

STATION ARCADIA OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT

S2, EPISODE 5: IN THE SEaweeds

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Eli: Hey listeners, this is Eli Allan, producer of Station Arcadia. Unfortunately, this podcast stopped production partway through season two. The following episode was mostly finished before the halt in production, but the show's cancellation is reflected in lack of background music during the story and other minor aspects of production quality. That said, please enjoy episode 5: In The Seaweeds.

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JO. Welcome, anyone. Thank you for tuning in today. You're listening to Station Arcadia.

[THEME SONG PLAYS]

JO. Hello listeners, this is Josiah Tremaine speaking, better known as Jo. I'm the producer of this radio show, and my pronouns for today are he/him.

Don't worry, Kass is fine. They accidentally nicked themselves with garden shears, again, but they'll be here soon. They didn't want to delay the broadcast, but Z and I insisted the wound be thoroughly cleaned before they got in the booth. This was the compromise, so I'll do my best to be decently entertaining as we wait for Z to finish her doctoring.

One thing I've learned about Talsorians over my time at the Station, is that there's some very basic practical knowledge that they don't seem to be taught growing up. Like the fact that if you cut yourself with a rusty metal object, you'll want to do a darn job disinfecting the wound afterwards. Or, for an even more basic example; how to fall asleep naturally. Lysell once told me they

used to take a pill, every single night, that would knock them out. It seems like a whole different world over there. I'm sure if I ever visited, I wouldn't know the very basics of that life either. It's so eye-opening to live with people who grew up in completely different environments.

That's why I'm grateful to the Station, not only for giving me a place to live, but for being a place where I'm able to be friends with Kass, Lyssel, and Z. I'd never have met them otherwise, and that would have been a shame.

I can't imagine ever moving back to Hardizan, where no one knows the first thing about the rest of the world. It just seems like... a smaller life.

[THE DOOR OPENS, KASS ENTERS]

JO. Oh, and here's Kass! Wonderful. I was running out of things to say.

KASS. Thanks for covering the intro, Jo. You have fun playing host?

JO. I don't mind saying hello to our listeners every once in a while, but I hope it can be a scheduled event next time. Please try to be more careful gardening.

KASS. Ugh, fine. Only cause you asked so nicely.

JO. I appreciate it.

KASS. Hey wait, do you think the listeners recognized your voice when you came on? Or did you make them think there was a new person at the Station?

JO. I introduced myself, Kass, for that exact reason. My voice has changed a decent amount since the last time I spoke on air and I didn't want to confuse or frighten anyone.

KASS. Z would call that a missed opportunity.

JO. Well if Z ever undergoes hormone replacement therapy, she can pull whatever kinds of voice-pranks she likes.

KASS. Don't tempt her.

JO. Why not? I'm sure Marvin can bring some extra testosterone the next time he swings around.

KASS. Along with more of those good biscuits, hopefully.

JO. You should ask him to bring a recipe and ingredients, instead, and then I can make them fresh here.

KASS. Oh would you really? That would be awesome.

JO. Of course. You need to do your broadcast, though, so I'll stop distracting you.

[JO STANDS & LEAVES]

KASS. Right, right, yes. Enough chatter! Let's get into it.

[KASS PLUGS INTO ARCADIA]

KASS. Hark was researching an essay for Miss Nye when they first found out about the seaweed.

Petal Nye was the curator for the museum in Latro, on Island 8. The building shivered in the cold, but was filled to the brim with artefacts that Miss Nye had excavated herself from all over the

Gannon Islands. Primarily Island 8. Miss Nye had become Hark's de facto teacher after they had been affectionately diagnosed with "ungovernable autism." They suited each other very well, in that they were matched in their unparalleled enthusiasm for the history of the Gannon Islands.

The museum's collection contained some cross-referenced exhibits that tried to paint a picture of the pre-seafaring Gannon people. There was some information about the different sleeping habits of the islanders on 8 and 3 that made a lot of sense given the differences of climate. And there were a few documents, meticulously preserved by Miss Nye with Hark's help, that detailed civic procedures. But what interested Hark the most was eating habits.

Information was fairly scarce as, while the pre-seafaring Gannon Islanders did write things down, the vast majority of the information about everyday life appeared to have been passed down primarily through oral tradition, and much of that was lost when the Empire attacked and the first boats hit the water. The bombs didn't exactly help the preservation of artefacts, either. The varied climate island to island meant that there had likely been an overwhelming variety of cultures and dishes, united by a heavy reliance on fish. Hark was interested in all of them, but Miss Nye suggested they start with Island 8. That way, they wouldn't have to travel far in their studies, and would be able to develop a rich understanding of the broader contexts of their findings. They were digging near the mouth of the river Bunbell when they discovered the remains of a small tool, and a collection basket.

After fiddling with it, they discovered that the tool was perfectly shaped to pry seaweed from the rocks in the brackish water, where the Bunbell river met the Tahmtu ocean. This was the breakthrough they needed, and made what scant written evidence that existed fit into place.

With the help of Miss Nye, they replicated the tool and created ten usable prototypes. Hark spent a morning testing them on the seaweed that clung to the rocks on the bed of the Bunbell. Morning turned to afternoon, and one day turned to three. They found that there were many different species. Books about seaweed gave some clues on their edibility, but not nearly enough to be fully confident that the crop they had gathered wouldn't cause problems if ingested. And even if they knew what kinds of seaweed were appropriate, they still weren't sure how it was traditionally prepared. They needed more information, more data, and it was quickly becoming apparent that in order to do that, they needed more resources.

[TRANSITION]

[OUTSIDE. A GATE BUZZ, THEN OPENS. FOOTSTEPS.]

AXEL. What is this, Sorren?

SORREN. An interview.

AXEL. I didn't mean a *job* interview.

SORREN. Why not?

AXEL. Working for my political rival and on top of that someone who hates me? I can think of a lot of reasons why not.

SORREN. Just think about it. You want to make a bigger difference. Sure, you could start small and grow from scratch until you reach your goal, or you can start at the highest we can get, and move up from there.

AXEL. There's no way they'll hire me.

SORREN. You don't know until you try. Besides, wouldn't it be good to have someone on the inside?

AXEL. I don't think that someone can be me.

SORREN. I do. Come on, it'll be fun.

AXEL. I doubt that.

SORREN. *(teasing)* Want me to come in with you?

AXEL. Oh stop it. Fine, I'll do it.

[SHE TAKES SOME PAPERS FROM SORREN.]

AXEL. What's the position?

SORREN. They're looking for someone to take charge of the communications department. They want someone who can communicate with sponsors and businesses and has good interpersonal skills.

AXEL. It says they're looking for someone with relevant experience in politics.

SORREN. I mean, running for Premier is pretty relevant experience if you ask me.

AXEL. I can't believe I'm considering this.

SORREN. I can, that's why I set this up. You're an exact fit, they were basically asking for you when they put this out.

AXEL. *(a realisation:)* I might have half a chance.

SORREN. You have more than that. You've got this.

AXEL. Here goes nothing I guess.

[TRANSITION]

KASS. Can you imagine showing up for what you think is a press talk, and it's actually a job interview? Axel took that much better than I would have! I really hope we get to see this interview, but in the meantime, back to the story.

KASS. Miss Nye helped Hark put together a presentation for the local government, to secure funding. Hark was excited, and confident. To them, it seemed an obvious move for the council to support their study. It was a potentially viable alternative food source, and a good way to understand how their ancestors lived. Miss Nye was more apprehensive. Every time Hark mentioned that it was a sure thing, her smile grew tighter, and less convincing.

The council listened to Hark's proposal with blank faces. After they had finished, the leader of the council cleared his throat with a wry smile.

(patronizing:) "I know you mean well, and this shows that you've put a lot of effort into your passions. It's good for teenagers to have interests and pursue them. But the world is an extra scary place right now. Our ancestors left these islands for reasons that are once more becoming relevant, and we wouldn't be honouring their sacrifice if we weren't ready to leave at a moment's notice. We must prioritise our survival."

He looked down at them with a good-natured, apologetic expression, but Hark was fuming. They wanted to call him a coward. They wanted to point out that seaweed could potentially be farmed and mobilised even *if* he was right, but they knew that their knowledge was not developed enough to confidently argue that it was possible. They left the town hall dejected.

Someone followed them out.

Hark was surprised when the lanky redhead approached them in the hall's courtyard. Based on the bulky briefcase the young adult carried with them, Hark had assumed that they were going to present something too, right after. They introduced themselves as Caden Acer, and asked Hark to show them where they had found the seaweed. Hark brought them to the mouth of the river and demonstrated their gathering technique, giving them one of the tool prototypes. Then they brought Caden to the museum, and Miss Nye showed them original artefacts and writings that indicated that the pre-seafaring society of Island 8, and maybe even other islands, might have eaten seaweed as a staple of their diet. Caden thanked them, but seemed in a hurry to leave. Hark wanted to ask them so many questions, about what their interest was in seaweed, and about what they were doing in the town hall, but the only one they managed to word was "Do you think they'll change their minds?"

Caden stammered a bit before finally answering with an unmitigated, unambiguous "No." They rushed to the docks and disembarked on a boat bound for Island 3.

Hark was crestfallen. Miss Nye offered what little consolation she could but eventually joined them in stony silence. The rest of the day, try as they might to get enthusiastic about the things Miss Nye was working on, they just couldn't do it.

The next day, after dropping their sister off at archery practice, Hark took their horse back out to the mouth of the river. The water gushed and the fish darted around, but Hark only had eyes for the seaweed. Green and brown and red, trailing and proud.

Swaying in the currents invitingly. Hark took one of the tools and harvested a strand from a nearby rock. A flat, green weed with

juicy globules that, though rubbery, felt so appetising in their hands. Without much thought, they put one in their mouth.

"Hey!" a voice reprimanded. "Be careful with that!"

It was someone wearing waders and a thick jacket, embroidered with a patch of the Oko University crest. She rushed over and inspected the seaweed Hark was holding. After a moment, she concluded that it was safe to eat, and asked how it tasted. Hark replied that it was somehow even chewier than they expected, and the student laughed. She introduced herself as Snow and told them that she grew up nearby but hadn't been back since she became a student. When Hark told her their name, Snow's eyes lit up. She showed them the tool prototype that Hark had given Caden, and asked them to show her what they had learned.

By the time they got back from speaking to Miss Nye at the museum, more Oko University students had arrived at the river mouth, scanning the water and wading around. They were drawing a crowd from the nearby town. A little boy Hark recognised as being a friend of their sister approached them, asking what all the fuss was about. Hark explained how to gather the seaweed and gave the boy one of the tools. Soon, more children joined him, bringing their parents in tow. By the end of the day, the area was a hub of activity. Children and university students worked alongside each other to gather samples and catalogue them. The parents looking on seemed impressed.

The next day, many of the same people returned. Someone had brought a massive old pot that had been passed down as an heirloom. The students were poring over recipe books and research papers that they had brought, painstakingly analysing them for any evidence. Locals brought other ingredients; fish, berries, rice, fiddlehead ferns, all things that might have been available to the pre-seafaring inhabitants of Island 8. By dinnertime, they had a pot of stew that smelled so divine it gathered an even larger

crowd, carrying bowls of their own. When Hark let slip that the council had denied the project funding, the local volunteers began paying absurd sums in exchange for their bowl of soup. Hark made sure they all knew that since everyone had come together to create the dish, they should be allowed to eat it without cost, but they insisted. They called it a donation. Connecting to the past had brought their community closer together, and the people of Island 8 were eager to see it happen again.

KASS. *(after a couple seconds of silence:)* Oh! Oh, that's the end! That was so charming, I got completely caught up in it. I hope we get to hear more about what Caden's been up to, some other time.

Before the end of today's broadcast, let's check back in on Axel and her interview.

[TRANSITION]

ASPHODEL. Well I'll give you one thing. You constantly surprise me.

AXEL. I hope that's a good thing, it's better for my chances.

ASPHODEL. Not very professional, right out of the gate. Wonderful way to start an interview, *Ms. Moore.*

AXEL. Just matching the energy in the room, *Ms. Russel.*

ASPHODEL. *(amused, despite herself)* Take a seat.

AXEL. Thank you.

[SHE SITS. ASPHODEL FLIPS THROUGH SOME PAPERS.]

ASPHODEL. Tell me a bit about yourself, *Ms. Moore.*

AXEL. Well, my friends describe me as friendly, and my coworkers say I'm easy to work with, so long as it's not the night before a deadline. My closest friend would probably say I'm quick to take charge of situations.

ASPHODEL. And you? How would you describe yourself?

AXEL. Capable.

ASPHODEL. *(interested)* Hm.

[SHE SCRIBBLES SOMETHING DOWN.]

ASPHODEL. What would you say are some of your biggest weaknesses?

AXEL. I do too much. I take on too much work and then struggle to get through it all.

ASPHODEL. And strengths?

AXEL. *(smiling)* Getting the work done, and getting it done well.

ASPHODEL. *(sigh)* Where do you see yourself in five years, Ms. Moore?

AXEL. I'd like to be able to make significant changes for the better in the lives of the general public. It's the whole reason I'm in politics.

ASPHODEL. Hm. What sorts of changes?

AXEL. I'm sure you heard some of my proposals in the interviews I did while running for Premier.

ASPHODEL. Many of which were against the proposals of my mother, the person you're trying to work for.

AXEL. That is correct.

ASPHODEL. Do you think that looks good? Admitting you have different opinions than your potential employer?

AXEL. Yes. I do. I think there's value in differing opinions. It prompts a discussion.

ASPHODEL. *(taken a bit aback)* Interesting. *(clears throat)* Um, out of all the candidates, why do you think we should hire you?

AXEL. Because I'm qualified. I bring a lot to the table as a former candidate for Premier and have an intimate knowledge of the processes that happen behind the scenes. I'm also, as I mentioned before, able to bring a different perspective to conversations.

ASPHODEL. No other reasons?

AXEL. Depends. Would you like me to have another reason?

ASPHODEL. *(flustered? surprised)* What do you mean by that?

AXEL. I mean, is there a certain type of person that you would like me to be, Ms. Russel?

ASPHODEL. *(agitated, trying to hide it)* I'm the one asking the questions, Ms. Moore.

AXEL. And I'm answering them to the best of my ability.

ASPHODEL. You're acting... weird.

AXEL. And you're acting unprofessional. But I'm happy to continue this if you are.

ASPHODEL. Don't look at me like that.

AXEL. My apologies, Ms. Russel.

ASPHODEL. *(intentional throat clear. This is a dance now)* So, tell me about a time you had to make a hard decision.

AXEL. Wooh. *(fake laugh)* Uh, there was this time that me and my best friend got in a big fight right before I went off to Oko university. I thought that she was playing things too safe, that she was just staying where she was because it was the only thing she knew. But she thought that I was just moving because my parents got jobs at the university, and she... thought I was abandoning her. It was one of the toughest choices I ever had to make.

Right next to running for Premier, of course.

ASPHODEL. Mm.

[WRITES SOMETHING DOWN.]

ASPHODEL. What could we expect to see from you in the first three months of your employment?

AXEL. I'd expect training would be a part of that, but after I've been introduced to the system I'd begin work on improving it to make it even more efficient.

ASPHODEL. Insulting our communication system already?

AXEL. There's room for improvement in anything. I'd also reach out to each of our sponsors, investors, and businesses we're in close

contact with to introduce myself and make sure our relationship continues to be a positive one.

ASPHODEL. You're being pretty vague. Have you ever held a position like this before?

AXEL. Not quite like this.

ASPHODEL. Hm. And you keep saying "our" and "we." Any reason for that?

AXEL. *(clearly pandering)* I already feel like I have a strong connection to this position.

ASPHODEL. Of course.

AXEL. I can *definitely* feel a connection here, Ms. Russel.

ASPHODEL. Are you... flirting with me?

AXEL. My comment was strictly professional.

ASPHODEL. Right. *(awkwardly clears throat)* Well, I think that's all I have. Do you have any questions for me?

AXEL. I don't think so. I glanced over the application on the way in, and it's very comprehensive.

ASPHODEL. Glad to hear it.

[A LONG, AWKWARD PAUSE.]

AXEL. *(almost too polite)* Do you, Asphodel Russel, have any questions for me?

ASPHODEL. *(like the floodgates have opened)* I- you know what, I do, actually. Why are you doing this?

AXEL. Doing what?

ASPHODEL. Putting up this... mask. This... this! What is this?

AXEL. Why am I acting like a suck-up interviewee who's perfect for the position and not acknowledging the fact that this is the first time we've talked since I shouted you out of my office?

ASPHODEL. Yes.

AXEL. I'm showing you that I can fit in here; that I can put on a smile, tell you exactly what you want to hear, and act calm and collected in a stressful situation. And I *am* perfect for the position, thank you very much.

ASPHODEL. Why do you even *want* this job?

[BEAT.]

AXEL. *(honestly)* Because this is how I can still make a change.

[LONGER SILENCE. YOU CAN JUST FEEL THE EYE CONTACT.]

ASPHODEL. Alright.

[STACKING PAPER NOISES. YOU KNOW THE TAPPING NOISE.]

We'll be in contact.

AXEL. Really?

ASPHODEL. You're dismissed, Ms. Moore.

[AXEL STANDS.]

AXEL. Thank you for your time, Ms. Russel.

[SHE EXITS THE ROOM.]

[TRANSITION]

KASS. Oh, that was better than I'd hoped for. The tension was sparking! I really hope Axel gets that position, and not *only* because she and Asphodel make for interesting radio.

Alright, my hand is killing me so I think that'll have to be all for today. Listeners, learn from my mistakes. Be careful when using sharp gardening tools, especially if you can't see what you're cutting. And as always, stay safe, stay moving, and stick close. You've been listening to Station Arcadia.

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ELI: Station Arcadia is a podcast by Metal Steve Productions, run by Eli Allan and J.R. Steele. It is produced by Eli Allan, with creative direction by Tovah Brantner, dialogue editing by Leo Zahn, and soundscaping by J.R. Steele.

The radio story for this episode was written by Matty O.K. Smith, with cutaway segments by J.R. Steele, Arcadia segments by Eli Allan, and copy editing by Eli Allan. It featured theme music by Arps.

This episode featured Lady Renaissance as Kass, Sam Murphy as Jo, Rae Cameron as Axel, Aakash S. as Sorren, and Tovah Brantner as Asphodel.

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Today's weather of the week is a mix of sun and cloud. Periods of drizzle throughout the morning, lasting until around 3pm. High of 8 degrees celsius, going down to 0 at night so we might get some frost. 40 km/h winds with gusts of up to 60. Humidity: 86%.