

1 INT. NARRATION -

1

NARRATOR

Chaika is created for an adult audience and features depictions of emotional distress. Please review the shownotes of this episode for specific content warnings.

INTRO MUSIC, starts, then fades to low

NARRATOR

Chaika. Episode 2. Drying inward from the edge.

INTRO MUSIC, up to full volume

2 INT. SPACE SHIP EVENTYR - CHAIKA'S LOG

2

CHAIKA's quarters.

Beep.

CHAIKA

Personal log.

Beep.

CHAIKA

Solarin, Chaika. Year 2089, month 8, day... 28.

Beep. Long beep.

CHAIKA

LEQU suggested I talk about my childhood. So. Right.

(beat)

Nothing much to say, really. I grew up on a moonbase.

(corrects herself)

The moonbase. There's never been more than one. Seems they had some pretty grand plans, but... It was just us. My

(slight hesitation)

mom was in charge of the mining operations. Until I was... eight or so... I was in school along with all the other kids in remote locations. My best friend was Lin, their parent

worked on a research station in the Arctic.

(slight laugh)

Once we tricked our teacher into thinking our cameras weren't working, it was so funny-

(interrupts herself, realizing)

I- But- Huh. Our teacher was AI, she must have known we were only- Yeah. That was... kind of her.

(beat)

SOLACE. That was her name. She used to read us stories... When I was really little I loved Goodnight moon. Made me feel special.

(small smile)

After all, I was the only kid on the moon... Felt like the whole story was saying goodnight to me... Made my mom read it so many times...

(slowly)

Good night air... Good night noises everywhere...

(beat)

So quiet... My childhood was so... quiet... So calm. Until that time when earth went silent. No calm, then, for a while... But after... Even quieter. No friends, just... us.

(half laugh, half sob)

They say in space no-one can hear you scream, but we weren't screaming... At least not on the outside. We were quiet little mice up on our moonbase, just waiting... Waiting for... someone... But no-one came. Not sure screaming would have helped.

(sighs)

Maybe we would have felt better. Not much for shouting, either of us. I read somewhere... All you need to be happy is freedom, books, flowers, and the moon...

(weak smile)

I had all of that growing up. But happy? I don't know.

(beat)

End log.

Beep.

3 INT. SPACE SHIP EVENTYR - AFTERNOON

3

Eventyr lounge.

CHAIKA and LEQU are mid-session.

LEQU
(energetic)
So how did you feel about recording
your first log? Fun? Horrible?
Splendid?

CHAIKA
Um. I don't know.

LEQU
(sing-song voice)
Yes you do.

CHAIKA
(sighs)
Yes I do. Um. It was all right, I
guess.
(beat)
I talked about growing up and stuff.

LEQU
Right. Yes.
(slowly, thinking)
And stuff...
(beat)
Was it a happy childhood?

CHAIKA
I... I don't know. It was all right.

LEQU
Lonely?

CHAIKA
Yeah.

Pause.

LEQU
(mutters, in Mandarin)
金口难开呀 [jīn kǒu nán kāi ya] [Like
pulling teeth]

CHAIKA
What was that?

LEQU
Sorry!

(in Mandarin, slower)
金口难开 [jīn kǒu nán kāi] [Like
pulling teeth]

CHAIKA
(repeats, haltingly, in
Mandarin)
金口难开 [jīn kǒu nán kāi] ['Like
pulling teeth', literally 'Golden
mouth is hard to open']
(in English)
What does it mean?

LEQU
(breezy)
That trying to get you to talk is
very slow and difficult today.

CHAIKA
(surprised, a little
dismayed)
Oh!

LEQU
Not to worry. That's my job to deal
with.
(beat)
Seems you don't really want to talk
about this.

CHAIKA
I guess not.
(sighs)
I... I don't mean to be difficult.

LEQU
Of course not. Let's talk about
something else. Get to know each
other a little. What do you like to
do when you have spare time?

CHAIKA
Um. Read? Watch old movies.

LEQU
What's your favourite film?

CHAIKA
Um.
(thinks)
There's this movie with really old
orange aliens - it's this epic
adventure, but it's funny, too. It's
called Sedition?

LEQU
(thrilled)
Oh!
(quotes as silly
character)
"What's my catch up, ketchup?"

CHAIKA
(fills in, laughing)
"-catch up, ketchup?"
(laughs)
I love that movie.

LEQU
Me too!
(beat)
See? We are getting to know each
other.

CHAIKA
(smiles)
We are. I'm glad.
(beat)
I still... I really would like to
meet some other humans, too. I... I
never have.

LEQU
(interested)
You have never met another human?

CHAIKA
No. Or, only my...
(trails off)

LEQU
Your?

CHAIKA
(deep breath)
My mother. Valen. Valen Solarin.

LEQU
Oh, I met her! She was starting her
new position- Wait, actually, I
think we should have access to some-
(calls)
HYGGE?

HYGGE entry beep.

HYGGE
(in Danish)
Ja? [Yes]

LEQU
Did you copy the file archives from
the moonbase?

HYGGE
(in Danish)
Selvfølgelig. [Of course]
(beat, in English)
TROST was most helpful.

LEQU
Good. Could you pull up all audio
files created by 'Valen Solarin',
please?

HYGGE
(in Danish)
Selvfølgelig. [Of course]
(in English)
I'll leave you to it.

HUGGE exit beep.

LEQU
Right. Once those are retrieved, you
start listening through them.

CHAIKA
(surprised and confused)
My mother's files? I didn't know she
left anything like that.

LEQU
It will help you. Listen to... let's
say one a day.

CHAIKA
All right. I... I will try it.

LEQU
Good. I feel like we are making
progress.

CHAIKA
(thinking, slightly
dubious)
Yeah. Maybe.

AMBIANCE fades.

HYGGE
Word of the day.

Ding.

NARRATOR
The word of the day is saman. Saman is Icelandic, and means 'together'. It is directly linked to the Old Norse word 'saman' of the same meaning, and the word also occurs in Norwegian Nynorsk as well as Faroese. It is thought to be derived from the Proto-Germanic word samanai, of the same meaning.

Ding.

5 INT. SPACE SHIP EVENTYR - AFTERNOON

5

Eventyr control room.

Doors whoosh open, CHAIKA walks in.

HYGGE
Good afternoon Chaika! How may I brighten your day?

CHAIKA
(small smile)
Hi HYGGE. Um. I realized... I never asked. How long... I mean when can we expect to get to-

HYGGE
(cheerful)
To our destination?
(in Danish)
Selvfølgelig. [Of course]

Beep.

HYGGE
I am delighted by your enquiry. We are currently on day 3, hour 13, minute 42 and second fifty...six-

Small beep.

HYGGE
-of our journey. So far conditions have been excellent, and we have

been making good time. If you look out on our starboard side-

CHAIKA
(confused)
Starboard?

HYGGE
(amused)
Hah! Yes, on a space ship all sides are 'starboards', of course!

CHAIKA
(still confused)
But what does it mean?

HYGGE
(excited lecturer mode)
The word 'starboard' comes from the early days of boating, where the right hand side of the ship was the 'steering' side, so 'star' actually stems from 'steer', and 'board' means 'side of boat', or in our case, 'ship'.

During previous, CHAIKA has walked over to window.

MUSIC starts faintly.

CHAIKA
(lets out awed breath)

HYGGE
(amused at themselves)
It is much less confusing in Danish, actually, 'styrbord' is easily understood to be connected to the activity of steering-
(interrupts themselves)
Chaika? Are you listening?

CHAIKA
(turned away)
Hm?

HYGGE
(softer)
Beautiful, isn't it?

CHAIKA
(in awe)
It is... I've never even left the moonbase before, so this...

HYGGE

It's Venus.

(happily back in lecturer mode)

You may wonder how come we encounter Venus before Mars. It has to do with our trajectory, where Venus will give us a gravity assist-

CHAIKA

(still in awe, not listening)

...this is incredible...

HYGGE

(still happily lecturing)

Venus. Second planet from Sol. Venus is the only Sol system planet whose day is longer than it's year, it orbits Sol every 224.7 [two hundred and twenty-four point seven] Earth days, and has a sidereal rotation period of 243 [two hundred and forty-three] Earth days. It also rotates-

CHAIKA

(emotional, as if from far away)

Are those... clouds?

HYGGE

(enthusiastic)

Yes! The surface of Venus is completely obscured by clouds made up of sulfuric acid. The atmosphere-

CHAIKA

(gently)

HYGGE.

HYGGE

Yes?

CHAIKA

(gently)

No more facts about Venus. Enjoy it with me instead.

HYGGE

(flustered)

I- Um- Huh. Very well. A-hem. Hm. Yes.

CHAIKA
(awed sigh)

MUSIC up to full, then lower again.

HYGGE
(softly)
Chaika?

CHAIKA
Yes?

HYGGE
All right to speak now?

CHAIKA
(smiles)
Yes.

HYGGE
You asked about our journey.

CHAIKA
(realizes)
That's right. That's why I came here
in the first place.

HYGGE
Well. As I was saying, we are making
good time. I calculate it will take
no more than a further 29 days. You
chose a fortunate time for this
journey in regards to alignment
trajectories, if you had-

CHAIKA
Good.

(beat)
HYGGE, do you-
(starts again)
All this time - all the years I was
growing up - you were there, on the
moonbase. Or Eventyr was. But we
never... Were you just waiting?

HYGGE
(cheerful)
We were in stasis.

CHAIKA
What does that mean?

HYGGE

(cheerful)
We were switched off. For 20 years,
67 da- [days]

CHAIKA
(interrupts)
So you didn't- What was it like?

HYGGE
(matter of fact)
It was nothing. I was reactivated,
and it was as though no time had
passed.

CHAIKA
But that... What if you hadn't been
reactivated? You'd be...
(doesn't want to say
'dead')

HYGGE
(thoughtful)
I suppose we would be dead, yes.
Whatever that means for us.
(cheerful)
But we wouldn't know about it.

CHAIKA
(upset)
But don't you see? That's the awful
part! And... We... I...
(hesitates)
My mother... *We* would be
responsible.

HYGGE
(thoughtful)
I suppose so. But you - or someone
else - could always reactivate us,
which would solve the problem, and
absolve you of responsibility.
(delighted)
We would be both dead and not dead.
Schroedinger's AIs, if you will!

CHAIKA
(still upset)
But aren't you afraid of... not
being anymore?

HYGGE
(thoughtful)
I don't think so. I either am or I
am not. I would certainly avoid the

not *being* if I could help it,
but... I am not afraid.

CHAIKA
(small voice)
I am.

HYGGE
(gently)
I understand that.
(pause)
Can I do anything to help?

CHAIKA
(small smile)
How may you 'brighten my day?'

HYGGE
(enthusiastic)
Exactly!

CHAIKA
(real smile now)
You are doing that already. Thanks
HYGGE.

HYGGE
You are most welcome.

CHAIKA
Tell me some more about Venus.

HYGGE
(delighted, in Danish)
Selvfølgelig. [Of course]
(in English)
Do you see that small area on the...

HYGGE fades out, MUSIC volume increases.

6 POEM OF THE DAY

6

Ding.

HYGGE
Poem of the day.

Ding.

MUSIC

NARRATOR
I know what my heart is like

Since your love died:
It is like a hollow ledge
Holding a little pool
Left there by the tide,
A little tepid pool,
Drying inward from the edge.

MUSIC fades

7 INT. MOONBASE - EVENING

7

Beep.

VALEN
Initiate psychology evaluation.

Beep.

LEQU
(impersonal mode)
Psychology evaluation session
enabled.

Beep.

VALEN
(quickly)
Solarin, Valen. Year 2070, month 10,
day 31.

Long beep.

LEQU
(impersonal mode)
State purpose of evaluation.

VALEN
I... I want to see if I can get
pregnant.

LEQU
(impersonal mode)
Fertility assessment requires
medical evaluation. Please stand by
while I request assistance from
COMODO-

VALEN
(quickly)
No! I mean- I did that part. It's
the psych eval thing-

LEQU

(impersonal mode)
Psychology evaluation to assess
patient's suitability for remote
conception assistance.

VALEN

Yeah.

(beat, slight laugh)
Is that what you are calling it?
'Remote conception assistance'?
Trying to make it as clinical as
possible, right? None of that fluffy
stuff...

LEQU

(impersonal mode)
Commence eval.

VALEN

Right. Yeah.

(deep breath, serious)
Is it... I know it's been allowed -
encouraged! - for a while now,
but... How common is it - to decide
to have a baby on a solo posting
like this one?

LEQU

(impersonal mode)
Solo postings for employees with
gestational capabilities are rare.
There have been one successful birth
to date, to an employee in the
Arctic.

VALEN

(fearful)
And... any unsuccessful births?

LEQU

(impersonal mode)
None so far.

VALEN

(relieved)
Good to hear.

LEQU

(impersonal mode)
Of course you need to be aware that
pregnancy and childbirth always
carry medical risks. Furthermore,
pregnancy in low gravity is largely
unexplored. However, you will be

closely monitored, and the artificial gravity of the moonbase will be adjusted to keep you and your child healthy.

VALEN

My... child... That still feels pretty unreal.

Three short beeps in succession.

LEQU

(impersonal mode)

You have successfully completed the psychology evaluation.

VALEN

What?

LEQU

(impersonal mode)

Your request for remote conception assistance is approved, and registered with CosmiCorps medical.

VALEN

But-

LEQU

(impersonal mode)

Delivery should take between 6 to 8 weeks. Thank you for your collaboration.

LEQU generic exit beep.

VALEN

(disoriented)

But we hardly started... I don't-
LEQU? Disable impersonal mode!

LEQU entry beep.

LEQU

(upbeat)

Thank you! So tiresome to be locked into that

(mocking)

'professional' mode. *I* am a paragon of professionalism, wouldn't you say?

VALEN

(distracted)

Yeah. Sure. Could you... Could you check your log? You and I just had a very strange eval.

LEQU

Certainly!

(mutters cheerfully)

Perhaps the 'professional' version of me is not as professional as they claim...

(in Mandarin, lightly)

最好小心点! [zuì hǎo xiǎo xīn diǎn]
[Better watch out]

VALEN

Thank you.

LEQU

(thoughtful)

This is peculiar... Seems she... I... well, she... we... received instructions from CosmiCorps to approve your request without further evaluation.

VALEN

Weird. Why would they do that?

LEQU

Beats me!

VALEN

Right. I suppose that is good.

LEQU

As long as that's what you want, then sure!

VALEN

(lets out breath)

O-kay. I guess... I guess I am going to try to get pregnant then... huh.

LEQU

(enthusiatic)

Congratulations!

(in Mandarin)

加油! [jiā yóu] ['Good wishes',
literally 'add oil']

VALEN

(overwhelmed)

Um. Thanks.

Fade out.

8 CREDITS

8

CREDITS MUSIC

NARRATOR

Please stay around until after the credits for a teaser of our next episode, and also some trailers for shows I think you will really enjoy.

You have listened to Danyelle Ellet as Chaika, Charlotte Norup as HYGGE, Sam Yeow as LEQU and Angelique Lazarus as Valen. Chaika was written, produced and directed by Karin Heimdahl - that's me! - I also do the narration.

Chaika's theme is by Chris Gregory, please check out his audio fiction anthology podcast, Alternative Stories and Fake Realities as well as his sci-fi podcast, The Dex Legacy. Additional music by ArchesAudio.com and Kevin McCleoud, please see the shownotes for a complete music list. Poem is Ebb by Edna St. Vincent Millay, and word-of-the-day definition is adapted from wiktioanary.org

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We will return in two weeks with episode 3, What portion of me be Assignable, where - among other things - you will hear this:

CREDITS MUSIC fade out

Extract from episode 3 fade in

Long beep.

VALEN

(dismayed)

It's been a week since earth went silent.

(thinks)

I don't know why I am continuing these logs. I mean, who will listen? Why am I following the CosmiCorps mandate of recording weekly personal logs when...

(deep breath)

When there seems to be no CosmiCorps... I still don't know what happened. There were no SOS transmissions, no reports of disasters... Or no more than usual.

(beat)

All of a sudden. it just stopped. The lights went out, the comms went silent, and all I could see from here were the raging forest fires... But those have been going for years. They've spread in the past week, though. I can only guess it's because no-one is fighting them.

Trailer for The Pilgrimage Saga

<https://thepilgrimagesaga.wordpress.com/>

Trailer for Seren <https://serenpodcast.carrd.co/>

OUTRO MUSIC

Pronunciations

Carson [CAR-sun]

Curie [q-REE]

Chaika [tCHEY-ka]

CosmiCorps [COS-me-CORE]

EVENTYR [EH-ven-tier]

FIKAMAD [FEE-kuh-mat]

HYGGE [HIG-eh]

LEQU [luh-CHU]

Lone Møller [LOAN-eh MEL-er]

Solarin [suh-LA-rin]

Tharp [thARp]

TellUs [TELL-us]

TROST [tRAWSt]

Valen [VALE-un]

Valentina Tereshkova [vall-en-TEE-na tuh-RESH-co-vah]