

EP 15: TWO WORLDS

Marisha:

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[Theme music]

DiPA:

Observer Pictures presents Apollyon. Written and directed by Faith McQuinn. This is episode 15: Two Worlds.

[Morning nature sounds. Savreen gets out of her car.]

Armand:

Morning.

Savreen:

Good morning. Why are you sitting out here?

Armand:

I want to take you somewhere.

Savreen:

What about the supplies?

Armand:

We can get them later.

Savreen:

Are you sure?

Armand:

No one will bother your vehicle as long as it's here.

Savreen:

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to imply-

Armand:
It's fine, Savreen.

[Armand opens a heavy metal door.]

Armand:
I hope you don't mind a little morning desert air.

Savreen:
Oh, my.

Armand:
Have you never been on a motorbike?

Savreen:
Quite the contrary. It's how I got around all through university. In fact, this looks a lot like the one I had.

Armand:
You're chocked full of surprises.

Savreen:
I hope that's good.

Armand:
It is this time. I'm taking you to my home.

Savreen:
Really?

Armand:
Really. We've known each other for so long and you've never been past the clinic. I thought it was time.

Savreen:
I'm so glad that you want to share this part of yourself with me.

Armand:
I'm happy to hear that. Shall we go?

Savreen:
Of course.

[An airplane takes off in the distance.]

Theo:

Okay. Are you all right?

Reese:

Yes.

Theo:

Because you look like you might vomit.

Reese:

Nope. I'm okay.

Theo:

Reece, take a deep breath.

Reese:

What if they hate it here? What if I don't remember what they like to do anymore? What if-

Theo:

It's going to be great. They're going to have a wonderful time. You're an amazing mom. It's going to be the perfect holiday.

Reese:

Don't oversell it.

Theo:

Okay. Sorry. You are a perfect mom though, and it's going to be an amazing holiday. Better?

Reese:

So how does all this work? I haven't been in an airport in so long.

Theo:

Nothing too different. They'll do a body scan and biometric ID at the door. We are already on the log, so that should be simple, and then we'll follow the directions to the waiting area.

Reese:

Well, that doesn't sound so bad.

Theo:

Exactly. It's just like train rides. Do you need a minute? You look like you need a minute.

Reese:

No, no. I'm fine.

Theo:

Okay. Let's go get your boys.

[A motorcycle's engine cuts off.]

Armand:

Do you need a hand?

Savreen:

I can manage. Thank you.

[Armand punches in a code. A heavy gate slides open.]

Armand:

Welcome to my neighborhood.

Savreen:

Wow. This is not-

Armand:

Not what you were expecting?

Savreen:

I didn't-

Armand:

Come on, Savreen. You know that not every outer neighborhood is made up of Bohemian cabins or industrial box homes.

Savreen:

I know, but the outskirts of them are so cozy. I did not expect your neighborhood to be an old traditional gated community.

Armand:

Well, we run on solar and wind power. That helps. Let me take you to the common house.

Savreen:

Where is everyone?

Armand:

The children are in school. A lot of the adults work in Evergreen, so it's rather quiet during the day.

Savreen:

What do the other adults do?

Armand:

Take care of the neighborhood. Tend to the crops, keep the common areas clean, maintain the solar panels and turbines among other things.

Savreen:

So this neighborhood simply appears to be old suburbia, but it's really an eco village?

Armand:

We prefer eco neighborhood. We're not fully self-sustaining, but enough to not want for too much.

Savreen:

It's beautiful here.

Armand:

Yeah, I love it. It's far better than where I grew up. That neighborhood was probably more what you imagine this would be.

Savreen:

When did you move to Colorado?

Armand:

I was shipped out here as part of the state's orphan program after my aunt died. Marsha and Don, my adopted parents, decided to the damn man or something and moved outside the limits when I was 11.

Savreen:

I didn't know you lived within the limits.

Armand:

For a little while. I barely remember it now.

Savreen:

There are a lot of homes here.

Armand:

Not every house is occupied, but we're hoping to fill the neighborhood in the next five years.

Savreen:

Mostly families?

Armand:

Yes. Even in the OL, we put families first. Being childless and single makes me a rarity.

Savreen:

You're young. You have time.

Armand:

You sound like my neighbors. They've been trying to marry me off for as long as I can remember.

Victor:

Morning Armand.

Armand:

Hey Victor.

Victor there lost his wife about a year ago. Their youngest was the one in the stroller.

Savreen:

AVS?

Armand:

No, car accident.

Savreen:

Really?

Armand:

There isn't an abundance of new vehicles out here or a fast response and we couldn't save her on our own.

Savreen:
That's terrible.

Armand:
Bringing a full-time doctor to the community is a huge desire, but doctors cost money.
We're here.

Reese:
Oh, we got here too early.

Theo:
It's better to be early than late.

Reese:
You're right. I'm surprised by how few people are here. Isn't December in high demand for travel visas?

Theo:
Only minors require someone to meet them at the airport.

Reese:
I guess.

Theo:
You said you hadn't been to the airport in a long time. How long?

Reese:
Six years. It was the last time I saw the boys in person. Wow. Saying it out loud really gives it some weight. I miss them so much every day. Especially now that they're getting older. I wish it was easier for me to see them more.

Theo:
Hopefully it will be soon.

Reese:
You really think your vaccine will change things?

Theo:
It has to, right? That's the point, to make the world safer, to make it more like we remember.

[Dozens of people are working and chatting.]

Savreen:

So this is where everyone is hiding.

Armand:

Yes. Like I said, most people work in Evergreen. Everyone else is here. To help conserve energy we prepare most of the meals here. People can pick them up to take home or eat here.

Bethany:

Hello, Armand.

Armand:

Good morning, Bethany.

Bethany:

Is this another potential resident?

Armand:

Savreen is just here to visit.

Bethany:

Well, welcome. We're glad to have you.

Savreen:

Thank you.

Armand:

Bethany is the reason we have such an amazing garden.

Savreen:

Are you a horticulturist?

Bethany:

Actually, I'm a chef. Horticulture is my hobby.

Savreen:

Oh.

Armand:

Bethany used to own a restaurant in outer Denver. Now she works part-time at the school.

Savreen:

What happened?

Bethany:

She's not a local, is she?

Armand:

Not exactly.

Savreen:

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to offend.

Bethany:

No, it's all right. Once I had my third child, I realized that I needed to be more involved in their lives, so I sold the restaurant. My partner and I moved here. I get to grow nearly everything. I prepare and I spend so much more time with my family, my ever-growing family. I'll let you continue the tour. It was lovely to meet you, Savreen.

Savreen:

You as well.

Armand:

We have a large dining room just down the hall here. It holds nearly the entire neighborhood, so I guess it's more of a dining hall.

Savreen:

What are behind these doors?

Armand:

Those are smaller gathering spaces We use for all kinds of things, support meetings, birthday parties, gaming. Most of our community gatherings happen in the common house.

Savreen:

Do you always spend so much time together?

Armand:

I know it's not for everyone, but we like it. We can always depend on one another. Everyone is willing to lend a hand and no one is afraid to ask for help.

Savreen:
I can see the appeal.

Armand:
There are a few more places I'd like to show you if you're up for it.

Savreen:
Lead the way.

Reese:
I think that's their plane.

Theo:
Which means... Yep. That clerk is probably here for you.

Clerk:
Which one of you is Reece Williams?

Reese:
I am.

Clerk:
Will you come with me please?

Reese:
Can my friend come with me?

Clerk:
Yeah. I'm sorry, but only legal guardians or those appointed are allowed in the receiving area.

Reese:
Right.

Theo:
I'll be right here. It won't take long.

Reese:
Okay.

Clerk:

If you'll please follow me.

[Footsteps echo down a hallway with faint music pumping in. An electric train goes by.]

Reese:

I didn't know the train went through the airport.

Clerk:

Oh, that train's not part of MARTA. That's a prisoner transport.

Reese:

I didn't think there was a prison in Atlanta.

Clerk:

There isn't. They're being transported to the farm.

Reese:

A farm?

Clerk:

The farm. The Louisiana Penal colony.

Reese:

Oh.

Clerk:

It's all right. Most people living within the limits aren't familiar with the term. Why would you be? Most prisoners are OLIMS anyway, usually a travel violation or missing a mandatory testing. With enough strikes, you're considered a first class threat to society. That carries a sentence of at least 10 years.

Reese:

Oh, that's quite steep. Couldn't imagine.

Clerk:

Yeah. I don't understand why some people choose not to follow the rules.

[The Clerk unlocks a door.]

Clerk:

Please take a seat. Just to verify, please state your full name.

Reese:

Reese Indigo Williams.

Clerk:

Your IC ID number?

Reese:

7-6-5-48-9-4-9-5-2.

Clerk:

Look directly at the white dot. Do not blink.

Reese:

I already went through a bio scan at the entrance.

Clerk:

It is protocol. Please look at the white dot. Thank you.

Reese:

How long before I can see my children?

Clerk:

Not much longer. They're going through testing now. This door will lock for your safety. If you need anything, just push the button right there on the wall. Otherwise, sit tight.

PSA Announcer:

Families are the backbone of our society. Children ensure our future. Children secure our economy. The ICRS supports families.

Reese:

I'm going to miss you so, so much little man.

Young Miles:

I'll miss you too, Mama Ree. You'll come back soon?

Reese:

I'll try. I promise.

Young Miles:

Mommy, can we go with Mama Ree?

Kelsey:

No, hun. We're not allowed inside the airport.

Reese:

One more big hug and a kiss to take with me?

Young Miles:

That's from Anthony too.

Reese:

And you can give this to him, okay?

Kelsey:

I tried to get him to come, but-

Reese:

It's all right. I understand. This is hard for me too.

Kelsey:

It's hard for all of us, Reese. Have a safe flight.

Reese:

Thanks.

Savreen:

You truly have a wonderful home here, Armand.

Armand:

Thank you. I know it's not what you were expecting, but I'm glad you've enjoyed your time here.

Savreen:

What's that building up ahead?

Armand:

It's our quarantine facility.

Savreen:

There's a QF in your neighborhood?

Armand:

Not an ICRS QF, no. It took us some years to put that together. I was probably around 25 when it was finished. It's not perfect, but it does help keep the community safer.

Savreen:

Is that where we're heading?

Armand:

Not quite. Do you mind if I ask you a personal question?

Savreen:

Go ahead.

Armand:

When your husband died, did you have a funeral?

Savreen:

No. It was during the first wave and we were in a strict lockdown. I wasn't even allowed to see him before he was gone. There were mass cremations during that time. I'm not even sure where he was laid to rest.

Armand:

I'm very sorry.

Savreen:

I was far from the only one in that situation. It hurt, but I understood the necessity.

Armand:

We had a funeral for my mother. Her best friend kept her ashes. At least I assume they were her ashes.

Savreen:

They were. We made sure of it.

Armand:

I guess that's good to know. Of all the people I've introduced you to, how many do you think have AVS?

Savreen:

I don't know, Armand. 15?

Armand:

Five.

Savreen:

That's rather low statistically.

Armand:

Do you want to know why it's so low? The others died either because we didn't have Redovir or they refused to take it.

Savreen:

I'm so sorry.

Armand:

This is what I wanted to show you.

Savreen:

This field?

Armand:

It's our cemetery.

Savreen:

You bury your dead?

Armand:

Yes. We find that it's a better way to have closure. It brings us closer to the ones we've lost. I think it helps us all really see death instead of being numb to it.

Savreen:

It is quite easy to become desensitized.

Armand:

Too easy.

Savreen:

What about protocols?

Armand:

We don't want to involve the government if we don't have to. It's easier for the families, for all of us.

Savreen:

How many are here?

Armand:

I can't be sure. We don't mark the graves for obvious reasons. In the last year, we've buried 10, all but one to AVS. When I first came here and saw this, honestly my first time seeing a burial site, I knew that I wanted to help keep people out of here, out of the ground.

Savreen:

And you have.

Armand:

But not enough.

Savreen:

Why did you bring me here?

Armand:

Let's find a comfortable place to talk. Yeah?

Reese:

Theo, I'd like you to meet Miles and Anthony.

Tony:

Tony.

Reese:

Sorry. I keep forgetting. Miles and Tony.

Theo:

It's a pleasure to meet you in person, Miles and Tony.

Tony:

You're taller than I thought.

Theo:
Thank you, I think.

Tony:
You're welcome.

Reese:
So how's your flight?

Tony:
Long and so coma. I really thought flying would be so list, but you just sit in a weird smelling tube that flies too high to see anything.

Miles:
Come on, Tony. The clouds were super list. I also got to play a video game the whole time and mom never lets me play that long. Mama Ree, are you going to let me play video games?

Reese:
We will discuss it when we get home.

Tony:
That means no.

Reese:
It doesn't.

Tony:
It always means no when mom says it.

Miles:
But Mama Ree isn't mom.

Tony:
She sure isn't.

Reese:
Well, let's get going shall we? Don't want to miss the next train.
Was check-in okay?

Tony:
Yeah. Atlanta has weird testing though. They scraped the inside of our mouths.

Theo:

That's an RT, rapid test.

Miles:

Anything is better than giving blood.

Reese:

They tested you again? They don't do that for train travel.

Theo:

Air travel is stricter. And Atlanta is an international port. Extra precautions.

Reese:

Of course.

Theo:

You've been quiet.

Reese:

Just taking it all in.

Theo:

Right.

Reese:

I thought the process would be faster.

Theo:

Picking them up, you mean?

Reese:

Yeah. I wasn't expecting so many questions and apparently all the extra testing. Does it always take so long?

Theo:

I don't know. I haven't had to test for travel since before college.

Reese:

Right. I assume ICRS travel is a bit different than it is for us normal folk.

Theo:

I get tested more often than you do, so there's a trade-off.

Reese:

I guess.

Theo:

But they're here now in one piece and it's going to be a wonderful holiday.

Reese:

I'm going to make sure of it.

Armand:

I'm constantly working to convince everyone here that Redivir is safe, that it is in their best interest to take it when they need it, when we have it.

Savreen:

If you are in short supply, I can-

Armand:

You're missing the point. What do you think will change if the vaccine is approved?

Savreen:

When it's approved.

Armand:

Fine. When it's approved by the means of... What did you call it? Human challenge trials?

Savreen:

Human challenge trials.

Armand:

When people find out that this vaccine came about because others were put in danger, what do you think will happen?

Savreen:

They won't want it.

Armand:

Right. Even if we constantly assure them that it will absolutely save them, they won't care. They'll continue to be afraid, which means they'll continue to die. Do you want that?

Savreen:

Of course not.

Armand:

Then why would you want these trials to continue?

Savreen:

Is it not obvious? The faster this vaccine is approved, the faster people no longer have to deal with the burden of AVS. The faster the world changes.

Armand:

Your world. I doubt mine will be a swift.

Savreen:

But it will change.

Armand:

Not fast enough to justify what you want.

Savreen:

I know that you aren't versed in research science, but believe me when I say that this is something that needs to happen.

Armand:

Don't talk down to me Savreen. I'm not stupid nor naive.

Savreen:

That is the furthest thing from my mind. Human trials have been done for centuries, and yes, there have been times when the research was morally questionable.

Armand:

Questionable? You really will tell yourself anything to sleep at night, won't you?

Savreen:

You think I sleep well at night?

Bethany:

Is everything all right in here?

Savreen:
We're fine.

Armand:
Just an intense discussion is all. You know how I get.

Bethany:
Yes, I do. I'll leave you to it then.

Savreen:
You say that my world will change before your world. I just want there to be no my world and your world. I want it to be ours, and I simply don't want to lie to people anymore.

Armand:
I don't know why I thought introducing you to people and seeing how we live would help. You've known me for years and had no trouble lying to me.

Savreen:
Armand, I don't know what else to say, but that I'm so very sorry.

Armand:
For what exactly? For lying to me about my mother or for lying to me about your plan?

Savreen:
All of it. But I'm coming clean now and I truly need your help in this. You have the trust of your community, of other OL communities. I can't do this without you.

Armand:
I knew going into this that it would be a huge sacrifice for me, and I understand that you're looking for absolution, but what are you sacrificing?

Savreen:
Everything I've ever worked for, my entire reputation.

Armand:
Your reputation? So? You've lived an exceptional life. You have done so much and have gained so much respect. If you succeed in getting the truth out there, what will really happen to you? You won't be able to travel as freely as you can now. You'll be out of a job.

Savreen:
Yes, and I won't be able to use my connections like I do now to help people.

Armand:

But the people won't need your help anymore, right? You know what will happen to me if this goes wrong or possibly even if this goes right? Prison, I will go to prison.

Savreen:

That's absurd.

Armand:

It's not. There have been numerous times that I've crossed into the limits without clearance and we're not always subtle about it.

Savreen:

But the guards-

Armand:

The guards know you. They trust you. I'm sure if their jobs were truly on the line, they'd flip on me in a second.

Savreen:

But-

Armand:

We may have more resources than you thought in the OL, but we lack in two very important things, healthcare and legal representation,

Savreen:

But you were a lawyer.

Armand:

Family law, it's not the same. Criminal lawyers in the OL are more rare than farm raised meat.

Savreen:

If anything happened, I would do everything in my power to help you.

Armand:

I know you would, but your help would probably not be enough to keep me free. Our risks are not the same Savreen and you need to fully understand that. This plan may or may not be putting your career on the line, but it absolutely is putting my life on the line.

[Theme music]

DiPA:

This episode featured the voices of Marquita Richardson as Theo Ramsey, Pamela Paul as Savreen Khanna, Marisha Tapera as Reese Williams, Torres Fontaine Jr. as Armand, Courtney Holly as Bethany, Davon Oliver as Miles, Terance Flowers as Anthony, Meg Biddle-Smith as Kelsey, James Oliva as the clerk, Brian Huey as PSA announcer, and me, Drea Silvertooth, as DiPA.

Producer, Amanda Lorraine, Assistant Director, Van Donnell, Sound Design and Mix, Joshua Suhy. Sound recorded by Courtney Holly at Bowman Sound Studios. Original theme composer and Music Supervisor, Katharine Seaton. Additional music provided by Soundstripe Music. Virology Consultant, Peter Krug, Ph.D.

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ICRS Computer:

The ICRS is keeping the world safe.