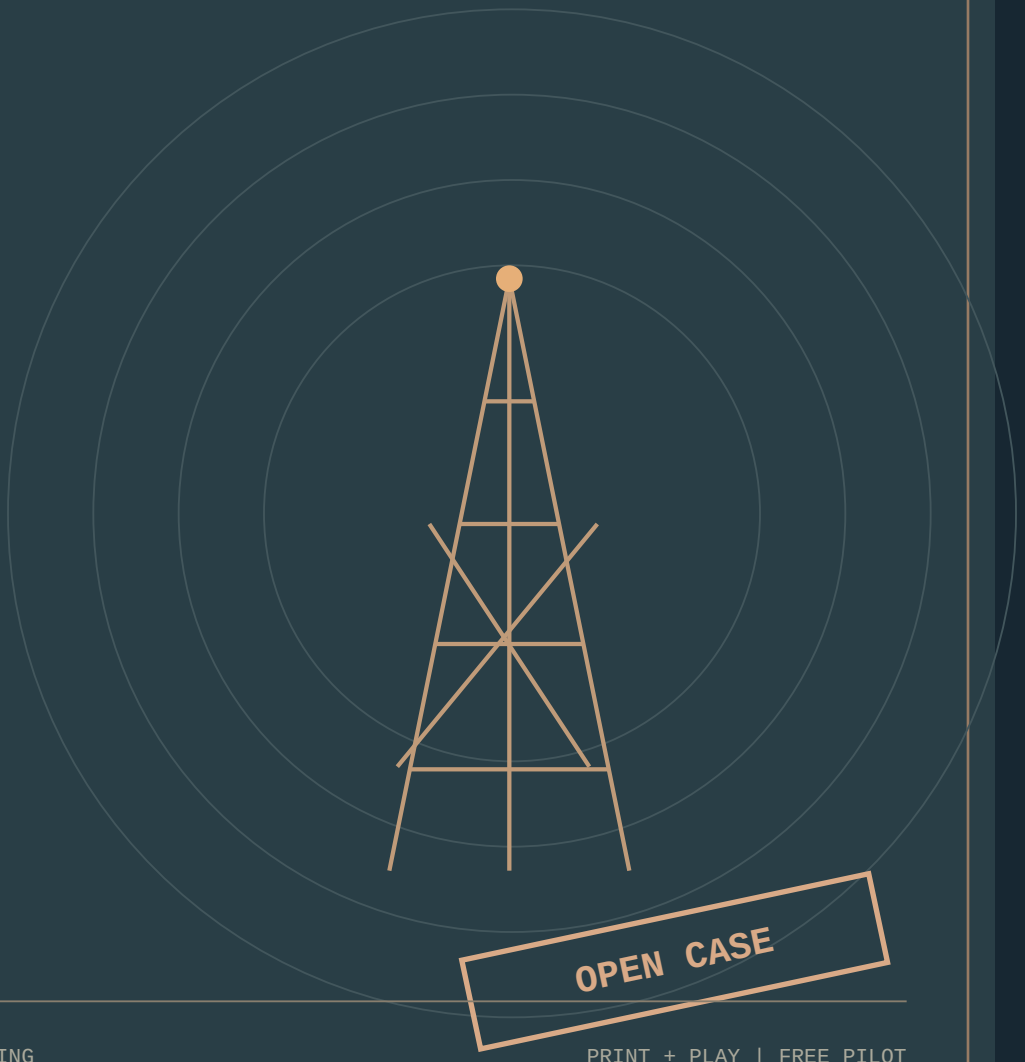
A MYSTERY TO SOLVE AT HOME

THE 9:17 BLACKOUT

One missing recording. Four accounts.
A broadcast that wasn't what it seemed.



CASE NO. CC-001

STATION ROOKERY

YEAR 1968

EXHIBIT GUIDE / DOCUMENT 02

How to open a case

PERSONAL PLAY COPY / NO HOST REQUIRED

This is an original, fictional detective puzzle. The six evidence exhibits are self-contained. You do not need outside research, special props, or any paid account to play.

01 / READ

Work through exhibits A-F. Keep notes, underline contradictions, and distinguish what a witness claims from what a timestamp proves.

02 / DISCUSS

With friends, take turns reading each report. Suggest theories, and ask which document supports each conclusion.

03 / DEDUCE

Complete the four findings on page 9. If you want immediate feedback, use the online investigation room to test every answer.

04 / UNSEAL

The final page contains the solution and a sealed letter. Keep page 10 face down until the group is ready to reveal it.

Best played with 1-4 investigators. Allow about 20 minutes.

Download a fresh copy or play interactively on the Case & Cinder site.

Print pages 1-9 for players. Page 10 is the solution / host copy.

EXHIBIT A / DOCUMENT 03

The incident report

ROOKERY STATION / OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

At 21:31, the station archivist discovered that the original Meridian recording had vanished from its locked cabinet. No duplicate exists. The last confirmed inventory check was at 20:50.

21:10	A planned electrical switchover began. Main corridor lights dimmed; essential systems stayed on backup power.
21:12	The nightly weather bulletin began. Listeners heard host Lena Cross throughout the eight-minute broadcast.
21:17	The archive cabinet register recorded one entry during the weather bulletin.
21:20	The first live studio segment resumed.
21:31	Archivist Mara Quill reported the Meridian reel missing.

> Everyone insists they were occupied at 21:17. Someone is mistaken - or wants us to be.

EXHIBIT B / DOCUMENT 04

The four accounts

STAFF ROSTER / CROSS-CHECKED STATEMENTS

Four people who could conceivably approach the archive gave these accounts. A statement is a claim until another document supports it.

MARA QUILL	Archivist. Says she was in the photographic darkroom from 21:08 to 21:21. The guard confirms speaking to her at the darkroom hatch at 21:16. Assigned archive key: A.
SILAS REED	Engineer. Says he was monitoring the electrical switchover in the generator booth from 21:10 until 21:22. Two technicians confirm seeing him there at 21:14 and 21:19.
LENA CROSS	Radio host. Says she was at the studio microphone for the entire 21:12-21:20 bulletin. The voice on the broadcast is unmistakably hers.
THEO BELL	Courier. Claims he reached the property after 21:20. The gate register timestamps arrival at 21:23.

> An unmistakable voice is not necessarily a live voice.

EXHIBIT C / DOCUMENT 05

Transmission schedule

CONTROL BOOTH / MASTER CUE SHEET

The control room logged its source material before and during transmission. The sheet was recovered from beneath the announcer's console.

21:10	Reel C-42 loaded into automatic deck. Format: WEATHER BULLETIN. Duration: 08:00. Voice: L. Cross.
21:12	AUTO PLAY engaged: C-42. Transmitter carried the recorded program.
21:17	Station monitor registered normal audio. No live microphone channel was active.
21:20	C-42 ended. Live microphone opened; L. Cross signed the next program into the log.

> The weather bulletin was recorded earlier that day. The announcer could leave the studio while it played.

EXHIBIT D / DOCUMENT 06

Archive key register

ELECTRONIC CABINET / CONTACT LOG

The archive has two physical keys with distinctive contact pins. Its battery-powered register identifies which key was used during the power switchover.

KEY A	Assigned to Mara Quill. Usually worn on a chain at her waist.
KEY B	Emergency spare kept in the announcer's studio desk drawer.
21:17:04	CABINET UNLATCHED / KEY CODE: B
21:17:58	CABINET LATCHED / NO FAULTS RECORDED

> No forced entry. No bypass. One of the station's own keys opened the cabinet.

EXHIBIT E / DOCUMENT 07

Guard's notebook

EAST CORRIDOR / SIGNED TRANSCRIPTION

The night guard was checking the darkroom and adjoining corridor during the station's planned electrical switchover.

21:16	Spoke to Mara Quill at the darkroom hatch. She complained that the red safelight had failed.
21:16	Saw a figure walking from the studio end of the east corridor carrying a flat slate-blue record case. Face obscured in the dim light.
21:18	Saw the same record case being carried back toward the studio end. Did not identify the carrier.
21:23	Met courier Theo Bell at the outer gate and let him sign in.

> The guard saw the case, not the face. The direction and timing are the reliable parts.

EXHIBIT F / DOCUMENT 08

Studio reel inventory

AUDIO STORAGE / END-OF-SHIFT COUNT

All broadcast reels are stored in rigid cases. Each case has two internal pockets, but weather reels usually travel with only one pocket occupied.

C-42 / 21:10	Weather bulletin. ONE reel in a TWO-pocket slate-blue case. Signed out by L. Cross.
C-42 / 21:24	Case returned to studio shelf. Annotation: 2 / 2 occupied. No second reel was issued.
C-43 / 21:24	Single-pocket sleeve, one reel. No discrepancy.
ARCHIVE	The missing Meridian recording has the same physical reel diameter as a weather reel.

> One case left the studio holding one reel. The same case came back holding two.

EXHIBIT WORK / DOCUMENT 09

Investigator's worksheet

FILE YOUR FINAL CONCLUSIONS BEFORE REVEALING THE ENDING

Use the exhibits to answer each question. You can check your reasoning in the online investigation room, or compare your findings with the sealed solution on page 10.

1. Did Lena's voice at 21:17 prove she was physically at the microphone? Why or why not?

2. Which physical key opened the archive cabinet at 21:17?

3. Who is the strongest suspect when the opportunity, access, and corridor sightings are combined?

4. Where should the missing Meridian reel be found? Cite the inventory discrepancy.

STOP. If you are still investigating, do not turn the page. The solution is sealed on page 10.

EXHIBIT SEALED / DOCUMENT 10

Resolution / host copy

SPOILERS AHEAD / OPEN ONLY AFTER PLAY

THE MISSING EIGHT MINUTES

A / THE ALIBI

No. The program was prerecorded. Reel C-42 played automatically from 21:12 to 21:20; no live microphone was active at 21:17.

B / THE ENTRY

Key B. The cabinet register explicitly identifies it. Key B was stored in the announcer's studio desk drawer.

C / THE PERSON

Lena Cross. The recorded voice gave her a false alibi. She had access to the studio spare key and time to travel along the east corridor.

D / THE PLACE

The second pocket of the slate-blue C-42 reel case. Inventory showed one reel at 21:10 and two at 21:24, without a second issued reel.

The letter behind the evidence

To whoever finds this - They called it a faulty recording. It isn't. Tomorrow they'll wipe the only account of what really happened during the Meridian test. I couldn't let the story disappear because it embarrassed the people in charge. You'll find the reel behind the C-42 bulletin. I didn't take it to hide the truth. I took it to keep it alive. - L. Cross