

BRONWYN. Hey, Bronwyn here, the voice of Alice Harlow. Sometimes, actors mess up. Or a motorcycle drives by outside. Or-

[DOG BEGINS BARKING]

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KASS. Welcome, anyone. Today is not the end of the world. If we're lucky, tomorrow won't be either. You're listening to Station Arcadia.

[INTRO THEME]

KASS. I think we're going to take it easy today. The last broadcast was a bit heavy, so I've asked Arcadia to give us something a little lighter. I suspect that will mean a story from the Gannon Islands, but you never know.

I'm never quite sure how much the Station understands me. She has no speakers or text displays, but seems to be able to react to what myself and the others say. And of course, I can connect through my eye ports which gives me a bit of a leg up over Jo, Z. and Lyssel. But even then, she doesn't *spea* per say. I just... I know things.

That's not the end of it though. There are things here that are hard to explain. Like, all of Jo's paperwork. When she first showed up I thought she must have brought it with her, but there's somehow still forms to fill out and paper to file away, so many months later. I don't understand it, but it's good, I think. Jo likes being useful, so... it's like the Station gives her a job.

I suppose I too, have a job to do. Let's see what *(grudging tone)* nice, gentle, story we've got today.

[TWO CLICKS]

KASS. Many years ago, the Gannon Islands flourished. The people who lived there respected and cared for the land that sustained them. They

entertained themselves with large festivals, boat races, and friendly competition. Aside from the occasional trade deal, they were isolated from the rest of the world, and they kept it that way deliberately. The people of the Gannon Islands preferred their lifestyle to one of labor or war or ever-changing trends and technology. It was their way. They developed their own sprawling cities and technology alongside the other societies, but did not integrate or concern themselves with outside business. As the Hardizan-Talsoria war brewed to the west, and a succession crisis started to destabilize the powerful Empire, they kept to their own.

The consequence of such isolation was that they weren't aware of The Empire's plan until it was too late. The neighboring country of Camnesse invaded. The conflict was brief, and brutal. Almost overnight, the people of the Gannon Islands were forced from their homeland, and left with nowhere to go. Those that made it out escaped onto the water. Families frantically gathered as many of their belongings as they could and piled into small fishing boats not meant to hold more than two people. They sailed away from the only home they had known, into a future that was as choppy and unsure as the waters that surrounded them.

Over the next few years, after several scouting missions and failed attempts at fighting back Camnesse, it became apparent that there was no going back. Slowly, they began to rebuild themselves. They built or acquired larger boats and established a system of trade and barter. They found small islands that had been overlooked and built small communities on them. It was nowhere near what they had before, but they persevered.

On one of these boats, there was a child. Who this child was is of little note. There were any number of children exactly like them, who were born on the islands but raised on the water. They were a part of the first generation of "seafarers," as they were dubbed, and they grew up with the civilization.

When both the child and the civilization of seafarers were still young, one of the child's parents decided to return to the Gannon Islands. It might have been as a scouting party or it might have been a desperate grab at reclaiming the islands, it hardly matters which. The mission failed regardless. At the time, the child was old enough to know something was going on, but young enough that they did not fully understand. From their perspective, their parent said goodbye and left one day with a group of people the child didn't recognise.

For the next few weeks, the mood on their boat was tense but generally positive. After several weeks however, the mood soured. Their parent had not returned.

The child never saw that parent again, but life carried on. The seafaring nation grew, and the child with it. The child did all the things typical of one's youth. They made mistakes, they learned, they made friends, they celebrated their coming of age when they turned sixteen. They even fell in love a few times.

KASS. And on that pleasant note, let's go to our first break of the night.

[TRANSITION]

INT. AXEL'S OFFICE

[SILENCE. THERE'S A FAN RUNNING QUIETLY SOMEWHERE]
[DOOR OPENS]

SORREN. Axel?! Oh, geez, there you are. I was looking all over for you and for a second I thought you'd-

Axel?

[PAPERS SHUFFLE, THEN SCATTER AS AXEL STARTLES AWAKE]

AXEL. Huh?! Wha's goin' on?!

SORREN. Did you sleep at the office?

AXEL. *(yawns)* Oh, yea. I went canvassing last night and it wasn't too late when I was done so I figured I'd come back and respond to some policy surveys and I guess I just... fell asleep.

SORREN. I know we've been working really hard recently, but that doesn't mean you're allowed to not take care of yourself.

AXEL. It's just a one time thing, I promise.

SORREN. Alright.

AXEL. Did you need something?

SORREN. Yea, actually. So, you might want to be sitting down for this.

AXEL. Well, that... doesn't sound good?

SORREN. Oh, no, it isn't, it's absolutely dreadful. We're doomed.

AXEL. *Sorren.*

SORREN. Okay, okay. So, I checked the polls this morning and...

You're leading by ten points.

AXEL. ... What?

SORREN. You're ahead of Hayyacynth.

AXEL. I heard you, I just... *Leading?*

SORREN. Yes.

AXEL. Sorren, that's *amazing!*

SORREN. Hey, don't get too cocky because of this okay? We still have to keep on doing what we're doing and not let up until the final votes are in.

AXEL. *(Still excited)* No, of course, I understand.

SORREN. ... *But* that doesn't mean we can't go out for dinner tonight to celebrate. Since you worked so hard last night.

AXEL. That sounds great.

SORREN. It's no big deal.

AXEL. Hey, before you go, I just wanted to say that, uh, I couldn't have done any of this without you.

SORREN. Thank you. That means a lot.

(Teasingly:) I mean I always knew it but to have you say it outloud is nice.

[FOOTSTEPS]

AXEL. *(To Sorren's back:)* Now who's being cocky?

[DOOR CLOSSES]

[TRANSITION]

INT. STATION ARCADIA

KASS. I shouldn't have doubted Arcadia. I asked for a pleasant broadcast, and, well, here we go! I'm happy for Axel and Sorren; it sounds like they're really making progress.

Now, back to the history lesson!

KASS. Several years went by and the person met someone. The two hit it off and began dating. Eventually, they got married, on board one of the nations largest vessels. The day of the wedding was sunny and bright, and everyone agreed they were a lovely couple.

Time went on, and the couple had a child. The child was born and raised on the boats and never knew the Gannon Islands at all. Many of the boat people didn't know the islands. Either they had been too young when they left or they had never been to the islands in the first place.

Eventually, the person got a boat of their own and became a captain. The boat was decent sized. It wasn't particularly large, but the residents had plenty of room. It was sleek and fast, made with the finest technology the seafarers had developed over the years.

The captain led their boat for many years, barely sparing a thought for the islands they had been born on. The ocean had become their home, and they were happy.

Alas, nothing stays perfect forever. Inevitably, there will be tragedy. The captain's remaining parent, as well as the other people on the parent's boat at the time, were killed by Empire soldiers in what seemed to be a freak accident. Parts of the boat were recovered, but the bodies never were.

The captain did not find out about the incident until a few days after it occurred and they grieved deeply for several weeks. Both their parents were now gone and they weren't quite sure what that meant for themselves. They had carried the grief for their first parent with them

for so long, it had become part of their routine. They didn't even think about it. But now that they had to figure out how to add a new grief to their routine, they didn't know what to do. Still, they did their best to keep moving and support their family as they always had, and in return, their family cared for and supported them through their grief.

They held a funeral for the dead on their ship, with the gathered loved ones of those lost. They sang songs together and played various instruments, before sitting down to a large memorial feast. In the evening, as the sun set, they scattered the ashes of the driftwood from the boat in place of the bodies.

A year later, things were going well for both the nation of seafarers and the captain. The captain still carried their grief with them, and always would, but they found purpose in caring for their family and crew. The nation had established itself fully at this point and people had completely adapted themselves to life on the water. Necessity is the mother of invention, and the challenges of the Seafaring lifestyle had produced some complex and ingenious technology. They were able to safely harvest energy from the wind, sun, sea, and rain, grow modified fruits and vegetables aboard ships, and use bioluminescence to decorate their living spaces. The decades passed rather uneventfully.

KASS. We never learned about any of this in history class. Wow. Let's pause for a moment and go back to the present-day Gannon Islands.

[TRANSITION]

EXT. GARDEN IN CORAX CITY

[GENTLE BREEZE IN THE TREES, SOME BIRDS CHIRPING]

[TEA SET CLINKS]

HAYYACYNTH. I heard you practicing earlier. A lovely piece.

ASPHODEL. Thank you.

HAYYACYNTH. Your tone sounded a bit brittle, though. You shouldn't grip the bow so tight. I thought you were past mistakes such as those.

ASPHODEL. I'll keep that in mind for next time.

HAYYACYNTH. Hm.

[TEACUP CLINKS AS SHE PUTS IT DOWN]

I hate to sour our time together with business, but I'm sure you know why I must.

ASPHODEL. Leeson said that if we keep our heads down, we'll be able to overcome their lead well before election day.

HAYYACYNTH. *(interrupting:)* He doesn't know what he's talking about. Frankly, I should have fired him long ago. No, playing it safe isn't going to do us any good.

ASPHODEL. But I don't see *why*-

HAYYACYNTH. What differentiates my campaign from Axel Moore's?

ASPHODEL. You're running on a platform of new energy methods and she-

HAYYACYNTH. No, dear. I don't mean policy. Every single election runs on the differences of policy. I want you to boil it down to the bare elements.

[A MOMENT OF SILENCE BETWEEN THEM]

ASPHODEL. I don't know, Mother. Some of us don't have a political science degree.

HAYYACYNTH. *(Sweetly:)* Flattery will get you nowhere.

The *difference* is action. Offense versus defense. We have policies, ideas, direction and Moore's plan is... to keep everything together.

(Smiling:) It's an unfortunate cycle for her. She never gets to talk about her own ideas, she's always responding to ours. It might have been different if she started off her campaign a bit more aggressively. She gave us ground and we managed to take it.

ASPHODEL. But that didn't work. Axel is currently ahead of us by a considerable margin. Clearly, forcing her to be on the "defence" failed.

HAYYACYNTH. Temporarily. Though I've always found that holding out to the end makes the payoff that much better.

[CUPS SLIDE ACROSS THE TABLE]

We've set up for the people to see the truth we need them to see. Axel Moore has *nothing* except for a handful of empty, feel-good promises. Sooner or later, she'll be called on to take action, and she'll crumble underneath the pressure.

We can't let her have even one moment to catch her breath.

ASPHODEL. But what if that doesn't work? In all this talk of being on the attack, you've left your own defenses down. Without your big projects you have nothing.

HAYYACYNTH. Do you not believe in my projects, Asphodel?

ASPHODEL. Of course I do. But if Axel manages to make everyone think they're dangerous it doesn't matter what I think. The integrity of the dam proposal has already been damaged.

HAYYACYNTH. I see. You know, if I didn't know any better I would think you still harbored some sympathy for her. You're not a kid anymore, Asphodel.

ASPHODEL. I barely even remember her.

HAYYACYNTH. (*ignoring Asphodel*) In any case, she can't knock down all my ideas. She's never held office before, the public has no clue who she is or what she stands for. They know me. In politics, sometimes that's all it takes.

Can you pass the sugar, dear?

[TRANSITION]

INT. STATION ARCADIA

KASS. One morning, almost sixty years after they had fled from the Gannon Islands, the captain was going about their daily business when they happened to pass by a fishing boat. They stopped the ship to chat and learned from the fishers that a Gannon Islands scouting party had returned with hopeful news. Supposedly, they had ventured to the Gannon Islands just over a month prior and upon seeing several of The Empire's machines in quite a state of disrepair, they spent several

weeks searching the islands for any current signs of Empire activity. All they found were more broken down and decrepit machines, and bombed ruins where cities used to stand. The islands were in bad shape - most of the plant and wildlife was completely gone, and the rivers were polluted with runoff chemicals. There were craters dotting the land from the weapons Camnesse had tested, and even the occasional land mine. Still, the islands were unguarded for the first time in 60 years, and what's more, with the Empire now embroiled in civil war and Camnesse taking significant losses, the islands were likely to remain so.

News spread fast through the Seafarers, and after some deliberation, a decision was reached. They would return to the Gannon Islands and begin to rebuild. It would take a tremendous effort but the people of the Gannon Islands had survived much worse and they would continue to survive as long as a shred of hope remained. They could not waste this opportunity. The Gannon Islands had once been their home, and soon they would be again.

The captain thought then of their parent whom they had lost in a similar expedition over half a century ago. They thought of their childhood on the boats and what everyday life had been like for as long as they could remember. They thought of their family; of their partner, their child and everyone on their crew. They tried to imagine the islands as they once were, but could only remember stories passed down from the older generations. As a child they had longed to visit the lush forests, plains, and marshes that their parents had described, but the prospect was now daunting.

As the captain turned their boat towards the islands, they felt a pang of something they didn't quite understand. They may have been born on the Gannon Islands, but it had never been home to them. Their home had always been out on the ocean, on their boat, and with their family. They were returning to a place that they had barely ever known.

It all became too real once the islands were in sight. The journey had felt far too short to prepare themselves for the enormity of what they were about to do. They were going to attempt to rebuild a world they had only heard about in stories. They knew that the Seafarers would have to use everything they'd learned over their years on the water, just to make the islands habitable. They'd have to learn even more, and develop new technology, and find ways to integrate their Seafaring culture with a stationary island life. Elders who remembered more about the original islands would tell stories to inspire the

rebuilding efforts, and younger generations would imagine new ways to build their home.

The Gannon Islands would never be the same.

But they didn't have to be.

The captain docked their boat at what seemed to have once been a port on island 4, their birth island. They found a group of people who had arrived before them and had begun forming a small community in the ruins of Abellio. Figuring this was as good a place as any, they decided to stay.

KASS. *(Contemplative)* Oh, hm, wow. I had no idea the people of the Gannon islands had gone through so much. *(embarrassed:)* Ghosts, I wish I could hack in and delete my old streams. I used the Gannon Islands as a punchline a... fair bit, when I was younger. I thought they were focused on *all* the wrong technology. I hate the idea of kids like Memorie watching my old stuff and getting a warped worldview.

Anyways listeners, thank you for joining me today. As always, stay safe, stay moving, and stick close. You've been listening to Station Arcadia.

ELIANA ESDI. 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 Logan Alexis H. with scenes by Tovah Branter and J. R. Steele. It featured Jade Virginia as Kass, Rachel Cameron as Axel, Aakash S. as Sorren, Caroline Hernandez as Hyyacynth, and Tovah Brantner as Asphodel. Join us on Twitter and Tumblr @stationarcadia for more content. Join us on Discord to chat with other fans using the link in the description. Checkout our website, stationarcadia.com for a transcript of this episode as well as information on the cast and crew. And finally, don't forget to subscribe to our patreon. Today's interpretive dance movement of the week is: *(shuffling noises of someone dancing around their room)*