

STATION TO STATION  
SEASON 1, EPISODE 1: STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE  
BY ALEX YUN

**Scene 1: Prologue**

**MIRANDA**

Today is April 13th. This is the unofficial audio log of Doctor Miranda Quan, a scientist from the Institute of Advanced Biochemical Research Development. What you are about to hear are not the recordings that I was asked to make by my employers, Mallux International, and if you are listening to this, I am probably dead or worse.

In the four days I have been aboard the research cruise S.S. Astrid, I have found that my research partner and best friend Jonathan Costello has disappeared. I'm-

I'm here to find out what happened.

SOUND: THE RECORDING CUTS OFF. REWIND. REWIND. REWIIIIIIIND

**Scene 2: Mobilisation**

**MIRANDA**

Today is April 7th, this is audio log one, and I am Doctor Miranda Quan, biochemist from the Institute of Advanced Biochemical Research Development. I am on board the research vessel the S.S. Astrid, today is the first day of mobilisation and we will be travelling at 14 knots from the port of Seward, Alaska and into the North Pacific.

I hereby declare that all recordings you hear from this point on have been made by me for purposes of this trip, as requested by my employers, Mallux International. This audio log will contain my research notes and diary entries of my daily life on the boat. I give my full permission to use any of the following recordings for educational or informative purposes, for future documentation and for research follow-up. Right. Let's see...what else...

SOUND: MORE SHUFFLING PAPERS

**MIRANDA**

This is my third year doing this cruise. Fairly straightforward. We've just started mob, like I said, so that means forming a work line and sorting through boxes of food, equipment, whatever,

moving them onto the ship. Although the workload is lighter this year - arranged by the sponsors, apparently. Nice of them.

SOUND: THE TAPE WARPS AND DISTORTS

If I weren't naturally suspicious of corporate backing as a principle and the corporate-science industrial complex, I would be over the moon but-

**MIRANDA**

I've been taking some time to set up the lab. We've got some really fancy stuff in here - one of the geologists brought in an electron transmission microscope and I think saw an XRD Machine being lifted in?

It's a mixed bag this year, we have about 8 different institutions on board, and about 40 crew members on top of that. I think someone said that we have in total about 84 souls. That's a lot more people than what I'm used to, but-

SOUND: A KNOCK ON THE DOOR. A PAUSE AS SHE GOES TO ANSWER IT

**MIRANDA**

Yeah...?

**SEBASTIAN FREDRICKSEN**

You got a minute? Won't take a sec, I promise, just doing a headcount.

**MIRANDA**

...Yeah. You're...?

**FREDRICKSEN**

Sebastian Fredricksen. I work in the lab right next to yours. I haven't seen you around before-

**MIRANDA**

Yeah, I keep to myself. Can I help you?

**FREDRICKSEN**

It's...It's just that the headcount's not really matching up to the manifest and management's freaking out a bit - you know how they are. One missing ROV member and they almost had a stress ulcer.

**MIRANDA**

Okay. Well, I don't know the ROV crew, so.

**FREDRICKSEN**

Right. No, I meant- You were supposed to share a lab bench with...Jonathan Costello? He hasn't showed yet, and hasn't given any notice. You heard anything from him?

**MIRANDA**

No, I haven't. I'm sorry, I wish I could help - but I actually haven't really heard from him... in a while.

**FREDRICKSEN**

When did you say was the last time you had contact with him?

**MIRANDA**

I didn't. And I...I don't really remember.

**FREDRICKSEN**

Give me a ballpark?

**MIRANDA**

It must have been...August, or something? Before he left. For a job, I mean. He was recruited to work on a...confidential government project thing and he left in early September. Look, I'm sorry, I really can't help you, but if he shows up, I'll tell you first thing, yeah?

**FREDRICKSEN**

Alright, no worries. I'll leave you to get settled.

SOUND: THE DOOR CLOSING

**MIRANDA**

...Oh my god, I sounded *really rude*. I'll have to apologise if I run into him later.

SOUND: THE RECORDING CUTS OFF

**Scene 3: Backstory**

**MIRANDA**

Right, so, backstory: I usually do this trip with my research partner, Jonathan, but it would seem that he hasn't bothered to show up yet. He got a gig a while back - I think it was for a government contract project, but he didn't clarify, and since then it's been nothing but radio silence. I was- I was hoping that he would show up, I guess? It's a bit lonely...out here-

SOUND: THE TAPE WARPS AND DISTORTS, THE SOUND MUFFLED

God, I just wish he would have told me - he's got half the preparation and experiment plans I needed. The only thing I have to go on are a secondary data from an old archive that got mailed to me - and it wasn't even the one I sent in for. This is-

SOUND: THE TAPE WARPS AND DISTORTS, THE SOUND CLEARS

Anyway, nose to the grindstone and all that. I have so much to do. First task of the ship: check the chambers and specifics of the Juday engine, calibrate the diffusion fluids, double-secure the sample subjects and calibrate the control valve.

SOUND: THE TAPE WARPS AND DISTORTS, THE SOUND MUFFLED

I'm...I'm just a bit disappointed, I guess? I haven't even gotten so much as a phone call from him in four months, so I was just.... It's- you know what, it's not a big deal. I'll just shout at him when I see him again.

SOUND: THE RECORDING CUTS OFF

#### **Scene 4: Setting Sail**

##### **MIRANDA**

Tuesday, 1700 hours. We will officially be on our way in an hour! The lab bench is...pretty roomy. I've got enough space to spread everything out on it, for once. It feels weird being the only one going at it alone. Well, more room for me, I guess - no fighting over fridge space this year. Screw you, Jon, for bugging off, but at least I have this.

SOUND: THE RECORDING CUTS OFF

##### **MIRANDA**

Ohh, thank God. So, okay - I found a big box of notes on my doorstep about a week before I set sail, and they're all first-hand data from, like, 15 years back. It's the original research that I'm basing my work on- I've been going through them, not very thoroughly, but last few pages has Jon's old notes attached. Pretty much just annotations here and there, but more than what I've been given to work with. I've been worrying so much yesterday I felt like I just aged five years.

The place of origin is Skipsea Research Centre for Biochemistry. They- okay, if I'm honest, the notes look like the drawings of an enthusiastic child, but the data is there, which is what matters.

SOUND: THE RECORDING CUTS OFF

MIRANDA

My purpose on this research cruise is to look into the preservation of organic matter using various methods of containing element 720-alpha. The experiment is based on the research of Dr Adelaide Montague, who first discovered this in 2002, in Bering Sea. It was a few hundred miles west of British Columbia coast, following a report of a sudden increase in toxicity levels.

Originally carried out by Montague's team, the expedition discovered that the entire seabed had become, for a lack of better phrase, frozen in time. Nothing was aging, nothing was healing, nothing was changing. A newly discovered element, named 720-alpha, was isolated at the site. 720-alpha had isotope-like behaviours, but also electromagnetic and gravitational properties, and it is believed this was the cause of the..."time freeze". There are certain more...eccentric theories that it's some kind of...quantum matter. It's not a popular theory.

The first of Montague's experiments managed to isolate and replicate 720-alpha. Following this, the Juday Engine was built to replicate the conditions of original site, but it was only the follow-up expedition, lead by the -

SOUND: A KNOCK ON THE DOOR

MIRANDA

...Again?

SOUND: THE DOOR OPENING

MIRANDA

Yes?

FREDRICKSEN

I...was just wondering if you were joining for orientation dinner? It's in an hour, everyone else is gathered upstairs-

MIRANDA

Yes. I'd like to. Join orientation dinner. And- sorry about earlier. I didn't mean to be rude, I just... I wasn't expecting anyone. I'll be up at six.

**FREDRICKSEN**

Right, then! I'll...see you in a-

SOUND: THE DOOR CLOSES

(a beat)

**MIRANDA**

...Oh god. I just slammed the door in his face.

SOUND: THE RECORDING CUTS OFF

### **Scene 5: Montague's notes**

**MIRANDA**

Tuesday, 1830. Huh. Okay, I need some more time with this. These aren't... Jon's old notes. They're well-researched and in-depth, but not anything like the ones he made while we were working together. I think- hmm. I thought I recognised something, but-

(she sighs)

This bit looks like gibberish. And this page has his results and analysis, but the theory's not anything like what I've worked with.

(she falls silent suddenly with realisation)

SOUND: THE TAPE WARPS AND DISTORTS, THE SOUND MUFFLED

Skipsea. Skipsea. Why does that sound so familiar?

SOUND: THE RECORDING CUTS OFF

**MIRANDA**

Log four: Tuesday, 2300 hours. Following are the introductory notes from Dr Montague's work, for the record:

SOUND: PAPERS RUSTLE

**MIRANDA**

The reaction and level of permeation of the wave particles into organic matter is dependent on the stability of the particles itself. The algorithm can only calculate with 67% accuracy the spread and field of the - I can't read this, I need to transcribe it into something legible before I try to dictate into a recorder.

SOUND: PAUSE, RUSTING PAPERS AS MIRANDA FLIPS THROUGH THE RESEARCH NOTES

**MIRANDA**

Huh. Although that's...interesting.

That's...really interesting.

SOUND: THE RECORDING CUTS OFF

**MIRANDA**

Log five, Wednesday, 1100 hours.

I...missed...orientation dinner. But, no matter - first day on the sea. I have missed this a bit, if I'm honest, and all the equipment works beautifully. I didn't even get seasick when we left port! Perks of being on a privately funded research trip, I guess - the equipment, I mean, not the seasickness, that's my own superpower. Fancy tech, bigger cabins, nicer boats. And better food than last year. I mean, I wasn't expecting caviar and foie gras, but the breakfast spread was surprisingly good stuff.

ROV's going down tomorrow, which means I finally get to get my hands on a couple of samples and start working!

Uh. The cabin next to mine is empty. It's so quiet out here. I'd forgotten how...vast everything seems. You can't actually hear the ocean unless the boat is moving, or the waves are lapping the sides. Usually during the day you can hear the pipes, or something from the deck, or some lab equipment or another whirring away but then at night- everything feels different at night.

(slightly sheepishly)

It just...feels kind of lonely, I guess. We've always done the cruise together, Jon and I, and it's always - easier, when I'm with someone else.

SOUND: THE RECORDING CUTS OFF

**MIRANDA**

Log six: The captain's said that there's a storm warning on the way – it's a minor one, but it means everyone's going to be stuck in their cabins for a few days, and no activity in the labs. I need to get started on prepping the samples before the storm hits, God knows that this can't wait another two days.

SOUND: THE TAPE WARPS AND DISTORTS, THE SOUND MUFFLED

Skipsea. I figured out where I remember that name from. It was the first location of Mallux's R&D.

SOUND: THE RECORDING CUTS OFF

### **Scene 6: ROV Dive**

SOUND: VOICES, WAVES, WIND, THE HANGAR GOING DOWN.

#### **MIRANDA**

Log seven. Thursday, 0700 hours.

Today's the first dive! I watched them do a test dive earlier. What they do is, they send an underwater submersible out with a camera, we tell the technicians what we need – point the camera there, grab a piece of that, turn it 30 degrees – and they get us samples.

I have missed this bit too, where they send the vehicle down and we get to just wait for it to surface with something like a bunch of nerdy, teched-up fishermen. The rest of the day is going to be sorting through everything and fighting for fridge space and maybe elbowing some people to get to the wet lab first.

We're getting close to the site where compound 720-alpha found, around 300 kilometres parallel to coasts of Juneau and British Columbia. There is some weird stuff going on down there. It's like a... like a video game simulation. Everything looks the same, no biodiversity whatsoever, even though the seabed is thriving and the fish samples all look healthy. This is where the bulk of my the research will be focused on – Area 6459, and the effect of it on living ocean organisms.

Oh and the ROV team is named – Christ alive – the ROV team is named K9 Alpha Squad.

SOUND: THE RECORDING CUTS OFF

## Scene 7: Skipsea

MIRANDA

Jon's notes - there's something off about them. I don't - I don't remember him working on it, it's not like anything we've done together. If he worked on this before August, then, I would have seen it - so this would have been done either in his spare time or...this is all his research from his time while...he was away.

...So he sent me the files, from Skipsea. Somehow. So he was...was Jon working for Mallux? Skipsea Research - that's where Mallux was founded.

SOUND: PAPERS SLAPPING ONTO A TABLE. THE RECORDING CUTS OFF

MIRANDA

Log eight: Friday, 1300 hours.

I've chosen to ignore what I spent three nights transcribing. The results are irrelevant to my work at hand, the control conditions are completely different to mine and the technology used to conduct it were too primitive for the precision I need anyway.

Furthermore...furthermore, Montague theorised several possibilities about the nature of 720-alpha. All of these theories were introduced in the conclusion - including something about time dilation - all of which require follow-up data - currently not in my possession.

From hereon I will be conducting my own research, work with what I have and see if I - I dunno. I'll just make it up as I go along, I suppose.

SOUND: THE RECORDING CUTS OFF

## Scene 8: The Last Recording

MIRANDA

I've found something taped to the inside of my wardrobe. It's a walkman-slash-recorder, with one tape inside. It...it looks like that clunky old thing that...Jonathan used. I think. I think that means he was on the ship?

SOUND: STATIC NOISES, CLICKING, THE SOUND OF A TAPE REWINDING

JONATHAN

This, uh. This is, uh. Probably the last recording I'm going to make. If you're hearing this, I'm - No, I'm probably dead. Or someone has taken me into a secret CIA bunker to water torture me, but - anyway. Miranda, I hope you get this. I really, really hope that it's you listening to this and not - not anyone else. You have to look for--

SOUND: THE TAPE WARPS AND DISTORTS

--they have people everywhere. I don't know how many, so be on the lookout. I need you to promise me that no matter what happens, my notes - the algorithm, the formula, all my research - I need you to make sure that they don't fall into the wrong hands. Do not let them get ahold of it. Please.

I can't tell you everything - I don't even know half of what's going on myself. And I don't want to put you in danger, but you've always been smarter than me, and you've always been the one who knows what to do, so...

I- I screwed this one up. I screwed this up real bad and I'm not asking you to fix it, but please, please just - be careful.

SOUND: THERE'S A CLICK, AND THE TAPE ENDS.

(MIRANDA LETS OUT A SHAKY BREATH, AND SITS IN SILENCE.)

SOUND: SILENCE, BUT NOT QUITE. THE HUM OF THE BOAT IS ON IN THE BACKGROUND, THERE ARE MUFFLED SOUNDS OF PEOPLE TALKING OUTSIDE AS THEY WALK BY.

SOUND: THE RECORDING CUTS OFF

**MIRANDA**

This is a private entry, I'm recording it separately. I've been looking through the notes again. They don't make any more sense, but I- I...

SOUND: THE RECORDING CUTS OFF

**MIRANDA**

What was he so afraid of? What was it that had him so terrified? He didn't even tell me - but if he was so afraid of telling me, why leave the recording device in my room? Did he want me to find it, is that why? What does he have that would put him in danger?

Why bring it on this ship, why send it to me? Did he send it to me? But the files, the papers-

(MIRANDA lets out a sob in frustration. Then, weakly)

I'm getting a headache.

SOUND: THE RECORDING CUTS OFF

**MIRANDA**

I...I don't even know if he's alive or not.

SOUND: THE RECORDING CUTS OFF

**MIRANDA**

H-he was working for Mallux while he made that tape. He was working Mallux while he made that tape. This boat- I'm trapped and he- and they- Oh God-

SOUND: THE RECORDING CUTS OFF

**MIRANDA**

No. No, I can't panic about this right now. I- I need to get to the bottom of it- I think- I need to work on the basis that whatever he was looking for is onboard, and I need to solve it, or find or- or- whatever. I need an answer. I need to know why he disappeared off the face of the earth with what looks like a- a *suicide note*.

**MIRANDA**

Today is April 13th. This is the unofficial audio log of Doctor Miranda Quan, scientist from the Institute of Advanced Biochemical Research Development. What you are about to hear are not the audio recordings that I was asked to make by my employer, Mallux International, and if you are listening to this, I am probably dead or worse.

In the four days I have been aboard the research cruise S.S Astrid, I have found that my research partner and best friend Jonathan Costello has disappeared. I'm-

His tapes are-

The only clues I have about his disappearance are what seems to be an audio log and a stack of research notes that he left for me. I'm here to find out what happened.

[END RECORDING]