

MOONBASE THETA, OUT S1E1
“Twenty”

by D. J. Sylvis

CHARACTERS

ROGER BRAGADO-FISCHER

(The episode begins with no real introduction, just a bit of static before Roger breaks through. There may be moments where the quality drops during his monologue, or static takes over again. It may be filtered to give the impression of a broadcast from space.)

ROGER

Broadcasting. This is Roger Bragado-Fischer, Communications, Moonbase Theta. The date is August 4, 2098; the time is 10:15. We are now at twenty weeks before base shutdown.

(short pause, on an even keel)

According to guidelines, the majority of our crew has gone into stasis to conserve resources. Still awake from our 42-person complement are myself; Nessa Cheong, Agriculture; Ashwini Ray, Astrophysics; Michell L'Anglois, Security; and Wilder, Base Maintenance. This is as per your list, other than the replacement with Nessa – our other farmer, Harold McVett, was a medical induction due to respiratory distress. A full report will be transmitted after this broadcast.

(pause)

Tasks for the shutdown sequence are outlined in the memo approved by senior management. These will be assigned as they best suit each team member, and include the ramping down of all mining operations, programming the radio telescopes for remote operation, closing down all active experiments and saving off data. Experiments requiring special attention include BRISTL, where the hedgehogs will need to transition to Earth-standard atmosphere; PIX-E, where the hallucinogenic agents must be neutralized without aspiration; and decisions must be made regarding the mutated tardigrades from Project GRO-BEAR. All team members will assist in the sterilizing and spaceproofing of laboratory areas as they are closed off.

(pause)

All active crew will also take shifts monitoring the stasis pods, as we have already noted some variations in the reports. We'd like to request the full shutdown logs from Bases Alpha through Eta, to see if they experienced any of the same. None of us are experts in this area; the additional data would be helpful.

(a brief pause, wryly)

Naturally, we're all looking forward to waking up safe and sound back on Earth. We appreciate your making this a priority.

(brief pause, a bit of irritation seeping in)

We would have accessed the information directly, but our link to the bases on the near side remains broken. I'd like to take an inspection tour of the microwave transmission towers; please see my requests of June 28, July 12, and August 1. Michell will not release the Rover vehicle for my use without your signed approval, despite my numerous ... numerous requests.

(a barely-breathed sigh)

Of course, this means we have lost video links as well, and with them our view of Earth and how things are going down there. We're starting to forget your face.

(pause)

Base operations remain within acceptable levels. Helium-3 stores are at 85%, water is at 63%; these will continue to increase with mining at current levels. We've switched power to the polar stations as we're currently in dark phase. Food stores are sufficient, particularly now that there are only five of us to fight over the drumsticks. And three are vegan.

(pause, somewhat amused)

I'll attach the numbers for that survey the Entertainment wing sent up – we had every crew member run through it pre-stasis. The Foie Gras track had the most heat as far as olfactory goes, but in the traditional media, the senssurround from *Hanuman's Children* was more of a hit. Everyone's excited to live that one on release day.

4

(pause, insistent, more emotionally invested)

Regarding your comment on my last transmission – if you review my employment contract, I am allocated fifteen seconds of each broadcast for personal messages. My personal message is as follows: To my husband, Alexandre.

(briefest of pauses)

I love you, give Castor and Pollux a treat for me, I'll be coming home soon.

(after a brief pause)

Moonbase Theta, out.

(The episode ends.)

MOONBASE THETA, OUT S1E2
“Nineteen”

by D. J. Sylvis

CHARACTERS

ROGER BRAGADO-FISCHER

(The episode begins with no real introduction, just a bit of static before Roger breaks through. There may be moments where the quality drops during his monologue, or static takes over again. It may be filtered to give the impression of a broadcast from space.)

ROGER

Broadcasting. This is Roger Bragado-Fischer, Communications, Moonbase Theta. The date is August 11, 2098; the time is 22:43.

(short pause, somewhat annoyed)

Base shutdown is at nineteen weeks and counting; all tasks are moving forward on schedule, though with ... minor variations. There has been some dispute among the extant crew members over who holds responsibility for quality assurance and final task approval. Our management team, of course, went into stasis on your instructions, which left a certain ... vacuum.

(a sardonic chuckle)

Perhaps in space, you believed that was unavoidable. But it is becoming an issue, particularly in the monitoring of the telescopic arrays. Clarification is requested.

(pause)

With the reduction in active personnel, we've all been taking shifts in the observatory. Dr. Ray – Ashwini – is immersed in data analysis, particularly as deadlines loom in our schedule. They've even taken to sleeping in the chamber. We assist by monitoring the flow in real-time, both from the radio antenna array and the multi-wavelength optical telescopes. Optical monitoring is, of course, only useful when observing closer and more erratic cosmic phenomena.

(pause for breath)

We log variations for review, and if they are marked for follow-up, we alter our focus in that direction. In theory, these decisions come from Ashwini as well, but lot of it has been passed on to bots they've written into the network. Direct feedback or signoff on our labour is nonexistent.

(pause, their voice softens, perhaps a sigh)

It *has* been intriguing, being brought up to speed on the radio array, learning to read the data. To be sitting hundreds of meters underground, the array spanning the breadth of the Daedalus Crater above us ...

(brief pause, reverent)

All of space filtered down in streams of numbers, in correlations and profiles that spiral like the galaxies they reflect ... quasars, nebulae, the unbelievable mass of a black hole, invisible but radiant gas clouds ... wavelengths too massive to measure through mirrors and glass. It's a magnificence unimaginable to the naked eye.

(pause, somewhat bashful at his enthusiasm)

Of course, it's my responsibility as Communications to capture it all, both for reports and to use in crafting outgoing messages. But there have been issues. Michell keeps inserting themselves into the process as if we all report to them, as if Security in the natural order of things trumps science or necessity or ...

(softer, quietly)

Beauty.

(again, a little embarrassed, rushing forward)

Certainly, if we find evidence of an incipient alien invasion, or encroaching development by a rival corporate entity, they'll be the first we alert. But otherwise ... you see the issue. If you could provide a memo, perhaps outline a reporting structure for these situations –

(just realizing, recoiling)

I am not suggesting that *I* be put in charge. I believe Dr. Ray is still capable, given proper motivation and reminders, to manage their area.

4

(pause, back to normal)

Base operations remain within acceptable levels. Helium-3 stores are at 90% and are being converted and stored for transfer on the returning supply rocket. Water is at 60%; a slight decrease due to an accident caused when the sewage tanks were vented directly to the surface. Please note the attached map and adjust your landing locations appropriately.

(pause, a bit perturbed)

Two final notes, both referring back to my previous transmission. First, we requested copies of the near-side Bases' shutdown logs for review. So far, our stasis pods have remained stable, but these would assist in reducing some significant safety concerns. Second, regarding my request for vehicle access to inspect and repair the microwave transmission towers. Michell has informed me that this is now pending with Security for approval. I'd ask you to reconsider and respond directly.

(pause, softening)

Personal message follows from this point. Alexandre, I'm missing you terribly today. Pets to Cas and Pol; have you been watching what they eat? You know how they get during squirrel season. You've been on my mind so often through the days, wishing I could share all this with you. Should we ever need to escape the strife on Earth, I've claimed a nebula in your name. The mathematics are absolutely lovely.

(after a brief pause)

Moonbase Theta, out.

(The episode ends.)

MOONBASE THETA, OUT S1E3
“Eighteen”

by D. J. Sylvis

CHARACTERS

ROGER BRAGADO-FISCHER

(The episode begins with no real introduction, just a bit of static before Roger breaks through. There may be moments where the quality drops during his monologue, or static takes over again. It may be filtered to give the impression of a broadcast from space.)

ROGER

Broadcasting. This is Roger Bragado-Fischer, Communications, Moonbase Theta. The date is August 18, 2098; time is 9:22 and thirty-six seconds. Base shutdown, eighteen weeks.

(short pause, upset)

The supply rocket has not arrived. With our ongoing transmission issues, we are only alerted when the rocket reaches line of sight with Theta; or if a message is sent via satellite, of which there are none currently within range. Thus, we have no news as to whether this is a delay en route, if the rocket was ever launched, or if ... there is some more significant issue, of which we have not been informed.

(trying to stay calm)

The primary consideration with this delay is the Helium-3 stores. The tanks are currently on the surface awaiting retrieval; however, the loading dock is within full sunlight – we shifted back to day this week – and it is difficult to maintain temperature for superfluid storage. Moving the tanks back underground would cause significant delays when the rocket *does* eventually arrive but may prove necessary. And of course, vehicle access to retrieve will require additional approval ...

(clears throat)

... from Base Security.

(continuing on)

Most standard on and offload items are lower priority, although since Nessa has taken over rationing and run an inventory, it is noted we are dangerously low on chocolate.

(brief pause, disapproving)

Stasis pods, as per your recent instructions, will be maintained on base for the time being. I've provided a log of the warning light configurations we've noted – if you cannot release the other Base logs, then please have your analysts compare and advise from that data. There are only three more rockets scheduled over which we can spread the offload of our personnel.

(pause)

In the meantime, we have begun to sterilize and decommission unused station areas. As mentioned in my previous broadcast, there were a few issues that required additional sterilization, and we've only just moved on to the crew quarters. While everyone was requested to move personal items into storage, wipe all media files, and initiate their own cleaning protocols, this has not turned out to be the case.

(still annoyed, but amused as well)

It's like being a resident assistant after dorm check-out. Dirty clothing stuffed into cubbyholes; used food trays, though these did allow us to secure most of the fruit flies which had disappeared from the genetics lab. A variety of contraceptive devices; several religious icons; several football banners, which were of course banned from open display during the last World Cup. Three Pizza Pops, which Nessa has confirmed were never a part of official stores ... and one hedgehog who had been written off as deceased in the labs, apparently being kept as a pet.

(pause)

Finally, some of the hydroponics equipment from our farm made its way back to the personal quarters of Harold McVett, Agriculture. I only mention this because the ... particular crop they were cultivating may have had to do with their respiratory issues.

(embarrassed cough, businesslike again)

As required by the Entertainment wing, we have been checking all media files for rights management. There were several bootleg copies of *Chennai Commandos* being passed around, as well as multi tracks by Depression Zed and a few questionable cortex apps. All details were logged and provided to Michell for reporting.

4

(pause, more urgent)

It appears that the satellite has moved into range while I composed this message, with no updates regarding the status of our supply rocket. Please reply as soon as you receive this broadcast.

(brief pause, just a bit hurried)

Alexandre, I'm sorry, I have to get this sent out. All my love, please take care of yourself. I'm already looking forward to the day I'm back in our terrible, lumpy bed.

(sighs, a pause)

Moonbase Theta, out.

(The episode ends.)

MOONBASE THETA, OUT S1E4
“Seventeen”

by D. J. Sylvis

CHARACTERS

ROGER BRAGADO-FISCHER

(The episode begins with no real introduction, just a bit of static before Roger breaks through. There may be moments where the quality drops during his monologue, or static takes over again. It may be filtered to give the impression of a broadcast from space.)

ROGER

Broadcasting. Roger Bragado-Fischer, Moonbase Theta. The date is August 25, 2098; 8:45 in the morning. Seventeen weeks before base shutdown.

(brief pause, concerned)

Your reply to my previous message, “Rocket delay – border skirmishes affecting access to Alacânta launchpad,” with no further explanation, has caused a rising level of dismay here. The rocket itself, of course, is needed – we have moved the Helium-3 tanks back underground for the time being, though storage space is limited. But on an ... emotional level, several crew members have friends and contacts in areas affected by the ongoing Rio – São Paulo enclave disputes. You should know from my personnel file that I hold Rio citizenship, and my husband resides there now. We await additional information, hopefully by the next satellite passby.

(pause, trying to hold on to normal operations)

If the supply rocket has *not* yet launched, Wilder has requested some additional items for base repairs – five meters of reinforced vacuum jumper hose; three XR-sized air filters for laboratory use, we’re still clearing out the PIX-E experiment; and, I’m quoting, “As much duct tape as you can spare.”

(a bit of a chuckle)

I’ve done a few shifts lately assisting Wilder on their rounds – the duct tape is an absolute must-have. What they do with tape and twist ties to a fusion reactor is both impressive and horrifying at the same time; I don’t know where we’d be without them. Actually, I do, and it would involve a lot less component molecules than any of us are comfortable with.

(pause)

I’d also ask that you place my positive endorsement in their file. I know Security has ongoing concerns about the trustworthiness of enhanced persons; that prejudice needs to be eradicated.

(pause, more serious and a bit upset)

Particularly as *our* Security representative has been less than circumspect of late. I know you’ll have received a report on the incident, but as I was also in the quarters where they were discovered ... I’d like to corroborate. I won’t go into details ... but it was definitely not their private space or their private time, but the activities exposed were ... very private indeed. While both are responsible for the incident, I feel that Security has an extra duty to exercise discretion.

(short pause)

I’m sorry, let me find my place. Rocket delay, Rio, base repairs, the Michell-Nessa thing ... oh. In response to my report on discovered contraband, I was asked to provide details connecting names to the illicit items listed. At the time we didn’t log that information. It had not been requested, and at this date, I’m afraid my memory fails.

(pause, distracted but pushing on)

Base operations – all levels are staying within levels. HE-3 is at, umm, 32%, this is our storage, not the tanks for retrieval. Water is back up to 70% and stable. Power supply is optimal, fully on local panels until we go dark later in the week. Food stores are still adequate, though the requests submitted previously remain outstanding ... until rocket arrival.

(brief, nervous pause)

Please ... provide further details at the highest priority, both on the rocket schedule and the current situation that is causing the delays. I will monitor for updates.

4

(pause, coughs)

Personal message following to my husband: Please write back as soon as this is delivered. I don't know what's going on there, and ...

(brief pause for breath)

A few words are enough, just ... tell me you're okay. I love you. Stay safe. Castor and Pollux, safe. All of you, safe. I love you.

(after a brief pause)

Moonbase Theta, out.

(The episode ends.)

MOONBASE THETA, OUT S1E5
“Sixteen”

by D. J. Sylvis

CHARACTERS

ROGER BRAGADO-FISCHER

(The episode begins with no real introduction, just a bit of static before Roger breaks through. There may be moments where the quality drops during his monologue, or static takes over again. It may be filtered to give the impression of a broadcast from space.)

ROGER

Broadcasting. Roger Bragado-Fischer speaking, Communications, Moonbase Theta. The date is September 1, 2098; the time is 20:43. Sixteen weeks, still counting down.

(pause, fairly reasonable but harried)

The rocket has just departed. It took most of the day to move the tanks back to the surface and onload, they made their return window with only minutes to spare. A full manifest will be sent by separate broadcast for your reference.

(pause, more focused)

Due to the loading schedule ... I've only been able to sit now and listen to your message. The news that the enclaves are cooperating once again has relieved some tension among the crew; thank you for that. However, your assurances that all family members and corporate employees are safely accounted for, without providing personal details or direct messages from the same ... are not making us feel all that secure.

(a bit more upset)

Just a few words from our loved ones, as soon as possible, any message *from* them at all, would be ...

(restraining themselves)

I'm sure you understand. We, umm, appreciate your ongoing efforts in this area.

(pause, pulling back in)

Tasks for the shutdown sequence continue. Ashwini has upgraded the automation on the radio telescope array, which has allowed us to scale back on monitoring duties. However, this has not resulted in their emergence from the observatory, not even at mealtimes. Helium mining operations continue, while ice mining has moved to lower priority. The reduction of these duties has allowed for a more constant supervision of the stasis pods. Wilder was able to find documentation that indicates the warning lights could be due to power fluctuations; please confirm if you are able.

(pause, more gently, opening up)

I've also been assisting Nessa with the hydroponic farm system. While our needs for produce and cultured proteins have diminished, scaling back has to happen in delicate steps, as the farm is tied into the air and water scrubbing mechanisms for the base. Also, there are aesthetic and emotional considerations – everyone tends to linger there on break and recreation periods. It's a ... welcome change from the sterile functionality of the other living areas.

(brief pause)

Much of the welcoming atmosphere comes from Nessa themselves, and that would be more difficult to reproduce. We've shared certain tasks since I took over responsibility for the genetic archives, but I've come to appreciate them even more while assisting on the farm. If our management issues continue, there could be a worse choice to fill in the gaps. Nessa is personable, listens closely and offers valuable feedback, and they have a remarkable mastery of Base rules and regulations.

(a bit maliciously)

When Michell came in complaining about secure protocols, Nessa had the appropriate Terms and Conditions right on the tip of their tongue, barely a pause despite the ... history between the two. It was impressive.

(pause)

Shortly thereafter, I was informed by Michell that there will be a coded Security report to broadcast later today. Be aware that is forthcoming.

(pause, stumbling a bit)

To ... my Alexandre, sorry this is the personal message portion of the broadcast, to Alexandre, whenever you receive my messages, please respond, please let me know where you are and how you're doing. It's been a tense few weeks.

(briefest of pauses)

Working the farm, I've been reminded of our garden. The planting and harvesting, walking beside the rows while dusk shadows the sky, and stars and satellites become visible. The scent of the flowers, the rustling of stalks in the breeze, your hand in mine.

(a quiet laugh)

I've been reading that book of poetry you sent me; I found the one you loved as a child.

(reciting)

*Slipping softly through the sky
Little horned, happy moon,
Can you hear me up so high?
Will you come down soon?*

*On my nursery window-sill
Will you stay your steady flight?
And then float away with me
Through the summer night?*

*Brushing over tops of trees,
Playing hide and seek with stars,
Peeping up through shiny clouds
At Jupiter or Mars.*

*I shall fill my lap with roses
Gathered in the milky way,
All to carry home to mother.
Oh! what will she say!*

*Little rocking, sailing moon,
Do you hear me shout — Ahoy!
Just a little nearer, moon,
To please a little boy.*

(after a brief pause)

Moonbase Theta, out.

(The episode ends.)

MOONBASE THETA, OUT S1E6
“Fifteen”

by D. J. Sylvis

CHARACTERS

ROGER BRAGADO-FISCHER

(The episode begins with no real introduction, just a bit of static before Roger breaks through. There may be moments where the quality drops during his monologue, or static takes over again. It may be filtered to give the impression of a broadcast from space.)

ROGER

Broadcasting. This is Roger Bragado-Fischer, Communications on Moonbase Theta. The date is September 9, 2098; the time is 12:54.

(grateful, relieved)

On a personal note – thank you for passing along word from my husband, even though it fell between the regular weekly schedule for transmission. It was greatly appreciated.

(brief pause, more professional)

We are at fifteen weeks before the scheduled base shutdown. We understand that schedule is now in dispute, due to restructuring after the merger of the Rio and São Paulo enclaves. There was some confusion in the memo received from your office – from whichever office now holds over Moonbase operations – and I would like to reply to your queries point by point.

(pause, icy, trying to throw their weight around with the new management)

If you refer back to my broadcast of August 11 – a full transcript is available if the audio file has been misplaced – I outlined my experience with, and feelings regarding, the use of the telescopic array. As this was one of the priority tasks that led to the construction of a far-side Moonbase to begin with; and as automation has already reduced this to a single person's responsibility (and that person is particularly dedicated), my recommendation would be to keep both eyes open until the last possible moment.

(pause, relaxing that grip a tiny bit)

To the related suggestion that mining become our primary focus, both helium and ice mining has continued at full capacity. There have been outside delays which have affected productivity – rockets arriving off schedule, a few bad solar flare days in the previous cycle – these could not be improved by shifting personnel from other shutdown sequences. I have Wilder's assurances in this regard, and no one better understands the system and its mechanisms.

(pause, irritation seeping through)

The current active experiments, the hydroponic farms, and the rest of your list of 'unnecessary responsibilities' are all in the process of being ramped down as it is. I've attached a copy of the original target dates for each instance – which leads us to your primary, and most complicated, request.

(the briefest of disapproving pauses)

You've asked if we could complete all Base shutdown activities and automations, including all active crew sent to stasis, by the mid-October rocket. That would compress our schedule almost exactly by half.

(injured pause)

I'm not sure you're aware of the ramifications. Astrophysics and Observation; Agriculture; Mechanical and Maintenance; the mining operations, the scientific experiments and the genetic archives – each of these is a valuable part of the Moonbase project. Each was implemented under rigorous corporate guidelines, has been through yearly review and retooling, and each underwent a six-month analysis to define the best flow for reaching base shutdown to the greatest benefit.

(more bitter)

We understand that with new project ownership can come new loyalties. Certainly, our Security representative must have thought so, as they seem to have advised – without any real technical knowledge or consultation – that this amended schedule is feasible. My opinion – our opinion, as I speak for the entire *technical* crew currently available – is that we should hold the course for the best of all involved. Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

(more personable in tone)

As you spin up to speed regarding Theta and pending Base communications, I hope you'll process outstanding requests in a timely fashion. Of particular concern on my part is an ongoing issue with the

4

towers connecting us with the larger comm system – I’ve submitted requests on several occasions that are currently bottlenecked due to Security, and I’d like to resolve this issue as soon as possible.

(pause)

Several crew members have asked if HR could forward an updated version of the Moonbase Employee Compensation and Benefit package, if any changes have been made due to the transfer in ownership. Of particular interest was whether we retain unlimited decontamination coverage.

(pause)

Personal message follows – please see my file if you have questions, this portion of the broadcast is to be provided to my legal listed contact.

(softening)

Alex, love, it was wonderful to finally hear your voice. I hope you’ll all be able to move back home soon, and please, if things are anywhere near as dire as you say ... hire a cleaning service.

(chuckles)

I promise, as long as you keep replying, I’ll ease off on the poetry. I love you.

(brief pause)

Oh. Non-personal message, additional – I received the note from Entertainment about the verses I read into my last broadcast. The work of Amy Lowell is certainly within the public domain, and I will not sign the agreement you’ve provided.

(satisfied pause)

Moonbase Theta, out.

(The episode ends.)

MOONBASE THETA, OUT S1E7
“Fourteen”

by D. J. Sylvis

CHARACTERS

ROGER BRAGADO-FISCHER

(The episode begins with no real introduction, just a bit of static before Roger breaks through. There may be moments where the quality drops during his monologue, or static takes over again. It may be filtered to give the impression of a broadcast from space.)

ROGER

Broadcasting. This is Roger Bragado-Fischer, Communications, Moonbase Theta. The date is September 15th, 2098; time is 2:29. Fourteen weeks before base shutdown.

(rushing a bit)

Base operations remain within acceptable levels. Helium-3 stores are at 66% - ahead of schedule for the next rocket offload October 5th. Water is at 82% and stable. Power levels are optimal on local panels; we moved back to light phase this week. Rations and miscellaneous supplies are good.

(pausing for breath)

Astrophysics continues to monitor the readings provided by both radio and telescopic arrays; Agriculture has been scaling back food production and recycling operations on schedule, as fresh rations have reached optimal levels. Additional Base areas have been decommissioned and depressurized, thanks to Maintenance, who have also kept up mechanical repairs and continue to supervise all mining operations. Security, presumably they report their progress to you directly.

(continuing)

Thank you for your confirmation that the original dates for full Base shutdown will be held. We appreciate your confidence in our schedule and our abilities.

(pause, slightly unsettled)

Your new Base directives have been received and disseminated to all personnel. It is understood that you expect these to be implemented as of this date, to the letter provided.

(brief pause, almost mechanically)

All data regarding the stasis pods is to be submitted in full for review by your experts on Earth. We are not to attempt any direct action in this matter, but are to wait for your instructions.

(pause)

The automation of telescopic arrays is to be made a priority, in order to free up crew hours for other key tasks. Analysis of outstanding data may continue for now but should be scaled back considerably. As mentioned in your previous communication, any additional availability due to these and previously scheduled changes should be applied to the HE-3 mining operations.

(pause, forced cheerfulness)

Agriculture is currently implementing the requested changeover of all cultured proteins to the company's new En-Soy-ment brand. Responses have been ... generally positive, and the crew has been informed that any pictures tagged with the Ensoyment button will receive credits for additional leave time on Earth. I'm sure you'll see those coming through shortly.

(pause, trying to be genial)

As I'm sure you're aware, there were issues with previous management due to a lack of clarity in reporting structures. It is obvious that you prefer a style where all decisions and changes in initiative come directly from the program supervisors there on Earth. This is heard and acknowledged.

(slightly sly)

For this administrative style to be optimal, clear and open lines of communication are an absolute necessity. I refer, of course, to the cross-Moon microwave tower network, which needs to be brought back to operating status. This would allow for more frequent communication both to and from Earth. Please see my recent reports.

(weighty pause, conflicted)

There is one new directive I haven't yet mentioned. This is your assignment to Communications, to myself, that I begin to monitor all internal Base messaging, both of a professional and personal nature. I

4

am to provide reports on the content of said conversations, as well as offering suggestions regarding censoring where ... this wording particularly struck me ... where 'appropriate'.

(a truly injured pause)

It is obvious that my protests will fall on deaf ears – the line reading, “THIS IS NOT A REQUEST,” was something of a hint – so I will restrict my commentary to a single point. You end this with the comment, “Of particular concern should be the communications of Agriculturist Cheong.” I’d like to ask why. If you’ve been told something by our Security ... I’d ask you to review personnel notes for both Nessa and Michell and consider how their previous interactions might colour any ... negative statements.

(pause, disheartened)

That said, I acknowledge and confirm the instructions provided.

(after another pause, warming up as they get into this)

Personal message to follow. Dear Alexandre, welcome home. I hope there wasn’t too much of a mess. I ... don’t believe I authorized the production of puppies in my absence. Make sure to name one after me, and make sure they all find good homes that are not ours. I love you.

(pause)

Moonbase Theta, out.

(The episode ends.)

MOONBASE THETA, OUT S1E8
“Thirteen”

by D. J. Sylvis

CHARACTERS

ROGER BRAGADO-FISCHER

(The episode begins with no real introduction, just a bit of static before Roger breaks through. There may be moments where the quality drops during his monologue, or static takes over again. It may be filtered to give the impression of a broadcast from space.)

ROGER

Broadcasting. Roger Bragado-Fischer, Moonbase Theta. September 22nd, 2098.

(barely a pause before jumping in, forceful)

Emergency alert to all teams receiving this broadcast. We have identified a potential collision event, an asteroid that we believe could impact planetside. Please distribute this report to all relevant parties. Again – we have found an astronomical object on course with Earth.

(pause, a bit more measured)

Using the Base's full range of telescopic arrays, we have identified an asteroid not previously known or tracked to this date, on a path that could bring it into range for a terrestrial impact event. This object originated from outside our system and entered close enough to the Sun that it was previously unidentifiable by our instruments and remains so to any planetside viewing stations. What we've been able to discover is that this is an M-type nickel-iron composition asteroid, approximately 95 meters in breadth, approaching at 8 kilometers per second. Provisional designation of the object would be 2098 SK₁₅₆; to simplify things we are calling it 'SK'.

(pause, terse)

The current projected path for SK could easily take it within the Earth's atmosphere. Potential impact sites have not yet been identified; the calculations are quite complicated. There is the possibility that it might fragment before reaching us, or carom between orbital debris and be diverted, or even impact here on the Moon. The Moon is hit by about 2800 kilograms of material per day, with no significant atmosphere to cushion the impact – you might say we're specialists in this area. You'll recall the meteor strike of June 2082, which created the Degrasse-Tyson crater and demolished our first mining operations on this side.

(pause, more personal, almost excited)

I was a part of the actual discovery – I continue to take shifts in the observatory as a part of my duties to craft the spaceward broadcasts sent out by the array, so I help now and then with the monitoring, as well. The initial radio reflections were so minute, partially hidden by noise from the Sun itself – I didn't even notice them. But Ashwini caught on right away, recalibrated and focused the array to that direction.

(a bit amused)

I've never seen them that agitated. They practically raised their voice, they actually left the room for a few moments to think. It was something to see. I'm sorry, of course this is a serious situation.

(brief pause)

A full report regarding the asteroid SK, including copies of all relevant data and projections, is being prepared by Astrophysicist Ashwini Ray and will be submitted by separate broadcast as soon as completed. We will await your instructions.

(pause, flat by comparison)

Base operations remain at acceptable levels. Helium-3 stores are at 74%; water remains stable. Power levels are optimal; rations are generally good. We've had to reduce provided sweets and snack items, but morale remains positive in that area. There are a few minor supply requests; I'll have Wilder provide a list before my next broadcast.

(brief pause)

We've reviewed your analysis regarding the stasis pod fluctuations. While "an acceptable level of efficiency" is a positive result, we'd like to know more about how the data compares to the near-side Bases. The warning lights continue to be a concern.

(pause for a breath)

I have yet to begin the review of internal communications that you ...requested, as of September 15th. Obviously, the current emergency had to take priority; we've all adjusted our focus and our duties. Nessa

4

in particular has taken up additional responsibilities during this crisis moment, particularly in resource allocation and personnel management – this should be noted in their file.

(pause, returning to the tone of the beginning of the broadcast)

Once more, to all receiving. There is an astronomical object approaching Earth on an impact course. Please review the additional documentation appended; we will provide further data as it becomes available.

(pause, fairly flat)

Note that we would have relayed this message far more quickly if it were not for current issues with the communications towers.

(brief pause)

Personal message – Alexandre, I promise you, everything will be okay. I love you. Best to the hounds and everyone there.

(pause)

Moonbase Theta, out.

(The episode ends.)

MOONBASE THETA, OUT S1E9
“Twelve”

by D. J. Sylvis

CHARACTERS

ROGER BRAGADO-FISCHER

(The episode begins with no real introduction, just a bit of static before Roger breaks through. There may be moments where the quality drops during his monologue, or static takes over again. It may be filtered to give the impression of a broadcast from space.)

ROGER

Broadcasting. This is Roger Bragado-Fischer, Communications Lead, Moonbase Theta. The date is September 29th, 2098; the time is 8:34.

(pause, on an even keel)

We are at twelve weeks before base shutdown, resuming normal operations and holding to our schedule. Following up on our broadcast of the 22nd, the asteroid known as 2098 SK₁₅₆ is no longer a threat. I repeat, SK is no longer an astronomical object of any concern. Emergency status is complete.

(even smoother without being aware)

The course of events is as follows: two days ago, at approximately 9:42 Lunar Standard Time, we observed by radio telescopic array that the path of the asteroid had varied to the point where it would pass within 5,200 kilometers of the planet Venus. This brought it just within the tipping point of Venus' gravity well, and into a parabolic orbit. On escaping that planet's pull, it will have been taken 79 degrees off the original trajectory and ... well, far from the Earth or the Moon, that's the important part. I'll leave it to Ashwini to provide the mathematical details. I've been asked to note that this possibility was included in the calculations they previously provided.

(pause, then continuing in the same vein)

We will monitor this progression closely, and continue to keep watch for any other objects that might encroach. We'll continue to feed data for review by your observatories planetside; as noted in last week's broadcast, this particular object was only visible to our instrumentation on-Base.

(pause, back on solid ground)

Offloading procedures have begun in preparation for next week's rocket arrival. Helium storage tanks and personnel stasis pods are being prepped for transport. He-3 will be transported in the usual tanks, also being used as the stasis cooling liquid. We have identified the pods for priority removal that have shown the warning light sequence previously discussed. After personnel are revived and those pods are decommissioned, hopefully you can identify the issues. A list of personnel for transport has been attached so you can issue the appropriate notifications.

(pause)

Maintenance has provided the following supply requests: Additional stock of duct and electrical tape; a replacement 13 millimeter socket suitable for cybernetic attachment; a dozen air fresheners, Lilac Lavender scent; and ... two bags of the seeding salts previously detailed in notes for experiment GRO-BEAR. Also, if you can provide any chocolate, it'd go a long way.

(pause, contemplative, but still perhaps the slightest bit fake)

In your most recent message, you asked for a report on crew morale. There's no question there have been a few difficulties. The changeover in management, the stress of continued changes to the task list for Base shutdown, the emotional difficulty of watching over our colleagues already in stasis. The end of our term on Theta is becoming visible, and I suppose we're wondering just what we've accomplished. We're looking forward to life on Earth ... but also looking for the meaning in our time here on the Moon. Sometimes, you throw yourself more fully into your work; sometimes you find yourself staring off into ... waiting for the end.

(brief pause)

Agriculturist Cheong has been organizing intramural competitions and game sessions to try to jolt everyone out of their funk. They play a mean hand of ten-card Sueca. Even Michell has joined in at times, and if anyone needs to shake themselves loose ...

4

(pause, falsely jolly)

There are always the standard distractions. I don't believe anyone in the crew is having sex these days, at least with each other. The senssuround library is being accessed regularly by those who have kept up their licenses – lately, the *Shaolin Superteam* series has seen a lot of access, we've all lived Professor Wing a time or two. Ashwini has licenses for the Narnia properties, I heard them talking to a faun under their breath in their cubicle. Full logs are available to the Entertainment group as required.

(pause)

Base operations remain at acceptable levels. Helium-3 stores are at 98%, currently being converted to superfluid state and stored for transport. Water remains stable, rations are generally stable, we've switched back to the solar panels at the poles for power supply, but have had to rely on generators a few times while Wilder tracked down some wiring issues.

(brief pause)

Personal message to follow, as usual to my husband. Hi, love. Are you counting down? Hopefully nothing happened to the kitchen cabinets during the recent upheavals, because you're going to want to look on the top shelf above the waffle iron ... but not until Thursday. I hope the vet went well, give me an update. I'll talk to you next week.

(pause)

Moonbase Theta, out.

(The episode ends.)

MOONBASE THETA, OUT S1E10
“Eleven”

by D. J. Sylvis

CHARACTERS

ROGER BRAGADO-FISCHER

(The episode begins with no real introduction, just a bit of static before Roger breaks through. There may be moments where the quality drops during his monologue, or static takes over again. It may be filtered to give the impression of a broadcast from space.)

ROGER

(a bit rushed, he is upset)

Broadcasting. This is Roger Bragado-Fischer, Moonbase Theta. October 6th, 2098; 20:16.

(pause, he is forcing himself to go through his notes item by item)

The rocket has just departed on schedule. There was a slight delay due to a faulty locking mechanism on loading hatch three, but Wilder was able to make a repairs with a length of 9-gauge wire and flame-retardant duct tape. Watch for that on landing. All supplies are checked off on the manifest as received. The Helium-3 tanks were loaded without incident and locked in successfully.

(takes a breath before diving in)

Not loaded in successfully were the personnel stasis pods. We had fifteen pods prepared for transport, stacked for loading on the surface, hooked to temporary connections so there would be no power or coolant interruptions, all as per standard requirements. When your rocket arrived and we opened it up, inside the bay reserved for the pods ... was nothing. No wire or tubing hookups, none of the required racks or dampers ... I suppose we could have stacked them like shoeboxes. We could have chucked them in there and hoped for the best – was there a memo we missed? Some change in the target dates? There are only two scheduled rocket landings after this one, and even if we dumped the HE-3 to make more space, we couldn't fit 42 pods into two rockets. Let us know as soon as possible what happened, why we weren't informed ... what is going on?

(pause, trying to calm himself)

I'm sorry. Please advise regarding your plan for the offload of Base personnel. I'm sure you can understand our anxiety. We await your response.

(a bit of a longer pause than usual, as if he's actually going to sign off there, then, reluctantly)

Eleven weeks before base shutdown.

(another moment to breathe)

Normal operations continue. Ashwini monitors the telescope arrays closely, including tracking the SK asteroid, which is now on a path back out of our solar system. Mining operations, focused on helium-3 production, continue apace. Agriculture and Maintenance report no incidents, fully on schedule.

(brief pause, warming up)

You asked about my previous reference to the work I do in designing spaceward, outgoing messages. As well as tracking and exploring astronomical objects, a secondary use of the instrument array is to send wide-range radio frequency messages *into* space. It may seem a bit foolish from a business perspective, though think of all the things we could sell to an alien race – but it's a project that the Base administration has always taken seriously.

(pause)

Finding a way to encapsulate the entirety of human experience for an audience that knows nothing of it. Putting concepts down in words, with which I have to include a primer for potential species that may not even talk. Making sure anything I include can't be misconstrued or poorly interpreted ... it's a challenging task. Obviously, we can't just send, "What's up? How's the weather on Proxima B?" If you have suggestions, I'd love to hear them.

(pauses then continues, obviously unhappy)

You also insisted that I provide information regarding the internal monitoring which, of course, has been undertaken. I want to register my continued discomfort with the task ... but my current report is as follows.

(after a breath)

Almost all of Ashwini's conversations are regarding theories and aspects of their analysis, despite the fact that no one they're speaking to could possibly understand the ramifications. Wilder has this really annoying habit of digging up ancient memes from the database and forwarding them around – none of us are certain what a 'doge' is but we've had about enough. Nessa's personal communications range quite a bit, they offer a lot of ... emotional support to the rest of the crew, almost a de facto counselor at times, but they also have an odd penchant for true crime media, so you hear more about autopsies and blood spatter than you might want to learn – all harmless, of course. If you want a report on myself, I'm sure anyone would tell you I spend too much time sighing about my family at home. I mean, you're talking about someone who had clause written into their contract to send sappy messages to their husband every week. I wasn't able to monitor Michell's messaging of any sort. It's completely locked down, which I'd assume you're aware of and approve. That's, umm ... all I have to say in this area.

(pause, fondly)

Personal message to follow. To my wonderful, amazing, incredibly good-looking and personable husband – well, that's all the birthday present you're getting from me. All right, all right. What did you think of the orbital? Did it fit? I hope the platinum goes well with the advancing grey in your hair.

(loving pause)

I found another poem in your book, it seemed appropriate. This one is by Anna Hempstead Branch:

(brief pause)

*When I am weary for delight and spent,
Even as a bird that tries too long its wings
Will nest awhile amid the grass and sings,
So I drop downward from the wonderment
Of timelessness and space, in which were blent
The wind, the sunshine and the wanderings
Of all the planets -- to the little things
That are my grass and flowers and am content.*

*Or if in flight my wings should beat so far
From the kind grass that is so cool and deep
That it must poise among the winds on high --
Yet will I sing to thee from star to star,
Piercing thy sunshine, and will always keep
A song for thee amid the farthest sky.*

(brief pause)

Happiest of days. Save some cake, love, we've only got ten more weeks.

(pause)

Moonbase Theta, out.

(The episode ends.)

MOONBASE THETA, OUT S1E11
“Ten”

by D. J. Sylvis

CHARACTERS

ROGER BRAGADO-FISCHER

(The episode begins with no real introduction, just a bit of static before Roger breaks through. There may be moments where the quality drops during his monologue, or static takes over again. It may be filtered to give the impression of a broadcast from space.)

ROGER

(very much by the book, perhaps the slightest bit overly animated)

Broadcasting. This is Roger Bragado-Fischer, Communications Administrator for Moonbase Theta. The date is October 13th, 2098; the time is 5:22. Current temperature is 25 degrees Centigrade; surface temperatures are around 113 degrees. Ten weeks until base shutdown.

(pause, we can hear that he is tiptoeing through this next bit)

I would like to start this week with an apology. Looking back at my report of October 6th, it's obvious that I crossed some lines, both in my response to the issue with the stasis pods, and in the ... tone of my commentary on the crew's internal messaging. As indicated, in both cases I let my professionalism lapse. I greatly regret my ... overreaction.

(brief pause; again, carefully)

I have reviewed your memo with the active crew members. An internal audit of all data relating to recent astronomical ... discoveries, as well as a report on shutdown sequences that have fallen behind schedule, have begun. We understand that any inaccuracies could result in changes in crew task assignments, including the decision to send personnel to stasis earlier than planned. These reports will be the main priority of all staff until completed.

(pause, he resumes, factual but a bit nervous)

Operations - other than those referred to above – continue within acceptable ... levels, as per approved Base guidelines certified by current management on September 11th of this year. Power levels are optimal on local supply. Our fluid-state Helium-3 stores are at 18% currently; mining operations had to relocate after exhausting their accessible supply of lunar regolith but are back up to full operation. Water supplies are stable; Agriculture has indicated that our stores exceed any forecasted needs through the remaining shutdown schedule. Maintenance says with your approval, our ice mining equipment could be decommissioned and the resources reallocated.

(brief pause, the slightest bit of warmth, feeling on solid ground)

Food stores are more than sufficient. The crew has expressed universal gratitude for the renewed supply of snack items. We were down to a single square of Dairy Milk per day, per person; now that's been upped to half a bar, and I'm seeing a lot more smiles around the dining cubicle.

(pause)

All Experiments are now marked as completed and all data logged; all extant subjects have been ... removed, or placed in the laboratory stasis chambers. The only exception is the tardigrades – Wilder has to rig up extra space for them, due to the significant increase in size from original estimates. You may wish to confirm back on Earth with Doctor –

(cut off, leave a pause here to insert static)

Sorry, little quake there, knocked out our power for ten or fifteen minutes. We usually aren't affected much by moonquakes – we're solidly installed within the most stable junction of the lava tubes – but there's been some readjustment as they move the larger mining machinery. We'll provide a full report including seismic analysis – initial estimates are a 3.1 Richter, K-Class of, I think 8. Still feeling the aftershocks now and then.

(pause, a bit rattled)

Operations. I think I've covered everything. We've decommissioned and sealed off 82% of unnecessary station space, including all unused crew quarters and laboratory spaces except as mentioned above. Monitoring continues on the stasis pods, with the variations reported previously and analyzed.

4

(brief, pause, more formal)

Again, allow me to apologize for my previous lapses; and again, your requested review and reporting is underway, to be provided at our next possible broadcast date. Your patience and consideration are appreciated. Umm ...

(there is a longer pause here, considering what to say next, then, finally)

Moonbase Theta, out.

(The episode ends.)

MOONBASE THETA, OUT S1E12
“Nine”

by D. J. Sylvis

CHARACTERS

ROGER BRAGADO-FISCHER

MODDY SARAH (recorded)

(The episode begins with no real introduction, just a bit of static before Roger breaks through. There may be moments where the quality drops during his monologue, or static takes over again. It may be filtered to give the impression of a broadcast from space.)

ROGER

(we can hear even in this beginning recitation that something is off, distracted)

Broadcasting. This is Roger Bragado-Fischer, Communications, Moonbase Theta. The date is October 20, 2098, the time ...

(a longer pause than usual, Roger has lost his way)

Umm, we are at nine weeks. Nine weeks until ... shutdown. Base operations are on an even keel, Helium-3 is increasing steadily, water and power ... we control most of the water, and all of the power. Food ... we're doing okay. Shutdown sequences are on schedule. Mostly on schedule. The reports you've requested previously are complete, and will be appended to this broadcast.

(pause as he carefully chooses his words)

Two days ago, we received a broadcast from an unauthorized source, a rogue satellite apparently launched with the purpose of coming within short-range communications distance of our network. Ashwini was tracking it as an unidentified object; we didn't even know for some time that it was sending. The frequency it used isn't typically monitored.

(pause, he takes a breath)

The message was not encrypted, and is fairly brief. I'll patch it in here.

(The audio is a bit scratchier in this portion, and there may be more reverb and/or background noise. If possible, the message might be prefixed by the sound of a few beeps, as if it were some sort of repeating hazard warning.)

MODDY SARAH

Good morning, occupants of the Moon. This is Moddy Sarah, leader of the Three Rivers Cooperative Community. We're a humanitarian enclave, originally founded under UN leadership – when there was a UN. We've managed to avoid corporate ownership from then to now, which is both a blessing and a curse. We're not the only freehold left to welcome the stranger, but as far as we know, we're the largest left standing.

(pause, weariness slips in)

While we stand. It's getting harder and harder down here, what with all the ... intramural squabbles between the major players. I'm sure you've seen the pattern; you must see halfway to God from where you're sitting. The coastal enclaves are constantly moving inward as the waters rise, annexing land wherever they can grab, making backroom coalitions. Zhengzhou / Shanghai, Philadelphia / DC, Rio / São Paulo, it's all the same dance. They conglomerate, strip the land down to the bedrock, then look for the next green pasture. It's getting to where they're all gonna meet in the middle, and anyone left who's ... unincorporated will get squeezed out.

(a pause, we hear her breathing)

There are still pockets here and there, where we don't have enough of what they need, resources or money to spend. But few places will take our coin, and it's not easy to raise your own crops – all the seed has that fertilizer lock built in and won't grow without it. And the water ... we all know what's upstream.

(solemn and a bit evangelical)

Messaging is pretty well locked down – we can't reach the other independents, we can't reach the supporters we might have inside the system. What we *can* still do is reach the moon. There's an old launch site – you don't need to know where, but we've got access and a bit of old tech and – well, if it all works out, you're hearing this message. This SOS. The Moonbases took their crew from every part of the world,

4

every corporate enclave. All we ask is that you reach out, back to where you're from, and ... send them word. We're still here, though we don't know for how long. Send help. We need critical actions, rebellious thoughts, grassroots efforts. As long as someone lives outside the walls, they'll need the support.

(a deep, soulful sigh)

I don't know what life looks like on the moon, but here ... it's not good, children. We're counting down.

(The message ends as it began, with the hazard warning effect.
Roger speaks again.)

ROGER

(again, choosing his words carefully, trying to hold back his emotion)

The sender does not seem aware that the bulk of the Moonbase program is already decommissioned and the personnel returned to Earth. The events they report haven't shown up on the recognized newsfeeds, and as all corporate enclaves dedicate a 10% tithe to humanitarian efforts, it seems unlikely that they would ... not find the help they need.

(pause, tiptoeing)

There has been discussion among the crew as to the most proper response. We assume this broadcast must be some sort of test, a crude fiction, or a joke gone awry. As such ... we leave it in your hands.

(a brief pause, emotional)

Personal message to follow. Alexandre, I ... hope this finds you well in body, heart, and mind. It's hard to imagine what life is like down there right now, what it'll be by the time I come back to you. I've been away for far too long. But however I find you, wherever you are ... that is always my world. I love you.

Best to Cas and Pol.

(brief pause)

Moonbase Theta, out.

(The episode ends.)

MOONBASE THETA, OUT S1E13
“Eight”

by D. J. Sylvis

CHARACTERS

ROGER BRAGADO-FISCHER

(The episode begins with no real introduction, just a bit of static before Roger breaks through. There may be moments where the quality drops during his monologue, or static takes over again. It may be filtered to give the impression of a broadcast from space.)

ROGER

(struggling a bit to start by the book, rushing through)

Broadcasting. Roger Bragado-Fischer, Communications, Moonbase Theta. The date is October 27, 2098, the time is 8:12. Current temperature is 25 degrees Centigrade; surface temperature is minus 167 degrees. Eight weeks remaining.

(at a more normal pace, a bit strained)

We have received your amended list of shutdown instructions, in response to reports provided and the updated needs of the Earthbound enclaves. Monitoring of the telescopic arrays and spaceproofing Base areas for potential future use are now downgraded, as are any non-essential repairs. Efforts will be concentrated on increased mining production, with the intermediate supply rocket – due on November 9th – fully allocated to retrieval of Helium-3 stores. Offload of the personnel stasis pods is postponed. These instructions have been noted to all staff and logged.

(pause)

Operations will be adjusted as per the new requirements. Water supplies are stable within tolerance levels, a slight unidentified reduction that Wilder is tracking down. Power levels are optimal. Helium-3 stores are currently at 43% in the Base storage tanks.

(a short pause for a breath)

Refocusing on helium-3 mining as requested will require the following reallocation: all ice mining equipment will immediately be converted; additional power lines will be transferred; an additional chamber will be opened for regolith processing.

(brief pause, more uncomfortable)

Personnel will be reassigned as follows: Wilder, already at 90% on mining-related supervision and mechanical; Ashwini will move to 70% allocation in processing and quality control; Nessa will focus at 70%, starting with the decommissioning of the ice mining operations; and my time will be allocated on an increasing basis after I compile the additional reports you've requested. Michell ... of course, has your separate instructions and will act on with whatever those might be.

(pause, more personal and intense)

In your list of materials for station retrieval, I noted that you've deleted references to experimental paraphernalia and the genetic archives. While for the experiments, data is generally sufficient – and would have saved us quite a bit of trouble with the tardigrades – the archives are another issue altogether. I took over their management when Biologist Austen went into stasis, and have become well acquainted with the collection since then, rotating through the samples checking the DNA for viability. I don't think you know ... just what you've got here.

(pause for a breath)

913 samples of animal species and subspecies, 410 of these now extinct. The hawksbill turtle, eastern lowland gorilla, red pandas. 643 samples of vegetative material, over half extinct or mutated beyond recognition. Goldenseal, ginseng-42, every cultivar of the modern banana. These were provided decades ago, they're clean and viable copies. And that's not even counting the genetic breakthroughs made in the experiments performed on-Base. Look at the records, look at the reports. I think you're underestimating the revenue potential in retrieving this material, as well as the moral responsibility in our role as archivists. I'm happy to provide further information, additional examples – just let me know.

(long pause, sighs)

All crew members have read your response to the unauthorized message we received and provided last week. As instructed, I am reading it into the record here.

4

(a slight sigh)

“The broadcast by the so-called ‘leader’ Moddy Sarah was nothing but a prank by rogue elements attempting to stir up unrest. The claims made are provably untrue. If there are further communications, you are instructed to disregard and not to disseminate in any manner.” The crew of Moonbase Theta acknowledges these terms, and signs off as such.

(brief pause)

Your guidance in these matters is always appreciated, though I must admit some context would also be appreciated. Not questioning your decisions here – just to save time in the future. A word to the wise, and any related idioms.

(pause, his tone softens)

Personal message to follow: Alexandre, I’m starting to count down to when I’ll see you again. Is there anything you need me to bring home? Milk, dog food ... I can get a good deal on helium isotopes. I hope you are well. I know I say that a lot, but ... I love you. Home soon. Be well.

(brief pause)

Moonbase Theta, out.

(The episode ends.)

MOONBASE THETA, OUT S1E14
“Seven”

by D. J. Sylvis

CHARACTERS

ROGER BRAGADO-FISCHER

(The episode begins with no real introduction, just a bit of static before Roger breaks through. There may be moments where the quality drops during his monologue, or static takes over again. It may be filtered to give the impression of a broadcast from space.)

ROGER

(from the very first moment, strangely muted emotionally)

Broadcasting. This is Roger Bragado-Fischer, Moonbase Theta. It is November ... 3rd, 2098. The time is 20:13. Base temperature is 24 degrees Centigrade; surface temperature is minus 135. We are at ... seven weeks to shutdown.

(sighs heavily; eventually continues)

Base operations are stable. Power is keeping up with the additional needs, water supplies are steady again. Food stores and miscellaneous supplies are sufficient for the remaining schedule. Helium-3 is at 62%, which we're aware is below projected levels. There have been ... problems.

(clears their throat, it's getting more difficult to continue on this tack)

Personnel have been reallocated as per my previous broadcast. Ashwini and myself have been clearing the backlog in processing and storage; Wilder has continued to expand and supervise the mining ... the mechanical aspects. Michell has acted in what has mostly been an ... observational capacity.

(pauses for a moment, trying to compose themselves)

Nessa ... Nessa is ... Agriculturalist Nessa Cheong is ... no longer an active part of the crew

(chokes back a sob)

This is due to an accidental – due to the failure of ...

(pause, then trying to talk around this)

Water supply and distribution falls within the heading of Agriculture and Environmental Services; Nessa was always a backup supervisor for the ice mining operations. As such, they were assigned to complete the decommissioning of those operations, so the equipment could be applied to increased HE-3 mining efforts.

(long pause)

At 10:13 yesterday morning ... Nessa and Wilder were clearing out the chamber with our tunnel boring machine, to allow them to turn around equipment more quickly. Nessa had ... left the control pod to check a mark they'd placed, when the wall beside them cracked and ... half the chamber caved in. The debris was ... by the time they were pulled out – Michell assisted, they had been observing, nearby – but by the time they were clear, Nessa was ...

(quickly, words tumbling out)

Everyone was working under appropriate safety protocols. Nessa memorized them before joining the duty roster – they quoted them to the rest of us constantly during changeover. It was completely accidental. It also appears to be unrelated to the quakes we'd experienced recently.

(pause)

I don't see any benefit in blaming Wilder. Their cybernetics are the only reason they survived.

(lost, looking for something to add)

Nessa will be ... sent down on the next scheduled supply rocket. Please inform their partners and children. A memorial will be planned here for next week, if you would like to have anything read.

(pause, starting to slip)

I don't think it's right what's been done with them; I was outvoted. Instead of using Nessa's allocated stasis pod, the ... remains have been stored outside the station. I think they hoped out of sight would mean out of mind.

(painfully, pulled out of them)

However, when you pull up external monitors, you can see just the corner of the ... the body bag. The way it sways ... it's hard to stop looking.

4

(brief pause, bitterly)

I'm told that mining activities will resume tomorrow morning. Supplies should exceed 80% in time for transport.

(taking a breath)

One final note – Ashwini has predicted an increase in solar flare activity over the next two weeks. This may affect scheduled broadcast times; please refer to the attached report for alternatives.

(after a moment)

Personal message to follow, to be directed to family and friends of Agriculturalist ... Nessa, you know who to send this to.

(brief pause)

I ... don't have words, really. We're all ... your loss is our loss. They are ... it was ... we wouldn't have any of this without them. I promise, we'll see them safely home.

(pause)

Second personal message – Alexandre, love and thoughts to you. I'll explain next time.

(brief pause)

Moonbase Theta, out.

(The episode ends.)

MOONBASE THETA, OUT S1E15
“Six”

by D. J. Sylvis

CHARACTERS

ROGER BRAGADO-FISCHER

(The episode begins with no real introduction, just a bit of static before Roger breaks through. There may be moments where the quality drops during his monologue, or static takes over again. It may be filtered to give the impression of a broadcast from space.)

ROGER

(plodding through the beginning of the broadcast, exhausted)

Broadcasting. This is Roger Bragado-Fischer, Communications, Moonbase Theta. The date is November 10, 2098; the time is 23:45. Temperatures are within average for light phase.

(pause, gathering his scattered thoughts and pushing back his melancholy)

Six. Six weeks left. Six weeks and counting down.

(pause)

I'm taking a break to send this before we move the Helium storage tanks back underground. Your message was fragmented and took some time to piece together, but the gist was received, that the rocket has been delayed due to the same solar flares we warned of a week ago. We'll proceed to the backup plan for next week, November 17th. Ashwini has confirmed that, based on their analysis, the flares should be diminishing by that time. Helium-3 storage tanks will be at capacity.

(a brief pause)

Please be sure to inform Nessa's family of the delay.

(the sigh is barely audible, but there)

I did review your questions ... regarding last week. I'll answer only for myself. I did not witness any of the initial events personally; I was on my free shift inside the Base, assisting Ashwini. When the emergency alarm sounded, we ran for our suits and the airlock, but by the time we'd made it to the mining tubes, Wilder was ordering us back for safety's sake.

(starting to wander a bit, upset)

Michell felt the need to echo that order, as if we'd ... as if there were any need for their presence at all. Why were they even – everywhere they go, they're in the corner observing. "Observing." Not assisting, not participating ... until something's already gone wrong. What do they add to this process? There's five extant crew members, what essential service do they provide? Four ... four crew members.

(pulling it back together)

Wilder ordered us back. I didn't even see ... anything. I thanked them for that after. That was my entire experience of the events until the ...until Nessa was recovered.

(pause, we hear the steel in their voice)

I don't believe anyone will be providing a full moment by moment report. Wilder has already supplied the details they were able, and is currently recovering from injuries suffered during the ... event. Incident. Accident.

(sighing more audibly now, a significant pause)

What I can provide ... the following was my contribution to the memorial we held on the surface two evenings ago.

(a bit more obviously reading this portion, emotional)

When I think of Nessa Cheong, it's not as my friend, though they certainly were ... without their friendship the moon would have been so much colder. I don't think of them as my colleague, though without them, particularly in recent weeks, the project would have fallen to pieces. Not even as the bright, enthusiastic novice I met during our training cycle on Earth, though I was impressed by their ... brilliance and energy even then.

(getting shaky)

I remember Nessa surrounded by growing things, not because that was their job; it was more of an extension of their personality. I remember Nessa *as* a growing thing, dug into the soil, arms spread like branches to embrace as much of life as they could possibly hold. I remember Nessa as ... life, green and vibrant, drinking deep and sending goodness through the air.

4

(a difficult pause)

It's a known fact that all the energies in our bodies belong to the universe, originated in the stars and return there as we drift apart. I found a poem I wanted to read, written by Rainer Maria Rilke, but somehow direct from my heart:

(pause, this is particularly difficult)

*Do you still remember: falling stars,
how they leapt slantwise through the sky
like horses over suddenly held-out hurdles
of our wishes—did we have so many?—
for stars, innumerable, leapt everywhere;
almost every gaze upward became
wedded to the swift hazard of their play,
and our heart felt like a single thing
beneath that vast disintegration of their brilliance—
and was whole, as if it would survive them!*

(a long pause follows)

Personal message. To Alexandre ... I didn't receive anything from you this week. It must have been sent, just ... technical difficulties, I'm sure an engineer will understand. I don't know how much anyone tells you, from the company or otherwise, but up here we suffered a great loss. Someone who ... made this a better place to be. The moon, the world, the universe. I wish you'd had the chance to know them. I wish they'd had the chance to know you ... for you do just the same to *my* world. I love you so much. If they'll allow it, please visit the Cheong family and tell them ...

(pause)

... give them my thoughts.

(brief pause)

Moonbase Theta, out.

(The episode ends.)

MOONBASE THETA, OUT S1E16
“Five”

by D. J. Sylvis

CHARACTERS

ROGER BRAGADO-FISCHER

(The episode begins with no real introduction, just a bit of static before Roger breaks through. There may be moments where the quality drops during his monologue, or static takes over again. It may be filtered to give the impression of a broadcast from space.)

ROGER

(somewhat more pulled together than in the previous episode)

Broadcasting. This is Roger Bragado-Fischer, Communications, Moonbase Theta. On the moon. It's November 17th, 2098; 6:18 standard time. We are at ... five weeks before shutdown.

(pause, considering where to begin)

Your latest has come through, fragmented in parts and with some significant dropouts. It seems strange that the flares would still be affecting communications on Earth when the interference from our position has passed. However, I believe we received the essential information.

(through this passage, a bit of the anger starts to seep in)

Confirming – what I understand from your instructions is that the scheduled – *amended* scheduled – supply rocket is no longer coming at all. Not a delay but a cancellation. All noted resources and ... personnel will be retrieved at station shutdown; sufficient transport will be provided at that time. We are to continue processing Helium-3 as a primary focus and topping up permanent storage – additional shipping tanks will be provided at shutdown. Non-essential resources, including scientific paraphernalia, personal items, and the genetic archives, will *not* be allocated space for retrieval.

(breaks down for a moment, bitterly)

I'm sure the delay is necessary to ensure a ... safe and profitable result. Make sure you mention that to Agriculturalist Cheong's family.

(pulling it back together)

Base operations are within acceptable levels. Helium-3 stores are at ... technically 100%, I suppose. Water is stable. Power is stable. Rations and supplies are stable. Personnel ... not so much.

(a long and heavy sigh, a bit sarcastic)

Wilder has thrown themselves back into the mining operations, you'll be glad to hear that. They've got one working leg, one working eye, and a fairly ominous tick somewhere in the mechanism every time they straighten their arm, but they're working double, sometimes triple shifts. Ashwini has done almost the opposite, retreated into their observatory, but with none of the feeds turned on. I think they're drunk as well, though I couldn't begin to tell you on what. Maybe they found a corner store that delivers.

(they laugh humourlessly)

I'm considering raiding their stash. I don't even see the point of talking to *you* about Michell. They're the same today, tomorrow, and forever, amen. I'm sure their report will be attached. Myself ... I've been reading, playing senssurounds, doing my job. I've spent a lot of time up on the surface of late. Not for my duties, but ... it helps to stare out into space. It helps to think somewhere out there might be ...

(they trail off for a few moments)

You're going to hear about an incident, I don't debate any of the details. Ashwini suggested this team-building exercise that ... Nessa used to organize to bring us together. It did do that, decidedly, for Michell and I. The bruises are flowering nicely. So ... yes. That's where we are.

(pause, deliberately)

The rumours aren't helping either. It's funny how four people, on a Moonbase where the company authorizes all communication up and downstream ... word still gets around. We're hearing that you've got big problems down there, that the hands on the wheel keep swapping places, that you can't hold the land you've taken. We hear you weren't able to track down that Three Rivers freehold, and it's not the only one by a long shot.

(a touch of mania in their voice)

I don't know why I'm being this candid. Maybe this won't even get to you. Maybe you're too busy to listen. Maybe I'm hoping you'll come up to try to stop me.

4

(pause for a moment, almost normal again)

To my husband, Alexandre: Your message came through this week, it was ... so good to hear your voice. Plus what sounded like about a hundred and one puppies – watch out for old women in fur coats. I hope Cas and Pol are getting some rest. I hope *you're* getting some rest. I hope everything there is ... keep it together, okay? Stay close to home, work the garden, stock up the pantry. Keep safe. I love you.

(brief pause)

Moonbase Theta, out.

(The episode ends.)

MOONBASE THETA, OUT S1E17
“Four”

by D. J. Sylvis

CHARACTERS

ROGER BRAGADO-FISCHER

(The episode begins with no real introduction, just a bit of static before Roger breaks through. There may be moments where the quality drops during his monologue, or static takes over again. It may be filtered to give the impression of a broadcast from space.)

ROGER

(sounding particularly scattered, saying the first word several different ways)

Broadcasting ... broadcasting ... broadcasting. I'm Roger, Roger Bragado-Fischer ... Communications, Moonbase Theta. On the moon. I think it's November 26th ... that is correct! Fourrrrr weeks to shutdown.
(coughs oddly)

I've been awake for 49 hours now, monitoring all transmission frequencies so I don't miss your message. I don't know if it's solar flares again, or a satellite gone all screwy, or no word has come through.

(brief pause)

I could really use a coffee the size of my head and a nap.

(rambling)

I could actually make a coffee that size, okay, several coffees that would be the equivalent. However, caffeine seems to have stopped working at this point. So has lowering the standard Base temperature, and I'm only moments away from attempting that thing with the toothpicks from old cartoons.

(longer pause than expected, we hear them make a noise when waking up from a microsleep)

Oh! Of course, what would make this all significantly easier is if the microwave communications towers were in operating condition. Then I could patch through to the close-side network and ... you know, options. I've just checked that outstanding request, which I have submitted to management four separate times, and it still shows as pending. Of course, if there's no incoming message by the next scheduled broadcast, we have the option of Base Emergency Communications Procedures. You know what those are? I go on an inspection tour of the microwave tower network!

(laughs, another pause)

Operations are ... okay. Generally. Thanks to Wilder, Helium-3 is now at 132%, which looks a little weird – we should probably adjust that to account for combined storage. You know. Water is wet, power hurts when you touch it, we've got food but I seem to be the only one eating. I actually haven't seen Ashwini or Wilder in the last few days. I hear their voices once in a while.

(brief pause, a bit more focused but still rambling)

Michell, I've seen. We've been talking quite a bit. I might be turning around on ol' Michell ... if I can trust them. I know you know we had a fight last week, they made a ... disrespectful comment or what I thought was ... about the remains. I misunderstood Ásatrú customs about hammers. But we talked that out. I still think they're a scoundrel, professionally, but they had real feelings for Nessa, who it turns out dumped them big time. I gotta respect that.

(pause, conspiratorially)

Once they let loose a little, they also confirmed some of the rumours going around. Don't tell them I said anything. I guess that's a breach, but ... again, come up here and stop us. Things down your way sound like they're one hell of a mess. That broadcast from the freehold ... how many of those are going around? Michell knows at least a dozen. And you can't squash that when you're fighting takeovers on two borders at the same time.

(more serious)

If there's another change in leadership ... don't let them forget we're up here. We're so close now, four weeks and counting. I'm sorry if I ... I don't mean to sound disloyal.

(another longer pause, another laugh)

Did I tell you about the tardigrades? If we're spilling secrets, might as well admit we've been keeping the tardigrades alive but off the charts. They're just too cute to kill off, now that they're the size of gerbils. Nessa liked them a lot. Used to let them bumble through the hanging gardens.

4

(pause, breathing slowly)

It's back to dark cycle here. Back to night on the ... really dark side of the moon now. You stand on the surface, where you can't see the landing lights, and it's ...

(taking a moment)

You forget sometimes, on Earth, that space really extends right through the atmosphere. You forget that all that black is really just a hand's breadth away.

(shaking it off)

I think that's everything. I'll keep on monitoring for your message from this end. If I fall asleep, there's all sorts of alarms and alerts set up. Just send on through.

(brief pause)

Alexandre, you better keep those puppies out of my closet. If I find one cardigan out of place, there will be dire consequences. And out of our bed. I miss that stupid bed. And you. Good night, pumpkin.

(brief pause)

Moonbase Theta, out.

(The episode ends.)

MOONBASE THETA, OUT S1E18
“Three”

by D. J. Sylvis

CHARACTERS

ROGER BRAGADO-FISCHER

(The episode begins with no real introduction, just a bit of static before Roger breaks through. There may be moments where the quality drops during his monologue, or static takes over again. It may be filtered to give the impression of a broadcast from space.)

ROGER

(starting out fairly collected and professional, perhaps slightly bitter)

Broadcasting. This is Roger Bragado-Fischer, Communications, Moonbase Theta. The date is December 1st, 2098. The time is 9:45. We are at three weeks until scheduled Base shutdown.

(brief pause, resolute)

There has been no response to my two most recent transmissions. The last broadcast received from Earth was November 17th, and that was fragmented and incomplete. The satellite that we use to bounce messages back and forth has appeared on schedule, we are able to ping it, it seems to be sending ... but no response, on either the standard or backup channels. This would indicate a communications issue of significant duration, and after consulting with Security, Maintenance, and the current Science lead, I'm invoking Article 27, Base Emergency Communications Procedures.

(pause, a barely-heard sigh)

As I indicated in last week's broadcast – if you got that – there is one primary function of those procedures. That is the inspection of the microwave towers linking Theta to the near-side Moonbases. I've spoken to Michell regarding use of the Rover vehicle, which Wilder will give a checkup and load for possible repairs. Ashwini is analyzing the latest photo footage to plan a safe route. I will depart three days from now.

(pause)

Of course, all of this could be halted if a message was received.

(brief pause, their tone becoming ironic)

Base operations report. Everything remains within acceptable levels. Helium-3 combined stores are now at 152% - Wilder's obsessive supervision of mining operations continues apace. Water stores have declined a bit, down to 60% - reports trace this to increased cycling of the airlocks connected to, umm, surface visitation. Power levels are acceptable, we had to cut back a bit inside to keep powering the mining machinery, but they were areas scheduled for decommission anyway. Supplies are adequate ... on the current schedule.

(pause, we hear them take a breath)

Obviously, we don't know what the situation is on Earth. The rumour mill shuts down, even for Michell, when everyone on the other end stops talking. There are assumptions being made, and arguments regarding how we should react, what *can* be done if things ... are the worst. If there are even options beyond proceeding with the last tasks of the shutdown sequence and keeping up hope.

(brief pause)

For now, that's our status. By next broadcast ... too many variables to tell.

(pause, their voice softens)

Personal message to follow. Alexandre, love. Hello.

(pause for a moment, sigh)

The hardest part of ... whatever is happening down there, what is definitely happening up here, is not knowing about you. I think about you all the time ... wandering through the house, working in the garden, wrangling that pack of vicious canines, sprawled across my side of the bed. All the life we've built together, everything I want so badly to return to.

(a deep breath)

But that's all the more reason why I have to say what I'm saying now, and hope things have fractured enough that the message gets through. Alex, if you hear this, if things are as ... tenuous as I understand down there ... You need to go. I need you to go. Get your things, take the dogs if you can, but leave the

4

city, leave the enclave ... run and don't stop running. When you find people you trust, ask about the nearest freehold and head in that direction. Please, love.

(chokes back a sob)

I'll find my way back to you. If there's any ... chance at all, I'll find you, but get somewhere safe.

(pause)

I keep looking at that nebula, the one I named after you, when I go up to the surface. I can just barely make it out without instruments. I wish we were headed there this minute, hurtling away from Earth at the speed of light, all our energies and gravitational forces aligned. I wish we were ...

(definitely sobbing now)

Go, Alexandre. Go now. I love you.

(after a long pause)

Moonbase Theta, out.

(The episode ends.)

MOONBASE THETA, OUT S1E19
“Two”

by D. J. Sylvis

CHARACTERS

ROGER BRAGADO-FISCHER

(The episode begins with no real introduction, just a bit of static before Roger breaks through. There may be moments where the quality drops during his monologue, or static takes over again. It may be filtered to give the impression of a broadcast from space.)

ROGER

(sounds like a fairly standard opening)

Okay ... broadcasting. The controls are a little off here. Sorry. This is Roger Bragado-Fischer, Communications, Moonbase Theta. The date is December 8, 2098. The time is 14:52.

(brief pause)

Please note that, for the first time, I am not broadcasting *from* Moonbase Theta. I departed from there on December 5th on a trip to inspect the microwave towers meant to connect our Base with the larger communications network. This network, of course, has not been in operation since May of this year, when the last Bases on the near side were still cycling through their shutdown sequences. No explanation was ever given for the network going down; it was blamed on 'standard system outages' and messaging rerouted through satellite communications instead.

(pause, keeping things on an even keel so far)

We planned a route for my trip extending from our base to the closest optimal location, Moonbase Delta, on the close side near the Mare Fecunditatis – the Sea of Fertility – passing by all intermediate towers. The bulk of the trip was in negotiating the terrain from our side – there were numerous occasions where the Rover slipped on the edge of a crater, twice when I took a spill and had to rest and effect repairs. I took naps as I could after performing inspections.

(brief pause)

The towers on our side were relatively undamaged and seemed in working order. To be fair, these also had to be constructed to survive a higher chance of meteorite impact. On the near side, this isn't a consideration ... but it was here where I found the actual issue. Several microwave towers after passing the terminator line were severely damaged, one actually torn out of the rock and beyond simple repair. One of the reasons I've lingered here at Base Delta is looking for materials to put that tower back in place.

(pauses, choosing their words carefully)

The damages I found were ... of a low likelihood to be accidental. See images attached.

(another pause, trying to take things to a more normal place)

I have to admit, I was in awe when I came up to a close-side base. There's a lot more to see from the outside – again, surface construction is a lot safer, but even the architecture is more impressive. They ... kinda swoop, and they've got fancy pointy bits that can only be for show. I guess you pretty them up because they're the ones visible from Earth. Anyway, the airlock worked, that's the most important part from my point of view.

(brief pause)

Speaking of points of view ... in here, I've been able to use Delta's equipment to focus in on what's happening planetside. I had to wait for you to spin around, of course, but ...

(hoarse, pleading)

At least there's still lights on in Rio. That's got to be something.

(long pause, their voice darkens)

Base operations report, Moonbase Delta. I thought while I was here, I should take a look around.

Naturally, water and power are minimal, as the base has been completely decommissioned. There weren't a lot of supplies worth raiding, they appear to have been meticulous in following their shutdown schedule. However, I thought it was worth checking their storage level ... and I'm sure you can guess what it is that I found there.

(slowly)

Stasis pods for all thirty-six Delta crew members, still plugged in and awaiting retrieval.

(they wait for a moment, letting that sink in)

4

I checked the logs, retrieval was scheduled at the end of their sequence on June 14th, almost six months ago. That's a long time left waiting in the cold.

(pause)

From here, I'm plugged into the computers for the full network. I was able to pull up statistics on the other decommissioned Moonbases. Alpha, thirty-three personnel, thirty-three still in stasis pending retrieval.

Beta, twenty-six personnel, twenty-six still in stasis pending retrieval. Gamma, twenty personnel, nineteen still in stasis pending retrieval – one pod shows a critical failure, didn't close correctly. Epsilon, thirty-one crew, thirty-one pending retrieval. Zeta, nineteen. Eta, twenty-three.

(after a pause, bitterly)

But hey, those pods seem to be working better than we thought.

(another brief pause, he sounds businesslike again)

This message will broadcast through the network and should appear in your feed momentarily. I'm gonna wait for twenty-four hours ... in case you have a reply.

(the briefest of pauses)

At that time, I will load up and start the trip back. You'll know where to find me.

(pause, hit Delta just the slightest bit)

Moonbase Delta, out.

(The episode ends.)

MOONBASE THETA, OUT S1E20
“One”

by D. J. Sylvis

CHARACTERS

ROGER BRAGADO-FISCHER

(The episode begins with no real introduction, just a bit of static before Roger breaks through. There may be moments where the quality drops during his monologue, or static takes over again. It may be filtered to give the impression of a broadcast from space.)

ROGER

(weary and a bit spaced out)

Broadcasting. I'm sending this out on every frequency. My name is Roger Bragado-Fischer, I'm ... I was Communications for Moonbase Theta, owned by the Consortium, managed by the Rio de Janeiro enclave. Sorry, Rio – São Paulo. Whatever they're calling themselves now, whomever is left to make that call. If you receive this message, please forward to their attention, and also ... to Alexandre Bragado-Fischer, wherever they might be found.

(pause, sigh)

Alex, please be found. I need to know you're there. All I could think of, coming back from the other side ... staring through that viewport, obscured by my breath ...

(they quote)

*Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,
Glimmered the white Moon-shine.*

(chuckling)

I found that in your book of poetry. The most ... appropriate selection yet. I am the Ancient Mariner, my eye so bright, my hand so brown.

(pause, gathering their scattered thoughts)

I didn't repair the communications towers. It seemed ... superfluous. I did, when I was back on this side, message ahead to tell them what I'd found. By the time I arrived, they'd already made their choice. I found three more active stasis pods, three sets of lights, blinking in perfect time.

(a long pause)

Wilder actually went into stasis first, I can see it in the logs. They pushed too hard in the mines and their arm just ... came apart, all at once, they had to take medical. Ashwini and Michell, I don't think they could see another way.

(pauses for a breath)

I think they were afraid I'd talk them out of it. I can't blame them. I literally can't blame them, I don't have the equipment to wake them up to have an argument. The company knew what they were doing, only setting us up for half the process. Sometimes I argue with them anyway, I curse and shout and spit, just in case they can hear. They know what they did, leaving me to watch alone. I can see it on their faces.

(quoting)

*All fixed on me their stony eyes,
That in the Moon did glitter.*

(pause)

I still go up to the surface a lot, since coming back. To stare at the stars, or to visit Nessa. I remember when I was outraged that they'd left the body here. If anyone deserved a trip home ... But now, it seems like a better place than most. Molecule by molecule, they'll make their way back into the universe. Piece by piece. That doesn't sound so bad, Alex.

(quoting)

*The moving Moon went up the sky,
And no where did abide:
Softly she was going up,
And a star or two beside—*

2

(pause, rambling)

I think about those messages I wrote for Ashwini. The ones to send out, into space, into the black. Every one was a failure, I couldn't figure out what to say or how to say it. I guess they should have sent a poet.

(brief pause)

What was I supposed to do? Invite them to be pen pals? Put out the welcome mat? Beg them to save us? Maybe I did. Maybe at the last possible minute, just when all hope is lost ... a flying saucer will swoop down from the black. It could happen, right? Just like we might still reach down and save that freehold. It could happen.

(pause)

When I'm back down below, I stare at the station schematics. Crew quarters, fully decommissioned, powered down. Laboratory areas, fully decommissioned, powered down. Hydroponic gardens, observatory, security offices, fully decommissioned, powered down. And I find my finger hovering over the power controls for the stasis pods ...

(a dangerous pause, as if they're considering that decision, but then they sigh)

But I can't do that. I can't do that, Alexandre, or the poem really is about me.

(quoting again)

*Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.*

(pause, enunciating every word more than is necessary)

Base operations report. Helium-3 stores are at 198%. Mining operations have ceased. Power usage is at a minimum. Water, food stores ... are unimportant.

(breathing)

Personnel ... 41 crew members in stasis, awaiting retrieval. One crew member awake. One crew member, remaining awake.

(pause)

The shutdown sequence is complete.

(long pause, beaten)

Personal message ... all of this has been a personal message. Every broadcast. To anyone who receives this, anyone left out there, particularly if your name is Alex and you're married to an Ancient Mariner ...

(quoting one last time)

*I pass, like night, from land to land;
I have strange power of speech;
That moment that his face I see,
I know the man that must hear me:
To him my tale I teach.*

(brief pause)

Live and be well. Moonbase Theta, out.

(The episode – and the season – ends.)

MOONBASE THETA, OUT S1EB1
“Twenty-One”

by D. J. Sylvis

CHARACTERS

ROGER BRAGADO-FISCHER

(The episode has more the feel of a personal recording, and less a broadcast. There may be background noises from time to time. is frustrated, but also caught up in all the changes to come. There is a slight chiming sound to indicate the beginning of the personal log.)

ROGER

So. That just happened. Umm, personal log, Roger Bragado-Fischer, July 28. This recording is not authorized for official review or broadcast.

(brief pause, like on the edge of a diving board)

We had an unexpected staff meeting just before shift end. Of course, they waited until they got a full day's work out of us.

(words tumbling one over the other)

Unexpected, that's putting it mildly. The gist is, Moonbase Theta is being shut down. Decommissioned. After all the talk about being the primary focus when they closed the near-side Bases, it's our turn to be ... I was going to say made redundant, but I don't think that applies when you're the last one.

(pause, more sardonic)

Unexpected for us – apparently, management has been planning this for the last six months. They've got a schedule, twenty weeks starting next Monday, tasks set up down to the minute. Every experiment boxed up – you gotta wonder how they'll fit the tardigrades? – every mechanism shut down or automated, every light switch flipped. We're gonna leave this place a ghost town.

(there is a shuffling and voices nearby, we hear a door close)

Sooner than later, really, considering. The plan includes 'optimal resource reduction' – basically, most of the crew goes into stasis over the next few days, leaving a handful doing all of the actual work. No managers, that's for sure – you could see it in every pair of eyes above the line, this universal, "Not it." Five people, five selected personnel to manage the twenty-week shutdown sequence. And guess whose name was on that list? Who gets to earn their pay with no hope of an early offload on one of the supply rockets? That's right. The luckiest comm lead this side of the Earth's natural satellite.

(we hear a fist smack against a hard surface)

Dammit. I better get Pacey to look at it before they go to stasis. Medics, of course, didn't make the cut. It's far more important we have that bonehead from Security on hand. I can't wait for twenty weeks where he's lurking around every corner. He better take his alternating duty shifts like the rest of us.

(brief pause, more positive)

That is the somewhat-brighter side, getting to learn the ins and outs of the rest of the station activities. Monitoring the telescopic arrays, archiving all that experimental data, helping out in the hydroponic farms ... I'm taking over the genetic archives, that's a pretty huge responsibility – and opportunity. I don't know the farmer they chose, McVett, but I'm looking forward to learning from Dr. Ray, and Wilder ... I know what they say about Wilder, but if anything, that makes her better at her job. There's nobody who knows the Base hands on from stem to stern like she does. I could pick up a lot in the next twenty-one weeks.

(sighs, suddenly becoming despondent)

Twenty-one weeks. Alex is not going to like that. It was bad enough when my rotation was scheduled to end in October. When I'd be back before Halloween. I can already hear it. "What will I do about our group costume, Roger? I see Watson, I see the Hounds of the Baskervilles, where is my Sherlock?" I'm sorry, love. I know this wasn't in the plan. That part sucks and I'm sorry.

(getting upset)

I mean, something was bound to happen. It wasn't going to go easy. I'm not the managers' darling at this point, after clashing over the near-side network and the arguments about my contract – I don't care what they say, limit downstream communications, I'm the one who operates the rig and I'm sending messages to my goddamn husband! Go ahead and place it in my permanent file, if I stop talking to Alex then he's left alone with his thoughts and until I make it back ...

4

(a long pause, we hear them breathing)

His last real memory with me is still that thing ... the day before I left. I can't just ... I didn't even mean to ... I knew he wouldn't do that. He knew I knew he wouldn't do that. It's just ... I've said I'm sorry, I've said it a hundred times and he's forgiven me a hundred times back. But ... not face to face.

(clearing up a bit)

He did send me that book of poetry, last ship. That's got to be important. Words mean things to us. I'll read every verse.

(brief, hopeful pause)

It's only twenty-one weeks. I'll make it through. And then we'll get away. I don't even care about my job, I don't care about the Enclave or the Consortium. There are places outside that are still viable, beyond the cities. He'd love the space to have a better garden, and I'd ... I could use the rest. Twenty-one weeks. It's not so long. I'm starting my countdown now.

(There is another chime to indicate the end of the personal log.
The episode ends.)

MOONBASE THETA, OUT S1EB2
“Minus One”

by D. J. Sylvis

CHARACTERS

ROGER BRAGADO-FISCHER
SCIENTIST
WILDER

(Throughout this episode, Roger is recording at various locations around the Base on a portable recorder. His voice is ragged and a bit hoarse, and he doesn't really expect anyone to hear his words. At the beginning, he is on the storage level. We may hear the slight hum of the stasis chambers in the background. There is a chime that signals the beginning of the personal log.)

ROGER

I'm just saying you could have left a note. "Hey Roger, we were feeling a little dozy. Dinner's in the fridge." Which fridge, of course, *that's* the game.

(after a pause)

Personal log. I haven't done one of these in a while, and it seems particularly absurd at this moment, but here we are. It's been a week since I came back from the other side, and I think I'm done having conversations with this lot.

(we hear him slap one of the stasis units twice in succession, which elicits a slight hiss of air)

Okay, hands off, I get the message.

(he sighs)

I'm done blaming them. What other choice did they have? When you know ... what there is to know? You either lean into the nervous breakdown, or you ... they've got no worries now. They can't wake up unless someone else does the job of sorting shit out.

(a bit of a verbal shrug)

But I'm still here. My pod is waiting, there are automated systems, everything was set up for this ending, but ... I feel like I need to keep watch. Someone has to walk the halls and remember.

(he laughs harshly)

I really am stuck on the Ancient Mariner thing. I guess I'll go wander, keep my eye out for a wedding guest. More soon.

(Another chime. When we cut back in, Roger's voice is hollow, and we can hear all of his breathing. He is in a spacesuit out on the surface.)

ROGER

One thing I did that's always been on my 'nice to have' list was set up a portable rig, so I could record from wherever I happen to be. No more hiding away in the broadcast booth. I can talk to myself from the bare black surface of the moon and capture every syllable.

(we listen to him breathe; his voice is contemplative)

I'm coming up here less often, day by day. The stars aren't ... they don't do it for me anymore. I'm sorry, Nessa. I'm sorry, Alexandre. There must be a poem in your book for this, but ... that hasn't been doing it for me either. Not since Coleridge. There's a reason he never wrote a sequel. "The Mariner is back ... and he's not gonna take it anymore!" You could cast the albatross as my Disneyesque sidekick.

(after a pause)

That's the real reason, Alex, why I haven't gone to the pod. But it's getting harder to resist. If I let myself go ... it's the dumbest thing. I don't even know where home *is* now. I don't know if you made it out, if you heard my message. I don't ...

(Another chime. When we come back, Roger's voice is normal again, but the background noise has changed – more empty, more of an echo. We are in the laboratory. There may be some very muted equipment noises. His voice is a bit sleepy, but the tone is normal.)

ROGER

I'm in the labs now, finished my rounds. "Base operations remain ..." – pretty decent on their own. I top off the hydroponics every once in a while, check the oxygen levels. Try to make myself eat. Chocolate supplies are finite, but I have the full crew's allotment at this point.

(we hear a muted beep somewhere in the background)

There's not much left on this level – a few experiments that wound up in cold storage, an active monitor or two, otherwise it's dark. I stay down here, most nights. It feels less empty than the bunkroom, or ... in with the stasis pods.

(a moment's pause, starting to slow down)

It's hard to remember what it was like, sleeping in our bed, listening to you snore. Being twisted into shapes as one dog or the other wriggled in between. I can't even imagine with all those puppies.

(he chokes back a sob, more awake)

I forgot the puppies. You couldn't possibly have ... maybe he did, Roger. Maybe they're living on a freehold in the country, with all the room to run and chase rabbits.

(after a long pause, his breathing slowing down)

When I can't sleep, I play back the notes the scientists left. That generally puts me right out.

(Another beep of some sort – not the personal log chime – and we hear a recording play.)

SCIENTIST (Recorded)

– experiment coded GRO-BEAR, exploring the growth potential for the phylum Tardigrada when exposed for extended periods of time to the increased solar and cosmic radiation reaching the far side of the moon. As has been established in prior research, there is an association between radiation tolerance and dehydration in the species, where the disordered proteins dessicate and the animal enters anhydrobiosis. Typical of this state is the synthesis of cell protectants ...

(The recording of the scientist has faded out and there is a break in the recording. The personal log chime once again, and we come back to Roger's voice, raspy from sleep but suddenly alert.)

ROGER

Wait. Hold on. I want this copied to my personal folder.

(We hear a few muted beeps as before, and a new recording begins.)

WILDER (Recorded)

Additional note. This is Wilder, Base Maintenance – it was my responsibility to, uh, terminate this experiment after th’ Grand Exodus. Instead, I let the little buggers – not so little now – keep on tumblin’ around for a while, like our own personal Hamsterdance. Nessa liked knowing they were there, gods rest her soul, and we all ... liked her. So I decided, after, to set up a chamber where they could go into stasis like th’ rest of us. They do pretty well on their own, but I thought it can’t hurt.

(We hear the mechanism in their arm move, and a sudden unhappy tick.)

WILDER (Recorded)

(under her breath)

Got to rejig that later.

(back to normal)

Anyhoo, it was a piece o’ work. I managed to sweet-talk a tech down below into sendin’ me some schematics for the pods – they blacked out pages at a time, but I was able to piece most of it together. I got to know the procedure pretty slick, front and back, upside, downside, inside out. I’m pretty sure at this point, I could even pull people *out* o’ stasis with the tools that I’ve got on hand.

(we hear the mechanism move again)

Or in hand. I know they didn’t mean to set that knowledge loose. I made a few sketches – make sure you check ‘em out if you’re gonna carry on from what I started –

(Another beep, and her voice is cut off.)

ROGER

Save full entry and all attached image files.

(there is a significant pause before he speaks, thoughtful)

Well. That, umm ... just happened.

(brief pause)

That could be a thing.

(We hear the personal log chime, signing off. The episode ends.)