

{Intro theme in background 00:00-00:47}

NARRATOR: The last known remnants of Earth's people are adrift in space, aboard the Ark of Humanity. Its 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 may change them more than they expect. This...is Seminar..

{Seminar Main Theme 00:48-1:15}

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**SEMINAR #86: "Test the Hypothesis"**

**SEMINAR WRAPPER #1 by Kathryn Pryde**

THE AURACH TEMPLE, MEDICAL BAY

ALEX: (grunts) All right...like this?

ZERASH: Alex's position on the medical bed does not alter the quality of the readings. Alex may be comfortable as he needs.

ALEX: (amused) Huh, yeah...she rubs off on everyone, doesn't she?

ZERASH: The nuances of Alice's speech pattern requires more empathetic responses than the Aurach utilized. This has been adapted for usage by this Zerash.

ALEX: Right, but why do you care if Alice understands you as well? You're an AI. Not even like myself or Thomas, you don't have a facsimile of emotion to work off of.

ZERASH: Alex's statement is correct. Zerash does not possess an emotional matrix. However, primary functionality of Zerash is to educate and convey information. Since Alice requires primitive verbal communication, the educational methodology must adapt.

ALEX: Huh, adapt...yeah, she's good at that. Making everyone adapt to what *she* wants. Doesn't seem to care if anyone gets hurt.

ZERASH: The complexities of interpersonal relationships were studied at great length by the *Aurachristeli*. And yet some mysteries were not solved.

ALEX: Yeah, well, she's convinced something's wrong with me...I just don't want her to leave. I can't be alone here.

ZERASH: Alice's primary concern is for your health. Alex could be a danger to himself or others.

ALEX: There's a story I remember about that: "You Always Hurt the Ones You Love."

**YOU ALWAYS HURT THE ONES YOU LOVE By Adam J. Blanford**

WASHINGTON, DC APARTMENT. IN THE BEDROOM.

[Rustle of sheets]

{Soft jazz music}

CAITLYN: (Out of breath) Recent polls of involved parties show that they would be "highly likely" to have sex with you again!

JOSH: (laughs) You weren't so bad yourself, Senator.

CAITLYN: No titles, Mister CEO. We're off-duty for the next two hours at least.

JOSH: Only two hours?

CAITLYN: I have to pick my husband up at the airport. Before that, I need to go home, freshen up...get rid of the smell of sweat and aftershave. (Chuckles)

JOSH: (sighs) I suppose.

(Josh and Caitlyn kiss)

JOSH: Still...if only the voters knew about your skills in this area. It might put more spice in your social initiatives.

CAITLYN: It certainly might. I could run for re-election with the slogan "Vote for Caitlyn Erickson: A Scandal You'll Enjoy!"

JOSH: That's a terrible slogan.

CAITLYN: That's why I have people for that.

(Josh and Caitlyn kiss again)

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OUTSIDE APARTMENT BUILDING AT NIGHT

[Street noises]

CAITLYN: Look Erin, you know I can't do anything that might imply a conflict of interest. Promoting Strategic Solutions for those defense contracts tomorrow would be a clear violation. I have an image to uphold.

ERIN: [on phone] (Frustrated) Look, I really need your help, Cait. I have a duty to my shareholders, but the general public seems to think we should be scaling back on matters of national defense. If I don't bring in some contracts soon, we'll be underwater.

[Car honks]

CAITLYN: I *can't*, Erin. We shouldn't even be having this conversation right now. (Sighs) I can't openly promote your company, but I won't stand in the way of any contracts, either. That's the best I can do. I'm sorry. You'll have to come up with other ways of keeping the company solvent.

[Car honks; vehicle passes by]

ERIN: [On Phone] (Sighs) You're right. I can't ask you to damage your integrity, especially in a re-election year. After all, it's like you used to tell me when we were growing up: you're going all the way to the top. Changing the world. Madame President.

CAITLYN: (Chuckles) Thanks for understanding. You're like a sister to me, you know that? I'd do it if I could.

ERIN: [On Phone] I know. I feel the same way. I'm glad I didn't accidentally tank your career.

CAITLYN: Me, too. And I know you'll figure out a creative solution. You always did find a way. I need to go. I just finished a...strategy session...with my reelection team, and now I have to go change and pick up my husband from the airport.

ERIN: [On Phone] Of course, I'll talk to you later, Cait.

[Car alarm disabled]

[Footsteps walking down the street]

MILO: Excuse me, aren't you Senator Erickson?

CAITLYN: (startled) Uh, yes.

MILO: My name is Milo. It's a pleasure to meet you. May I have a moment of your time?

CAITLYN: (Uneasy) I'm sorry, uh, Milo. I have to go. Prior engagement, [car honks] you understand. You can always call my office-

**YOU ALWAYS HURT THE ONES YOU LOVE** By Adam J. Blanford

MILO: Nice car! Looks like a leather interior, cushy seats-

CAITLYN: Look, if this is a robbery, take the car! I have money, too.  
[Vehicle passes by] It's all yours, I don't want any trouble!

MILO: (Soothing, slightly mocking) Oh, no! This isn't a robbery, Senator. I'm genuinely sorry if I implied that. As I said, I just want a moment of your time to discuss...recent activities. Is the car unlocked? I call shotgun!

[Two car doors opening and closing]

MILO: Wow, this is a really nice car! How much did it set you back? A hundred grand? One-twenty?

CAITLYN: (Hostile) Cut the shit, Milo.

(Milo activates audio player)

*CAITLYN: No titles, Mister CEO. We're off duty for the next two hours at least.*

*JOSH: Only two hours?*

*CAITLYN: I have to pick my husband up at the airport after that. Go home, freshen up...get rid of the smell of sweat and aftershave.*

(Milo turns off player)

CAITLYN: You son of a bitch!

MILO: And just so you know, this recording is backed up in a least a half a dozen places. Along with other selections of your "greatest hits." You know, you really are athletic, despite your age-

CAITLYN: What do you want?

[Truck driving by]

MILO: I want you to do two little things. First, I want you to persuade your friend Erin O'Donnell of Strategic Solutions to drop out of the running for those defense contracts. Second, you'll find a way to put Corwin Aerospace at the top of the pile for consideration.

CAITLYN: Betray my friend and commit a blatant conflict of interest? Erin would never speak to me, and the Congressional Ethics Office would crucify me! *And* Corwin Aerospace is a third-rate defense contractor!

MILO: Okay, I lied. It's not really miniscule. In fact, it's a major thing I'm asking.

CAITLYN: *Two things.*

MILO: They're connected, so let's split the difference, shall we? One and a half. Believe me, I have an idea of how you feel. You and Erin go way back, to preschool, if I remember correctly. That would be asking a lot of your friend, but then, after so long, you know how to talk to her. Make her bow out gracefully. As for the second thing, well...you're a smart lady. You should be able to find a subtle way to put Corwin at the top.

CAITLYN: (Angrily) There has to be another way. I can't do what you're asking-

MILO: (Coldly) Yes, you can. You're going to drive over to Miss O'Donnell's house right now and have a conversation with her. If she removes her company from consideration before the vote, you'll get an anonymous email with the links to all of the dirt I have on you. I'll even throw in a sniffer so you can search the web and confirm it's all gone. If she decides not to withdraw...well, I wish you all the best on the public speaking circuit.(pauses) And just so you know...if anything happens to me, all of the data gets emailed to every major newspaper in the country. If you really want to get to the top and change the world, you'll do as you're told.

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ERIN O'DONNELL'S HOUSE

ERIN: What?!

CAITLYN: Look, I thought about lying to you, but after all we've been through together, I couldn't. I'm being blackmailed by some guy named Milo because of my...relationship...with another man.

ERIN: And I'm supposed to take a dive for you? Because you decided to fool around behind Mark's back? Because of your stupidity? I already told you Strategic Solutions is in trouble!

CAITLYN: I'm desperate! We're talking about my entire life! My career, my marriage, my- my *future*! I need your help!

ERIN: I founded that goddamn company, Cait! You know how hard it was, being a female CEO in a male-dominated industry! I can't stand by and let it go down in flames because of you!

CAITLYN: Erin, please-

ERIN: No! You're asking me to risk my life, *my future*, all for your stupid mistakes!

**YOU ALWAYS HURT THE ONES YOU LOVE By Adam J. Blanford**

CAITLYN: And who helped you build that life? Who stuck with you when you were nine and your parents divorced? Who gave you pep talks at 2:00am when you weren't sure you could hack it in the aerospace industry? Who lent you startup money so you could found Strategic Solutions?

ERIN: Cait, stop-

CAITLYN: -Who *dropped everything* when your marriage fell apart? And when your brother committed suicide? I stood by you through *everything*. And now, when I need you the most, you won't even consider helping me? We're talking about everything, Erin! I'm going to be President someday and to do that I have to say clean!

ERIN: (tearfully) I used to love you for your humanity, Cait. I always knew I could come to you and you wouldn't judge me. You'd only be there to help. I really thought of you as my sister. And now, I see you were keeping a tally all along. It's a shitty way to call in favors.

CAITLYN: (Subdued) You always hurt the ones you love.

ERIN: Ain't that the truth. (Pauses) Fine. I'll remove Strategic Solutions from consideration tomorrow. (Coldly) But you owe me.

CAITLYN: (Relieved) Thank you, Erin. (Angrily) I can't believe that son of a bitch has me over a barrel! Spying on me like that!

ERIN: I hate him, too.

CAITLYN: You know what really pisses me off? If I were a man, I'd get a free pass! If the public finds out about me, I'll be crucified. No hope of redemption.

ERIN: In today's world, you never know who's watching or listening.

CAITLYN: You think he could be listening right now?

ERIN: Would you put it past him?

CAITLYN: Let him listen, the bastard. I hate this whole thing! No woman should have to go through this.

ERIN: No, they shouldn't. But like you said, he's got you over a barrel, right now.

CAITLYN: I should go. (Hesitates) I really hope...we can do something about all this. Someday.

[Door opening]

ERIN: It might take a while for us to fix it.

[Door closing]

[Car starting outside]

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UPSCALE LOUNGE, WASHINGTON DC

[Quiet chatter, glasses clinking]

[High heels walking on a hard surface]

{Light music}

ERIN: Waiting for someone, Milo?

MILO: (startled) W-what?

ERIN: I have to figure you're waiting to have a...conversation...with someone, keeping an eye out for them. Don't worry, I'll keep you company. I'm a great conversationalist myself.

MILO: (Suspiciously) Very...kind of you, Ms. O'Donnell. What shall we talk about?

ERIN: Corwin Aerospace. What do you know about them?

MILO: Eh...they had a good week, won some lucrative defense contracts over their competitors. Say, let me buy you a drink. I figure you probably want to save your nickels and dimes now, right?

ERIN: What do you *really* know about them, Milo?

MILO: Beg pardon?

ERIN: What do you know about the people at Corwin? You covered all the angles with Caitlyn, so I have to figure you hedged your bets with Corwin's management.

MILO: I have no clue what you're talking about.

ERIN: Caitlyn told me the whole sob story. We're like sisters...or at least we were. Thanks for that. But, any man who can force a woman to betray a decades-long friendship to achieve his own ends is the kind of man I want on my team.

MILO: Not that I'm admitting to anything, but doesn't it seem a little strange for the best friend of this "Caitlyn" person to approach the guy supposedly responsible to be on her "team?"

**YOU ALWAYS HURT THE ONES YOU LOVE By Adam J. Blanford**

ERIN: *Former* best friend, Milo. And you know what she said in one of our last conversations? When I asked her for help on those defense contracts, she said, "You'll figure out a creative solution. You always did find a way." I think you're someone like me, who appreciates creative solutions to problems. I need someone like that for my latest project.

MILO: Which is?

ERIN: Acquiring Corwin Aerospace and its juicy contracts. Want to help me do it and make some real money?

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MILO'S TOWNHOUSE, WASHINGTON D.C.

TV ANCHORMAN: [On TV] *...In financial news, shares of defense contractor Strategic Solutions climbed to \$423.52 at the closing bell, a clear sign of market confidence in the acquisition of competitor Corwin Aerospace. This has been a tumultuous year for Corwin: Despite being awarded several high-profile defense contracts seven months ago, the company was rocked by scandal in June with allegations that Chief Technology Officer Mikaela Zhukov had been passing along trade secrets to foreign power. The investigation forced the resignations of Zhukov, CEO Forrest Lockley, and CFO Julia Allen, and sank the company's stock price, paving the way for Strategic Solutions CEO Erin O'Donnell to make a bid. In other news... (fades into background)*

MILO: (Chuckling) Amazing what a foreign-sounding name, some illicit meetings, and a few leaked out-of-context emails can do, huh?

ERIN: Zhukov was Corwin's only asset: a damn fine engineer and a force to be reckoned with. Taking her out of play undermined confidence in Corwin's ability to fulfill those defense contracts. The stock price dropped, allowing us to step in and acquire the company at a substantial discount. Genius. And fun.

(Milo and Erin kiss)

MILO: It's been a lot of fun the last seven months. We work well together. We can both see an opponent's weakness and, uh...hit them where it hurts with "creative solutions."

ERIN Agreed. We're a great pair in the boardroom, Mister Director of Strategic Operations.

MILO: I think we're a great pair in a lot of ways, Erin. I want to explore all the ways we're compatible.

ERIN: Milo, are you saying you want an actual relationship?

MILO: (Flustered) Um...yes.

ERIN: Hey, it's okay. I understand what you mean and I'm open to it. It's just...I've never seen you so flustered before. You're always so confident during board meetings.

MILO: Yeah, well, this is different- wait, turn the volume back up!

TV ANCHORMAN: [On TV] *In political news, Senator Caitlyn Erickson issued a statement that she would support defense spending reforms, including the institution of a "blind" bidding and review process for defense contracts, as well as greater oversight of defense contractors. Erickson received criticism last spring from fellow lawmakers and the defense industry when she all but directly endorsed Corwin Aerospace for a series of high-profile contracts. Critics decry this as politically motivated, to shore up support in advance of Election Day...*

MILO: It looks like the good Senator is starting to grow a backbone. I'll have a talk with her. Stay here.

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ERICKSON RE-ELECTION CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS, AFTER HOURS

[Papers rustling]

MILO: Senator Erickson? It's a pleasure to see you again. May I have another moment of your time?

CAITLYN: Again, cut the shit, Milo. What do you want?

MILO: (Nonchalantly) I want you to drop your endorsement of the defense reform bill.

CAITLYN: I can't do that. I took a lot of heat for Corwin Aerospace, and you'll pardon me if I try to avoid a situation like that again.

MILO: Aw...That's too bad. Oh, I forgot to mention, it turns out a copy of those recordings of you and a certain CEO are still saved on an anonymous server. Oops, missed that one.

CAITLYN: Go ahead. Release them.

MILO: You know what's at stake here. This is career suicide. You're bluffing.

{Soulful music starts}

CAITLYN: I've thought a lot about what got me to this point. I cheated, and then compounded the error by letting fear of exposure and the end of my ambitions get the best of me. I betrayed my oath as a

Senator and nearly destroyed one of my closest relationships to save myself. I won't do that again, even if it costs me everything.

**YOU ALWAYS HURT THE ONES YOU LOVE By Adam J. Blanford**

MILO: Do you really think I haven't heard this kind of thing before? There's always a last gasp of resistance before they finally realize that I own them.

CAITLYN: You own them as long as they fear you. That's what you really want, isn't it? To be feared. To hold a metaphorical gun to your victim's head and make them acknowledge your power. Trouble is, that gun only has one bullet and no one has ever dared you to pull the trigger, until now. If it spares any other woman from having to go through this, it'll be worth it.

MILO: I make my shots count, lady. I'll destroy everything you hold dear.

[Footsteps as Erin enters the room]

ERIN: Then I'll do the same.

MILO: (surprised) What???

ERIN: Go ahead and release what you have on Caitlyn. Then I'll release everything I have on you.

MILO: You've got nothing on me!

ERIN: I've spent the last *seven months* gathering information about you. Through Corwin Aerospace you taught me about your methods, and I got some great photos of you meeting with the Corwin Aerospace management right before the trade secrets story broke. You also dropped more than a few hints about past blackmails as we got to know each other. Like you said, we're a lot alike: we can identify weaknesses and exploit them. You're lonely, with no one to celebrate your skills.

CAITLYN: And I've spent the last seven months following the leads Erin gave me. Talking with the women you manipulated, tracing hush money through shell company after shell company through a series of transactions leading back to several aliases.

MILO: You can't prove any of those names are connected to me! I can beat that in court!

ERIN: Don't you get it, Milo? You're on the board of directors for a major aerospace company, practically a public figure now. With increased scrutiny of all defense contractors, the authorities will be

looking into *anything* remotely questionable. Aliases, bank accounts, blackmail threats..

CAITLYN: And even if you release everything you have on me out of spite, I'm willing to bet at least one of the women you blackmailed before will come forward. Then there will be even more questions. You won't be able to walk away. You'll be under a government microscope, and your reputation will be destroyed.

MILO: But you two were done with each other! I heard your argument.

CAITLYN: I thought that might be the case, so I stopped and emailed her, explained the whole thing before I got there. We put on quite a show, didn't we?

ERIN: Make no mistake, I was angry. That wasn't acting. But I used that as motivation to bring you down by any means necessary.

MILO: I can still take you down with me as an accessory, Erin.

ERIN: You kept me out of all the shady dealings. I'm clean.

CAITLYN: Any way you look at it, you can't get out of this unscathed. So you have a choice: release the documents and take your chances, or accept our terms.

MILO: (sighs) What do you want?

ERIN: You have twenty-four hours to get out of town. Consider your resignation as a Strategic Solutions Director accepted. We don't care where you go, as long as it's not on the eastern seaboard.

CAITLYN: Find a nice, quiet rock to hide under. We'll keep everything we have on you ready to send to the authorities, just in case. And we'll be watching.

[Footsteps as Milo heads to the door]

CAITLYN: Oh, and Milo...?

MILO: What?

CAITLYN: You know the large amounts of money you have stashed in those shell companies? There are some women's shelters in the metro area that will be thrilled at your donation.

MILO: (Sighs) Fine. (To Erin) I meant what I said about you earlier. I think you felt it, too. But I guess we'll never know where it could have gone. Have a nice life.

ERIN: Probably the most genuine feeling you've had in a long time, Milo. Have a nice life.

(Milo leaves)

CAITLYN: Erin, I-

ERIN: What you did was stupid, and reckless, and selfish! It almost cost us everything. And Milo was charming and brilliant, in his own twisted way. I was tempted to forget about you and focus on him.

CAITLYN: But you didn't. You stood by me, as you always have.

ERIN: I always will, just as you've done with me. But never forget what happened here. That's a lot of collateral damage for your mistake.

CAITLYN: I know. It'll take time to get past this, and I can only hope that I can repair some of the damage. (Sighs) I guess it's true what they say: You always hurt the ones you love...

ERIN: ...and the ones who love you.

{Seminar Segue Music 24:13}

## **SEMINAR WRAPPER #2 by Kathryn Pryde**

THE AURACH TEMPLE, MEDICAL BAY

[Medical equipment beeps in background]

ALEX: See? It doesn't matter how people try to help or say they care about you, in the end they still care about themselves.

ZERASH: The allegory of that particular narrative suggests that while greater risk for personal injury exists due to a close friendship, the bond is harder to permanently sever and can produce long-term rewards.

ALEX: Yeah, see, but that's the thing - someone always has to be selfish. There's always self-preservation at stake. A-and Caitlyn? That was all she did. She focused on covering up her mistakes, the hard truths she didn't want to face.

[Alex's vitals intensify]

ALEX: She couldn't be loyal. Just like Alice. (having another mood swing as he keeps talking) She can't just leave things alone. She can't just be happy with what she has. She has Thomas, she has me, and she still wants *everything* to be different. Nothing's ever good enough for her! Why?

ZERASH: Alex is experiencing an increase in Adzak hormone levels, as well as gulionin and cerebro-adminase. Initial hypothesis suggests that the combination of Zarrak hormones and chemicals are reacting with Alex's human-based emotional understanding to create conditions similar to Zarrak Hirash.

ALEX: What does that even mean?

ZERASH: The Zarrak Blood Frenzy. Conditions required for full-scale assault as a suicide trooper. Alex should try to remain calm.

ALEX: How can I calm down when you just told me I'm turning into a weapon? I don't even know how it's *happening!*

ZERASH:

Zerash lacks the necessary supplemental medical data to fully assess the effect of the Blood Frenzy on Alex's mental state.

ALEX: (worried) I'm gonna hurt her... I'll tear her apart, I'll tear every damn *servo* off of Thomas if they don't listen to me! IF they're so determined to see something wrong with me, *I'll give them something to be scared of!*

ZERASH: Alex must remain still. Attempting to dispense the necessary medication. Zerash will attempt to mitigate the effect of the frenzy.

ALEX: *No!*

[Alex gets off the bed; Smacks a console until it breaks]

ALEX: I can't do this! I can't hurt anyone! But I *will!*

ZERASH: Alex does not have to harm any individual. This is a condition designed to remove Alex's sense of autonomy. This does not have to be so. Zerash cannot compel Alex back on the bed. But, consider the actions of the individuals in this vignette. Playing "Wands and Weaponry"...

**{Seminar segue music 26:48}**

### **Wands and Weaponry by James Rossi**

HOTEL ROOM, MORNING

{Fantasy music in background}

FRAN: (Mumbles a small tune)

[Knock at the door]

ALDOUS: Ma'am?

FRAN: Come on in, Al. Door's unlocked.

[Door opens]

ALDOUS: (sighs) Please keep the door locked.

FRAN: Maybe I'll remember next time. Sit down a moment while I fight with this absurd shirt.

ALDOUS: I like the colors.

FRAN: Shut up, Al. All part of the indignities of being a dignitary I suppose, though. I can tolerate looking like a vase for one day.

FRAN: Let's get going.

[Footsteps; Door opens]

FRAN: You did a sweep for transmitters right?

ALDOUS: Yes, Ma'am. All clear.

FRAN: Damn, I must be getting irrelevant in my old age. [Elevator noises] I'd been speaking misinformation and nonsense to myself all morning too. Let someone think I lost my marbles. So, Al, you looked through the program right?

ALDOUS: Of course.

FRAN: Well, Anything pique your interest?

[Elevator call button pressed and door opens; door closes]

ALDOUS: There's a set of communication stones small enough to place inside the ear that looked interesting.

FRAN: Tiny radios? *That's* what's got your heart pounding? Man, you need to liven up.

{Fantasy music becomes 'elevator music'}

ALDOUS: I prefer things that help keep people safe.

FRAN: Ah, yes. One of your lessons from the monk house.

ALDOUS: Monastery.

FRAN: Sorry. Didn't mean to disrespect. Anyway, before I can let you go exploring, I have a meeting I need to go to that I'd like your eyes for. We can-

[Elevator pings; door opens]

GOVERNOR: Ahhh Duchess! About time you dragged yourself out of bed. Looking lovely as always!

FRAN: Governor! how many times do I have to tell you, just call me Fran. My title is about as ill-fitting as this shirt!

GOVERNOR: (laughs) Come now, my friend! Alana picked it out, she has fantastic taste in patterns, and the cut makes you look...proud. (chuckles) Now, is there anyone you wish to meet with? I have a few vendors I think you'd be particularly interested in.

FRAN: Perhaps tomorrow, I have a full schedule today. However, once my obligations are filled I will gladly speak to your preferred vendors and give them the attention I'm sure you already promised them.

GOVERNOR: Fran, you know just how to suck the air out of a conversation, don't you? (chuckles) I'll leave you to it, enjoy yourself, and don't forget, I wish for you to join me and Alana for dinner tonight.

FRAN: I'm looking forward to it as always, Governor.

GOVERNOR: It will be splendid. (sees another important guest) Ah! Ms. Pyritin so good to see you!

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CONFERENCE HALL

[Crowd noises; loud explosion; people shouting; laughter]

ALDOUS: This is making me very nervous.

FRAN: Try to relax and enjoy yourself for once. I know all the machine wands look intimidating, but everyone here has been vetted. And I recognize most of these dealers. [magical effects] They know what they are doing. Today, you're here to make me look important, not keep me safe.

ALDOUS: Very well.

VENDOR: Hello, hello, hello! Tolk and Cavendish welcomes you to the Wands and Weaponry Expo! [explosion] I think you'll find our product line quite intriguing!

FRAN: Gotta to start somewhere, I suppose.

VENDOR: Alright, so, this sucker, can fire up to 650 spells per minute. Capable of accepting a variety of spell-bound wands. The

barrel and triggering system are kept cool with a Rune configuration written on the outside of the barrel.

### **Wands and Weaponry by James Rossi**

FRAN: Huh, that's new, previous design tests had issues with the Runes either being too weak to mitigate heat, or too strong and freezing solid.

VENDOR: Ahhh, finally a customer that understands just what an accomplishment this is! I mentioned those runes on the barrel, here, hold one.

FRAN: Let Al take a look at it.

[Chunk of metal handed over]

ALDOUS: There's nothing on here.

VENDOR How's your hand feel?

ALDOUS: It's cool. Well cold. [magical effects] Real cold.

VENDOR: Move your hand.

FRAN: Oh wow, those runes weren't there a moment ago.

VENDOR: The runes are heat activated! When exposed to heat they warm up and reveal themselves, which cools the barrel right back down. And maintenance is a breeze for any Man-at-Arms.

FRAN: I'll take your card.

VENDOR: Fantastic, and we'll be having some live fire tests this afternoon at the range around back.

FRAN: I just might attend.

[Footsteps]

FRAN: So what'd you think?

ALDOUS: I don't do war, Ma'am. I focus on security.

FRAN: You don't need to understand the broad strokes to have a good idea what would benefit a soldier in a battle.

ALDOUS: I suppose.

PRINCESS: Fran! There you are! I was beginning to wonder if you'd flaked out on me!

FRAN: (cordially) I'm right on time and you know it. How are you, Princess?

**Wands and Weaponry by James Rossi**

PRINCESS: (cordially) Don't even start with me. How's your boy here?

FRAN: Best bodyguard in the room. He's still on high alert.

PRINCESS: (laughs) I suppose he would be. Hey Al, can I get a hello this year? Third time's the charm right?

ALDOUS: Ma'am.

PRINCESS: Oh! He did it! Fran, I'm not sure what you've been doing to this boy, but I like it! [magical noises]

FRAN: All right, all right, let's give the monk a break. Not his fault he lived his formative years vowed to silence.

PRINCESS: He knows I'm kidding, don't you Al? Sorta?

FRAN: You got a demonstration ready for us, Rune Shatter bombs, right?

PRINCESS: The RS-100s? Sure do. Got a few small-scale examples and one live one, full size.

FRAN: Mind giving me the spiel while we head outside? My advisors gave me the rundown, but I trust you to be more objective than them, if you can believe it.

[Footsteps; door opens]

PRINCESS: The short of it is machines can inscribe an incredible amount of miniscule runes onto each device. [door closes] There is a delicate balance of containment and explosive pressures. The item remains inert, but once you start a failure in that balance, it detonates. Flinging shards over a wide area, it generates smoke and fires [explosion] across a distance you can calibrate for. Fantastic for softening targets.

ALDOUS: (coughs nervously)

FRAN: You alright Al?

ALDOUS: (nervous) F-fine, Ma'am.

PRINCESS: This tech's been in use before, but our contact has finally found a way to bring the price down. [echoing] These'll be in everyone's back pocket soon, but since you're such a good customer, I thought you'd like the first run.

FRAN: That's cute, got a miniature battlefield out here.

PRINCESS: Easiest way to show these off without setting a real forest on fire, is to use a scaled down version. Here. This is what you'll be buying.

FRAN: Al?

ALDOUS: (struggling to hold back panic) O-ok Ma'am.

PRINCESS: So the real thing is about the size of my head, take that marble, cutie, and just give it a toss over the little field of war we have here.

[Loud explosion]

(Aldous shrieks)

[Debris hitting the ground; flames]

PRINCESS: (gleeful) There we go!

ALDOUS: (a short gasp, difficulty breathing)

FRAN: Oh my! If we'd had those back in my army days, we'd have been overtaking trenches left and right!

PRINCESS: You pop a few of these pre-engagement, it'll clear out any cover, and really opens up your options.

FRAN: And you aren't giving me a line when you say this scales up?

[Sounds fade out]

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CONFERENCE HALL

{Discordant music}

(Aldous has a panic attack)

[Sounds of fire; shouts]

ALDOUS: (Heavy breathing)

Aldous strikes Vendor's display)

VENDOR: Hey, watch it! That's an expensive set up!

ALDOUS: (gasping, confused)Do you- I- I need water, or something. I-

VENDOR: Alright, alright. [Magical noises] Come with me, anything to get you away from the merchandise.

### **Wands and Weaponry by James Rossi**

[Footsteps into hallway]

[Bottle opened]

{Solemn music}

ALDOUS: Thank- Thank you.

VENDOR: Yeah don't mention it. What the hell was that?

ALDOUS: Can you blame a weapon?

VENDOR: What? The hell does that even mean?

ALDOUS: If a gun kills does it share the blame?

VENDOR: (totally confused) No, of course not. It's the person who fired the shot.

ALDOUS: What about the ones who tell them to fire? Or the ones who ake the weapon? Or those that stand-

VENDOR: (Impatient) Whatever, look I have to go back. Just, get help or something. There's a nurse station... somewhere.

[Fran runs into hallway]

FRAN: (out of breath) There you are, what got into you?

ALDOUS: I...

FRAN: Are you ok?

ALDOUS: I...No.

FRAN: Was it Princess making fun of you? I know how hard it is for you to open up to people.

ALDOUS: It's my family.

FRAN: When did you get one of those? I thought you were alone.

ALDOUS: I am. Because of those. The bombs.

FRAN: You don't need to talk about it if you aren't ready, and I know a lot from your background check reports.

ALDOUS: Those bombs destroyed my hamlet. Burned my Monastery. Killed my Order. The townspeople were no threat to anyone. The people we felt responsible for were farmers and fishers. Martial training wasn't enough to protect them anymore...

FRAN: You can't be sure what destroyed your town. The report never came to conclusions on the weapons used in the attack.

ALDOUS: One landed in a courtyard where my brothers and I were sparring. It was the same. (breathes deeply) It exploded. In an instant everything caught fire. There were pops high above, dozens, and these shards streamed across the sky. The entire hamlet burned...just like out there.

FRAN: I...It's...It was war.

ALDOUS: We tried to put out the fires, but they would spring back to life. And when those shards landed on bare skin, they would burrow like ants, scorching flesh and muscle, then cracking bone. As the monastery burned, it was like the flames were screaming.

FRAN: My gods.

ALDOUS: Those things don't just end life, they make it suffer. Burn it from the inside out.

FRAN: I...I have something important to attend to, will you be okay?

ALDOUS: I'll be fine.

FRAN: No, I mean it. Will you be alright?

ALDOUS: Eventually.

FRAN: If you need anything, track me down, I'll be fine for the rest of the day, and check in with me tonight, please.

ALDOUS: Yes, Ma'am.

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DINING ROOM BAR

ALDOUS: (sighs)

[Door slams open and closed]

PRINCESS: (pissed) Al. There you are.

ALDOUS: Hi?

PRINCESS: No, none of this timid monk bullshit. What the hell did you say to the Duchess?

**Wands and Weaponry by James Rossi**

ALDOUS: (confused) I don't know what you are talking about, why are you mad at me?

PRINCESS: The Duchess just cancelled our order. Now my supplier is going to be pissed at me, for whatever you pulled. It was you, wasn't it. You're the only one she seems to listen to or give a damn about.

ALDOUS: I told her about- (sighs) does it really matter?

PRINCESS: I just lost a multimillion dollar deal, Al!

ALDOUS: I told her how I lost my family, and I'm really sorry, but- I just can't go back there right now.

PRINCESS: (softening) Well, at least get me a damn drink. What are you even doing in here? Monks don't drink, do they?

ALDOUS: My order would celebrate the passing of the day with a glass of wine.

PRINCESS: Must be celebrating the passing of a week then. That bottle in front of you is almost empty. I'll kill it for you. (swigs bottle)

ALDOUS: Still mad?

PRINCESS: (reluctant) Yes. [Clunk of bottle on bar] But business is business. Time to go off the clock.

ALDOUS: Why are you called Princess?

PRINCESS: Ha! Fran never told you? I am one, as simple as that.

ALDOUS: You are a gun runner.

PRINCESS: Well, I wasn't always. At one time I spent day and night learning the proper etiquette for a future bride-to-be. A tool to ensure a contract between kingdoms.

ALDOUS: So, you left?

PRINCESS: My family was killed. They made the wrong enemies, and some distantly related half-wit was placed on our throne. I refused to give him my hand, and legitimize the destruction of my line.

ALDOUS: It's hard. Being alone.

PRINCESS: Yeah, it really is. [Swig from bottle; set on bar] But we do what we can. Get through another day, try and have a good night's sleep.

ALDOUS: And hope their cries don't come to us in the dark.

PRINCESS: Someday, I want you to share your story with me. And if I find a way to silence the cries, I'll let you know.

ALDOUS: There's a different path for you, you know.

PRINCESS: Perhaps. No maps out there to buy, though.

ALDOUS: We just have to trust that once you enter the wilderness, there will be something on the other side.

PRINCESS: Go to bed, Monk. I believe you've celebrated the day enough.

ALDOUS: I think I'll do that. Goodnight Princess.

PRINCESS: Goodnight, Al.

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HOTEL ROOM

FRAN: (Mumbles a small tune)

{Fantasy music again}

[Knock at the door]

ALDOUS: Ma'am?

FRAN: Come on in Al. Door's unlocked.

[Door opens]

ALDOUS: Really?

FRAN: Al, would you mind contacting the Governor and thanking him and his wife for the lovely dinner? Been a tiring day.

ALDOUS: Yes, Ma'am. It has.

FRAN: Al, what was it like, in your Monastery before it was destroyed?

ALDOUS: Simple, yet lovely. And quiet. I miss us training in silence. It felt safe. Like our monastery kept the conflict of the world away, and protected those who lived below our hill. We would spar in the shade of monuments to our best warriors.

FRAN: I hope we do the same.

ALDOUS: Ma'am?

**Wands and Weaponry by James Rossi**

FRAN: Remember those who fought, instead of those who led.

ALDOUS: "To the children of tomorrow, we are nothing but our legacy."

FRAN: That's terrifying.

ALDOUS: It depends. You cancelled the order.

FRAN: I simply backed out of a decision made based on bad information.

ALDOUS: It was the right thing.

FRAN: Perhaps. It gets so hard to remember what the right thing is, when so often the best you can do is choose the least wrong. You think that maybe, there is no right, only what will get the job done best.

ALDOUS: There must be something that exists outside our circumstances, some way our actions are measured.

FRAN: I hope so. Because there will not be a very warm welcome for me once we reach the capitol. My choice here will be seen as weakness, and I will be descended upon. I very much doubt I will be in my position for long.

ALDOUS: I didn't-

FRAN: (interrupting) Don't falter on me, Al. I listened to you and I need you with me. I'm not going to have very many allies left. I just hope this act will mean something, change *something*. Prevent what happened to you from happening to someone else.

ALDOUS: There's been one tenet of my order I've been unable to fulfil for some time.

FRAN: That is?

ALDOUS: Always, stand with family. I'm not going anywhere, Ma'am.

**{Seminar Segue Music 43:48}**

**SEMINAR WRAPPER #3 by Kathryn Pryde**

THE AURACH TEMPLE, MEDICAL BAY

[Thomas whirring on his servos; Console Alex smashed still sparking]

THOMAS: Alex! I have exciting news from Alice! She told me I could tell you first! She believes she's found... (trails off) Alex? Zerash? Where is Alex?

ZERASH: Unknown. Alex refused medical treatment. Zerash has not been able to locate him.

THOMAS: Why would he do that? I thought this was a physical.

ZERASH: Alex is concerned..

THOMAS: Concerned? Why... (notices console) Zerash, what was he listening to?

[Seminar segue music plays, but garbled; followed by a snippet of "Wands and Weaponry"]

*ALDOUS: Can you blame the weapon?*

*VENDOR: What the hell does that even mean*

*ALDOUS: If a gun kills, does it share the blame?*

THOMAS: He thinks he'll hurt Alice. We have to find him.

[Proximity alert goes off]

ZERASH: Alex has left Byzantium.

**{Seminar Theme 44:45}**

END CREDITS NARRATOR: Featuring the voice talents of Adin Rudd as Zerash, Dan Foster as Alex, and Dan Foster as Thomas.

In "You Always Hurt the One You Love," Eleiece Krawiec was Erin, Joseph Stix Davis was Josh, Lisa Michaud was Caitlyn, Loren Walton was Milo, and Nick Bean was TV Anchor. The story was written by Adam J. Blanford.

In "Wands and Weaponry Expo," Graham Rowat was Aldous, Kait Kliman was Fran, Cindy Woods was Princess, Alex Greenslade was Vendor, and Dave Morgan was Governor. The story was written by James Rossi.

This episode was directed by VC Morrison, and assistant-directed by Samantha Reed. The wrapper script and story were written by Kathryn Pryde, and the shorts and wrapper were edited by Jeffrey Bridges.

The music featured in this episode include the following: Ascending the Veil, Floating Cities, Jazz Brunch, and Smooth Lovin' by Kevin

McCloud. Additional music and Seminar theme were written by VC Morrison. Produced by Pendant Productions.

Seminar Co-created by Kathryn Pryde and Jeffrey Bridges. This production is copyright 2019, Pendant Productions.

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

**TEASER TRAILER STARTS AT 46:30**

NARRATOR: Next, on an all-new Seminar...Problem solving, as humans it is our greatest asset...

WOMAN: I finally figured out how to get out of spaghetti jail...you just have to go up to the bars, which are naturally made of spaghetti, squeeze them until they're mush in your hands...and then you're free!

NARRATOR: Some problems are harder than others...

CHUCK: Astarte, the last anyone saw of you, you were a guest on O'Malley's Media Storm. You cured Richard O'Malley's cancer and then vanished. Some thought you disappeared entirely due to shame from that appearance. What have you been doing in all that time?

ASTARTE: I'll be honest Chuck. I think this species, humanity, has a very short time left to remain as it is.

CHUCK: You're talking about climate change.

ASTARTE: I'm talking about a lot of things. This world around you, with your laptops and your lattes, and your 401ks, it's all going away. And I can't stop it. What's more, I don't think I want to.

NARRATOR: Whatever the difficulty, finding a solution can be very satisfying...

CHUCK: But you can't just...that's...it's unethical.

ASTARTE: I think we're past that now, Chuck. We're talking about survival of the species. Drastic measures. Yeah, I'm really liking this idea.

WOMAN: I figured out your little plan, Julie! And now I'm finally going to GET SOME SLEEP!

NARRATOR: Discover interesting solutions with stories written by Kaitlyn Kliman and VC Morrison coming June 26 2019 only at [pendantaudio.com](http://pendantaudio.com).