Here Be Dragons - Episode Nine

"The Ahklut"

by

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Black Lace and Laser Beams Productions
SCENE ONE

INT. Ops, U.S.S. Rusalka – DAY

The crew is gathered together in Ops. Scarlett is standing over Harper’s shoulder, studying the navigational display.

SCARLETT
Check it again.

HARPER
Commander–

SCARLETT
Check. The charts. Again.

HARPER
(sighs) Running navigational software and sonar sweep... Again.

We hear her typing, flicking a few switches.

HARPER (cont’d)
... Sonar is still nonfunctional. (under her breath) No surprise there. (louder) And analogue record of our coordinates is the same.

SCARLETT
Officer Campbell, what’s the status on that diagnostic?

PIP
Ship’s computer system is running normally, commander. Ophelia’s run three self checks, and I’ve done two manually. There’s no problem with the Rusalka’s hardware or software.

SCARLETT
There HAS to be. Look at these coordinates! Look. Right now, we should be here. See? There should be islands, here, and here. Somewhere to stock up on supplies, refuel. But you look out the window? Nothing. Just open ocean. We’re approximately 390,000 square miles further south than we should be. Which means we’ve been running off course for... days. Maybe weeks. And Ophelia hasn’t caught (MORE)
SCARLETT (cont’d)
it. (beat. for once, not in a rage)
It has to be a problem with
engineering. I need you to tell me
what you did.

PIP
I... I-

ATLAS
Pip didn’t do anything. I did.

PIP
Dr. Atlas-

ATLAS
It’s alright. (turning to Scarlett)
... I’ve been making adjustments to
the heading for the past few weeks.
Every night on the Graveyard Shift.

beat.

SCARLETT
... You? ...What?

BOOM! The whole ship shakes and there is a crunching,
scrapping sound as the bottom of the hull hits something.

ATLAS
Is everyone okay?!

There is a general groan of ascent as the crew pushes
themselves up from the floor.

HARPER
What the hell was that? Did we hit
something?

PIP
It... it sounded like we’ve run
aground.

We hear a powering down sound. The lights flicker and die.

HARPER
Whoah! Okay, who turned out the
lights.

PIP
Ophelia’s rebooting her systems...
Automatic damage check, it’s a
safety precaution I installed.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

PIP (cont’d)
Everything but life support shuts down after a bad crash so nothing blows up. She should be coming back online in a few minutes...

There is an eerie silence as they wait. Even the engine is quiet.

ATLAS
I think we should take a look outside. See what it was we hit. Get a sense of the damage. ...
Commander?

HARPER
Commander Scarlett, are you okay?

SCARLETT
(deadly calm) What do you mean you’ve been adjusting our heading?

beat.

ATLAS
You really want to do this... now?
(pause) Pip. Harper. Why don’t you two go check out the crash. We’ll be with you in a moment.

The Wonder Twins exchange a glance, then leave the room. We hear the door close behind them. There is a brief pause.

ATLAS (cont’d)
Alright commander. Where would you like to start?

FADE TO:

2 SCENE TWO
INT. Corridor, U.S.S. Rusalka – DAY
Harper and Pip are standing beneath the entry hatch, flashlights in hand.

PIP
Are you sure about this?

HARPER
Sure. We weren’t submerged when we crashed. And we can get a better (MORE)

(CONTINUED)
HARPER (cont’d)
look at the damage from outside.
It’ll at least give us a bit of
light. Hold the flashlight steady
while I open the hatch, will you?

PIP
There was nothing on the radar...

HARPER
Probably just a reef.

PIP
Maybe... (quiet for a moment)
Harper, do you think Commander
Scarlett-

HARPER
Was right? No. I think we’re in a
boat that should’ve been
decommissioned before we were born,
and things are bound to break when
you try to integrate technologies
from different centuries. Don’t
listen to Scarlett, okay? She’s
just... I don’t know... Stressed.
Things have been weird lately. But
you’re doing fine. Things break,
but that’s why we have you around.
She knows that.

She shivers.
Though I don’t think it’d kill you
to do something about the heat.
It’s freezing in here.

PIP
The reboot probably shut off the
central heating. But it shouldn’t
be THIS cold.

HARPER
Yeah, well, as soon as we’re done
outside, I’m getting a sweater.

Harper pushes open the hatch and she and Pip look out. We
hear wind moving across a deserted plane.

PIP
... whoah...

(continued)
HARPER
... How far off course did Scarlett say we were?

CUT TO:

3 SCENE THREE

INT. Ops, U.S.S. Rusalka - Meanwhile

ATLAS
WEEKS of research and calculations! All of the notes I’ve been acquiring, and YOU decide to throw it all down the drain! And for what? To satisfy your army of insecurities?

SCARLETT
We’re here to track down your boyfriend’s little pets, how EXACTLY are we supposed to do that if we don’t cover every square inch of the territory?

ATLAS
But we have a brilliant opportunity to do so much more than that, AND YOU ARE MISSING IT!

SCARLETT
Oh, then BY ALL MEANS, do enlighten me doctor!

The door opens. Harper enters, unnoticed by either of them.

HARPER
Guys...

ATLAS
The fact of the matter is that the closer we have gotten to the center of the Bermuda Triangle, the more of these monsters we find. I have a theory that they are all concentrating there for a reason. And if we can just-

Scarlett starts laughing. She’s either having an epiphany or a total breakdown. Possibly both, and it’s not pretty.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

HARPER
Guys?

ATLAS
It’s. Not. Funny.

SCARLETT
You’re right! It’s not. You’re out of your mind! And you’re either so arrogant, or think I’m so stupid that you honestly thought you could get away with hijacking my ship, to go off chasing fairy tales-

ATLAS
Well you’d know all about that, wouldn’t you, captain.

HARPER
HEY!

SCARLETT AND ATLAS
WHAT?!

HARPER
You need to come outside.

SCARLETT
Are we sinking?

HARPER
Not exactly...

CUT TO:

4 SCENE FOUR

EXT. The Wasteland - DAY

The crew stares out at what looks like hundreds of miles of ice.

ATLAS
What the hell...

PIP
Harper thinks it’s an iceberg. I think it’s Antarctica.

ATLAS
(dazed and only half listening)
That’s not possible...

(CONTINUED)
HARPER
But it’s pretty cool, right? Check it out!

Harper hops down onto the ice, her feet crunching in the snow.

ATLAS
Harper! Get back here!

PIP
It’s okay! It’s totally safe, we’ve already tested it.

ATLAS
It is NOT safe! You don’t know if that thing’s solid or not! How far it goes, or what’s out in that snow! You don’t even know what it’s MADE of!

PIP
Ice?

ATLAS
We’re in the tropics! There are no icebergs or blizzards in the tropics! (rounding on Scarlett) And are you EVER going to have any sort of opinion on this, or am I going to have to deal with this all myself?!

SCARLETT
This is your fault.

ATLAS
What?!

SCARLETT
You. You did this.

ATLAS
Yes. I made an iceberg and a snowstorm appear out of thin air. Brilliant deduction.

SCARLETT
Look at where we are, Atlas! You. You and your stupid theories- You scheme, and you screw around, and for what? You’ve wasted time! You’ve wasted resources! You went (MORE)
SCARLETT (cont’d)
over my head, and your little games have nearly gotten us killed. And now this! You DELIBERATELY sailed us into danger BECAUSE YOU FELT LIKE IT, and have been doing so WITHOUT my consent for I don’t even want to THINK about how long, and with the equipment on the fritz—...
Do you even KNOW where we are?!

beat.

Yeah. That’s what I was afraid of. A NORMAL person might have taken that into consideration. (Captain Mode Activated) We’re turning back. As soon as Ophelia’s done rebooting, we’re heading back. Starting over.

ATLAS
But–

SCARLETT
END OF DISCUSSION. Everybody back inside.

Atlas doesn’t move.
(warning) I said back inside.

ATLAS
(through gritted teeth) I will not let you throw away all of my hard work, just because YOU feel mildly uncomfortable.

SCARLETT
MILDLY UNCOMFORTABLE?!

ATLAS
Yes. Put your big girl panties on, Adrienne. This is what you signed up for. What exactly did you think this little adventure was all about? Stop stalling!

SCARLETT
I’m doing my job!

ATLAS
No, I’M doing your job. Unless otherwise explicitly stated in your military training manual what you
(MORE)
ATLAS (cont’d)
should do, YOU just stand by and
bully the crew. So do us all a
favor, and stay out of my way.
a very long beat.
Atlas has touched a nerve, and Scarlett is actually hurt.

ATLAS (cont’d)
(startled at her own viciousness)
I—... Command—... Adrienne, I—...
I’m... sorry. I didn’t—

SCARLETT
... You know what? Fine.

She hops down onto the ice.

HARPER
Commander Scarlett?

SCARLETT
Fine.

ATLAS
Adrienne, wait!

SCARLETT
Nope! You want my job so bad? Keep it!

Scarlett walks off into the gathering snowstorm. Atlas jumps
down from the ship, followed by Pip.

ATLAS
Adrienne, come back!

HARPER
Where are you going?!

PIP
Commander!

ATLAS
She’ll freeze to death out there.

HARPER
I’ll get her.

She doesn’t wait for an answer, and takes off after
Scarlett.
ATLAS
(exasperated) Harper- HARPER! Get back here!

PIP
... are we just going to let them-

ATLAS
No. Come on. We’ll all freeze together.

PIP
Or not at all... Preferably not at all.

In the distance, we hear Harper shriek.

PIP (cont’d)
Harper?!

They run to her.

PIP (cont’d)
Harper? Where-

HARPER
I’m here! I’m here, I’m okay. Careful, there’s a ledge or—... I just slipped.

ATLAS
Let me see... You’re alright. Nothing broken. This is why we don’t go racing off in the middle of a snowstorm.

HARPER
I lost her.

ATLAS
That’s alright. Pip, get Harper back to the Rusalka in one piece, she’s soaked. Make sure she changes, and then we can work on how to... to... Pippa, are you listening to me?

PIP
It’s a footprint.

HARPER
What?

(CONTINUED)
PIP
The ledge.

ATLAS
It’s a ditch.

PIP
Only if you’re sitting in it. Look.

Atlas and Harper climb out of the depression in the ice. beat.

ATLAS
That... is a very big paw print.

HARPER
... it’s... huge...

PIP
What IS it?

ATLAS
Don’t look at me.

HARPER
I mean... There’s a story...
A ghost story really. Something to explain bodies in the snow, tracks in the ice, people who don’t come home... The Inuit people have this legend about this giant orca, that shape-shifts into a wolf so it can hunt on land and sea... It’s supposed to be the ultimate predator. A brutal, merciless hunter-tracker, that crawls out of the sea devours anything it comes across... They call it the Akhlut.

In the distance, we hear the strange, oddly distorted howl of a wolf.

ATLAS
You two get back to the ship.

PIP
What about-

ATLAS
I will find Commander Scarlett. But you two-
CONTINUED:

HARPER
We're not leaving.

ATLAS
Harper-

Again, the "wolf" howls. It's much, MUCH closer.

beat.

ATLAS (cont’d)
Okay... Okay. On second though, you two stay by me. Stay very... very... close.

FADE TO:

5

SCENE FIVE

EXT. The Wasteland - DAY

Scarlett trudges through the snow. She'd be shivering, but her rage keeps her warm.

SCARLETT
Stupid... Useless... (a truly terrible impression of Atlas) "Oh, look at me! I'm Natalya Atlas! I wear leather jackets and practice medicine like a serial killer with a hacksaw! Nobody's smarter than me! What's that you say, Commander Scarlett? Be a reasonable second in command and just do what you tell me so we can complete our mission objectives without killing anyone? Hm... Well nobody else on the crew is doing that, so I'm not going to either! I think I'll get us all lost and crash the submarine into a freaking iceberg and let everyone freeze to death!" (dropping the impression) Yeah. See how that works out for you, doc. I'll take my chances out on the ice. There's a great big mountain up ahead... I'll just... find a cave. Go ice fishing. Spend the rest of my life trapped on this stupid frozen ball of crap. But I'll outlive you, that's for sure. I'll be a hermit. But I'll be a live hermit. YOU HEAR THAT? So. Screw you. I win.

(CONTINUED)
Scarlett pauses. Did she hear something? There’s a faint crunching sound. Footsteps on the ice?
... hello? Atlas?

More crunching. Something is definitely following her.
What, you’re just gonna hide behind snow banks, is that it? I can hear you out there! Come out where I can see you! ... Well?! ... This isn’t funny you know! It’s cold, and I can’t see, enough with the games! ATLAS!

We hear the howl of a wolf.
(realizing her mistake, very quiet)
Oh sh-

HARPER
Commander!

Scarlett screams.

SCARLETT
HARPER! Jesus! Don’t DO that!

HARPER
You’re okay!

Harper practically jumps on Scarlett, wrapping her up in a bear hug that nearly throws them both of balance.

SCARLETT
Oof! Harper, I—... (softens) I’m fine. I just... Needed some air. (trying to extricate herself) Get off. I’m... not much of a hugger. ... So you can let go now.

HARPER
It’s not a hug. It’s a safety precaution. It’s freezing out here.

SCARLETT
... I’m not going anywhere.

HARPER
I know. ... Are you—... Are you sure you’re okay.

SCARLETT
... Yeah. Sure. (off Harper’s look) ... I will be. (beat) But I mean... it’s all going wrong, isn’t it. I (MORE)
SCARLETT (cont’d) did something and... It’s all going to hell. Everything is so... out of my control... The ship, the mission, the crew... Somebody’s going to get themselves killed out here. And it’s my fault.

HARPER Scarlett... none of us would be alive right now if it weren’t for you. I’d’ve drowned on like, day one. Atlas and Pip would’ve been eaten by sirens... You know that, right? We wouldn’t be here without you.

SCARLETT No offense, Harper? We’re standing on an iceberg, where logically speaking, no icebergs should be. Ever. So... "here" isn’t exactly where I want to be, and it’s not where any competent leader would have landed her crew. Which means I screwed up. Again.

HARPER Adrienne...

SCARLETT I’m sick of everything going wrong.

Atlas and Pip come running up through the snow.

PIP We heard shouting! Is everyone okay?

SCARLETT Yeah. Yeah, that was me... Just got a little turned around in the snow. I was just trying to head back. Harper found me.

Atlas and Scarlett look at one another.

ATLAS Adrienne, I-

SCARLETT Forget it.
ATLAS
I’m sorry.

SCARLETT
... Yeah. Thanks.

HARPER
We should head back. I don’t think this storm is letting up any time soon.

ATLAS
We won’t make it back to the ship before dark. Temperature’s already dropping, our best bet might be to find shelter out here.

SCARLETT
There’s a mountain up ahead. I was thinking—... There might be a cave or something. We’ll wait for the storm to pass.

PIP
Um... Commander?

SCARLETT
What is it Pip?

PIP
I don’t think we should go that way.

SCARLETT
Why not?

ATLAS
Harper’s been telling us ghost stories. It’s nothing.

HARPER
Monster stories. And if you thought it was nothing, why didn’t you send us back to the ship?

ATLAS
I didn’t want you to be eaten by wolves. Or, more likely, to fall into a snow bank, or ice fissure.

HARPER
Yeah, okay.
SCARLETT
What are you talking about?

PIP
We found tracks. Big ones. Moving in this general direction. And there was this noise.

SCARLETT
(uneasy) That loud, creepy howling?

ATLAS
Oh, I was really hoping you were going to say 'That’s just the wind.'

HARPER
We think there might be an akhlut out here.

SCARLETT
Gesundheit.

HARPER
Giant ancient Inuit wolf monster.

SCARLETT
Okay! Shelter. I vote we head back to the ship. Because guns and an engine. Atlas, you’re not armed are you?

ATLAS
Not at the moment.

SCARLETT
Then you lead the way, and I’ll cover the rear.

ATLAS
With what exactly?

SCARLETT
Pistol. ... What? It’s not much, but it’s better than a snowball.

PIP
Commander? Can we get moving? Please?

SCARLETT
Aww, are your toesies getting cold?
PIP
Yes... And that mountain? Just moved.

They all freeze. For a moment, there’s only the sound of the wind. And then a low, shuddering boom as a giant foot takes a giant step. Ice cracks under its weight. The ground shakes. And we hear the loud, bone chilling howl of a wolf.

We hear Scarlett rack her gun.

SCARLETT
Go. Now. Move fast, but stay together.

PIP
But-

SCARLETT
Predators aim for the smallest of the group and stragglers. DO NOT separate. And don’t leave a woman behind.

ATLAS
In this storm?! We can’t possibly outrun-

SCARLETT
I didn’t ask you for statistics doctor, I asked you to have my back. Can you do that?

ATLAS
... yes. Always.

SCARLETT
Do you know the way back?

ATLAS
I-

SCARLETT
Doctor!

ATLAS
Yes! Yes.

SCARLETT
Good. Just... back away... slowly... And on my signal... We run.

(Continued)
Another booming step. More cracking ice. We hear the akhlut sniffing, like a giant dog. It lets out a low snarl.

SCARLETT (cont’d)
Back away... Back away... It can’t see any better than we can...

PIP
You don’t know that! It could have super blizzard vision!

SCARLETT
Pippa... shut up...

HARPER
Nice doggy... Nice giant murder puppy... good boy...

The akhlut howls.

SCARLETT
RUN!

The girls turn and flee, their feet crunching in the snow. We hear the akhlut snarl and bound after them, its giant feet pounding the ice.

ATLAS
I see it! I see the Rusalka!

PIP
We’re not going to make it!

SCARLETT
We’re going to make it! Keep moving!

There is a loud snapping sound.

HARPER
Commander! The ice!

PIP
It’s breaking!

SCARLETT
Keep moving!

Louder snaps and crumbling noises. The iceberg is breaking up under their feet.
SCARLETT (cont’d)
Go! GO! GO!!!

HARPER
Adrienne!

SCARLETT
We’re gonna make it!

The akhlut lets out a loud, terrifying howl. It leaps into the air, and we hear it come crashing down onto the ice. The iceberg shatters. Again the akhlut howls as it goes crashing into the sea. There is a loud splash, the sound of bubbles… silence. The crew is breathing hard, staring into the giant rift in the ice.

ATLAS
See? I told you… it wasn’t solid…

SCARLETT
Is everyone okay?

PIP
Yeah… Yeah…

HARPER
That was WAY too close.

PIP
It just… went right through the ice. It fell right through the ice.

ATLAS
Is it dead?

HARPER
Don’t count on it.

There is a moment’s pause, but nothing happens.

SCARLETT
Come on… Let’s get back to the ship.

As we FADE to the next scene, there is the muted scream of an orca…
SCENE SIX

INT. Ops, U.S.S. Rusalka - NIGHT

Scarlett is sitting alone by the navigational controls. The door opens and Atlas enters.

beat.

ATLAS
Commander Scarlett. I thought you were in bed.

SCARLETT
Out for a midnight stroll, doctor?

ATLAS
Something like that.

beat.

SCARLETT
You’ve got a lot of nerve.

ATLAS
Adrienne-

SCARLETT
Don’t. You really think I’m going to let you anywhere near these controls ever again? After the day we’ve just had?

ATLAS
I wish you could understand.

SCARLETT
Well, I can’t. And you haven’t exactly been forthcoming with answers. You say you know better, hell you’ve got the balls to go around acting like you’re in command around here, so you’ve got to know SOMETHING. So come on. Share with the class. What the hell is going on?

Silence.

Scarlett lets out a mirthless laugh.

(CONTINUED)
SCARLETT (cont’d)
Fine. You want to be that way?
Fine. Do what you like. Get us killed. You know what’s best, right?

ATLAS
I’m not-

SCARLETT
No. I obviously can’t reel you in.
So I’m game. I’ll go along for the ride. You’ve obvious got some Grand Master Plan. So just this once, I’ll let you have it your way.

Scarlett starts for the day, then pauses.

SCARLETT (cont’d)
You don’t like me very much, do you?

ATLAS
I like you fine. I just-...

SCARLETT
What?

ATLAS
... You know, some women do drugs. Or climb mountains. Or sew. Or sleep with strangers. You make bad decisions. Must be quite the kick. (beat) He was wrong. Killian was wrong to choose you.

SCARLETT
If you want to lead this mission so badly, then why don’t you?

ATLAS
I could. Easily. And I think we both know the girls would be happy to follow me...

She sits down in front of navigation. We hear her making adjustments to the heading. But you’re wrong. That’s not what Killian asked me to do. And I’ve absolutely no interest in mutiny. If I did, you’d be dead.
SCARLETT
Is that a threat?

ATLAS
Just a fact. You might not like it, but it’s the truth. I don’t WANT to see you fail. I consider you my friend. But this mission means more to me than you do. I think Killian made a bad call. I don’t blame you for that. But you’re out of your depth. You don’t know what you’re up against. And the way you’re running things, it’s starting to look like failure is your only option.

SCARLETT
Unless I do things your way.

ATLAS
Unless we work together. I’m no leader. I’m not trying to take your place. I’m here to... facilitate. But there are some things—... I need you to trust me.

SCARLETT
I did. Now... I—... (she sighs)
Goodnight, doctor.

ATLAS
Goodnight, captain.

SCARLETT
Atlas?

ATLAS
Yes?

SCARLETT
Don’t call me that. Ever.

ATLAS
... (smiles) Yes, commander.
Goodnight.

SCARLETT
(uneasy) Yeah. Night.

Scarlett leaves. The door closes. Atlas goes back to the controls.

FADE OUT.
INT. Ops, U.S.S. Rusalka - Meanwhile

Atlas is sitting by the console, making small adjustments to the computer. We hear the door open, but Atlas doesn’t look up.

beat.

PIP
Why did you lie to me?

ATLAS
(dryly) If you want an honest answer, you’re going to need to be far more specific.

Pip sits down beside her.

PIP
(quietly) You said it would be alright if we adjusted the ship’s course. You said we were following orders.

ATLAS
And we were. Just not commander Scarlett’s.

PIP
Why didn’t you tell me?

ATLAS
Because it might have changed your mind. And I enjoyed having your company. The Graveyard Shift is a lot less... depressing when there’s someone to talk to. (pause) Are you angry with me?

PIP
I don’t know... (changing topic) Are we really lost?

Atlas considers Pip for a moment.

ATLAS
... no. But for now, I think it might be best that the commander not know that.
PIP
Why?

ATLAS
Because she won’t like where we’re headed. And she’s a proud woman... doesn’t like to accept anyone else’s help. I think she finds it threatening. And frankly, it would take too long to explain, and I’m not sure she’d understand anyway.

PIP
You told me.

ATLAS
Not much. But that’s different. You were made for this. You have a better understanding.

PIP
So where are we headed.

ATLAS
South. Warmer waters. Weirder territory. I have a strong feeling we’ll find Killian’s hounds there. Amongst other things. (pause) How much of this have you told Harper?

PIP
Nothing.

ATLAS
She’s your best friend.

PIP
You told me not to.

ATLAS
That I did... Because there’s a very good chance that she’d tell Scarlett. And then-

PIP
Adventure’s over.

ATLAS
Precisely. And I can’t—... Killian would hate to see that happen.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: 25.

PIP
Are you two-

ATLAS
You want to think VERY carefully about the phrasing of that question.

PIP
... you guys have worked together for a long time.

ATLAS
A very long time. He’s my best friend. And this project is... probably the closest thing either of us will ever have to a child. (pause) I realize I’m being... unfair. Underhanded. But it’s very important that we get this right. We’ve been working towards this since we were your age, at least. And chances like this don’t just happen. It’s bad enough Killian’s not here, I’m not going to lose everything just to let Scarlett feel better about being in charge.

PIP
... you and Killian aren’t separated that often, are you?

ATLAS
(a little surprised) What makes you say that?

PIP
You’re homesick.

beat.

ATLAS
... Yes. I suppose I am.

FADE OUT.

END.