

**SCENE 3.1 RESPONDING TO TRAGEDY**

INT. HEIDEBERG LAB - DAY

The lab members are gathered for a meeting. Heideberg composes himself before entering the meeting room.

HEIDEBERG

Good morning, everyone.

There is a somber undertone to the room, though some are cheerful and oblivious.

HEIDEBERG

To start, I have some unfortunate news. Harold Wendling will be leaving the lab. There is a family medical emergency that requires him to move home. It was apparently quite urgent, so he has already left. He will not be returning to the lab.

Murmurs among the group. Heideberg pauses till they die down. It is clear some lab members know the truth, but no one says anything.

Darren looks at Meena, confused. Clearly he hasn't heard.

HEIDEBERG

Obviously we are sorry to see him go, but the work we are doing must continue.

Heideberg briefly makes eye contact with Meena.

HEIDEBERG

Darren and Meena, I would like to see the both of you after this meeting to resolve the ongoing issues with the Sorenson lab. Okay?

They both nod.

HEIDEBERG

All right, moving on...

FADE OUT.

INT. HEIDEBERG'S OFFICE - DAY

Heideberg sits at his desk, lost in thought. Meena and Darren knock on the door. Heideberg straightens papers on his desk.

HEIDEBERG

Come in.

They sit.

HEIDEBERG

I want to resolve the issue with producing for the Sorenson collaboration as soon as possible. Darren, I want you to work with Meena, watch her go through the synthesis, find out where she is going wrong.

DARREN

Is that really necess--  
(Heideberg's look says it all)  
Of course, we'll get started right away.

HEIDEBERG

Don't stop working until you figure it out and keep me updated.

MEENA

Okay.

Meena and Darren get up to leave.

HEIDEBERG

Oh, Meena...  
(she stops)  
...would you be comfortable packing up Harold's bench? If it's not too much trouble? We've been asked to ship his belongings back to him when we can.

Darren looks puzzled by this phrasing.

MEENA

Sure. I'll do it.

HEIDEBERG

Thank you.

(CONTINUED)

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Meena and Darren leave.

**SCENE 3.2 JULES AND LORETTA MAKE PLANS**

INT. SORENSON'S OFFICE - DAY

Sorenson sits at her desk, not really working. Loretta knocks on the door.

LORETTA

You ready for me?

SORENSON

Sure.

LORETTA

Great, so I talked to the Director of Graduate Studies about the increased funding we will have for grad students--

(sees Sorenson is  
distracted)

Everything okay?

SORENSON

Yes. Sorry. I've just been thinking.

LORETTA

About?

SORENSON

Seems things are a bit gloomier out there than I realized. Wondering what more I could have done to keep things on track for some of these students.

LORETTA

I don't think you should be so hard on yourself.

SORENSON

I've been so consumed with funding the lab that I lost track of the students' day to day progress.

LORETTA

Well, that's pretty important to the lab and no one else can do it but you.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LORETTA (CONT'D)

I think you should give yourself a break. Let's just move forward, all right?

SORENSEN

Yeah. Okay.

LORETTA

I'm happy to help. Is there anything I can do to take things off your plate?

SORENSEN

You've helped me so much already, thank you, Loretta. I'd like to make some concrete plans and put lab protocols in place so things will work more efficiently around here.

LORETTA

Great. Such as? Let's make a list of priorities.

SORENSEN

I'd like to create a better mentoring plan. I need a system that tells me where students stand with their research development. I think initiating a mentoring compact and establishing a timeline for check-ins with each student is a good idea. Evelyn Towne and I talked about this when I saw her last. She may have a good model for this, so let's follow up with her about that this week.

LORETTA

Let's do that together since you know her better than I do.

SORENSEN

Sure. I'd also like to establish clear guidelines for data management and implement a unified electronic notebook system and set of policies.

LORETTA

I agree. We can start by following up on our first iREDS discussion.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LORETTA (CONT'D)

That lab meeting was really valuable and we all got a lot out of it. I'll set up our second, follow-up conversation soon. All right?

SORENSEN

That would be wonderful, thank you.

LORETTA

Anything else for right now?

SORENSEN

Let's get these protocols in place. Clearer practices will help us all. We've set high standards for ourselves and these steps will really help us get to where we need to be. I wanna keep making progress.

LORETTA

We're talking about a lot of things that'll be a lot of work. And I'm on board.

Sorenson nods. They continue to sit and make plans together as we...

FADE OUT.

### SCENE 3.3 RESOLVING THE ISSUE

INT. HEIDEBERG LAB - DAY

Meena and Darren work together at her bench. She prepares a solution and heats it, watching the temperature rise on the thermometer. It reaches 86 degrees.

DARREN

Woah woah woah, What are you doing?

MEENA

What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DARREN

You're supposed to heat it to 82 degrees. You just screwed the whole thing up.

MEENA

I thought it was 92 degrees.

DARREN

No. It's not.

Meena checks the protocol open on the desk next to her.

MEENA

This says 92.

Darren checks. It does say 92.

DARREN

Okay, well, I might have transcribed it wrong. It's gotta be right in the notebook though.

He opens his notebook. The number is quickly scribbled. It could easily be read as an 8 or a 9.

DARREN

Huh.

The potential import settles over both of them.

DARREN

Uhm, okay, uh, let's start over and see what happens if we make that 82.

Meena amends the protocol with a pen. They start over.

CUT TO LATER:

INT. HEIDEBERG LAB - DAY

Darren checks the spectroscopy results of the compound.

MEENA

Is it right?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DARREN

Yeah. It's the right molecule.  
I'll get Dr. H.

CUT TO:

INT. HEIDEBERG LAB - DAY

Heideberg checks the spectroscopy results. He nods his head.

DARREN

So, uhm, I guess I screwed up. I don't know. I was under a lot of pressure, I must have transcribed it wrong, somehow.

They all absorb the import of that, especially in light of Harold's absence.

HEIDEBERG

Yes you did. And we'll address that later. But I'm glad we've figured out the reproducibility problem. It still doesn't account for the inconsistencies Jayna was getting.

DARREN

I still think that must be an issue on her end.

MEENA

I did notice this compound looks like the initial lot that was delivered. The second one had a distinctly different color.

DARREN

That doesn't mean anything.

HEIDEBERG

It doesn't necessarily mean anything but it could be indicative of something. Have all of these been created with the same batch of starting materials?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MEENA

The material I started with was brand new. I think we just received it.

HEIDEBERG

What about the first two lots?

DARREN

For the first lot, I had enough left over from working with Justin. So, the second lot was a different shipment of raw materials.

HEIDEBERG

I wonder if something was off with the product. Do we have enough from each shipment to test?

DARREN

We should.

HEIDEBERG

Let's check them with a polarimeter.

Meena and Darren look confused.

HEIDEBERG

It's used to measure the angle of polarized light passing through substances. They are not used often anymore but I'm sure we must still have one in a closet somewhere.

CUT TO:

INT. HEIDEBERG LAB - DAY

The polarimeter on a desk. Heideberg shows Darren and Meena how it works. They test the base materials from all three shipments.

HEIDEBERG

Look. You can see the second batch of material is different. It likely resulted in the creation of a stereoisomer of the molecule you were trying to create.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)



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HEIDEBERG (CONT'D)

That's could be why Jayna's results were incompatible and why it didn't show up in the NMR data.

DARREN

We shouldn't have to test the starting materials. That's crazy. Now that we know the issue, can we just deliver the new lot and chalk up the issues with the second to an anomaly?

Heideberg and Meena are both appalled at this.

HEIDEBERG

Of course not. No one's faulting you for not testing the starting materials. Everyone assumes if they order a product, it's viable. But it's imperative that we are always forthright and honest in what we do here. Especially when collaborating with another lab. That's disappointing, Darren.

DARREN

Sorry, I just...I knew it wasn't me and I didn't want Jayna to think that...

Trails off.

HEIDEBERG

I will contact Jules Sorenson myself and explain the situation. The fact that the compound has a stereoisomer could actually be significant for them biologically. I'll see what she thinks. Meena, can you deliver this latest compound to Jayna as soon as possible?

MEENA

Of course.

HEIDEBERG

Thank you.

Heideberg leaves. Meena looks over to the boxes on Harold's bench.

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DARREN

He doesn't have a sick relative,  
does he?

MEENA

Nope.

DARREN

You're making this out to be my  
fault? If something like this  
pushed him over the edge, he would  
have washed out eventually.

Meena says nothing.

DARREN

I don't have anything to feel  
guilty about.

He stalks off. Meena watches him go, then takes out her  
phone. Dials Harold's number.

HAROLD (O.S.)

Hello?

MEENA

Harold? I think there's something  
you should know...

FADE OUT.

### **SCENE 3.4 A BETTER UNDERSTANDING**

INT. SORENSON LAB - DAY

Dr. Sorenson works at her desk. An email notification  
pops up from Dr. Heideberg. She clicks it.

TEXT OF EMAIL: JULES, WE HAVE IDENTIFIED THE LIKELY  
REASON FOR THE INCONSISTENT RESULTS JAYNA IS SEEING  
BETWEEN THE COMPOUNDS. THE CULPRIT WAS A BATCH OF BAD  
STARTING MATERIAL WE PURCHASED. I AM HAPPY TO GIVE  
FURTHER DETAILS IF YOU HAVE TIME TO MEET? I BELIEVE WE  
HAVE RESOLVED THE ISSUE AND WILL BE ABLE TO GET THE  
COLLABORATION BACK ON TRACK. LET ME KNOW IF YOU HAVE TIME  
THIS WEEK TO GRAB COFFEE. MALCOLM.

Sorenson types.

TEXT OF EMAIL REPLY: MALCOLM, THAT'S ENCOURAGING. HAPPY  
TO GRAB COFFEE THIS WEEK.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sorenson finishes typing up the email and sends it.

INT. ESPRESSO ROYALE - DAY

Sorenson and Heideberg grab their drinks from the counter and head to an open table.

HEIDEBERG

It was really a combination of factors. There was a careless transcription error between lab notebook and protocol, Darren was overconfident he had the procedure down and had shown the grad students how to do it. Being a senior postdoc, I thought he warranted that trust but he clearly did not. The issues with the raw material were much harder to spot. I have trouble holding him accountable for that. I'm just glad we were able to identify the problem.

SORENSEN

Yeah. Sure.

HEIDEBERG

I have to imagine we've identified all of the issues. If Jayna finds her results from the latest lot of compound correlate with her initial findings, I think we can assume everything is fine. Even so, we'll continue to test any new shipments of starting material just as a precaution.

SORENSEN

I think that's a good idea.

HEIDEBERG

It also occurred to me the effect of the stereoisomer might be of interest in the research. I'm not sure if that's something Jayna would want to pursue beyond this project.

SORENSEN

It's potentially significant and we'll certainly explore it.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

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SORENSEN (CONT'D)

Given Jayna's timing, we need to think it through. She's ready to run her own lab.

HEIDEBERG

Of course.

SORENSEN

And I'm glad you were able to resolve the technical issues. Those were not the only issues though with the collaboration.

Heideberg doesn't track.

SORENSEN

Jayna did her due diligence. Her data supported that there was a difference between lot 1 and lot 2. As far as we know, Darren never even looked at it.

HEIDEBERG

As I said, he was overconfident to a fault.

SORENSEN

There was also no communication around the delays. Jayna was given rough deadlines that were missed with no explanation and no clear expectations for a new delivery date. Repeatedly.

HEIDEBERG

That's unfortunate. Darren should have been more forthcoming about what was happening. I admit.

SORENSEN

And I think Jayna felt disrespected and uncomfortable with how she was treated in your lab. Particularly by Darren, but not exclusively.

Heideberg does not know what to say. A bit stung, he sips his coffee.

HEIDEBERG

I, uhm, I am sorry to hear that she felt mistreated. That was never my intention, of course.

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SORENSEN

While I think Jayna would appreciate an apology, knowing her, she would prefer to just know the next young scientist that comes up has a better go of it than she did.

Uncomfortable silence.

SORENSEN

So, while I am optimistic that Jayna and Meena can handle the day to day going forward, I would like to have them agree to specific deadlines and set out protocols for communicating clearly issues from either side. And I think the both of us should sign off on them.

HEIDEBERG

I'm okay with that.

SORENSEN

Great.

They sip their coffees, not much left to say.

### **SCENE 3.5 A NEW DIRECTION**

INT. SORENSON'S OFFICE - DAY

Alex knocks on Sorenson's door. Loretta is already there.

SORENSEN

Come in, Alex.

ALEX

Thank you.

Alex sits.

SORENSEN

So, I understand our last conversation didn't land on you the way it came off to me. That's why Loretta is here. To help make sure we are communicating effectively.

(MORE)

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SORENSEN (CONT'D)

First though, I'll just say that my goal is to help everyone in this lab develop along the path that most suits them. In grad school, I didn't feel like I had the freedom to pursue the research that most interested me. I don't want that to be the case here. So let's talk about how to help you pursue the best path forward for you.

ALEX

Okay. And I do appreciate that openness. I just need more of a direction to go in, I think.

LORETTA

That's fine. You told me your previous PI took a firmer hand in determining the direction of your research.

ALEX

Yeah, he did.

LORETTA

More than just determining what your next project will be, we think it's important for us to get an idea of how you see yourself developing as a researcher.

SORENSEN

Right. So where do you see yourself after your thesis work is done? Do you want to run your own lab or are you more interested in an industry job?

ALEX

I guess I'm not entirely sure yet.

LORETTA

And that's fine. We don't expect you to have all of the answers. These are things that can change and develop as you grow as a scientist.

SORENSEN

It just helps to have an idea of where you want to go.

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CONTINUED: (2)

ALEX

I guess I do see myself running my own lab someday. I think that's something I would want.

SORENSEN

Which is great. In order for that to happen, you'll have to determine what research you want to pursue independently at some point.

ALEX

I understand. I mean, that makes sense.

LORETTA

And that's something we can work toward.

SORENSEN

Definitely. Last meeting, you mentioned mRNA therapeutics. I think that's a really fascinating area right now and it fits in with a lot of the other work going on in the lab. Is that what you would like to work on for your first project?

ALEX

Yes. I think so.

SORENSEN

Okay. I've pulled some papers I think are promising. I'll email them to you. If you could take a look and come back with a few specific options of what you'll pursue, I think that's a good next step. At that point, we can set up a recurring meeting so we can check in regularly. How does that sound?

ALEX

Good. Yeah.

LORETTA

Meanwhile, we'd like you to think about directions you might want to go. Again, you don't need to decide anything now.

(MORE)

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LORETTA (CONT'D)

It will help us though in figuring out how best to guide you.

ALEX

I understand.

SORENSEN

I feel like we talked a lot. Is there anything you want to say or questions you have for us?

ALEX

No. I just kind of wanted a direction to go in. I feel like I have that now. I'll do some work and bring it back and we'll see where to go from there.

SORENSEN

Sounds good. And in the future, if you feel I am not hearing you, let me know that. I won't be offended. It's more important that we can talk.

ALEX

I will. Thanks.

Loretta walks Alex out.

INT. SORENSON LAB - DAY

Outside of the office, Alex stops Loretta.

ALEX

Loretta, I just wanted to say thank you.

LORETTA

It's what I'm here for.

ALEX

I know but I was kind of a jerk to you and you didn't give up on me. I really appreciate that.

LORETTA

You're welcome.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

ALEX

Uhm...it's just, in Korea, I didn't grow up around black people. I don't really know any. I think that was part of my reluctance.

LORETTA

Well, I'm glad to hear that and I'm glad you felt you could tell me. But now that you've realized this, let's keep the conversation going. And maybe check in with your lab mates as well?

ALEX

Right, I understand. Thank you.

**SCENE 3.6 JULES AND ANA SOFIA GET COFFEE**

INT. ESPRESSO ROYALE - DAY

Sorenson and Ana Sofia sit at a table, drinks in front of them.

SORENSEN

It took longer than I hoped. I'm glad we are finally getting to grab this coffee.

ANA SOFIA

Me too.

SORENSEN

I know it's been a rocky start. I never meant for you to get lost in the shuffle. I shouldn't have left you and Jayna so much on your own without making sure you had what you needed.

ANA SOFIA

I understand. I'm sure it's not easy keeping a lab like this going and growing. That's one of the reasons it's exciting to be here though.

SORENSEN

I hope so. First I want to talk about your research going forward.

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CONTINUED:

ANA SOFIA

Okay.

SORENSEN

The Heideberg people figured out what the problem with the second lot was. They got a bad batch of raw material. They didn't catch it in the spectroscopy because it created a stereoisomer, which might have significant applications for the molecule. It may not. It's hard to tell at this point. Is that something you would be interested in exploring as your first project?

ANA SOFIA

Yeah. If you think it could be important, I could do that.

SORENSEN

Good. We'll talk to Jayna to bring you up to speed on what she's doing so you can see how it relates and may apply to her work.

ANA SOFIA

That'd be great.

SORENSEN

Good. Loretta and I are developing different protocols to help manage things better when I'm out of the lab. Would you be willing to work on a mentoring compact you and I would agree on? It's a way for you to express your interests and for us to have clear parameters around your research, so you know what my expectations are. It would help me track your progress even when I'm not in the lab as much and it will give you some insights that could be helpful to you as you grow as a scientist. Would you be willing to do that?

ANA SOFIA

Sure. Of course.

(CONTINUED)

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SORENSEN

If you find it helpful, I'll make it standard practice for all lab members.

ANA SOFIA

I think it's a good idea.

SORENSEN

There's something else I'd like to ask for your help on as well.

ANA SOFIA

OK.

SORENSEN

I found the iREDS discussion last week really eye-opening in terms of the issues with how data is being handled in the lab. You saw this first hand of course with Justin's work.

ANA SOFIA

Yeah.

SORENSEN

So, Loretta and I have drawn up the beginnings of a data management plan so we can avoid those issues moving forward. This will be part of the wiki and go in the new lab manual. Everyone in the lab is going to contribute, but I'd like you to take the lead, if that's okay.

ANA SOFIA

You think I'm ready for that?  
Being so new to the lab?

SORENSEN

I think that's an asset because you're coming at it with new eyes. By not being embedded in the procedures we're hoping to improve on, you can hopefully ask the questions we don't know to ask. That's all if you're willing, of course.

ANA SOFIA

Sure.

(CONTINUED)

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SORENSEN

It will be an ongoing thing.  
Loretta and I will make sure you  
don't get overburdened with it as  
you get your research up and  
running.

ANA SOFIA

Okay. I'm happy to do that.

SORENSEN

Great. Also, I want to make this a  
regular thing, whether it's  
grabbing coffee, or taking time to  
catch up. I want to make sure you  
feel like you have room to grow  
professionally and just that  
you're happy here.

ANA SOFIA

Thanks. That means a lot. I'm  
really excited about everything,  
so, this is great.

SORENSEN

I'm glad.

They drink their drinks.

### **SCENE 3.7 JAYNA'S FUTURE**

INT. SORENSON LAB - DAY

Jayna works at her desk, headphones on. Sorenson  
approaches.

SORENSEN

Jayna?

JAYNA

(taking out earbuds)  
Oh, hey.

SORENSEN

Do you have a minute to talk?

JAYNA

Uh, sure.

Jayna follows Sorenson back to her office.

INT. SORENSON'S OFFICE - DAY

SORENSON

So, Malcolm Heideberg and I met.

JAYNA

Really?

SORENSON

Yes. They've figured out where the issues were in producing more compound. Darren didn't record something correctly in his notes, so it was impossible for Meena to reproduce the molecule. They've resolved that and Meena will be delivering a new lot shortly.

JAYNA

Is that why the second lot was off?

SORENSON

No. They also figured out that some of the starting materials they purchased were bad. Unfortunately it produced a stereoisomer so it wasn't caught in the spectroscopy. That's what Heideberg believes caused the inconsistent results. They checked the material for this new lot and it should be correct. So, we need you to run your tests and see if things match up with your initial results.

JAYNA

I knew it was on the Chem side.

SORENSON

Yes. You were right. You have good instincts. Like a lot of great scientists. But it's hard to blame them though for not testing the raw material. You should be able to trust you're getting what you ordered.

JAYNA

Still...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SORENSEN

I know. They should have been more open to the problem being on their end. The important thing is the problem has been resolved.

JAYNA

And my initial results are hopefully sound. I don't have to start all over.

SORENSEN

Exactly. I know you don't want to hear this. Dealing with things like this will be important when you have your own lab. Which I know you'll have soon.

JAYNA

I get it. It's just frustrating.

SORENSEN

It definitely is. My intention was to help you develop into an independent scientist. I should have listened better and supported you more. Even if it was just to let you vent about a frustrating situation. I hope when you have your own lab, you'll still consider me a mentor and a resource. It's a lot of work, believe me, I'm still learning how to juggle it all. I know you'll be great.

JAYNA

Thanks. Of course, I'll still come to you with stuff.

SORENSEN

I hope so. This has made me realize that, as one of your mentors, I might not always be the best person to address the different problems you're going to face. Some of the groups I'm in are talking about using a mentoring map to think about different career needs in building out a network.

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SORENSEN (CONT'D)

The idea is the map can help you determine who to go to for which issues you might face. I have a friend, Denise Rogers, she's Black, she runs her own lab. I'd like to introduce you two. I think she might have insights to offer I might not have.

JAYNA

Okay. Yeah, that would be great.

SORENSEN

Good. Do you feel confident about your next steps?

JAYNA

Yeah. This all sounds great. I'm excited just to be able to get back to work. And as long as things are back on track, I'm fine to involve Ana Sofia in what I'm doing. I know she'll need to get up to speed if she's going to be part of the collaboration. I just needed to know whether I was back at square one or not.

SORENSEN

I'm glad you said that. I've asked if she would like explore the potential significance of the stereoisomer and she seems eager to pursue that. I'd like you to help her get that up and running. Sound good?

JAYNA

Sure.

SORENSEN

Let me know if there are any issues, okay?

JAYNA

I will. Thanks.

Sorenson smiles as Jayna leaves.

FADE OUT.