

"A CLARION CALLING"
The Sheridan Tapes - Season 03, Episode 60
Recording Draft - June 3, 2022

by

Virginia Spotts and Cassandra Tse

Based on story and characters from
"Homestead on the Corner" by Trevor Van Winkle
and
"Apocalypse Songs" by Cassandra Tse

Copyright 2022
Homestead on the Corner

1. INT. AIRPLANE CABIN - NIGHT - 4/15/15

The gentle rumble of a plane in flight. The red-eyed passengers are almost all asleep, and a man snores nearby.

ANNA SIGHS, annoyed and frustrated.

MARIA SOL
(mumbled, sleepy)
Go to sleep, Anna.

ANNA SHERIDAN
(annoyed, irritable)
I would if I could. You got any duct tape?

MARIA SOL
(trying to fall back asleep)
You told me to leave all that at home.

ANNA SHERIDAN
(MOCK GASP)
Not the zip ties, too?

MARIA SOL
(joking back)
You specifically warned me that the border agents would turn us away if we looked like a couple of 'ne'er do wells'
(SLEEPY GIGGLE, TURNING TO GROAN)
Nooooo, I'm waking up.

ANNA SHERIDAN
(half-standing up)
Good, I have to use the bathroom. Let me squeeze by -- ope!...

MARIA SOL
(still sleepy)
"You shall not pass..."
(GIGGLE)

ANNA SHERIDAN
(LAUGHS, shaking head affectionately)
Nerd...

Anna squeezes past just before light turbulence shakes the plane. There's a small ding as the seat belt light turns on.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

(quiet, trying not to wake
sleepers)

Attention passengers -- just wanted
to let those of you still awake
know that we're experiencing a bit
of light turbulence, and the
captain has illuminated the fasten
seat belt sign. Please return to
your seats until the air clears up
a bit. Thank you

ANNA SHERIDAN

(quiet, frustrated)

Oh, come on...

Anna trails off, hearing something: a deep and resonant noise
that just rises above the drone of the engines.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

(confused, concerned)

What is that?

Anna stoops down, trying to see through the windows in the
opposite aisle.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

(squinting, muttering)

Can't see anything out the windows.
Maybe I could--

The noise suddenly grows louder, suddenly seeming like it's
inside the plane.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

(growing worry)

What is...

There's a faint whoosh of air, and the snoring suddenly cuts
out. The faint shuffling and human noises vanished with the
other passengers.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

(nervous, but not
panicked)

Alright... hmm. The plane is...
empty now. Mostly. Maria's still
here, but besides that -- the noise
is gone, the people are gone...

(realization)

Is the pilot still here?

Before Anna can check, the turbulence hits again, worse this time. ANNA GASPS, grabbing the headrest of the nearest chair to keep from falling.

It lasts a few seconds, then ends -- and as it does, the plane is full of people again.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
 (heart racing, bland
 apology to other
 passenger)
 Oh -- excuse me.
 (beat, moving away)
 Huh. Okay.

Anna starts moving down the aisle again... but before she reaches the bathroom, she hears the noise again..

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
 (DEEP BREATH)
 This isn't real. This isn't real.

The noise intensifies, and Anna looks out the window again. The same whoosh of air, and the passengers vanish from their chairs.

The overhead lights flicker as turbulence begins to rock the plane, growing faster and more intense with each passing second.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
 (panicking)
 Maria! Maria, wake up! Wake! Up!

The turbulence suddenly slows, and a flight attendant taps Anna on the shoulder. The plane is full again, and the other passengers grumble and mutter -- apparently, they heard her yelling.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
 (concerned, professional)
 Miss? Miss! Are you alright? We're experiencing some turbulence, so I'm going to have to ask you to return to your seat for your own safety.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (suddenly very
 embarrassed)
 Oh, I'm... I'm so sorry.

She walks as fast as she can back to her seat, ignoring the muttering of the other passengers (including the now-awake snorer)

MARIA SOL
(groggy, confused)
Was that you, Anna? Are you okay?

ANNA SHERIDAN
Uh, I... yeah. I'm -- I'm okay now.
I think. Probably just need some
sleep.

MARIA SOL
(rubbing her arm,
comforting)
I think that's a good idea.

ANNA SHERIDAN
(pause)
Did you see it?

MARIA SOL
(confused)
See what?

ANNA SHERIDAN
The plane -- one minute it was
full, the next it was empty. All
that noise. That loud...
(beat, SIGHS, slower)
It was empty except for you and me.
But it looked like you were still
sleeping.
(pause)
Did you see that?

MARIA SOL
(mild concern)
I think you need to get some sleep,
Anna.

ANNA SHERIDAN
(disappointed, settling
back down)
Yeah... you're probably right.

MAIN THEME

2. INT. MERIWETHER FACILITY - ATRIUM - DAY - 12/7/19

Audio from the CCTV cameras picks up as Maria rounds the corner into the atrium, opening the door to find KATE AND PETER LAUGHING together.

MARIA SOL
(surprised)
Oh, sorry -- didn't mean to interrupt.

PETER SLATE
(carefree, slightly tipsy)
Not at all!

KATE SHERIDAN
It's Saturday night and Andrew's asleep early, so you know what that means...

Peter and Kate clink glasses.

PETER SLATE
(stage whisper)
We raided the kitchen fridge and found a few abandoned beers from Thanksgiving.

KATE SHERIDAN
(LAUGHS)
Abandoned for good reason!

PETER SLATE
(smiling)
Oh yeah, they're just awful.

MARIA SOL
(pouring herself a glass of water)
Mind if I join you for a bit?

KATE SHERIDAN
(slightly sheepish)
I'm afraid the beer is gone...

MARIA SOL
(shaking her head, sitting)
Don't worry about it, I just -- can't sleep. White Sands, it was... it was just a lot.

KATE SHERIDAN
 (a little more sombre)
 No kidding.

MARIA SOL
 (trying to be nonchalant)
 I really just came in here to sit.

KATE SHERIDAN
 (sensing there's more to
 this)
 ...and?

MARIA SOL
 (a little embarrassed)
 Okay fine. I also wanted to listen
 to... well, I thought I'd be alone,
 so now it just feels silly.

PETER SLATE
 (genuinely curious)
 What does?

MARIA SOL
 (hesitant)
 It's this... gift I made for Anna.
 Kind of an audio journal from our
 trip to New Zealand a few/years ago-

PETER SLATE
 (excited)
 New Zealand?

KATE SHERIDAN
 Oh, Peter does a great Kiwi accent.

PETER SLATE
 (shrugs, thick NZ accent)
 Yeah, nah, it's pretty average, eh.

MARIA SOL
 (a little thrown off)
 Um...?

KATE SHERIDAN
 (SIGHS)
 And he loves to show it off at
 every opportunity. He's obsessed
 with New Zealand cinema. And
 writing. And--

PETER SLATE
 (cutting her off, excited)
 I didn't know Anna went there!

KATE SHERIDAN
 Yes you did -- it was right after
 Andrew was born, remember?

MARIA SOL
 (trying to help)
 April 2015?

PETER SLATE
 (realizing)
 Ooooh, that's why I don't remember
 it.

MARIA SOL
 (back on track)
 Anyway... this was right after her
 last book came out. Anthony
 convinced Poulitce Press to pay for
 a tour to Australia and New
 Zealand, mostly around Wellington.
 Still don't know how he managed to
 pull that off. Would it be... it
 wouldn't be weird to play it in
 front of you, would it...?

KATE SHERIDAN
 (excited)
 Oh please, I'd love to hear it.

PETER SLATE
 (thick NZ accent)
 Come on bro, gizza hoon.

MARIA SOL
 (SCOFFS)
 Alright, Rhys Darby, hold your
 horses...

Maria fumbles with the cassette, then...

CLICK.

3. INT. WLG TERMINAL - DAY - 4/16/15

The recorder is accidentally started in Anna's bag: muffled
 sounds of movement and resonant dings overhead.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (slightly exasperated)
 Maria, the exit's this way!

MARIA SOL
 (fangirling hard)
 I found the Gollum statue, Anna!

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (too tired for this)
 Great for you!

MARIA SOL
 (growing further away)
 He's so beautiful!

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (exasperated, jogging to
 catch up)
 Maria, wait!

MARIA SOL
 (closer, imitation)
 "My precious..."

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (LAUGHS despite herself)
 Wow.

MARIA SOL
 (excited)
 Come on, come on, picture time!

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (giving up, likes seeing
 Maria like this)
 Alright, hold on, let me find my
 camera...
 (rummaging through bag,
 annoyed)
 Oh no, how long have you been
 running --?

CLICK.

4. EXT. WELLINGTON HARBOR - AFTERNOON - 4/16/15

Anna walks between a wharf and the main road -- the sounds of heavy wind, waves, bikes and skateboards, and seagulls fill the air.

ANNA SHERIDAN

(contented)

I have to say, I think Wellington might just be my new favorite city. We're on the -- Maria! Come back! -- we're on the Writer's Walk. The city put all these hidden bits of poetry everywhere along the waterfront... all these lines of writing, immortalized in stone. I'm in heaven.

Maria's footsteps approach. Anna turns.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

Maria, look at this one...

(reading)

"And now, as I grow in years, I feel at times like an old violin played on by a master hand. You, dear city, are the maestro drawing the bow over the sensibilities of my mind, echoing the music of my days."

CLICK.

Anna stands closer to the water, next to another quotation.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

(reading)

"I love this city, the hills, the harbour, the wind that blasts through it. I love the life and pulse and activity, and the warm decrepitude... there's always an edge here that one must walk which is sharp and precarious, requiring vigilance."

CLICK.

A little further down the route, as a bicycle passes by.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

(reading, feeling it
resonate with her
experience)

"I live at the edge of the universe... like everybody else."

CLICK.

5. INT. HOTEL ROOM - MIDNIGHT - 4/16/15

Maria snores softly, but besides that all is quiet... everything except the same resonant sound from the plane.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (whispered, vindicated)
 I hope the recorder's picking that up... I can hear that noise again. The one on the plane. I knew I wasn't just imagining things.

CLICK.

Anna restarts the tape outside, running out onto the sidewalk in bare feet. SHE SHIVERS, listening.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
 (whispered, confused)
 Why is no one else out here? I know they can hear the sound... I just checked the tape.

Anna jogs down the block, staring up into the hills beyond the city.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
 (whispered, curious)
 It sounds like it's coming from the other side of town... somewhere high up.
 (beat, making a decision)
 I need to find out what's causing it.
 (beat, realizing)
 I'll need a guide.

CLICK.

6. INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER

Back in her hotel room, Anna makes a call on speaker. The dial tone rings several times before...

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 (bleary, barely awake)
 Hello...?

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (steamrolling slightly)
 Hi -- Amy Louise Chen? This is Anna.

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
Do you know anything about the
weird rumbling noises in the sky?

AMY LOUISE CHEN
(confused)
...Anna? Sheridan?

ANNA SHERIDAN
(suddenly realizing)
Oh. Yeah, it's me. Someone at the
radio station gave me your number.
Is this a bad time?

AMY LOUISE CHEN
(YAWNING)
It's six a.m.
(checks watch)
Six seventeen.

ANNA SHERIDAN
(apologetic)
Sorry... I'm still on Pacific time.
We just flew in last night.

AMY LOUISE CHEN
(already awake, may as
well check)
Mm. Uh, I've got our interview
booked in for 10 at the studio. We
still on for that?

ANNA SHERIDAN
(getting back to her
point)
Actually, I had a different idea.
Could I play you a tape?

AMY LOUISE CHEN
(still barely awake)
What? Uh, yeah... go ahead.

ANNA SHERIDAN
It's from just outside my hotel --
I heard it on the plane over, too.
It sounded like... well, just let
me play it.

Anna presses play, and the mysterious noise comes through at
full volume. After a few seconds, Anna shuts it off.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
It sounded like it was coming from
the sky -- somewhere high up, at
least.

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 (a bit creeped out)
 That's... weird.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (excited)
 It is? I wanted to do a bit of digging around, see if I can work out what it is, where it's coming from. I thought it would help to have someone who knows the city. You want to come with?

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 ("who is this woman?")
 I... I've got work --

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (insistent)
 This is work. You were already going to interview me today, so let's do that -- you know, just... in the field.
 (pause, Amy considers)
 Come on, it'll be fun. Plus, I'm not really great at the whole '20 questions' thing.

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 (hesitant)
 ...I'll have to ask my boss --

ANNA SHERIDAN
 But you'll ask?

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 (still a bit unsure)
 I'll see.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (like it's already decided)
 Great. Could you meet me at 8? There's a little coffee shop next to the hotel that would be perfect.

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 You're gonna have to be more specific than that.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (struggling to remember)
 I think it's called... Mojo?

AMY LOUISE CHEN

(slightly exasperated)

Which -- never mind, I'll text you.
But... you know, the interview
would have only taken like, half an
hour. Don't you have better things
to do than investigate strange
sounds all day?

ANNA SHERIDAN

(shrugging)

Not really. My, uh... my
assistant's taking a day trip.

CLICK.

7. EXT. TOUR BUS - MORNING - 4/16/15

The buzz of an impatient crowd as a bus idles nearby. A tour
guide calls over the crowd from a distance.

TOUR GUIDE

Okay, if you're in the 9 o'clock
group, follow me onto the bus,
single file please...

Maria moves towards the doors, speaking into her recorder.

MARIA SOL

(her best Cate Blanchett
impression)

"And so it came to pass that Maria,
daughter of Gabriela Londoño
Rodriguez and Alejandro Valero Sol,
set out on a grand journey. A quest
that would lead her over marsh and
forest, plain and river, to that
green jewel at the heart of
the/shire--"

TOUR GUIDE

(slightly irked)

Ticket, please.

MARIA SOL

(scrambling slightly)

Oh, right -- one sec, it's in my
bag... there. One ticket to
Hobbiton.

TOUR GUIDE

(unamused)

Cheers.

MARIA SOL
 (to self as she boards)
 I don't care what you get up to
 today, Anna -- there's no way
 you're having as much fun as me.

CLICK.

8. INT. COFFEE SHOP - EARLIER

Spoons clink in mugs, espresso machines hiss, and a low drone
 of conversation fills the room.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (mid-sentence, excited)
 [I was about to turn around, but
 the noise stopped,] and then the
 flight attendant tapped me on the
 shoulder and everyone was right
 back where they should be.
 (CATCHES HER BREATH, to
 herself)
 "I heard a clarion calling,
 burning paper falling
 from a low-flying airplane
 and around me was white,
 white skies and white mountains
 with cold bones about them,
 my soul, oh my soul,
 I await endless night."

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 (slightly confused)
 What's that from?

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (stops, thinking)
 ...I don't know. It... must have
 been from the writer's walk.

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 (skeptical)
 That's a little dark for the
 writer's walk.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (beat, LAUGHS, trying to
 sound carefree)
 I probably just dreamed it.

AMY LOUISE CHEN

Sorry, but -- is it okay if I just record all this? I don't want to miss anything important.

ANNA SHERIDAN

(shrugs)

Knock yourself out. I'm usually the one recording everything.

AMY LOUISE CHEN

(suddenly interested)

Oh? Is that part of your writing process? Dictating your drafts aloud? I'd heard that since your accident/you've had to--

ANNA SHERIDAN

(annoyed)

Could we not do that now?

AMY LOUISE CHEN

(confused)

Do what?

ANNA SHERIDAN

(pushing forward)

Could we not do the whole -- formal interview thing just yet? You said you had an idea for where we could look into that sound?

BARISTA

(slightly distant)

Takeaway latte, takeaway flat white?

AMY LOUISE CHEN

(to Barista)

Thanks.

(to Anna, hesitant)

I don't know, I just thought -- you said it came from the sky, right? From somewhere high up. So I figured we could walk up Te Ahumairangi lookout -- it's not far from here, and you get a good view of the whole city. You keen for a bit of a hike?

ANNA SHERIDAN

(grinning)

Do you even need to ask?

CLICK.

9. EXT. TE AHUMAIRANGI LOOKOUT TRAIL - LATER

Anna and Amy halfway up the hill, PUFFING A BIT. Wellington winds buffet the recorder in Amy's pocket.

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 (SLIGHTLY OUT OF BREATH)
 Hold on, I think we just missed the
 turnoff.
 (beat, footsteps)
 Yep, there's a little path this
 way. We can cut through to the
 lookout.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (admiring the view)
 This place is stunning.

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 (smiling, still winded)
 Pretty nice, eh? Feels like we're
 in the wilderness, even though the
 city's just a few metres down the
 hill. Oh...
 (stumbles slightly,
 recovers)
 Watch your step. Big rock there.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 Thanks for the tip.

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 (subtly trying to
 interview her)
 So... you're a big hiker?

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (shrugs, disinterested)
 I think best when I'm moving.
 Hiking or driving... either one.

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 Must be a good way to conquer
 writer's block, right?

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (nodding)
 There was this little creek near
 the house I grew up in. I used to
 down there when I was a kid,
 just...

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
 walk by the creek and make up stories. Once I got so distracted I ended up following it all the way to the river, a whole town over. Mom was pissed for a week, even though dad was the one who came and got me.

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 Was that in Iowa, then?

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (pause, slightly annoyed)
 You're doing it again.

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 (playing innocent)
 Doing what?

ANNA SHERIDAN
 Interviewing.
 (notices a sign)
 Oh... here we are -- there's the clearing.

Anna speeds off. AMY SIGHS, then follows. The wind picks up as the trees fall away, growing louder on the recording.

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 (louder, trying to be heard over wind)
 Ta da! Welcome to Poneke.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (admiring)
 You weren't kidding about the view.
 (focusing, frustrated)
 I can't hear that sound -- just the wind.

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 (shrugs)
 Well, it is the windiest city in the world.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (confused)
 I thought that was Chicago?

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 Common misconception. Depends on how you measure it,/but--

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (cuts her off)
 Wait -- do you hear that?

The noise from the night before has returned -- distant at first, but becoming omnipresent, low and sonorous.

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 What?

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (SHUSHES HER)
 There it is! It's the same sound --
 listen.

The two women pause for a moment.

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 (a little confused)
 I can't hear anything. Are you sure
 it's not just the wind?

ANNA SHERIDAN
 No, no -- it's too deep. Almost
 like whale song. Or like... the
 hinges on a giant door, opening.

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 (unconvinced)
 Huh.

The noise begins to shift, almost creaking as it unfolds into another equally resonant pitch. AMY GASPS SLIGHTLY in surprise.

AMY LOUISE CHEN (CONT'D)
 (surprised)
 I can hear it now.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (surprised)
 You... can?

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 (unsure)
 I think so.
 (beat)
 It's fading away.

She's right -- the noise quiets until only the wind remains.

ANNA SHERIDAN

(beat, slightly unnerved)
I... Honestly, I didn't think you'd
be able to hear it.

AMY LOUISE CHEN

(processing)
It was weird -- it was like, when
you spoke about, I could suddenly
pick it out of the wind noise.
(beat, looks over)
You look surprised.

ANNA SHERIDAN

(curious)
People don't always sense the same
things I do.

AMY LOUISE CHEN

(trying to interview
again)
What do you mean? Are there often
things you can sense that other
people can't?

ANNA SHERIDAN

(pause, evasive)
I write horror.

AMY LOUISE CHEN

(confused)
What does that/mean--

ANNA SHERIDAN

(intentionally vague)
I notice things other people don't
want to.

AMY LOUISE CHEN

(joking)
You mean some people see the good
in everything, and you see the
horror in everything?

ANNA SHERIDAN

(oddly serious)
Yeah.
(beat, shaking it off)
Okay, so we both heard the sound.
That still doesn't give us much to
go on.

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 (trying to be helpful)
 I mean, you were definitely right
 about it coming from the sky...

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (frustrated)
 But it just starts and stops at
 random, with no clear cause.
 (SCOFFS)
 Not unless it's some kind of
 invisible plane or UFO, or a very
 strange bird.
 (shaking head)
 Come on, let's head back to the
 studio and--

Anna cuts off. Almost unnoticed, the noise had returned --
 and as she speaks, Amy disappears into the air.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
 (alarmed)
 Amy? Where did she -- what the
 fuck? Amy? Amy!

The noise grows louder, now almost overpowering.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
 (almost panicked, yelling)
 Amy! Amy!

The noise creaks and shifts around her, growing louder still.

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
 (NEARLY HYPERVENTILATION,
 overstimulated)
 Oh god... oh fuck...

Suddenly, the noise fades out -- and Amy is standing in front
 of her, chattering away.

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 (mid-sentence)
 [So how about we head back to the
 studio]...and do the interview
 there?
 (sees the look on her
 face)
 Are you all good?

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (SIGH OF RELIEF)
 Oh Amy, thank god.

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 (confused, concerned)
 What's going on? You look like you
 saw a ghost.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (realizing she didn't see
 it)
 You just disappeared.

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 (concerned)
 What? No I didn't.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (insistent)
 Yes, you did. For a couple seconds.

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 (insisting back)
 I was literally just talking to you
 before you started freaking out.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (about to start arguing)
 No, you were...
 (realizes there's no
 point)
 Never mind, you're back now. Let's
 head down to the studio... one
 missing Amy's enough.

Amy remains silent, not sure if she believes Anna but seeing
 how shaken she is.

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 (trying to lighten the
 mood)
 Guess that's why my horoscope told
 me to 'stay present' this morning.
 (UNEASY LAUGH)

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (pause, curious)
 How much do you know about
 astrology?

CLICK.

10. INT. CRYSTAL'S CRYSTALS - DAY - LATER

Inside a small New Age shop -- calming, Enya-like music in
 the background as Anna flicks through a book and Amy wanders.

AMY LOUISE CHEN

(SCOFFS)

I'm supposed to be the local guide,
and I didn't even know this place
existed.

(picks up a crystal from a
tub)

"Rose Quartz: The love crystal.
Nurturing, comforting, dissipates
anger." Cute.

(replaces the crystal)

Where the hell did you find this
place?

ANNA SHERIDAN

(distracted, nonchalant)

Walked past it this morning.
They've got a copy of *Below the
Silent Deep* in the window.

AMY LOUISE CHEN

("of course they do")

Right. Of course.

(mostly to recorder)

Some people say your novels have a
'cult following.' Do you think it's
more difficult to be taken
seriously as an author when working
entirely in genre fiction?

ANNA SHERIDAN

(dry, barely looking up)

Great interview question. Very
encouraging. Here, take a look at
this.

Anna hands the book to Amy.

AMY LOUISE CHEN

(reading, skeptical)

"*The Starstuff Within Us.*" Does it
say anything about weird sky
noises?

ANNA SHERIDAN

All matter -- everything around us -
- is just vibrating atoms, right?
The carbon that makes up our bodies
is the same as the carbon that
makes up the atmosphere on Venus,
all just radiating out from the Big
Bang.

(MORE)

ANNA SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

Our entire universe is made of the same tiny atomic structures, combining and recombining endlessly across time.

AMY LOUISE CHEN

(dubious)

So that's why we Geminis are all indecisive.

ANNA SHERIDAN

I'm thinking more like... planets, sending out waves of energy.

Rippling back to us.

(tapping the page)

Read this part.

AMY LOUISE CHEN

(reading)

"Neptune is the psychic planet, ruler of ideals, compassion, intuition, and the spirit. It is the domain of delusions and dreams."

(looks up)

So you think the sound is coming from Neptune?

ANNA SHERIDAN

(shrugs, unsure)

It's a theory, at least.

AMY LOUISE CHEN

(curious)

Kind of reminds me of the whole 'music of the spheres' thing. Like... back in medieval times.

ANNA SHERIDAN

(a little surprised)

Oh yeah?

AMY LOUISE CHEN

They used to think that the movement of the planets created this beautiful, ethereal music -- it comes up in Shakespeare and other stuff from back then. And earlier.

(beat)

Now that I think about it, it's kind of a strange idea. Like...

(MORE)

AMY LOUISE CHEN (CONT'D)
 these ancient astronomers
 discovered that other planets
 existed, and they jumped straight
 to 'oh, they must make a lovely
 humming noise.'

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (slightly uncomfortable
 realization)
 Maybe they heard the same thing we
 did.

They both fall silent for a moment.

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 (trying to get back on
 track)
 Is it okay if I just ask you like,
 3 questions about the book?

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (LAUGHS, impressed)
 You just don't quit, do you?

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 (apologetic)
 I'm sorry, it's just... I'm kinda
 nervous.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (amused)
 What, because of me?

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 (hesitant)
 This is... sort of... my first
 interview. Like, my first proper
 interview for Arts on Saturday. I
 did interviews at uni, but... you
 know, normally they put me on fact
 checking and writing up stuff for
 the bulletin.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (surprised by that)
 Huh.
 (beat)
 Well... is it everything you
 expected it would be?

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 (amused, but exhausted)
 Not at all.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (pause, deciding)
 Okay. Let's do the interview.

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 (surprised)
 In the studio?

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (reassuring her)
 In the studio, sitting down, the whole shebang. This Neptune thing's a dead end anyways. Even if that's where the sound came from, I don't see how it could make people disappear -- or how we could stop it, even if it was.

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 (endlessly relieved)
 Amazing. Thanks Anna, I'll grab us a taxi and we can head over--

Anna's phone suddenly starts to ring.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (sees who it is)
 Hold on a second.

CLICK.

11. INT. TOURIST PUB - DAY - SIMULTANEOUS

Maria sits at the bar of a merry pub, with bright folk music playing and laughter surrounding her. Her phone dials, then Anna picks up.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (fond)
 Hey there, stranger.

MARIA SOL
 (a little slurred)
 Greetings fair maiden, from the Green Dragon!

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (CHUCKLES, amused)
 ...you sound like you've had a few.

MARIA SOL
 (conspiratorial whisper)
 They give you a free pint with the
 tour. Shhh...

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (glad to hear she's
 enjoying herself)
 Having fun?

MARIA SOL
 You kidding!? This is the time of
 my life! How was the interview?

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (a little sheepish)
 We, uh... haven't quite gotten to
 that yet.

MARIA SOL
 (exasperated, amused)
 Aaanna...

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (lightly defensive)
 I know, I know -- it's a press
 tour. Still, it's only...
 (checks watch, annoyed)
 3 o'clock, shit.

MARIA SOL
 (concerned)
 Did you forget to eat again?

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (realizing there's a rush)
 We'll... grab something on the way
 to the studio. Gotta go -- love
 you!

BEEP. Anna hangs up before Maria can answer.

CLICK.

12. INT. RECORDING STUDIO - LATER

Amy and Anna are just finishing a meal of fish and chips, mid-conversation about their theories on the noise.

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 (overly animated)
 And so everyone thinks she's crazy,
 right?

(MORE)

AMY LOUISE CHEN (CONT'D)

And they're telling Jodie, "Ma'am, you never had a daughter, when you boarded the plane it was just you," and obviously she doesn't believe them, but then they slowly start to convince her, like, her daughter didn't disappear, she's just crazy.

ANNA SHERIDAN

(unsure)

Okay...

AMY LOUISE CHEN

And then, just as Jodie Foster is fully convinced that she just hallucinated her daughter completely, she sees this little smiley face her daughter drew in the condensation at the start of the flight, and she's like, "Oh my god, I'm not crazy!" And it turns out she didn't disappear, it was just like... a really elaborate gaslighting kidnapper scheme.

ANNA SHERIDAN

(not sure where to go)

So... not like what I saw on the plane at all, then.

AMY LOUISE CHEN

(through bites,
disinterested)

Hm. Yeah. Good movie though.

(pause, swallows)

Could have been some kind of foghorn.

ANNA SHERIDAN

(shakes head)

Too loud. And too deep. How would I have been able to hear it from the plane?

AMY LOUISE CHEN

(deflated, then
spitballing)

Yeah... I mean, there are ways to make it look like someone disappeared -- military technology with nano-cameras and such... but I mean, you think I disappeared, and I definitely wasn't wearing a camera suit.

ANNA SHERIDAN

(insistent)

You did disappear. I saw it with my own...

(realizing)

Unless it's just my mind, playing tricks on me. I did take a lot of sleeping pills on that flight.

AMY LOUISE CHEN

("that doesn't add up")

But I heard the sound too.

They fall silent. Anna turns on her phone and types something in as AMY EATS A BATTERED FISH.

AMY LOUISE CHEN (CONT'D)

(finishing her bite)

Are you finished with your chips?

ANNA SHERIDAN

(distracted)

What? Oh, sure.

AMY LOUISE CHEN

'cause I, um... kind of need to get this interview on tape by 5 so I can edit/tomorrow before it goes--

ANNA SHERIDAN

(excited)

Wait... I think I found something. Ever heard of a skyquake?

AMY LOUISE CHEN

(confused, curious)

Like an earthquake in the sky?

ANNA SHERIDAN

Exactly.

(reading)

Wow, it looks like they happen all over the place -- Indonesia, Mexico, Finland... "A mysterious and unexplained phenomenon, first recorded in 1824, in which a loud, booming sound is said to originate from the sky. Other names include Seneca guns, bombes de mer, cries from/the sea--"

AMY LOUISE CHEN

Does it say anything about people vanishing?

ANNA SHERIDAN

(disappointed)

Not that I can see. It doesn't seem like it did you any harm, though. Disappearing for a moment, I mean.

AMY LOUISE CHEN

I don't even remember it happening.

ANNA SHERIDAN

(concerned)

Neither did anyone else on the plane.

(SIGHS)

I don't know. Maybe we should just leave it.

AMY LOUISE CHEN

Yeah -- but like you said, it doesn't seem like anyone's really in danger from... whatever this is.

(LAUGHS)

Hey, maybe I just slipped into the next universe over for a second. No harm done.

ANNA SHERIDAN

(oddly serious)

Because you came back. Not everyone does.

AMY LOUISE CHEN

(pause, concerned)

Anna... are you okay?

ANNA SHERIDAN

(hesitant, unusually vulnerable)

I knew a girl who disappeared. Just... vanished. Completely. Like she never existed. Maybe into another dimension, or maybe just... gone. She isn't in any photos, didn't leave any belongings behind - - there's barely any evidence she existed at all. Just my memories... and even those are starting to fade.

(beat, hurting)

Her name was Amy too.

(beat, looking up)

You think I'm making it up.

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 (reassuring)
 No. I believe you.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 I've seen her in my dreams, you
 know. Her. Other people. My father.

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 (confused)
 What do you mean?

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (struggling to put it into
 words)
 Like... you know when you turn the
 TV off, and there's an after-image
 left on the screen? Old CRT's,
 not... anyway, it's like that,
 only... before, not after...
 (beat, SIGHS)
 I used to think the unknown was the
 only thing worth fearing.

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 (curious)
 And now...?

Anna doesn't answer -- just takes a moment to steady herself.

ANNA SHERIDAN
 (briskly, walls back up)
 Right. What time is it?

AMY LOUISE CHEN
 (whiplash, disoriented)
 Uh... just about four?

ANNA SHERIDAN
 And you need the interview done by
 five, right? I think we can manage
 that. You still have questions for
 me?

CLICK.

13. INT. RECORDING STUDIO - LATER

The interview as it aired on Radio Aotearoa -- upbeat intro
 music with Amy speaking over the top.

AMY LOUISE CHEN

(live)

Kia ora and welcome to Arts on Saturday. I'm Amy Louise Chen, filling in for Rebecca Minaere, and today I've got a fantastic programme lined up for you, starting with my interview with renown American horror novelist Anna Sheridan, whose book *Below the Silent Deep* is in stores now.

(pre-recorded)

Anna, thank you so much for being here today.

ANNA SHERIDAN

(slightly cheesy opener)

Wouldn't want to be anywhere else -- I mean, my horoscope did tell me to 'stay present' today.

AMY LOUISE CHEN

(STAGE LAUGH)

I want to start with a question about *Below the Silent Deep*. There's a central question that kind of drives the book as a whole: "What would you do to save yourself?" Is that a question you find yourself answering often?

As they speak, the recording of the noise rises in the background.

ANNA SHERIDAN

Well, I just like to build all of my novels around a philosophical or moral question as a rule -- something I don't have a simple answer to, myself. Gives me enough to chew on for 80,000 words. Plus, it's a good way to come up with characters. You can think of each character in *BTSD* as a different answer to that question, all contradicting each other and creating thematic tension in the narrative. / (Captain Barnet, for example -- the closest thing to a protagonist the book has. His answer would perhaps be: "anything that doesn't cost me or mine." Anne Bonny, on the other hand...)

Anna's voice fades out completely as the noise rises, then fades away too.

CLACK.

14. INT. MERIWETHER FACILITY - ATRIUM - DAY - 12/7/19

The recording ends, and Maria, Kate, and Peter sit in silence.

KATE SHERIDAN
(slightly taken aback)

Wow.

PETER SLATE
(trying to find the words)
Maria, that was...

KATE SHERIDAN
Brilliant. Eerie. I felt like I could... see all of it happening. This is what you do for a living?

MARIA SOL
(self-conscious, blushing)
Well... a bit. Mostly video work, but there is something special about audio editing.

PETER SLATE
(amazed, hint of grief)
I can't believe Anna actually let her guard down like that. On tape, no less. I never got to see that side of her.

MARIA SOL
Don't take it too personally. She wasn't ever all that forthcoming with her feelings, even around me. Or about the things she saw or... heard.

(beat)

I don't know how Amy was able to connect with her like that. She hated doing interviews, and the fact she sat down with a junior reporter out of nowhere...

(CHUCKLES)

That definitely had Anthony scratching his head. But... well, you can hear it. Amy had a way of getting through to her.

(MORE)

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)
 I've heard some of the work she's
 done since, and it's... it's good.
 She knew her stuff.

KATE SHERIDAN
 (a little wistful)
 Thank you for sharing this with us,
 Maria. It was nice to hear Anna's
 voice again. The real Anna.

MARIA SOL
 (melancholy smile)
 I know what you mean.

KATE SHERIDAN
 (to Peter)
 Wanna get to bed?

PETER SLATE
 (smiling)
 Way ahead of you.

They stand, and Peter grabs Kate with a grin -- SHE LAUGHS,
 surprised.

PETER SLATE (CONT'D)
 Lead the way, love.

KATE SHERIDAN
 (slightly embarrassed)
 Goodnight, Maria.

MARIA SOL
 (amused)
 'night!

15. CONTINUOUS

Footsteps as Kate and Peter retreat down the hall. Maria sits
 in the quiet, listening to the water.

MARIA SOL
 (realization)
 ...wait.

Maria taps a few keys on her laptop, playing back the ending
 of the file. The low droning noise comes through the speaker.

She plays it at 2x speed. Then half speed. It almost sounds
 like speech.

MARIA SOL (CONT'D)
(unnerved, but needing to
know)
There's no way...

She slows it down further. Twice as slow. Three times as
slow. Then finally...

VOICE
(distorted, deep)
Listen...

Mesmerized, Maria plays it again. And again. And again.

CLACK. The recording ends.

ROLL END THEME
AND CREDITS