

STATION ARCADIA OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT

SEASON 2 EPISODE 1: GHOSTS IN THE MACHINE

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ELI: *Hey listeners, this is Eli Allan, producer of Station Arcadia. Unfortunately, Station Arcadia stopped production midway through season 2. The following episode was mostly finished before we were forced to halt production, but the show's cancellation may still be reflected in minor aspects of its production quality.*

These disclaimers will... rapidly escalate as we get into the season, but for now this is a pretty normal Station Arcadia episode, so... enjoy!

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[TAPE RECORDER CLICKS ON]

KASS. Welcome, anyone, new or old. You're listening to Station Arcadia.

[INTRO THEME]

KASS. And... we're back! Ghosts, it feels good to be back on the air. I've plugged into the station a handful of times since our last broadcast, but it's not quite the same. I know this sounds crazy, but I think Arcadia herself wants me to *share* her stories. Whenever I'm off air she'll show me little scenes, bits and pieces of what's going on in the world, but they're teasers more than anything else. And I've been able to talk to Axel, Charlie, and Peaches a couple times, but I haven't been able to get any news on Memorie, or on the Clercourt revolution.

Still, Jo was right. I did need a break. I needed some time to just exist, without worrying about the state of... everything, everywhere. If Arcadia has taught me anything, it's that the world is so large and there is so much going on in every part of it. So many lives, so many little stories unfolding every moment of the

day. Which is fascinating, of course! But it's also exhausting just to think about.

Luckily, we don't have to dwell on it right now. All I have to do is shove these metal tubes in my eye sockets and we'll be on our way, lost in some story or other. Back, at long last, in Arcadia's capable hands. Or... wires? Tapes?

Hm. Let's just do this.

[KASS PLUGS IN]

KASS. Little snapshots of other people's lives filled Turner's days.

Photos, posts, and poems... art, updates, and messages... a thousand little things that outlined a person, that hinted at the whole. Pixels of a picture that Turner carefully compiled and pieced together, then fed to a program that finished the job. An eternally preserved snapshot of life, an archive of unfamiliar laughter and sadness in one terabyte; the entirety of someone's mark on their world.

Turner was the ferryman. Or rather, Turner was one of three dozen ferrymen working at her branch of Arachne Access, sorting through, organising, and archiving the footprints the dead leave on Talsoria's ever changing, massive web. Everything from legal records, and birth certificates to social media accounts and purchase history, to a reminder once left on a comm.

Every day, Turner went to work and got to know a complete stranger better than any of her neighbours. Then she'd pack them away into a computer program, where between pre-written code and an artist she'd never spoken to, the deceased would be transformed into a hologram, ready to be released into the city for the next Night of Ghosts.

Over his nearly twenty years working as one of the ferrymen, Turner had seen hundreds, easily thousands, of lives. They all blurred together in the end. A devoted husband who'd loved the colour blue, a child with hardly anything to archive but a record of their first steps, a teenager who'd had a feed full of laughing photographs with friends. All of them strangers, strangers Turner would never be able to meet, And yet, he still recognized faces of these strangers on the streets every Night of Ghosts.

Turner went to work on a rainy day like any other, rushing past other people on the crowded street who were in as much of a hurry as he was, before settling into his small dreary office and logging in. Today, the life of a young woman, Sira, was placed in his hands first.

Turner had the process of filing someone's life away down to an art, and she could often manage two in a day if she was fast about it. Photographs to send to the artist, private messages sorted into the program, alongside public posts and status updates and purchases and so many things archived away into neat packages, placed like a museum display. To be looked at, but not touched.

Sira had been twenty-one, and her next birthday would have been in two weeks. She had beautiful geometric tattoos, and had made music in her spare time. Her cause of death was listed as an allergic reaction. She had cared extensively for a horde of digital plants that likely would have been holo-projected in her home. Sira's life flashed before Turner's eyes, and, as he'd expected, everything was correctly filed by early afternoon. This left him with five minutes to take a breather before sitting down to the next task; the next life.

[TRANSITION]

[THE BOOK CLUB. AVI IS SHUFFLING CARDS. DYNE IS TYPING AWAY ON A MOBILE DEVICE. MEMORIE IS PACING.]

KYREESE. Are you alright, Memorie?

MEMORIE. *(withdrawn)* Fine.

STITCH. Wanna talk about it?

DYNE. As much as you can, anyway?

AVI. We get it if you have to keep some stuff secret-

STITCH. But we're curious.

MEMORIE. I know, guys. *(after a pause)* I'm mostly just thinking about communication systems.

DYNE. Ooh, what kind?

MEMORIE. Analog.

KYREESE. Hah!

DYNE. *(fondly reminiscing)* Oh, I remember my analog phase.

STITCH. *(muttered)* Oh boy.

AVI. *(overlapping)* We all remember your analog phase, Dyne.

DYNE. I gave a lot of that stuff to Memorie, actually.

MEMORIE. Yeah, and I kept it. I've been using it to communicate with Nikki.

DYNE. No kidding?

MEMORIE. Well yeah, once I realized that was the best way to reach her. Turns out the revolution doesn't really use digital technology.

STITCH. No way.

DYNE. *(overlapping)* You're joking.

MEMORIE. It took them a whole month to get last week's meeting location to me. I couldn't even go because I got the message so late. I mean, I'm excited, don't get me wrong. But they have to find a better way of doing this.

AVI. How did they get you the message?

MEMORIE. I got a couple fax requests on the setup Dyne mentioned, a few days ago.

[THE BOOK CLUB BREAKS INTO DISBELIEVING LAUGHTER.]

DYNE. This is insane. But I told you guys it'd be useful!

STITCH. Don't start.

KYREESE. *(still cracking up)* They faxed you?

MEMORIE. Yeah. They're lucky I still had it, even though I never check it. Nothing made in the last half century can send or receive faxes. And, on top of that, they sent me a letter. A letter, can you believe it?

KYREESE. *(just absolutely tickled)* On paper and everything?

MEMORIE. Yup. I didn't even know they'd sent it until Nikki came up and pointed it out to me herself this morning. It was on top of one of those wall drains in an alley on my route here.

AVI. A wall drain?

MEMORIE. Yeah, like one of those circle drains that stick out of the wall and go down to the sewers.

DYNE. Like a scupper?

MEMORIE. I have no idea what that is.

STITCH. Like those drains that stick out of the wall-

MEMORIE. You know what, as long as we're on the same page, it doesn't matter what it's called. I found it there.

STITCH. They can't have expected you to know where to look. And it's not like you can get a regular letter to a digital mailbox.

AVI. I guess I get *why* they do it. It's to keep the information confidential.

DYNE. But there has *got* to be a better way of making sure their messages get where they need to go. There's tons of coded messaging software they could use.

MEMORIE. Or they could even just send me a quick tip on where to find the note!

DYNE. Sending a letter to a random place on the grid and expecting Memorie to find it is pretty unreasonable.

MEMORIE. When I go to this meeting, maybe I'll get a clearer idea of what the situation is. They can't be *that* far behind. There are some things you just have to do digitally nowadays.

STITCH. Hmm...

AVI. What?

STITCH. Well, I was just thinking, maybe there's a different reason they're using analog.

DYNE. Other than confidentiality?

STITCH. Remember a while ago, when I was looking into the Prince?

MEMORIE. Yeah. You were trying to find proof that she didn't die.

STITCH. I mean, yeah. And I'm still convinced. But I'm talking about what caused the revolution to collapse. At least what people think caused it.

MEMORIE. Do you mean...?

STITCH. That maybe the fallout made them more careful with what sorts of systems they're using? Yeah, I think it's possible.

MEMORIE. So they're doing it out of fear.

AVI. You can't really blame them. It was a big thing.

MEMORIE. I mean *yeah*. It was huge. But how do they expect to make any changes if they're still hung up on what happened last time?

DYNE. Isn't that what you're going there for? To change things? Maybe you could use that line of questioning to get somewhere.

MEMORIE. That's true.

DYNE. Like I said, there are a lot of other options for coded messages and files.

AVI. Let us know if they need ideas.

STITCH. No doubt we could come up with something useful between the five of us.

MEMORIE. *(with a little chuckle)* For sure. I'll mention it. See what I can do.

KYREESE. Just keep us updated!

STITCH. As much as you can.

DYNE. You know we're here to help.

MEMORIE. Thanks, guys.

[TRANSITION]

KASS. I'm so glad that Memorie is alright! Not that I had any particular reason to think fae wouldn't be, but you just never know. I can see why Memorie's frustrated at their communication, but if the revolution truly has learned from... well, from my mistakes, then I think that's a good thing.

KASS. Turner had hardly opened the new file when her comm beeped. She wasn't supposed to take personal calls at work, and her two housemates knew it, but there, plain on the screen, was Janus. She frowned, turned the device over, and went back to examining the file; that of an old man, who had lived a long, full life and left behind enough data that Turner would be working on it tomorrow as well. She'd hardly touched the material when her comms went off again. And again.

Turner really wasn't supposed to take personal calls, but at the fifth attempt to reach him, he kicked his chair into the corner where the security camera couldn't quite see him and answered the call.

Janus, their partner Irena, and Turner had lived together since they were hardly adults. Their apartment had become a home, decorated with the memories and detritus and keepsakes that three people had collected over nearly thirty years. They'd settled into a rhythm, they'd built a family and life together. Then, Turner answered his comms.

Janus was crying when he picked up.

Irena, in the space of half an hour, between the first comms call and the one Turner had responded to, had died. She had joined the hundreds of waiting files piling on the desks of the ferrymen. Turner stammered out something about it to her boss, and the rest of the day blurred into tears.

He couldn't afford to have more than a few days off of work, and soon Turner was back at his desk, dizzy and tired. Everything was the same, it was like nothing had happened.

This time, when Turner opened the file she'd started the day before, tears pricked the back of her eyes. This person, who she was filing away, was someone's loved one. Someone's friend. Someone's Irena. Work suddenly became harder than it had ever been, and Turner took her time sorting and archiving, even though her productivity metrics suffered.

Days passed in a haze. Janus returned to normal, and even though they were much snappier than usual, it felt like Irena had never existed. It felt like Turner was the only one who still cared. And then, two weeks after her death, Turner opened up his terminal to find a new file waiting for him. He scanned the username.

TheSunshowerIrena77.

Out of thousands of files, Turner had been handed the life of her dead best friend. What were the odds? Turner had no idea if this was good or terrible luck, but either way, there was Irena, smiling back at her from every angle. Turner couldn't do this, she thought, she just couldn't. Then— she saw the first picture of herself on the feed. She kept scrolling. There were pictures of their house, of their life together, of so many little moments she'd forgotten in the depths of her grief. Little moments of joy. Irena had been so cheerful, even through hardship, and Turner reached out to the screen to touch her face before remembering it was just pixels.

Turner was a ferryman, and he was going to take Irena's hand and lead her over to the other side. Maybe it was a blessing, that it was him that had been selected to archive her. That Irena's life wouldn't be given to a stranger who would just feed her to the algorithm and move on, like Turner had done for so many others.

He took a deep breath and started his work.

There was data from the day Irena was born, to the day she'd died. Turner flipped through her social media, her purchases, and her government records. There were things he remembered— presents for Janus and himself, and things she'd bought for the house. The receipts for the yellow curtains and colourful cushions still decorating their living room. It had everything; every voice message she'd recorded, forum she'd commented on, every photo she'd ever taken. But it had nothing of the space between the photos. Nowhere did it show walks the three of them had taken, moments of laughter, all the time spent piled on the couch laughing at stupid streams and shows. It was everything Irena had been, missing so much of her spirit.

Irena wouldn't have wanted the two of them to cry for her, but there was no way of knowing that through her posts, her search history and medical records.

KASS. Whew! This is... well, honestly it's probably what I should have expected. Arcadia isn't one to shy away from the tough stuff. But we'll put it on pause for a second, and pop back over to Memorie.

[TRANSITION]

[SMALL CROWD. THERE'S SOME ECHO, BUT IT'S A VERY SMALL ROOM WITH A FEW PEOPLE IN IT. PEOPLE ARE TALKING, THROWING IDEAS.]

NIKKI. Memorie.

MEMORIE. Oh, Nikki! I'm glad I'm in the right place.

NIKKI. They've already gotten started, *(mildly irritated)* but you haven't missed much. Come on.

MEMORIE. Lead the way.

[A COUPLE VOICES BEGIN TO STAND OUT.]

V. We could protest. Start rallying people together.

RAM. Peaceful approaches *don't work*. We need to make a statement.

V. What I'm saying *would* be a statement. We need support. We need coverage, not more bodies on our hands.

RAM. Well I say we stay low profile. Get close. Target someone that matters to them.

V. That's risky.

RAM. And would we be here if we didn't take risks?

V. *(passive aggressive)* Okay, we target someone close to them and then what? Talk to them?

RAM. (*mocking*) Talk to them? Give me a break.

V. I know what you're going to propose, and it's not a good idea.

[ANGRY MUTTERING FROM THE OTHERS]

RAM. (*overlapping*) How could you possibly know what I'm going to say?

V. Listen, making a plan out of anger isn't smart. We have to be strategic. We have to pick our battles.

RAM. Oh yeah, that worked out so well last time. Or did you just pick the wrong battle?

[ARGUING ENSUES]

MEMORIE. Why are you guys fighting? Shouldn't you be making actual proposals instead of making personal attacks at each other?

RAM. You again?

V. I thought we were being more careful with letting new people join. What are fae doing here?

NIKKI. I asked Memorie to join us. If that's going to be a problem, then you can take it up with me.

[ANGRY MUTTERING]

MEMORIE. How do any of you expect to make a difference by standing around fighting? We're supposed to agree. Not on everything, of course. Arguing can be productive sometimes. But you've got to find a common ground for debate.

RAM. You're not a part of this conversation. You don't even know what we're discussing.

MEMORIE. You're not *discussing*. You're going at each other's throats and for what? With your tone, you're not going to get anything done. And you.

V. Me?

NIKKI. (*warning*) Memorie...

MEMORIE. Why are you shutting down ideas that haven't even been proposed yet? If something won't work, it'll become apparent quickly. But a discussion has to happen.

V. You've got some nerve to come in here and act like you know the solution to everything-

MEMORIE. How is that any different than what you two were doing? There isn't one solution to everything. And yeah, maybe I just got here, but I've been doing my research for a long time so that I could come in here and say my piece. But when I come here and find people attacking each other instead of making progress? Fighting instead of uniting over a common goal? I see a really important problem.

[MURMURING]

MEMORIE. My name is Memorie. I'm one of the reasons you all have this [rustling paper] from SpiriTech.

RAM. Give me a break.

NIKKI. Faer telling the truth, and you'd do well to take faer seriously.

MEMORIE. The reason I wasn't here sooner is because your systems of communication are, frankly, completely outdated. Your meeting places are so random that even someone with advanced coding skills couldn't crack it. Sure, that means big corps can't find you, but what about your members? I guarantee you've lost some numbers over time because they just couldn't figure out where to go. On the flip side your public moves, however rare, are predictable. And you don't have the numbers to be pulling off any sort of big statement without serious repercussions. It seems like there hasn't been any progress since the fallout, and I'd even go so far as to say you've taken a few steps back. I think some changes have to happen before we can get any further.

RAM. Show your code. What are you suggesting?

MEMORIE. I'm so glad you asked. I made a list.

[TRANSITION]

KASS. Turner kicked her chair into the corner and pulled out her comm, messaging Janus.

Remember that stupid jacket Irena got? That she wouldn't take off for a month? And it looked so bad but she loved it?

It took Janus half a second to respond: We're at work. Now isn't the time.

When is the time, then? We get home and you're too tired to talk about it.

Just leave it alone. We need to move on.

We need to move on.

We need to move on, said Turner's job, said Janus, said the entire bright blaring world of Talsoria. You have to keep going, get back to work. The world can't spare you while you grieve, said the security camera in his office. Whatever happens, you're needed at work the next day. But Irena's file was still in Turner's hands and he had forgotten so many of these things, these things now offered to him in a lovely little package of photos and files.

Maybe the cold neon lights could wait, in exchange for the dimmer, warmer ones of Turner's memories.

Usually, Turner didn't read people's social media posts while she was archiving. They were just another thing to file away, but now, she found herself scrolling through them, smiling faintly, remembering occasions where Irena, consumed with giggling, had hardly managed to type out whatever hilarious phrase she'd had in her head before she forgot it again. The little sentences, even with her ridiculous overuse of emoticons, didn't convey any of those moments. It was the cold shell of who Irena was. Even though her account was less filtered than some, there were still only glimpses of who she'd been between the posts and photos.

He didn't want to finish his work, even though files, for the first time since he'd started at this job, began to pile up on his desk. He had it down to a perfect process, and yet, here he was, dragging his feet over something that would still be in public archives after he was finished. He could go back later and look at all of these photos, remember her when he had a spare minute.

Turner kicked her chair back into the corner and messaged Janus again.

Want to use my work account to dig up some old photos later?

Two minutes. No response. A read receipt popped up, and Turner waited another thirty seconds before tucking his comm into his pocket again and turning back to his terminal, trying to ignore the bitter taste in his mouth. Janus didn't want to talk to him, fine. If Janus wanted to pretend they hadn't lost their partner of twenty years and go back to whatever the hell they did at work, fine. Turner could care about Irena for both of them.

Photos and memories blurred past, slower than usual but steadily, and the next thing Turner knew, she was finished. Irena's file was compiled into several neat little parcels, waiting to be sent on. Turner couldn't quite make herself do it.

He wanted to keep holding onto her. Keep looking at photos forever. Clicking this last button, archiving this file, would mean she was really, truly, gone. It would mean that trying to message her would be greeted with a polite error signal saying that this person no longer existed, it would mean that— A bright notification popped up on the corner of the file. And then a second. And a third. Then one more, and they stopped.

Something new had happened on Irena's file. Frowning, Turner opened it up again, only to find a direct message from Janus, to Irena's messaging account

I'm sorry.

I miss you and I don't know what I'm doing without you. Everyone is telling me to move on— well, except Turner— and I'm trying. It hurts to remember that you're gone and maybe if I just keep going, it won't hurt, but I already miss talking to you. I hope this message is sent before he archives your file, even though I know you'll never read it.

I'll look for you on the night of ghosts.

Goodbye.

Turner stared at the messages for a long moment before she closed her eyes, added the new data to her file blind, and closed it. She could do this without seeing. She knew every step of the process by heart.

Turner took one more deep breath, mentally took Irena's hand, and stepped with her over to the other side.

He archived the file, and his terminal rang out with the confirmation of the completed process. Seconds later, the buzzer for the end of Turner's workday sounded. His vision was blurred with tears as he made his dim, distant way outside, before taking out his comm with shaking hands and calling Janus.

"I saw your message to Irena," she said, words sounding like they came from someone else's mouth. "She's been archived. Do you want to— to— I was going to leave something in the server room."

Janus was quiet for a long moment, before taking a shaky breath and agreeing to meet her at her workplace. Turner waited, trying and failing to sort through the emotions tangling in her rib cage, watching the crowd go by. She hardly ever got a chance to sit and watch like this, to just see people passing by on their way to who knows what. Janus's brightly coloured hair eventually appeared through the crowd, and the two of them met under the awning of Turner's office building.

Neither of them said a word. Turner reached out and tried to take Janus's hand, but they shrugged her off as they re-entered the building, heading downstairs to the massive server rooms whirring under the city.

One of the servers was processing Irena's life. Janus finally took Turner's hand, and Turner produced a crumpled snack pack from his pocket. The tops of the servers were crowded with other offerings; food, notes and little trinkets. A superstitious effort to keep the servers running smoothly, to appease the ghosts in the machine. Turner had left a lot of offerings here in his time as a ferryman, but today, he passed the bright cellophane packet to Janus, who reached up on tiptoes to place the packet on top of the whirring server.

"It's going to be okay," Turner told them, squeezing their hand, her voice almost lost under the electronic whirring, and Janus froze. For a moment, Turner thought she'd said something wrong, before Janus turned and wrapped their arms around her.

The next day, they would both have to go back to work. The loud, bright world of Talsoria would move on, and they would have to move on with it. But for now, tonight, the two of them took the slow way home. They sat in their living room, looking through old

photos and messages and posts, laughing and crying and holding onto each other. Remembering.

[MUSIC ENDS]

[MOMENT OF SILENCE]

KASS. (*choked up, trying and failing to keep her tone light:*) Wow Arcadia, really hitting me where it hurts, huh?

I just... I never mourned her.

I never mourned her, and I *should* have. I should *still*. She deserves that even if I don't, but I just... I can't. I can't even... I can't even *talk* about her! I don't think I've said her name since- since-

(*suddenly frustrated/angry:*) I can't DO this.

[CHAIR SCRAPES AS KASS STANDS UP, A BUTTON IS HIT]

[TRANSITION]

[SMALL CROWD, SAME AS BEFORE, BUT PEOPLE ARE LEAVING.]

V. Hey, Memorie. Remember me?

MEMORIE. Yeah, hey! We met in the bar a little while ago.

V. Mhm. I'd nearly forgotten about it until you walked in and said I was "shutting down ideas."

MEMORIE. Oh, yeah... sorry about that.

V. No, you were right. I came over here to say that I think you've got some good neurons between your ears.

MEMORIE. (*amused*) Haven't heard that one before.

V. I'm Viran, but most folks around here just call me V. Pronouns: vi and vir.

MEMORIE. That's easy to remember. You already know, but I'm Memorie, fae/faer.

V. It's nice to meet you properly.

MEMORIE. I did agree with some of the things you said before. Violence isn't always the answer. Some things can be changed with peace.

V. Yeah, Ram and I don't always agree on that front, but they've got some good ideas sometimes.

MEMORIE. How long have you guys been here?

V. I've been here since just before the fallout. Ram came after. Their best friend was one of the casualties.

MEMORIE. Ah.

V. Yeah. I try not to give them too much trouble, but they've got a different perspective, you know?

MEMORIE. Course. I get it.

V. Anyway, I just wanted to say, I look forward to seeing you next time. Not sure I can speak for everyone; there's always going to be some people who don't agree. But I'm glad Nikki found you.

MEMORIE. It was kind of a mutual finding.

V. Well, I'm glad you're here. We need some fresh eyes.

MEMORIE. Which I'm happy to provide. Hey, it was good to meet you, V, but I've gotta get home.

V. No problem. I'll see you around, Memorie.

MEMORIE. See ya.

NIKKI. Oh, Memorie! Before you go, here's the update on our next meeting.

[A PIECE OF PAPER IS HANDED TO FAER.]

I hope you'll bring some more possible solutions for the communication issue?

MEMORIE. I plan to.

NIKKI. We'll see you next time, then.

[MEMORIE LEAVES.]

V. Faer a good kid, Nikki.

NIKKI. A bit ambitious for my liking.

V. Well, we need that. *(sigh)* Fae remind me of-

NIKKI. Viran.

V. I know, Nik. But it'll be different this time. I know it.

NIKKI. I'll see you at the next meeting, V.

[A PIECE OF PAPER IS PASSED. VIRAN SIGHS.]

[TRANSITION]

LYSSEL. Um. Hello.

Hi.

Sorry, I'm loading.

Listeners, you will have to excuse the buffering - Kass asked me to cover for them and I am doing my best, but my brain doesn't run on words.

Kass is ok, don't worry. They just need to reboot for a bit. I am going to unwind some of Arcadia's tapes tonight to tell her that it's *not* keep-up to show Kass stories about the Ghosts in the Machines. 'Specially not with clips of the revolution in the middle! Probably almost anything else would be better, so it should not be hard for Arcadia to *(warningly:)* never do this again.

Ok. I think that should be enough outro for Jo to be happy. Thank you for listening, I'm going to say the ending words now!

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

[CLOSING THEME]

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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 Quinn O.A. Feinberg, with cutaway segments by J.R. Steele, Arcadia segments by Eli Allan, and copy editing by Eli Allan. It featured theme and background music by Arps.

This episode featured Lady Renaissance as Kass, Olly Davis as Lyssel, Ellison Cardenas as Memorie, Ari Delyne as Kyreese, C.V.V.M as Stitch, Coco Chen as Dyne, Antigone Brickman as Avi, Laurent J.L. Hall as Nikki, Eli Allan as V, and Sterling Rae as Ram.

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Today's Station Arcadia episode of the week is Episode 12: Three Ways Money Can Buy Happiness.