

Bronwyn. Hey. Bronwyn here, the voice of Alice Harlow. If you enjoy this episode, please consider sharing our show with a friend, or talking about it on social media using the hashtag arcpod, spelled A R C P O D. As a young podcast, word of mouth is vital, and we'd really appreciate your help in getting our show off the ground. Thanks, and enjoy episode 2 - what the War Left Behind.

INT. STATION ARCADIA

KASS. Welcome, anyone. Anyone at all. You're listening to Station Arcadia.

[THEME MUSIC PLAYS]

KASS. *(sigh)* Well- here I am- Arcadia has another story for me, and I'm going to share it to... someone... hopefully someone is listening.

[PAUSE FOR A BEAT]

KASS. Even if nobody can listen, we're going to be "official and organized", as Jo says. Jo made me a broadcasting schedule, the works. It really does make this feel so much more official. *(Amused:)* She loves doing paperwork, for some reason. So many lists and schedules...

In other news, Lyssel still hasn't gotten anything off the SynthTechX but they say they're working on it.

(pause) Yeah, I'm not really sure what I'm supposed to do or say at the beginning of these things so uh... yeah I'm just gonna start. Let's start.

[TWO CLICKS]

KASS. There is a man riding through the wasteland. His horse moves tirelessly through toxic mud, a horse made of metal and powered by diesel. A live animal would never make it out in the wastes so mechanical mounts like this one are not an uncommon sight in the Empire. The man sitting on top of this particular mech is huddled against the wind, holding tightly onto the reins.

His name is Noah, and he's looking for someone.

Noah is exhausted, worn out from the strain of a hopeless search, grief, and loneliness. His gas mask hides his face, but you can still see the determination that fills him. He's looking for his fiancée, who was declared missing in action after fighting for Surrigen in one of the pointless, constant battles against the other Empire countries.

The wastes are... eerily quiet, compared to the never ending air raid sirens Noah's hometown, Perrimon. The only sounds existing are the creakings of his horse, the mud beneath metal hooves, the hisses of his breathing through his gas mask, and wind whistling across the wastes. Sometimes in the distance he hears gunfire or the explosions of bombs being dropped, but that's just a part of life within the Empire.

Noah knows his mission is hopeless, and the likelihood of finding one man in the wastes is almost impossible, but it's amazing what love can make you do.

[slightly shaky breath]

KASS. The wastelands are full of danger, more so than everyday life in the empire. It's not just the war to worry over- it's everything the war left behind. Land mines and barbed wire, hazardous chemicals and pools of toxic sludge.

Then there are the scavengers. Noah hasn't encountered any of them yet, but he's caught glimpses of them in the distance. Scavengers are the people who live out on the wastes, collecting the... valuable leftovers. Noah's weapons, supplies and mechanical horse would be quite the find for them. He has to be careful.

Noah and his fiancée met in the army. All countries in the Empire have mandatory service, and in Surrigen it's requested to serve for at least five years. Noah was in his third, and Milo in his second. That was when the two of them met and became... acquainted. Two and a half years later Milo asked Noah to marry him before he went off to the next battle. Two months after that Noah got a letter telling him that his fiancée was missing in action. More often than not in the Empire, that means blown to bits, uniform, dog tags and all, but the missing

in action label means there's still a thin sliver of hope and Noah will cling to that until he can find out, one way or another.

Noah is looking for closure. That's what he's trying to convince himself- that he just wants to know if Milo is dead or alive. But that doesn't stop his thoughts, running wild with hope that Milo is still out there. Noah's rational mind knows how insanely small that chance is, but the hope remains.

He's so focused on his thoughts and the journey ahead of him that he doesn't notice the two scavengers behind him, following him through the wastes.

The attack is sudden and without mercy, it catches Noah off guard. The first gunshot just misses his shoulder. He ducks to the side as the second shot slams into the ear of his horse.

He breaks into a gallop, leaning low over his horse's neck as more shots fly past him. They keep running even more once they start to lose them, flying through the wastes at a breakneck speed and hoping desperately there are no land mines ahead. He pushes the mech far beyond the limits of what any ordinary horse could take and by the time he sees the coil of metal on the ground it is far too late to turn, or slow down.

A mechanical horse can keep going through a lot, but it can still stumble on barbed wire. Noah is thrown forward out of the saddle, and goes flying as the horse topples into a muddy pit. He crashes into an old, half rotted barricade, and is knocked out instantly as the rest of the barricade collapses on top of him. Noah stirs to find himself pinned under rotten wood and more barbed wire, with his horse and supplies gone.

He lies there for a long time, looking up at the grey sky through the planks of wood, and thinking about Milo. He has all of his letters tucked into the front pocket of his shirt, including the one about Milo being missing. He can't reach them, pinned and injured as he is, but he's read them so many times he could practically recite them anyway. Under the gas mask, he realizes he's crying.

It starts to rain, rain that hisses against the wood he's pinned under. Noah's grateful that he still has his gear on him. Acid rain is just another part of life in the Empire.

Eventually, Noah falls asleep, still unable to move.

KASS. Oh um I think Arcadia has a... transmission for me to show? Here lemme just...

[CLICK, STATIC]

INT. TEDDY'S OFFICE

[KNOCKING; DOOR OPENS]

HARLOW. Is this the office of Detective Theodore Montgomery? I have an appointment about this time.

TEDDY. Yes. I assume you're Miss Harlow?

HARLOW. That would be me, yes.

TEDDY. Have a seat, then.

[DOOR CLICKS SHUT]

[FOOTSTEPS; HARLOW SITS DOWN]

What's the reason for your call? Cheating spouse? Background check? I do want to say I make it a point to not investigate M.I.A.'s so if this is about the war...

HARLOW. No! No, it's about my daughter. She's missing.

TEDDY. Ma'am I just told you-

HARLOW. (*Firmly:*) My Alice is 19, she still has a few years before she has to go out and fight. But I-I can't find her now.

TEDDY. Hm. How long has she been gone?

HARLOW. Almost a week now. She said that she would be stepping out of the house, but she's yet to return or even *call* us. I'm worried something terrible has happened to her.

TEDDY. Does Miss Alice have a habit of doing such things?

HARLOW. A bit. She's always been a precocious one, and she doesn't much like me or Henry breathing down her neck all that much. But I don't think she understands how dangerous things are. We'll already be losing her for five years, I don't want to lose any more time with her than I have to.

[TEDDY EXHALES]

TEDDY. Mrs. Harlow, I think I know what happened here.

HARLOW. You do?

TEDDY. I think that your daughter just got fed up with you and your husband being overbearing and decided to strike out on her own. And, unfortunately for you, I don't make much of a habit of getting involved in finding kids who want to disappear from their parents. She'll either be back in a few days, or she's halfway across the country in a convoy or a bird.

HARLOW. But-

TEDDY. There's a bag of jerky next to the door, feel free to take it as consolation for your daughter.

HARLOW. This is your job! You can't just refuse to do this!

TEDDY. Funny enough, I work in the private sector. So yes, I can just refuse to do this. Since you haven't hired me, I'm under no obligation to do anything you ask. You aren't interviewing me, right now, Mrs. Harlow, I'm interviewing you.

HARLOW. Please, Mr. Montgomery. If anything, can you just find where she is so I know whether she's okay? I've already lost my son, and I

can't bear to live not knowing if she's alive or not. You don't even have to tell me where she is. If you don't want to, that is.

[TEDDY SIGHS]

TEDDY. Fine then. Is there any other information about Alice you can offer me that might help?

HARLOW. No, I'm sorry. I have some pictures of her, though, if that helps.

[SOUND OF PAPER]

TEDDY. I... Yes, that'll work. Thank you for coming in, Mrs. Harlow. I'll keep in contact.

HARLOW. Thank you, Detective Montgomery.

TEDDY. Don't- *(sighs)* Teddy is fine, alright? There's no need to be all stuffy about this.

HARLOW. Alright.

TEDDY. You can still take that jerky, if you want.

HARLOW. I... think I'm fine, thank you.

[FOOTSTEPS]

[DOOR OPENS AND SHUTS]

TEDDY. Dammit.

[STATIC]

INT. STATION ARCADIA

KASS. Did... did that man just try to offer jerky as a consolation prize for someone's daughter?

You know what, nevermind. Back to Noah.

KASS. Noah wakes up to the sound of wood being shifted. It takes him a second to remember where he is. His vision blocked by the mask; he can't see what's happening, but he can guess. More scavengers. He struggles to reach his gun to defend himself.

A few more planks move aside, and he sees a blurry image of a person with goggles and a scarf wrapped around their face. She doesn't wear a gas mask, and the hand that holds out to him is missing two fingers.

He takes it, and she pulls him to his feet. Silently, she helps him back to her home. It's a former bomb shelter, fortified with scraps of barbed wire and metal. As soon as they're inside, Noah sinks into the chair next to the makeshift door and takes off his gas mask. The air inside the small room isn't very good, but it's a little cleaner than the air outside.

He cleans off the lenses while his rescuer brings him a cup of water. He learns her name is Alesta, and her lungs are too damaged from gas attacks for her to speak or travel for long periods of time. Her partner used to do most of the scavenging, but they died not too long ago. She'd heard Noah being attacked and had gone to pick up the scraps.

Noah tells her about Milo, and his desperate search. She listens to him speak, before she stands up and puts on goggles and a scarf, gesturing for Noah to follow. He puts on his mask and follows her back outside.

Not too far from the shelter, there is a chain link fence still standing despite everything. Hanging from it are dozens of sets of dog tags. Alesta points at the right end of the fence, where there are less hanging, and tells Noah that Milo's might be there.

He runs up to the fence and starts to search, Alesta quietly helping him as he does so.

And then, all the way at the bottom, kneeling on the ground as he searches, Noah finds Milo's dog tags, his engagement ring still on the chain. Noah spends a long time kneeling on the ground, holding the chain in his hands.

He's found his closure.

KASS. Well... I guess it's good, for him, that he found closure. Though honestly... I think I'd rather not know. Then you still have that hope, right? I'd rather have hope.

Maybe I'm being silly. I don't know.

(Kass pauses)

I'm sorry, this is... a downer of an ending! Things aren't all bad, I mean, there's... Uh. Well, Z's from the Empire and she's pretty cheery so I'm sure there are good things there too, you know? And there are... probably good things... in other places.

(Kass sighs)

Oh, Arcadia wants me to listen to something. *(Sarcastic:)* Maybe it'll be happy.

[STATIC]

EXT. ABANDONED BUILDING

[SOUND OF SLOW WALKING; WITH A CANE]

TEDDY. *(Grumpily:)* If this is a dead end I'm going to lose my mind. You chase a girl's paper trail halfway across the city and she doesn't even have the decency to be in a non-abandoned location with a clean floor and-

[TALKING CAN BE HEARD IN THE DISTANCE]

DEALER. Hey, you didn't say there'd be two of you.

TEDDY. Thank god.

ALICE. Let's make this quick, I don't trust you guys not to leave a trail.

DEALER. Bold words coming from the likes of you.

ALICE. I'd thank you to not make comments about things you don't know about.

BLUEBELL. Alright, that's enough between the both of you. We're here to pick up the hardware, and then we can both be on our way.

ALICE. I just think it's suspicious they brought so much back up when they knew it would just be the two of us.

DEALER. Back alley deals like this are never really a sure thing.

BLUEBELL. He has a point.

ALICE. And another thing; why are they so cheap? It seems like you're losing a lot of profit on this.

DEALER. They're burners. About seventeen bodies on the whole lot

ALICE. Hold on a second, that wasn't part of the deal!

DEALER. You can take it or leave it, little miss.

ALICE. Call me that again, I dare you.

BLUEBELL. What I believe my associate here is trying to say is that we can't afford to take on burners. We already get blamed enough for things we didn't do, we can't afford to implicate ourselves any further.

DEALER. I wouldn't worry too much about that, if I were you.

BLUEBELL. ... What do you mean?

DEALER. You won't be able to do much to implicate yourselves anymore once we're done here.

ALICE. Bluebell, they're-!

TEDDY. *(Whispering:)* Undercover government.

[GUNFIRE AND FIGHTING SOUNDS]

[TEDDY LAUGHS NERVOUSLY]

(Shaking:) Okay. Okay, I just have to get out of here, back the way I came.

[SOUNDS OF TEDDY TRIPPING; SOME BOXES FALL OVER]

[FOOTSTEPS]

[LESS AND LESS GUNFIRE CAN BE HEARD AS TIME GOES ON]

DEALER. Well. Hello there.

TEDDY. I'm unarmed!

DEALER. They had you hang back, did they? Doesn't seem too useful. No weapon, can't run... Well, no skin off my back.

TEDDY. No, I'm not with them, I was-

[GUN CLICKS]

DEALER. You can save your excuses. I'll make it quick for you.

[GUNSHOT; BODY HITS THE FLOOR]

[BEAT.]

TEDDY. Um.

BLUEBELL. Looked like you could use some help. *(Shouting to the side)* Alice, I found someone!

ALICE. *(In the distance:)* How do you know it's not another government lackey?

BLUEBELL. *(Calling to ALICE:)* Well, they don't make much of a habit about shooting their own men for no reason! He's- Hold on! *(Back to TEDDY)* Checking out the view there, doll?

TEDDY. No, no, no, of course not! I was just...

BLUEBELL. I can tell you where I got the skirt, if you like. Doesn't seem much your style, but who am I to judge?

TEDDY. *(Slightly higher:)* Umm.

ALICE. *(In the distance:)* Are you FLIRTING with him!?

BLUEBELL. I'm just making conversation, Alice, for Gods'sake!

[FOOTSTEPS]

ALICE. *(Closer now)* He's kind of dirty, isn't he?

BLUEBELL. Now you're just being rude. The man was nearly shot.

ALICE. What's your name?

TEDDY. Teddy.

ALICE. Last name?

TEDDY. I don't want to tell you.

ALICE. Well what's Mr. I-Don't-Want-To-Tell-You doing at a clandestine weapons deal?

TEDDY. It was your mother, Mrs. Harlow, she wanted-

ALICE. I knew it! I knew that she wouldn't be able to keep her nose out of my business for one week! She's such a pain! I told you she'd do this!

BLUEBELL. I know, Alice.

ALICE. I mean, I'm a grown woman! I'm old enough to drink in Westerfield!

BLUEBELL. Everyone is old enough to drink in Westerfield.

ALICE. And yet here she is, sending some weird, dirty man to find me in the middle of an important meeting.

TEDDY. (*Snappishly:*) I think your comments towards me are starting to become a little grating.

ALICE. Get up, then.

TEDDY. I can't walk, my cane-

BLUEBELL. Here.

TEDDY. ... Thank you.

ALICE. Let's get out of here before more soldiers show up and with bigger guns.

TEDDY. Why would I go with you?

ALICE. Oh, I see the confusion. You don't have a choice.

BLUEBELL. Sorry about the poor initiation, but you're now an official-unofficial member of the Clercourt revolution.

[STATIC]

INT. STATION ARCADIA

KASS. (*to self*) Interesting...

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

[THEME MUSIC PLAYS]

ELI 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 Quinn O.A. Feinberg with scenes by Tovah Brantner and J.R. Steele, and featured Jade Virginia

as Kass, Andrew Simons as Teddy, Cole B. as Bluebell, Bronwyn as Alice Harlow, Rowan Wright as Mrs Harlow, and Jonaya Riley as the Gun Dealer.

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 office supply of the week, is the staple remover. Do you own a staple remover? Should you?