

Hi, Eli Ramos here, creator and editor of Under the Electric Stars. I don't usually put trigger warnings in audio form before the episode. Those go into show notes, where this warning will be along with other potential triggers in this episode. This episode deals in large part with the police, including police violence, threats, and arrests. Take care of yourself if you decide to listen and please organize, sign petitions, and donate to organizations that support Black and Indigenous people and anti-police terror organizations. Black lives matter.

EPISODE BEGINS.

SFX: Neon buzzes. Chatter, footsteps, and then police chatter.

CAINE:

(NARRATING)

Had the warehouse and apartment always looked so empty? Even with the Correctors swarming the place, a singular force undulating through doors like a living force unto itself, the place had never felt so... dead. I mean, I lived among other tenants of the apartment, people who Dax wrung cryptos out of every second. I worked the delivery routes with them too. Now they're just gone. Boxes of possessions—each one probably treasured the way my parents treasured their old equipment and pictures—were just taken out of each unit, no one chasing after them for what was inside.

It was empty here. And maybe, in a way, it always had been—since the day Valeria and my parents disappeared. But there was one last thing here I had to face before I could finally leave it all behind.

SFX: Flashback.

INDRA:

I think you should go. You are the only one who could do it. But I think it's safer if you avoid talking with Dax at all. It can't be too hard to sneak in. You snuck out after all.

CAINE:

That actually was probably more sheer luck than anything. But you're right, I do know the place pretty well. I did live there for all my life.

SU-JIN:

I really wish I could go with you. I don't want you to be by yourself.

CAINE:

Well, Su-jin, Rossum was right. Correctors are swarming that neighborhood and with all the security breaches, I can't keep putting Zero Zero in danger.

INDRA:

Plus, we've only got the one Corrector disguise. Bomb squad's probably not going to be there and since everyone's seen the number on Lola's, that one's a bust.

CAINE:

That too. And besides, I won't be completely alone.

JET:

Don't worry! I promise I'll do a good job of looking after Caine!

VIC:

Lola and I will be able to track you two, since Jet will be screen-jumping to your comms. And if you push the panic button on your comms, Indra and Su-jin will come and get you, no matter what. I think your odds are pretty good. But you'd better go quick. The longer he has info on you, the more danger you and all of us are in.

SU-JIN:

We've got your back.

SFX: Flashback ends.

CAINE:

Okay. Come on, Reyes. Game time.

SFX: Footsteps.

CAINE:

Where is everyone? I only see the Correctors—oof!

SFX: Thud.

CORRECTOR 1:

Whoa!

CAINE:

Sorry.

CORRECTOR 1:

Hey, you weren't with our unit, were you?

CAINE:

Uh... no.

CORRECTOR 1:

Ah, so you must have heard our radio in for cleaning up the place.

CAINE:

Yeaaah... I did.

CORRECTOR 1:

Well, you made pretty good time. I mean, you missed the fun part—arresting all the criminals holed up here. I tell you, Pastore's our best informant yet. I just can't believe he managed to round up so many of them.

CAINE:

Probably because they were desperate for a job. You had to work with Dax to live here and—I mean, that's what I hear, at least.

CORRECTOR 1:

Don't believe the talk on the street you hear, rookie. These people are lazy. They just want people to hand them cryptos instead of doing good honest work! These people are thieves and liars at best. I mean, take a look at this! There's no way that an Epsilon saved enough up for a comms system like this.

CAINE:

Aw come on man, it's a five-year-old model.

CORRECTOR 1:

Well, that's still way too fancy for someone who claims to be cryptoless. Toughen up, rookie. I know it can be hard at first to watch them, but you start to learn after you get enough calls in that they're all the same.

Oh, looks like Pastore's done talking with that guy. You should talk with him!

CAINE:

Uh, I-I-I think I'm good, dude. You know what? I'm gonna head up another floor.

CORRECTOR 1:

Suit yourself. He's a really interesting guy. Makes you think.

CAINE:

Yeah, I'm sure he does. See ya.

SFX: Caine runs off.

CAINE:

Oh, thank god no one else stopped me. Well, here's to hoping Dax didn't bother to change the security on my door.

SFX: Door opens.

CAINE:

(NARRATING)

When you come back to a place you've left behind, there's a stillness to it. I mean, no one's been living there, so everything's exactly as you remember it. The deep plasma scorches in the wall, the mess of cassettes on the floor, its spools of tape clipped and hastily patched together—all reminders of how I'd gotten away. The camera in the corner and the heavy security door made no indication that they were operational. Everything was dead silent. A time capsule from the night I'd gotten away.

I hadn't miss the place as much as I thought I would. For the first week, I couldn't stop mourning all the things I'd left behind. But it was all just bitter reminders of my life before my family was broken. I almost couldn't stand to look at it now... knowing that Dax knew what happened to Valeria and kept it from me all that time.

CAINE:

Hey, Jet?

JET:

Yes, Caine?

CAINE:

I got my comms and my old radio. Remember how we found you by using an LPS? We're gonna do the same for that tracker module. Do you have the specs on it?

JET:

Processing... here they are! The radio signal that it transmits should be able to be received and processed if you hook the LPS to me!

CAINE:

Heh, nice. Now it shouldn't be too hard for us to find it. We shouldn't stay in one place for too long. Man, I keep

hearing footsteps. Which means the Correctors are probably heading up here.

JET:

Right! The third floor was relatively empty while we were coming up here. Not sure where they're coming from.

CAINE:

Sounds like they're coming up the stairs. Umm... oh. Let's sneak to the elevator.

SFX: Footsteps, radio chatter. Caine presses a button.

CAINE:

Oh, you've gotta be kidding me right now.

SFX: Click click.

CAINE:

Of course. And the elevator's still down for maintenance. The only person I ever saw using it was Dax.

SFX: The Correctors are getting louder.

CAINE:

What should I do, what should I do, what should I do?

JET:

Your room's the one that's unlocked—we can figure out what to do after they leave... and hopefully they do.

CAINE:

Looks like that's our best shot.

SFX: Caine walks back.

DAX:

*What* are you doing up here?

CAINE:

Oh, shit.

CORRECTOR 2:

What you've asked us to do for every single floor.

CORRECTOR 3:

You gave us permission to sweep the whole building.

DAX:

Well, I'm going to request that you skip this one. Or at least this room.

CORRECTOR 3:

Uh... why?

DAX:

I've got that KLO4 out for my Epsilon, Caine Reyes, with your department. This is their room. They're coming with me once you're done with the building, so I ask that you don't sweep this place before I've had a look through it.

CORRECTOR 2:

Heh. Fine by me. It's your Epsilon. Come on. We can take our break.

CORRECTOR 3:

Sure.

SFX: They walk away.

DAX:

Might as well look through it now.

SFX: Footsteps.

JET:

We should go out the fire escape.

CAINE:

Didn't you hear what Dax said? He's got the Correctors looking for me.

JET:

Better to risk being seen by Correctors than to get caught by Dax himself.

CAINE:

Honestly, I don't like those odds. But you make a good point.

SFX: Caine opens the window and heads down the ladder.

DAX:

Ugh, what a mess. It was really just carelessness on my part that let Caine keep getting away from me. Keep tipping off Correctors and yet they still manage to disappear before anyone's on the scene. It's infuriating. (HE SIGHS) Good that they're finally checking that abandoned radio station. Of course Caine would choose a place like that to hole up in. Obsessed with it, just like Maricel and Benjie were. Where is that stupid radio? I'll just toss that now that I have the chance.

SFX: Rummaging.

DAX:

What in the...? I saw that they left it here on the security camera. Where is it?

SFX: Wind.

DAX:

The fire escape. Of course.

Pastore to Head Corrector on the scene. Caine Reyes is here. Don't let them get away if you see them.

Perfect timing, Caine. Can't wait to see you.

RADIO:

KLO4 on Caine Reyes. All units deploy immediately.

CAINE:

Oh, great.

JET:

Hm...

CAINE:

Everything okay?

JET:

I'm just trying to locate the radio signal for your tracker. But there's so many signals just in the Tollbooth alone...add the five channels that the Correctors have running and it's a mess in the airwaves. It's hard to pick it out, but I'm trying.

CAINE:

I figured as much. But you did good, Jet.

SFX: Radio chatter fades in, then out.

CAINE:

It's lucky this floor's so empty. I bet they think they scoured it already so they're not gonna check back here for a while.

This room's pretty empty too. That's depressing.

JET:

I can't understand why they took everything with them. Isn't anyone coming back?

CAINE:

...Probably not. I mean, not unless we do something about it. And knowing Dax, whatever the hell he's doing, it's something big. It sounds like he's trying to sell the place or something.

JET:

Why does that make me so nervous?

CAINE:

I don't know. But it makes me feel that way too.  
How much longer do you think it's gonna take?

JET:

Um... I think I can sort out the signal in a couple more minutes. Let's move farther into the apartment, I think it'll be clearer if we're farther from the hallway.

CAINE:

Good thinking, Jet. Probably safer too.

SFX: Caine walks. Plugging in.

CAINE:

And you are now plugged in. Just let me know when you're done.

JET:

Of course.

CAINE:

So you stay there, and I'm just gonna find a seat somewhere.

SFX: Caine walks. The crunch of broken glass.

CAINE:

Oh.

SFX: They pick it up.

CAINE:

Correctors must have dropped this while they were carting things out.

Oh.

I... uh... remember this... this girl that moved in with her parents three years ago? She was like, what around my age? I didn't talk much unless it was about your personality core... This is her picture.

JET:

Oh no. Was she arrested?

CAINE:

No... I don't think so. See? In this picture, she's in front of one of those academies in Windowpane. I think she must have started going to school there 'cause it doesn't look like this room was being shared. I think it was just her parents that got arrested. I don't even think she knows. What is she going to do when... if she comes back here and everything's just... gone?

JET:

I didn't see her very often.

CAINE:

Guess she didn't visit all that much.

JET:

Her parents probably wanted her not to be in the Tollbooth. It *is* very dangerous here with law enforcement constantly patrolling the area.

CAINE:

Yeah. Guess Windowpane's not all that different in that respect.

SFX: Boop.

JET:

Found the signal!

CAINE:

You did? Awesome. Alright, let me see it.

SFX: Beep.

CAINE:

Uh... wait, wait, wait, wait. Jet, are you sure about this? This is saying that it's coming from somewhere above the eighth floor. There's nothing up there.

JET:

Um... not quite apparently! See, if I trace the signal, there's nowhere else it could be coming from. I know the

fire escape doesn't go that high, and the stairs don't either... but that's where the signal is coming from. I think there's a way to get up through the elevator.

CAINE:

That must be why it's closed right now. Too many people snooping around. Us included.

JET:

If that's the only way there, we need to start the elevator again—although I'd love to start it myself, it's an analog one, so I can't do anything but direct you to it.

CAINE:

So you're telling me we have to go to the basement and start it up manually.

JET:

As long as we do it quickly, I think we'll be okay!

CAINE:

Eh... alright.

JET:

Something's on your mind.

CAINE:

No, it's just... I don't know if I should take this picture with me. It feels wrong to leave it behind. But then again, it feels really wrong to bring it with me. I don't know her that well. And even if I wanted to give it back to her... would she even come back?

JET:

Show it to me! I'll take a picture of it.

SFX: Flash!

JET:

Now if we see her, we can help her out.

CAINE:

Yeah. I think that's a great idea.

Okay.

SFX: Caine steps out. Correctors are rushing around.

CORRECTOR 4:

Hey, what are you doing just standing around! Haven't you been on your radio?

CAINE:

Uh... For the KLO4, right?

CORRECTOR 4:

What else would I be talking about?

CAINE:

Right. Uh, well, my squad's heading down to the basement so I should probably head out.

CORRECTOR 4:

We *just* did a sweep of that area.

CAINE:

You know what, have you been on *your* radio? We're doing multiple sweeps of the building.

CORRECTOR 4:

Oh. Uh. Well... I knew that! Squad 6 to third floor! Moving out!

SFX: Caine heads down to the basement.

CAINE:

Looks all clear.

JET:

The elevator's motor should be connected to the generator!

CAINE:

I'm on it.

SFX: Caine opens the switchboard.

CAINE:

Let's see, which is the right switch... oh my god... this one?

SFX: Caine hits it. The elevator starts.

JET:

Sounds like that was the right one!

SFX: A blaster is unholstered.

CORRECTOR 3:

Hey, what are you doing?

CAINE:

What?

CORRECTOR 3:

Squad 6 sent me down here saying someone was doing a second sweep. But you don't even have a radio on you.

You know what, I've seen that number before. All the Correctors in the Windowpane have been on the lookout for number 1871. Not as many of us has been looking for number 5043. I saw you on that telecast. You're Caine Reyes, aren't you?

CAINE:

Shit.

CORRECTOR 3:

Thought so.

All squads to the basement. I've located Caine Reyes. Don't move. Dax said you shouldn't be dead, but he didn't say you couldn't be injured.

CAINE:

No. Screw that.

SFX: Caine hits a button. The lights go out.

CORRECTOR 3:

Hey!

CORRECTOR 2:

What happened to the power? All the lights are out!

CORRECTOR 3:

Suspect had access to the generator. Shit.

SFX: The elevator dings.

CORRECTOR 3:

Hey! They're taking the elevator up! Station your squads at the elevators!

SFX: The elevator closes.

CORRECTOR 2:

Will do. We're on the upper floors so it's not safe for us to get down the stairs.

CAINE:

That was too close.

I think our best bet is riding up to the eighth floor and... I dunno, figuring out what to do from there.

JET:

It sounded like most of the Correctors are higher up in the building too.

CAINE:

How should we get them off our tail?

JET:

Let me think... I'll get some light in here.

SFX: Shing!

JET:

Look up there! Think you can get that emergency exit open?

CAINE:

Jet. Come on, I don't even know if there's a ladder up there.

JET:

I think so...

CAINE:

Do you know that for sure?

JET:

There should be one.

SFX: The elevator keeps moving up.

CAINE:

(SIGH) Fine. I trust you. And if there isn't one, we'll figure out another way. We always do, right?

Alright. Let's go.

SFX: We hear the elevator rise. Cables start to snap.

CORRECTOR 2:

We got them.

SFX: The elevator doors open.

CORRECTOR 2:

Come out quietly and you won't get hurt.

CAINE:

Hah. Like I haven't heard that one before. What a load of bull.

CORRECTOR 2:

Stand back! It's gonna fall!

SFX: The elevator crashes, then dings. The doors close.

CAINE:

Alright. Well, Jet. Guess you're gonna have to help me find my way up to that last floor.

JET:

Just keep climbing!

CAINE:

Roger that.

SFX: Caine climbs the ladder.

CAINE:

(NARRATING)

It turns out, the ninth floor wasn't really a floor at all—just a small hallway I had to feel along the sides of in the murky dark. It led to a single room that was thankfully unlocked. There was a small generator up here, connected to a small lamp that barely illuminated the room.

When my parents disappeared, I saw Dax throw out most of their things. I was able to save their old tapes, but everything else: their belongings, family mementos, their life's work... all of it was junk to him. So of course I assumed he'd done the same with Valeria's things... but some of it was tucked away in here. Her video logs, her journals. Like our parents, she'd always kept a record of as much as she could. She never wanted to forget things. I remembered wanting to hear her again so much—then despairing when I realized it was gone. But here it was again. Maybe I didn't need to get answers from Dax. Maybe I could get them from Valeria herself.

But before that, I had to get the module.

SFX: Caine walks slowly over.

CAINE:

This must be it.

CAINE:

(NARRATING)

I... I didn't understand what I was looking at. The GPS module was old, like the tracker in my arm supposedly was—unwieldy and slow to start up. I could hear how much power it took to keep it running as electricity buzzed up the cables and into the device. The screen lit up with a sickly, dim glow—a map of the entire Metropolis and the outskirts appeared, followed by dots that lit up on different locations.

That was the part I didn't understand. Because it wasn't just one dot. It was three—all in different parts of the map.

CAINE:

What...?

SFX: Footsteps.

DAX:

Caine. There you are.

SFX: Caine pulls out their plasma knife.

CAINE:

Don't even come near me, Dax. I mean it.

DAX:

Relax. I'm not here to hurt you. I'm happy to see you again. And to see what you came here for! When I heard that elevator crash, I figured that was your doing, so I climbed right back up here.

You, uh... you found out about this sooner than I expected.

CAINE:

This? You mean the tracker you put in my arm? Or whatever plan you've got for me and the two other people you've been watching?

DAX:

Oh. No, no, no, Caine, Caine. I think you've got it all wrong.

Let me explain it to you. I think you'll come around to what I'm saying.

CAINE:

Hah. Come on. You are not going to convince me of anything. All you do is keep secrets and lie. About everything.

DAX:

Fine. If you won't believe it from me, you can hear it from the source.

SFX: He picks up one of Val's videologs.

CAINE:

What do you think you're doing, touching Val's stuff?!

DAX:

I think you'll find what you hear will be very enlightening. I know I did.

SFX: He starts the recording.

MUSIC: Neon by Scott Buckley.

VALERIA:

This is stupid. It's stupid! It's—ow! This hurts! It's not fair. I can't even imagine how much pain Caine is in. Or... will be. They're still asleep. Dad said the sedative would last longer since they're younger. Seb seems fine, but he never pays attention to anything really, so he probably doesn't even notice how messed up this is! Or care. No one ever listens to me. Even though Mom asks me to basically act like I'm the oldest and keep Seb and Caine in check. And even Sebastian agrees that we should wait for a while longer, but our parents just do whatever they want because they're older. Neither of us could convince Mom and Dad to not install a tracker on Caine too. They even made us promise to make sure Caine didn't know about it. Well, I'm not going to do that. They're going to know all about it.

CAINE:

What the hell?

END EPISODE.

Hi, Eli Ramos here, creator and editor of Under the Electric Stars. If you liked this episode, please share it with your friends and rate and review it wherever you're listening to us. You can find us on our website at [undertheelectricstars.com](http://undertheelectricstars.com), or on social media: we're @utes\_podcast on Twitter and [undertheelectricstarspodcast](https://www.tumblr.com/undertheelectricstarspodcast) on Tumblr. You can also find us on Patreon at [mxeliramos](https://www.patreon.com/mxeliramos), that's M-X-E-L-I-R-A-M-O-S. You can get early access to episodes, behind the scenes looks, and extra content there, so please support us if you have the means. This episode was edited by Brad Colbroock. Our voice talents are as follows: Rhea Anne as Caine Reyes, Rey Ángel as Indra, Christine Kim as Su-jin Yi, Robin Guzman as Jettison, and David McGuff as Dax Pastore. Additional voices were provided by yours truly, Adrian J. Mercer, and Seth Timple. The song you heard was "Neon" by Scott Buckley. Attributions for sounds used can be found in

the show notes. Thanks to Jordan Davis, Fran Carr, and Ezra Lee Buck, \$20 Patrons on our Patreon. And to everyone, thanks for listening, and see you in Metropolis West soon.