

[Seminar theme music]

ANNOUNCER

The last known remnants of Earth's people are adrift in space, aboard the Ark of Humanity. It's sole purpose; to instruct each generation 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. This planet holds the sleeping archive of a culture even more ancient and unique than Earth. And the planet itself might change them more than they expect. This is seminar.

[Seminar theme music]

ANNOUNCER

Seminar, Episode 98: "A Time to Weep & A Time to Laugh..."

[Seminar theme music]

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[Console sounds indicating problems and sounds of electronics powering down]

THOMAS

You found a shuttle bay in Byzantium?

NEW

I did, while I was – (beat) while Alex was chasing Alice through the halls, and she found the shuttle bay. It was damaged, powered down. We may have never found it if it had not been out of necessity.

THOMAS

Alright. But, what about Zerash? We can't leave him operational only for the Zarrak to rip him apart.

ZERASH

This unit does not feel pain. Thomas's concern is illogical.

NEW

Let's find out if we can do it first. (beat) You can do it, Zerash, can't you?

ZERASH

This Zerash can route power to the shuttle bay, the medical bay, satellite and sensor array, and defensive shields have sufficient power. Re-routing will take... an unknown amount of time. Internal chronometer readings are... unoperational.

NEW

Do the best you can. Let me know as soon as you're able.

[Footsteps walk away]

NEW

(deep breath) Thomas...?

[Thomas whirrs over]

THOMAS

Yes, New?

NEW

You've had all these stories in your repository this whole time. I never understood – as Alice – how that must have felt, having knowledge locked away without the context to understand it. And as

Alex, I knew that gleaning context from those stories was very difficult but could lead to great personal insights.

THOMAS

Sorry, I'm not sure I follow.

NEW

I think I could use a story for myself, but I don't know which one to choose. I mean, how does one know which one to choose?

THOMAS

Gee, I guess I never thought about it. I don't know that Alice did, either. Sometimes, she – I mean, you – I think you just... knew. You felt it. Instinctually.

NEW

I've not considered what my instincts are now.

THOMAS

Well, if you'd like to pass the time, I can think of a kind of story I think you might like. The way I see you now.

NEW

Oh, I'd like that. I... would like to know how you see me.

THOMAS

Alright. Accessing file... "Short Stories".

[Seminar music]

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[Music]

[Glasses clinking, drinks being poured and people chattering]

TILLY

Hey, Patrick!

PATRICK

Tilly! How have you been doing?

TILLY

Fantastic. Always love coming here.

PATRICK

(laughs) Best bar in the city, and I'm not just saying that because of the nerdy decor.

TILLY

You said you wanted to pitch a story for my audio drama podcast?

PATRICK

Yeah! I finally had an idea that I think will work. It's a nightmare I had ten years or so ago about a corpse that is found walled-up in an old church.

TILLY

Creepy.

PATRICK

Have you met me?

TILLY  
Touche.

PATRICK  
But, that's not the really creepy part. What's creepy is that the corpse is still alive in a way. She was a plague-eater, and this little town put all their plague into her to save themselves. The plague is still alive in her, brewing in her hate, ready to be unleashed into a world that isn't ready for it.

(beat)

[Glasses chink]

TILLY  
I love it. Let's do it.

[Scene change sounds]

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[Mouse clicks and video call connecting sounds]

TILLY  
Patrick! How are you doing?

PATRICK  
About as well as could be expected, given the circumstances. I mean, I'm good, don't get me wrong. But only as good as anyone could be in the middle of a global pandemic. Uh, you?

TILLY  
Yeah, basically the same.

PATRICK  
Your family's doing okay?

TILLY  
A little stir-crazy, but okay. Looking forward to your story airing.

PATRICK  
Oh Lord, don't remind me. Are you sure it's not in poor taste at this point in our Coronapocalypse?

TILLY  
Nah, I mean, like you said, it's a story about something that scared you, and pandemics scare you. It's good to be honest about that.

[Dog barking]

TILLY (CONT'D)  
(beat)  
Speaking of honest, are you doing okay?

PATRICK  
Ah... I'm okay. Honestly, I'm okay. Like I said, I'm about as good as I could be given the circumstances. I've got a job, I don't live alone, money isn't an issue and I can easily get food if I need. Just... (beat) (sigh) Yeah. I'm kind of scared. I'm not going to lie to you.

TILLY  
That's okay, dude. We're all scared. All of us.

PATRICK

Yeah. I think I'd like to do something a little different for my next story.

TILLY

As in "Not horror"?

PATRICK

As in something that can't actually happen in real life, right? (laughs) Ah, okay. It's about a building that's actually ALIVE and it's eating people. Kind of a metaphor for consuming workers...

[Scene change sounds]

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[Video call connecting sounds]

TILLY

Dude, are you psychic?

PATRICK

What?

TILLY

Have you not seen the news? A building EXACTLY like the one in the story you wrote collapsed! It killed all the workers inside. Turns out the architect was some kind of serial killer and wanted to sacrifice the workers to his creative vision.

PATRICK

Holy shit.

TILLY

Yeah. I swear it's like you're making these things happen by writing about them. (forced nervous laughing)

PATRICK

(forced nervous laughter lasting longer than Tilly) Aw!

TILLY

(sigh) (beat) So... got something else for me?

PATRICK

Sure. Uh, sure! It actually helps for me to have something to do right now in quarantine, ya know?

TILLY

Totally. Another horror piece?

PATRICK

Nah. Well, sort of. There are ghosts in it, but I think it's more of a kid's adventure story.

TILLY

Like Monster Squad?

PATRICK

Exactly! Only with less creepy gender politics than the original Monster Squad. It's about a Haunted House attraction where the owner has been trapping ACTUAL ghosts to use as scares in the attraction for years!

[Scene change sounds]

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[Video call connecting sounds]

TILLY

Hey... um... Patrick.

PATRICK

I know.

TILLY

So... you saw the thing about the Haunted –

PATRICK

Yes, Tilly. I saw it. Ghosts are real. They've been apparently powering Haunted House attractions around the nation for eighty years. Big exposé. President couldn't help but comment on it and is insulting ghosts for not being hard enough workers and taking jobs from living Americans.

TILLY

Okay. (beat) Just wondering if you'd seen it.

PATRICK

Yes. Yes, I have seen it.

TILLY

I'm just... saying, that maybe it would be nice if you wrote a nice story. A happy story, about a vaccine being discovered, or a Presidential election swinging a certain way.

PATRICK

(sighs) The thought's occurred to me.

TILLY

And?

PATRICK

(breathes in through the teeth) It's...

TILLY

Yes?

PATRICK

It's just that it's so BORING!

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[Seminar music]

NEW

Uh, who am I in this scenario?

THOMAS

Oh, don't be silly. Patrick, of course! Since you've woken up, you've had great idea after great idea, and you seem to just know what's going to happen before it does.

NEW

But, I'm not prescient. That's a stretch.

THOMAS

So then... you're just really good at guessing like Patrick?

NEW

(beat) (chuckle gradually getting louder until it's full belly laughter)

THOMAS

New? Are you going to be okay? Hey, make sure you breathe. In... Out... In... Out...

NEW

(laughs harder) Oh... thank you, Thomas. Oh, thank you for making me laugh.

THOMAS

Oh my, that wasn't my intention, but... you're welcome.

NEW

I've been trying to figure out what and who I am, and well here you are perfectly happy to accept whoever that might be. Thank you. That's... that means a lot in a way I can't quite voice.

THOMAS

You may be New. But, you're still my family. That hasn't changed. (beat) There's something else I'd like to play for you, if that's okay.

NEW

What is it?

THOMAS

Well, I wanted to play a story for Alice, to thank her for all she's done to teach me. But... I think it should be a different one now, because I think it's what you need. Accessing... "Pep Talk".

[Seminar music]

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[Echoes of loud conversation, laughter and footsteps approaching at a fast pace]

MAGDALENA

Alright witches, remember to keep this a fair fight. You're sparring for practice, not defending your kingdom from invading paladins. And for goodness sake Tabitha, no more frog spells! Ha, I barely caught Elaria before she hopped into the Forbidden Pond.

TABITHA

Fine, Magdalena. No frog spells.

MAGDALENA

Thank you, dear.

TABITHA

Not that we'd see much difference if I turned Kels into a frog anyway.

[Echoes of laughter, snickers and booing]

KELS

I'm not afraid of you Tabitha. I've been training.

TABITHA

Oh, the almighty frog witch has been training!

[Laughter]

MAGDALENA  
I heard that Tabitha.

KELS  
Can we start the match now?

MAGDALENA  
Of course.

[Thrilling music]

MAGDALENA  
Ready... Set... Fight!

TABITHA  
Avem!

[Magical sounds]

KELS  
Did you just try to turn me into a bird?

TABITHA  
Old Mag only said no frogs. (beat) Rattus!

[Magical sounds]

KELS  
Obstructionum!

[Magical sounds]

TABITHA  
Oh, not bad, not bad.

KELS  
I'm not letting you bully me anymore, Tabitha.

TABITHA  
Ha! Who said I bullied you? I'm just better at magic and obviously will be chosen to be in the Queen's Guard. It's not my fault the only tutor your parents could afford was that crusty old sea hag.

KELS  
(deep angry breath) Undarus!

[Magical sounds]

TABITHA  
(laughs) Lapidum!

[Magical sounds]

KELS  
(groans)

[Sounds of damage]

KELS  
(groans)

TABITHA  
(evil laughter) Oh look, the little toad croaked. Better luck next time.

[Sounds of cheering]

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KELS  
(groans)

[Chair creaks]

URSULA  
Hey, there's my favorite little tadpole.

KELS  
Ursula, I told you not to call me that.

URSULA  
You did. I'm choosing to believe it'll grow on you.

KELS  
Well, I'm choosing to believe Tabitha will fall into a hole where she'll be dragged down into the nether regions where she belongs, but no luck yet. (scoffs) I don't know why I bother. I'm starting to think there's almost no chance I'll be picked for the Queen's Guard.

URSULA  
(laugh) Yeah, same.

KELS  
Wait, what?

URSULA  
I was agreeing with you.

KELS  
You're not supposed to agree with me. You're my tutor.

URSULA  
I didn't see lying in my job description.

KELS  
Well no, but... I don't know. Aren't you supposed to inspire me? Make me believe I can succeed?

URSULA  
Hey I didn't agree with "no chance". I agreed with "almost no chance." Big difference.

KELS  
(exasperated sigh) You really think I probably won't be chosen?

URSULA



Tadpole, you've seen the statistics. I'm not going to be one of those tutors that blow rainbows up your butt and convince you "you're the special one." You and I both know you're pretty average on a good day.

KELS

Well... Okay, but average means I can work harder to be one of the best, right? If I work hard enough I can do whatever I put my mind to!

URSULA

Eh...

KELS

What? What's the eh... ?

URSULA

Practice will make you better, and that's not nothing. But getting chosen... It's not a meritocracy.

KELS

They... don't chose the best for the job?

URSULA

(snorts) Oh, no. Oh sweet little tadpole, no. You know several of the past witches that were chosen, right?

KELS

Of course. Evanora, Daphne, Agnes, and Elphaba.

URSULA

Okay so, Evanora's uncle is cousins with one of the princes. Daphne's mother is already on the Queen's Guard, so you know, legacy and all. Agnes comes from one of the wealthiest families in the realm, and Elphaba... Well, I heard she had some dirt of the naughty variety on the Queen herself.

KELS

I can't believe this.

URSULA

Listen, even the Queen is allowed to have a little fun once in a while. I don't know why people get so worked up that she might like to get a little — oh, you mean about the meritocracy thing.

KELS

If working hard doesn't mean anything, is there even a point? Should I just drop out?

URSULA

I dunno. Do you want to drop out?

KELS

Um... No? I don't think so. I... uh... no. (chuckles) I don't.

URSULA

Why not?

KELS

What?

URSULA

Why not quit?

KELS

(hesitates) Because I want to keep trying?

URSULA

(sighs) Okay. If that's what you want.

KELS

Wait, Ursula. That's it? I just... accept that my hard work might mean nothing and keep trying anyway?

[Chair creaks]

URSULA

Yup! Or don't. If you want it bad enough, you'll keep going with full knowledge of how hard it is. Or if you don't want to do that, then you'll quit. Pretty straightforward.

KELS

You are really bad at pep talks.

URSULA

Or I'm the only person that's really good at them.

KELS

No, I don't think that's it. (sighs)

URSULA

Well, the next sparring test is in a few weeks so we'd better keep at it. I'll see you for more practice tomorrow then?

KELS

Yeah. Yeah, I'll see you tomorrow.

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[Cheering sounds]

URSULA

Alright, remember Tadpole, it doesn't really matter what you do. Life is terrible and things will work out how they will despite how hard you try to control the outcome.

KELS

Ursula, we talked about you trying to give me pep talks.

URSULA

Eh, I couldn't help but try for one more. Now go knock her on her tuchus.

KELS

Okay. (breathes deeply) Here I go.

URSULA

Oh and by the way, I saw the scout from the Queen's Guard in the crowd somewhere, but don't worry about that too much since nothing matters. Okay, have fun. G'bye.

KELS

Uh... WHAT?!

[Footsteps approaching]

MAGDALENA

Alright witches, I'm not even going to bother with my spiel about a fair fight, since no one ever listens to me anyway. (laughter that turns into crying) Can we... Can we please just keep it to spells that I won't have to write an incident report on? Yeah.

TABITHA  
No promises.

MAGDALENA  
(sighs) Whatever. I'm quitting after this school year anyway.

[Magical sounds]

MAGDALENA  
Ready... OK, yeah? Ready... Set... Fight, I guess... Woo hoo... Fight. What is my life?

TABITHA  
Anguis!

[Magical sounds]

TABITHA  
A snake! To go with your stupid little snake nose.

KELS  
Snake nose? (scoffs) That doesn't even make – Woah! Okay there buddy. Let's take care of you. Uhhh... Pereo!

[Incomplete sounding magical sounds]

KELS  
Pereo!

[Incomplete sounding magical sounds]

KELS  
(angry groan) PEREO!

[Magical sounds and shocked gasps from the audience]

TABITHA  
Oh! Way to go, Kels.

KELS  
(groans)

TABITHA  
All you did was make it bigger. I'm sure the scout will love that.

[Magical sounds]

TABITHAAI  
Actually, that's getting really big.

[Snake sounds, screams from the audience]

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URSULA

Well, that went well.

KELS  
(groans)

URSULA  
Hey, look at the bright side Tadpole. At least you didn't end up in the hospital wing this time.

KELS  
Oh! Yeah. (scoffs) Let's not forget the fact that at least I didn't get maimed because Magdalena stepped in and shrunk the snake back down before it ate the scout.

TABITHA  
That was my favorite part. Well, except for the part where the scout invites me to join the Queen's Guard.

URSULA  
Oh sweetie, that's not happening.

TABITHA  
Whatever you old sea hag. You're just jealous because you never made it. Just watch, they'll come find me later today.

URSULA  
Do you mean that scout at the end of the hall talking to Merida?

TABITHA  
WHAT?! (beat) Oh no. No, no, no, no, no. How could this happen? I perform way better than her during sparring!

URSULA  
Sorry kiddo. Life stinks sometimes.

KELS  
Tabitha, I'm sorry –

TABITHA  
Don't touch me, you little polliwog. (crying) I just... I... This is so unfair! (entitled shriek)

[Footsteps departing]

URSULA  
Well Tadpole, that was quite a day.

KELS  
It was.

URSULA  
So... What are we doing about practice tomorrow?

KELS  
(beat) I already know you'll think this is silly to keep trying. But honestly, I just can't see myself being happy doing anything else. I've wanted to be in the Queen's Guard ever since I was a girl. They'd come through our village with the Queen, looking powerful and confident, like no one in the world could hurt them. And they're protectors, so they keep other people from getting hurt too. I could have used someone like that in my life when I was little. So I guess I just really want to be that for other people. And honestly, I just really really love magic.

URSULA

So, you're not quitting?

KELS  
Nope.

URSULA  
Even if it's unfair and worse people get let in ahead of you?

KELS  
Even if it's unfair.

URSULA  
Even if you're arguably not very good at it yourself?

KELS  
Even if – Hey!

URSULA  
Sorry, sorry, even if you're arguably not very good at it yet.

KELS  
Even if I... (chuckles) have room for improvement.

URSULA  
So, I'll see you for practice tomorrow?

KELS  
You will.

[Music]

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[Seminar music followed by machine whirring sounds]

THOMAS  
You might feel like you haven't figured out who you are, or what you find valuable about yourself, but I do know that you have shown you have your own way of doing things. And I like that. I like that very much. I appreciate anything you can teach me.

NEW  
Oh, I hope I give better pep talks.

THOMAS  
Jury's still out on that one. Alex did not.

[Power fluctuates]

NEW  
We should check on Zerash.

[Footsteps and sounds of electronics powering up]

ZERASH  
Power has been successfully rerouted.

[Warning klaxon, then a hiss as a door opens]

ZERASH

The path to the shuttle bay is currently illuminated. There is one shuttle currently with power in the bay. However, this Zerash cannot specify which one. The sensors in the bay have been damaged.

THOMAS

And how many shuttles are in there?

ZERASH

Fifty-seven.

NEW

How do we figure out which one is powered?

ZERASH

Manual touch access to the shuttle is required.

THOMAS

Well, that can't take long, right?

NEW

Each of those shuttles is a hundred and eighty feet long. Average stride length is 2 feet. So being conservative, you're looking at 45 to 60 seconds to walk the length of the shuttle. Times 57. An hour at worst. (beat) I don't think we have that long.

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[Seminar theme music]

ANNOUNCER

Featuring the voice talents of:

Dan Foster as Thomas

Sena Bryer as New

Adin Rudd as Zerash

In SHORT STORIES:

Kristine Chester as Tilly

Patrick Earl Phillips as Patrick

Written by Patrick Regan

In PEP TALK:

Miranda Lennert as Kels

Emily C. A. Snyder as Magdalena

Katie Walker-Cook as Tabitha

Lisa Michaud as Ursula

Written by Kaitlyn Kliman

Directed by Adam Blanford, Jeff Robinson, Garan Fitzgerald, and Tilly Bridges

Shorts edited by Tilly Bridges

Wrapper written by Kathryn Pryde

Seminar theme by V C Morrison

All other music by Josh Molen at [TheTunePeddler.com](http://TheTunePeddler.com)

Produced by Pendant Productions

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

[Seminar theme music]

ANNOUNCER

For more information, visit [pendantaudio.com](http://pendantaudio.com). Thanks for listening.

[Seminar theme music]