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CRITICAL FAULT

Written by Linda Townsend

SPECIAL THANK YOU

To Kerry and Fran for review and technical editing.

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From alien sightings, bumps in the night and strange happenings, the Office of Scientific Investigation and Research sets out to understand and scientifically prove that paranormal events actually occur all around us. But what happens when one of their own is touched by one of these events? Will the team be able to save him? Will he ever be the same again? It's up to the experts of the O.S.I.R. to put the pieces together in, 'Critical Fault'.

DAN AYKROYD

NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

Before reading this fan fiction, I recommend you watch or read the episode synopses for the following 'Psi Factor' episodes: Perestroika, Threads, The Egress, Jaunt, Comings and Goings, and Regeneration. Details and storylines from these shows were expanded upon in 'Critical Fault'. Also, many of the main characters from 'Psi Factor' were used, but are not owned by me. The characters I created for this story are, Nikolai Sorokin, Andrei Dmitriev, Sergei Petrov, Viktor Kuzmin, Dr. Alina Volosevich, and Dr. Robert Pavlovna.

PETER AXON

CHIEF SCIENCE ANALYST, CASE MANAGER

Once a true skeptic, outspoken, sometimes abrasive, Axon now challenges conventional wisdom and the easy explanation.

LINDSAY DONNER

CHIEF DATA ANALYST

A Psychology and Biology major, Donner is smart, zealous, and continually questions the O.S.I.R.'s secretive practices.

MIA STONE

PARAPSYCHOLOGIST

The newest member to the O.S.I.R., parapsychologist Mia Stone offers a new and fresh look to the cases the team encounters. Being on her own since she was fifteen, Stone is independent and smart.

DR. ANTON HENDRICKS

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

A psychiatrist and physician by training, Hendricks mixes a rigorously intellectual approach to cases with heartfelt concern for the experiencers. He is a leader, with a healthy balance of spirituality and philosophy.

DR. CLAIRE DAVISON

CHIEF MEDICAL ANALYST

An expert pathologist, Davison brings a critical eye to investigations. She is down to the facts, and trusts in modern science for answers.

RAY DONAHUE

CHIEF SECURITY OFFICER

A former homicide cop, Donahue clears the path for the team with his knowledge of police procedures, mercenary tactics and crowd and riot control.

L.Q. COOPER

CHIEF ZOOLOGIST

The O.S.I.R.'s lead zoologist, Copper passionately studies any life form he encounters. His keen enthusiasms are sometimes lost on others, especially Axon.

CURTIS ROLLINS

CASE MANAGER

A behavioral scientist, case manager Rollins brings intense dedication to solving cases. He believes there should be an answer to every mystery and puts his job above all of other life priorities.



Magicians are well known for their illusions, intriguing audiences for decades by hiding a person or object before the naked eye. But what happens when a disappearance isn't an illusion? In the following case, the O.S.I.R. must aid in a reappearance after a case gone horribly wrong.

DAN AYKROYD

Critical

F A U L T

TIME & PLACE 09:00, Monday, February 4, 2002. A natural gas liquefaction complex somewhere in Northern Russia, near Archangelsk.

“Andrei let me see the data again. I don’t want any mistakes happening this time.” The up-and-coming young man brought the binder of reports to the project manager, Nikolai Sorokin. The plant opening had to be just right. It took over four years to build, and with pressure from influential government

authorities, insuring perfection in the schematics once more was well worth the effort.

“How long until we are ready?” Nikolai masked the tension in his voice. He was a professional and a former Russian Naval Commander, born of confidence, stature, and honor. He didn’t know the meaning of fear or disappointment.

“Less than ten minutes until the plant will be fully operational, sir. We are waiting for your go ahead.”

Nikolai set down the reports on his desk and gave the signal, “Proceed with compressor startup.”

Andrei brought the radio he was holding in his hand up to his mouth, “Start the compressors, we have a go.”

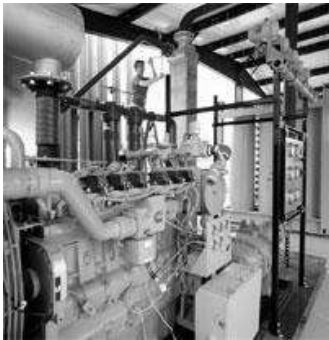
The two men walked out of the office and into a large break room that overlooked the plant’s main compressor room. It was full of large equipment, chaotic tracks of piping, circuit boards and walls of switches. It wasn’t a technological advancement, but rather a close cousin to its predecessor who’s hay day was during the Cold War. Never-the-less, the past four years of work rested on this, and so did Nikolai’s career.

TIME & PLACE *Down in the room below, two men, Sergei and Viktor, are dressed in workman’s coveralls awaiting the signal to launch the compressors.*

“Start the compressors, we have a go,” Sergei’s radio rang out. Viktor began to carefully flip

switches on the main circuit board while Sergei monitored data coming in on an out dated computer. Noise slowly generated from the monstrous machine, until it became so loud that the two had to shout to hear each other.

Sergei picked up his radio, “All looks good, sir. We will be reaching twenty percent power...now.” Nikolai looked down upon the room. All seemed to go as planned until he noticed smoke rising from the back corner.



Andrei noticed it too. Frantically he called over the radio, “Sergei, we have a situation in block three.” A warning alarm suddenly went off on Sergei’s computer. From the radio speaker, Sergei’s garbled voice yelled out in a panic.

“The compressor’s temperature is rising and is creating a natural gas build up. We are dangerously close to over load!”

“Divert power!” Nikolai walked up to the glass windows dividing the two rooms, looking intensely over the scene.

“See if you can divert the power, and bring the main compressor offline,” Andrei shouted over the radio. The noise grew.

“It’s too late,” Viktor yelled. “We have to get out of here before the whole system blows!” Small explosions erupted and set fire to the main circuit board preventing Sergei from shutting down the system.

Viktor grabbed the hand held radio, “Sir, we are reaching critical fault!”

“Order them out of there.” Nikolai barked, “Divert the main controls to the communications room.” Andrei nodded in agreement. He rushed down the stairs as he relayed the orders to Sergei and Viktor.

Nikolai desperately made his way to his office and grabbed the phone attempting to sound the emergency evacuation alarm. Then he heard the enormous explosion. In a split second, Nikolai looked up to see the glass divider shatter and implode into the break room. A bright white light flashed, filling the rooms and shaking the building so violently it knocked him to the floor.

Mr. Sorokin tried to get to his feet and out of the building. If critical fault was reached, a final explosion would erupt large enough to level the whole complex. Instead, Nikolai heard the sound of the compressors lessen.

A muffled voice came from the drawer of his desk. Nikolai opened the drawer and found his backup radio left on, “I repeat, the main compressor has been successfully taken off-line.”

Nikolai carefully passed through the decimated break room and rushed down the stairs to where Sergei and Viktor were stationed. Parts of the compressor room were on fire and the whole system seemed to be in shambles. “Is everyone secure?”

“We’re fine, sir,” Viktor replied as he helped Sergei to his feet. The sprinkler system kicked on and was now extinguishing the fire. As the smoke dissipated, Sergei noticed something lying on the other side of the room.

“Viktor, look!” The two men look over to see the shape of a man on the floor. He was covered in glass, trapped under fallen pipe. Sergei thought the worst, “Andrei!”

“I’m right here,” Andrei ran into the room, “are you two alright?”

“Yes, but he’s not.” Sergei was confused. Who is this person and where did he come from?

Viktor ran over to the man and looked at his wounds in horror, “Someone get an ambulance!”

TIME & PLACE 08:30, Tuesday,
*February 5, 2002. The O.S.I.R.
Alpha team arrives at the
Arkhangelsk First Clinical
Hospital. Inside, they wait for
Dr. Alina Volosevich, the
hospital’s head doctor.*

Case Manager, Peter Axon, speaks into a small tape recorder, “File # 19-3825. We have been called in to investigate the sudden and mysterious appearance of an unidentified man at the Arkhangelsk Natural Gas Liquefaction (or LNG) Terminal here in Northern Russia. Little information about the event has been passed on to us, but we’re hoping that preliminary interviews of the eyewitnesses will help shed light on the case.” Peter shut off his tape recorder. “I wish Anton could have shed more light on the case before we left.”

“Was it just me, or did it seem like he was holding back?” Mia Stone, the team Parapsychologist, replied.

Dr. Claire Davison looked anxious, “I don’t know, let’s just get this case investigated and finished.”

Peter looked over at Chief Data Analyst, Lindsay Donner. She looked distraught as she sat in a chair along the hospital hallway. He knew she didn’t want to be on this case. In fact, none of them wanted to be on this case with the exception of Mia.

“I heard you guys had a case here a few years ago,” Mia asked in curiosity. “It’s kind of strange to have two separate cases so close in



location, especially when the event site is in such a rural area.” Lindsay looked up at Mia with a sickness on her face.

“Dr. Volosevich?” Peter quickly changed the subject as Alina walked toward them from the end of the hallway.

“Great, you’re here,” she spoke with a heavy Russian accent and rushed straight to the point, “I’ve never seen anything like this before,” Alina reported of the patient. “When they brought him in we couldn’t explain his condition. His core temperature was lethally low and we found something strange in his blood stream. I’ve already contacted our Centre for Epidemic Control. When we did further tests, we found...”

“Whoa, whoa,” Peter tried to slow Alina down. “We’re talking about the man who was brought in late yesterday from the liquefaction complex?”

Dr. Volosevich looked surprised, “That is why you are here, no?”

“Yes, but no one told us about ‘strange’ things in his blood or subsequent tests.” Claire replied.

Alina took a sigh in frustration, and began to explain, “The man who came in yesterday was unconscious. Nikolai Sorokin, the plant project manager, and the other plant workers all reported that the man appeared out of nowhere. I have no idea what they were talking about, they must have been drunk. What I do know is that we contacted the O.S.I.R. because of the condition this man was brought to us in.”

Alina went on as she took the team down another wing of the hospital, “We’re not set up for this kind of thing, you know, we’re a clinical hospital. We only took him because he was very ill. When we couldn’t identify the foreign entity in his blood stream, we ran tests. Finally an M.R.I. showed some kind of parasite attached to the lining of his stomach.”

“A parasite?” Lindsay looked at the team, fear struck. The details sounded frightfully familiar. Peter and Claire both displayed the same concern.

“I’m going to need a look at those M.R.I. films,” Claire expressed to Alina.

Mia seemed out of the loop and pulled Axon aside, “Peter, what is going on?”

“These two separate cases you were talking about may not be so separate,” Peter was intense. He directed himself to Dr. Volosevich, “You said when he came in his core temperature was very low...”

“Yes, it was below eighty degrees,” Dr. Volosevich thumbed through the medical chart in her hands. “It seemed like he had fallen through the ice,

but he wasn't wet. We still can't get his temperature back to normal."

Claire's concern grew with urgency, "I need to see him right away."

"Sure, he's right this way," Alina led the team into a hospital room at the end of the hall. The curtain around the bed had been drawn closed, when Alina went to open it.

"Oh, my," Lindsay gasped, "Peter!" She yelled in shock at who she saw.

Peter quickly pressed the button on his headset, "Get two security officers to hospital room three-eleven, A.S.A.P. I need 'round the clock monitoring. No one goes in or out."

"You know this man?" Alina was startled at the team's reactions.

Chief Security Officer, Ray Donahue rushes in the room, "Connor."

"No," Peter turned to Ray, "one of Spurvey's Clones."

TIME & PLACE 10:15. *In the mobile lab, just outside the clinical hospital, a round table meeting is being assembled. Lindsay Donner, and Mia Stone, wait patiently in the conference room. Peter Axon is just outside in a video-conference with O.S.I.R. Headquarters.*

"Anton, how could you not give us this pertinent information," Peter's frustration was about to hit it's limit.

“Peter, I wasn’t sure what to expect from the information I was provided. The description did matched that of Connor’s, but it was sketchy at best.” Anton paused and came off the defensive, “Have you identified it as one of Spurvey’s hybrid clones?”



“Claire is still trying to get the hospital’s cooperation in order for the DNA testing. We won’t even know what stage of growth he is in until the testing can be done,” Peter sat back in his chair and rested his head on his fist. He was still upset. He leaned in closer to the monitor, personalizing the conversation, “Anton, you still could have told us your suspicions.”

“I’m sorry Peter,” Anton exclaimed, “I needed to be sure, and I needed you and the team to be sharp on this case.” A gentle knock hit the door of Dr. Hendricks’ office, “Yes?”

“I’m sorry, sir, but your plane leaves in an hour,” his secretary’s soft voice was heard in the background.

“Thank you Natalie.” Anton refocused on Peter, “I’ll be meeting you and the team early tomorrow morning.” Peter had a surprised look on his face. Anton hadn’t been out in the field in over a year, but he reassured him, “Main Headquarters can handle a few days without me sitting behind this desk. You can contact me on the plane if there are any new developments. Hendricks out.”

Peter pressed a button on his computer ending the video conference. He was a little more relaxed knowing that Hendricks would be back with the team.

Ray Donahue rounded the corner heading for the meeting. “Was that Anton?”

“Yes, he’ll be here in the morning,” Peter stood up from his chair and entered the conference room with Ray.

“I have two men stationed at the hospital room door,” Ray sat down with the team, “no unauthorized personnel will be permitted in or out.”

Peter turned to Lindsay, “What about the liquefaction complex?”

“I talked to Mr. Nikolai Sorokin, the plant project manager,” Lindsay took the screen controller and displayed a still picture of Sorokin from his preliminary interview tape. “Though he was frustrated that he couldn’t get his clean up crew in right away, once I explain to him what we may be dealing with, he agreed to let us cordon off the area. And there’s more...” Lindsay pointed the controller at the screen again playing a segment of Nikolai’s preliminary interview.

“The compressors were overloading with natural gas, but with great Russian ingenuity, we successfully controlled the situation,” Mr. Sorokin was very proud.

Lindsay’s deprecatory voice was heard from behind the camera, “What happened before you saved the day?”

Nikolai displeasingly scrunched his face at Lindsay and gave in to her question, “There was an explosion. A bright light filled the room and glass shattered all over,” he explained in detail, remembering the event. “We thought the whole LNG complex was going to erupt in flames, but it didn’t. And then he just appeared. Out of nowhere. It seemed like he came in with the light,” he laughed at

himself. Lindsay stopped the tape and set the controller down.

Dr. Claire Davison entered the room, “I think I just found something that you need to see,” Peter raised his eye brow as Claire stood joining the team in conference.

“I just did a basic exam of...” Davison took a breath as she searched for a name to call him

“The Experienter,” Mia volunteered, trying to ease the tension in the room.

“Whoever he is, he’s not a hybrid clone.” Claire dropped a bombshell.

“What?” Lindsay was in disbelief.

“How do you know?” Mia wasn’t part of the team that encountered Dr. Spurvey two years prior, and didn’t know the details of the case.

Claire tried to quickly fill her in, “Back in March of 2000, the alpha team encountered a genetically enhanced hybrid clone engineered by Dr. Elaine Spurvey, formally of the O.S.I.R...”

“Wait,” Mia was eagerly interested, “genetically enhanced...with what exactly?”

“Alien DNA extracted from a dead parasite we encountered here five years ago. It was brought back to O.S.I.R. Headquarters. When Dr. Elaine Spurvey left the O.S.I.R. she took DNA samples of the parasite, along with some others and used them in her cloning technology.” Claire was still standing behind her chair, though the rest of the team was sitting around the conference table. She was anxious to get to her discovery.



“It’s the same parasitical DNA we found in ‘The Experienter’ here,” Lindsay stated in frustration. There couldn’t be another explanation for this man looking like Connor Doyle, unless it was a clone.

“Not exactly,” Claire pulled out copies of a blood analysis from the folder she was holding and passed them to her colleagues, “We found the parasite eggs in his blood stream, like we would if he was infected. Until I am able to do a DNA analysis, we won’t know definitively if ‘The Experienter’s’ DNA was genetically altered.”

“What else could it be?” Lindsay said cold, distancing her self from ‘it’.

Claire opened the medical report she was holding and placed it in front of her on the conference table, “When ‘The Experienter’ was



brought in, Dr. Volosevich and her team had to treat him for small abrasions, presumably from the shards of glass that shattered in the explosion, a minor burn to his left hand, and bruising likely sustained from the piping that collapsed on top of him.”

“Spurvey’s highbrids had healing abilities,” Peter had a questioned look.

“Right, and there’s more.” Claire picks up the remote from the center of the table and displays a medical report on the conference screen, “this is part of an incident report filed during case #32-1147.”

“That’s the previous case here, where the parasite was first encountered?” Claire nodded, confirming Mia’s question.

“During that investigation, Case Manager, Connor Doyle accidentally sustained an injury to his

right forearm.” Davison pointed the remote controller at the screen again and a picture of the wound is shown. “The ‘Connor’ that’s in hospital room three-eleven, has an identical contusion to his right forearm.” Claire presses a button again. A second picture displays next to the first, revealing identical images of the wounds.

“Wait a second,” Lindsay’s voice was strained. “You’re saying that this ‘Connor’...”

“This ‘Connor’ may really be Connor.” The room froze. Not even a breath was drawn.

“The parasite in his stomach?” Lindsay gasped, shattering the silence.

“It’s the same one that was in him five years ago,” Peter’s concern flooded his face as he looked to Claire for answers.

“We don’t have much time.”

TIME & PLACE 11:00. *After tying up a few loose ends at the mobile lab, Lindsay, Claire and Ray rush to the hospital room where Connor lays still unmoved, and unconscious. Standing at his bedside, Lindsay reaches for his hand.*

“He’s cold,” Lindsay stares at Connor’s lifeless face, intense and scared.

“Even with the use of heating blankets, we haven’t effectively raised his core body temperature,” Claire looked up from the charts in her hand. “His temperature may explain why the parasite’s growth hasn’t increased, but the long term effects of it could

prove...fatal.” Claire strained stating what they all already feared.

“We have to get that thing out of him!” Ray’s anger raged.

Peter walks in the room, speaking to Anton over his headset, “Mia’s in the process of doing a fingerprint comparison. We know from the past that if we were dealing with a clone, the fingerprint pattern would mirror the original. The test would be conclusive and faster than the DNA analysis.” Peter acknowledged those in the room, with eye contact. The tension was high, but they were all hopeful and determined, “I’ll keep you posted of further developments. Peter out.”

Peter tugged the headset off his ear in frustration, “Is there anyway to get this thing out of him?”

Claire understood his mood, “When we brought the parasite back to O.S.I.R. Headquarters five years ago, we were able to study it. We found that a simple herb called Berberline acts like an antibiotic, and effectively rids the body of the parasite eggs.”

“Isn’t that the herb you take after drinking the water in Mexico?” Ray cautiously asked.

Peter hesitantly smirked, “You like your Tequila on the rocks?”

“Only in the safety of my local pub,” Ray replied half heartedly joking.

The humor didn’t last long. Peter turned to Dr. Davison and asked the hard question, “What about the parasite inside of him?”

“It will have to be surgically removed, but it’s dangerous,” Claire looked at Connor and found she

couldn't shut out her emotions. She was distraught, and so was Lindsay.

"We have to do something," Lindsay bursted, "we can't loose him again."

"Claire," Peter interjected, "whatever you need, set it up." Claire solemnly nodded and promptly left the room seeking Dr. Volosevich to make the arrangements. Ray followed after her. He couldn't stand the helplessness any longer.

Peter walked over to Lindsay and laid his hand on her shoulder. He couldn't find the words to comfort her. He felt he had failed Lindsay, his friend, and the rest of the team. He was determined. He couldn't let that happen again.

TIME & PLACE 14:00. *Peter Axon is once again in the mobile lab on a video-conference with Director of Operations, Dr. Anton Hendricks.*

"Are there any theories on how Connor just appeared after five years?" Anton was speaking over a secure line from the airplane. It would be another fourteen hours before he reached the event site.

"I don't know, Anton," Peter was lost, "there are just too many unanswered questions on this one." Peter paused and then asked, "Did you read the reports of the on-site assessment?"

"Yes." Anton re-situated himself in his seat as he opened a copy of the reports, "it seems the witness accounts are all in agreement."

“There was a bright light,” Peter stated and began to remember, “I also saw a bright white light right before the catastrophic LNG explosion five years ago.”



Peter turned and picked up the status report from the desk beside him, “I checked the blueprints of the current liquefaction complex and compared it to those of the plant that was destroyed.” Peter looked up from the report and directed himself at Anton through the monitor, “they completely rebuilt on top of the old site.” He held up the two charts printed on transparencies, “The interesting part is, when we marked the spots where Connor disappeared and re-appeared, they definitively coincide with each other,” Peter placed the two charts on top of each other. Two red dots representing Connor’s exit and entry perfectly aligned. “It’s almost like he was there the whole time, just hidden from the naked eye.”

“Now we just need to find out what brought him back.”

“He’s not fully back yet,” Peter was discouraged. He knew that time was running out and they could lose Connor once more.

“Claire updated me on his condition and the progress she is making with the local authorities,” Anton reassured him, “now it’s time for you to get some rest. We’ll all need it.”

Peter tilted his head in acknowledgment, but didn't want to agree, "I'll contact you again before the surgery." Anton nodded and ended the conference.

Peter sat back in his chair, contemplating Connor's condition when Dr. Davison walks in and calls his attention.

"Peter, we have a problem," Claire's voice was filled with urgency, "The Arkhangelsk City health authorities and the Centre for Epidemic Control won't allow the Hospital to grant us surgical permissions because it's not a contained environment. They say the risk of exposure to the public is too great. They won't budge on the matter."

"Do we have any alternatives?" Peter directed his full attention to Claire and the situation.

"The C.E.C. suggested I contact the Arkhangelsk State Medical University," Claire sat down next to Peter, "it's minutes from here. They've agreed to provide us with the facilities we need, but they can't allow us to use them until they can put necessary security measures in place."

"How long?" Peter was very concerned.

Claire paused before she spoke. "It may be too long," she paused again knowing that the news was a great set back, "it maybe hours...possibly tomorrow morning."

"Will Connor survive that?" Peter didn't want to ask, fearing the worst.

"I don't know," Claire's heart skipped a beat, "We are doing everything we can to try and sustain him, but the parasite could expel from his body at any time and his low core temperature is causing concern."

Peter's mind ignited, "This is what I don't understand...when we first encountered the parasite,

didn't Cooper explain that it needed a warm and wet environment to survive?"

Mia walked in and joined Peter and Claire, "I just read the case file, and it doesn't add up. Even though his body temperature is low for a human, the parasite should be thriving with that kind of heat. It should have already left his body by now."

"Right," Peter was dramatic and his voice rose in vexation, "Instead it seems like it's in some kind of stasis."

"What would do that?" Claire inquisitively searched for answers.

Peter shrugged. None of it made logical sense until it came to him, "Critical Fault."

Claire and Mia looked at Peter waiting for an explanation. Peter now had a theory, "When Connor disappeared, there was an enormous bright white light right before the final devastating explosion. The light was identical to the light described by the eyewitnesses at the liquefaction complex, except this time it wasn't followed an explosion. Critical Fault was never reached."



Peter went on, "The energy created by the Critical Fault must have put Connor in some kind of limbo. When Critical Fault was almost reached again, he was brought back, but not fully. The process was incomplete, and so was his entry."

"So he's still partially caught in limbo," Mia understood as Peter's theory came together.

“And so is the parasite,” Claire turned to Peter, “That’s why it’s not thriving, and why Connor has sustained so long and why his injuries haven’t started to heal.”

“Now we just have to finish the process,” Peter quickly turned to his computer and pulled up Case # 75-1718 from the O.S.I.R. database. “Back in 1998, Anton disappeared for several months after entering ‘The Arch’.”

“I remember reading that file just after coming to the O.S.I.R.,” Mia explained, “He was caught limbo just like Doyle.”

Peter turn to her and nodded in excitement, “yes, until the conditions were artificially recreated, bringing him back. We can do the same here.”

“After the parasite is safely removed,” Claire adds realizing that if Peter’s theory is right, Connor may still have time.

There were still unanswered questions, “But what caused his body temperature to lower in the first place?” Mia brought to the floor.

“Alexei Shasharin,” Peter stated.

Claire knew where he was going, “Alexei Shasharin was one of the original men to die after being infected with the parasite. Right before the parasite left his body, his temperature plummeted.” She looked at Mia, “He was cold as ice.”

“Davison,” Claire was interrupted by Ray’s voice over her headset, “A doctor Pavlovna from the Arkhangelsk State Medical University is wanting to speak to you.”

“I need to get back to the hospital,” Claire pressed the button on her headset.

The intense energy and excitement was almost shadowed by relief. Connor may still have a chance,

but there was still much to do, “Mia and I will set up the energy emitters needed to safely recreate the Critical Fault.” Peter was ready to get to work.

Claire nodded and swiftly left the room. Before Peter and Mia went on with the plan, Mia turned to him with the folder she was holding, “Oh, Peter, before I forget.” Mia handed the paper print out it contained to him, “This maybe superfluous now, but...”

Peter took the paper from Mia’s hand, “Huh,” he snickered at the timing, “the fingerprints are a positive match.

TIME & PLACE 17:00. *Peter enters Connor’s hospital room where he finds Lindsay still at his bedside.*

“Lindsay, you look exhausted,” Peter noticed that she hadn’t moved from Doyle’s side.

Lindsay sat up from where her head was laid on the bed, “I’m okay, Peter.” Her hand was still clutched to Connor’s. “Claire filled me in on your theory,” she tried desperately not to yawn, “Did you and Mia get the emitters working?”

“Yeah,” Peter sat down in the chair next to Lindsay, “we’re ready to go, right after the parasite is removed.”

Lindsay was relieved. She began to update him on the interviews she conducted earlier that day, “I talked to the sweeper team we sent to the LNG Complex. There were no traces of the parasite found. The whole place is clean.”

“Did you do that over the phone?” Peter knew that she hadn’t left the room in almost six hours.

Lindsay smiled for a second, “Yeah,” she pointed to the phone resting on the table next to her, “it came in handy.”



They both sat, blank faced, and stared at Doyle’s limp body, “You know,” Lindsay leaned her head towards Peter, speaking to him, but leaving her eyes on Connor, “most doctors would tell you, when a patient is in a coma, they can hear every word you say.” She looked at Peter as he nodded his head, “do you think the same rule applies to those stuck in limbo?” she softly laughed.

Peter smiled, “I don’t know. It’s worth a shot though, huh?” He got up from his chair and patted her shoulder as he left the room.

Lindsay leaned back toward Connor’s hospital bed. She took a deep breath and prepared herself for what she was going to say, “There’s something I need to tell you...”

TIME & PLACE 02:05,
*Wednesday, February 6, 2002.
Anton arrives at the airport in Arkhangelsk, where he is greeted and picked up by an O.S.I.R. Operative. He is quickly rushed to the Arkhangelsk State Medical University where Claire is making final preparations for the parasite’s removal.*

“Anton, you’re here,” Claire and Anton met in the hallway just outside the University’s operating room. She was happy to see Hendricks, “we should be ready to go in a couple hours.”

“Good,” Anton took his jacket off and settled in, “I’m scrubbing in with you.”

Claire was surprised. She didn’t want to insult Hendricks, but at the same time she was worried that the sleep deprivation may impair his abilities, “Anton, you just had a fifteen hour flight.”

He anticipated her reaction, “I slept the last half of it,” he assured her, “besides, when was the last time you had sleep?”

Claire thought about the question and smiled, “The night before I decided to join the O.S.I.R.,” she laughed. “Okay, Anton.” She led Anton into the classroom



across the hall from the O.R. There they reviewed Doyle’s M.R.I. scans and other medical documents over a computer, “We’ll do a Gastroscopy using an endoscope. Once we are in, the hard part will be removing the Parasite from the inner wall of his stomach.”

“I think I have the solution,” Anton was confident, “I talked to L.Q. last night. He said the parasite much like a leach. When you want to remove a leach, you don’t cut it off...”

“You pour salt on it,” Claire finished, “we can effectively do that with saline solution.”

“Right.” The surgical plan was coming together, but there were still other details to go over. “Are Peter and Mia ready with the energy emitters?”

“The operating room has been outfitted with the necessary equipment.” Claire pulled up a detail chart of the O.R., showing it to Anton, “protective shielding has been placed over the sensitive equipment in these areas.” She turned to Anton, “Peter will start the emitters once we are done removing the parasite, but during the energy pulse we can’t stay in the room.”

“Why?” Anton was concerned. Leaving Connor unmonitored could be dangerous.

“Though the energy emitted will be beneficial to Doyle, allowing him to completely sever limbo, there is a slight chance that it could be harmful to the rest of us, experiencing lightheadedness, dizziness or nausea.” Claire knew that they both had to stay sharp, and this could seriously affect them. “Peter will be installing protective shielding in the room. During the energy pulse, we’ll wait here for the ‘all clear’.”

Anton agreed with the plan as they continued working out the remaining details. Everything had to be perfectly in place for this to work.

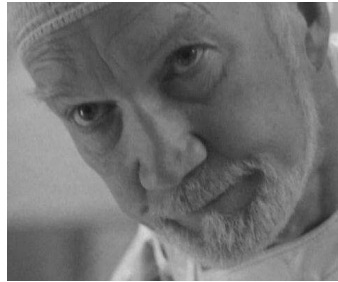
TIME & PLACE 03:00, *Two O.S.I.R. medical operatives roll Connor into the O.R. on stretcher. Overhead, Peter, Lindsay, Mia and Dr. Robert Pavlovna, the director of Arkhangelsk State Medical University, wait patiently in the Observation Room. After an hour has past, Connor is*

successfully put under anesthesia. Anton and Claire enter the O.R., dressed in medical scrubs and surgical garb, ready to begin.

“Start the recording,” Anton signaled an operative in the observation room to document the surgery. It was standard protocol.

Davison hands the endoscope to Hendricks. Above, the team watches the operation behind a glass room divider. They can hear the surgeons speaking over an intercom system. Dr. Pavlovna interprets the medical jargon of the procedure to the team.

“The small camera, when inserted through the esophagus, allow the doctors to have a clear look inside the stomach,” he points to a monitor mounted on the wall. “You should be able to see the parasite soon,” he pauses for a second, “there.”



A snake-like creature was displayed on the television screen. Peter noticed Mia cringe and turn away, “Mia, are you alright?”

“I’m fine,” she kept her composure. “I have a stronger stomach than Ray, but now I know why I never watched those medical shows on TV.” She turned to Lindsay, “How about you?”

Lindsay was fine. She smirked and replied, “I never miss an episode of ‘ER’.”

Below in surgery, Anton calls for the saline to be introduced.

“See,” Dr. Pavlovna points out, “he’s holding the parasite still with forceps and will pull it away from the stomach lining.” The team watches as the saline forces the parasite to let go.

“It looks like it’s melting off,” Peter watches intently with the others in the room. He looks to Dr. Pavlovna, “What’s next?”

Robert explains, “There seems to be only a small amount of blood. First they will repair the abrasion left on the lining of his stomach. Then they will gently remove the endoscope, leaving the forceps in place. Once the endoscope is out, the forceps will be retracted, carefully removing the parasite from the patient.”

Lindsay turned to Mia, “You may want to look away for a moment.”

Mia sickly nodded her head as she was halfway turned in her seat, “I’m gonna go back here and set up the laptop controls for the energy emitters.”

Lindsay looked back at the operation. Dr. Davison was holding a container marked “Hazardous Material” as Anton extracted the lifeless parasite. Claire quickly sealed it in the container and handed it to an operative to be placed on ice.

Hendricks, concerned, monitored Connor’s vital signs for a few minutes. “Peter,” Anton called up to Axon over the microphone, “we’re finished here and ready for you. We’ll begin to clear the room of the remaining equipment sensitive to the energy pulse, but I want to keep an eye on his vitals.”

Peter steps up to the intercom and presses the button allowing him to reply, “We can remotely monitor them from here.” Anton nods his head in acknowledgment. Peter turns to Mia, “Are we ready for the second phase?”

Mia looked up from her computer, “We’re all set.”

Peter goes back to the intercom, “Anton, we’ll wait until you’re all safely behind the protective shielding before activating the emitters.”

The last of the surgical team exit the O.R., leaving Connor on the table. Peter hears Claire over his headset, “Peter, we’re in position.”

Peter presses the button on his headset, “The whole process should only last a minute or two. Once the emitters are offline, we will signal an all clear. You and your medical team can then re-enter the room.”

“We copy that,” Dr. Hendricks and Davison wait anxiously in the secured lab across the hall.

Peter walks over to where Mia is set up with her laptop. She types a few last commands into the programming before giving Peter the go ahead, “Here we go.” Mia hits one last key on her computer.

The sound of the emitters echoed through the O.R. and in the observation room. Mia and Peter continued to monitor Connor’s vitals as the sound grew louder. “We should be recreating artificial Critical Fault in five...four...three...two...”

An energy wave pulsed through the Observation room, shaking the glass. The team suddenly felt dizzy and nauseous as a bright flash of light immersed the rooms. Lindsay, standing closest to the divider, threw her arm over her eyes trying to shield them from the piercing burst.

The light disappeared and the emitters automatically shut down. Peter radioed Davison and Hendricks with his headset, “That’s it.” Peter expected a response, but there wasn’t one. “Anton...Claire?” He couldn’t reach them.

“Peter,” Mia checked her computer, “My laptop, along with our radio com, is dead. The glass wall must not have provided enough protection from the energy pulse as we predicted. It fried the system.”

“We need to get the medical team back in there,” Lindsay raced out of the room heading to the O.R. She was worried. Without his vitals being monitored, and doctors standing by, Connor could flat-line. The team knew it too, as they followed after her.



“Anton! Claire!” Lindsay calls out as she passes through the hallway. The two doctors step out of the lab catching up with her, “The energy pulse took

down the system. We couldn’t radio you.”

The team ran into the operating room where Connor was still unmoved. Dr. Davison ran to his side, checking his pulse, “We have a pulse, but it’s faint,” she rushed to put monitoring equipment, untouched from the emitter, back on him, “He’s not breathing, he’s in shock!”

“Get the intubation tray and paddles ready!” Anton feared that Doyle’s heart would stop.

“Wait!” Lindsay yelled. She stood at Connor’s side, when she saw him draw in a deep breath.

The room froze in apprehension as they anticipated the worst. Instead, Connor’s eyes opened. “Donner?” Doyle looked around the room trying to realize where he was. He was groggy and his throat was sore, “what happened?”

Lindsay smiled and sighed in relief with the rest of the team, “Everything is going to be okay.”

TIME & PLACE 15:00, Monday,
February 18, 2002. O.S.I.R.
Headquarters. Over lunch,
Anton, Lindsay, Claire, Ray,
L.Q. Cooper and Case Manager
Curtis Rollins sit with Connor,
filling him in on the events of
the past five years. Outside of
the conference room, Peter
records his final log entry.

“Less than two weeks have past since the removal of the parasite,” Peter speaks confidently into his recorder. “Dr. Claire Davison assures me that Doyle’s body is rid of the parasitical infection and we should expect a complete and full recovery. On another note, the Arkhangelsk Natural Gas Liquefaction plant has been reopened. We are working with local authorities to insure that certain security measures are put in place protecting against this event from reoccurring. Case File, #32-1147 is now officially closed.”

Peter shut off his tape recorder. He watched through the glass doors of the conference room seeing his friends and colleagues having a blast in celebrating Connor’s return. Meanwhile, Mia approaches Peter with a folder, “Here’s my final report.”

“Hey Mia,” Peter was smiling as he was about to join the team inside. “Would you like to join us? There’s a ton of food...”

“I better not.” Mia felt a little left out. Being the rookie of the group, she never got a chance to meet Connor prior to the case, “this is your time to catch up with your friend.”

“Mia, Come on!” Peter invited her in, “you’re part of this team now.” The two walked into the conference room where they heard bursts of laughter.

“Peter!” Doyle smiled welcoming him in. “It’s about time!” he joked.

Peter reached over and firmly shook Connor’s hand. “It’s been too long,” he sarcastically joked back. Peter turned to Mia and introduced her, “Connor, I want you to meet Mia Stone.” Mia quietly smiled at Connor, still feeling out of place, “She’s the O.S.I.R.’s newest Parapsychologist.”

Doyle reaches out his hand to Mia, “Hi.” They shook and Connor offered Mia a chair. “I heard that you played a vital role in getting me back.”

“I don’t know about that,” Mia laughed, embarrassed at the compliment.

“Well, either way,” Connor replied, “Thank you.”

Mia smiled and nodded her head feeling welcomed to the group.

“Now,” Peter changed subjects as he looked through the Chinese take-out boxes, “where’s the Kung Pao Chicken?”

Lindsay looks up seeming very guilty, and Peter notices it, “Lindsay!”

“I’m sorry, Peter!” She laughed, “I couldn’t help it.”

Connor smiles and shakes his head, “I guess nothing changes around here.” He laughed.

Smiling, but frustrated, Peter continues to search through the cartons on the table. He stops

when he is repulsed at what he sees in the carton he is holding, “what is that?”

Cooper leans over, “Oh, that’s cooked pig uterus.”

He notices the disgust on Peter’s face, “What? I hear it’s a Chinese delicacy.”



Peter quickly hands the dish to L.Q., as the others try hard not to laugh. “No, Connor. Nothing has changed.” And the room erupts in laughter.

Epilogue

Even after his wounds and injuries were well healed, Connor Doyle was never able to recall memories of where had disappeared to during those the five missing years. Was he teleported to another plane, waiting to be re-entered to this one? Did he accidentally fall into a time portal created by the Critical Fault? In any event, it was the dedication and hard work of his team that allowed him to come full circle.

DAN AYKROYD

G L O S S A R Y

CRITICAL FAULT

1. A process error or break resulting in complete process failure. 2. A compressor natural gas build up, resulting in a potentially harmful explosion.

ENDOSCOPE

A medical device for viewing internal cavities of the body comprised of a fiber optic tube with a camera and light on the end.

E.R.

Emergency Room. Usually a portion of a hospital, where emergency medical attention is offered.

GASTROSCOPY

The examination of the inside of the gullet, stomach and/or duodenum with the use of an endoscope. Also known as an Upper GI Endoscopy.

INTUBATION

Medical procedure practiced when a patient's breathing is under distress or has stopped. The insertion of a tube into the larynx (also known as the windpipe or airway) allowing oxygen to pass through to the lungs.

L.N.G.

Liquefied Natural Gas. A colorless/odorless energy source in a liquid form created from Natural Gas.

M.R.I.

Magnetic Resonance Imaging. An imaging technique used primarily in medical settings to produce high quality images of the inside of the human body.

NATURAL GAS LIQUEFACTION COMPLEX

A factory that presses natural gas into liquid form through a process known as liquefaction. These are also called Natural Gas Liquefaction Terminals.

O.R.

Operating Room. A room in a hospital, clinic or doctor's office where medical procedures are preformed.

PARAPSYCHOLOGY

1. 'Beyond Psychology' 2. The scientific study of paranormal phenomena, or Psi, presently unexplained by modern science.

SALINE SOLUTION

Isotonic solution of sodium chloride (salt) and distilled water.

