

INTRO:

Hi folks, Eli Ramos here, creator and editor of Under the Electric Stars. This is going to be our last episode before our summer hiatus, so I hope you're excited to hear it. We'll be resuming production of Under the Electric Stars come September, but we should have a special episode ready for you during the summer, as well as tons of other stuff to listen to on our podcast network, Aster Podcasting Network. We'll also be hosting a Patreon Drive in August, so if you can't wait till September, you can pledge to our Patreon at patreon.com/mxeliramos, that's M-X-E-L-I-R-A-M-O-S, to check out all the content we have and to support our network. That's all I have to say for now, thanks for all of your support so far, whether it's just tuning in or if you pledge any amount on our Patreon, we appreciate it all. I'll see you in the credits, here's the episode.

SCENE 1

SFX: A drum roll. Curtains rise up. Applause. Slow footsteps on the stage.

NELL:

Welcome, everyone, to our show. Tonight, we tell you stories from every corner of our world as we know it. From Glasshouse to Metropolis West to Cair Mallplex, each one is like a trick mirror. Spin it once, twice, three times, and see your reflection in it every time. Never the same, but always, inexorably you. All stories have stories inside of them, which have stories inside them, and so on, and so forth, forever and ever. But let these tales illuminate the one we tell after this little diversion. For it's sometimes by a mirror that we reflect a brighter light.

SFX: A stage light turns on.

RONAN:

Ganymede, sweetheart, could you put Adina to bed? Tell her a story. Tell her ours.

SFX: A stage light turns on.

SEBASTIAN:

Okay, okay. Hey, Caine, come sit up here. I've got the perfect story.

SFX: A stage light turns on.

AVA:

This can't be it. I want the full story.

RONAN:

When we first met.

SEBASTIAN:

One you've been waiting to hear for a long time.

AVA:

The whole truth.

SFX: One final light turns on.

GANYMEDE:

Once upon a time...

SFX: A crowd ambience fades in.

CROWD MEMBERS:

Yeah, can you straighten that side? Perfect.

Oh, we should ask mom if we can just replace the sechach next time and leave the walls up for next year.

GANYMEDE:

Has anyone seen Shivani? She has the etrogs. I don't know where she keeps putting them down, we need those.

CROWD MEMBER:

I think she went that way?

GANYMEDE:

Away from the sukkah? What's she doing with them?

CROWD MEMBER:

She just said something was going on and she wanted to find out what.

GANYMEDE:

Something so interesting that she couldn't put the basket down? That, I've got to see. I'll catch up with you later.

SFX: Ganymede walks off.

GANYMEDE:

There she is. I'd better... wait, who's that?

SFX: Ganymede walks over.

GANYMEDE:

Hiya, Shivani, who's your new friend?

SHIVANI:

That's a generous term.

RONAN:

My name's Dr. Ronan Walsh.

GANYMEDE:

Fancy outfit you've got on.

SHIVANI:

He's from... you know.

RONAN:

(CLEARS THROAT) Um, yes. I'm from Glasshouse. I'm representing POTEN Co.'s scientific expansion team.

GANYMEDE:

A scientist! Really now? I didn't think you'd come all the way out here. Long trip, isn't it? Where's the rest of your team?

RONAN:

Doing further surveys in other locations. We're a pretty small team, so you'll really only be seeing me for the time being. I'd like to take some soil and water samples if that's alright? You're all clearly part of an agriculturally based community, so it would be helpful for

us to know how you're doing out here! Keeping track of the quality levels could—!

SHIVANI:

Well, we were actually in the middle of something, so we'll be on our way.

GANYMEDE:

Hang on, Shiv, let's hear him out. I, for one, would like to know what the deal is with getting those samples.

RONAN:

We've been observing the area to see if it's suitable for us to bring some new operations to the area. For my department, I'm responsible for food science. As you know we've been subsisting largely on synthetic food in Glasshouse and the greater Metropolis West area, but there hasn't been a push to reintegrate agriculture anywhere in Metropolis West. I'd like to be a part of the change and connect with outside communities to learn how to better address food insecurity for our ever-expanding city.

SHIVANI:

And how long have you been rehearsing that thesis statement?

RONAN:

I, uh...

GANYMEDE:

So, you'd like to grow some more plants over there, help feed people better.

RONAN:

In essence, yes.

GANYMEDE:

I can get behind that. Good day to talk about it, too.

RONAN:

What do you mean by that?

GANYMEDE:

It's Sukkot. Basically, it's the end of the harvest season festival. That's what we're carrying all these fruits for.

RONAN:

Are you eating them?

SHIVANI:

These? No, no, you don't eat the etrogs. At least, not right now.

GANYMEDE:

But there will be a seder, if you'd like to come.

SHIVANI:

Wait, you're inviting him?

GANYMEDE:

Don't want you to be a stranger, Dr. Walsh!

RONAN:

I feel like it'd be rude to turn it down, Mister... uh, I'm sorry, I haven't gotten your name yet?

GANYMEDE:

Ganymede Moreno. Good to meet you. Now, come on, let's not be late.

SFX: The three walk off.

SCENE 2

KALEO:

"Though POTEN Co. had established supplemental power on the outer rim of the city, there were still straggler societies that, if not recruited into the militia, would continue to establish fringe communities. These were found and systematically eliminated as soon as possible in order to maintain the peace and ensure resources for Metropolis West."

HAVEN:

But not all of those were stamped out. There are a few still out there. And I'd like you to find the biggest and best one.

AVA:

Cair Mallplex, right?

HAVEN:

I don't really care too much about the name, but yes. That one. I have reason to believe that Lola Sunn and the rest of her deluded little gang have made their way out there.

KALEO:

What kind of proof do you even have of that? Seriously, no one leaves the Metropolis and lives! You're kidding yourself.

HAVEN:

They certainly seemed convinced that they could. After I heard that radio broadcast that you two were so obsessed about, I recognized her voice—and the voice of one of my previous clients. I had the pleasure of solving that little mystery, finally. And wouldn't you know, I'd just found the perfect bot to help me make the trace back to Client 912's equipment xe stole from me!

SFX: A pressurized hatch opens.

HAVEN:

You've met it, by the way. It's how I saw both of you for the first time, which made it much easier to get ahold of you.

Machine-004? Awake from sleep mode, now.

SFX: A beep, then a metallic scream.

AVA:

That's... that's what attacked us.

SFX: Motorized footsteps.

AVA:

Wow, it's so much smaller up close.

HAVEN:

You'll have to forgive its indiscretion. I asked it to target any interlopers in case they were who I was looking for, and I'm afraid it's not too bright with things that aren't code or machines. I've always felt hackers were a little distasteful anyways, but I'm sure he's happier like this.

KALEO:

He? Are you saying this is a person?

HAVEN:

Well, it's not anymore. Pardon the slip-up. I tracked it to the Numitron Tube station. I was searching for Client 912, but all I found was some hacker in a pool of his own blood. He was half-dead anyways, but he'd seen 912, so I struck a deal with him. At least his intelligence didn't go to waste. And as far as your proof goes, we were able to reactivate my old equipment and hear a little conversation. Machine-004, play it for our... guests.

RECORDING:

Jet has the map, Caine's our ride out of here, and the Metropolis couldn't care less about another Epsilon like me disappearing.

SFX: Fast forward on tape.

RECORDING:

We've gotta make sure that even if someone breaks in, they're not gonna scrap all of our stuff, so take what you need, and we'll store the rest in the bunker. Uh, Lola, you ready to take your stuff down?

SFX: Fast forward on tape.

RECORDING:

I've got it, I think. Haven's communicator? I... thought I disabled this.

Uh, Lola, you probably should have destroyed it.

I'll pull up my hacking computer and interrupt the—!

SFX: The recording abruptly ends with a smash.

HAVEN:

Unfortunately, I wasn't able to get more information, but like I said before, that's why I brought you two here. I hope you'll forgive the terribly rude way I had to do it. I just had to guarantee you'd come. But just know, as long as you're lending me a helping hand, you won't come to any harm.

KALEO:

But why? I mean why are you even doing all of this?!

AVA:

Look, I agreed to come do this, but Kaleo and I are on the same page about this. We deserve an explanation.

HAVEN:

For all your enjoyment of history, you barely know what's going on right under your nose. I suppose you're both young. And she was such a star... All you need to know is that Lola Sunn and I worked quite closely with each other. But for all the incredible work she did, she tossed it all away to defy POTEN Co. and dragged me down with her. I just want justice. Isn't that what you want too? So, we're following her, wherever she goes, until we finally catch up.

SFX: Haven walks.

HAVEN:

You'll be spending a majority of your time here in my auxiliary laboratory. Machine-004 will serve as your protection and a link to me should you need anything. I trust that you'll try to figure out the other signals in that drive as quickly as possible, because Machine-004 can also serve as a disciplinarian if you try to step out of line. Now if you'll excuse me, I've got an appointment with another client.

SFX: The hatch closes and locks.

KALEO:

God... what the hell are we going to do...?

AVA:

(SNIFFS)

KALEO:

Ava? Hey, hey... are you okay?

AVA:

I'm really sorry, Kaleo.

KALEO:

Huh? No, what? You don't need to apologize for anything. If anything, it's my fault, I even promised you that I'd try to be careful!

AVA:

Please, *please* don't take the blame for this one. We got caught up in all of this because of *me*. I caught the signal and put it on air, I went to that base and got spotted, I made us go on that wild chase through the Panel District Mall and get in that stupid fight, and I agreed to do this because I didn't want you to get hurt.

KALEO:

Well, I think I deserve at least some credit, but hey, that's just me.

AVA:

(LAUGHS A LITTLE)

KALEO:

Ava, I'm serious though. If I was going to be stuck in an awful situation like this, which we are, I'd like to be stuck with you, which... I am. You're seriously one of the smartest people I know, and if we put our heads together on this, you, me, and everyone we care about will be okay. Or at least, I can promise you I'm going to try as hard as I can to make sure that comes true. And I'm glad I'm with you... if only to keep an eye out for you, too. Someone has to.

AVA:

Thank you.

KALEO:

Of course.

SFX: Ava and Kaleo hug. They linger until the cyborg beeps loudly.

AVA AND KALEO:

(STARTLED SOUND)

AVA:

I almost forgot that it—*he* was here.

KALEO:

Do you think he's even actually alive in there anymore? Or are we just looking at a brain stuck through with some wires?

AVA:

Ugh, horrible imagery, but not outside the realm of possibility.

SFX: Ava walks over.

AVA:

H-hello?

SFX: The cyborg beeps.

KALEO:

Can you hear us? Like... say, one beep for yes, two for no or something?

Beat.

AVA:

Maybe he really is—!

SFX: The cyborg beeps once.

KALEO:

I should have chosen something other than beeping, since, you know, bots do that all the time. (SIGHS) Could've been a fluke.

SFX: Two beeps.

AVA:

I don't think so.

Are you okay in there?

SFX: Two beeps.

AVA:

Okay, yeah, that was a stupid question. Um, what should we call you? Or should I ask that as a yes or no question?

SFX: The cyborg prints a sheet out. Ava tears it off.

AVA:

"Uberkidgamma7"?

KALEO:

(SNORTS) Is that a username?

SFX: One beep.

AVA:

Kind of a mouthful. Does just "Gamma" work?

SFX: One beep.

KALEO:

(WHISPERING)

Hey, um... Are we being listened to or recorded right now?

SFX: One beep.

KALEO:

Can we stop that from happening? At least for a minute or so?

SFX: We hear the cyborg beep once, then many different beeps.

KALEO:

Okay, timer! Wow, you bought us 20 minutes? That's a lot of time, actually. Thank you.

Look, I know the first time we met got off on an... interesting foot. I mean, you did seriously freak us out, but I get that you weren't totally able to control that.

AVA:

We've been chasing down this big mystery that we thought you were at the center of, but it turns out that you're just one part of this. But you're not just some clue. You're a person too.

KALEO:

And we can't just let someone who's exploiting you get exactly what she wants. She's obviously bad news. We have to find a way out of this together.

AVA:

Yeah. I mean, you're clearly pretty genius if you remotely reactivated a tracker, plus it was you that helped locate us, right?

SFX: One beep.

KALEO:

So, you're good at finding things. That's what we need for this. We'll try to keep you out of trouble, but we have to stop her. You with us?

SFX: One beep.

KALEO:

Glad to hear it, Gamma. Welcome to the team.

AVA:

Then, let's finish reading what we have on the drive.

SCENE 3

MUSIC: Fantasy Music by LiteSaturation.

SEBASTIAN:
(NARRATING)

Once upon a time, there was a man who lived on the outskirts of a beautiful castle. It towered high above everything else, and through its windows, you could see all the lords and ladies of the court passing through the spire: happy, free, careless. Its splendor was so great, its opulence so magnificent, that everyone all but forgot that there was a town in the shadow of the castle. This is where that man lived. Where the castle was wrapped in perpetual sunshine, the world he lived in was one of darkness. And so, he left his home in search of that light.

MUSIC: The White Lion by GuilhermeBernardes.

SFX: A bag is zipped up.

SEBASTIAN:

That's everything.

Caine? Val? Either of you awake?

Beat.

SEBASTIAN:

(SIGHS) Come find me, then. Whenever you can.

SFX: Sebastian closes the door behind him.

YOUNG CAINE:

But what about his family?

SEBASTIAN:
(NARRATING)

The man was not afraid to leave his home, for he knew that the people he loved most would be able to find him. He knew

they had all been bound together by a spell. One he thought of as a curse in some ways, but one that he also hoped would bring him back to them. He did not wish to leave everyone behind, but his home was so dark, and he believed surely, they would follow him to the light, wherever it lay.

SFX: City ambience.

SELLER:

Alright, initiating crypto transfer.

SFX: Beeping.

SELLER:

Damn Sebastian, you actually got it. I'm impressed. What'd you do, sell everything you had to get all of this?

SEBASTIAN:

Pretty much, yeah.

SELLER:

(LAUGHS) Okay, you got guts. Not brains, but you do have guts.

SFX: Keys jingle.

SELLER:

Car's yours. Dunno why you want it when you got a pretty nice car at home.

SEBASTIAN:

Didn't feel like taking it with me.

SELLER:

Yeah, on your suicide mission.

SEBASTIAN:

That's not what this is.

SELLER:

You're betting all you have on a half-plated car and the clothes on your back, all to... what? Die on a road beyond the Metropolis? (SCOFFS) Good luck. If you're not travelling the Glasshouse roads, you're not making it to another Metropolis. Hell, I sort of doubt there even are any.

SEBASTIAN:

I don't *want* another Metropolis. I don't want another Glasshouse. I want to be free.

SELLER:

Always with your head in the clouds, man. Suit yourself. And for what it's worth... Thought you were a nice kid. Gullible, but nice.

SEBASTIAN:

Oh, save it. You've never even dreamed of anything but the next crypto in your account.

SELLER:

That's all there is.

YOUNG CAINE:

Oh, what then? How did he travel? Did he take a helicopter? Or a truck? Or a submarine?

SEBASTIAN:

(LAUGHING) No, no. Remember, Caine, this is a fantasy story, okay? He got the best carriage he could from a local merchant and set off into the wild unknown. Everyone thought that beyond the tower was death and destruction. After all, no one had ever seen the people of the court

leave their citadel. But he had gotten a map. A very special map that was supposed to point him to an enchanted palace, far away, where everyone could see the sun.

YOUNG CAINE:

But how did the map work?

SEBASTIAN:

It was like a... code. A set of sigils and runes that the man had to decipher if he wanted to find the kingdom. He realized that they had hidden the pathway so that only the worthy could find them. There must have been something very special about that place, but as for what it was, he wasn't sure. He had spent many sleepless nights looking over the symbols...

SFX: Knocking.

CAINE:

Seb, Dad's gonna get mad if you make us wait any longer to eat dinner.

SEBASTIAN:

I said you could just eat without me, I'm busy!

CAINE:

Dude, you're always busy! Come on, I'm like, really, really hungry and I don't want Dad to start yelling.

SEBASTIAN:

Tell him I'm not interested.

CAINE:

Seb.

SEBASTIAN:

Goodbye, Caine.

CAINE:

(SCOFFS) Okay, well you better not get mad at me if he makes you wash all the dishes. I'm just the messenger.

Seb?

SEBASTIAN:

Let's see, so these points are situated northeast...

CAINE:

(GRUMBLES)

SEBASTIAN:

(NARRATING)

And once he'd driven to the edge of the town, he prayed that the map would keep him safe on his journey.

SFX: Beep.

GPS:

Destination is beyond limits of Metropolis West. Please register that you are accompanied by a POTEN Co. representative within the next 30 seconds or authorities will be contacted.

SEBASTIAN:

Stupid Glasshouse tech.

GPS:

Access granted. Enjoy your drive!

SEBASTIAN:

Good riddance.

SFX: Sebastian revs the engine.

YOUNG CAINE:

Then what happened next?

Kuya, you're supposed to be reading me the story, not just reading it yourself!

SEBASTIAN:

Sorry, sorry. But don't worry, Caine. I'd never get to the good parts without you. First, the man had to traverse a burning hot desert. The sun beat down on him as his carriage rolled across the burning sands.

SFX: Bandage wrapping.

SEBASTIAN:

(HE HISSES IN PAIN) Didn't think I was ever going to get these blisters.

YOUNG CAINE:

Are there any monsters he has to fight? Are they big? What kind? Does he use blasters? To fight 'em off? Or, you know what, I hope he has a sword. Can he have a sword?

SEBASTIAN:

Patience, patience. Let's not get ahead of ourselves. Then, as he crossed the desert, he ran into a roving gang of bandits.

SFX: Blaster fire ricochets.

TECH:

We said stop the car!

SEBASTIAN:

Come on, come on, power pack, fit in place...

SFX: Sebastian clicks it in place and returns fire. His car swerves as he shoots.

TECH:

Subject returning fire, we're in pursuit!

SEBASTIAN:

(NARRATING)

The bandits chased the man all across the desert, gaining on him inch by inch. Desperately, the man tried to follow the map, but the symbols began to fall away.

GPS:

Signal lost. (GLITCHING) Signal lost.

SEBASTIAN:

(NARRATING)

And the man grew weary and began to doubt himself. His spirit waned—especially because he had sustained a terrible injury.

SFX: A window shatters with a laser blast that strikes Sebastian.

MUSIC Always With Me, Always With You (Main) by ZakharValaha.

SEBASTIAN:

(PAIN NOISE) No, no, no, goddammit, I'm not dying!

SEBASTIAN:

(NARRATING)

Blood streamed down his face, blinding him as he raced away down the road. And just as he thought he was free of them... you know what he came across?

SFX: A dragon roar that transforms into the sound of a truck. Honking.

YOUNG CAINE:

A dragon!

SEBASTIAN:

Exactly! And he knew that right now, he could not face it.
Because who was he? Just a man from a town in the shadow of
a tower. And no man could do what he needed to.

TECH:

Stop him at any cost!

SFX: The car crashes hard.

SEBASTIAN:

Please don't let me die here.

NELL:

(DISTANT)

I saw movement. He might still be alive in there. Ganymede.
Ganymede!

SCENE 4

COWORKER:

Ganymede.

GANYMEDE:

Hm?

COWORKER:

You've been making lovey-dovey eyes over at that Glasshouse doctor for the past... I don't know how long he's been around.

GANYMEDE:

Two weeks.

COWORKER:

That's two weeks too long. How much time can it take to pick up some soil and put it in a test tube?

GANYMEDE:

Science can take time, you know that.

COWORKER:

Sure, but having him be around so often *is* suspicious. What kind of data is he actually sending over?

GANYMEDE:

I know it's odd, but he's trying to help his community and ours can offer him at least part of a solution. He's been pretty respectful so far too. I want to keep us safe as much as you do, but that doesn't mean we can just kick out anyone we please. ...And besides, he's leaving soon anyways.

COWORKER:

Why's he looking this way?

RONAN:

Oh, hi Ganymede, I'll be done in just a few more minutes!

COWORKER:

What is going on between the two of you?

GANYMEDE:

Lunch plans. Last day and all.

SFX: Ganymede walks away.

GANYMEDE:

Hiya, darling. Working hard?

RONAN:

(LAUGHS) Just finishing up. Spent most of the morning testing nitrogen levels and comparing against Metropolis soil. The difference is incredible! And your use of hydroponics too. Really fascinating stuff.

GANYMEDE:

Thank you. My family's been farming for quite a few years now, so we're kind of old hands at this.

RONAN:

I picked the right person to hang out around then.

GANYMEDE:

That's how I feel about you.

RONAN:

(LAUGHS, EMBARRASSED) Let me store these real quick.

SFX: Glass tubes jingle.

GANYMEDE:

So, where'd you like to eat? Not a huge selection of choices but you seemed to mightly like the curry place.

RONAN:

That was *incredible*. But you're supposed to be choosing today! We switch off, remember?

GANYMEDE:

I'm relinquishing my decision this time. My treat.

RONAN:

Okay, okay. Thank you for that. How about we do curry again, then?

GANYMEDE:

I'd be delighted.

SFX: The two walk together.

GANYMEDE:

So, soil samples are good, water's good... I hope you're telling them we're good at our jobs here. Maybe to leave us the hell alone with all that other stuff.

RONAN:

Aw, you don't want me around anymore?

GANYMEDE:

You're different. You actually... kind of care? I think POTEN Co. could actually change if people like you are working with them. You're not here to just see if you can seize our land from us. Unless of course, that's what you came to do?

RONAN:

No, no! Gosh, no. Strictly data is all I work with. Your whole place is... something I'm kind of jealous of if I'm being honest. You have all of this great work you're doing agriculturally, right? But like... you guys are a community. I don't wanna romanticize it, obviously it's really hard living out here, but I love that you guys do things together. A lot. When I was first working with my team, I didn't even meet them until I finished my first month. I was always doing bench work, under the fume hood, pipetting samples... and even then, I don't think they got me that well, to tell the truth.

SFX: The two enter the restaurant.

GANYMEDE:

Table for two, please!

Also wait, really? I mean, I guess I saw you by yourself when you first came here, so that's not totally farfetched, but what do you mean they don't get you?

RONAN:

Obviously, we're all pretty much on the same page when it comes to our research goals, but beyond that, we're nothing more than co-workers. I don't think if I asked, they would know anything about me.

GANYMEDE:

Like what?

RONAN:

Hm?

GANYMEDE:

Like... what kind of things would you say they should know about you?

RONAN:

I dunno, favorite color, things I like doing outside of the lab? The food I like?

GANYMEDE:

Let's see, you're always wearing green, so I suspect you like that color. You seemed like you had a lot of fun when I took you driving around.

RONAN:

I did have fun! I don't know anything about cars, but wow, you can drive.

GANYMEDE:

And food you like, well...

WAITER:

Hi there! Can I take your order?

RONAN:

I think I'll do the tikka masala again?

GANYMEDE:

That's what I was going to say. I'll take a plate of that too, thank you.

WAITER:

Perfect. I'll send someone over with it.

GANYMEDE:

How'd I do?

RONAN:

Good. Great, actually! But that's not really that surprising.

GANYMEDE:

I know, we've been spending a fair bit of time hanging around each other, so I might be disqualified.

RONAN:

(LAUGHS) Come on, Ganymede. I already knew we were friends! You've been super nice to me, inviting me to all sorts of stuff. Even Shabbat dinner! I mean, I was already thinking about converting, but getting to be around more Jewish people, that really started cementing it for me.

GANYMEDE:

Yeah, I get the feeling! I was pretty young when I converted, but you know, I never want you to feel like an outsider in any spaces you'd like to have a place in.

RONAN:

You do a great job of that. Really. I mean, this place, the way you all do things, you... it's been better than I could ever ask for.

GANYMEDE:

(LAUGHS) Now you're just sucking up to all of us.

RONAN:

Pfft.

SFX: Plates clink.

WAITER 2:

Enjoy! And don't forget, if you can, fill out our form out front and pay it forward with some community service!

RONAN:

Ooh, wow, did not realize how hungry I was before I saw this.

GANYMEDE:

Yeah, let's eat.

SFX: Silverware clinks.

RONAN:

Seriously, this is so good. I don't get it, it's never this tasty when I cook it myself.

GANYMEDE:

Glad you enjoyed this place so much.

RONAN:

Ganymede, you alright? You looked super sad for a second there.

GANYMEDE:

I'm alright, really. I was just thinking it was awful sad that this is the last time we'll be doing lunch plans together, you know? I mean, yeah, I do like people here. Obviously, these are *my* people, you know what I mean? But being around you has been pretty fun. Showing you new things made me appreciate what we have here more, and I wish I could just keep doing that. Keep taking you around, see what things you like and what things you dislike. Find out more of the answers to the questions you wish people would ask you! Because... wow, well, I think I'm getting a little ahead of myself.

RONAN:

We don't have to stop doing these things together.

MUSIC: Sad Piano Calm by Ashot-Danielyan-Composer.

GANYMEDE:

I mean, we do. Can't pretend you're gonna keep coming around as soon as you've gotten everything you need. Which, it's been an awesome two weeks. Feels like it flew by and

yet I've done more around town with you than I do with pretty much anyone else. I mean, I don't consider myself a total workaholic, but I can get pretty hyper-focused on what I'm doing. I skip out on stuff I'm doing with people to check up on the crops or make sure our software for auto-watering is up to date. But you really like that sort of stuff and... talking with you for all those hours about my work made me just feel like you appreciated it and appreciated me.

RONAN:

I do!

GANYMEDE:

Thank you. It means a lot.

Because... whew, I didn't think I'd have to start saying this, but I've got this inkling I might have started to like you more than most people. Or... let me not put it so delicately. I just realized I have feelings for you and you're leaving, so that is an interesting predicament I've gotten myself into.

RONAN:

Uh, wow! ...Wow.

GANYMEDE:

Sorry to spring that on you right before you go back to Glasshouse. I hope that doesn't make your last memory of this place totally terrible or anything.

RONAN:

I... um, I was going to wait until we finished eating. Which, if you want to eat, you should! I can save this for the end of the meal.

GANYMEDE:

Don't think I've got much of an appetite right now, my stomach's flip-flopping all over the place.

RONAN:

Okay, then I may as well say it now.

I'm not leaving.

GANYMEDE:

I—wait, what?

RONAN:

I'm not leaving for Glasshouse.

GANYMEDE:

Did something happen? Are you in trouble?

RONAN:

Nope.

GANYMEDE:

Can you really just do that?

RONAN:

Nothing says I can't. Things are looking good for us to expand operations here. Though I'm not totally sure what that means, I know they wouldn't bring my team if it didn't have to do with the work we were already on. Actually, I... submitted my request to stay on last week and I got approved last night.

GANYMEDE:

But what about your work back home?

RONAN:

I care about the Metropolis, I do. But so do the people I work with. I'm part of the big machine we call teamwork, and honestly, it would be great for us to have a liaison here. I talked it over with them and they said they'd be happy to let me stay.

GANYMEDE:

You better not be joking around with me.

RONAN:

I'm not.

SFX: Ganymede gets up and hugs Ronan.

MUSIC: Always With Me, Always With You (Main) by ZakharValaha.

RONAN:

Whoa, haha!

GANYMEDE:

I really thought I wasn't going to see you ever again.

RONAN:

Now you'll be seeing me plenty. I'm glad it all worked out. I want to be here. With you.

GANYMEDE:

Me too. And now I've got everything I could ever want, right here.

RONAN:

Your food's gonna get cold, you know. I'd hate for you to waste a plate of my favorite food.

GANYMEDE:

(LAUGHS) So he hates wasting food! That's something new.

RONAN:

That should have been obvious. And... now, you've got all the time in the world to learn new stuff about me.

SCENE 5

AVA:

"It was after only five outer communities remained that "Cair Mallplex" would slip out of detection, having violently seized a POTEN Co. property that had been taken under code 57a of civil forfeiture. In doing so, they recloaked its location and continued to defend its borders while also sending out changing signals to alert Glasshouse defectors and Metropolis runaways. While we consider them to be a threat, they're in low enough numbers at this juncture that we don't project a full-on attack will be necessary until..."

Oh no. That's why Hayden's been trying to stamp out all the signals.

KALEO:

"A full-on attack won't be necessary until-!" Oh no, that's this year.

AVA:

Oh god, I really screwed this up, Kaleo.

KALEO:

Hey, hey. Feelings are important and all, but we need to focus on the task at hand. We're on a time limit, remember? If we can decode these signals and interpret them, we can put a stop to them too.

AVA:

But Dr. Haven is reporting this whole thing directly to POTEN Co. And honestly, from the looks of all of this, I wouldn't be surprised if some shady executive or Corrector tortured the rest of this information out of her if she did decide to hide anything from them. All of this feels so crazy. I had no idea that everything was so bad. Studying history all the time and always running into gaps of information... I thought it was just laziness or some shady

government conspiracy to hide like, underground labs. This is worse. This is people, all over the place, suffering for what? For people who already live on top to keep making more?

KALEO:

It's a lot. Even in the Metropolis, it's so easy to just look away from the bad stuff that happens. See a guy begging on the street and just hurry away, 'cause it's not like your pocket doesn't hurt too. But... seeing that it's like this, even in places you can't reach, makes you realize how far-reaching all of it is. I thought I could just worry about me and my family, but that's not really possible anymore.

AVA:

Yeah... yeah.

Okay, but let's not get stuck in wallowing, like you said! Now that we have context, we can decode them and figure out what to do with all of it.

SFX: Ava opens several files.

KALEO:

Oh, man, that is a lot of ciphers and codes.

AVA:

Apparently, some of these were re-encrypted over twenty times. That's enough to make anyone give up.

KALEO:

Me included. There is no way we're breaking any of those any time soon.

AVA:

Agreed. There's what seems to be coordinates, but those are scrambled too. There's a bunch of colons and periods in them where I don't think they should be.

KALEO:

We could run those through Gamma to brute force them to something readable?

If that works for you. 'Cause hopefully if Ava and I can solve something, then we'll have a backup just to confirm.

SFX: One beep.

AVA:

I'll feed the data in then.

SFX: Typing.

AVA:

And last but not least, audio files!

KALEO:

Well, guess it's what we're good at.

AVA:

Never underestimate your own talents, Kaleo.

KALEO:

These ones seem to be actually compatible with the laptop, so I'll just go ahead and play them.

SFX: They play the files, which sound like garbled static.

AVA:

They do all have that same sound at the end though, right? Kind of like the D-R-O message. I wonder what that could be.

KALEO:

It says here that these were all picked up on various radio stations at... seemingly random times. Hm. That unfortunately knocks out a lead.

SFX: Kaleo plays one again.

KALEO:

Doesn't sound like morse code and probably not another kind of audio cipher if there's that sound at the end.

You know how at Moondog, we don't do all that many shoutouts? Sometimes you'd wanna sneak one in, for your friend or brother or something, but you didn't want to go through the trouble of clearing it with a supervisor? You'd make these little clips that they knew were for them. And if you ran it through a sonic visualizer... I'm suddenly very glad we did this on my work laptop. We can visualize this on a spectrogram like... so.

SFX: Kaleo opens a program and plays an audio file.

AVA:

There are messages hidden inside!

KALEO:

This little symbol at the end was making that sound. But I've really got no clue what these other things are. "Gliese-832"? "Itonda"? Those don't mean a whole lot to me.

SFX: Gamma beeps.

KALEO:

You already went through the coordinates? Man, you're fast.

AVA:

These are really weird groupings, like 94.7, 101.9, 88.6...

Wait, are these *stations*? H-Hang on, is there a radio anywhere in here?

SFX: A panel opens on Gamma.

AVA:

Right, radio panel on your side. Okay, let me just tune into these.

SFX: Radio scanning.

AVA:

And that's 101.9. All of these stations are dead air or cleared for ham radio frequencies, which means these are the stations these must have been playing on!

KALEO:

These other numbers on the list might be times then, right? It says 00:38, 06:06, 10:14 and so on, so these must correspond with the radio stations somehow.

AVA:

But there's so much data to sort through, I don't know how-

SFX: Timer beeping.

KALEO:

Timer's down to one minute. This is good progress, but we shouldn't let Dr. Haven know we even have any of this. We'll slowly give her information while we're figuring things out, but in the meantime, let's hide any data we got from our new buddy here.

SFX: The timer does its final beep. Meanwhile, a phone rings.

MUSIC: Sunday Morning in the Great Hall by foolboymedia.

HAVEN:

Dr. Elizabeth Haven speaking, if you need a little Haven help, you've come to the right place. Ah, yes. Wonderful to speak with you again. I've just obtained a few new associates for helping me track down Zero Zero. I'm aware that someone's very recently made this union a matter of interest to you, and I can only assume they failed miserably. But rest assured, I'll be taking at least one operative in.

Oh, the one of interest to you? Well, I'm not completely abreast of who's who in that ragtag little group aside from the most notorious names, but I'll see what I can do. I'll keep you posted, ma'am. Pleasure talking with you.

SFX: Haven hangs up the phone.

SCENE 6

SFX: Ganymede wakes up with a start.

GANYMEDE:

Ronan, sweetheart. Something's wrong.

RONAN:

(YAWNING) Ganymede, babe, what time is it?

GANYMEDE:

I don't know, just... do you hear that?

RONAN:

Don't hear anything, but I sure smell something. What is that? Did I leave the stove on or something? Actually, don't answer that, I'll go down and—!

SFX: A distant knocking at the door.

GANYMEDE:

Let's just both go down, Ronan. I have a really bad feeling about all this.

SFX: The two go downstairs and open the door.

RESIDENT:

Mr. Moreno and, uh... Dr. Moreno.

RONAN:

That's us.

RESIDENT:

I'm so sorry to wake you both up like this, but we're sending out an alarm in a moment. We're in the path of a wildfire and it's a big blaze. Everyone needs to evacuate.

We're heading to Cair Mallplex, but you should pack your things and get ready to leave.

GANYMEDE:

Hang on, what?

RESIDENT:

I just heard the news, but my girlfriend is packing up our stuff. We don't have all that much, so I thought I'd run and tell everyone else in the neighborhood so we can get going and fast.

RONAN:

We're just supposed to uproot our whole lives?

RESIDENT:

I don't know. I don't know anything really, I mean, I hope not. But you both know how crazy the fires can get. A fire just took out district D153 last year.

GANYMEDE:

Go tell the others. We'll get ready. Thank you.

SFX: Ganymede shuts the door.

GANYMEDE:

Oh, Ronan... How are we supposed to leave? This is where I grew up. This is where my family lives, this is... this is my home. I can't abandon it.

RONAN:

There's no other alternative.

GANYMEDE:

If we go, it'll be completely unguarded. Someone could come and destroy it whether it's desperate people or Celadon Carbonate coming to scrap our stuff. Someone should stay.

RONAN:

No, Ganymede, no one can. There's no guarantee that the fire will pass by, so either way, part of this town will be destroyed. And that's okay. We have to be okay with that.

GANYMEDE:

But we got married here. We live in this house! This was supposed to be *our* house, we're supposed to have kids here!

RONAN:

I know. And I'm sorry. Don't think this isn't hard for me because it is. I love this town and I always will. But I'm looking out for both of us right now and I say our lives are more important than the house. Once we get out of this situation, I promise we'll try to come back. If it means I have to rebuild our home from the ground up, I will.

Beat.

RONAN:

Out of everything, it's you that makes that place a home. Okay?

GANYMEDE:

Okay.

RONAN:

So, let's pack up as much as we can.

GANYMEDE:

(WIPING TEARS) I'm sure our neighbors will need our help too, so... right. Let's do it.

SFX: Fade to outdoors ambience. A car door shuts.

RONAN:

We still have enough space for a few more boxes in our truck, anyone need it? We want to make sure you have everything you need when we leave!

Babe, could you go `round and ask? I think someone needs help lashing everything to their car.

GANYMEDE:

On it.

SFX: Ganymede walks.

GANYMEDE:

Anyone need to pack stuff? We've got some extra space.

RESIDENT 2:

I mean, it's probably something to do with that POTEN Co. "scientist..."

GANYMEDE:

Excuse me?

RESIDENT 3:

Oh, crap.

RESIDENT 2:

Nothing.

GANYMEDE:

I'm sorry, no, I don't think I misheard. You were talking about my husband.

RESIDENT 3:

It's just that Dr. Walsh—!

GANYMEDE:

Moreno, if you would.

RESIDENT 3:

...Dr. Moreno only moved in a few years ago and ever since then, we've run into more trouble.

GANYMEDE:

Oh, really? How exactly is that Ronan's fault?

RESIDENT 2:

He moved in and we suddenly had more people from POTEN Co. coming around the place for a while!

GANYMEDE:

That would have been his team, yes.

RESIDENT 2:

Well, after that, our crop yield was lower! You brought him out to the fields, so you should know that's on him.

GANYMEDE:

I'm sorry, the year we had less than 4 inches of rain? So, he can control the weather now. And besides, this fire could be the same thing—we haven't been getting good rains for years now, sometimes these things just happen.

RESIDENT 3:

But he's an outsider!

GANYMEDE:

Why does that matter?

RESIDENT 3:

Because it's his fault that we aren't safe anymore.

GANYMEDE:

(SIGHS) I can see you two are young. That doesn't excuse what you said, but I know why you said it. You're scared and you need someone to blame. But that perception of safety shouldn't stop you from welcoming new people in. The day you pass up helping someone because you're more interested in saving your own skin is a day you're gonna regret for the rest of your life. We've all been outsiders. Don't let someone suffer for that. Got it?

RESIDENT 2 AND 3:

..Got it.

SFX: Ganymede walks back over to Ronan.

GANYMEDE:

Everything okay, hon?

RONAN:

Yeah, everything's okay. I, uh... I heard what happened.

GANYMEDE:

You did? Sorry if I overreacted.

RONAN:

No, I appreciate you looking out for me. But I kind of feel like I don't deserve it.

GANYMEDE:

What? Don't say that.

RONAN:

Gan, I got a message from my team. They said that our research project was discontinued because they got rejected for the grant. POTEN Co. didn't see it as profitable any longer and so my team warned me to get out of here.

POTEN CO. set the fire. And they're going to write it off as another natural disaster, but then they'll seize the land. God, and it is my fault, because if I'd never come here—!

GANYMEDE:

I'm serious, Ronan, don't you even think about another word coming out of your mouth. You came here with good intentions and so did the rest of your team. You treated us with respect and kindness. It is not your fault that a corporation decided to do something so horrific. I am so, so happy to have met you. And I'll always look out for you and keep you safe, okay? You're a part of this community. Always.

RONAN:

Thank you.

SCENE 7

SEBASTIAN:
(NARRATING)

Days passed and the man simply would not wake up from his long dreaming. The dragon had injured him grievously, and when he came to, he was completely alone. But it was not to the mangled remains of his carriage, nor was it to the home he once knew. No, he had been rescued, by members who belonged to the very same enchanted palace that he wished to enter.

SFX: A heart rate monitor beeps and Sebastian wakes with a start.

SEBASTIAN:

(SHARP INHALE, THEN GRIMACING) Oh God, my head. Jesus...

SFX: A door opens.

RONAN:

Oh gosh, you're awake! Wow, that's good news! Uh, hi there. I'm Ronan Moreno.

SEBASTIAN:

Uh... Sebastian.

RONAN:

Sebastian, you're probably pretty darn hungry, so I'd better run and get you a little something to eat, yeah? I'll call a proper doctor for you. I'm a doctor, but not that kind? I'm so glad you're okay. Seemed like things were pretty nasty out there, with how shaken up everyone was. Hey, and don't pick at your stitches.

SEBASTIAN:

Uh (STAMMERS) S-sorry.

RONAN:

Welcome to Cair Mallplex, kiddo! Now if you'll excuse me, I gotta go tell everyone else you're no longer in a coma.

SEBASTIAN:
(NARRATING)

Though he did not arrive in the fabled kingdom of his own accord, he had gotten there all the same, and for that, he was grateful. For him, it was not about the journey, but the destination. His injuries took many months to heal, for the dragon was cunning and brutally strong. Kinder souls residing there in the kingdom whittled him a cane to hobble upon while he re-learned how to walk. And apothecaries mixed many potions to help him gain back his strength and dull the edge of pain that had lodged itself in his body. Once he was strong enough, he was finally able to meet the Queen of the court he had entered.

SFX: Sebastian walks with a cane to Nell.

SEBASTIAN:

Hello there.

NELL:

Come sit.

SFX: Sebastian sits.

NELL:

What is your name?

SEBASTIAN:

Baz. Er, Baz Reyes. I keep forgetting you guys do that here. Sebastian Reyes if you need my full name.

NELL:

Nice to meet you, Baz. I'm Nell Palomo. I'm sort of the de facto leader around here.

SEBASTIAN:

I heard about you. From Bunnie. Or, um, Tari.

NELL:

Yes, I had my meeting with em a few days ago. You're both quite new arrivals by our standards, but I do apologize for holding bun's first without meeting with you. Ey're more of a threat level than you are.

SEBASTIAN:

What's that supposed to mean? Tari's not a threat.

NELL:

Tari de Whitte used to be an influencer in Glasshouse. Someone with a fair amount of sway in the place ey escaped—and reputation, especially a positive one among that crowd, can be dangerous. Ey passed though.

SEBASTIAN:

Is this a test?

NELL:

I just like to vet people who come here if they come in such unusual ways. Usually, I can do it by observation, but in your case, you were injured, and we were quite busy. I trust your healing process has been alright? I'm sorry I couldn't oversee it myself.

SEBASTIAN:

Yeah, uh... I think I'm okay.

NELL:

And you're not a common sight around Cair Mallplex. You're rather solitary. Are you having second thoughts about coming?

SEBASTIAN:

..No? I don't think so. This isn't really how I thought I'd get here. And it's not really how I thought it would be either? It's not bad, it's just different.

NELL:

Many fantasies often differ from reality. I'm sure people have told you that.

SEBASTIAN:

Yeah, too many times. I mean, have you been to the Metropolis?

NELL:

Many times, in fact. Not my favorite place in the world, you understand.

SEBASTIAN:

Right, I get that. But it's just... this place is so *big*.

NELL:

Other communities in the area unfortunately had to migrate here or risk elimination by POTEN Co. We wouldn't have grown so much otherwise.

SEBASTIAN:

Okay, yeah! What's the plan here?

NELL:

..What plan?

SEBASTIAN:

Like, I had no idea how many people were here, all with a huge vendetta against POTEN Co.! I mean, we could fight back. You basically have a whole army here—!

NELL:

I'd prefer if you didn't call the people living here that. I understand that you, like many others who have come here before you, have dreamed of a revolution. But I advise you not to lose yourself in that. This place is not a recruitment center, nor do we want any more violence. We are not in a position to overthrow anything, let alone the biggest company there is. This is a safe haven. Don't treat it like cannon fodder. (SIGHS) And besides all that, I hope you understand why we feel that way. And I invite you to make your home here if that's what you'd like to do.

SEBASTIAN:

(NARRATING)

Despite the Queen's kind words, the man felt the weight of them pressing down on him. Somewhere in his heart, he had truly longed to make it so that all his hometown and every town thereafter had the chance to see the sun. But like with the dragon, he was just one man. And the foe that he faced was the insurmountable tower that none had ever survived scaling, toppling, or even making a scratch upon its surface. A dragon could be ferocious, of course. But a tower was stalwart and unfeeling. And the man felt keenly that the hearts of those he tried to speak to of his plan were like that too. Stony and convinced that the tower could never fall.

GANYMEDE:

You look down, Baz.

SEBASTIAN:

I'm—I'm fine. (SIGHS) It's frustrating to talk to people about all this. I thought when I got here, I—I could change things.

GANYMEDE:

You're one person. Don't expect so much of yourself.

SEBASTIAN:

Funny coming from you.

GANYMEDE:

Oh, hush. I do appreciate you helping me with repairs.

SEBASTIAN:

I could take it on full-time, y'know. You clearly like being out of the garage more than you like being in it.

GANYMEDE:

Someone needs to watch out for you.

SEBASTIAN:

Thanks, man.

SEBASTIAN:

(NARRATING)

And even though the man had grown to love the palace with its generous court and plentiful banquets, half of his heart always belonged to his family back home. The kingdom's magic spells that had guided him there were now laid bare to him, and he hoped that he could use it to at least get some word back from them.

SFX: Radio crackle.

MUSIC: Adrift Among Infinite Stars by Scott Buckley.

SEBASTIAN:

Hello, this is call sign Bravo Alpha Zulu-838, do you copy? Again, call sign Bravo Alpha Zulu-838. Does anyone copy? Broadcasting on frequency 142.8, this is call sign...

Valeria, Caine, this is Seb. Call sign Bravo Alpha Zulu-838. I know this isn't 103.7, but I know you still have my radio.

Is anyone listening? Broadcasting on frequency 91.2.

Broadcasting on frequency 179.9.

Broadcasting on frequency 103.7, so Val or Caine, if you're listening, it's me.

SFX: The radio shuts off.

SEBASTIAN:
(NARRATING)

Months passed with no answer. And day by day, the man grew lonelier and lonelier and wished more with every passing minute that he could come home. Even if he couldn't see the sunshine, at least he would be among his loved ones. And maybe they could put their heads together and bring light to their town.

But no hero can ever go home again.

YOUNG CAINE:

But what about the spell? You know, the spell that kept him and his family together. That should have worked, right? Then at least they could come see him.

SEBASTIAN:

You would think that it would. But this spell could not be activated by him. It couldn't point him back, so he could only hope that they would come and find him, the way he asked them to before he'd left.

SFX: Knocking.

TARI:

Baz? Are you in here?

SEBASTIAN:

Yeah.

SFX: The door opens. Tari sits next to Sebastian.

TARI:

I know today is hard for you. I get it, I do.

SEBASTIAN:

One year. Woohoo.

TARI:

You know, when we both came here, this... this life is the one that we wanted. One where we wouldn't be devalued and exploited the way we were before. But I know that it's still hard to leave things behind.

SEBASTIAN:

I feel more like I was the one left behind. I thought they would come. I thought at least one person would... I don't know. I don't think they even care about all those things like I do.

TARI:

(SIGHS) I don't really know who you're talking about still, and—and frankly, if you never tell me, I won't be mad. But I can tell you that at least in my experience, some things you have to just let go of. All that hurt has to go someplace, but you shouldn't hold it inside! Whatever ways you thought your life would be, you just have to be okay with the fact that it's not there yet. But you can take all the little ways your life brings you joy now and... and make something out of that, at least! I—I get it, though, really. Nothing can ever really replace the people you want to have by your side.

SEBASTIAN:

Well, you know, you're doing a pretty good job of making me feel at least a little less lonely.

TARI:

(LAUGHS) Now you're just being nice.

SEBASTIAN:
(NARRATING)

The man dreams of his life being one way, and it ends up different, and it's *fine*. Because it has to be. Because at some point, he has to accept that no one from his hometown thought he was worth chasing after and he has to be okay with that. That being alone and figuring out life without his family is just part of the process—that he has to make this new place home eventually. He has to realize at some point that every story he told about himself and the life he wanted, and the things he wanted for everyone he loves are just that. Stories. Not the truth.

Because the man wasn't a hero at the end of the day. No one is.

SFX: Jet's startup sound.

JET:

But you don't have to be a hero.

CAINE:

And maybe we can tell a new story.

SCENE 8

SFX: Footsteps.

JET:

We're closing in on Caine's location. It seems they've stopped and are preparing to deploy the haustoria once they find a suitable spot, so we'd better hurry!

SEBASTIAN:

Right. Everything's together for the plan?

GANYMEDE:

Should be. It's a pretty solid one, though I'm glad you asked me for help. You might have gotten both of yourselves killed.

JET:

With all of us together, it'll work for sure! ...I think.

SFX: They continue to walk.

SEBASTIAN:

Caine!

CAINE:

What?

What the hell are you doing here? You can't change what you did.

MUSIC: Mysterious Depressed Ambient by Ashot-Danielyan-Composer.

SEBASTIAN:

I know I can't. I'm sorry, Caine. I'm so, so sorry. Even if I was hurt, I shouldn't have pretended like those six years didn't hurt you too. I was supposed to be there for you,

and I wasn't, but I'm here now. And we can't change the past. But we can change what we do now.

CAINE:

Well, I'm choosing to do this. Even if it kills me.

GANYMEDE:

Caine, I have to tell you now. I got so scared after I had Adina. Old fears resurfacing about what it meant to keep my family safe, how to stop anything bad from ever happening. But behind my own back, I turned into a hypocrite—and I don't want to do that anymore. You and Sebastian, you both wanted to make a huge sacrifice to protect the people you love. And I admire that. And you inspired me to act. But we shouldn't *have* to sacrifice ourselves.

SFX: Ganymede pulls out a device.

CAINE:

What is that?

SFX: Jet's startup sound.

JET:

I can tell you.

CAINE:

Jet, there you are. I thought I'd lost you.

JET:

I screen-jumped. I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to leave you alone for so long.

We scrapped that together on the way. Sebastian had the plan, I created some schematics, and Ganymede put it all together. It's a chain resistor!

SEBASTIAN:

Jet said that before, you discharged the energy, and the power surge didn't affect you. We can't do that, but what we can do is split the charge, so to speak.

JET:

I can take a lot of charge too! Between the four of us, it hopefully will be enough to pass the power through us all safely.

No, I *know* this will work. I believe it will!

SEBASTIAN:

Isang bagsak, remember? If one falls, we all fall. So, take my hand, Caine.

CAINE:

Isang bagsak.

SFX: Caine holds Sebastian's hand.

CAINE:

Alright. Here goes nothing.

SFX: The resistor powers on.

MUSIC: Affirmations by Scott Buckley.

GANYMEDE:

Barukh ata Adonai Eloheinu, melekh ha'olam, hagomel lahayavim tovot, sheg'molani kol tov.

[Blessed are You, who bestows good things upon the unworthy, and has bestowed upon me every goodness.]

SFX: Electricity crackles.

SEBASTIAN:
(NARRATING)

Once upon a time there was a man. He was a dreamer because it was the only thing that made sense. In a world where things could be so dangerous, he wanted to dream of a place where they weren't. His parents wanted to keep them all safe so badly that they made a decision that, later on, would nearly cost their children their lives. And despite that, and despite all the flaws that every member of his family had, he loved them all. But he wasn't always very good at showing it. He would run toward some far-off goal and one day, he ran so far he turned around to see no one there. Once upon a time, he thought that meant he wasn't loved. But he was wrong.

GANYMEDE:
(NARRATING)

Once upon a time, there was a man who lost his home. Greedy hands stole away the very soil on which he and all his ancestors past had lived on. They robbed him of his memories of the earth and the security he felt there. He had always wanted his child to know the place they had come from, but that physical place no longer existed. All of those memories, however, were still inside of him. It was not right, what happened to him and the town that he loved. But he would not let those greedy hands take his memories from him by making him so afraid that he would never open up again. He was tired of feeling like his walls needed to be up forever. So, he tore them down.

SEBASTIAN:
(NARRATING)

A story can be a memory. A way to remember and record what happened, to reinforce the way that someone perceives the world. A story can be escapism. A way to brighten up the way that one sees things.

But most importantly, a story can be a vision of the future. The stories we tell are the way we want things to be. And yes, one man can't do it all by himself. But...

CAINE AND SEBASTIAN:

We don't have to do this alone.

SFX: Electricity powers through. Back in Cair Mallplex, power returns to the building.

SU-JIN:

Looks like they did it! Come on, Vic, we gotta get Ronan, Adina, and everyone else out of there.

SFX: Back in the crypto farm...

CAINE:

It's connected.

SEBASTIAN:

And we're all still alive.

GANYMEDE:

That was... that was something.

Thank you so much. All of you. You guys jumped into action when I said I couldn't go down here. (CHUCKLES) But look at me now! Made it through my old hometown reunion.

CAINE:

Oh, this could have gone much worse without you, Ganymede. Thank you for braving all of this. Truly.

(DEEP BREATH) And um, Seb...

MUSIC: Reyes Family Theme by Eli Ramos.

SEBASTIAN:

Caine. I know I really screwed up in leaving home the way I did. Nothing I could say about how I felt back then justifies me abandoning everyone and expecting you all to follow me without question. Things are... definitely not perfect between us, and they probably never will be. And if you need time to figure this all out, I can wait. Even if you don't forgive me, I... want to be your brother again. Maybe we're not the same people as we were back then, but there's hope in that, you know?

CAINE:

Yeah. There is.

You were gone for so long and I looked up to you for... my whole life, really. I guess I started thinking of you as... kind of perfect in a way? But I was waiting for the brother I wanted back then, instead of seeing the person you became.

Thank you for being here, the way you are right now. I couldn't ask for anything more from you.

SFX: The two of them hug.

GANYMEDE:

I think it's about time we headed home. And when we're not fresh out of all of this, I want to talk to you about Zero Zero.

CAINE:

Yeah, sounds good. And Jet, don't think I forgot to thank you. You did so much to get this all together and for that, I'm definitely grateful.

Jet, you okay?

JET:

(GLITCHING)

I'm feeling a little strange, but I'm okay, I think?

CAINE:

Whoa, whoa, whoa, alright. I think you took more of the electricity than any of us, huh?

JET:

(GLITCHING)

I guess so.

CAINE:

Jet, you take a break. We can find our way back, so... let's go, you guys.

SCENE 9

SFX: The hatch in Haven's lab opens. Heels click.

HAVEN:

Hello, Kaleo. It's been a few days. Do you have any meaningful updates for me? I'd hate to hear that you've been so busy with nothing to show for it.

SFX: Gamma beeps.

HAVEN:

Machine-004, if you would?

SFX: A blaster deploys.

HAVEN:

And please, don't lie.

KALEO:

We're still taking time to decode the audio files in here. I don't know what to tell you, it takes *time*. Doesn't help that you took Ava.

HAVEN:

I suppose you were a little impaired in your progress since Ava's time in... well, solitary confinement is such a harsh term, but we can call it what it is.

SFX: Haven opens a door.

HAVEN:

Time's up.

SFX: Ava shuffles out unsteadily.

HAVEN:

I hope you don't get any more ideas about leaving before you're finished with what I asked. That'd be breaking our deal! But I like you, Ava. So, I figured I'd let you get a taste of the consequences first, instead of Niusha.

AVA:

I'm... I'm not going to run anymore.

HAVEN:

Good! You learned your lesson. Now, with your other half back, I expect an update in the next 24 hours. Got it?

SFX: Haven turns and leaves.

AVA:

Good to see you both. Can we speak freely?

SFX: Gamma deactivates the blaster and beeps once.

KALEO:

Are you okay? I know it was part of the plan and everything, but solitary confinement doesn't really sound like my idea of a good time, you know?

AVA:

Hey, I volunteered for it. It was the least I could do since you got put on the business-end of a ray gun multiple times throughout all of this. It did work as a distraction though, right?

KALEO:

It did. Gamma's been scanning the airwaves for any weird signals. And we've been putting together a pattern for what we already have. And your first guess was actually right—they are coordinates... in a way. The times each represent a small section of them. Even frequencies we *think* are for latitude, and odd frequencies, longitude. At least, that's

what makes the most sense, but we don't really know what order to put the numbers beyond starting with 38 on latitude and -121 on longitude.

AVA:

Well, my stunt wasn't just a distraction. I got something for us when I was out.

SFX: Ava unrolls a paper.

KALEO:

Wow, low tech.

AVA:

It's a navigator's chart. You know where else I've seen that symbol on the spectrogram? In a history book with constellations. All of those random words, they're the names of stars. Which one of those was broadcasted at 00:38?

KALEO:

Theta Piscis Austrini.

AVA:

So, we start here. Then, we figure out which broadcast matches up to the next star in the sequence, and so on, till we get the coordinates.

KALEO:

That is... so majorly complicated.

SFX: Gamma beeps in agreement.

KALEO:

But that's our first good lead. You're honestly really amazing at finding those.

AVA:

(LAUGHS) Thanks.

KALEO:

(CLEARS HIS THROAT) But yeah, anyways—!

SFX: Beeping.

AVA:

What's going on?

KALEO:

I think that means Gamma found a signal broadcasting from somewhere!

SFX: Radio tuning.

NELL:

...our broadcast... Until next time.

SFX: The broadcast ends.

KALEO:

Dammit. We just missed it.

AVA:

Like the broadcast says, I... guess we have to just have to catch it next time around.

SFX: Footsteps on the stage.

MUSIC: Music Box Music by Domenico Scarlatti (1685 - 1757)3 by Nesrality.

NELL:

We hope you enjoyed our stories we told tonight. Didn't I tell you, that each individual one would become part of a greater whole? That each one would shine a light on

something grander than its individual parts? If I didn't... well, I suppose I'm telling you now.

The whole story isn't finished yet, though. It won't be for a little while longer. I'm sure you're curious to hear more from all of us, myself included, so that you can really understand the bigger picture. But it's been said of me before, that I like a good cliffhanger. And so, I think this is where we'll say... good night.

SFX: The curtains fall. The audience applauds.

END EPISODE.

OUTRO:

Hi, Eli Ramos here, creator and editor of Under the Electric Stars, an Aster Podcasting Network production. If you liked this episode, please share it with your friends and rate and review it wherever you're listening to us. You can find us on our website at undertheelectricstars.com, or on social media: we're @utes_podcast on Twitter and [undertheelectricstarspodcast](https://www.tumblr.com/undertheelectricstarspodcast) on Tumblr. You can also find us on Patreon at [patreon.com/mxeliramos](https://www.patreon.com/mxeliramos), that's M-X-E-L-I-R-A-M-O-S. You can support Aster Podcasting Network at different tiers and get rewards like early access to episodes, annotated scripts, commentaries, behind the scenes posts, art, and even merch! That's not just for Under the Electric Stars, but all the shows on the network. The money you give directly goes to supporting our editor, showrunners, and actors who make these shows possible. Please support us if you have the means. Any amount helps. This episode focuses a lot on Jewish characters, so I wanted to take time to thank some people. First, thank you to Lucas Galante, Ezra Lee Buck, Nico Cabanayan, Bev Yockleson, and Calliope Monroe, who all taught me about Judaism in some way, I can't thank you all enough for being in my life and being my friends. Thank you also, of course, to the actors Rue Dickey and Bridget Guziewicz, who have

lent both their voices and their experiences as Jewish people to these roles, and a very special thanks to Rue Dickey for selecting the prayers that would go into this episode and last episode. I appreciate that you helped me tell this story in a deeper and more meaningful way. Thank you. Our voice talents are as follows: Katriel Charoite as Nell Palomo, Bridget Guziewicz as Ronan Moreno, John Patneau as Sebastian Reyes, Serena El-Hajali as Ava Jafari, Rue Dickey as Ganymede Moreno, Matheus Nogueira as Kaleo Hale, Stephanie Arata as Elizabeth Haven, Rhea Anne as Caine Reyes, Philomena Sherwood as Tari de Whitte, Robin Guzman as Jet Reyes, and Christine Kim as Su-jin Yi.

Additional voices were provided by yours truly, Jenny Pan, Calliope Monroe, Q Avraham, Inigo Sherwani, Kief, Devin Nissan, CCMegaCheetah, Mya Worrell, and Audrey Pham. Attributions for sounds and music used can be found in the show notes. Thanks to Ezra Lee Buck and Audrey Pham, our \$20 Patrons on Patreon. And to everyone, thanks for listening, and see you in Metropolis West soon.