?

PIP
Nothing!

HARPER
Nothing...

PIP
Mostly nothing...

HARPER
In the middle of the hallway?

PIP
Um... yes?

HARPER
You’re not waiting for Dr. Atlas, so you can jump out and scare her, are you?

PIP
What? No! I mean... I am waiting for her but... it’s more like... like a secret mission.

HARPER
You’re spying on her?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

PIP
Spying sounds so creepy! I’m just... investigating...

HARPER
You’re hiding behind a wall, staring at her door and... are those snacks?! Pip how long have you been here?

PIP
Only ten or eleven hours...

HARPER
Pip!

PIP
Okay, FINE I’m spying on her, but ONLY because she deserves it! She’s being super sketchy... She’s been in the lab ALL DAY. I had to go to the bathroom **twice** but she hasn’t opened that door once in the whole time I’ve been here!

HARPER
How do you know she didn’t leave when you went to the bathroom?

PIP
(continuing as though she hasn’t heard) And she’s always up in the morning before everyone else... and still SO busy when everyone else is going to bed! But there are only four of us... Nobody’s injured, or sick, so what is she DOING all day?

HARPER
Reading, probably. She’s just a bit anti-social...

PIP
She’s up to something. I just know it.

HARPER
Like what?

PIP
I don’t know! Human experiments! Breeding sea monsters, or developing a biochemical weapon of mass destruction!

(CONTINUED)
HARPER
Has anyone ever told you, you have an overactive imagination?

PIP
No such thing!

HARPER
Actually-

PIP
I’VE GOT IT! She’s got a secret laboratory!

HARPER
(laughing) What?

PIP
A secret lab! Of course! It all makes sense! It’s so simple, yet so brilliant! We never see her around the ship, because she’s hidden in a secret lab, running her insane experiments!

HARPER
Just because she’s a scientist, doesn’t mean she’s a mad scientist, you know that right?

PIP
Then where is she all the time?

HARPER
Working! In her lab!

PIP
But which one?

HARPER
Pip, where would you even PUT a secret lab on a submarine?

PIP
Under the regular lab! Or behind a secret door!

HARPER
A secret door.

PIP
We have a library and a game room... it’a not SO impossible... I (MORE)
PIP (cont’d)
bet this ship’s riddled with secret passage ways, and unmapped rooms!

HARPER
Maybe... Or, she left when you went to the bathroom, and you’re sleep deprived and staring at the closed door to an empty room.

PIP
Oh, she’s in there alright... with her... beakers and her... microscope!

HARPER
If you wanna know what she’s doing so badly, why don’t you just knock on the door and ask her?

PIP
NO! It’s too dangerous. She can’t know I’m onto her. You have to help me find out what she’s up to.

HARPER
You’re nuts, you know that?

PIP
Harper, I need you! You’re the only one I can trust! ... and Commander Scarlett would probably just yell at me.

HARPER
And what if Atlas isn’t up to anything?

PIP
Alright, fine. If you think she’s so innocent... then what’s she a doctor OF?

HARPER
I... I don’t know... Medicine. Marine biology... Probably...

PIP
If she’s REALLY a doctor, then why doesn’t she wear a lab coat?

(CONTINUED)
HARPER
I guess she thinks leather’s more comfortable?

PIP
And she works for Killian...

HARPER
We ALL work for Killian, Pip.

PIP
Yeah, but she works WITH him. They’re so... friendly... That’s not weird at all to you?

HARPER
Probably not weird in the way you mean... But I guess we just have different tastes.

PIP
Come on, Harper! You’re not even the TINIEST bit curious what she might be doing in there?

HARPER
I mean...

PIP
She’s weird! I thought you liked weird things? Besides! You could be saving the world...

HARPER
... Okay, fine. But ONLY to prove to you that Dr. Atlas is a perfectly normal, unsociable person... and because if she has a secret lab, it’s only fair that we know about it. AND you have to promise if we’re doing this, we’re not doing anything crazy, alright? We’re just... keeping an eye on her. As... coworkers. Casually. Nothing... weird.

PIP
Right!

HARPER
Because we’re curious. Curious coworkers. It’s not spying...
PIP
Super casual. Nothing to see here... just... two gals... sitting in the hallway... watching a door.

HARPER
Casually.

PIP
Casually.

CUT TO:

2 SCENE TWO

INT. Records Room, U.S.S. Rusalka - About 30 Minutes Later

Harper and Pip are digging through one of the filing cabinets.

HARPER
This is so illegal.

PIP
We have as much right to look at the ship’s records as anybody else on board.

HARPER
Is that why you used a crowbar to break it open?

PIP
What do you want me to do, ask Commander Scarlett?

HARPER
You don’t have to ask anybody, you’re the chief engineer! You have a master key!

PIP
... I like to be creative. Now come on! The blueprints have to be in here somewhere...

HARPER
If it’s a secret lab, why would it show up on blueprints?
PIP
’Cause Killian’s the one who built it, duh. He’s too confident. And who looks at blueprints in this day and age anyway?

HARPER
Well, somebody must, ’cause they’re not in here.

PIP
What?!

HARPER
See for yourself.

PIP
No! Who comes into the records room at this time of day, and takes the ship’s blueprints?!! What could you possibly want with those, in the middle of the afternoon?!!

HARPER
Oh my god... Pip...

Harper pulls a file out.

PIP
Is that... Dr. Atlas’s file?

HARPER
Yup.

PIP
We’re not allowed to look at that...

HARPER
Nope.

She opens it and starts to flip through its contents. Pip leans over to read over her shoulder.

PIP
Oh... wow... Is it just me or does she look really good with her hair pulled up like that?

HARPER
I know...

(CONTINUED)
PIP
Do you think she’d teach me how to
do that? I don’t know if it would
curl like that though...

HARPER
Pip.

PIP
Right! Focus... Sorry.

HARPER
Doesn’t say what school she went
to... And... this is weird... her
family information is all scratched
out... Holy crap, how many
languages does this woman speak?

SCARLETT
What the hell are you two doing?

Pip and Harper jump as though they’ve received an electric
shock, and the file slips from Harper’s fingers, the papers
scattering everywhere. Commander Scarlett has entered the
room behind them, and stares at them with her arms crossed,
eyebrow raised. Harper scrambles to pick up the papers.

PIP
Ah!

HARPER
Commander Scarlett!

SCARLETT
Officer Bennett. Officer Campbell.

HARPER
Um... hi...

SCARLETT
Hi. Care to tell me why you’re on
the floor?

The girls exchange a look.

HARPER
I’m... stretching?

SCARLETT
Uh-huh. Officer Campbell, is
that... a crowbar?
PIP
Um... yes?

SCARLETT
Why?

PIP
For... leg stretches?

SCARLETT
Oh, yes, of course. How silly of me. So what’s this?

She bends down and collects a few pieces of paper.

HARPER
No, wait!

Too late.

beat.

SCARLETT
This is Dr. Atlas’s personal file.

HARPER
... yes.

SCARLETT
Do you have clearance to be reading this?

PIP
... no.

SCARLETT
Then why are you reading it?

PIP
Because... we wanted to... to...

HARPER
... to see if... she wrote down her secret stretching routine? Because... I mean... have you seen those arms? Hah... talk about... good stretching...

SCARLETT
Are you two spying on her?
HARPER
What?! HAH! No!

PIP
Spying has an entirely negative connotation! We prefer casual browsing.

SCARLETT
Well did you find anything?

Pip and Harper exchange another look. They must have misheard.

HARPER
What?

SCARLETT
Did you find anything? Has she been sending secret coded messages? Carrying around suspicious, covered items? Oh! Did you find the entrance to her secret lab?!

PIP
You know about the secret lab?!

SCARLETT
Well... I mean... I’ve never seen it. But where else could she possibly go all day? She’s always ‘working,’ but what does she ACTUALLY do?

HARPER
Am I the only one who thinks she might actually just be working?

PIP
Yes.

SCARLETT
Don’t be naive, Harper. On a ship full of strangers, nobody’s going to tell you half of who they really are. ... Okay, except Pip. All we know about Atlas is what she tells us, and so far, that hasn’t been much.

PIP
Plus, she’s being SUPER weird. She brought this on herself.

(Continued)
SCARLETT
SO. Details. What have you got so far?

HARPER
Uh... Nothing yet. She went into the lab a while ago, but she hasn’t come out yet...

SCARLETT
You sure she didn’t leave while you two were in the bathroom or something?

PIP
(overlapping) YES!

HARPER
(overlapping, but more under her breath) No.

SCARLETT
Mm. Then we can’t be sure where she is... BUT maybe if you could be assured she’d be somewhere else for, oh, I don’t know... twenty minutes or so? Say, up on the bridge, dealing with some sort of medical emergency? It might give you the perfect opportunity to do some in depth sleuthing.

PIP
A distraction! Perfect!

HARPER
Wait a minute! Commander, you’re endorsing this? We’re not even getting yelled at? You’re helping?

SCARLETT
(laughing) Oh GOD no! You’re going to be breaking into Dr. Atlas’s lab without probable cause, or her permission, AND you’ve been reading files that are WAY above your pay grade. That’s illegal. I’d never let you do something THAT stupid in a million years. In fact, I haven’t seen you all day. So if you Wonder Twins get yourself in trouble, that’s YOUR problem.
PIP
(gasps excitedly) Harper, we’ve been disavowed!

HARPER
You know that only happens when the higher ups think you’re probably going to die, right?

SCARLETT
It’s a sacrifice I’m willing to make.

HARPER
Great.

SCARLETT
But if you find out ANYTHING, you come straight to me, got it?

PIP
Got it! Ooh this is so exciting!

SCARLETT
Now scram, both of you. I’ll deal with this. You two weren’t here.

Scarlett moves to pick up the rest of the files. Pip leaves, but Harper lingers for a moment.

HARPER
Commander... What were you doing down here anyway?

SCARLETT
Just some casual browsing.

She pulls a set of blueprints from her pocket and carefully sets them back to where they are supposed to be. She smiles at Harper, then raises an eyebrow.

HARPER
You took the blueprints?

SCARLETT
Of course not. They’ve been here all day. Unless... did you see anything, Officer Bennett?

HARPER
... No, commander.
SCARLETT
Thought so. Run along.

Harper eyes her commander for a moment, then turns and leaves. Scarlett moves to collect the rest of Atlas’s file from the floor, and starts to riffle through it.

SCARLETT (cont’d)
... Jesus, how many languages does this woman speak?

CUT TO:

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SCENE THREE

INT. Corridor, U.S.S. Rusalka - DAY

Harper and Pip are crouched in the hallway outside of Sick Bay. Both girls duck as the door swings open, and we hear Atlas exiting.

ATLAS
Yes, commander, I’m on my way up now. (voice fading, as she moves down the hall) Just lie back... try to keep your eyes closed.

PIP
Now?

HARPER
Wait for it... Okay, now! Go! Go!

The girls wait just long enough for Atlas’s footsteps to disappear down the hall, before they race across to the unattended lab.

PIP
WAIT!

HARPER
What?! What’s wrong?

PIP
What if it’s booby trapped?

HARPER
(exasperated) Pip!

PIP
She could have all kinds of security set ups in there! Lasers, or trip wires, or poison gas, or—

(CONTINUED)
HARPER
Pip, she can’t DO that, it’s the closest thing to a hospital we have on board!

PIP
...Oh... Right... But what if-

Harper rolls her eyes and pushes open the door. Pip gasps, and then attempts to hold her breath, waiting for the sudden burst of poisonous gas! Harper raises an eyebrow.

HARPER
You coming or what?

PIP
... Yeah, okay.

INT. Sick Bay, U.S.S. Rusalka - Moments Later

The girls duck into the lab. A small, black radio sits on one of the counters, playing faint jazzy music in the background (preferably La Vie En Rose).

PIP (cont’d)
It’s so... normal.

HARPER
Told you so.

PIP
I mean it’s not even creepy or anything... it just... looks like a doctor’s office...

Pip looks so crestfallen, Harper can’t help but to feel just a little bit guilty.

HARPER
Well... I mean... yeah, on the surface. But that’s just what she WANTS us to think, right?

PIP
I guess

HARPER
Let’s split up. I’ll check out the wall panels, and you see if there’s a secret switch on the bookcase or something. Careful with that radio.

(CONTINUED)
PIP
(brightening) On it.

They go about their separate tasks, Harper tapping the walls to see if they’re hollow, and Pip climbing up on one of the counters and pulling down all the books.

PIP (cont’d)
Nothing here...

HARPER
Me neither. Check the filing cabinets, I’ll take a look at these shelves here.

They separate again. By this point, the radio has stopped playing, but neither of them have noticed.

HARPER (cont’d)
(picking up bottles) Look these... Chloroform... Formaldehyde... Dimethyl Sulfoxide... Sodium Hydroxide? What kind of doctor just leaves cyanide in a glass front cabinet?

PIP
She’s got files on all of us down here! (flipping through) ... This... There’s stuff on my parents in here... Why would she have this? Why does she need this?!

HARPER
Does Scarlett know about this? She can’t know about this...

PIP
We’ve got to tell her.

HARPER
But what do we do in the meantime about-

ATLAS
Well now, what do we have here?

Dr. Atlas has silently entered the room, and is now standing in the doorway. Her dark eyes flick from one girl to the other, and she smiles.
ATLAS (cont’d)
Trespassers! Dear me, what am I going to do with you?

Pip lets out a small whimper. Atlas closes the door, which closes with a noise like the shutting of a tomb.

ATLAS (cont’d)
Pippa, you look a little pale. Why don’t you have a seat.

PIP
(meekly) I’m okay.

ATLAS
I said sit down. Harper, you too.

Pip sits abruptly on the floor. Harper slowly goes to sit on one of the examination tables.

ATLAS (cont’d)
There... Now that we’re all comfortable-

HARPER
Shouldn’t we get the Commander?

ATLAS
Commander Scarlett is not at all well at the moment... I see no need to involve her in this.

PIP
(whispering to Harper) Oh my god... She murdered the commander!

ATLAS
What?

HARPER
We’re not afraid of you!

PIP
I am.

HARPER
No, Pip, you’re not! Because we know what you’re doing down here, Dr. Atlas! And you can’t kill us both!
PIP
Yes she can!

HARPER
Pippa, shut up!

ATLAS
You... You think I’m going... to try and kill you? Why on earth would I try to kill you?

Harper and Pip exchange a look.

HARPER
Well... maybe not KILL us... We know about your secret lab!

ATLAS
My... what?

HARPER
We know you’re up to something!

ATLAS
Like what exactly?

PIP
Something evil! You’re always sneaking around, and ’working’...

ATLAS
I didn’t realize doing my job thoroughly was a crime.

PIP
Yeah? So why do you have files on us, and information on our families down here? That’s confidential!

ATLAS
Those are medical files. I have to have that information in case one of you gets sick, and there are some conditions that are inherited.

PIP
Where’s Commander Scarlett?!

ATLAS
Up on the bridge! She said she was feeling faint... But I forgot my thermometer, so I had to come back down here.
HARPER
Why do you have all these creepy solutions in your cabinets? Last time I checked, doctors don’t need to dose their patients with Sodium Hydroxide!

ATLAS
Bio-Chemistry is a passion of mine... The items in the standing cabinet are for recreational use! I was hoping, if we got another chance to look at those creatures, I might be able to take a more in depth look at them... And for that, I need powerful solvents, and solutions to protect the specimens from decay...

HARPER
Oh...

PIP
But that doesn’t explain where you GO all day! Why do you just disappear, and never spend any time with us?

ATLAS
I... I didn’t realize anyone wanted me to... You all seemed so... settled, together. I thought it might be best if I just kept to my work...

PIP
Oh...

There is an uncomfortable pause.

HARPER
Dr. Atlas... We-... we’re sorry.

PIP
Yeah... sorry...

ATLAS
Did you really think I was just... going to murder you all in your sleep?
HARPER
... No... Not really.

PIP
We just wanted to know where you go all the time. What you’re doing...

ATLAS
Reading, usually. And keeping the lab in order... I have a lot of books.

HARPER
Do you-... We can help you clean up, if-

ATLAS
That’s quite alright. I’ll take care of it.

PIP
You sure?

ATLAS
Yes. You two run along... If you wouldn’t mind just... telling Commander Scarlett I’ll be with her shortly? I need a moment.

HARPER
Right... Of course...

ATLAS
Pippa? Harper? ... I would like us to be friends. And as I said, I don’t think there’s... any real need to involve the commander in all of this.

PIP
Thank you...

HARPER
See you at dinner?

ATLAS
Yes, I think so.

Harper and Pip exit the lab. Dr. Atlas watches them go, and once the door is closed again, she breathes out a long, slow sigh.
ATLAS (cont’d)
That was... too close.

She moves across the lab, and fiddles with the controls of the black radio on the counter. The music starts up again, and is quickly replaced by static and a sort of scratching sound as she adjusts the channels.

ATLAS (cont’d)
How much of that did you catch?

KILLIAN
(slightly muffled through the radio) Enough. That was quite the performance, Natalya. Not a dry eye left in the house.

ATLAS
Shut up. ... Did they-

KILLIAN
No harm done. The feed came up as soon as they tripped the sensors around the door. I had eyes on them the whole time.

ATLAS
And?

KILLIAN
The lab is fine. Your work is perfectly safe. They didn’t even get close.

ATLAS
Good.

beat.

KILLIAN
You alright, darling?

ATLAS
I’m... I’m fine. It doesn’t matter.

KILLIAN
You want them to like you.

ATLAS
That’s not my job. Whether they like me or not, I’m here to protect them, not to make friends. I don’t have to be social.
KILLIAN
It couldn’t hurt.

ATLAS
Maybe... (pause) Any news?

KILLIAN
Head further south, you might have an easier time picking up a trail the warmer the waters.

ATLAS
And how’s-

KILLIAN
Recalcitrant. But she’ll come around, now she has a bit of incentive.

ATLAS
(uncomfortable) Right... I... I should go. I’ll check in with you soon.

KILLIAN
You’d better. Things here are progressing quickly, Natalya. Don’t keep me waiting too long.

Killian’s voice fades back into static, and the music picks up again. Atlas stares at the radio for a moment longer, then begins to gather up the books and papers scattered across the lab.

FADE OUT.

END.