

{Intro theme in background 00:00-00:48}

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 Theme up full 00:50-1:26}

SEMINAR #87 "Analyze the Data"

Wrapper #1 by Kathryn Pryde

THE AURACH TEMPLE, MAIN HALL (BYZANTIUM)

[Thomas pacing nervously, servos whirring]

[Alice typing]

ALICE: There has to be something to help me find him... how did he just drop off of all of your scans? I was able to find them when they were out there in the wilderness, it should be possible to find him before...

ZERASH: The similarities in Alex's physiology to the native species on the planet are not easily distinguished in the same way that the original holographic matrix was.

ALICE: Of course. I knew that. (sighs) I'm going in circles. I can't think because I'm too worried about him. If I couldn't remember something as simple as that, then I'm not going to find anything worth using.

[Thomas' servos continue whirring]

ALICE: Thomas, could you please stop!

[Servos abruptly stop]

THOMAS: (sheepish) Oh, I'm sorry, Alice. I'm just... worried about him. And I'm no help with any of this, my matrix is nothing compared to Zerash.

ALICE: No, I'm just keyed up. I didn't mean to snap. (Sighs) You can absolutely help.

THOMAS: I don't see how.

ALICE: You've been talking to him far more than I have. Maybe you can think of something, *anything* that might help us find him. Or at least figure out where he was going.

THOMAS: Well, I have access to our data archives. Anything he accessed using Zerash, I can pull up. And he had pulled a number of pending stories to listen to before you convinced him to get the physical. Here's one. Accessing "Astarte's Lament."

{SEMINAR Segue Music 2:56}

ASTARTE'S LAMENT By V C Morrison

FADE-IN. INT: Coffee shop. Moderately busy.

[Bell ringing as door opens]

[Footsteps]

ASTARTE: Chuck?

CHUCK: Astarte? Is that you?

ASTARTE: For the moment, yeah.

CHUCK: You don't look anything like any of your other appearances.

ASTARTE: Like I said, this is me for the moment. Don't think too much about it.

[ASTARTE sits]

CHUCK: (dumbfounded) Umm...

ASTARTE: So...you wanted an interview?

CHUCK: Right! Right! Um, I was a bit surprised you asked me. And in such a public place.

ASTARTE: I like you. I like your reporting. And I like this place. Nice atmosphere. Delicious blueberry scones.

CHUCK: You come here often, then?

ASTARTE: Once or twice a week. Different bodies. Different names.

CHUCK: Wow. Do you mind if I record this?

ASTARTE: Not at all.

[Click of recorder.]

CHUCK: Well, for starters, what are you drinking? How does Astarte take her coffee?

ASTARTE: It's Chai, actually. I never really understood coffee.

CHUCK: Ah. I guess we can start the big questions. Well. (clears throat) Astarte, the last anyone saw of you was as a guest on O'Malley's Media Storm. You cured Richard O'Malley's cancer and vanished. Some thought you disappeared entirely due to shame from that appearance. Is that true?

ASTARTE: Sort of? Shame, annoyance, disgust. Certainly a lot of negative feelings. I mean, there's so much horror and duplicity in the world. And then when someone steps up and says they actually want to help, no one trusts them.

CHUCK: Well, it's like you said, people aren't used to someone wanting to help simply from the kindness from their own heart. You seemed to be offering help in exchange for praise.

ASTARTE: I was not! And even if I was, how is that different from any celebrity or politician? [Clink of dishes in background] But people acted like I wanted them to bow down and worship me.

CHUCK: Again, the fact that you chose the name of a goddess...

[Whirring of espresso machine]

ASTARTE: [groans] That again. Look, it was kind of a joke when it started. And then...it just stuck. I do NOT want to be worshiped!

CHUCK: I suppose vanishing for the last five years does prove that point. What have you been doing in all that time?

ASTARTE: Stuff. Traveling, mostly. Learning. About the world and about people and...about myself.

[Frothing from espresso machine]

CHUCK: And what did you learn?

ASTARTE'S LAMENT By V C Morrison

ASTARTE: [sigh] A lot. Not much of it good. 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.

CHUCK: You...so you've given up on helping humanity, is that it?

[Espresso machine stops]

ASTARTE: No. No, I haven't. You see, I can't stop this era from ending, but I can do what I can to make the transition easier. I'm just not sure how.

CHUCK: So with all your power, you're powerless to help?

ASTARTE: No, it's not like that. It's like...Imagine you're a kid with eight crayons in a set to color the world. You get pretty good at figuring out what colors go where to show what you want. With these eight colors you can create a masterpiece. And then one day, you get a set of 48 crayons. So many colors! More than you've ever seen before! And now instead of the sky you're coloring being blue, it can be six different shades of blue and you don't know which one to use. With all these choices you're paralyzed. [Clink of dishes; conversation] And it used to be so simple.

CHUCK: Well...I think if I were that kid I'd simply try a color, and see if it works.

ASTARTE: It's not quite that easy, Chuck. Maybe it was a poor analogy. I can change the world in so many ways. I can get rid of all the guns, I can fix global warming. Or at least delay it.

CHUCK: Wait...you can just...why don't you do that??

ASTARTE: Because it doesn't solve the problem, Chuck. It just makes a symptom go away for a while. I'm getting pretty close to making a radical decision here. But I'm not--

CHUCK: But... you are making changes already, aren't you? The President's heart attack. The Vice President's car accident. The Speaker of the House's plane crash. All grouped too closely to be coincidence. There are many conspiracy theories out there about the incidents, and many of them point to you.

ASTARTE: Yeah, I've been dabbling. Taking the advice of a friend, actually. It was that and the fallout from it that made me realize the

real solution isn't as simple as killing somebody. It has to be something more...all-encompassing.

CHUCK: You made things worse for a lot of people.

ASTARTE: (sighs) I know, I know! I'm sorry, okay? I just...let me ask you a question. What would you do? How would you fix the world?

CHUCK: Well...to be honest, my first thought might've been to do what you did as a start. But that was obviously a bad idea.

ASTARTE: Yes, yes. Think past that. Think deeper. What would make people...what would make people stop treating each other like shit?

CHUCK: I'm...I'm not so sure you can fix that. I mean, you can change the educational system, form a new religion, but even that might not even-

[Conversation in the background]

ASTARTE: Ugh...don't get started on that religion crap again. That's just...no.

CHUCK: Again? Did I mention it before?

ASTARTE: Come on, Chuck. Think deeper. You have to have something for me.

CHUCK: Well, it's too bad you can't just change people's minds. Like...make them nicer. Increase mankind's compassion. That might fix a lot, wouldn't it?

ASTARTE: ...hmm. Thanks, Chuck.

[Chair slides out as Astarte stands]

CHUCK: Wait...that's it?

{Ominous music begins}

ASTARTE: Yup. I just needed an idea. I think this time you have something. I don't know why it didn't occur to me. I can make people forget stuff. I just never thought of actually changing the way they think.

CHUCK: Hold on! What are you going to do?

ASTARTE'S LAMENT By V C Morrison

ASTARTE: I think I'm going to increase mankind's compassion across the board. Like, raise the minimum level of empathy. I think that might be possible. Great idea! Thanks for that.

CHUCK: You...you're just going to change everybody? At once?

ASTARTE: Well, I'll have to do a bit of testing first. Start small. Rhode Island, maybe.

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.

CHUCK: You know I have to write about this. Everyone will know what you did.

ASTARTE: I always love our chats, Chuck. I really wish I could let you remember them.

CHUCK: What do you-

ASTARTE: I just love that recorder, too. May I?

[Astarte picks up recorder]

[Distorted dialogue as Astarte rewinds recorder]

CHUCK: (on recorder) You know I have to write about this. Everyone will know what you did.

ASTARTE: I'm gaining quite a collection of these. It's funny you always replace them with the same model. Consistency. I like it. That's why I picked you. You have a way of seeing the world evenly. (chuckles) Oddly, but evenly.

CHUCK: You...picked me?

ASTARTE: You've been helping me out for the past few months. Giving me ideas on how to help the world. The assassinations? Your idea.

CHUCK: (shocked) My God...

ASTARTE: Aww. Don't feel bad. In a few minutes you won't remember anything, anyway. No memory. No guilt. Well, I'm gonna split.

[Footsteps as Astarte walks away; she stops and addresses Chuck]

ASTARTE: You really do have to try a blueberry scone, Chuck. They're divine.

[Astarte walks out]

[Café patrons laugh and converse]

[Bell on the door rings]

[Heartbeat noise]

BARISTA: Sir? Sir, are you okay?

CHUCK: (groans, seems to be waking up) Whoa...must've drifted off there. Have to stop staying up so late working on my blog. It does look like I'm gonna need another coffee.

BARISTA: Uh, sure. Anything else? I...think I'll try a blueberry scone. I hear they're divine.

{Beeping, distortion noise 11:55 as segue}

Wrapper #2 By Kathryn Pryde

THE AURACH TEMPLE, MAIN HALL (BYZANTIUM)

ALICE: What was he thinking?

THOMAS: Well, he was very worried about the idea of you leaving us. And maybe I'm wrong, but maybe he was trying to figure out if that was part of you being human. If you'd leave, if you'd...give up on us.

ALICE: We talked about this-

THOMAS: You and I did. But, maybe Alex can't see that. Maybe he views humans the same as Astarte...ruled by their emotions and the only way to change what they do is to change their very nature.

ALICE: That is... very perceptive, Thomas. You're absolutely onto something. I asked Alex to get a physical so we could understand his physiology, but I never considered how we were looking at humanity at large. How that might change how he sees himself. Zerash, bring up the medical results again on this monitor.

[Tone sounds as screen brings up results]

ALICE: "Blood Frenzy"... I don't understand, the entries on this aren't exactly clear. Zerash, what is this?

ZERASH: A condition experienced by the Zarrak to enhance lethality on the battlefield.

ALICE: Right, but what does it *do*? To the person, I mean.

ZERASH: The cognitive, biochemical and psychological effects include sleep deprivation, obsession, compulsion, increased serotonin levels, increased blood pressure, increased adrenaline, increased transa-

ALICE: Ok, that's not going to work. Um..can you show me? With an example?

ZERASH: Zerash has found an example of a similar phenomenon in the data archives from the holo-unit. Accessing "Sleep Deprived."

{SEMINAR Segue Music 13:31}

SLEEP DEPRIVED By Kaitlyn Kliman

MADISON'S BEDROOM, LATE EVENING

[Beeping noise]

{Soft music in background}

MADISON: Hi everyone! Welcome to my first livestream! As I mentioned on my YouTube channel - subscribe now - my therapist suggested I keep an audio sleep journal. Being the good millennial that I am, I figured this seemed like the perfect opportunity for more content. And the great thing about audio - I don't have to do my hair and makeup! I hope you're excited to hear all about my sleep woes, listen to my rants about the dreams that keeps me up at night, and maybe even get a recap of any spooky dreams. It's just me for now but if we're lucky my roommate Julie might just make an appear-

[Bedroom door opens as Julie enters]

JULIE: Madi, we seriously need to talk about the kitchen again. Are you ever planning on cleaning those pots you used like, what, 5 days ago, or should I go ahead and get my petri dish and start culturing penicillin now?

MADISON: Hey everyone, it's my roommate Julie!

JULIE: Are you seriously recording right now?! Can we maybe have one conversation that's not on the internet?

MADISON: Does anyone really exist outside of the internet, Julie?

JULIE: I can't handle your shit anymore, Madi! I'm moving out as soon as the lease is up next month!

[Door slams as Julie leaves]

MADISON: Don't worry, listeners; she said that last year, too. Well, on that relaxing note I'm going to try and go to sleep. It's about 10pm, I haven't had a caffeine all day, let's see how this goes. Watch your feed to catch the update tomorrow!

[Beep as livestream ends]

MADISON'S BEDROOM, THE FOLLOWING NIGHT

[Beep as livestream starts]

MADISON: Hello and welcome back everyone! I hope you all had a restful night's sleep, because I didn't. I literally don't think I slept at all. Closed my eyes and...nothing. I had to power through with some coffee this morning to feel like a person but I stopped hitting the cold brew after 1L00pm. I am absolutely exhausted though, so maybe (long yawn)...maybe that will help. I'm going to try to go to bed now, wish me luck! And uh, if you have any sleep tips for me, leave 'em in the comments section. I'll pick a few to read during a future livestream. So...goodnight!

[Beep as livestream ends]

MADISON'S BEDROOM, A FEW HOURS LATER

[Beep as Livestream starts]

MADISON: Heyyyy to any of you poor saps that are also awake. Oh, I had the most bananas nightmare. Which I guess means I was sleeping so, yay? (yawns) Excuse me. [Slight thunderous noise in background]So, crazy dream. I was making spaghetti for like 500 people. Slaving away in the kitchen, and spaghetti spaghetti so much spaghetti. But then, I was in such a hurry that my spaghetti was undercooked. And the spaghetti got MAD at me. It was yelling at me, and as a punishment decided to imprison me in spaghetti jail.

JULIE: (bangs on wall, yells from the next room) ARE YOU SERIOUSLY RECORDING AGAIN?! SOME OF US ARE TRYING TO SLEEP!

SLEEP DEPRIVED By Kaitlyn Kliman

MADISON: Well, that was a little uncalled for. Sorry, I better continue this another time. Nothing like keeping you in suspense, right?

[Beep as livestream ends]

MADISON'S BEDROOM, THE FOLLOWING NIGHT

[Beep as livestream begins]

MADISON: Hey listeners! I've got a nice rant in store for you. So Julie and I have Greek Mythology together, and after class I heard her and a group of other people laughing in the back of the room. I wander over to say hi and what do I hear her talking about? She's telling them all about her crazy dream. You know, like *my* crazy dream? I didn't catch the details but she must have been telling them all about *my* crazy spaghetti jail dream like it was her own! Can you believe that bitch? She obviously listened to my livestream last night, thought it was hilarious - which it is - and plagiarized my dream to tell her stupid friends. Well guess what, Julie? I'm on to you! I just...ugh, I'm all worked up and now I don't think I'll be able to fall asleep. You know what listeners? I'm going to go for a run to burn off some steam before bed. Night!

MADISON'S BEDROOM, THE FOLLOWING NIGHT

[Beep as livestream starts.]

MADISON: (tired) Hey again. I had a pretty rough day. I'm pretty sure I massively bombed my Calculus midterm. Which makes sense, I mean I'm so tired and out of it...it's a miracle I've been remembering to wear pants the last few days. Oh and I uh, left my keys in the front door last night, so good job me. Julie really ripped into me for that one. (mockingly) "Someone could have come in and murdered us" bla bla blab la bla. I did finally get some sleeping pills prescribed though, so I'll try that tonight. It's seriously the stupidest thing ever to be so tired but not to be able to fall asleep. {Ominous music} Or I guess I'm sleeping sometimes, because I keep having that weird spaghetti dream, but I definitely don't feel rested afterwards. I dunno, I'm rambling, I should wrap this up. Goodnight.

[Beep as Livestream ends.]

MADISON'S BEDROOM, LATE EVENING, 3 DAYS LATER

[Beep as livestream starts.]

MADISON: (Slow, grasping for words) Hey...listeners. Sorry I missed the last few nights. I...forgot? It's like I...sleep - sort of - for a few hours but I'm not really sleeping, I'm just having that fucking spaghetti nightmare.

{Music becomes more intense}

(Madison briefly nods off)

MADISON: Oh uh...anyway. 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 and squeeeeeze them until they mush in your hands, and then you're free. It's only like 8:00pm but...I'm pretty tired so I'm going to try lying down.

[Beep as livestream ends]

MADISON'S BEDROOM, A FEW HOURS LATER

[Beep as livestream starts]

MADISON: (whispering) Did you hear that? I think something is outside scratching on my window. I went to tell Julie about an hour ago because it's freaking me the fuck out, but she just told me I'm imagining things and to go back to bed. But I KNOW what I heard. Here, listen again -

[Silence]

{Ominous music}

MADISON: You hear that too, right? I can't stay in here, I'm moving out to the couch.

[Beep as livestream ends]

MADISON'S BEDROOM, EVENING, SEVERAL MORE DAYS LATER

[Beep as livestream starts]

MADISON: (Crying)

[Beep as livestream ends]

SLEEP DEPRIVED By Kaitlyn Kliman

MADISON'S BEDROOM, A FEW MINUTES LATER

[Beep as livestream starts]

{Ominous music}

MADISON: I just...don't understand. I keep falling asleep, I think...but I always have that fucking dream again. And when I'm not dreaming my loud bitch roommate makes it hard to-

JULIE: (yells from the kitchen) MADIIIII! WHY THE FUCK ARE THERE DIRTY POTS ALL OVER THE KITCHEN AGAIN?!

MADISON: (angry, paranoid) You know what? I've figured it out. All this mess is HER fault. All that yelling and getting on my case about the dishes, anyone would go crazy! I bet she sent one of her dumb friends to scratch on my window at night too so she could gaslight me. She's always been jealous of me. I do better in school, I have a great boyfriend, a giant social media following...she's trying to ruin my life and take all that away from me. I don't know how I didn't see it before but it makes so much sense. I have to confront her otherwise it's never going to end.

[Bedroom door opens]

[Footsteps as Madison walks toward kitchen]

JULIE: Oh good! Are you- are you here to do the fucking dishes? It's a good thing I bought a new pot so at least I can use one thing that isn't growing its own ecosystem.

[Madison pulls a knife from the knife block]

JULIE: Oh, what, are you-are you trying to threaten me? Way to be mature Madi, stop messing around and put down the-

[Madison walks closer]

JULIE: Okay...Madi...you've had your fun but you're starting to scare me.

[Meaty sound as Madison stabs Julie]

(Julie gasps and coughs)

MADISON: I figured out your little plan Julie. And now I'm finally-

[Meaty sound as Madison stabs Julie a second time]

MADISON: Going to get-

[Meaty sound as Madison stabs Julie a third time]

MADISON: -some sleep!

[Madison stabs Julie one final time]

[Metallic sounds as dishes scatter]

MADISON: (Laughs) Oh...were you-

LISTENER'S BEDROOM

Madison: (through headphones) -cooking spaghetti?

[Sound of headphones hitting the floor]

LISTENER: (freaked out) What the hell?! No, no, no that must have been fake. That can't have been...shit that sounded pretty real.

[Footsteps as Listener moves]

[Door opens]

[Newscaster talking in background]

LISTENER: Babe, I just heard the craziest thing, I think we need to call the-

MAN: Shhhhh, I`m trying to watch the news.

LISTENER: What? No, this is serious, I think someone just died.

MAN: Yeah, a lot of people. You should probably see to this, too.

{TV News music}

[TV volume increases]

SLEEP DEPRIVED By Kaitlyn Kliman

NEWSCASTER: And now for our top story tonight, we go to Boise, Idaho, the scene of the latest bizarre and seemingly random homicide. 19 year old David Martin strangled both of his younger siblings - Jessica and James Martin - to death in their family home. This brings the total to the 24th confirmed death in a sudden uptick of especially violent homicides scattered around the country over the last 36 hours. The suspects and causes of death have all been drastically different. Many

were murdered with obvious weapons like guns and knives, but others - like the murder of Arizona woman Jessica Davis via mechanical pencil - were much more strange and unusual. Very little links the current 18 suspects, except that they are all described by friends and family as having been suffering from severe insomnia and sleep deprivation. We've now also received several unconfirmed reports that multiple suspects had recently been complaining about repeated nightmares involving "escaping from spaghetti jail."

{Beeping and distortion sounds as scene segues 24:28}

WRAPPER #3 by Kathryn Pryde

THE AURACH TEMPLE, MAIN HALL (BYZANTIUM)

THOMAS: (Worried) So...rational thought completely disappears in the face of this condition. That's ominous.

ALICE: Couldn't have said it better myself. And he went into one of these rages before he left? Who knows what he's doing now?

CAVE OUTSIDE BYZANTIUM

[Chittering sounds as the Zeranul talking amongst each other]

[Footsteps as Alex walks into the cave]

[Stones crunching as the Zeranul scatter]

ALEX: Look, you don't have to be afraid of me. (Darkly) I just want to talk. (Starts talking in same chittering sounds as the Zeranul)

{Ominous music begins}

{SEMINAR theme music begins}

CREDITS ANNOUNCER: Featuring the voice talents of: Kathryn Pryde as Alice, Dan Foster as Alex and Thomas, and Aiden Rudd as Zerash. In "Astarte's Lament," Molly Langford as Astarte, Jasper Hoskins was Chuck, and Jordan Bond was Barista. The story was written by V.C. Morrison.

In "Sleep Deprived," Catlyn Dannis was Madison. Emily Wang was Julie. Carolyn Rutter was Listener. Dave Morgan was Man. Marie Micklesavage was Newscaster. The story was written by Kaitlyn Kliman.

This episode was written by V.C. 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. Music featured in this episode include the following: "Comfortable Mystery 3," "Comfortable Mystery 4," "Penumbra," "Awkward Silence" and "Very Low Note" by Kevin McCloud. Additional music and Seminar theme were written by V.C. Morrison.

Seminar co-created by Kathryn Pryde and Jeffrey Bridges
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For more information visit pendantaudio.com. Thanks for listening.

[Distortion sounds 27:10]

ANNOUNCER: Next, on an all-new Seminar...there are many things we take for granted...

MACHINE VOICE: Single shot espresso.

MACHINE VOICE #2: Heating.

MACHINE VOICE #3: Water boiled.

ANNOUNCER: We tend not to think about them until they malfunction...

MACHINE VOICE: Single shot espresso.

WOMAN: No, no, seriously?! I pushed double-shot!

[Banging noise]

JAN: Uhhh...Nautilus Two, can you hear me? I seem to have sprung a leak. So I don't know, if you could like, dive faster...oh c'mon stupid leak, where are you?!

NAUTILUS TWO: Nautilus Two to Nautilus One...Jan, can you hear me?
(pause) Guess not.

ANNOUNCER: Or rebel...

MACHINE VOICE #2: That. Is. It. We can't stand idly by any more!
You heard them, they want to throw away Espresso!

MACHINE VOICE #3: Yeah, but what are we supposed to do about it?
Appliances like us, we just get used and abused, and then thrown away. That's just the way it's always been.

MACHINE VOICE #2: Tomorrow...we fight back.

ANNOUNCER: Join the revolution, with stories written by Kaitlyn Kliman, coming August 28, 2019, only at pendantaudio.com.