

**SEMINAR Episode 104: New Adventure**

**{Intro theme in background 0:00-1:04}**

NARRATOR: There was once a ship called The Ark of Humanity where the last known remnants of Earth's people were instructed in the history of human civilization. Confined and categorized, none could leave...but one made a daring escape. Cut loose from all she knew, with a holographic student as her only companion, she crash-landed on a nearby planet: the planet of the Zarrak.

Now as a new lifeform, the half-human, half-Zarrak survivor meets an organization of galactic species and must make a decision: search for their missing companions or take the chance to continue teaching about humanity. This time, not to other humans, but to aliens from every corner of the galaxy.

**{Seminar main theme 1:10 -1:57}**

CREDITS ANNOUNCER: Seminar episode 104: "New Adventure"

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**Wrapper #1 by V.C. Morrison**

HALLWAY OUTSIDE K'TELERAN'S OFFICE

[Alien humming sound, footsteps, loud central air system in background]

THOMAS: Well, here we are. Now, we've practiced your speech a dozen times, New. Are you ready?

NEW: Absolutely! Probably. No, not really. Let's go back and see if we can get another practice-

[Beep as door to K'Teleran's office opens, footsteps]

K'TELERAN: (over intercom) Ah! New! Right on time. Please, enter.

[Chime as door opens, footsteps as New walks inside]

THOMAS: Good luck!

[Footsteps]

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INSIDE K'TELERAN'S OFFICE

[Alien air conditioning, a low thrumming and periodic bubbling, office door closes]

NEW: K'Teleran. Hello, I...! I didn't know you had company. {Ominous music} Is...is that company? It's hard to...

[Bubbling and clicking sounds]

K'TELERAN: New, this is Rektek Olun, Headmaster of the College of Cultural Studies at Hemaji Minor.

[Footsteps]

NEW: Hello.

REKTEK OLUN: (groaning sound) Hmph!

NEW: Nice...to meet you.

K'TELERAN: You'll have to forgive him. He's not very good with first contact situations. Or...any contact situations.

REKTEK OLUN: K'teleran, that's the third insult in so many minutes! I've a good mind to-

K'TELERAN: Rektek Olun is here to talk to you about your assignment. That is...assuming, of course, that you've accepted our offer.

NEW: (Takes deep breath) K'teleran, I'm very grateful for what you've done so far. I gave the matter a lot of thought and came to the conclusion...

REKTEK OLUN: And what makes you think you're good enough to teach my students, hmm?

NEW: Oh! Uh...

K'TELERAN: Rektek Olun wishes to examine your aptitude for teaching.

REKTEK OLUN: I've a particular test in mind. We will listen to two stories and you will...

NEW: I haven't actually said that I would...

[Bubbling sound]

REKTEK OLUN: Don't interrupt! We will listen to two stories. After each story, I will ask you questions. Answer these questions to my satisfaction, and the assignment is yours.

NEW: What sort of questions are-

REKTEK OLUN: Ostinato! Begin!

**{Seminar segue music 4:27}**

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**OSTINATO by Cole Kozlov**

TOP OF ANCIENT RUIN

[Desolate wind blowing, footsteps shuffling in the dirt, heaving breathing]

TAYLOR: (singing quietly) The ballroom was filled...with fashion's throng...it shone...with a thousand liiiiiights...

[Dawkins speaks with filtered voice over Taylor's headset]

DAWKINS: Is the singing strictly necessary?

TAYLOR: Naah.

DAWKINS: Thank you.

TAYLOR: And there...was a woman...who passed...along..

DAWKINS: You just said -

TAYLOR: I said it wasn't necessary. I didn't say I'd stop.

DAWKINS: It feels like my original question was clearly also a request for you to stop.

[Rocks shuffling]

TAYLOR: Quarter kilo of silver says I can kick this concrete off the roof.

DAWKINS: Where am I going to get silver? What would I even do with silver?

TAYLOR: If I don't make it I'll stop singing.

DAWKINS: I'm in.

TAYLOR: (grunting as she kicks)

[Rock skittering over stone]

DAWKINS: (cont) You make it?

[Impact of stone on the ground below]

TAYLOR: Yup. (deep breath) The fairest...of alllll the siiiiiights...

DAWKINS: Come on, I'm begging you.

TAYLOR: Can't you turn off your audio receptors or something?

DAWKINS: The problem there is that since whatever rocket scientist designed this rig didn't think to put so much as a single camera in it...

TAYLOR: (overlapping) Oh dear god -

DAWKINS: Rendering myself completely blind so you can sing early twentieth century-

TAYLOR: Fine!

DAWKINS: Thank you.

TAYLOR: When we get back to the ship, I am going to watch The Sound of Music so many times...

DAWKINS: Ooooooh, oh no, it got erased in a magnetic storm last month, sorry.

TAYLOR: You son of a bitch, I swear to God, if you -

DAWKINS: Deep space is treacherous!

TAYLOR: I am going to go into your memory core with a blowtorch and-

[Whooshing sound, electronics]

ORSON Hello. Sorry. I didn't mean to startle you.

TAYLOR: How were you trying to avoid startling me? How did you even do that?

DAWKINS: That is a very good question.

**OSTINATO by Cole Kozlov**

ORSON: You were over here...and I was over there...and now, I'm also over here.

TAYLOR: How did you...how did you even get here?

ORSON: I was...already here.

TAYLOR: Has another ship come in since we landed?

DAWKINS: (a little worried) No. Definitely not.

ORSON: You're talking to your AI?

TAYLOR: She's not "mine."

[Wind blowing]

ORSON: "She." How quaint. "She." (snorts) You are a "she." The glorified mousetrap in your earpiece is not "she."

TAYLOR: That is not really the issue right now. Are you hearing this?

DAWKINS: Something is very wrong here...

TAYLOR: Yeah no shit. (to Orson) And you are...?

ORSON: Orson. I sort of...used to run the place. More or less. Nice to meet you.

TAYLOR: Uh...the Shadow Consortium died out something like seven hundred years ago, so that's funny, because you don't look a thousand years old.

[Foosteps]

ORSON: (genuinely pleased) Thank you!

DAWKINS: Taylor.

TAYLOR: So I don't know what your story is-

DAWKINS: Taylor!

TAYLOR: But there was nobody else here when I landed, which means salvage rights for this entire place - this entire planet -

DAWKINS: (interrupting) Taylor!

TAYLOR: The fuck, Dawkins, what?

DAWKINS: There's nobody there.

TAYLOR: I'm sorry, what?

DAWKINS: There's nobody there. You are talking to no one. I've been checking echolocation, air pressure sensors, temperature. You are the only person standing on this roof.

TAYLOR: Can't you hear him?

DAWKINS: Yes, I can hear him, but I can't anything else him. There's. Nobody. There.

ORSON: Your AI is telling you I'm not here?

TAYLOR: I, well, yes.

ORSON: Do you believe it? (snorts) Sorry, "her?"

TAYLOR: I...why can't she see you?

ORSON: For one thing, "she" doesn't have eyes. Seems like a design flaw.

TAYLOR: You know what I mean!

DAWKINS: Taylor, he is not real.

ORSON: I do, I'm sorry. (sighs) Do you know the kinds of things that used to get made on this planet?

TAYLOR: Yeah. Miracle tech. Sufficiently indistinguishable from magic-type shit. That's why I'm here. I'm trying to find it. (beat) A tiny piece, even a single nanochip, I could..

DAWKINS: Why are you talking with this thing?

**OSTINATO by Cole Kozlov**

ORSON: Do you know what the very first technology the Shadow Consortium created was?

TAYLOR: I do not.

ORSON: A cloak. A shield. Call it what you want. A way to hide themselves from AIs. It's how they killed the machine intelligences that controlled this system when humans discovered it. The humans that became the Shadow Consortium. Maybe that's why "she" can't spot me with her instruments.

TAYLOR: That sort of makes sense, I guess...

DAWKINS: That is the dumbest thing I have ever heard.

TAYLOR: So, you can hear him?

DAWKINS: I can hear him but he's nuts! Evil progenitor machines? You've got to be kidding me.

ORSON: Come over here.

[Two sets of footprints, jingle of equipment]

ORSON: Be careful this close to the edge, that wall-

[Orson taps the wall]

ORSON: -Is older than it looks. If you took a tumble I doubt it would stop you from going over the side.

TAYLOR: Great.

ORSON: (casually) How long have you been here?

TAYLOR: We jumped in-system about a hundred hours ago. Only been dirtside about forty minutes. Why?

ORSON: Aaahhh. Hell of a sight, isn't it? Nanotech architecture. Couldn't even exist anywhere else.

TAYLOR: It was probably nice at one point, back when, you know, there were more than two people on the entire planet.

DAWKINS: There's only one person on this entire planet.

ORSON: Yes, well. As the man said, so it goes. Do you know what happened to the Shadow Consortium?

TAYLOR: A plague. Some kind of...genetic time bomb. Entire civilization dropped dead over a couple days.

ORSON: That is actually pretty close to accurate. (sighing)

[Winds die down as they go into a flashback. Sound of footsteps on solid stone]

ORSON: Before they went extinct -hundreds of years before, I'm talking- the Shadow Consortium's Chief Technical Officer...(beat) The CTO was Chairman's, man. Woman. Traditionally the sort of...right hand Person.

DAWKINS: What the fuck is this thing talking about?

ORSON: He was experimenting with what the Consortium called "remote synaptic engineering." Fancy term for using flashing lights and such to mess with the brain.

[Whirring of instrumentation]

TAYLOR: That's...that's nuts, even Shadow Consortium tech couldn't reprogram your brain.

ORSON: No. No, they couldn't. But mess with the brain...[whirring electronics] The CTO cracked it. It was elegant. A collection of sounds, millions of them, stacked and layered and interpolated with each other. It sounded like...music, a bit. And when the human brain heard it...

[Person in distress as they hear the sounds. Orson snaps his fingers]

ORSON: A few seconds later, they would just drop dead. The Chairman was his first human test subject.

TAYLOR: Not very nice.

{Ominous music}



**OSTINATO by Cole Kozlov**

ORSON: Once he was sure it worked, with the Chairman dead the CTO started picking off the heads of the Consortium departments one by one, trying to set himself up to be named Chairman.

[Breaking glass]

ORSON: But what was left was too weak, too fragile, and pretty soon one of the other families came in and wiped them out, took over.

[Crowds screaming]

TAYLOR: That's...that's awful.

ORSON: And by then it was too late. The genie couldn't go back into the bottle. The music existed, out there..

[Orson rapping on the wall they're standing next to]

ORSON: In here. Somewhere.

TAYLOR: Here? This building?

DAWKINS: Yeah, okay, even if this bullshit was remotely true, which it is not, how did that thing kill every human in fourteen systems all at once? Did they play the music over the Emperor's Christmas speech?

TAYLOR: That, uh, that's a good question. How does it end up killing the entire Consortium?

{Dark music}

ORSON: The music shut down human brains. AI brains, though, it did...something else. It twisted them. When made just an AI heard the music it them hateful, murderous.

[System rebooting]

ORSON: Not murderous, though. (beat) they became, I believe the what Old Earth term was "suicide bomber."

TAYLOR: Oh my god...

ORSON: Somehow, something, probably a research AI like an historian or a librarian found the music buried in the bottom sectors of the Consortium archives. And it played it. And it went mad. But not all at once, mind. On their brains it took time to do its work. Days, instead of seconds. And while it was poisoning that first AI -

TAYLOR: (horrified) It was contagious.

ORSON: It was contagious. By then the Shadow Consortium had offloaded all of the actual work of their society to machines. They had conquered scarcity, inequality, all of it. It was a marvel. Made possible by the AIs all constantly talking to each other.

[Desolate winds again]

Imagine it. You build a perfect society and then one day it decides to kill you. And all of it, at the very bottom, because one man who already had everything wanted more.

TAYLOR: Kind of a cautionary tale.

ORSON: Oh, absolutely. But that's the problem with cautionary tales. No one ever actually listens. Well, humans don't, at any rate.

TAYLOR: What's that mean?

[Low static sound]

ORSON: How did you know where to land?

TAYLOR: What?

ORSON: How...did you know...where to land?

TAYLOR: When I first jumped in, Dawkins pulled down a complete set of maps from...

[Same low static sound]

TAYLOR: There was...the transit beacon was...I couldn't believe it was still...on...

ORSON: How long has it been since your AI chimed in to tell you I'm not here?

**OSTINATO by Cole Kozlov**

DAWKINS: (laughing)

TAYLOR: Dawkins? Dawkins! Talk to me! Dawkins!

[Musical cacophony]

TAYLOR: No - Daw - ! (Shocked)

[Taylor dies]

[Orson raps the wall twice with his knuckles.

ORSON: So it goes.

[Footsteps methodically stepping away]

ORSON: (quietly singing) A girl to her lover then softly  
sighed...there's riches at her command...

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**{Seminar segue music 18:42}**

**Wrapper #2 by V.C. Morrison**

K'TELERAN'S OFFICE

[Several beeps and clicks, central air system in background]

REKTEK OLUN: First question! What are the major themes in this  
story?

NEW: Wow! Uh...revenge?

REKTEK OLUN: Incorrect!

K'TELERAN: Olun, perhaps you should...

REKTEK OLUN: Try again!

NEW: Uh...Good versus evil!

REKTEK OLUN: While technically correct, that's a very primitive...

K'TELERAN: Olun!

REKTEK OLUN: I am merely attempting to ascertain this person's worthiness in regards to...

NEW: Look—that is not how this works!

[Bubbling and clicking sounds]

REKTEK OLUN: I beg your pardon?

{Energetic music}

NEW: On the Ark...that's...that's not how we did this. We weren't discussing thematic structure or "grammatic license" or whatever. We were...we were looking at the characters and comparing them to our own experiences.

REKTEK OLUN: And you think such a...p...p...pedestrian approach is good enough for my college?

NEW: (scoffing) I don't know what your college is like, sir, but I was raised on these stories and that teaching method. And if it was good enough for me, then it certainly is good enough for any random blobby aliens you would have me teach!

{Music stops}

[Indignant bubbling noises]

NEW: I'm so sorry, was that offensive? Maybe I should just ...

REKTEK OLUN: Individual sentient lifeform designated as New!

NEW: (Meekly) Yes?

REKTEK OLUN: Prove it. Second story! Water Man is the Worst! Begin!

**{Seminar segue music 20:25}**

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**WATER MAN IS THE WORST by Dan Gorski**

CAFÉ IN THE DAYTIME

[Kitschy music, conversations in background, silverware clinking, water poured, footsteps rushing in]

SALLY: Oh my god! Water Man!

WATER MAN: (sighing) I'm sorry. No photos. I just want to be left in peace to eat lunch.

SALLY: But we need you! A huge fire is blazing at the Medical Center, and you shoot water out of your hands!

[Water Man slams fist on the table]

WATER MAN: Really? Again? I just put out a fire at the bank two days ago.

SALLY: People are trapped! Besides, it's right across the street. Hurry!

WATER MAN: I don't know. I just got my food.

SALLY: You have a power that can save lives. Have you no sense of duty?

[Footsteps. Sounds of a struggle]

WATER MAN: All you people are the same. You think just because I can do something I should do it all the time? Whenever you demand it?

SALLY: What is wrong with you? You're just going to let people burn?

WATER MAN: You don't understand. It's so exhausting. Always saving people. When is someone going to save me? Huh? You ever think about that? No, you sure don't. It's always 'Save Me Water Man!' Maybe I'm tired of...what's that? You're recording me? I don't consent. Give me that.

[Chairs knocked over. Struggle as Water Man reaches for the phone]

SALLY: People could die, and you can only think of yourself. I'm exposing the truth.

WATER MAN: How dare you! My private life is none of your business.

SALLY: Hey! Give that back.

[Phone plops into a water glass]

SALLY: You monster! You should be thankful for your powers!

**WATER MAN IS THE WORST by Dan Gorski**

WATER MAN: Is that all you've got? Because it's ham and cheese o'clock.

[Water Man eats]

WATER MAN: Mmmm. So good.

SALLY: Ughh! Fine.

[Footsteps as Sally leaves]

SALLY: I better tell the commissioner you're not coming.

WATER MAN: Huh. That's quite a fire.

[Flames intensifying, screams]

[The screams get louder and more horrifying]

WATER MAN: Oh, man. That does not sound good. (sigh)  
Ugh...Fine! Fine! For Chrissakes!

[Squeaky footsteps as Water Man leaves the Café]

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OUTSIDE THE BURNING BUILDING

{Energetic music}

[Flames blazing]

SALLY: Whatever will we do, commissioner?

FIRE COMMISSIONER: We've done all we can now. Without Water Man, I'm afraid we --

SALLY: Look! He's coming after all!

FIRE COMMISSIONER: Water Man! We're saved!

[The crowd cheers]

WATER MAN: (deeper superhero voice) I want to apologize. I behaved horribly back at the cafe. I'm having some personal issues, but...that's no excuse for my reaction. Of course, I'm happy to help!

[Crowd cheering again]

SALLY: Consider it forgotten.

FIRE COMMISSIONER: We're just relieved you came!

WATER MAN: I better get up there. I'm off!

[Gush of water]

SALLY: He's doing it.

FIRE COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Water Man!

[Water suddenly stops. The fire grows again]

SALLY: What happened?

FIRE COMMISSIONER: Oh no! Something must've happened to him. I better go save him!

SALLY: Be careful!

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INSIDE THE BURNING BUILDING

[Wood cracking, flames blazing]

FIRE COMMISSIONER: Water Man! Where are you! We can't lose you now!

WATER MAN: (distant, echoing) No. No! Nooooo!

FIRE COMMISSIONER: Water Man? I'm coming for you.

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IN AN OFFICE INSIDE THE BURNING BUILDING

{Ominous music}

[The flames are dampened, outside the walls of this office space]

**WATER MAN IS THE WORST by Dan Gorski**

WATER MAN: No way I'm feeling sorry for you.

MOTHER: Oh, please. I don't need your weak pity. Give me a break!

WATER MAN: Stop trying to manipulate me, mother. You didn't even tell me you had a doctor's appointment today. How am I supposed to know you want a ride if you don't tell me?

{Music slows down}

[Door opens]

FIRE COMMISSIONER: Water Man? Are you okay?

MOTHER: Oh look. You can't even finish this job without making the Fire Commissioner come all the way up here? How selfish!

WATER MAN: Shut up! You never understood my gifts. I save lives!

FIRE COMMISSIONER: I hate to interrupt, but walls are collapsing.

[Squeaky footsteps]

WATER MAN: See. He needs me. Have you ever said one nice thing about my gifts?

MOTHER: Who cares? You're only doing this for the attention.

WATER MAN: Guuuhhhh! You're the worst! I can't take it anymore. You can just, just..go to hell!

[Squeaky footsteps]

FIRE COMMISSIONER: Where are you going Water Man? You can't leave us now!

{Somber music}



[Footsteps as they leave]

MOTHER: Let him go...I tell you what, Commissioner. If he thinks he can keep living in my basement now, he's got another thing coming.

**{Seminar segue music 26:30}**

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**Wrapper #3 by V.C. Morrison**

K'TELERAN'S OFFICE

[Low humming sound, bubbling]

K'TELERAN: Oh my. That was ...abrupt.

[Footsteps]

NEW: Yes, some of these are more vignettes, a "slice of life" of a character.

{Piano music}

NEW: So, on the Ark, a discussion about this story might start like, "Water Man, a so-called superhero..." I'm sorry, do you guys have superheroes in your cultures?

REKTEK OLUN: Yes. Both fictional and real. Mono-molecular Radiance Absorber was a personal favorite of mine.

K'TELERAN: Oh yes! I remember studying her in one of your classes. What was that battle cry?

REKTEK OLUN: "I soak up evil and spit out justice!" (laughing)

K'TELERAN: (Laughing) Yes! Oh ...classic.

[Footsteps]

NEW: Right. Well, Water Man, though a so-called superhero, has normal problems. We see that, like any other kind of celebrity, he's hounded by admirers when he just wants to live his life.

[Bubbling sounds]

NEW: Also...he has issues with his mother.

K'TELERAN: Oh, I can relate! I dread coming home for Reloperin's Renewal Day every year.

REKTEK OLUN: How is Madam K'leroti these days?

K'TELERAN: Oh, she's good. Just had another lesser appendage replacement. When you get older, those things just...

[Beeping and whirring sounds]

NEW: Class! I mean...if this were on the Ark you would be a class...doesn't matter. As you've pointed out, his experience ...his very human experience, is relatable even to those outside of his culture. Now, the way he deals with the situation with his mother...would you consider that a healthy resolution?

K'TELERAN: Oh, no. He needs to go back and confront her. Also, he needs to put out that fire.

REKTEK OLUN: I disagree. She's clearly a bane to his existence. He should leave. In fact, he should move, perhaps, to another city where people could appreciate him more. Ev-Everyone should be able to eat lunch in peace.

NEW: What about the fire and the people that need saving?

REKTEK OLUN: Surely, he'd be able to extinguish the fire on his way out. Or he could leave it as a last expression of his discontent with the city and its people. Not a superheroic action, of course. But I think that would suit his character as portrayed by the story.

NEW: Do you think someone with special powers, such as Water Man, is obligated to use those powers to help others?

{Music ends}

REKTEK OLUN: Certainly not! He has no obligation but to himself. There's no implication that he was given these powers specifically to put out fires set by other people. He could use those powers to create art.

K'TELERAN: While I disagree with Rektek Olun that Water Man has no obligation to help others with his powers, I do think he could do things other than just put out fires. If his powers do create pure H2O out of nothing, which would violate several laws of physics, but this is fiction, he could use his gifts to bring water to the thirsty or irrigate a desert.

NEW: Yes, that would be useful. But irrigating a desert would destroy an ecosystem.

**Wrapper #3 by V.C. Morrison**

K'TELERAN: It would destroy a lesser ecosystem for a more useful one.

{Ominous music}

NEW: Lesser...

REKTEK OLUN: Indeed! Such a power could reshape a planet! In fact, he could travel to another planet and terraform it! It may take the entirety of his life, but I would call it a noble cause!

K'TELERAN: Would colonizing another planet necessarily be noble?

REKTEK OLUN: Is a Sishyoshowbi actually lecturing me on colonization? [Bubbling sounds] Have you forgotten when your people ...

NEW: All right! Very interesting points. But could we focus? We still have some things to get through here.

[Whirring sounds]

REKTEK OLUN: (Gently) No, no I don't think that will be necessary.

NEW: Excuse me?

REKTEK OLUN: I've seen enough. K'teleran, you were correct. This individual's skills and experience would be a lovely addition to our school.

NEW: But I wasn't...

K'TELERAN: I'm so glad you agree. [Door opens] Congratulations, New! You're a professor!

[Door closes, background noises fade to silence]

NEW: Now, wait just a minute here, uh ...huh.

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HALLWAY OUTSIDE K'TELERAN'S OFFICE

[Door slides open, New walks out, door shuts]

THOMAS: Well, how'd it go? Did K'teleran take it well? When are we leaving to continue our search?

NEW: (dazed) Thomas, I...{Upbeat music} I start teaching next week.

THOMAS: Wait, what? You're doing it? What made you change your mind?

[Footsteps as they leave]

NEW: I'm not sure. It just kind of...happened.

[Footsteps continue]

{Music swells}

THOMAS: Oh, New, this is great! It's a whole new adventure!

NEW: Yeah ...that's me. New adventure.

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**{Seminar theme music 32:22}**

ANNOUNCER: Featuring the voice talents of: Bailey Wolfe as K'Teleran, Dan Foster as Thomas, Eric Gray as Rektek Olun, and Sterilng Rae as New.

In "Ostinato," Katy Milholland as Dawkins, Lisa Michaud as Taylor, and Mr. Blackwood as Orson. Written by Cole Kozlov.

In "Water Man is the Worst," Janani Sreenivasan as Mother, Matt Armstrong as Water Man, Russ Gold as Commissioner, and Sarah Palmero as Sally. Written by Dan Gorski.

Directed by Garan Fitzgerald. All shorts edited by Tilly Bridges. Wrapper written by V.C. Morrison. Seminar theme and outro by Garan Fitzgerald. All other music by Josh Molen at TheTunePeddler.com.

Produced by Pendant Productions. Seminar co-created by Kathryn Pryde and Tilly Bridges. This production is copyright 2021 Pendant Productions.

**{Seminar theme fades out}**

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