

## STATION ARCADIA OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT

### EPISODE #20: One Square Forward

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On behalf of the Station Arcadia team, a big thank you to our patrons: Claws of Fenrir, Antigone Brickman, Bronwyn, n13e86, and CaraLee Rose.

#### INT. STATION ARCADIA

**KASS.** Welcome, anyone. As always, you're listening to Station Arcadia.

The weather is starting to warm up, which means, according to Arcadia, that it's time to start planting! I'm going to start with "peas" and "lettuce". I'm also going to try potatoes again - they were one of the first things I planted when Marvin helped me start the garden, but they didn't grow well. I'm hoping the second time will be an upgrade.

Lyssel also found a bag with some little brown seeds in a store room, but we haven't been able to figure out what they are. I've asked Arcadia, but she's either just as stumped or deliberately not telling. We're going to try planting them and hope for the best. With any luck it'll be a nice surprise.

Uh... *(Kass taps their fingers twice, close to the mic.)*

That's about all that's been going on here at the moment, but I'll keep you updated on the mystery seeds if we see any growth. In the meantime, let's get to it.

**[Two clicks]**

**KASS.** Fifteen people stood on a beach. Around them were several small piles of waterlogged supplies, mostly rations with a scant few bedrolls thrown in the mix. The military unit had accidentally dashed their boat against an unexpected group of sharp rocks and ended up coming ashore somewhat sooner and rather more unceremoniously than they had planned. The last few stragglers had just finished dragging the now-mangled carcass of their too-small boat onto the fine sand of the beach.

The bedraggled military unit comprised of a group of soldiers from the country of Surragen, who had fled to the Gannon Islands. They had grown tired of the monotony of war and the inevitability of death in the Empire, and one day, after a particularly horrifying battle, they

started discussing their options. It wasn't often that the Surrigen military fought out on the ocean, so when the soldiers were soon after relocated to the port city of Perrimon, they leapt at the chance to make their escape. The boat they stole wasn't large enough to fit fifteen people, especially for the two day voyage to the Gannon Islands, but it was their only option. Things had recently begun taking a turn for the worse in Surrigen, and the whole country felt like it was collapsing in on itself. The soldiers decided that they had to get out before it killed them.

These soldiers had very little in common, and like many in the Empire, were only united by the common goal of survival. They had only met around a month ago, when their unit was formed out of the remaining members of a handful of fallen troops. Now they were many leagues away from home on an unfamiliar island where they most certainly would *not* be welcomed. Still, surely it had to be better than the alternative. At least here, even if their odds were no better, they wouldn't die a meaningless death as just another nameless, faceless soldier at the hands of an equally nameless, faceless enemy.

#### [A few musical notes]

The group began to walk towards the forest that seemed to take up most of the island, in search of a town or city, or even just somewhere to rest. They had never figured out their next plan for once they arrived on an island. Just making it to the Gannon Islands with everyone still alive was a feat in and of itself. Beyond that, their only idea was to try and find whatever government was in charge of this island and attempt to make some sort of... appeal. With more than a little apprehension, the soldiers began their trek through the woods.

[Low, eerie music starts] The forest that surrounded them was dense and ominous. The trees were several times bigger than any the soldiers had seen before, and seemed to loom overhead. Keegan Shaw, the group's Lieutenant, marched reluctantly at the head of the group, attempting to clear the path forward. It had never occurred to him that there would be other vegetation in a forest besides trees, but the forest floor was covered in all manner of strange and unidentifiable plants that made their progress annoyingly slow. After a few hours of walking, Keegan figured they must be a decent ways inland, but the soldiers had yet to see any signs of civilization. There was just trees, trees, and more trees as far as the eye could see. At one point Nathaniel Peters pointed out what seemed to be an old rusted piece of Empire machinery but it looked as though it had been abandoned for

years. The soldiers wandered aimlessly, searching for anything or anyone that could be of use to them. The dense underbrush and tightly packed trees were a change from the wide, almost entirely empty stretches of land the soldiers were used to, and they navigated through their surroundings less than expertly.

As the hours passed, feelings of apprehension grew amongst the group. The island seemed to be home to nothing but forest. The soldiers could find no evidence that anyone had lived on the island in several decades and began worrying that the island they had landed on was uninhabited.

The soldiers continued to trudge through the forest, despite their flagging energy and morale. As the unit forded a small but swift-moving creek, Jason Doyle slipped and fell. He only sustained a few small cuts, but began shivering violently as the hours wore on. Charlie Eann twisted her ankle in a small hole that was so expertly concealed by leaves she was certain it must have been a deliberate trap. **[Music ends.]** They should not have been there, that was clear. They themselves knew it and it seemed the forest did as well. No birds sang as they walked and even the insects hardly buzzed. The only sounds were the crunching of boots against leaves and the mutterings of uneasy soldiers.

After several more hours of walking, the unit stumbled into a small mossy clearing. Lieutenant Shaw assessed the location for danger and, finding none, declared it was high time for a break. He set his pack down on a dry patch and gestured for the other soldiers to do the same.

Fifteen thuds echoed dully around the clearing as the soldiers complied. For a moment the forest came alive with noise and movement as the few animals still remaining in the vicinity fled.

The soldiers ate a quick meal, chatting amongst themselves and taking their first real break in months. There were no bombs in the distance, no threat of gas or gunfire hanging over their heads. No one was entirely sure what to do with themselves, but they tried their best to enjoy it and relax. One soldier, Amy Cook, pulled out a deck of cards she had brought with her and they all played a few rounds.

Once they had eaten and rested some, they set off again in somewhat higher spirits. Lieutenant Shaw reminded everyone to keep a sharp eye out for any signs of human habitation. There were several false calls

where soldiers thought they'd found man-made paths through the underbrush, but nothing more concrete. Then, after several hours, Rick Winters spotted something through the trees that he swore up and down looked like a roof. None of the others saw what he was pointing towards, but they began to head towards it nonetheless. Anything was better than continuing to wander aimlessly.

Seconds later, however, their march towards whatever Rick had seen was interrupted by the sound of a group of people approaching from the left. They all turned, with varying degrees of apprehension and relief. Most hands flew to rest on their weapons - they had no intention of hurting or threatening any locals, but it never hurt to be prepared. Then, after a moment of stillness, someone shouted the words "They're Camnesse!"

The unit reacted instantly, and by the time the other group came fully into view, they had already drawn their guns and fired.

**[Ominous music begins]** Indeed there was a small group of people a dozen yards away, wearing the military uniforms of the country of Camnesse. They had their weapons in hand, and retaliated immediately. They looked equally startled to see the enemy on foreign soil, but both groups had been trained to recognize and destroy their evil opponents.

The first soldier that went down was from Camnesse. The rest of their group hardly even blinked as it happened, too focused on the fight and their own survival. The next two were both from Surrigen. Amy Cook and Johann Mestler took a bullet to the head and chest respectively, and were spared no more than a passing glance by their companions. The peaceful forest was suddenly transformed into a warzone as cacophonous and brutal as the one they'd fled. **[Music ends]**

Dina and Isaac were hard at work. They only had a few precious minutes to sharpen their swords and gather ammunition before an intruding army would be upon them. They piled small stones into a wooden bucket - bombs, to keep the knights and archers at bay. Dina made bold claims about the quality of her rock-bombs - she had amassed all different sorts. Ones that could ricochet from person to person, ones that exploded into smoke, ones that would turn their bones to jelly...

Isaac didn't think the jelly one was realistic, but he was too busy practicing his swordplay to comment. He swung the long stick around

with vigor, and tested it's mettle on the side of a log. It would do no good for his sword to break mid-battle.

"They're here!" Shouted Dina, and they both turned West - away from the direction of their village. The imaginary enemy was coming to claim their land, but neither 10 year old would back down. As monarchs of the land, they would defend their kingdom to the dying breath. Dina grabbed her sword - a light but sturdy oak branch - and she and Isaac began hacking away at the air. They clambered around the forest clearing, shouting to each other about foes felled and arrows dodged.

"We need to fall back!" Shouted Isaac. They both rushed to the base of the largest tree, where the bucket of rocks sat waiting. Isaac defended Dina from the knights while she began lobbing rocks into the forest, all the while declaring what manner of bomb she was throwing.

After a minute of this, they agreed that the tide was definitely turning their way, and began going through the final motions of defeating the enemy. If they didn't head home soon, Isaac was going to be late for his piano lesson and would get in trouble from his mom *again*.

Then, right as Dina threw an "ice cloud" bomb, a loud noise sounded out from deeper into the forest. It was immediately followed by more of the same, until the forest was filled with a rattling, reverberating noise. Isaac and Dina looked at each other, imaginary battle immediately forgotten. Wordlessly, they began running in the direction of the racket, eager to see what from sea to sky was going on.

**[Music begins]** Charlie Eann spared a moment to glance around her, and registered the bodies of her unit members near her feet. She missed the trenches. Here, there was nowhere to run to, nowhere to fall back. There were no reinforcements coming. **[Music ends]**

Her moment of distraction nearly cost her life, as a volley of gunfire sounded just a few inches to her left. Her ears began ringing, but she managed to dart behind a tree trunk and catch her breath. She peered around and aimed at the Camnesse soldiers. They'd ruined everything, and she was going to make them pay.

Georgia Jamieson spotted Charlie dashing behind a tree and attempted to follow suit, doing her best to use the land to her advantage. As she ran, she caught a glimpse of two children standing barely a dozen

yards away. She stumbled, thoroughly caught off guard, and landed on the ground with a thud.

By the time she'd scrambled to her feet, one of the children was still frozen in horror, and the other was trying to drag them away. The battle was still raging. Georgia tried to call out something, anything, to warn people, although even she herself was not sure whether she was addressing her fellow soldiers or the children.

In the end it didn't matter - her voice was lost beneath another volley of gunfire.

**[Anxious music starts]** John Lee peered through the scope of his gun and aimed solidly at the Camnesse soldier that had been targeting him. He could hear his own heartbeat, drowning out the fearful shouts of both friend and foe. He squeezed the trigger. **[Music ends]**

John and Georgia were the only two to notice as the bullet flew past the Camnesse soldier and into the stomach of one of the children. The kid swayed for a moment, eyes wide, before crumpling against his friend.

Another stray bullet grazed the other child's arm as she tried, tears streaming down her face, to drag her friend away. A few more soldiers noticed, and resolved to defeat the enemy as fast as possible so they could go help the bystanders.

Minutes later, as the last combatants collapsed to the ground, the gunshots ceased. Dead and dying soldiers littered the ground between the trees, and at the edge of the gory scene sat a wounded child, sobbing over the unconscious body of her friend.

The battle was finished almost as soon as it had begun. There was no winner, and nothing had been achieved. It was just another pointless, bloody conflict in a line of pointless, bloody conflicts.

As the last soldier finally faded from consciousness, a group of worried adults from the village arrived at the scene of the battle and looked in horror at the aftermath...

**KASS.** Oh, uh, I think that's it? Ghosts, that's awful. Arcadia didn't let me know of a break time at any point, which is strange, *(stammering)* but it looks like she has something for us now. Let's uh...-

[TRANSITION]

INT. AXEL'S OFFICE

**AXEL.** Thanks for coming to the office, Caden. I just feel like there's so much going on.

**CADEN.** No problem, it's good to see you again.

**AXEL.** I'd rather have met you somewhere nice like a cafe or something, but I've still got so much work to do here.

**CADEN.** No rest for the wicked, huh?

**AXEL.** You're telling me. You'd think with the lead we have I'd be able to take more breaks, but if anything it's just added *more* to my plate.

**CADEN.** Congrats on that, by the way. I would have gone crazy *ages* ago. I don't know how you haven't tried to physically fight Hayyacynth.

**AXEL.** I'm just hoping that once this is over I can take one day off and spend it with a tackle box.

**CADEN.** Hey, you deserve it.

**AXEL.** Thank you, I'm glad that we can-

[DOOR SLAMS OPEN]

[SORREN IS PANTING HEAVILY]

What- Sorren?

**SORREN.** TURN ON THE TV RIGHT NOW!

**CADEN.** Okay, okay, just give me a second!

[TV TURNS ON]

**NEWS ANCHOR.** -land 6 has recently been hit by an attack from The Empire.

The fight broke out on the edge of Ordale, one of the smaller forest communities. Two children were caught in the crossfire. One of them, ten year old Isaac Layton, is currently in critical condition at Kosumi general hospital.

**SORREN.** Oh *crow*, that's Finn's nephew, I... I have to go call him, I'll be right back.

**AXEL.** Sorren, wait-!

[HE RUNS OUT]

[DOOR CLOSSES AGAIN]

[CADEN TURNS OFF THE TV]

**CADEN.** An Imperial attack hasn't happened on Gannon soil in-

**AXEL.** I know.

**CADEN.** And in your interview the other day-

**AXEL.** I *know*!

This is, really, really bad.

**CADEN.** Can I do anything to help?

**AXEL.** Just... (*stammering*) get some food? I think Sorren and I are going to be here all night.

#### INT. STATION ARCADIA

**KASS.** (*Slightly panicky, trying to be "professional":*) Thank you for staying with us. Um, we've never really covered breaking news on the station before, so I-I've brought in an expert on the Empire. Kind of.

**Z.** Hello everyone!

**KASS.** Everyone, you've heard Z on the air before, but now she's actually supposed to be here. She's-

(*Leaning in, quieter:*) Um, you have fought in the Imperial war, right?

**Z.** Uh, yea, it's kind of illegal not to?



**KASS.** (*Relieved:*) Good, good. I mean, not good!

Sorry, um... do you have a full title you want to introduce yourself as, or something?

**Z.** Just Z's fine.

**KASS.** Right. Uh, do you have... any idea why those soldiers would do what they did?

**Z.** Hey, wait a minute, isn't this supposed to be Marvin's thing? Like (*Mimicking Marvin:*) "a storm has just hit the north side of the Gannon Islands" or whatever he does.

**KASS.** (*Impatiently:*) I already tried to reach him, but communications can be finicky at sea. You're the next person who would have the most insight into the situation. (*After a pause, genuine:*) Do I need to repeat the question, or do you remember it?

**Z.** Come on, my attention span isn't that short.

I mean, uhh, I don't know what to tell you? Imperial soldiers can be a bit trigger happy when they see enemy uniforms. I guess it's easy to forget you're fighting another person, because everyone is always wearing a gas mask, so uh, you don't get a lot of faces out there. Well, there was this *one* time where my regiment got stationed in the Westerfield mountains, and that was high enough that the air quality was okay to not wear masks in. Not that it was much better in the end because it was so *cold*, but-

**KASS.** Okay! Westerfield, you said? Is that where you're from?

**Z.** No, I'm actually from Surrigen. They're allies in the war, you know, so we were sent up north to shore up defenses in important bases, uh, royal family, and all. Let me tell you something, though, Westerfield has a *great* drinking culture. Like Surrigen isn't as uptight as Camnesse, or anything but Westerfield... Whoo, it's something else.

**KASS.** (*Desperate:*) Do you have *anything* else that might help our listeners understand *why* this event occurred?

**Z.** Mmm... nope!

**KASS.** Z., are you taking this seriously?

**Z.** Huh? I mean, yea.

**KASS.** Then *why* are you going on all these tangents? I'm just trying to figure out why someone would *do* this.

**[BEAT]**

**Z.** Look, I'm sorry, but there isn't a reason. Not a real one, anyways. They just saw someone wearing the enemy's colors and that was a good enough reason to do them in. Didn't matter why they were there.

You can't think about the enemy as humans, Kass. Because if you do, you realize how *good* we've become at killing them. How much of the machines we make are only designed to kill them. You have to be the first one to get rid of your humanity to *survive*, because if they do it before you, you'll be the one with the bullet in your head. And if you can't, you drink that kindness to death before it can kill you.

Those soldiers from your story didn't see other people, they saw a threat.

**[BEAT]**

*(Suddenly much more cheerful:)* Well That got a bit more serious than I wanted! Do you have any other questions, Kass?

**KASS.** ... No. No. We'll just have Arcadia take us to another break.

**[TRANSITION]**

**INT. AXEL'S OFFICE**

**[SOUND OF AXEL PACING THE FLOOR]**

**AXEL.** How is it looking?

**SORREN.** Hayyacynth has already run to any news source that will have her to run her mouth about this.

**AXEL.** Is she live right now?

**SORREN.** Yeah.

**AXEL.** Turn it on.

[BUTTON CLICK]

**HAYYACYNTH.** (*From the computer/TV:*) -look at what they've done to our community, our home.

Axel Moore said that the Empire wouldn't be a problem. Is this not a problem? Are the children of our nation not worth protecting? The Empire is a disease and we can't allow it to feed on us any longer.

**AXEL.** No, no, shut it off I-

[BUTTON CLICK]

[FEED TURNS OFF]

I thought I could handle what she was saying.

**SORREN.** We need to start drafting your response.

**AXEL.** How am I supposed to *respond* to this?!

**SORREN.** Well, we need to figure something out! This is an absolute disaster!

**AXEL.** I can't condemn the entire Empire based on this one incident! I don't even know who those Imperial soldiers were, or what they were doing-

**SORREN.** Hayyacynth has already spun her own tale on why they were here. A scouting mission for future plans of attack.

**AXEL.** But that might not be true.

**SORREN.** It doesn't matter, because she's already put that idea in people's heads and now that's the story we have to respond to.

**AXEL.** There has to be something else I can do besides conceding to Hayyacynth's version.

**SORREN.** The election is less than a few weeks away!

I don't... I don't know how we can salvage this, Axel.

**AXEL.** No. We can do this, the *right* way. There's always a way.

[TRANSITION]

INT. L'AUORE, CLERCOURT

[SOUNDS OF L'AUORE... BUT WITHOUT MUSIC]

[TEDDY WALKS UP TO THE BAR]

**TEDDY.** Alice, what the hell is going on?

**ALICE.** (*Very stressed and distracted:*) Hm?

**TEDDY.** Everyone's been acting weird all morning. They're all... tense.

**ALICE.** Oh, yea.

**TEDDY.** ... Are *you* okay?

**ALICE.** Yea, yea, totally good! I'm just thinking about some stuff, you know?

**TEDDY.** Is it the same stuff that everyone else is thinking about?

**ALICE.** I guess.

**TEDDY.** Okay, can you stop being so damn vague and tell me what's happening?

**ALICE.** There was an Imperial attack in the Gannon Islands.

**TEDDY.** There was... *what*?

**ALICE.** (*Rant open:*) General Collier made an announcement just this morning. We don't really know who were the parties involved, and what they were doing there, but everyone's really nervous about it. Snakebite hasn't made a statement yet, they're still trying to figure out the details.

**TEDDY.** Is it really that big of a deal for you guys?

**ALICE.** Are you kidding? This could change *everything*. Whichever country's soldiers did this are going to be going for each other's

throats, and that's ignoring if the Gannon Islands make a response. I mean, there hasn't been an attack on foreign soil in *decades*.

Like, I'm not good at politics, but if one side figures that the other is making a grab for Gannon's resources again, they're going to be real keen on getting those first.

**TEDDY.** I'm... sorry.

**ALICE.** It affects you too, you know. There's probably going to be more attacks across the continent. (*Attempt at a joke:*) Hope your gas mask is up to snuff.

**TEDDY.** Fun.

**ALICE.** So what are you thinking now?

**TEDDY.** I... don't know.

**ALICE.** I wouldn't blame you if you wanted to make a break for it.

**TEDDY.** Alice-

**ALICE.** I'm serious. You didn't sign up for this in the same way the rest of us did. If I were you I might have already packed my things for my trip to Thiazi.

**TEDDY.** That seems a bit ambitious.

**ALICE.** I could just look the other way and then, whoops! Looks like Teddy slipped by me. Sorry guys, my bad.

**TEDDY.** I appreciate the offer.

**ALICE.** Are you going to take it, then?

**TEDDY.** ... No. Not yet, at least.

**ALICE.** Alright. Well, fair warning, you might want to take my offer before I die in a blaze of glory.

**TEDDY.** As if the precocious Alice Harlow could ever be killed.

**ALICE.** That's the spirit.

[TRANSITION]

INT. STATION ARCADIA

**KASS.** Well. Well this has certainly been... something. Wires are getting a bit tangled out there. As much as I like hearing from Alice and Teddy, I could have done without the reminder that an event like the one today could have far-reaching consequences.

And Axel... well, things may not be looking good, but she doesn't seem to have given up yet. Ghosts know that being smart, determined and having good people on your side won't always save you, but maybe this time it will.

Listeners, stay safe, stay moving, and stick close. You've been listening to Station Arcadia.

[THEME MUSIC PLAYS]

**Eli.** 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 Eli Esdi and C.V.V.M., and directed by Tovah Brantner. Today's episode contained take selection by Eli Esdi, soundscaping J.R. Steele, and music by Theo Goodwin. It was written by Logan-Alexis H. and Eli Esdi, with scenes by Tovah Brantner and J.R. Steele. It featured Jade Virginia as Kass, Rae Cameron as Axel Moore, Aakaash S. as Soren, Sam Chauvin as Caden, Tizzy Trussler as Z., Sam Lueke as the news anchor, Caroline Hernandez as Hayyacynth Russel, Andrew Simons as Teddy, and Bronwyn as Alice.

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Today's Canadian joke of the week is: Why did the Newfoundlander want Quebec to separate from Canada? Well, because it would be a shorter drive to Toronto, of course!