

OSTIUM PODCAST - SEASON 6

EPISODE 64 - Anomalies III

Created and written by Alex C. Telander

STEVE played by **Alex C. Telander**
JAKE played by **Chris Fletcher**
MONICA played by **Georgia Mckenzie**
YOXALL played by **Lucille Valentine**

DIRECTION

DIALOG - (*DIRECTION*) - [SCENE] - *SOUND DESIGN* - *Music*

[SCENE ONE: BARRACKS SHOWER ROOM] [STEVE]

sfx - [MUSIC OF CLAIR DE LUNE THROUGH WATER FILTER SLOWLY INCREASING VOLUME AS STEVE GETS CLOSER TO THE SOURCE]

STEVE: [NARRATION]

I suppose I shouldn't have got my knickers in such a twist over where I was being pulled towards . . . obviously Ostium was taking me to the same place Jake and I had originally visited when we'd first heard those strange and very wrong musical notes, albeit through this eerie dark twilight, the so called "Bowels of the Ostium Network," so called because that's what I'd decided to start calling this place after getting pulled back here time and time again. You might even say I have some strange connection to Ostium . . . and yes, that one's for you Jake. Hope you like it.

[SCENE TWO: JAKE & MONICA'S APARTMENT] [JAKE/MONICA/STEVE]**JAKE:**

You know, I probably wouldn't believe you if you'd just told us you said that, but the fact it's right there in the recording . . .

Said sarcastically

Well, I'm kind of touched.

STEVE:

No worries mate. I'm always thinking of you.

MONICA:

Glad you guys are having a heart to heart moment, but can we get back to the story please? I'd like to get this done before I have to go have another goo bath to make myself look younger.

JAKE:*Chuckling*

See Monica, now that's a funny joke.

STEVE:

Very amusing mum. Fine, let's get back to the story at hand.

[SCENE THREE: BARRACK SHOWER ROOM] [STEVE/YOXALL]*sfx - [STRANGE MUSIC CONTINUES]**sfx - [STEVE WALKING]***STEVE: [NARRATION]**

I followed in the familiar footsteps I'd taken before, walking past the bunk beds and completely ignoring them. My goal was to get this whole bit over with as quickly as possible, because I was completely out of my element here and I really hated this music. It was making all my hairs stand on end, and not in a cool "I'm at a banging gig and loving the music kind of way," but in a "I'm walking down a dark alley and I think I'm being followed by someone with a very large knife" sort of way.

*sfx - [DRIPPING SOUND FROM SHOWER ROOM]**sfx - [STRANGE MUSIC INCREASING IN VOLUME AND GETTING PRETTY DARN LOUD]*

I made it quickly to the shower room where the music was bloody loud. I stood there, watching the dripping and wondering how long I could take this. I was approaching my wit's end and I had no idea what I was supposed to do next.

STEVE:*Yelling*

COULD YOU JUST TURN THAT BLOODY HORRIBLE MUSIC OFF! PLEASE!!

*sfx - [MUSIC SUDDENLY STOPS, DRIPPING CONTINUES]***STEVE:**

Oh wow. Thanks. It bloody worked. Incredible. Erm . . . thank you whoever did that. I really appreciate it. It was really starting to do my head in.

STEVE: [NARRATION]

And then I just stood there, gormless, saying nothing. I don't know if I was expecting any sort of response or waiting for something to happen, or maybe I just wanted my head to stop ringing with that horrid tune. I actually used to like it; not anymore. Not after being here.

And then I heard the voice.

YOXALL:*Stifled, anguished*

Is . . . is someone there? Can you help me? Who's there?

STEVE:

Erm . . . my name's Steve. I don't really know if I can help at all. Where are you?

STEVE: [NARRATION]

The voice was coming from the drain, actually all the drains I found out, as I checked each shower stall, listening to the voice speak.

YOXALL:*Feeling hopeless*

I'm . . . I'm below. Deep below. I'm trapped down here. I've been down here a very, very long time.

STEVE: [NARRATION]

The fear started running through me like . . . well, like icy water through a pipe. I didn't know who or what exactly I was hearing but I knew I had to do something about it. I couldn't just keep standing here, waiting for something to happen; and I couldn't turn and run like a scared little puppy. I stepped into one of the shower stalls and approached the drain. There was no water dripping, but I could tell the floor was all wet. Could even feel my feet slipping a bit as I got closer. And I could see the glistening shine of the metal that looked blue and fluorescent in the strange light. I could almost sense that something was about to happen, but I had no clue what. And I was getting closer; couldn't stop myself now. Everything was inevitable. A mantra for the Ostium Network if there ever was one.

I was over the drain now and crouched down a bit, thinking somehow that was going to make a difference.

sfx - [PERSON CROUCHING DOWN]

STEVE:

Hello? Is there someone down there?

STEVE: [NARRATION]

I waited, leaning down a bit more. Getting closer. Making sure I didn't miss any sounds.

Was there really someone down there? Had I really heard something? Or was my mind starting to play tricks with me in this bonkers place?

STEVE:

Hello?

STEVE: [NARRATION]

I got on my knees then, feeling my trousers get wet, but not giving a shit. I needed to know for sure.

Then I heard two soft words.

YOXALL:

Got ya.

sfx - [METAL BENDING AS DRAIN EXPANDS AND STRONG JET OF WATER FROM THE SHOWER AS STEVE IS PULLED INTO THE ENLARGED DRAIN PIPE]

STEVE:

[GURGLING SOUNDS]

STEVE: [NARRATION]

My world turned upside and it felt like I was drowning as I was falling down that shower drainpipe that had become something much larger and far more horrific. I half fell, half flailed for a long time. And just when I thought I really was going to drown, I came out the other end.

sfx - [HEAVY SPLASHING SOUND AS STEVE LANDS IN A LARGE POOL, WITH ECHOING WATER SOUNDS LIKE IN A LARGE WATER TANK]

STEVE:

[GURGLING SOUNDS AND TAKING IN DEEP BREATHS, SPLUTTERING]

STEVE: [NARRATION]

What could be worse than being in an alternate Ostium Network where everything is glowy and shadowy? Doing all that treading cold water and not knowing how bloody deep the bottom was.

I chose to put on a brave facade, the opportune word being facade, meaning nothing of strength behind it.

sfx - [STEVE SWIMMING, TREADING WATER]

STEVE:

Hello? Whoever did that I didn't find it very fucking funny. Not at all. Bloody naughty if you ask me.

STEVE: [NARRATION]

And that's when I saw a sort of blue glowy patch in the water and swam quickly towards it. I don't know if I instinctively knew what it was, but when I reached it, I crawled up onto it and was very thankful for some solid albeit very wet ground to sit on. I didn't trust my legs to stand up at the moment.

*Spoken with evil glee
in a soft voice*

Spluttering

Vicious

YOXALL:

Now I've got you where I want you.

STEVE: [NARRATION]

And then whatever had spoken rose from the water like bloody Jesus.

sfx - [BREAK]

STEVE: [NARRATION]

They came out of the water like nothing I'd ever seen before. What I noticed first, noticed strongest, were the gills. This creature could and did live beneath the waters meaning they were able to take in the liquid in which they lived and extract the oxygen or perhaps even the hydrogen they used to breathe. But now that they were above the surface they no longer had any need for those gills, if that was in fact what they were.

sfx - [STRANGE BREATHING SOME FROM THIS CREATURE]

They were below their head, attached to the side of the neck and before my very eyes each gill along the side rotated somehow, like it was on some sort of swiveling mechanism with what looked like thousands of tiny holes that individually began closing and opening like a million minuscule mouths, as the creature took in the air around and began breathing it, even though just moments before this strange and unique creature had been breathing underwater. And now they were breathing the same air as I was, as if IT were perfectly natural and they had been doing it for all of their life.

And for all I knew, this was completely true: a strange being that could simply and easily live and breathe in both environments above the waters and below them.

They were like no one and no thing I'd seen before, and I will fully admit I've seen my fair share of weird shit in my time. Could I be classed as an Ostium veteran now? I think so.

And the humanoid that came out of the water was unique and just incredible. Their skin was a slimy blue that shimmered and glistened. They appeared to not be wearing any clothes, nothing I could recognize at least. Their body looked to be adapted and evolved for living in oceans and deep waters. Well muscled but also well insulated for swimming easily in the deep, cold depths.

The lower half of their body did not divide into two legs, but formed a kind of central trunk or thick tail, much like a mermaid I would have to say. Only this leg or trunk did not end in a tail but more of a wide flipper like a seal lion or manatee, as they came on to the island of solid ground I stood on. They were using the flipper like one big foot to stand on.

They were watching me with eyes that I will try my best to describe.

Two large, round pools. Dark and deep and bottomless. They were the size of billiard balls, black eight balls.

Their skin was moist and slimy, looking like, well, like something that lives in water all the time.

Beneath those massive, absorbing eyes was no observable nose, because one wasn't really necessary. There were two narrow, parallel slits that were rapidly opening and closing as they were sampling the air and taking in the scents around, inhaling the scents of me too presumably.

Below the strange lines that was a nose was a fleshy rectangle of a mouth that didn't so much as open and close like your usual mouth or orifice, but seemed more to spin open and then pucker closed, like some sort of muscle.

However there were no lips or teeth but fuzzy strings; cartilaginous layered strings that I believe they call baleen, for filter feeding.

But there must've been some sort of voice box or vocal cords within the mouth or perhaps in the throat because they were able to speak and speak in my language no less, although perhaps something around me or even within me, something to do with the Ostium Network, was translating these words for my understanding and comprehension.

Of course, the voice was like nothing I had heard at all or anything spoken before.

They had a low register of tone that sounded like it was being run through some sort of filter, making it sound a little electrical, a little artificial, and a little bit - or perhaps a lot - like something a voice being broadcast from somewhere very far away or even from another dimension.

Yet for everything going on with this unusual voice, I was still able to understand them and their intent perfectly.

sfx - [YOXALL'S VOICE WILL MATCH DESCRIPTION]

YOXALL:

Well now, who the fuck are you then?

STEVE: [NARRATION]

I didn't really know what to say, what I could stay, so I kept shtum.

YOXALL:

I know you're not him. Definitely not. So who the hell are you then?

STEVE: [NARRATION]

The voice almost grated against my nerves, almost like nails raked across a blackboard.

They were watching me with those eyes that encompassed my entire being and made it so I couldn't look away.

STEVE:

I'm . . . well, I'm Steve.

YOXALL:

STEVE.

STEVE:

Yeah. Just a regular old bloke really. Who heard some funny music and got sucked down a drain and ended up . . . here. With you. And you might be?

STEVE: [NARRATION]

With each extra pointless word that came out of me, the more confident I grew . . . for some reason.

YOXALL:

I am known by many names across time and space; beneath the waters and above. But the one I most adhere to is Yoxall.

STEVE:

Wow, that's a bit of a mouthful, isn't it? So is that a man's or a woman's name?

STEVE: [NARRATION]

The look they gave me then literally made me start shivering.

Clearing voice

Disdain, unimpressed

YOXALL:

I do not bend to the whims of those who choose to categorize me by such primitive, ignorant codifiers. But if you must know - not that it is in any way any of your fucking business - I am neither of those antiquated terms, and also both. Does that simplify things for you?

STEVE:

Erm, not really.

YOXALL

Fuming Good! It wasn't fucking supposed to!

STEVE:

Trembling So . . . so who did you think I might be then? What other bloke were you expecting?

STEVE: [NARRATION]

There was that withering look again and this time I actually felt my teeth chattering like I was freezing cold, or facing something I was simply terrified of.

YOXALL:

With distaste I was expecting . . . *him*. That despicable excuse for one of your species. The one known as Jake Fisher.

STEVE:

Shock Jake . . . oh, you mean the other Jake. The head honcho of this place. That wanker in charge of the Ostium Network.

YOXALL:

I know only one Jake Fisher. And he is a fucking asshole. He is the one who found me. He absconded with me from my water world and brought me to this cold, distasteful purgatory.

STEVE:

You were taken too? By him? Like Marla . . .

YOXALL:

There have been others? Others he has taken and brought to this place? Against their will?

STEVE:

Yes. Unfortunately. You're not the first . . . actually, I don't know that for sure. You might be. But there have been others. Thyra. Marla. I think I was able to help them. Help them get out of here. Maybe I could help you too?

YOXALL:

You?! How?

STEVE:

I don't know. Maybe I can in some way. So long as you promise not to . . . kill me, or eat me, or whatever?

YOXALL:

Laughing Why would I wish to harm you? It is HE I want to eviscerate. You I have no care for, whether you live or die.

STEVE:

Oh, very nice.

[SCENE FOUR: JAKE & MONICA'S APARTMENT] [JAKE/MONICA/STEVE]**STEVE:**

I think it was around this point I realized that they were using a diction much like Thyra's, which meant either they were also from the planet Albion, which was bloody impossible in my mind, or . . .

JAKE:

There was some sort of translation device being used like you thought.

STEVE:

Yeah. My guess is still the Ostium Network doing it. I don't remember anything from the many classes before mentioning it in any way, but it's the only thing that makes sense really. What do you think mum?

MONICA:

I don't remember anything either, honey. But I think you're right. Just with the kind of archaic language they both are using. Plus what's the chance two different people from somewhere else in the universe speaking the same fucking language we do?

JAKE:

There isn't one.

MONICA:

Right. I mean, Yoxall said "purgatory." Do they have a Christian religious background we don't know about? I don't think so.

JAKE:

Well, at least we know in the future we won't have a . . . language barrier, just an Ostium barrier I guess.

MONICA:

Jake! That was fucking terrible. Just no! Not funny at all.

JAKE:

Then why are you smiling?

MONICA:

Fuck you Jake. Just fuck you.

JAKE:

Maybe later.

STEVE:

Oy, enough of that you two love birds! Can we get back to the rest of my story?

Laughing

[SCENE FIVE: BARRACKS SHOWER ROOM] [STEVE/YOXALL]**STEVE:**

That bit of music that was playing? Were you the one creating it? How do you know it?

YOXALL:

That is an interesting tale, and since I am destined only for this watery grave, I suppose I have plenty of time to regale you with the story.

STEVE:

Erm, please do.

STEVE: [NARRATION]

At this point I was just extremely relieved I wasn't going to be killed, and was willing to get whatever knowledge I could from them and see if I could help in any way.

YOXALL:

It is actually a piece of music from your world, as I'm sure you are aware. It was long ago, perhaps eons now, as time has ceased to have any meaning in this place, and I know not how long ago I was taken from my ocean planet. But one day in the past a strange ship passed into our atmosphere and crashed into my waters. It slowly sank to the bottom of the dark depths, and I was notified before it reached its soft bottom. It landed in multiple pieces which were each brought to me. They were made of a substance that did not exist in my world and all seemed uninteresting and little more than scraps and waste except for one piece. A bright golden disc that appeared to contain much information, though I knew not how to extract that information. So I put my aids on it, to study it and eventually understand it, which they were able to do. Using the other pieces we had cast aside, along with some pieces of detritus that had fallen into the oceans over time immemorial and been collected and brought to me. I also gave my aids some magics to use, and this seemed to do it. But when the golden plate began spinning, the sound was incomprehensible. There was something not right. Then one of the aids pointed out that this object had come from another world, perhaps once where the waters did not ebb and flow supreme. So we brought it to the surface and created a special pontoon upon which it could sit. And then we set the golden plate in motion on the device that had been invented, along with my magic coursing through its wires and conduits and heard voices and words and statements and then music. The music is what I found most fascinating. Much of it was a pleasure to listen to, some entrancing and hypnotic, and this piece . . . I would say it was like nothing I had ever heard before, but this of course was true for the entirety of what was on that plate. But it reached me on a superior level that encapsulated me and made me dream of other worlds where this might be first created and composed and then played and listened to by others. It is a piece that has been with me ever since. One I accompany myself with whenever I feel I need to feel uplifted in some way. Sadly, since I have been forced to live in this dark, dank place, I have played it much.

STEVE:

Clair de lune.

YOXALL:

What is that?

STEVE:

That is the name of the piece of music. Clair de lune. It was composed by Claude Debussy. And I believe the "plate" you mentioned was the golden record used on the Voyager probe. Well, one of them. They were sent from our world a long time ago, in search of other life in the universe. They were meant to tell the story of our world. Share our knowledge and I suppose the best of what we're capable of as a species.

YOXALL:

I see you too have a story to tell of it. I thank you for sharing.

STEVE:

You're welcome. But if you had to create a machine to play the music, how are you able to reproduce it now?

YOXALL:

Ah, that is a story in itself. But in a simple sentence: I taught myself to play it. It took time, much like our learning of how to play the record. It required quite a bit of my magic, but also much practice and training on my part. Time passed and eventually I was able to make my own sounds and then I had to adapt my instrument and my ability to emulate the music. Much more time passed, but I eventually got to a place where I could make the music I had grown to love so much.

STEVE:

Would you . . . would you mind demonstrating your skill?

STEVE: [NARRATION]

While they didn't smile or give me any noticeable facial expression, those wondrous eyes seemed to glisten, which I took as a complimentary sign.

YOXALL:

I would be honored.

STEVE: [NARRATION]

Then they stood tall and the breathing vesicles that were somehow also gill slits began moving and twitching and flexing in all new ways and just as I wondered what the hell was going to happen, these beautiful sounds began . . .

sfx - [CLAIR DE LUNE BEGINS TO PLAY IN THE SAME WATER/FILTERED WAY AS BEFORE]

It went on for a good five minutes and at the end of it I could feel my cheeks were wet with tears. It was one of the most beautiful things I'd ever heard, and also the saddest. Seeing this incredible being - Yoxall - play it, with such love but also such sorrow and loneliness. It somehow both warmed my heart and broke it in two. After some time, I was able to find my voice again and speak.

STEVE:

That was . . . beyond beautiful. Thank you for that.

YOXALL:

You are most welcome. And now, alas, I must avault. I feel I am being summoned to perform another deed which I wish I did not have to but must.

STEVE:

For him. For Jake.

YOXALL:

Yes. It is my power. My magics he craves. For he has none. And he needs me to do his dirty work.

STEVE:

Bastard. There has to be some way . . . some way to set you free.

YOXALL:

I fear not.

STEVE:

Where do you go?

YOXALL:

What do you mean?

Getting angry,
protective

STEVE:

When that asshole summons you to do whatever he wants you to do. Where is that?

YOXALL:

It is a place beneath the waters. A specific chamber with devices that can channel and absorb my magics. He knows I am strongest and greatest beneath the waters and in that way he can get the maximum potential from me. And my magics conduct well through the water.

STEVE:

How about . . . have you ever played your music for him?

YOXALL:

The special piece I just played you? No. Never. I would not dare.

STEVE:

Why not?

YOXALL:

Because it is mine. My last little increment that is me, of my world and past life. Something he cannot take. Something he can never have.

STEVE:

But that's just it. It's something he's never known. Never faced before. You changed yourself, adapted to be able to create that unique music. That special sound. What if you used that along with your magics and channeled everything at the device that takes it from you. Maybe you could overload it. Cause it to rupture or even fail?

YOXALL:

Like a deep sea quake. Something earth wrenching?

STEVE:

Exactly. It might not work. Might do nothing. But there's also a chance it will do all those things you just said and possibly even more. Maybe it could cause . . . I don't know, some sort of chain reaction and things could start breaking down, falling apart. And I know for a fact the Ostium Network is only an island. A small piece of land surrounded on all sides by dark, deep water. I don't know if there will ever be a way for you to get back to your water world, but this could be a way out. A freedom in the ocean depths, away from here, and most importantly, away from him.

YOXALL:

I . . . will have to consider this. But there is something in what you say. A chance. There is a chance. This I believe.

STEVE:

Good. It is of course up to you. You do what you must; what feels right for you. But I also believe in you. You told me that unbelievable story that I couldn't help believing. Just as I know you are incredibly powerful. And much more powerful than him, no matter what he's done to you. That's why he needs you, remember? Because you have what he does not, what he wants.

YOXALL:

I must go. I thank you. Steve. You have been good. You have changed my mind a little on this world. I thank you for that.

STEVE:

Glad I could help a little, in whatever way I could. And best of luck to you I suppose. Oh, and one more thing.

YOXALL:

Yes?

STEVE:

Are you able to . . . somehow send me back up the drain? From where I dropped down from?

YOXALL:

Of course! It would be my pleasure.

sfx - [WATER SOUNDS AS STEVE IS RETURNED]

STEVE: [NARRATION]

And then before I could close my eyes, this column of water rose around me and lifted me up and again somehow back through that incredibly small space and back into the shower room.

I was back where I'd been before. Soaked to the skin, and with hope in me that Yoxall would do what they needed to do to break free.

[SCENE SIX: JAKE & MONICA'S APARTMENT] [JAKE/MONICA/STEVE]**JAKE:**

What an incredible person Yoxall sounds. I hope they did it.

MONICA:

Me too.

STEVE:

Yeah, I've got my fingers and toes crossed. And, unfortunately, I know it's only early afternoon, but I'm going to have to call it a day.

MONICA:

Okay, huh. Everything okay? Tired?

STEVE:

Yeah. It's a lot going through all this again. And the last part is . . . it's a lot to share. And I need to go over in my head how exactly I want to tell it.

JAKE:

Sounds good Steve. Maybe take a walk, enjoy the fresh sea air and sunshine.

STEVE:

That sounds perfect.

MONICA:

Same place, same time tomorrow?

STEVE:

Of course mum. Wouldn't miss it for the world.

[END CREDITS]