

THE SILENT DOME

PRINTABLE MURDER MYSTERY

Meridian Observatory, 3,900 metres above sea level. A January night, a four-hour exposure running beneath four thousand stars. Nothing moves but the dome motors.

By morning, observatory director Dr. Adrian Voss lies dead at the foot of the dome stairs. It looks like a fall. But the telescope that spent the night recording the sky recorded something else as well.

CLASSIFIED

4 SUSPECTS · 11 PAGES · 1-6 PLAYERS

ESTIMATED TIME: 50-75 MINUTES · DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM-HARD

THE SOLUTION IS A SEPARATE FILE — DO NOT OPEN IT FIRST

This file is a fictional imitation of a real investigation dossier. You have reports, an autopsy, four statements and technical logs. No page tells you the answer; you extract the killer from the documents yourself.

Setup

1. **Print it.** Single-sided on A4 or Letter. Colour is not required.
2. **Separate the solution.** The solution is a second PDF. Nobody opens it before the game ends.
3. **Keep a pen handy.** You will not reach the answer without laying the times side by side.

Playing Alone

Read the pages in order. Do not look at the solution until you have filled in the Verdict Form on the last page. Average time: 55 minutes.

Playing as a Group (2–6 players)

Hand out the suspect pages (6–9), one per player, and let each player defend their suspect. Keep the evidence pages in the middle where everyone can see them. Argue for 30–40 minutes, then everyone votes in secret.

THE DETECTIVE'S TWO RULES

- **Everyone has a secret, but not every secret is murder.** All four people at this station are hiding something. For three of them, what they are hiding has nothing to do with the killing.
- **Statements contradict each other; records do not.** A person can misremember or lie; a motor log cannot. When in doubt, go back to the document.

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04	Observatory Site Plan and Evidence Points
05	Preliminary Forensic Report
06–09	Suspect Files (4)
10	Additional Evidence — System Logs, Correspondence, Access Records
11	Verdict Form

NOTICE

Every person, institution and event in this file is entirely fictional. Any resemblance to real people or events is coincidental. Suitable for ages 13 and up.

Scene Examination Report

Location	Meridian Observatory, Ridge Station, 3,900 m
Deceased	Dr. Adrian VOSS, 61, observatory director
Time Found	13.01.2026, 07:05 (morning shift)
Found By	Ingrid Sorensen (station engineer)
Initial Assessment	Suspicious death — apparent fall from height

1. General Situation

A single mountain road serves Meridian Observatory; in winter it is used only by the station's snow vehicle. That vehicle made its final run at 16:30 on 12 January, and five people remained at the station overnight: Dr. Adrian Voss, chief observer Dr. Lena Hartmann, doctoral student Milo Berg, station engineer Ingrid Sorensen and foundation representative Tomas Rivera.

An uninterrupted deep-sky exposure was scheduled on the telescope from 22:00 to 02:00. During such an exposure the dome slit stays open, the telescope tracks its target automatically, and entry to the dome building is prohibited. Every person working at the station knows this rule.

2. Position of the Body

The deceased was found inside the dome building, lying on his back at the foot of the steel staircase leading to the observing platform. There is severe trauma to the back of the head. At first glance the scene is consistent with a fall from the platform into the stairwell.

The deceased was wearing a heavy coat and liner gloves; his outer gloves lay on the floor beside the stair rail. The station's master access card was in his pocket.

3. Findings in the Dome Building

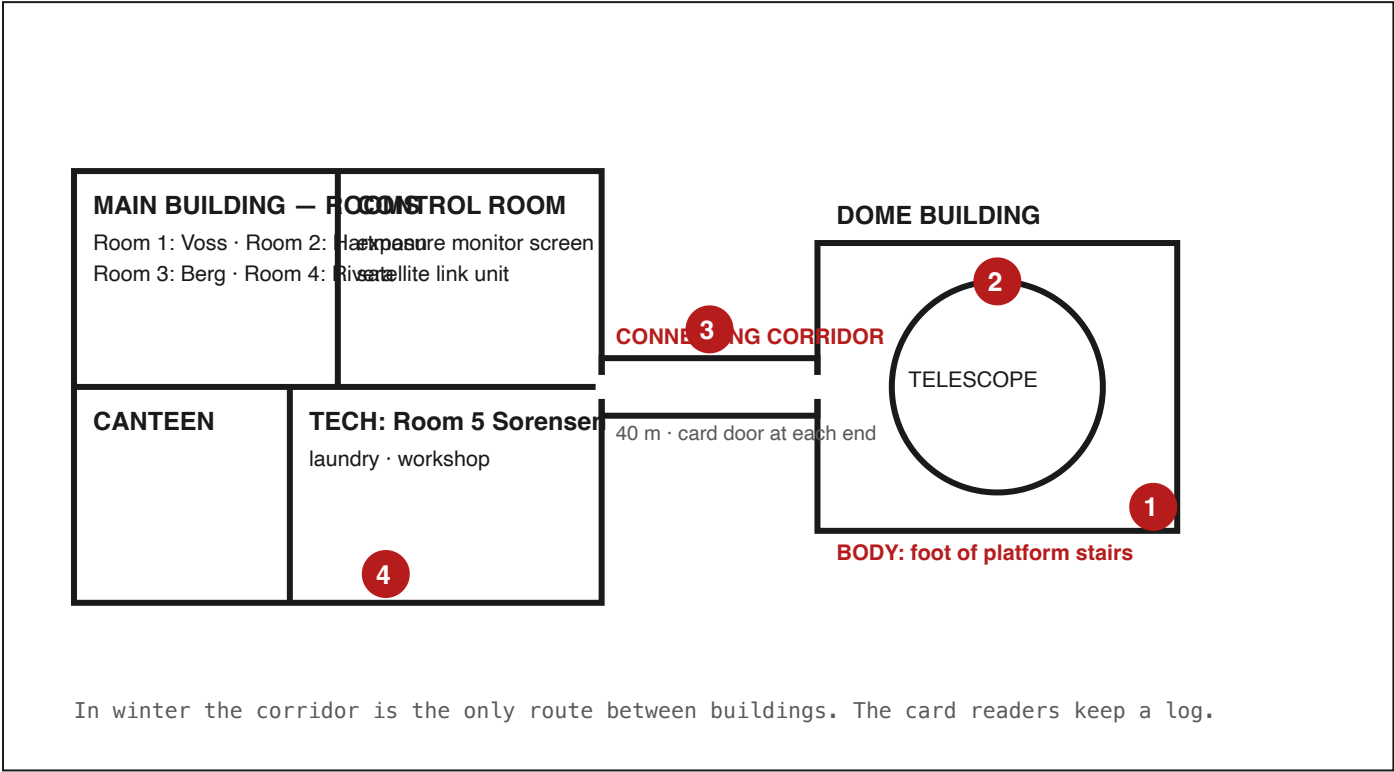
- On the platform railing, directly above the point of the fall, there is a fresh scrape in the paint. Dark grey wool fibres were recovered from inside the scrape; neither the deceased's coat nor his gloves are that colour.
- On the telescope's counterweight arm, level with the standard maintenance labels, an area has been wiped clean; the wipe pattern carries fibres consistent with a cleaning cloth.
- The dome floor at the foot of the stairs was at -18°C , the night heating being switched off. No footprints could be distinguished (open steel grating floor).
- The dome slit was found open in the morning; the telescope was not in its park position but still holding its target.
- The cover of the dome control panel was closed, but the lock bolt had not been thrown. The panel opens with a four-digit personal code (see Page 10, ANNEX 3).

4. Findings Elsewhere at the Station

- The main building and the dome building are joined by a 40-metre enclosed connecting corridor. Both corridor doors open with an access card, and the readers keep a log (see Page 10, ANNEX 3).
- The bedrooms, canteen and control room in the main building are heated overnight. A screen in the control room monitors the exposure; nobody is required to attend it while it runs.
- On the desk in the deceased's room, an unfinished official letter dated 12 January was recovered (see Page 10, ANNEX 2).
- A single pair of woollen gloves, washed during the night, was found on the drying rack in the laundry. The gloves are dark grey. Ownership was put to each suspect in interview.

Site Plan and Evidence Points

The station consists of two structures: the main building, containing the bedrooms and the control room, and the dome building housing the telescope. An enclosed corridor joins them. In winter it is not realistically possible to walk between them outside (−30 °C, iced rock ground).



POINT	FINDING
1	Foot of platform stairs — body; railing scrape containing foreign wool fibres
2	Dome control panel — cover closed, lock bolt not thrown
3	Connecting corridor — card reader at each end (logs in ANNEX 3)
4	Laundry — dark grey woollen gloves washed during the night

Note: There are no beds in the dome building, and no duty requires anyone to be inside it during an exposure. The telescope can be monitored from the control room screen.

Preliminary Forensic Report

Identity	Adrian VOSS — male, 61, 182 cm, 88 kg
Cause of Death	Severe blunt force trauma to the back of the head
Time of Death	Night of 12–13 January, 00:30 – 01:10 (cold-environment correction applied)
Manner of Death	Suspected homicide — findings contradict the fall scenario

Findings

- The fatal blow is single and lies on the rear midline of the skull. The impacting surface is narrow and elongated, consistent not with a stair tread but with a curved metal edge.
- Inconsistency with a fall: a person falling from the platform into the stairwell would show impact marks to the shoulder, elbow and hip. There are none. No second impact is present anywhere on the body.
- There are no defensive injuries to the hands or arms. The deceased received the blow standing, with his back turned; the fall followed.
- The palms of the liner gloves carry particles consistent with the paint of the platform railing: the deceased had been holding the railing before the blow.
- Blood alcohol 0.00. No recorded medical condition; fully acclimatised to altitude.

Laboratory Addenda

- The dark grey wool fibres from the railing scrape share the same yarn twist and dye profile as the gloves dried in the laundry.
- Although those gloves had been washed, trace machine grease was recovered from the cuff of the left glove. The same grease type is the product used to service the telescope's counterweight arm.
- A swab from the wiped area of the counterweight arm is presumptive positive for human blood; DNA results pending.
- The deceased's outer gloves lying on the floor beside the railing suggest he had been working on the platform in bare liner gloves for some time; the tasks usually requiring liner gloves are fine adjustment and writing.



Lena Hartmann

CHIEF OBSERVER

AGE	45
ROLE	Scientific lead of the observing programme
RELATIONSHIP	Colleague of the deceased for 11 years
ROOM	Main building, Room 2
FIRST REACTION	Cold. She was overheard saying, "So it finally happened."

Statement — 13.01.2026, 13:00

"Voss and I did not get along; everyone knows that. Three years ago he published my observing data under his own name. My complaint to the journal is still open. Did I hate him? Hate is a strong word. I wanted what was mine, yes."

"That night I was in the control room from 23:30 until 00:45 — but not for the telescope. I had a satellite call with the institute; I had to defend the February observing schedule. The session is logged. Check it."

"When the call ended I went to my room. I did not go near the dome that night. You do not enter the dome during an exposure. I wrote that rule."

Investigation Notes

- The authorship dispute with the deceased is documented; the journal process is ongoing.
- Satellite link unit logs are in ANNEX 1; the session identifier matches the suspect's personal account.
- The death of the deceased does not advance the suspect's complaint; the journal process proceeds independently of the parties' health.
- Her own gloves are navy fleece. She states the dark grey woollen gloves are not hers.
- She holds a panel access code (required by her role). Card access records: see ANNEX 3.

Supplementary Statement — 13.01.2026, 17:40

"The satellite call was not only about the schedule; I left that out. In the last ten minutes I filed a formal complaint against Voss with the institute — I was reopening my data theft case. Everyone would have known by tomorrow anyway. A person who files a complaint does not kill the man she has complained about that same night. My complaint only had a chance of meaning anything while he was alive."



Milo Berg

DOCTORAL STUDENT

AGE	29
ROLE	Data processing for the night exposures
RELATIONSHIP	Fourth year under the deceased's supervision
ROOM	Main building, Room 3
FIRST REACTION	Panic. He became faint twice during his first interview.

Statement — 13.01.2026, 14:10

"At dinner last night Dr. Voss pushed back my submission date again. I am entering my fifth year. Yes, I shouted. I said, 'You are rotting me alive up here.' Everyone heard it."

"After dinner I went to my room and stayed there. I listened to music with headphones, then I slept. Nobody saw me, because nobody needed to. It is a room. I slept."

"The gloves are not mine. Mine are in my room, they are orange, and I did not touch anything that night."

Investigation Notes

- The dinner argument is corroborated by four witnesses.
- On the suspect's laptop, the station's raw observation data was found to have been uploaded three times in the last six months to an address belonging to a commercial satellite-imagery company. Selling data is a serious breach of the station agreement.
- The unfinished letter on the deceased's desk (ANNEX 2) refers to this matter.
- The suspect holds no personal code for the dome control panel (student status); see ANNEX 3.
- He holds an access card; corridor card records: see ANNEX 3.

Supplementary Statement — 13.01.2026, 18:30

"I sold the data, all right. My stipend had not been paid for three months and Voss refused my raise twice. The company only wanted cloud-cover figures; I thought it harmed nobody. Voss found out — he called me into his office before dinner and said, 'I am reporting this to the institute tomorrow.' The submission delay was the punishment. But I did not leave my room that night. Look at the card records. I did not leave."



Ingrid Sorensen

STATION ENGINEER

AGE	56
ROLE	Dome, telescope mechanics and all infrastructure
RELATIONSHIP	19 years at the station; the most senior staff member
ROOM	Main building, Room 5 (technical wing)
FIRST REACTION	She found the body. Calm, methodical, precise.

Statement — 13.01.2026, 15:00

"At 07:00 I went to close the dome; the exposure ends at 02:00 and closing the slit in the morning is my job. I went in and saw him at the foot of the stairs. I did not touch him. I stepped out and called it in on the radio."

"The night? After dinner I was in the workshop repairing a track on the snow vehicle. Around 23:00 I went to my room. I did not come out until morning."

"The gloves in the laundry belong to everybody; I do not keep track of who washes what. My work gloves are leather and they hang in the workshop. Go and look."

Investigation Notes

- The last service record for the telescope's counterweight arm is dated 28 December and carries the suspect's signature; the arm's grease type is used only in that service.
- The station archive contains an internal review the deceased opened on 9 January, concerning a ventilation failure in the connecting corridor last winter that put an assistant technician in hospital. The file requests examination of the maintenance signatures.
- On the maintenance schedule for that period, the ink age of two signatures was found inconsistent; handwriting examination is ongoing.
- The suspect holds a panel access code (required by her role); see ANNEX 3.
- Her radio call reporting the body is logged at 07:04.

Supplementary Statement — 13.01.2026, 19:15

"I corrected that schedule, I will not hide it. When the failure happened last winter I had not entered two records in the maintenance log — I forgot; paperwork piles up. I completed the dates before the inspector came. It was wrong, I know. But the failure itself was not my fault, the fan motor was defective from the factory and there is a report to prove it. Voss knew that. He told me himself the review was only a formality."



Tomas Rivera

FOUNDATION REPRESENTATIVE

AGE	38
ROLE	Audit visit on behalf of the funding foundation
RELATIONSHIP	Institutional counterpart for 3 years
ROOM	Main building, Room 4
FIRST REACTION	Tense. He complained repeatedly about the lack of phone signal.

Statement — 13.01.2026, 16:00

"I came here with bad news and I am not hiding it. The foundation board has decided to cut next year's budget by forty per cent, and I had to tell Voss face to face. I told him yesterday afternoon. It was a hard conversation."

"I could not sleep. Altitude, headache. Around midnight I got up, took water and a painkiller from the canteen, sat for a while, then went back to my room. I did not go over to the dome side. Why would I? I do not even understand telescopes."

"Voss's death does not make the foundation's job easier, it makes it harder. Now there will be a leadership crisis on top of everything. The only scenario that helped me was him alive and signing."

Investigation Notes

- The budget decision is confirmed by foundation correspondence; it was finalised on 8 January and did not depend on the deceased's approval.
- The canteen water dispenser counter registered one use at 00:07; the medicine cabinet sensor was triggered at 00:09.
- The suspect holds a visitor access card with no permission on the dome corridor doors (see ANNEX 3).
- He holds no panel access code.
- His own gloves are brown leather and were found in his suitcase.

Supplementary Statement — 13.01.2026, 20:00

"Let me correct one thing. While I was sitting in the canteen I heard a door from the corridor side. Which door, I could not say; every sound in this building is the same. I looked at the time because I had taken a sleeping tablet and was wondering how long it would take: 00:26. I did not mention it in my first statement because I did not want to put anyone under suspicion. But since everyone is telling everything — I heard that."

ANNEX 1 • System Logs (dome automation + satellite unit)

TIME (12–13 JAN)	ENTRY
22:00	Exposure started; dome slit OPEN, tracking motor AUTOMATIC
23:31	Satellite link ESTABLISHED (control room unit, session: L.HART-0231)
00:32	Dome tracking motor switched to MANUAL (at the panel, on site)
00:47	Satellite link ENDED (session duration 76 min)
00:51	Dome tracking motor returned to AUTOMATIC (at the panel, on site)
02:00	Exposure completed; system on standby

Panel operations can only be performed at the physical panel inside the dome. In the exposure frame the star trails are corrupted between 00:32 and 00:51 (processing note: "tracking interruption").

ANNEX 2 • Unfinished Letter on the Deceased's Desk (dated 12 January)

Handwritten draft to the institute. Unsigned, incomplete.
Tomorrow morning, in the 09:00 satellite window, I will transmit two separate reports. The first concerns the unauthorised commercial sharing of station data; I will attach the evidence. The second concerns the maintenance records of last winter's ventilation incident; I have identified signatures completed after the fact, and
[the text breaks off here]

ANNEX 3 • Access Records

TIME	DOOR / SYSTEM	CARD—CODE
22:04	Corridor door A (main end)	CARD-01
22:06	Corridor door B (dome end)	CARD-01
00:21	Corridor door A (main end)	CARD-05
00:24	Corridor door B (dome end)	CARD-05
00:32	Dome panel — MANUAL mode	CODE-3, correct on first attempt
00:51	Dome panel — AUTOMATIC mode	CODE-3, correct on first attempt
00:58	Corridor door B (dome end)	CARD-05
01:01	Corridor door A (main end)	CARD-05
07:01	Corridor doors A + B	CARD-05

ASSIGNED TO	CARD	PANEL CODE
A. Voss	CARD-01	CODE-1
L. Hartmann	CARD-02	CODE-2
M. Berg	CARD-03	no code assigned
I. Sorensen	CARD-05	CODE-3
T. Rivera (visitor)	CARD-07	no code assigned

Verdict Form

Fill this in before you look at the solution. If you cannot write a name, you are not ready — go back into the file.

The Accusation

Mark one person. You get one chance.

☐ Lena Hartmann	☐ Milo Berg
☐ Ingrid Sorensen	☐ Tomas Rivera

YOUR REASONING – WHICH PIECES OF EVIDENCE POINT TO THIS PERSON?

YOU MAY NOW OPEN THE SOLUTION FILE

The solution is a separate PDF: **the-silent-dome-solution.pdf**

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