

EP 11: LOSS AND GAIN

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Faith:

Hello everyone, it's Faith, and I am so excited to finally bring you season two of Apollyon. It was an absolute delight to work on this season, and I hope you enjoy it as much as we enjoyed making it. Before we get started, a reminder that you can listen to episodes ad free, and early, if you join Patreon. I will also be doing short director's commentaries for those at the \$5 and \$10 levels. So if you want to see my face, come and join. You can sign up by visiting patreon.com/ObserverPix. And speaking of ads, you're going to hear a few before the show gets started, but absolutely no interruptions during this first episode. The cast, crew, and I appreciate you. Thank you so much for listening.

[Theme music]

DIPA: Observer Pictures presents Apollyon, written and directed by Faith McQuinn. This is episode 11, Loss and Gain.

Theo:

DIPA, call Savreen.

DIPA:

Calling Savreen Khanna.

Savreen: Hello, Theo.

Theo:

I want to leave.

Savreen:

Are you still at work?

Theo:

Yes, I'm... I had to leave the lab. I can't do this.

Savreen:

Do not make rash decisions. You're too emotional.

Theo:

Why is everybody telling me emotions are the enemy?

Savreen:

Because right now, they are. You are a scientist, a critical thinker. You cannot let your emotions cloud your judgment.

Theo:

What makes you think my judgment is clouded?

[whoosh]

Young Theo:

Can I sit with you, Daddy?

Eric:

Of course you can, T. Come on, your desk awaits. You sure got to work fast. What are you writing?

Young Theo:

The same thing you are.

Eric:

Oh, I see. You're writing a class lecture?

Young Theo: Yep.

Eric:

What's it about?

Young Theo:

The same as yours.

Eric:

Ah, I see. Okay. You're writing about whistleblowers too.

Young Theo:

Did you say whistles? Why would you teach about whistles?

Eric:

Not actual whistles, honey. When the referee blows the whistle at a basketball game...

Young Theo:

Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. You don't teach basketball.

Eric:

No, I don't teach basketball, T. But the referee is calling out something a player did wrong. That's what a whistleblower does. They talk about bad things that happen.

Young Theo:

You mean like Mommy telling you I broke the plate?

Eric:

Not exactly. My lecture is about whistleblowers who were at the beginning of major socioeconomic changes.

Young Theo:

What's socio... econ... So...?

Eric: Socioeconomic.

Young Theo: Yeah, that?

Eric:

"Socio" comes from social, the way people behave with other people. "Economic" is about people's money. "Socioeconomic" is about people's behavior and how they handle money. So, let's say you found out your reading teacher was doing something that would put you in danger.

Young Theo:

Mr. Niles would never do that.

Eric:

Okay. Another teacher.

Young Theo:

Miss Hannigan. I don't like her. She won't let me play when I finish my work early.

Eric:

Okay. Let's say that Miss Hannigan is doing something bad.

Young Theo:

Like not letting me play?

Eric:

Something that puts you and your friends in danger. You would tell me and Mommy, right?

Young Theo: Right.

Eric:

Then Mommy and I make sure changes are made at your school, so that bad thing won't happen anymore.

Young Theo:

That's what people who blow whistles do?

Eric:

Yep. They talk about the bad things that are happening where they work. There are laws that protect them, but it can still be very dangerous to speak up for yourself.

Young Theo:

Because they could get in trouble.

Eric:

Yes, honey. Lots of trouble, but that trouble is sometimes worth it if the bad things need to stop.

[Eric's voice echoes as the scene falls back into present day]

Savreen:

So you've stepped away from the lab for only moment. You plan to head back to work after we speak.

Theo:

No, I don't want to be a part of this.

Savreen:

This is the work that needs to be done. And if you're walking away, that is a rash decision, Theodora.

Theo:

Savreen, this is wrong. All of this is wrong, and you know it!

Savreen:

Of course I do! But pointing out the obvious does not make it go away.

Theo:

Pretending everything is fine isn't something I can do. I am not my mother.

Savreen:

Evidently not. Jamilla had the strength to stay and fight.

Theo:

Fight? What did she do? She stood by while you killed those people.

Savreen: I didn't-

Theo:

Don't try to sugarcoat it, Savreen. Those deaths are on you and your entire team. I can't do that. I won't.

Savreen:

You cannot leave. We need you exactly where you are.

Theo:

Why?

Savreen:

This isn't the time to discuss it.

Theo:

When is the time, exactly? After these poor people volunteer their lives away?

Savreen: Theodora, please.

Theo:

I don't want to be a part of these lies.

Savreen:

I know! But we cannot change this world overnight. I need to go, but we should talk again soon. All right?

Theo:

Goodbye, Savreen.

[an automatic door slides shut]

Weiss:

Have a seat, Theo. This needs to get to Geneva before EOD.

Riley:

I'll get it there, sir.

Weiss:

And give us the room.

Riley:

Of course.

Theo:

Nice to see you, Riley.

Riley:

Dr. Ramsey.

[footsteps followed by the automatic door sliding open and shut]

Theo:

Thank you for seeing me, sir.

Weiss:

I assumed it was necessary to get you back to work. What can I do for you?

Theo:

I would like to have the rest of the day.

Weiss: For what?

Theo:

I need to think.

Weiss:

About what exactly?

Theo:

About my future here.

Weiss:

Well, it's very simple, Theo. You either continue with your work, which is literally the most important thing in the world right now, or you throw it all away.

Theo:

There really are no gray areas for you, are there, sir?

Weiss: None.

Theo:

Continuing my work means people may die.

Weiss:

Of course it does. That will happen whether you're here or not.

Theo:

This research can be done with no loss of human life.

Weiss:

The fact of the matter is the lives of a few O-Lims are worth saving the lives of billions.

Theo:

You think the lives of the people outside The Limits mean less than your life?

Weiss:

Those people's lives mean less than the billions they will save. Without an aggressive approach, it would take years for people to get this vaccine. Now, I'm not saying this to be harsh, it's reality.

Theo:

Scientific research shouldn't boil down to the trolley problem.

Weiss:

The trolley is already running over people, Theo, we need to stop it sooner rather than later.

Theo:

The Hippocratic Oath states, "I will remember that I do not treat a fever chart, a cancerous growth, but a sick human being..."

Weiss:

"... whose illness may affect the person's family and economic stability." I'm aware of the Oath, Theo. I am the medical doctor in the room.

Theo:

If we conduct this study in the manner proposed, we are not doing everything we can to minimize the harm to the subjects. This goes beyond a simple fever or rash. Do you truly believe that the possible benefits to our society outweigh those risks? And I'm not just speaking of the health risks. If what we will potentially do in these trials were to ever become public knowledge?

Weiss:

You've gotten very bold lately.

Theo:

That was not a threat, sir. It was an observation. As a scientist, I am supposed to explore and question every possible outcome; that is one of them. And to deny it? It's naive, at best. If you want me to be a part of this, you will give me the rest of the day to think it over.

Weiss:

How would Gabe handle you leaving?

Theo:

Dr. Larson is more than capable of continuing the work without me.

Weiss:

You mean he's willing?

Theo:

I mean he's capable. He is just as skilled a virologist as I am.

Weiss:

Gabe is an exceptional scientist. He wouldn't be on my team if he wasn't. But he's not you. You were the one who came up with the formula.

Theo:

We did it together. Without his research and hard work, we would've never...

Weiss:

Cut the diplomatic bullshit, Theo, you're not in front of a committee.

Theo:

I'm simply speaking the truth.

Weiss:

I know that you and Gabe are partners, connected at the fucking hip, but I know this is yours. I've read your notes. When this vaccine is a success, it will be your name everyone knows. You would really walk away from the greatest scientific discovery of our time?

Theo:

It's not that simple for me.

Weiss:

Scientists a century from now would be studying your work. Your name would be said in the same breath as Curie and Fleming. If you walk away, that's all gone.

Theo:

We do not have the right to sacrifice people's lives for our own gain.

Weiss:

This is not for our gain. And that is not your choice to make.

Theo:

You sit there and say that this will bring me untold recognition, but it's not for our gain? I care about the people. I couldn't care less about the recognition if I don't believe in the work.

Weiss:

You're honestly going to sit there and tell me you don't believe in the work?

Theo:

I don't believe in risking people's lives for the work.

Weiss:

The needs of the many, Theo. The needs of the many.

Theo:

No matter if we're inside The Limits or out, we should all have the right to life.

Weiss:

Yeah, that's a beautiful idea, but it's not the world we live in. It could be, if you stay and see this through.

Theo:

Why are you trying so hard to get me to stay? No matter what, you will get the recognition you want. This study continues with or without me.

Weiss:

Yeah, but without you, it doesn't happen on the timeline I want. The timeline everyone but you wants.

Theo:

I have to consider every aspect of this. I honestly don't understand how I seem to be the only one who is.

Weiss:

Dr. Ramsey, you never fail to fascinate me. I do sometimes envy your capacity for giving a damn.

Theo:

I'm not sure how to respond to that.

Weiss:

Yeah. I did know what I was getting into when I hired you. You are so much like your mother.

Theo:

I am nothing like her. She stayed quiet and complicit. It's probably what killed her.

Weiss:

AVS is what killed your mother. Understanding and accepting the importance of what we do is how she kept her career. I'll give you the rest of the day.

Theo:

But?

Weiss:

You do know me, don't you?

Theo:

As well as you know me.

Weiss:

I need you to be clear on what's at stake. If I don't see what you've logged in within the next 24 hours, you will become an assumed threat. You will never set foot in this building again. And not only will your name be wiped from this project, I will make sure you never touch as much as a petri dish for the remainder of your life. The recognition may not be important to you, but I know the science is. Do we have an understanding?

Theo:

You could not have been clearer, sir.

Weiss:

Use your time wisely, Dr. Ramsey. You may go.

[whoosh]

Jamilla:

He's gone.

Eric:

But they took him on Friday. That was... Is Savreen all right?

Jamilla:

Of course not, Eric. None of us are all right. I wish there was something we could do.

Eric:

Just being here when she needs us is best.

Jamilla:

I wish I could actually be with her. I hate that she's all alone.

Eric:

From what I've seen? I'm thankful she wasn't there at the end.

Jamilla:
How can you say that?

Eric:
Sometimes there are things we shouldn't see.

[Toys tumble in the hallway]

Jamilla: Theo?

Young Theo:
Yes, Mommy?

Jamilla:
Were you eavesdropping?

Young Theo:
No.

Eric:
Come here, honey.

Young Theo:
Am I in trouble?

Eric:
So you were listening.

Young Theo:
A little bit.

Jamilla:
What did you hear?

Young Theo:
Who did they take away?

Eric:
Zeeshan.

Young Theo:
Why did they take him away? Did he do something wrong?

Jamilla:
No, honey. He didn't do anything.

Eric:
He passed away, baby.

Jamilla:
Eric!

Eric:
This is her world as much as it is ours.

Young Theo:
When is he coming back?

Jamilla:
He's not, sweetheart. When someone passes, they don't come back.

Young Theo:
Is Savreen sad?

Jamilla:
Very much.

Young Theo: I'm sad.

Eric:
So are we, T.

Young Theo:
What made him... pass away?

Eric:
The Destroyer, honey.

[Eric's voice echoes]

Theo:
You know, you don't have to help me.

Reese:
You know I don't mind. Are you feeling all right?

Theo:
Yes. Why?

Reese:

Well, not to offend you or anything, but you actually let me talk about my holiday plans with the boys.

Theo:

I think I might be a little offended. What do you mean, "I let you"?

Reese:

Well, usually, our Wednesday dinners are dominated by you talking about work. You didn't mention it once. In fact, you barely talked at all.

Theo:

There are things more important than work.

Reese:

Not to you.

Theo:

Do I really talk about work that much?

Reese:

I'm actually impressed that you've been able to talk so much about it without actually revealing specifics. It's almost a superpower.

Theo:

Yeah. I'm sorry. That makes me a pretty shitty friend.

Reese:

You've done it since college, I'm used to it.

Theo:

Doesn't make it any less shitty.

Reese:

That is true. But really, are you feeling all right?

Theo:

No. But it's something I should deal with on my own.

Reese:

Please don't do that. Don't shut me out.

Theo:

The boys are going to be here in a week, and I know how excited you are about it.

Reese:

Of course I am. I'm also terrified. So I'm going to need my best friend to not be whatever you're being when they get here. So let's talk.

Theo:

It's getting late, Reese, I'm sure you want to get home?

Reese:

Damn it, Theo! Can you just let me help you?

Theo:

You can't do anything for me!

Reese:

Why?

Theo:

I'm thinking about quitting.

Reese:

Shit.

Theo:

Yeah.

[Reese starts laughing]

Theo:

Okay? Not the response I was expecting.

Reese:

I'm sorry, it's just... (suppressed giggle) I, oh! I've known you for 15 years, and when you are at the biggest crossroads in your career, you don't mention it once in the hours we've been together. I'm sorry. It's just... (laughs) I'm sorry, I'm sorry. Oh, it's not funny. It's not funny.

Theo:

In a very sad kind of way, it is.

Reese:

Oh. I know you can't tell me everything, but I do want to help in any way I can. Please let me. By the way, kicking me out right now would also make you a shitty friend.

Theo:

Ugh. Do you want a drink?

Reese:

Do you have coffee?

Theo:

Coffee?

Reese:

I may love you, but you know full well I'm not touching that slush you call tea.

[musical transition]

Theo:

So, there have been some revelations with the vaccine research.

Reese:

Whoa, does this mean you have to start over?

Theo:

No, it's more related to the research, and not the vaccine itself.

Reese:

Okay.

Theo:

And I'm not exactly happy with the direction we're going.

Reese:

"Not exactly happy" doesn't usually lead to "I'm quitting". I know you can be a little dramatic sometimes, but...

Theo:

When have I ever been dramatic?

Reese:

When you got a B in Science History, you drunkenly sang karaoke for far longer than anyone wanted. When your first mouse died, you cried every night for a week.

Theo:

Both of those were in school. I am not that way anymore.

Reese:

Whenever I talk about how good it is that kids aren't exposed to AVS...

Theo:

Okay, children thinking AVS is not a problem is dangerous. I wish you'd realize that! People will stop fighting-

Reese:

We can have that debate another time. Okay? Why do you want to quit?

Theo:

I already told you, I don't like the direction the research is going.

Reese:

So change the direction.

Theo:

It's not that simple.

Reese:

It is that simple. It may not be easy, but it is that simple.

Theo:

There are so many obstacles I don't think I can tackle.

Reese:

If you leave, what happens?

Theo:

The work continues.

Reese:

In the direction you don't want.

Theo:

Yes.

Reese:

So what does leaving do for you?

Theo:

I prove my point. If I stay, I'm being complicit. I won't have that on my conscience.

Reese:

Theo, complicit isn't a word you use when talking about-

Theo:

Reese.

Reese:

Does this have anything to do with those files we found?

Theo:

You know I can't get into specifics.

Reese:

Right. Savreen wanted you to find this information, didn't she?

Theo: Yes.

Reese: It's why she does what she does now, isn't it?

Theo: Yes.

Reese:

You have to stay, Theo.

Theo:

Staying means I carry the burden. I stand right there and basically say I'm okay with things continuing in the direction they're going.

Reese:

But leaving means you don't even get a chance to make a difference.

Theo:

I don't have the power to make a difference.

Reese:

Excuse me? You're Dr. Theodore Ramsey! You absolutely have the power to make a difference.

Theo:

You obviously think I'm more important than I am.

Reese:

Savreen thinks you have the power. And from what you've told me, she herself has more pull than anyone I've ever met. If she believes in you, and I believe in you, you have the power.

Theo:

Is this teacher Reese talking?

Reese:

No, this is best friend Reese. I believe in you, damn it. You can't light a fire without a spark.

Theo:

You sound like my father.

Reese: Good.

DIPA:

Incoming call from Gabriel Larson.

Theo:

Voicemail.

Reese:

What does Gabriel have to say about all this? Oh.

Theo:

Yeah.

Reese:

Now I really understand why you want to walk away.

Theo:

It's not about him.

Reese:

Maybe not completely, but he is a factor. When you're throwing around the word complicit, and you two aren't seeing eye to eye, you can't be in a room with him, can you?

Theo:

Not right now, no.

Reese:

You still shouldn't leave. Don't let him put out your flame.

Theo:

You're really loving that metaphor.

Reese:

Aren't you?

Theo:

It is a good one.

Reese:

I have my talents, you have yours.

Savreen:

Have you heard from your friend lately? The one in outer Atlanta?

Armand:

I spoke to them a few days ago.

Savreen:

And?

Armand:

They know at least three people who've gone through the vetting process. I was correct.

Savreen:

You still don't know if that's-

Armand:

Stop, Savreen. I already told you, that stipend was too high. We both know what's coming.

Savreen:

All signs are pointing in that direction, yes. At least this time we have Redivir.

Armand:

Yes. At least this time we have a drug that you smuggled here.

Savreen:

This friend, have they tried to warn people?

Armand: Of course.

Savreen:

Armand, you may elaborate when you answer. We're not in a courtroom.

Armand:

Old habits die hard.

Savreen: Yes, they do.

Armand:

My friend was able to get a few people to step away, but the opportunity was too good for most of them.

Savreen:

The money.

Armand:

It's not just the money. It's the chance to be within The Limits.

Savreen:

Being within The Limits is not as wonderful as some seem to believe.

Armand:

Not everyone chooses this life, Savreen.

Savreen:

I know.

Armand:

So do they. The DHH? They know if they dangle a big enough carrot, it won't matter what rumors are out there. People just cannot miss out, no matter the consequences.

Savreen:

I understand that too.

Armand:

Really? A renowned chemist, who uses her free time and extra money to smuggle medicine to my lowly clinic? Just being with these people doesn't mean you understand them.

Savreen:

When I was a child, there were lotteries all over the world for people to play.

Armand: Play?

Savreen:

Not like the lotteries now. These were games, for money. Sometimes the prize would reach one billion US dollars.

Armand:

Good Lord. What did you have to do to win?

Savreen:

Simple. Buy a ticket for as little as \$1. Some people would play for fun with no hopes of winning. For some though, it would become an obsession. They would do anything to get as many tickets as they could. My father was one of those people. He spent most of our savings on lottery tickets and other gambling. No matter how many times my mother told him that he needed to stop, he just knew that the next ticket, the next bet would be the one.

Armand:

I assume he never won?

Savreen:

Never enough to get ahead. That carrot was just too big, as you said, and he could not stop chasing it.

Armand:

So if we can't stop them from chasing the carrot, we need to take the carrot away.

Savreen:

That is my plan, yes.

Armand:

You need Jamilla's daughter though.

Savreen:

Theo? Yes.

Armand:

And what if she doesn't want to be a part of this?

Savreen:

Then we will need more time.

Armand:

Time is not in our favor.

Savreen:

I know. Believe me, I know.

[Theme music]

DIPA:

This episode featured the voices of Marquita Richardson as Theo Ramsey, Pamela Paul as Savreen Khanna, JK Robbins as Xavier Weiss, Marisha Tapera as Reese Williams, Torres Fountain Jr. as Armand, Gary Scales as Eric Ramsey, Janet Simmons as Jamilla Ramsey, Dani McQuinn as young Theo, 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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