

STATION ARCADIA OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT

EPISODE #21: Side Effects May Include

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INT. STATION ARCADIA

[CLICK]

KASS. Welcome, anyone.

JASYN. Oh, are we starting?

KASS. We are! This is my introduction.

JASYN. Oh, sorry for interrupting.

KASS. No worries. *(pause)* You're listening to Station Arcadia.

[THEME SONG PLAYS]

KASS. As you may have heard, I have a guest with me today.

JASYN. Hi!

KASS. Our little moving island positioned itself just within view of Pallus city yesterday and someone who saw it decided to electroboat over and check it out. Good thing they're friendly.

JASYN. Hello, everyone. My name is Jasyn and my pronouns are they/them. I am a school teacher from Talsoria and an ex-employee of Elevated Meadows Pharmaceuticals. A lot went down during my time there, and I guess that's what I'm gonna tell you all about today?

KASS. Thanks for joining us.

JASYN. It's my pleasure. I gotta say, I don't know what I expected when I saw your island offshore, but it wasn't this. A full station and everything for... what did you call it again?

KASS. Radio.

JASYN. Radio... it's got a certain old timey charm to it, that's for sure, all this cassette stuff. I'm not sure if everyone back home would agree though.

KASS. You'd be surprised. A couple members of our crew are from Talsoria.

JASYN. Oh yeah, you mentioned you were a cyber native. Who else here's Talsorian?

KASS. One of our residents is from Destinus.

[SHUFFLING NOISES FROM THE VENT]

KASS. Their name's Lyssel

[A METALLIC THUD IS HEARD FROM THE VENT]

KASS. ... Although you might not see much of them. Lyssel's very nice, but they keep to themselves.

JASYN. Destinus, huh? I'm from Pallus, although I was relocated to The Nexus when I took the job with Elevated Meadows, then moved back.

KASS. Not many people leave the Nexus for Pallus...

JASYN. I know it might not seem attractive, but it is my home, and it is... well, it made the most sense after what happened. Which is what I'm supposed to be talking about, I guess. Ha, I wonder how many times I'll get off topic during the course of one interview... I'm not used to this kind of thing.

KASS. That's okay. Do you want to take another moment to collect your thoughts first? I can play some foreign audio for a few minutes.

JASYN. Sure? If it's not a problem.

[TRANSITION]

EXT. TALSORIAN ALLEY

MEMORIE. *(sigh)* I guess this is the place. *(calling)* Nikki?

Hmm. Maybe it's farther down the street...

[CRUNCHING GRAVEL FOOTSTEPS.]

NIKKI. You?

MEMORIE. Aah! Ghosts!

NIKKI. What are you doing here?

MEMORIE. I was looking for you, actually.

NIKKI. And you managed to find me. And my handle. (*beat, slightly more curious than aggressive*) How?

MEMORIE. I'll tell you in a click. Can I...? Stay?

NIKKI. If it's important.

MEMORIE. It is.

NIKKI. ...alright. Come with me.

[GRAVEL FOOTSTEPS. THEY APPROACH SOMEWHERE WITH A CRACKLING FIRE AND SIT DOWN BY IT.]

MEMORIE. What are you burning?

NIKKI. (*with a small smile*) None of your business. Are you gonna tell me how you found me?

MEMORIE. A good combination of the web and what I know about you from observation. I learned you were homeless.

NIKKI. Not too hard to see.

MEMORIE. No. Being homeless in the Nexus isn't exactly uncommon. But being homeless and purposefully avoiding every trail, every connection anyone may have to you? That leaves its own trail.

NIKKI. I'll have to be more careful.

MEMORIE. I can help with that.

NIKKI. (*sigh*) We've gone over this--

MEMORIE. But this time, I have proof. Let me show you exactly how I can be of use.

[FAE PULL OUT THE FILES AND HANDS THEM TO NIKKI, WHO FLIPS THROUGH THEM.]

NIKKI. What is all this?

MEMORIE. Information from SpiriTech. There's stuff on the revolution. If it's true... well I figured you guys wouldn't want it to get out.

NIKKI. *(under her breath, thinking)* Fiorti... Pix...

MEMORIE. I don't know how accurate that data is, but--

NIKKI. I'll have a look.

MEMORIE. *(genuinely relieved)* Cool. *(beat)* Oh, there's also some information on Talsorian involvement with the Empire. Specifically in Surrigan and Westerfield. And a few passcodes to make it easier to get in again if you need to in the future.

NIKKI. You got all this by yourself?

MEMORIE. Oh, no. I had help.

NIKKI. From who?

MEMORIE. Book club.

NIKKI. *(disbelieving)* You and a book club got into SpiriTech and retrieved this information.

MEMORIE. Well, yeah.

[NIKKI IS SILENT FOR A MOMENT.]

(sincere) Look. I know it's dangerous. I know there's a risk. But if no one takes the risk, there's no revolution.

Things were hard for me growing up. I've basically raised my little brother on my own, because my parents don't have the time for us, and despite all of that I'm one of the lucky ones. And the idea that we live in a system where what I went through is one of the "favorable" outcomes, makes me sick.

So when I heard that other people were trying to change that system, that I wasn't alone in thinking this way... It was like coming up from underwater. And I couldn't let them do all the work, I had to contribute too.

And, I just want to say, I don't want to do this because it sounds "cool", I want to do this so that in seventeen years, someone else won't have to.

[A PAGE TURN.]

NIKKI. (*quietly*) Do you know what this is?

MEMORIE. A list of fallen revolutionaries.

NIKKI. This doesn't scare you?

MEMORIE. It does. But if we back away from fear, nothing will ever change.

[BEAT.]

NIKKI. Then I'll be in contact.

MEMORIE. (*taken aback*) What?

NIKKI. I can't stop you. Can't scare you off either. And I haven't seen anyone this determined in a long time. So, I'll be in contact.

MEMORIE. Of-of course! Yes! Thank you, Nikki! You won't regret this.

NIKKI. (*fondly*) Go home, Memorie.

MEMORIE. Yeah, yeah it's late. Uh, goodnight! Thank you!

[MEMORIE RUNS OFF. THE FIRE SPARKS AND CRACKLES.]

[TRANSITION]

INT. STATION ARCADIA

KASS. Welcome back.

JASYN. What was *that*?

KASS. Oh um, the... radio station can pick up frequencies from Talsoria! Which can include, you know, streams, TV audio..., eduvids, um... That was the season finale of a new audio fiction story.

JASYN. Oh, interesting! What is it-

KASS. Why don't you start at the beginning of your story, and we'll go from there.

JASYN. Right, well. I graduated from university with a degree in pharmaceuticals. See when I was a child, I grew up quite poor, like... like most people in Pallus. The adults in my life were all overworked and underpaid. Not to mention, we, as a community, had been hit quite hard with the Iron Fever. Those who had it were left with health effects that lasted the rest of their lives. I was always really good with the sciences in school though, and because of my experience, I thought why not go into medicine? I could help people... and make lots of money. I considered being a doctor, but when I mentioned I was interested in finding solutions to various illnesses and medical conditions, like what happened with the fever that struck my city, one of my professors pointed me to pharmaceuticals. It sounded interesting, plus, I mean, the money you make from it -- after all the money you have to spend on the years of higher education, of course -- is... is incredible.

When I finally graduated and got my medical license, I applied to a few places and got a job with Elevated Meadows Pharmaceuticals. They seemed incredible; showed a real commitment to helping people with all kinds of conditions. I was *thrilled* to work with them, but the dream job came with one caveat. They wanted me to act as a spokesperson. Not only would I be involved in developing the medicine, I would also have to go the doctors and physicians and talk to them about the benefits of Elevated Meadow's products. It's a pretty normal job in Talsoria. When you have so many competing companies, spokespeople are important. It wasn't exactly what I wanted to do, but a job's a job and a credDrop's a credDrop.

About 6 months in though-- this was back in 403-- they developed a new drug, a type of painkiller specifically for people recovering from surgery. It didn't matter that I wasn't in the target range of people the meds were for - they decided I should be the lead spokesperson for the marketing efforts. The company said it would be reassuring for doctors to have it be recommended by someone with my charismatic attitude. There was something about it that bothered me, but again, it paid well though and I did genuinely like the idea of helping people.

If this could help doctors help people, like my bosses promised me it would, I wanted to do it. So... I did.

KASS. What was it like?

JASYN. It wasn't bad at first. The drug was cheaper and more effective than others of its kind, so I kinda felt like I was helping people by encouraging doctors to embrace it. I managed to put my doubts behind me. It was about 5 years before I realized what had actually happened. By that point, Elevated Meadows Pharmaceuticals had long since moved on to different things. The painkiller was still in production and being prescribed, but I was busy with a lab position helping develop a drug that would slow memory loss, and the pain-killer was far from my mind.

But I ran into a friend of mine from high school who worked in the data centers of Deadline. He started telling me about how in the past few years, half of his coworkers had begun indulging in a street drug called "pixel rubies". I recognized it because it was a year 396 prototype painkiller, produced by another company owned by Lanata Health - which also owned Elevated Meadows. It was the prototype that had preceded the 403 drug but had been discounted due to its hallucinatory side effects and became relegated to the realm of party drugs.

That didn't make sense to me, but I shrugged it off. Until I ended up snooping through old records at work one night. Which sounds bad, but I promise it wasn't for a malicious reason. Not at first. I was merely dropping some analytics papers in my bosses office and saw he had left his messenger open. I had been sending him emails for an entire week straight about harmful side effects in the memory loss drug that made me think we should change the course of our research. I was getting annoyed and starting to suspect he had been deleting my emails.

KASS. Ouch.

JASYN. He wasn't exactly in the running for boss of the year. Anyways, I took the opportunity to see for myself. And I noticed an interesting chain between him and Bartholomew Blaize, an important investor, discussing logistics and tax breaks and other stuff that went over my head. I remembered then that Blaize had been involved with the 396 model, the "pixel rubies", that my friend had been telling me was on the rise. So I did some more digging. I found messages from researchers early on in the developmental stage of the 403 model warning him about addictive side effects, and messages from Blaize about the declining profit of the 396. The more I found, the more it

became undeniably clear that Bartholomew and my boss had come up with a less than ethical deal. If Elevated Meadows could create a drug with the right addictive properties, then as soon as the doctor no longer felt the need to prescribe EM's drug, then Blaize's products would be right there to fill the gap, and *both* companies could get a cut of the profit.

(sigh) It all rubbed me the wrong way. I don't mind Talsoria's drug culture but it's never been something I've really been into either, outside of a couple fun trips in college. I don't judge those who are into it, but like I said, this whole situation rubbed me the wrong way. We were supposed to be helping people. Everyone wants to be on the good guys' side right? We're supposed to do our best to be the good guys.

KASS. Well, I don't know if everyone really does their best...

JASYN. I do, and you do too, right?

[KASS IS SILENT]

JASYN. Well, I do. So I made plans to quit... but it turns out I didn't have to. I'd forgotten - you're always being watched in Talsoria. My boss called me into his office, and didn't threaten me or even bother getting mad - just told me that he had seen the security footage and that the company would be letting me go. I couldn't have argued, even if I wanted to. I just thanked him for my time at the company and left. Moved back home to Pallus. Spent some time tutoring kids in the local schools. I might actually go back to university, and then set up my own independent medical practice in Pallus. It was hard to find a good doctor growing up there, because anyone worth their salt moved to the bigger city. There's not much money to be made, but I think I've been focusing too much on that.

KASS. That sounds like a plan. I hope it uh, has the effect you want it too. *(after a moment of silence:)* Did you have anything else you wanted to add?

JASYN. I don't think so.

KASS. Well then, thank you very much for coming on the show, and sharing your story.

JASYN. It was my pleasure. I think... I think I needed to get away from Talsoria for a bit. I haven't really been able to talk about this with anyone, not unless I want to face a slander lawsuit from Elevated

Meadows. I admit, it's been weighing on me. I'm glad I found this place.

KASS. Yeah... you aren't the only one who's felt that way. I know you said you need to get back, but if you ever find your way to Station Arcadia again, you'll always be welcome here.

JASYN. Thank you, I appreciate it.

KASS. To our listeners - stay safe, stay moving, and stick close. You've been listening to Station Arcadia.

[CLOSING THEME 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 Eli Esdi and C.V.V.M., and directed by Tovah Brantner. Today's episode contained take selection by Eli Esdi, soundscaping by J.R. Steele and music by Theo Goodwin. It was written by Emily Bennet, with scenes by Tovah Brantner and J.R. Steele. It featured Sterling Rae as Jasyn, Jade Virginia as Kass, Ellison Cardenas as Memorie, and Laurent JL Hall as Nikki.

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Today's board game of the week is 7 Wonders. It's a medium complexity family game for three to seven players, that takes around 30 minutes to play and utilizes the drafting mechanic.