

Bronwyn. Hey. Bronwyn here, the voice of Alice Harlow. If you enjoy this episode and want to help us improve the quality of our show, consider donating to our tip jar, linked on our website at Stationarcadia.com A small donation goes a long way and we'd appreciate your support. Looking for another way to support the show? Why not recommend it to a friend, or talk about it on social media using the hashtag arcpod, spelled A R C P O D. Thanks, and enjoy episode 3 - Clear Blue Water.

INT. STATION ARCADIA

[BRIEF STATIC]

KASS . Welcome, anyone. Thanks for joining me today. You're listening to-

[SUDDEN BURST OF STATIC, DROWNING OUT KASS]

Oh load up.

C'mon... how do I-

[Kass fiddles with knobs, static changes quality until it's nearly manageable]

(Over the static, stammers) Ah, sorry, tech issues. Ah, let's just -

[STATIC BEGINS TO INCREASE AGAIN]

(Fighting to be heard) You're listening to Station Arcadia.

[THEME MUSIC PLAYS]

[STATIC, FADING AWAY TO SILENCE]

JO. There you are.

KASS. Thanks Jo.

JO. Of course. This is only, what, your third time in the booth? Couldn't expect you'd know how to push the right button yet.

KASS. ...I honestly can't tell if you're being sarcastic.

JO. Button, Kass, singular. There's only one button to press. Yes I'm being sarcastic.

KASS . Ah. Well, I forgot.

JO . I thought Talsorians were supposed to be good with technology? No offense.

KASS . Uh, that's a myth actually. I mean, everything there is so automatic that there's no real reason to learn your way around a circuit. Lyssel's the exception, not the rule. 'Sides, I mean this cassette stuff is different. Us, less... advanced.

JO . Alright well have you got it handled now? I have some paperwork to fill out.

KASS . Oh wait, am I on air?

JO . *(with thinly veiled frustration)* Yes, Kass.

[FROM OUTSIDE THE STUDIO, A FAINT CRASH AND A SHOUT]

(Jo stands up, starts to leave)

JO . *(ice cold)* If Z. is playing darts in my office again I swear I will-

KASS . Wait, Jo, before you leave-

JO . What.

KASS . What button is it to switch frequencies? Y'know, in case Arcadia wants to share some audio.

JO . The yellow one.

[DOOR SHUTTING AS JO LEAVES]

KASS . I'm blind!

Well, listeners - *(Pause.)* If there are any listeners - That was Jo. He's nicer when he's not on the clock, I promise. Not that there really is a clock here, but he takes this broadcasting thing pretty seriously. Speaking of which, I guess I'd better get started.

Let me just plug in and we'll see what the station has to say.

[TWO CLICKS]

Okay, there we go. Sorry for the rough start - I woke up with my wires crossed. Let's move forward.

KASS. Caden Acer was not a political person by nature. The last time the Gannon Islands had an election for Premier they'd been about 12, and hadn't paid much attention to the process. They had, however, voted for the mayor of Oko last fall, and watching all of the press conferences in order to make an educated decision had been an absolute headache. Caden remembered sitting with their roommate Nadia for hours on end, growing increasingly frustrated with how the politicians seemed to evade giving even the simplest of straight answers.

'How difficult could it be' thought Caden, 'to actually say what your platforms are?'

So, while it wouldn't be accurate to say Caden had been *dreading* this year's general election, they certainly hadn't been looking forward to it.

Caden certainly hadn't been expecting to get *involved* in said election.

Yet there they were, standing just off the main stage at a political panel, where Madame Russel was already addressing the crowd. She had a good stage presence, they couldn't deny that. Caden gripped their notes hard enough to crumple the paper, trying to stop their hands from shaking.

It had all started last June, just before the flood season. Caden was at a bit of a loose end, having just finished their dual major in freshwater sciences and energy studies, and they'd been drifting aimlessly since graduation, unable to find good work. It'd come as a surprise and a relief to Caden when one of their teachers summoned them to his classroom, saying he had a potentially high-paying project. When Caden arrived, their teacher introduced them to one Hayyacynth Russel - a middle aged woman, warm, friendly, but with an edge to her that belied years of experience dealing with people who did not want to be dealt with.

Madame Russel, as it turned out, was a member of the Island 7 council, and was about to announce her candidacy for Premier of the Gannon Islands. As much as Caden disliked politics on a personal level, they knew the importance of having strong, wise leaders, and Russel seemed like a good fit. So when she asked them if they'd like to do some research for her, they agreed. Russel's plan, if the data checked out, would help provide more clean energy for the islands, and, more to the point, the project seemed to fit perfectly within Caden's wheelhouse.

The next day, it was straight to work. They started by learning about Madame Russel's proposed platform, which was to build a dam on a river in island 8. On the surface the idea sounded wonderful - a dam like the one Madame Russel proposed would provide an enormous amount of energy. The Gannon Islands had developed the technology to ensure that the change in river flow wouldn't harm the breeding cycles of the fish, so that wasn't the concern. No, the problem with the large river dams was something far more subtle, far more insidious.

Methyl mercury poisoning.

Hundreds of years ago, when people of the Gannon Islands first started to create dams, they flooded a valley on Island 6. It was controlled and necessary for the project, and all the residents were evacuated beforehand. By all accounts, the plan was a success. That's when the methyl mercury compound started to build up in the water behind the dam, and when it was let through it began to bioaccumulate in the fish and game downstream. Three years later, people started to take note of the mercury levels in the water, and of the effect. Even so, politicians at the time deemed it negligible, and simply advised the residents of the village downstream to eat fewer or no fish. There

were a couple issues with this - namely that fish was a major component of their normal diet and had been for centuries, and that damage to the population of the village had already been done. The effects of the poisoning lasted for decades. Eventually the people of the village were offered homes elsewhere where they would attempt to rebuild what had been taken from them. The town was abandoned, the dam was destroyed, and the people of the Gannon Islands resolved never to make the same mistake again.

Then, last year, a group of research students at Corax College had made a breakthrough. They'd found a chemical compound that could - theoretically - react with and eliminate the excess mercury in the water.

And that's where Caden came in. All they needed to do was to prove that the compound actually worked, and that Madame Russel's plan would be safe.

KASS . Oh, it seems like Arcadia has a bit of an audio to share directly with you, listeners. Um, I'm not sure where she's pulling it from. But, I'll just go ahead and press the uh, yellow button... whichever that one is. Ghosts, which one is it again?

(to self) No, okay, that one turns it off...

I'm sorry, this is so unprofessional.

Ah, thanks Arcadia! Alright, here we go.

INT. POLITICAL PANEL

[A CROWD OF PEOPLE. YOU HEAR ONE VOICE ABOVE THE CROWD.]

PA. Excuse me? Excuse me I'm trying to-- that's just rude. Hello! Excuse me can you point me in the direction-- *really now.*

AXEL. Hey, are you looking for someone?

PA. Yes! Yes, thank you. Do you think you could tell me where the candidate is?

AXEL. Which candidate? There is more than one, you know.

PA. *(irritated)* Axel Moore. Do you know where she is?

AXEL. Oh uh... well, that would, that would be me, actually.

PA. Oh! Oh, you're... not what I was expecting.

AXEL. What's that supposed to mean?

PA. You're shorter than I expected. That's not to say you're short, you're just... *(nervous laugh)* yeah. Anyway, you're supposed to be getting ready, you're going on in 5 minutes.

AXEL. Already? I thought I still had... *(checks watch)* Oh.

PA. Exactly. If you'll follow me, Ms. Moore?

AXEL. Sure. Uh, Axel is fine.

PA. Not for me, Ms. Moore. This way.

[THEY MOVE BACKSTAGE.]

SORREN. Axel! There you are. Now, this is just the introduction, so remember, you've got to--

AXEL. *(imitating SORREN)* Smile bright, hit 'em with the stuff they want to hear. Make sure I'm quick and concise, no one likes a long speech. *(normal voice)* I've got it Sorren.

SORREN. *(laughs nervously)* Great! Knock 'em dead!

AXEL. You know I will.

[STEPS AS SHE GOES UP ONTO THE STAGE.]

Moderator. Axel Moore!

[THE AUDIENCE APPLAUDS. AXEL WAITS FOR IT TO GO SILENT BEFORE SPEAKING SLOWLY AND WITH DICTION.]

AXEL. Good afternoon everyone. My name is Axel Moore, and as I'm sure you all know, I'm your candidate. That's right, *your* candidate. Myself, as well as my dedicated colleagues, want to be there for you in whatever way we can. A leader cannot exist without people to lead. That's our mindset as we plan to replenish and reform our beautiful islands. I'm happy to be your candidate during this election season, and I will remind you all that my team and I are always open to responses from you. Please reach out to us, please help us accomplish the change that you want to see. Axel Moore is here for you. Thank you.

[THE AUDIENCE APPLAUDS. AXEL WALKS BACK OVER TO SORREN.]

SORREN. Axel! Wonderful job! I took just a *few* notes, I think you can improve on your enunciation a bit and for goodness sakes you have to smile. They want to see that you're happy to be there and that you want to represent them! I think you could also put some more pep into your step as you walk onstage, throw in a little wave... *(the audio trails off as they walk away.)*

[TRANSITION]

INT. STATION ARCADIA

KASS. Oh, that was... related, I think. Interesting. Let's get back to it.

KASS. Though they were excited to work on this project, Caden soon found that it was a bit more complicated than they'd assumed. It would be a long process to figure out if the compound even *worked*, and after that they'd need to figure out how much of the compound would need to be produced, and ensure that it wouldn't have any negative long-term effects on the wildlife. The lab became a second home to Caden in the following months, despite Nadia's attempts to get them to rest. Madame Russel had been very clear that she'd like to have some positive results by the time the first political panel rolled around in September.

What's worse, none of the results they were getting made any sense. Theoretically, the byproduct of the reaction should have been

harmless. It all worked out perfectly in the test tube, and they'd been tested to make sure it wouldn't react with any chemicals in the river water, or have any adverse effects on the wildlife. But whenever Caden attempted a more complex simulation, all life put in the water died within days. Caden spent long hours staring at a screen, begging the numbers to make sense, until one day, a scant two weeks before the panel, they finally understood the problem. Caden's heart sank when the new test results confirmed their hypothesis - the soil at the site of the dam contained trace amounts of a chemical left over from when the Empire had invaded the Gannon Islands. It would be an impossible task to fully remove the chemical, and even the smallest amount would react with the byproduct to produce a powerful poison.

Caden ran some simulations to see what would happen if the plan went through, and it was worse than they'd imagined. Within five years the fish population would be significantly reduced, several species of plants would disappear from the river entirely, and any wildlife caught in the river would be entirely inedible. If Russel's plan was implemented, the consequences would be disastrous.

By this point there was only one week left before the political panel. Caden knew they had to act fast. They emailed Madame Russel immediately and CC-ed their professor, stating the issue and requesting to meet them at her earliest convenience. Caden breathed a sigh of relief when her reply was near instantaneous, and set up a meeting for the next day.

Caden explained the stakes to her at the meeting, as clearly and as concisely as they were able. They emphasized she could not continue having the proposed dam as a part of her election platform, because the dam could not be built. The compound didn't work, and without something to neutralize the methyl mercury, any dam built would poison both fish and people. Despite the massive energy payoff, it was far too risky. Russel listened closely and carefully, and spoke only once Caden was finished saying their part.

"It is a shame that the new chemical didn't work out," she said, "but that's no reason to give up hope. Science is growing and developing on our islands at a rate like never before. I trust that scientists would be able to find a way to mitigate either the mercury, or the new type of toxicity, before the dam's completion."

Caden squinted at her, and asked if she meant that they should try and find some other way to make the dam a viable option. It would be a much longer project, probably a year or two at the very least, but they could try if they had some proper funding and a team of assistants. In the meantime, however, she couldn't promise anyone that she'd build the dam. Not until they knew it could work.

She just laughed lightly, shook her head, and explained that the people wanted the dam. If they could be convinced that it was theoretically possible - well, then of course she would talk about it. Of course she would promise to build it. It didn't matter that the science was a little ways behind - no one needed to know that.

"In fact, it would be better for public morale if you refrained from mentioning the results of this little experiment. If anyone asks, the results were inconclusive. And they were, weren't they? We still haven't concluded a positive test result."

Then, Hayyacynth Russel stood, and left.

Caden remembered why they hated politicians.

Nearly all of the freshwater wildlife specialists from Oko university were sitting around a large conference table, listening intently as Caden stumbled their way through an explanation on their research. The assembled faces were grave, and the discussion that followed was somber and intense. It had happened too many times in the past that politicians had put a plan into place, trusting that "scientists could fix it later", when often that simply wasn't possible. If Madame Russel couldn't be persuaded to abandon the idea of the dam, then she couldn't be allowed to hold office. Someone needed to warn the people, to try and sway the votes against her.

Somehow, the job fell to Caden. They didn't understand how - surely the scientists could see how awkward they'd been to a mere 25 people. But it had been them doing the research in the first place, and them who understood it best, so it made some sense. Besides, as much as they hated both public speaking and politics, Caden figured they had some amount of responsibility to share their findings.

And so, there was Caden, at a massive political panel on island 7, a minute away from stepping onto the stage. They would be taking the mic from Hayyacynth Russel, and denouncing her and her plans in front of a crowd that she'd already won over.

Ghosts, they felt sick.

KASS . Oh! Oh, Arcadia- she can patch us into this, if I'm understanding what she's showing me. Um, I can just...

[TRANSITION]

INT. POLITICAL PANEL

HAYYACYNTH. This is why I believe the dam will be beneficial to the community of Island 8.

MODERATOR. Thank you, Madame Russel.

[POLITE APPLAUSE]

MODERATOR. Allow me to introduce a representative from Oko University, with a statement on Madame Russel's dam proposal. Please welcome Caden Acer.

[MORE POLITE APPLAUSE]

CADEN. (*nervous*) Thank you. In response to Madame Russel, a couple of problems have come to my attention as I've looked into your project. The benefits of building the dam are great, but I'm not sure the consequences justify it. Uh, when Island 6 was first flooded and the dam was built there, a chemical compound called methyl mercury began to build up and this compound is naturally occurring and incredibly toxic, and has been infecting the water and the fish that the citizens of Island 6 live on. Building another dam will only repeat the problem on Island 8. I hope you will consider this as you move forward. Thank you.

MODERATOR. We will now open the panel for questions.

REPORTER 1. *(immediately)* How exactly are you planning on dealing with this issue, Madame Russel?

HAYYACYNTH. I would like to address it, but until there is more information given, I will withhold my final verdict.

REPORTER 2. Will you be taking the problems that Mx. Acer brought up seriously in your plan?

HAYYACYNTH. Camden's considerations are very helpful.

CADEN. *(quietly)* It's Caden, actually...

HAYYACYNTH. *(hasn't heard them)* I am glad the concerns were brought to my attention. However, I believe the benefits are greater than the consequences.

AXEL. Actually, from what it sounds like, it *will* harm the people of the island. The population relies on that water for food and, well, water. The island has a large fishing background, and it seems like methyl mercury poisoning is going to greatly impact their markets. The people eat the fish and if the fish are poisonous, then they've just lost a main source of income and food. Not to mention the obvious health concerns. The consequences seem far greater than the benefits from my side.

REPORTER 1. Madame Russel, what do you have to say to this?

HAYYACYNTH. Ms. Moore has a very considerable point. I'll be taking all criticisms into consideration when planning this dam, including those of Ms. Moore.

AXEL. The dam is not going to work. There's too much risk.

HAYYACYNTH. There is no reward without risk, and no advancement without challenges. I have no further comments on this subject.

MODERATOR. Ms. Moore?

AXEL. *(only slightly grumpily)* No further comments.

MODERATOR. Then we will move on. Everyone please give a warm farewell to our Premier candidates.

[POLITE APPLAUSE AS THEY WALK OFF THE STAGE. AXEL TAKES CADEN ASIDE.]

AXEL. Caden, the points you brought up are good, and should be addressed. Please bring them to the next panel? I'd like to be able to discuss this further if possible.

CADEN. Oh! Um, yes. I think that'd be wise.

HAYYACYNTH. *(clearly had been eavesdropping, very overly polite)* Oh by all means, please do! It appears I need to put some more thought into all of this business with mercury, and how we can work around these little problems.

CADEN. *(under their breath)* Well, it's methyl mercury actually, it's a little bit different--

HAYYACYNTH. I'll see you around, Camden.

CADEN. Caden.

HAYYACYNTH. Please feel free to contact me privately anytime if you have concerns with this that you would like to share with *(pause, to look at AXEL supposedly)* no interruptions.

[SHE WALKS AWAY, HER HEELS CLICKING]

AXEL. Come on, they're waiting on us.

[THEY WALK OUT]

REPORTER 1. Ms. Moore, Ms. Moore, Ms. Moore, what are your thoughts on Madame Russel's plan for the dam?

AXEL. No comments at this time.

REPORTER 2. *(almost directly after)* Caden Acer! I heard your opinion on Madame Russel's dam plan was a bit fuzzy, can you tell us why you're on the fence?

CADEN. *(hesitant)* Well, my main concern is about the water. Um, there's a compound that forms that could hurt the population if you aren't careful and--

REPORTER 2. *(talking over them)* Madame Russel seems convinced that it's perfectly safe, are you implying that she's wrong?

CADEN. Well I'm not trying to go against Madame Russel--

REPORTER 1. What evidence do you have that the plan isn't going to work?

CADEN. What? I never said that.

AXEL. *(to the side)* They like to twist your words. Here. *(louder)* What Caden is trying to say is that Madame Russel has not considered some of the important factors in her plan. These factors are being discussed. I am taking these matters very seriously, and I hope that in the future, Caden here will be able to shed more light on the situation. No further questions.

[THE REPORTERS CONTINUE TO TALK]

[AXEL AND CADEN WALK AWAY.]

AXEL. See? You've got to tell them something they want to hear and then brush them off.

CADEN. Thank you Ms. Moore.

AXEL. You can just call me Axel. Everyone does. I'll see you at the next panel?

CADEN. Yes. I'll see you then.

AXEL. Great. Good luck with getting Hayyacynth to listen. That woman only has ears for what she likes to hear. Everything else is in one and *(Axel does a "whoosh" sound effect)* out the other.

CADEN. (*stubbornly*) I believe that Madame Russel *will* listen. Given time.

AXEL. Well, we'll see soon enough. Good luck nonetheless. You're gonna need it.

[TRANSITION]

INT. STATION ARCADIA

KASS. Well, that was certainly something! It's interesting how they have individual people run for government instead of companies - I don't think any of those people were sponsored!

You know, I already knew there was a lot to learn about the world, but I don't think I really ever grasped the scale of it. No matter how well you paid attention in history class, there's always plenty they're not telling you. You gotta find out for yourself. And no matter how much you learn, you'll always be just scratching at the surface. I suppose that's something to make peace with.

(*Clears throat*) On that note, I think it's time to sign off. So to anyone out there - stay safe, stay moving, and stick close. You've been listening to Station Arcadia.

[THEME SONG PLAYS]

C.V.V.M. Station Arcadia is a podcast by Metal Steve Productions, and licensed under a creative commons attribution noncommercial share-alike 4.0 international license. It is produced by Eliana Esdi and C.V.V.M., and directed by Tovah Brantner. It is edited by Eliana Esdi and J. R. Steele, with soundscaping by Becker Hoang and music by Theo Goodwin. Today's episode was written by Eliana Esdi with scenes from Tovah Brantner and J.R. Steele. It featured Jade Virginia as Kass, Marina Verlaine as Jo, Rachel Cameron as Axel, Aakash S as Sorren, Caroline Hernandez as Hayyacynth Russel, Sam Chauvin as Caden, Sam Lueke as Moderator, Polina Litvak as the PA, Logan-Alexis H as Reporter 1, and Avery R. C. as reporter 2.

Join us on twitter and tumblr, @stationarcadia, for more content. Check out our website, stationarcadia.com for a transcript of this episode as well as information on the cast and crew.

Today's animal of the week is the Agalychnis Lemur, or the Lemur Leaf Frog. These critically endangered frogs are native to Costa Rica, Panama, and Columbia, and they sure do have eyes. Yup. Those sure are eyes. If you've ever wondered what animal best represents the intersection of dread, anxiety, and shock - wonder no more. The Lemur Leaf Frog is here for you.