The Elysium Project Episode 3: Family

Podcast Transcript

Introduction:

The Elysium Project Written and produced by Natalie Van Sistine Episode 3: Family

Prologue Scene

Outdoor city ambiance, but without the voice of pedestrian and traffic sound. Wind is light, but audible, and the sound of something burning not too far away seems to grow.

Nick: Okay... that was getting way too close.

Another explosion goes off, followed by the rattling of debris. Footsteps running fade in quickly as Melissa ducks into the alley as well.

Emma: Melissa, did he get you?

Melissa: Oh I'm fine. But they have no idea what's about to hit them.

Emma: Good. Nick, what about you?

Nick: Yeah, nothing too bad.

Melissa: We'll have to take them head on. You guys ready for this?

Emma: Payback time.

Nick: Lock 'n load. I'll go around first and-

Emma: (grunting, frustrated) Nick!

Nick: Where did that come from?!

Melissa: Guys! They're coming from back there too-

Emma: Behind you!

Gunfire explodes - sound suddenly becomes thinner – obviously coming through speakers as Emma and Nick are playing a video game. A male voiceover begins to cry out as Nick's character is mortally wounded.

Nick: What?! No no no no no no! I can not believe I'm dead before you both. Again.

Emma: I've been a shut in most of my life. If there's one thing I can do well, it's kill zombies and monsters.

Melissa: And she's been learning from the best.

Horrible screeching sound and an explosion from the console. Emma's character is suddenly killed and maimed in an instant by a new attacker. Game ends.

Emma: ... except when that happens. Did you see that? He came out of nowhere!

Melissa: Well thanks for leaving me to deal with these-! ...And I'm dead too...

Nick: So this is actually how you both met?

Melissa: Yep. The battlefield forges iron friendships.

Emma: I think she just felt sorry for me during a really bad raid one time.

Melissa: Well you weren't... good when we first ran into each other, but my careful tutelage has made you a force to be reckoned with!

Emma: Except when we get ambushed by half a squadron on the first street level.

Melissa: Well *that* is clearly a glitch and does not normally happen. We weren't intentionally trying to get you killed and ruin your stats Nick, I promise.

Nick: Thanks. I'm glad we clarified that.

Distant sound of the front door opening and shutting. Emma and Nick sit up abruptly. Intro begins to fade in soon after.

Nick: Huh. I thought you said your dad doesn't get home until late?

Emma: He doesn't. Maybe it's just Monica... I doubt it would be dad this early unless it has to do with the peace summit tomorrow. Let me go check...

She stands up and begins to walk towards the door, Nick begins to follow.

Nick: Want me to come with?

Emma: Actually, it'd probably be best if you don't mind waiting here and keeping Melissa company. Technically, I'm not grounded, but dad might not know you've been coming over and it might work out better if things stay that way...

Nick: Potentially vindictive dad is probably a good thing to avoid - got it.

Melissa: Great! In the meantime, I am going to teach you how to shoot things properly and maybe we can go over the standard death threats I will issue if you ever hurt Emma for any reason. It's just procedural best friend duty, no need to take it personally.

Nick: This is the friend who wants to be a doctor?

Emma: She's pre-med, so there's still time. Besides, we've already been attacked by a crazy person - there's no way my dad getting home at three in the afternoon can be *that* bad.

Transitional Cut to Intro

Intro: The Elysium Project.

Intro: Written and Produced by Natalie Van Sistine.

Intro: Episode 3... Family.

Scene 1

Emma walks slowly towards the kitchen, the sound of James voice fades in as she gets closer, and he is obviously talking to someone (Doctor Meyer, though he isn't heard) over the phone.

James: ...you could do that? I was going to try and run her blood work myself, but you have the better resources. It should be ready tonight.

James: No. I'm just going to continue as planned.

James: I'm not sure I know what else to do...

James: I'll talk to you later.

There is a beep as he hangs up the phone. Footsteps as Emma slowly steps into the room.

James: I heard you, Emma, you can come out.

Emma: Sorry... it's just... you're never home this early.

James: Yes, well... I'm hoping that'll start to change. I wanted to talk to you and... I need a sample of your blood, actually. I've got the equipment on the table.

Emma: My blood?

James: It's about the attack. I want to make sure that whatever you were injected with... that it didn't do anything more than knock you out. I hope they were just trying to send a message – to scare me without actually hurting you. But there's a chance it could be something else.

He walks over to the table and sits down. Emma follows and sits down. James begins to pull out some equipment, basic items for taking blood.

Emma: I thought the doctor cleared me last week.

James: There are things that a doctor wouldn't know to look for that those people might have used on you.

Emma: What would we be talking about? Like a long term drug?

James: I suppose... in a way. Hallucinations could be a first symptom around this stage of the drug if you haven't shown more obvious symptoms already. Please, Emma, if you see anything or something happens to you that's at all unusual... please tell me. I know you don't always like my decisions, but this is something you can't hide from me, do you understand?

Emma: ...Okay. I understand.

James: Alright. Emma, if can roll up your sleeve, I'm going to tie this around your arm, right here.

Emma: Okay. You've done this before, right?

James: Yes, Emma. Mostly in school, but I've had to work with subjects occasionally since then. It's just like riding a bike.

Emma: You had to take people's blood for your project?

James: Sorry, did I hurt you?

Emma: No, it's fine. I just never got used to needles, that's all. Or watching blood coming out of me...

James: Let me know if you get light headed. And if something did happen, this would be interesting to try to explain to the hospital.

Emma: "It's for science I swear!"

James: It comes with living with someone like me. You've really done well with all of this, and I know it hasn't exactly been easy on you, especially with this... latest development. Emma, I'm sorry this happened to you and your friend. I know the moves have been hard, but it's always been to keep you protected from harm.

Emma: But your project's over, right? You can relax now and we don't have to move anymore.

James: All right... I think that's enough blood for the tests I'll be running. Here, I'm going to pull this out, and I'll need you to hold the gauze over where the needle was, alright?

Emma: Okay.

Various foley noise as they finish the process. James pulls out a bandaid for Emma, and places it on her arm.

James: There. Nothing to worry about.

Emma: Dad... is something wrong?

James: Yes. I'm afraid that... just because I'm done with this project, it doesn't mean we can settle yet. I... probably should have told you about this sooner...

Scene transitions back to Emma's room, where Nick has begun playing again while waiting for Emma. He pauses the game as the door opens and Emma re-enters.

Nick: Hey, Em. Everything all clear?

Melissa: We've got another campaign lined up – your dude needs to start power leveling if he's ever going to be useful.

Nick: We've been having a great time while you were gone.

Melissa: Did you know his parents are part of that peace summit at the UN next week? That's kind of scary awesome.

Emma: Yeah, it is. And Dad just came back early so he could get a blood sample for something to do with the attack. Not that he'll tell me what that means.

Melissa: He's probably using it to start the zombie apocalypse. He'll unleash it tomorrow with all the big wigs at the UN and crush several major international powers in one fell swoop.

Emma: You know what? He probably will.

Nick: Right. Weren't we going to try this again?

Emma: Sure. Let's see what else we have to kill....

Scene 2

There is a rush of curtains being pulled aside. The fugitives are staying in yet another hotel suite and probably passed out on whatever furniture is available. They've spent about a month moving, making most of them edgy and more sarcastic.

Kate: Good morning! Guess what we're doing today?

Alex: Nobody cares until there's coffee...

Jessica: Kate, do you ever sleep?

Kate: Only when I'm bored and run out of Red Bull.

Rachel: Which is never...

Alex: What the hell did you do to the bathroom last night?

Ian: Ugh...

Jessica: *Again?!* Kate, last time you started experimenting we nearly got busted by a drug squad because the neighbors smelled the *explosion* and called the cops!

Kate: Yes, I know, I was *there*! The bust was totally my fault, but I'm being a lot more careful this time. Look, trying to synthesize the formula is not exactly easy with a high school chemistry set and a bunsen burner over a toilet seat!

Alex: Uhh... never mind. I'm just going to go back to bed and pretending I didn't see what happened to the coffee maker.

Kate: Anyway. After my latest setback last night, I ordered us plane tickets.

Ian: Wait, to where?

Kate: Seattle. After that, I think we can try to get to Canada by sneaking over the border. Then maybe we can start trying to expose James.

Rachel: But... wait, are we leaving today?!

Kate: No Rachel, in a week and a half - *nobody* can buy tickets right now and *not* get automatically detained as a potential terrorist. (Thank you stupid peace summit next week.) Which means we get two more weeks of motel hopping!

Jessica: And you woke us up for that...?

Kate: No, I woke up you up because it's already 10am and we should do something different today. We've been acting like fugitives for a month, it's time we enjoyed being *free*. Also, there's a cute bistro down the road and I cannot handle any more takeout knowing it's there.

Alex: Or how bad the bathroom smells right now...

Kate: Shut up, Alex.

Rachel: Are you *sure* that's a good idea? The news said there could be riots if anything goes wrong with the peace summit. It sounds like the shortages are worse this week and more people are getting angry about them.

Kate: Exactly. It's perfect! Because it's so crazy outside, it'll be way harder for us to get caught with everything else that's going on. Anyway, we'll be in public, so there's no way James or his people would try anything in front of that many already pissed off people. What could go wrong?

Alex: Well because you just said it, we're officially screwed now.

Kate: (grinning) All right. Let's get outta here!

Scene 3

The school office – Emma is sitting in the waiting area, texting Melissa while waiting to hear from the counselor. Both phone keypads and "text" sound are heard beneath.

Melissa: You can't talk? Don't you have study hall? I need to dish on the latest batch of crazy Mr. Philosophy Major unleashed on us during class discussion.

Emma: Oh lord, that should be good. And I do have study hall, but the school counselor asked to talk to me about something. I have no idea what they want.

Melissa: Counselor? Ooh, that'll be good.

Emma: I shouldn't be in trouble, I didn't do anything!

Melissa: I don't think you're *capable* of doing anything. Don't worry about it. I'll hang out here until you get back. Just text me when you're on your way.

The counselor comes out of their office, speaking to Emma.

Counselor: Emma?

Emma: Hmm? Oh, coming!

Emma puts her phone away and enters the office. Ambiance fades, to a light room tone and a chair creaks as the counselor sits down in front of Emma.

Counselor: All right, I don't want you to feel like you're in trouble here, I just want to ask you a few questions.

Emma: Okay, I'm really confused.

Counselor: I know. I don't get the vibe that you're the type of girl to do this, but the problem is that your grades... they've gotten a little *too* good. Especially for your previous record in some subjects.

Emma: Uh, I'm not cheating, if that's what you mean.

Counselor: Have you been studying more?

Emma: No, probably less, actually.

Counselor: Any new friendships? Relationship?

Emma: Well, there's Nick, I guess.

Counselor: Nick... Landon?

Emma: Yeah. I guess we're... dating right now.

Counselor: And that's fine. But Nick has had very consistently good grades here, I hope he hasn't been helping you more than he should-

Emma: Oh no, it's not him at all! I mean, I guess if anything... I don't know how to explain it, but I feel like I'm remembering things better lately, especially during tests.

Counselor: All right... I'm sure this is the last thing you want to hear from me, but I have to ask anyway. There are some smart drugs available that can help with memory retention, whether it's intentional or not-

Emma: But I'm not taking drugs!

Counselor: I know. I'm not trying to incriminate you, this is just to help me clarify what's going on.

Emma: I'm not cheating and I'm not taking anything.

Counselor: Of course. But do you think it's possible someone might be drugging you without your consent?

Emma: What?

Counselor: Sometimes that happens to girls your age - because of the people they spend a lot of time with, like their boyfriends, even their family.

Emma: I don't feel any different... and Nick would never...

Counselor: Is something wrong?

Emma: The attack...

Counselor: Did someone hurt you?

Emma: It was three weeks ago - I was attacked by this guy and he injected something into me...

Counselor: Have you told anyone?

Emma: I was in the hospital for a bit. My dad said it was taken care of and I shouldn't worry about it. Someone he worked for did it...

Counselor: And what does your dad do?

Emma: I don't know. It has to do with experimental sciences, I think, but it's international. He never says...

Counselor: I think I understand. Why don't you follow up with me if anything else happens so we can stay on top of this, okay? You're not in trouble, I promise. I just want you to be safe.

Emma: Okay...

Counselor: Can you stop by my office this time next week and let me know how you're doing?

Emma: Uh, sure. That should be fine.

Counselors: Thanks. I appreciate you talking with me today.

Emma: Yeah, no problem.

She leaves the room and the door closes behind her. After a pause, the Counselor reaches for the phone, dials, and waits for the tone.

Operator: New York DSS.

Counselor: Yes, I'm with Lincoln Academy and I wanted to report a situation regarding a student here.

Operator: The name?

Counselor: Her name is Emma Grayson.

Music Transitions Scene Out

Scene 4

The fugitive group is out and gathered in a park, sitting on the grass near quietly moving water. Light wind and distant traffic rumble slightly in the background.

Alex: ... Well this is nice. We haven't died and everything.

Jess: Can you just... not still for two minutes?

Alex: It's April, and I'm freezing. And there's a food truck over there.

Jess: Ugh... go feed your raging ADHD demons and leave us in peace.

Alex gets up and starts walking away.

Alex: I'll get you some chocolate for your lady hormones.

Jess: He wants me to drown him in the pond. I just know it...

Kate: No... children, stop fighting...

Jess: Kate, you're the one who can't control your spawn. You're a terrible mother.

Kate: You wound me. You wound me deep. See if I ever take you anywhere again. Now only Rachel goes to Disney World.

Rachel: (grinning, smug) This is why I'm the favorite child.

Ian: Thanks...

Kate: And I guess Ian still has a chance.

Jess: Rachel, you don't talk enough to get in trouble in the first place.

Rachel: Well it works.

Jess: It still lets people walk over you.

Rachel: And when they're done, they leave you alone. It worked at the academy. There's a reason I almost never got picked for anything. It was safer there.

Ian: The place that experimented on us and tortured us was *safe*?

Rachel: No! I just meant that running away means that we're always... it just... Ugh, Forget it.

Rachel stands up and speeds away quickly. Jess immediately gets up to follow.

Jess: Really, Ian?

Ian: I didn't-I didn't mean it like that!

Jess: Yeah, I'm sure that was obvious to her.

Ian: Maybe? She's the one who's been way more touchy lately.

Jess: Yeah, because she's completely freaking out about the possibility of getting caught. She's been jumping at shadows all day.

Ian: She has super powers-

Jess: Which she hates. Ian, she's so scared of everything that she can't even get out of her own damn head to use them even when she wants to. She hates getting dragged out like this because she knows she's a liability - you don't need to keep reminding her of that.

Ian: Jess, I really didn't mean it. I didn't even think she'd take it that way...

Jess: I know.

Jess walks off.

Ian: Ugh... Everything I say...

Kate: (on edge) You can handle it.

Ian: (tired, but dry) Yeah, thanks for the assist.

There's a long pause.

Ian: Kate, what's wrong?

Kate: It's... You see that building over there, at the edge of the park.

Ian: Uhh, the brown one?

Kate: The high rise behind it. James lives there, in the penthouse.

Ian: Kate, that's not funny.

Kate: I'm serious. I did some research and that's where he lives.

Ian: This is really, really stupid. We could get caught.

Kate: I found the address in some of the files I decrypted. I just wanted to see it. The money he made off of us... that's where it went. Do you know how much money it costs to live here?

Ian: I'd say somewhere around the cost of using us as lab rats.

Kate: You know I just pictured him as living in the lab, like he was just some crazy scientist. I never thought he could just "go home" after what he did to us.

Ian: Knowing the truth doesn't help. Unless... were you thinking of trying to stop him? You said it earlier... did you find something?

Kate: No, I already tried. I've crawled through most of his network, but he's got connections everywhere. Police, officials, even some news execs - they're on the same payroll if you trace the accounts far enough. Chances are we'd be dead just trying to leave an anonymous tip.

Ian: Then why even come here?

Kate: Because... I thought we were just going stir crazy from hiding and we'd be fine if we just got out today, but I don't think it's going to make a difference wherever we are. We won't have a chance at having normal lives or real identities without him finding us. Not while he's living *there*.

Ian: (sighing) This is still better. It has to be.

Kate: For you, sure. You've always been the best at this. The rest of us... we're ruined now. Maybe we have a couple months, but it's only a matter of time before we fall apart. That's what's wrong. I think it hit me. No matter how far we run, we don't get to be free.

Ian: We'll help each other. We'll hold it together.

Kate: I don't think we're strong enough to fix this...

Scene 5

The bell rings, and Emma is texting outside of the counselor's office as students flood into the hall.

Nick's footsteps fade in and he comes up to Emma

Nick: (approaching and sitting) Hey. I thought you'd be in class.

Emma: (glancing up nervously, shy) Hey.

Nick: (sensing her unease) You okay? What did the counselor want?

Emma: (nervous) I don't know, it was just something they said about the attack.

Nick: Yikes. I'm sorry.

Emma: It's not your fault. I'm just still processing it.

Nick: Well... we could get out of here. You can come hang at my place until school gets out. I'll have you back to catch your ride home, no one's the wiser.

Emma: I-I've never ditched before-

Nick: And it's really not that impressive.

Emma: I have a test in sixth period-

Nick: You'll make it up tomorrow or whenever. We can even go over note forging basics while we're out if it makes you feel better.

Emma: Can't we get in trouble?

Nick: At this school? They're too terrified of our parents.

Emma: So I... I take it you've done this before?

Nick: Plenty. Let's get out of here. I'm feeling like ice cream. How about you?

Music Transitions the scene out.

Scene 6

The doors to the elevator open on Nick's apartment floor and he and Emma step out.

Nick: (to Emma) Feeling better at all?

Emma: A little. I'm still nervous about getting caught. Not gonna lie.

Nick: Do this a few more times and it goes away really quick. Don't worry about it. And this is us. Not quite your dad's penthouse, but I think you'll like it.

Emma: I'm sure it's great.

Nick unlocks the door to his apartment and he and Emma enter. Catherine is standing over the table, going over some paperwork, and she looks up to greet them.

Catherine: Hey there. I wasn't expecting both of you.

Nick: Mom? I thought you were-

Catherine: Swamped with work? Oh, we are. Hi Emma. I don't think we've met before. I'm Catherine, Nick's mother.

Emma: Nice to meet you.

Several pans clink in the direction of the kitchen.

Greg: And dad!

Emma: Ahaha, hi!

Catherine: So what are you playing hookie from?

Nick: Us? Playing hookie?

Catherine: Do you really want to play that game with a lawyer?

Nick: Absolutely not. Emma had a rough time with the counselor. They said the stuff we were got drugged with is starting to have some weird side effects on her.

Catherine: So I've heard. That's part of the reason we're here. We were about to come pick you both up until social services could send a representative.

Emma: Social services? Why would they be sending someone?

Catherine: Nick, I'd like to talk to Emma privately if that's okay. Can you go help your father finish lunch?

Nick: (slowly, uncertain) I can, but-

Catherine: Neither of you are in trouble, especially not with us. But Nick, your father is cooking for all of us and would appreciate the table being set. Guest manners.

Nick: (still slightly wary) Sure thing. You good, Emma?

Emma: (nodding, more relaxed) Yeah, I think so.

Catherine: Thanks hun. I'm sorry that this is somewhat abrupt. I did meet your father after your... attack, but Nick's told us a lot about you lately-

Emma: Uh, Mrs. Landon?

Catherine: Choy, actually. We gave Nick my husbands name, but I kept mine. In my position, it's hard enough being a woman as it is.

Emma: I actually recognized your name. You're on the news a lot too, aren't you?

Catherine: All the more reason for discretion.

Emma: I understand. But... Mrs. Choy, I think I know what this is about. You don't want me to see Nick anymore after this, do you? You don't want him in danger, and-

Catherine: Oh Emma, no. That's not what I want at all. You are welcome here, and we're glad to have you. But I'm also very afraid for you. Your meeting with the counselor was proof that we needed to act immediately.

Emma: But it can't be that big of a deal.

Catherine: Emma, I think you've underestimated your father. What you've been through isn't normal and it doesn't seem like you've been happy for a second of it.

Emma: That's because I don't have a choice! I never have! I had to fight my dad just to go to a school instead of having another tutor. I've never even been out with someone my age before except with Nick.

Catherine: Under normal circumstances, your father has every right to determine what's best for you until you're eighteen, and that should always be for your well being. But this situation is unique enough that it's not unreasonable for someone to investigate whether or not you're actually safe.

Emma: But if you're wrong, my dad could sue you and lock me up and he's already going to...

Catherine: We couldn't forgive ourselves if something happened to you because we didn't act. Your safety is important, and it's worth fighting for.

A knock comes from the door.

Catherine: Yes?

The door opens.

Nick: Sorry... dad said lunch is ready.

Catherine: All right, we're on our way.

The door shuts and Nick retreats slowly.

Catherine: Emma, are you okay with this? I'm sure this... this has to be terrifying.

Emma: I just feel... numb. When the counselor told me about the drugs, I just... didn't feel anything. Is that bad?

Catherine: Whatever your feeling doesn't have to be right or wrong. We're turning your whole world upside down right now – nobody ever knows how to react to that. But if you need help dealing with it, telling someone helps. I promise.

Emma: Okay.

Catherine: It should be less overwhelming soon, I hope. Don't worry. Let's get some food in you.

Brief Transition:

Nick's family and Emma are sat down for dinner and eating.

Catherine: Greg, it's been way too long since you've cooked.

Emma: You made this?

Catherine: It's one of the ways he wooed me back in grad school.

Greg: You should be taking notes, son.

Nick: Not if I have to keep squinting through all that PDA.

Catherine: (smug) Says the boy who did not inherit his father's talent. We signed him up for at least a half dozen after school electives over the year we moved back to the states. Cooking did not pan out so well.

Nick: (glowering) Mom-

Catherine: At the time we were worried that the culture shock made you anti social-

Nick: I was not anti social!

Catherine: Well not now! But you didn't know what to do with your free time.

Greg: Nick, did you tell Emma you got pretty good at the piano while we lived in China?

Nick: Not at the rate this conversation is going. Emma, did you know I played piano while we lived in China?

Emma: Really? Wow.

Nick: Happy?

Greg: Eh, marginally. How about you, Emma? Any hobbies?

Emma: Uh, not really much – I just like taking pictures of things whenever I get the chance to go out.

There is a knock at the front door; then a pause, followed by a second knock.

Greg: (low, but calm) Let me.

Greg pushes his chair out and goes to answer it. He opens the door to find Susan in the apartment hallway.

Greg: Can I help you?

Susan: Yes, you can. I'm Susan Danvers, James Greyson's lawyer. I'm here to collect his daughter.

Greg: There was a complaint filed about her wellbeing. She's safe here until it can be addressed.

Susan: I believe you are fully aware of just how unsound your claim is. In a fully legal sense, you have kidnapped Emma Greyson and we are fully prepared to press charges to that extent with extreme bias. This confrontation will not end well, Mr. Landon, I assure you. I will not be leaving without her.

Greg: Now you listen-

Emma's chair is pushed back abruptly as she stands.

Emma: I'll go.

Catherine: Emma, wait. We have our own lawyers – we'll take this to the police, and-

Susan: After we leave, you can waste all the time you want. This is in Emma's best interest.

Nick: This has nothing to do with her best interest-

Greg: Nick! Let us handle this!

Emma: Please! I don't want him to hurt you.

Catherine: Ms. Danvers, you cannot hear her say that and believe for a second she is going back to a "safe" environment.

Susan: Mr. Greyson knows what's best for his daughter.

Greg: Let her go...

Catherine: Greg-

Emma: I'm so sorry about the trouble...

Nick: Emma!

Susan: Thank you for your compliance. Regardless, you'll still be hearing from our legal team.

She shuts the door behind us.

Nick: Dad... how could you let her do that?

Nick's chair pushes back and he storms out of the room.

Catherine: Greg, what happened?

Greg: My head feels... I didn't want to let her go... I should have stopped her...

Catherine: Greg? Are you okay?

Greg: I don't know. I don't know what just happened...

Music transitions out.

Scene 7

Elevator doors close and the engine begins to run as Emma and Susan descend to the ground floor.

Susan: Has your father ever told you that you look like your mother?

Emma: No. He doesn't even keep pictures.

Susan: Hm. He never did seem to take her leaving very well. Not that I really got along with her, but I always admired her. She was strong, but rarely knew how to pick her battles...

Emma: My mom's been gone since I was three. How long have you worked for my dad?

Susan: Practically forever.

The elevator dings. Outdoor traffic fades in and the door of James' car opens up.

James: Emma...

Emma: You sent your lawyer? You couldn't even get me yourself?!

James: Get. In. The car.

Emma: Are we even going to talk about this?

James: Yes. When we get home, I have more than a few things to say to you...

Music rises and swells

~ End of Episode 3 ~