

Station to Station Episode 8, "ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS"

Episode written by Alex Yun

Station to Station created by Alex Yun

Scene 1

REVA

This is an interview with Dr Sebastian Fredricksen. Time is 17:34 Pacific Time, date is April 28, location is an empty cabin on the second deck. Parties present are myself and Dr. Miranda Quan.

SOUND: Two sets of footsteps in a corridor. Fade up on Fredricksen

FREDRICKSEN

...You know, don't overdo it with the labs. Management's pretty big on the whole "work/life balance" thing, even though we're in the middle of the...

SOUND: Door opening

...of the...ocean...Uh. Thought you wanted to go to the promenade deck...

MIRANDA

I changed my mind. We should talk. Take a seat.

FREDRICKSEN

(HAHA GOOD JOKE)

What's going on?

SOUND: Door closing

MIRANDA

I wanted to talk to you about Jonathan Costello.

FREDRICKSEN

(A LITTLE RATTLED)

You— so you know him—

MIRANDA

You worked with him before you came on board this ship, didn't you? He disappeared and I know that Mallux was behind it. I just want to—

(SHE TAKES A BREATH, PACING HERSELF)

Please take a seat.

SOUND: A chair being pulled out

FREDRICKSEN

Who — wait, what are *you* doing here?

REVA

Dr. Fredricksen, my name is Reva Luther. I'm a federal agent and for the past eight months I've been investigating Mallux International—

FREDRICKSEN

Wait— I— *What is this?* Is this a joke?

REVA

It's alright, calm down. As I said—

FREDRICKSEN

(LAUGH OF SHOCK/DISBELIEF)

...You're an ROV tech!

REVA

I'm undercover. I took up a sudden vacancy left by Riley Arber on very short notice.

FREDRICKSEN

Who?

REVA

Let's start at the beginning. Dr Quan has been acting as a, uh, consulting expert on the case. As far as we understand, a few months ago you were contracted to work for Mallux International on a confidential research project. You worked with Jonathan Costello, who registered for this cruise before his untimely disappearance. Is that correct?

FREDRICKSEN

You don't— You're not supposed to remember that name.

REVA

(PATIENT, BUT INSISTENT)

Is that correct.

FREDRICKSEN

How the hell did you even know that? That's— this is— Miranda, what have you done?

MIRANDA

Dr Fredricksen, *calm down*. We just want to ask a few questions.

FREDRICKSEN

Well, I'm not answering them!

REVA

Our investigation shows that there were at least 50 scientists working at a private Mallux facility from September last year to March this year. Most of them didn't make it out alive, and the ones that did disappeared without a trace. I just need your corroboration on this.

FREDRICKSEN

Not happening.

MIRANDA

But you were there. You worked with them. Who do you remember?

FREDRICKSEN

No one.

MIRANDA

Bollocks.

REVA

(UNDER HER BREATH)

Doc.

MIRANDA

Who do you remember?

REVA

We're not asking you to testify, if that's what you're afraid of. We just want to know what you saw. You're the last person — probably the only person — we can connect to the crime. Dozens of people have gone missing without a trace, and we're just asking for some help.

MIRANDA

Please. You remember Costello, don't you? And— and Adison McKinnley and Sabine Durand and David Won.

FREDRICKSEN

(LYING THROUGH HIS TEETH)

No. I don't.

REVA

What about Jackie Simmons? What do you know about her?

FREDRICKSEN

Enough to stay the hell away. She's, well, Simmons.

MIRANDA

Right! Well, we have intel on her and— well, we're gathering intel on her, but we know what's she's up to and we can—

(FREDRICKSEN SCOFFS)

FREDRICKSEN

Okay, alright. I've heard enough.

(HE SIGHS)

Ah, Christ. This one of those quid-pro-duo deals?

REVA

If you tell us what you know, we can answer your questions. Is that a deal?

FREDRICKSEN

Alright, fine.

MIRANDA

(RELIEVED)

Thank you—

FREDRICKSEN

But if — and *only* if — I'm given full immunity.

REVA

(ON THE VERGE OF A STRESS HEADACHE)

Oh for God's— you realise we're in the middle of the ocean, right? You want me to, what, call up a federal prosecutor via satellite phone?

FREDRICKSEN

Fine. Then I don't talk.

REVA

We're interested in the people at the top of this, not contract scientists who got caught in the crossfire. If you can help us bring charges against Mallux, you'll be protected.

FREDRICKSEN

No. I'm not risking being labelled an accomplice when your bosses find out you've got an easy target to pin your conspiracy theories on.

REVA

If you're innocent, you should want to talk to us—

FREDRICKSEN

(SCOFFS)

Yeah, we've all heard that one before.

REVA

(FRUSTRATED)

People have died, Fredricksen, and you're impeding an investigation. I'd think you should be more worried about saving your own skin.

FREDRICKSEN

Are you threatening me?

REVA

I'm laying out the facts.

FREDRICKSEN

That's it, I'm done.

SOUND: Chair scraping

REVA

Sit down.

FREDRICKSEN

You can't keep me in here. Hell, I should go to the captain right now--

MIRANDA

Wait, wait. What if I talk to you? Without Reva.

REVA

What?!

MIRANDA

It won't be an FBI suspect interview, it'll just— be us. Having a chat, like we planned to.

FREDRICKSEN

...I'm listening.

REVA

Quan.

MIRANDA

Reva was never here. And I'll tell you what we know. Deal?

Scene 2
(NELLY AND SIMMONS, ELSEWHERE)

NELLY

Interview with Jackie Simmons, possible mad scientist, maybe corporate spy, most definitely a suspicious person. Location is deck two, former cabin of scientist David Won, time is half past five, April 28.

Alright... I am not police, I don't work for the government, I'm not gonna do you in. I just want answers. You give me those, and it'll be easier on the both of us. Got it?

(SHE IS MET WITH STUBBORN SILENCE)

So. Who do you work for?

(SHE IS MET WITH STUBBORN SILENCE)

We can start smaller. Is Simmons even your real name?

(SHE IS MET WITH STUBBORN SILENCE)

Look, if you think you can just sit there until I get bored and move away from this door, you're going to be here a bloody long time.

SIMMONS

I thought you wanted to talk about having your shift covered so you could take a night off. I don't— what is this?

NELLY

Like I said, I'm just looking for some answers. We know all about your little tiff with McKinnley the other day.

SIMMONS

I don't know who that is.

NELLY

McKinnley, Simmons. You fought with him, and hey presto, no more McKinnley. Doesn't look good. What did he have on you? Did he know why you're really here?

SIMMONS

This is some kind of mistake. Have you taken a walk lately, gone above deck? They say cabin fever can make you think some pretty crazy stuff. My first week onboard — whoo, let me tell you, there were a couple days — and all the seasickness pills — just a bad time—

NELLY

Why are you here, Simmons?

SIMMONS

To do my job.

NELLY

Your job. As a...what was it you do again? Because no one seems to be able to pin down your line of work. One night, you're covering a tech shift, the next you're sitting in on a biology dive. You are, as they say, everywhere.

SIMMONS

What can I say? I get around.

NELLY

You're snooping. I caught you red-handed the other day, didn't I — sneaking into the lab when you thought you'd have it to yourself. What do you think the rest of the researchers would say if they knew someone was spying on their work?

Or what about our sponsor? How you think Mallux would feel to hear word about you had gotten out?

(SILENCE)

You know, couple of my friends have another of your people just down the hall. We could go have a little chat.

SIMMONS

I don't know what you're—

NELLY

Look me in the eyes, Simmons. You think I'm bluffing?

SIMMONS

(WEAKLY)

I don't—

NELLY

Hey, look, it's alright. I'm not big bad Nelly here to try to make your life hell. If you just level with me I can help you—

SIMMONS

How? I don't even know what you want from me — and I don't want to. I just want to do my job and get off this hellish metal tin.

NELLY

What's your job, Simmons?

SIMMONS

Can you stop saying my name every other—

NELLY

Job, or I tell every single person on this ship why you're really here.

SIMMONS

Okay, okay. Fine. Ask me whatever you want, just don't tell other people. Please.

NELLY

Great! Now, might as well just get it out there and clear the air — who do you work for?

SIMMONS

PanOptics Incorporated.

(SHE IS MET WITH STUNNED SILENCE)

What?

Scene 3

(BACK TO MIRANDA AND FREDRICKSEN)

MIRANDA

I— I should say that, uhm. Whatever you say in here, it won't implicate you in the court of law—

FREDRICKSEN

No kidding.

MIRANDA

Let me finish. Nothing you say to me will be part of the official investigation record. We're just two people, talking.

Also, Reva wants you to know that she doesn't trust you more than she can throw you and she'll be near enough to hear it if I yell for help.

...are you ready to start?

FREDRICKSEN

What tipped you off about me?

MIRANDA

You were nice to me. For no discernible reason. There had to be some ulterior motive.

(FREDRICKSEN SNORTS)

FREDRICKSEN

So you were grasping at straws.

MIRANDA

Maybe I was. So what — got me here, didn't it?

FREDRICKSEN

That it did.

MIRANDA

(SIGHS)

Why did you go about dancing around it? You knew Costello was gone the first night of mob, you could have told me everything then.

FREDRICKSEN

I couldn't confirm who you were, and I didn't want to blow my cover. I do now, though.

MIRANDA

For what it's worth, I still think you're shifty.

FREDRICKSEN

(I KNOW SOMETHING YOU DON'T KNOW)

...Thanks.

MIRANDA

You said you were stationed at—

FREDRICKSEN

The only reason I'm here is because you know what happened, and you think I did it.

MIRANDA

You're not a suspect. We're just trying to piece together a story. Just— tell me what you know.

FREDRICKSEN

Little more specific.

MIRANDA

What did they do to him? Was is Mallux, did he know too much, was it—

FREDRICKSEN

Alright, okay. One at a time. First: Nothing. He wasn't silenced, he just got stuck. Wrong time, wrong place — he got unlucky. That's it. That's all it took.

MIRANDA

Why can't I remember him? Why can *you*?

FREDRICKSEN

I worked at the facility for five months. After a while your brain gets used to the whole... weirdness. Call it exposure immunity.

MIRANDA

By weirdness, you mean your experiments, all the messing with time and space.

FREDRICKSEN

More or less.

MIRANDA

(DISBELIEVING)

...Christ. You punched a hole in the fabric of reality to do— what? Soothe your own egos? Chase some kind of— hubristic glory just to get your names in a few papers—

FREDRICKSEN

(KIND OF AGITATED)

Hey, hey, don't be so melodramatic. There was more to it than that. This was solid research, we were breaking new ground — there were all kinds of real-world applications getting thrown around. This was something people would have died to be on.

...Okay, maybe that was...badly worded.

MIRANDA

Yeah... But go on.

FREDRICKSEN

The project didn't have an official name. Lab facilities were way out in the middle of nowhere - they didn't even have phone reception out there.

MIRANDA

That sounds like a military base or a—

FREDRICKSEN

Prison? Yeah. We called it Project Lazarus. Name was just something that got tossed around by a few people as a joke. Caught on, I guess.

MIRANDA

Why 'Lazarus'?

FREDRICKSEN

(CREEPY)

Why do you think?

MIRANDA

Someone on the team really digs the Bible?

FREDRICKSEN

Because no one could kill the damn thing.

(UNCOMFORTABLE PAUSE. MIRANDA TAKES A FEW BREATHS TO CALM HERSELF)

MIRANDA

You tried to kill it?

FREDRICKSEN

Some of us tried to find a way to stop it. We realised that- that something was awry, after a while. We were working on re-purposed machinery based on the Juday engine, so we tried to find a way to kill the processors, or sabotage the engines. We called that—

MIRANDA

—Project Red String. Costello mentions Project Red String — it was something he wrote in his notes. I think he found a way to stop it. I thought he was working alone, but—

FREDRICKSEN

Wait, you have the his notes?

MIRANDA

He left them to me. Here—

SOUND: A file being pushed forward

I brought all the data we've gathered over the past few weeks on the ship. I just— whatever it was Mallux was working on, I need to stop this. I need to finish what he started. If you have anything on the location, or— or, personnel files, experiment notes — we can work together.

FREDRICKSEN

That's a lot of notes.

SOUND: The file being snatched back

MIRANDA

But I want your intel first.

(FREDRICKSEN SNORTS)

FREDRICKSEN

No. Look, I get what you're trying to do. But this isn't a rabbit hole you want to fall down, Miranda, because trust me — you're not gonna like what you find. Give me the notes and the tapes, and walk away.

MIRANDA

I'm already past the point of no return.

FREDRICKSEN

It's not too late to turn back—

MIRANDA

It is for me. I can help you. We're on the same side.

(NO RESPONSE)

Fredricksen, please. Give me something.

FREDRICKSEN

Still can't get on a first name basis, huh?

MIRANDA

(AWKWARD)

Sebastian—

FREDRICKSEN

Actually, it's Eugene.

Scene 4

(BACK TO NELLY AND SIMMONS)

NELLY

PanOpt.

SIMMONS

PanOptics Incorporated.

NELLY

Yeah, I've heard of it. One of Mallux's biggest research competitors might just be on my radar, thanks. How long has PanOptics known all this was going on?

SIMMONS

Uh... about the cruise? I don't think that part was hard to figure out. They flog this thing pretty hard. It's really good corporate PR.

NELLY

About the experiment, Simmons.

SIMMONS

Which one?

NELLY

Really? We're still doing this? What about a "Project Lazarus"? That ring any bells?

SIMMONS

What is that, like, a movie reference?

NELLY

I'm pretty sure it's the thing that's been making people disappear and wiping them out of our minds. You know, Mallux's research on the lower deck.

SIMMONS

(SLIGHTLY STUNNED)

There's a lab on the lower deck?

NELLY

Right... okay. So, if we don't all die out here, I'd like it on the record that I'm going to spend a lot more time vetting my interview subjects beforehand from here on out.

SIMMONS

Whoa, hang on. There's *a lab* on the *lower deck*? Why?

NELLY

(GROANS)

The less you know the better.

SIMMONS

Is that why that dick from engineering keeps biting my head off every time I try to take a peek at the engine?

NELLY

(AT WIT'S END)

...oh, blimey.

Okay. You remember when you found Miranda in McKinnley's lab—

SIMMONS

Who the hell is McKinnley?

NELLY

—and you had to almost carry her to the medic's office?

SIMMONS

And then you kicked down the door and dragged her out?

NELLY

...yeah. She was looking for someone who never existed.

SIMMONS

So...*did* she have a stroke, or—?

NELLY

No, let me put it this way. Your undercover work on this boat is not exactly...subtle. But when was the last time you felt scared — truly scared — that you'd been rumbled? That someone made your cover? Do you remember that?

SIMMONS

Ye— no—

...yes. Right after the storm passed. There was a— there was this...this jackass who got on my case for— for getting near his samples or something? I mean I probably was, but, I just needed some data— I had to be a bit more careful after that...

NELLY

But you don't remember his name. That's what Mallux's secret project did. That was McKinnley. He was on this boat. He isn't any more - and the reason you don't remember him is because he was erased from time.

SIMMONS

(MATTER-OF-FACTLY)

...okay.

NELLY

Okay?! What do you mean, okay?

SIMMONS

Okay. It means, I am done. Listen — I came out here to have a look around, gauge any up-and-coming scientists, try to get a general sense of Mallux's R&D strategy, and write up a report back at HQ. I was not told about...this.

NELLY

But you have to know why you're on this ship — they didn't even tell you what to look for? Just... spy on the scientists, bring back whatever looks nicest from the market? There is no way they just stuck you on here with no objective.

SIMMONS

Why would they tell me anything? I'm a grunt, okay? I come here, I observe, I report back. Nothing illegal, nothing that could be traced back to company, nothing wrong with me being on this boat. I have credentials — I have my degree in geology, I even have a part-time tenure. You— you are my biggest problem right now. All they said they wanted to know is, if anything out here is going to interfere with— [the Amphitrite project.]

(WHOOOPS, ALMOST GAVE AWAY TOO MUCH)

—with any possible...future developments.

NELLY

PanOpt wants to develop their own technology and beat Mallux at its own game.

Scene 5

(BACK TO MIRANDA AND FREDRICKSEN)

MIRANDA

(WARY)

Eugene. Nice to meet you Eugene. Do you have a last name?

FREDRICKSEN

One step at a time. Those tapes Costello left you. What's on them?

MIRANDA

His diary entries. What, um— what division— what did you do—

FREDRICKSEN

I want to hear them.

MIRANDA

There's barely anything left. What did you do? What was your job at the facility?

FREDRICKSEN

Middle management.

MIRANDA

Did you work with McKinnley as well? What about Durand and Won, were they also—

FREDRICKSEN

McKinnley made a mistake. I don't know what happened to Durand and Won. The tapes, Quan.

MIRANDA

So your team just— erased from existence. Doesn't that— bother you? You talk about it like it was a— a calculation error.

FREDRICKSEN

That wasn't meant to happen. This project was going change everything, but it went...it just didn't exactly go according to plan.

MIRANDA

Why is it onboard the ship? Why bring it here, in the middle of the ocean, exposing an entire—

FREDRICKSEN

It's out here because it's being shut down.

MIRANDA

(STUNNED)

It's being shut down? But that must be a billion-pound research project, why would—

(WITH HORROR, AS REALISATION DAWNS)

...You're getting rid of the evidence.

FREDRICKSEN

You said it, not me.

MIRANDA

Yeah. You know, I never told you about Costello's tapes. I would have given them to you, though there really isn't anything left. That whole...time-erasing thing, you know.

FREDRICKSEN

...Damn. You're smarter than I thought you'd be.

(A PAUSE. THEN, BOTH SUDDENLY GRAB FOR THE FILE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DESK)

Scene 6

(BACK TO NELLY AND SIMMONS)

SIMMONS

Hey, you said it, not me.

NELLY

And the fact that there's some kind of terrifying, inhumane experiment going on under all our noses — maybe even being conducted on all of us — you're just... not bothered?

SIMMONS

It's not my business. And *so far* beyond my paygrade.

NELLY

You can't let this just pass you by! The people disappearing without a trace, the mysterious gaps in memory, suppressing the—

SIMMONS

(DEFINITELY HAS HER HANDS OVER HER EARS)

Nope! Don't want to know. Not my problem.

NELLY

So you're going to go back to your company empty-handed? No intel, no answers? Your bosses won't like that.

SIMMONS

Hey, I'll burn that bridge when I get there. I've done a pretty good job of keeping myself out of trouble so far. Until you people started snooping around, anyway. How many of you are there?

NELLY

We have information. We know — we have an idea about what's going on.

SIMMONS

That's nice. Good for you. Can I go?

NELLY

We know about the technology. We know who discovered it, what they're using it for. Why they're developing it and why now. There are people getting hurt as collateral damage—

SIMMONS

Don't care! I can't care about any of this — there will always be collateral damage, there will always be people who fall between the cracks. I don't have the capacity to worry about them and still do my job.

NELLY

You really think this is all unrelated to you? When it starts hurting more people, you'll have been complicit.

Scene 7

(BACK TO MIRANDA AND FREDRICKSEN)

SOUND: Two chairs scraping, frantic rustle of fabric against microphone

FREDRICKSEN

Let go.

MIRANDA

Get off me!

FREDRICKSEN

Let go of the folder—

MIRANDA

Get *off* me—

FREDRICKSEN

Listen to me— and I'm not saying this again. Walk away. Leave this behind you when get off this boat and then get as far as you can. They're not gonna let you get out of this in one piece, that is not how they operate. Give me the file and *walk away*.

MIRANDA

I said let go!

FREDRICKSEN

You're not gonna like what you'll find at the bottom of this rabbit hole. Forget what you saw, forget what you read, forget about Costello. Walk. Away.

SOUND: Fabric rustling. Something hitting the mic. Chair scrape, a thump. Fredricksen choking, coughing and gasping for breath. The door slams open. Footsteps

REVA

What the hell is going on?!

Scene 8

(BACK TO NELLY AND SIMMONS)

SIMMONS

Then that's a headache for my boss. And her boss.

NELLY

How can you be so blasé about all this?

SIMMONS

It's called self-preservation instinct. It means I don't stick my nose where it don't belong, and no one buries me for seeing what I shouldn't have seen.

NELLY

Self-preser — It's gonna come for your company as well. And you've got to know, deep down, how bad that is. You wouldn't be so scared if you didn't, so eager to get out of here under the radar—

SIMMONS

Here's what I know about the missing people. That, one: this research cruise is well-funded and two: that some people bailed before we left port for whatever personal reason. That is all I know, and all I care to know.

NELLY

And how long do you think it'll be before you've gone missing too?

SIMMONS

You said you weren't going to threaten me any more!

NELLY

Friendly warning. Maybe you don't care about what happens to other people — but you'll look out for yourself, won't you? Mallux doesn't seem like the company who likes to leave loose ends.

SIMMONS

What do you want?

NELLY

I want Mallux's project stopped. And you're going to volunteer to help.

Scene 9

(BACK TO MIRANDA AND FREDRICKSEN)

SOUND: Fredricksen coughing/gasping for air in the background

MIRANDA

...it was self-defense.

FREDRICKSEN

(CHOKED/HOARSELY)

I want a lawyer!

REVA

Did you...did you just stab him with a pen?

SOUND: coughing/gasping continues

REVA

You stabbed him in the neck?! You stabbed him *in the neck*.

MIRANDA

He attacked me.

REVA

Alright! Calm down. Interview over. Doc, outside. I'm taking over.

FREDRICKSEN

I'm done talking.

REVA

Hang on-

FREDRICKSEN

No. No, I think I have all the answers I need for now.

SOUND: Electric buzzing sound, the engine shutting down

FREDRICKSEN

The hell..?

SOUND: Chair scraping the floor

REVA

(SUPER PISSED)

Sit down! We're not done yet.

SOUND: Footsteps, muffled fight-y sounds. Door shutting.

REVA

God damn- Cochrane! Cochrane can you hear me? Someone's cut the power and Fredricksen just got away. We need to reconvene, now!