

# Ninety Degrees South

## EPISODE THIRTEEN: Comfort & Joy

INTRO MUSIC

FADE IN-SLIGHT WIND, SOUND OF PEOPLE MOVING CARGO IN THE DISTANCE. BASS IS ON THE SAT-PHONE OUTSIDE. CALL IN PROGRESS

CHUCK

(Over Phone, Irritated)

...and honestly, Bass, I'm going to ask you a question in the interest of complete clarity. ...Why are you so stupid? You should have held knowing about Atlas in reserve, had the ace up your sleeve.

BASS

(Angry, mostly at himself)

I know Charlie, I know. I beat myself up about it enough already. Point is, Jocelyn, has surfaced and what's more concerning is that she emerged to warn me. She hates me, Charlie; hell, she shot me in the leg during Cincinnati. Why alert me if the alternative is the DIA gets involved?

CHUCK

(Over Phone)

Great question. You and she had history ever since...since your wife. I haven't seen or spoken to her myself in over ten years, but I'm pretty confident for as much as she dislikes you. She has nothing but fury, rage, and destructive intent towards me. She's three-alarm psycho, boy. Continue to steer clear.

BASS

What are your D.C. contacts saying?

CHUCK

(Over Phone)

Nothing. Bupkiss. They're not hearing anything from the D.I.A. regarding you, the station, or anything else in your direction. Radio silent.

BASS

What about from Marshall's office in D.C.?

CHUCK

(Over Phone)

Ditto! Nobody on the hill is returning any of the Marshall's calls. Been going on for the better part of the week. Whatever is going on...all the field offices are being left out, not just us.

BASS

(Guessing aloud)

Punish them all for the act of one and erode our support in-house?

CHUCK

(Over Phone)

Possibly. Do have to admit that would be Jocelyn's M.O. to a tee.

AIRPLANE FLYING HIGH OVERHEAD

CHUCK

(Over Phone)

Do me a favor here Donkey Brains. Remember last time when I told you to keep to the investigation and ignore all the rest of the background noise down there?

BASS

Yeah, Charlie?

CHUCK

(Over Phone)

Well, this time...actually listen to that advice and do it! Do you hear me?

BASS

I copy Charlie. I'm keeping my nose clean. What about that other thing? The dossier I requested?

CHUCK

(Curious)

I have it. Who is this woman, Bass? Suspect? Person of interest?

BASS

P.O.I. only for now, Charlie. I just want to make sure I'm...being thorough.

CHUCK:

Jennings, Kendra Rene. Doctor. Degrees in Quantum Physics and Cosmology. ... What does the station need with a makeup artist, Bass?

BASS:

(Confused)

Huh?. That's 'Cosmetology.' \*Cosmology\* is the study of the universe's origin.

CHUCK

(Joking)

I know. That was called a 'dad joke,' and you used to smell them coming a mile away! You're slipping, boy.

BASS

Keep going, old-man.

CHUCK

She was born April 27th, 1989, to Raymond Jennings & Rebecca Connor-Jennings in Kalamath Falls, Oregon. She's a professor of Archeology at the University of Cambridge. He's dead. He taught Theoretical Physics at Cal-Tech in the '70s and '80s.

TRUCK BACKING UP IN THE DISTANCE

CHUCK

Older Brother. Devin Alexander, K.I.A. with the US Marines; 15<sup>th</sup> M.E.U. in 2003, Umm Qasr in Southern Iraq. Younger sister, Mary-Ellen Cooper-Jennings. Two nieces ages 4 & 8. Homemaker.

2SP

CHUCK

(Routine)

Other than that, Bass, there isn't anything here. Standard academic classes and awards you might expect. No criminal record, no warrants, no traffic tickets. No bankruptcy or financial issues. The only thing that stands out is a reference to a check done by M.I.-6 on your doctor there back in 2017.

BASS

(Confused)

British intelligence?

CHUCK

Maybe due to your doctor's Mom being a professor at Cambridge. You know the secret squirrels, Bass. Everybody always keeps tabs on everybody else's scientists if one wants to jump ship or defect.

BASS

(Thinking)

Maybe. I don't know. Just seems...really off.

CHUCK

(Teasing)

You sure this doctor is just a person of interest, boy? I'm looking at a photo of her. Very attractive!

BASS

Knock it off, Charlie. I'm on the clock down here. (pause) You and Janet doing anything for Christmas?

CHUCK

We're mainly having a quiet time to ourselves. Going to pay our respects to Janet's folks. Then I thought we'd stop in and visit Diane for a bit. I don't want anybody to be alone on Christmas.

BASS

(Happy)

That's great, Charlie. I'm sure she'd love to see you and Janet again. Tell her I wish I could be there too!

CHUCK

(A bit of worry)

I will son. Listen, Bass. You be careful down there. Dealing with a killer in the wild is one thing. Having a bureaucratic powerhouse gunning for you is a whole other matter. The more headaches you seem to be causing down there, mean...

BASS:

More headaches for you. I hear you, Charlie.

CHUCK

You hear me, but you seldom listen. Bass?

CHUCK

Merry Christmas, boy!

BASS

Merry Christmas, old man.

PHONE SHUT OFF BEEP, SOUND OF SHOES WALKING IN SNOW BACK TO STATION

ROBOTIC VOICE – RECORDING STARTED. ARCHES BACKGROUND NOISE.  
MECHANICAL BACKGROUND. ((ALL FRANKLIN DIALOGUE TO BE MUFLED  
BEHIND CAGE WALLS))

BASS

(Professional Voice)

Deputy US Marshal Bass Marlow, Mark Rodney homicide investigation; Amundsen-Scott station. The South Pole. Today is December 21st. 2021 and time is 16:20 HRS. This is the interview of...Franklin Cohn. Resident of...

FRANKLIN

Political Prisoner!

2SP

BASS

Resident...of the station. Now. For the record, please state your name.

FRANKLIN

You mean like my name, or my NAME, NAME?

BASS

(Confused)

Huh?

FRANKLIN

Well, the name everybody knows me as, is Franklin Cohn. Franklin was the human I possessed for 42 years when I was

last on earth. My NAME, NAME...can't tell you that. It would give you power over me.

BASS

(Leveling with him)

Okay, Franklin...I'm going to be 100% honest with you. I have ZERO clue about why you are in that cage or why everybody thinks you're the devil.

FRANKLIN

Whoa whoa whoa! Never said devil, not once did I profess to be the Morningstar!

BASS

The point being, I'm inclined to hear you out...

2SP

FRANKLIN

(unsure)

Say what now?

BASS

I think you heard me. I stopped believing in God, the devil. Heaven and hell. All...divinity. In my opinion, it's all bullshit made by age-old leaders wanting to control the masses. Wanting to line their coffers with money. Jesus, the apostles, Lucifer's war against God. Bull-certified-grade-A-Horseshit!

2SP

FRANKLIN

(Very confused)

Okayyyyyyyyyyy. You had me at the start but veered off there into some, very interesting emotional baggage. Obviously, you have something you're trying to work through...I'm cool with that. Some therapy maybe; but let's go back to the 'inclined' part?



BASS  
(Deadpan Serious)  
How long have you been in there?

FRANKLIN  
“What year is it?”

BASS  
2021

FRANKLIN  
Right...Gregorian calendar. Um, then five years.

BASS  
I’m going to level with you. I think something around here has contaminated the water. I believe you are infected too. I may be the only one not affected because I’m still relatively new. So, as soon as I find my killer, as soon as I get back to McMurdo, I intended to contact the CDC and have them scramble down here to treat the station, yourself included, and get you out of there. There is no such thing as ‘demons.’ You’re a victim; you think you’re a demon. It’s outlandish, and means you need help. So convince me. Convince me you think you’re a demon, that you’re crazy, and I’ll get you out.

FRANKLIN  
(HAPPY)  
And you will be my savior...okay, wrong choice of phrase. Um...Hero!

FRANKLIN  
(Hannibal Lector Impression)  
But first...Quid pro quo Deputy Marshal. Tell me something about you. Something personal.

CHAIR SQUEAKS BEING PUSHED BACK

BASS

Nope, see you later!

FRANKLIN

(Apologizing)

Sorry, sorry, Mr. Marlow! We can chat! It's just...how many opportunities do you get for the perfect setting and circumstances' for that impression?

SITS BACK DOWN

BASS

So I hear you were in 1980's Los Angeles. Tell me about that.

FRANKLIN

(Fond Laughing)

I possessed a white, mostly straight republican male lawyer in 1986. I was living in Los Angeles, California. The \*height\* of the Regan era. You ever hear of Sodom & Gomorrah?

BASS

Yes.

FRANKLIN

LA made them look like a Southern Baptist church during prohibition. It.was.GLORIOUS!!! Women, drugs, booze, money, lust, men, more money, expensive cars, and condos. Ah.....good times!

BASS

So you were a lawyer?

FRANKLIN

No, I possessed a lawyer. Well...technically, I possessed a 19-year-old kid, home from university, who played with a Ouija board alongside some Delta Gamma sorority girls so that he could touch a boob. E.Z., D.G.!!

BASS

Dude...

FRANKLIN

Anyway...that's when I hitched a ride. Found out he wanted to be a lawyer...we have LOTS of them back home; so I figured what better way to collect my due than include the guilty parties' soul as partial legal payment. So, I learned with the kid. In time, we passed college, passed law school, first try at the bar exam...thank you!! Got accepted as the youngest junior partner at McKenzie, Brackman, Chaney & Kuzak.

BASS

(Skeptical)

You let people pay their legal fees with their souls?

FRANKLIN

(Genuine)

Well, not the WHOLE bill. Just like...30%. Need the green to pay the rent and your dealers! Speaking of which, is snorting coke off the ass of a stripper still a thing?

BASS

How the hell would I know? I'm a federal officer.

FRANKLIN

(Sarcastic)

Oh, okay. Sure, if you say so.

BASS

For the record, the man called Franklin Cohn winked at me.  
Please continue.

ENGINE REVVING IN THE DISTANCE, MUFFLED SOUND THROUGH 3 OR 4  
WALLS.

FRANKLIN

So I was a rock-star attorney until 2002 when my ride suffered  
a stroke, and I had to return to the pit.

BASS

So then, how did you end up here? At the South Pole. In a  
modified solid iron rounded top tube?

FRANKLIN

Oh, funny story. So I'm waiting for a new assignment. It was  
taking unusually long. I had been back in the pit for almost  
three months, and the front office was seriously taking forever.  
It was quarter close, and you **know** how things get around  
then!

BASS

(Dryly, disbelief)

Hell. (pause) Has fiscal quarters?

FRANKLIN

Bureaucracy, red tape, needless and endless paperwork, Excel  
spreadsheets. Hi! We're hell; that's our bread and butter for  
suffering.

BASS

Uh-huh.

FRANKLIN

(Recounting)

So I'm just keeping busy until my next job comes in. Walking  
around the back-nine of hell, when I see this...flickering light,

with a purplish mist floating around it. I approached it because...well, why the... **their** not, and then I'm suddenly in this ice borehole with people shouting above me. I'm woozy; the head is pounding like when you tell the hooker dressed as a circus clown to choke you during...

BASS

(Quickly)

GOT IT, got it. Don't need the...I understand. You were disoriented. Did you say swirling purple mist?

FRANKLIN

Yeah. Why? Do you know what that was?

BASS

(Dismissive)

Not relevant, honestly. Go on.

FRANKLIN

Well, by the time I get rid of the head-funk, there is this tube being welded to the metal floor around me, and a third-year divinity school drop-out is reciting ancient Sumerian and warding the cage against me. Who knew they still taught Sumerian at university! Been here ever since...um, November 2016.

SOUND OF WALKING ON METAL FLOOR, PASSING BY OUTSIDE THE ROOM

BASS

(Curious)

Okay, why don't you tell me about heaven and hell then? If you *\*are\** a demon, formally an angel that rebelled, you'd have seen both places.

FRANKLIN

(tempting)

Aren't you more curious about your homicide investigation?

BASS

Of course, but you've been locked up down here. What could you possibly know that would help?

FRANKLIN

The murder weapon was a twisted blade, 12 inches long and hand-forged in one of the machine shops here at the station and is...as of this time, still missing. A nasty weapon that is! I believe you humans call it a...cyclone blade?

3SP

BASS

(Shocked)

That analysis wasn't released to anybody. Even doctor Ambrose couldn't determine the weapon used. It took forensics back in Honolulu to make that identification. Only four people on the planet know this. How could you possibly know...

FRANKLIN

Demon!

BASS

That's it? You just...know the murder weapon because you're...I'm going to need more.

FRANKLIN

Demons can smell sin. We can smell it a mile away. Literally! If the wind is against us, sometimes two to three. It's... intoxicating. Imagine having prime rib every day for a year.

Then you go decades without. That first time you smell the prime rib again...oooooh, I'm getting worked up here.

BASS

So you smelled Doctor Rodney being murdered?

FRANKLIN (start slip into demon voice)

Absolutely.

BASS

From in here. Under the ice. Hundreds of meters away from the MAPO lab?

FRANKLIN

Yes. For instance (sniff) right now, I can smell your guilt. You have something that's been gnawing at you (sniff) wow, for a long time. It explains that whole grade-A horseshit rant doesn't it. That is some intense marinated guilt. (Sniff) Well, now, there is a touch of lust on you too. Newer, very recent! Who's the lucky gal?

BASS

(curtly)

Not your concern.

FRANKLIN

Lucky fella?

BASS

(insistent)

Drop it

FRANKLIN

Also, and this is a freebie (Sniff). Stop using Old Spice cologne. What are you? A seventy-year-old retiree at a Shriner's convention? Get some Calvin Kline or something.

BASS

So did you... smell who the murderer was?

FRANKLIN

It doesn't work like that. (sigh) How can I...okay. We smell sin. All sin. We smell it when it happens and for as long as it lingers on your soul.

BASS

No such thing.

FRANKLIN

(Recounting VERY fondly)

UGH!!!!, FINE!. Your soul, your conscious, your being, your matrix of leadership...I don't care what you call it, trust me...it's there! Your basic sins: pride, gluttony, sloth...those are appetizers. The free bowl of mixed party nuts you get when you sit at the bar. Lust! Envy! Greed!...mmmmmm, those are entrees for sure. It makes my mouth water just thinking about them. But wrath! Ohhhhh now wrath...there is no greater offense to the almighty than when one of you hairless apes kills another. (Makes euphoric sound) Wrath! It is a seven-course feast unto itself. It's enticing, alluring. It is the source for murder, hatred, revenge, all things evil, and it sings out to us, it beckons us.. and we will always...

MUSIC –  
BACKGROUND,  
UNDERSCORE.  
BUILDING IN  
VOLUME AND  
FREQUENCY AS  
FRANKLIN  
DESCRIBES SIN

Building louder  
until (shuts off)

'RING-A-LING' FROM EIGHTY 6 – GILMORE GIRLS: RINGTONE PLAYS

BASS

(confused)

What the hell? Do you have a mobile phone in there?

FRANKLIN

(guilty)

NO!



RING TONE CONTINUES

BASS

Then why is it still ringing? You do have a mobile phone!

PHONE SILENCED

FRANKLIN

I'm a lawyer; I know I don't have to answer!

BASS

And how the hell do you get cell service, down here, inside of an iron tube, at the south pole?

FRANKLIN(Revert to Human voice)

5G?

BASS

You know...fine, we'll pretend that didn't happen. Or that your ringtone isn't suspiciously interesting.

FRANKLIN

Bottom line, when you're on a floating hunk of ICE with a small number of people, sins are not plentiful. It's not like standing in Times Square with thousands of people within that mile or two you can smell. So when somebody got ventilated...yeah, it stood out immediately. Was very fragrant.

BASS

Was?

FRANKLIN

Was! After a few days, the aroma went away. Most of the time, it means the person who did the killing was killed themselves, left the area, or committed suicide.

BASS  
(pondering)  
None of those things happened.

FRANKLIN  
(impressed)  
Well then, Deputy Marshal, you have yourself a rare suspect indeed! If they're still part of this mortal coil and didn't check out themselves, then you have a true psychopath on your hands. No remorse, no guilt, finds no problem in what they did. Those are the people who often get executive positions down in the pit!

BASS  
(contemplating)  
So no remorse or feelings, you can't detect him. Then parading the remaining 28 people still on station and who winterovered...would do no good.

FRANKLIN  
I wouldn't be able to smell them. Besides that, Waynewright and Zeke restrict who can come in here since the Buzz incident.

BASS  
(Half listening)  
Let's get back to heaven and...wait, what's the 'Buzz Incident?'

FRANKLIN  
Back in 2016. Buzz Aldrin saw my true visage. Made him have a stroke. They flew him out of here a few days later.

Waynewright got an earful about that, I'm sure. (wonders) I never did hear what the cover story was...

BASS

(shocked)

I remember that! That was you?

FRANKLIN

The man is an American hero. He walked on the moon for... \*his\* sake. They were letting him go wherever he wanted on the station. I had to meet him!! I remember watching the moon landing on T.V. during an earlier assignment. I just got too...excited.

BASS

(Not believing it)

They evacuated him to Christchurch. Said it was altitude sickness and fluid in his lungs. He was rambling. Tweeted about how we were all in danger, how it was evil itself. They said he was talking about climate change... \*you\* you were the evil?

FRANKLIN

Hey, words hurt!

BASS

(Accusatory, raised voice)

You almost killed Buzz Aldrin!

FRANKLIN

Not Guilty.

2SP

BASS

(Sigh) I have a party to get to and need to shower and get some paperwork first. We're continuing this conversation later!

FRANKLIN

Just don't wait too long. The sooner I help you catch the bad guy, the sooner you get to McMurdo, and I get out of here.

CHAIR SQUEAKS BEING PUSHED BACK

BASS

(Smirking)

Now, why would I let a dangerous creature out of his cage?

FRANKLIN

(shocked)

You were lying this whole time?

BASS

And you won't smell any guilt about it at all.

FRANKLIN

(Impressed)

Oh, Deputy Marshal, I like you indeed. Please, whenever you want to return to finish our chat, I'll be here. Maybe you can bring a meal, and we'll dine together.

FOOTSTEPS WALKING TOWARDS THE DOOR AND OPENING

FRANKLIN

(Anthony Hopkins Impression)

We could have liver with some fava beans and a nice Chianti.  
(Imitate slurping sound)

BASS

Night Franklin.

FRANKLIN

Ohhhhh, it's Franklin's time to shine!

LIGHT SWITCH SHUTS OFF, AND DOOR CLOSES  
ROBOTIC VOICE – RECORDING STOPPED

ELECTRIC BEEP; STATION HUM

BASS

(V.O., Digital Recorder)

Diane, it's 17:45 Hrs on December 21<sup>st</sup>. This may be my last dictation to you before Christmas day. First and foremost, I wish you a very Happy Holidays. I saw on the tracking website the gift was delivered on Monday morning. I hope it brings you great joy and happiness.

DRINK

BASS

(VO, Digital Recorder)

I finished an interview about an hour ago; I don't want to go into details. You'll see the body cam footage when the data package is transmitted tomorrow. Do me a favor. See what you can dig up on a Franklin Cohn. Lawyer practiced in California, Los Angeles County to be exact. The 1980s–2000s timeframe. Standard background check.

CHERYL-LYNN

(P.A. – DISTANT-MUTED)

Okay Ya'll. Join us in the Galley in thirty minutes for the Chris....I mean...Holiday party. Rumor has it, a very special somebody is gonna be making an appearance. Great food and some special eggnog. Wink Wink. See ya'll there. Thank youuuuuuuuuuu.

BASS

(V.O., Digital Recorder)

Spoke with Charlie earlier. You'll be getting your regular Christmas visit from him and Janet. Remember what we talked about, Diane. These visits mean just as much to Chuck and Janet as it does to you. Not saying to go all out, and I know you've all gotten on well forever. It's just..., and this may be me getting sentimental as I get older...I don't want you to be alone, or them to be either. You, Charlie, Janet...you're the only family I have left. It's hard not being there with you guys. Have a toast, be with each other and think of me.... AHEM.

SNIFF

BASS

(VO, Digital Recorder)

Okay, Diane, I'm freshly showered. Nose and ear hair trimmed. I have on that dress shirt you bought me just before Cincinnati, have it on some authority that Old Spice may not be suitable for me, and so I took a cologne sample out of a magazine I found in the quiet room. Obsession. (Remembers) By-the-by! Thank you for tracking down and arranging my gift to Kendra! I can't believe you were able to make it happen. Not sure if I should be thanking you, or Charlie, or you \*and\* Charlie, but this...I hope makes her day. Oddly looking forward to this. U.S. Deputy Marshal Bass Marlow, end of the day. DECEMBER 21ST 2021.

ELECTRONIC BOOP

2SP

ROBOTIC VOICE – RECORDING STARTED

CHEERING AS BASS ENTERS, COCKTAIL PARTY MINGLE BACKGROUND  
CHRISTMAS MUSIC PLAYING (GET LICENSES)

MALE 1

Deputy Marshal, Merry Christmas!

BASS

Merry Christmas, Doctor.

MALE 2

Hi deputy, glad you made it.

BASS

Happy to be here. Merry Christmas

FEMALE

Whooohooooo, Hi Bass. Aren't you a sight!

BASS

Okay, should probably slow down on that eggnog, Betty.

FROM OTHER SIDE OF GALLEY

THOMAS

(Excited, from a distance)

DEPUTY MARSHAL, DEPUTY MARSHAL!!

WALKING OVER

BASS

Hello Mister Kelley, Happy Holidays!

THOMAS

Oh, I don't mind Merry Christmas. Even if I celebrate Hanukkah, I still love the Christmas Spirit and food!

BASS

Well, now, Mister Kelley, I didn't know you were a member of the tribe? Shalom Aleichem.

THOMAS

(Surprised)

Aleichem Shalom! Deputy Marshal, I didn't know you were Jewish?

BASS

I'm not; I don't follow any religion or practices. Not for a while now. Oh, my best friend in Kansas growing up...he was Jewish. He taught me all about Judaism.

THOMAS

Well, I'm glad he did. Your Hebrew is flawless. No accent at all!

BASS

Only remember a few words. Hello, goodbye, where is the bus stop and just enough to get my face slapped.

THOMAS

Still, very impressive. Ooooh, I almost forgot; I need to make sure Zeke has everything. Excuse me, won't you?

GENERAL MINGLING, CLASS CLINKING AND GOOD TIMES

BASS

(Curious)



Dr. McKendrick? Saw you standing over here by yourself.  
Everything alright?

HELENA

(Somber)

Yes, thank you, Deputy. I'm just contemplating, looking out at  
...snow and ice and contemplating.

BASS

Well, at the risk of prying, anything you need to talk about?

HELENA

That's very sweet. No dear, I'm just taking in everything that  
has happened over the last year. It's...(deep breath). It's made  
me reconsider; where do I belong?

#### CHEERING FROM OTHERSIDE OF ROOM

BASS

(Unsure)

You mean here or... existentially?

HELENA

(Chuckles)

No, I mean, is my being here at the station the best thing for  
me and my relationship. My husband, Michael...and I, well, it's  
been rough for the last four or five years. So...we decided to  
go our separate ways and consider what we want? To stay  
married, to formally divorce? That was two and a half years  
ago. Around the same time, I got an offer to come down here.

BASS

And it being Christmas time; naturally, thoughts turn to family  
and friends.

HELENA

Yes. Exactly! Oh, I've been making the most of being separated and down here. I'm sure in your investigation you've...heard things.

BASS

(Reassures)

Not my place to judge, Doctor

HELENA

Despite my appetites, none of that has ever filled the emptiness in my heart, which until recently, I didn't even realize was there.

### LAUGHING FROM CROWD

BASS

(Deep sigh)

Doctor, I'm not sure I'm qualified to advise on matters of the heart, but instincts I am pretty good at. Taking away your social life here, taking away the problems you may have had...when you look deep inside yourself, what does your gut tell you. Don't think, don't consider, just...what does your gut say?

2SP

HELENA

(Almost tearful)

I need to go home.

BASS

I've always found your gut instinct is 99% the right instinct. I hope you find that too, Doctor.

### KISS ON CHEEK

HELENA

Thank you, Deputy. I'll let Lawrence know in the morning and then start making the preparations. You know...Doctor Jennings is a lucky woman.

BASS

(embarrassed)

You're welcome, Doctor. Oh and Kendra and I are just friends.

HELENA

(chuckles)

Why are the cute tall ones always oblivious! (smirk) Have a good night, Deputy.

BASS

Good night Doctor.

MIKHAIL

(Walking by, transition to talking over shoulder)

Always listening to guts. I must remember. It seems Russian wisdom is catching into your brain!

BASS

What can I say, Mikhail, I'm learning from the best!

TAPPING ON MICROPHONE

LARRY

Hello everyone. Hello.

CROWD STILL MURMURING

LARRY

(addressing, smugly)

Let's quiet down. I'll give my annual holiday speech, so you all may return to enjoying your... Jocularly. Consider **THAT** my Yule-time gift.

### GROAN FROM THE CROWD

LARRY

I've prepared a speech for this occasion. AHM.

### MICROPHONE SCREECH

LARRY

(Reciting, smugly)

Friends and Colleagues. At this time of year, we take a moment from our busy lives, toils, and endeavors to come together and celebrate our joy and fondness for one another. Even here, in the most remote part of planet earth, we come together to pursue scientific knowledge to help make our world better than when we found it.

### LITE APPLAUSE

LARRY

(Addressing the room, smugly)

It can be challenging to be away from familiar surroundings at this time of year. To be away from our families and loved ones. Not be able to gather around a fireplace and enjoy roasting chestnuts and merry making.

### 1SP

LARRY

(Pointed comment, smugly)

Especially those who intended to be home by this time but are being asked to remain by our beloved **DEPUTY** Marshal Marlow.

### AWKWARD SILENCE

LARRY

(Feigning sympathy, smugly)

So it is in the spirit of the season. Due in no small part to my efforts, I announce those who are still required to remain on the station will be given double their promised salary for this unfortunate inconvenience, retroactive to the day you were supposed to have departed.

BASS

(low, under breath)

Fuck you sideways Larry.

### CHEERING

LARRY

(Soaking it in, smugly)

Yes, yes, you're welcome. Happy Holidays. You're welcome!

### CHEERING DIES DOWN

LARRY

(Continues, smugly)

So, my fellow Scientist, contractors, Galley workers, Maintenance and Custodians

MIKHAIL

(Faint, From the back of the room)

JANITOR!

LARRY



(Reassuring)

No, no!! Not at all. I've just never...never saw you with your hair down and not wearing glasses.

KENDRA

(Nervous, self-conscious)

Well, it's...a holiday party so ...I wanted to...do something different. To do make-up.... Bass, please stop staring; you're making me...

BASS

(Apologetic)

I'm sorry, really, I didn't...it's just....Bombshell!

KENDRA

(Low voice, insistent)

Basssssssssss!

BASS

(picking up his jaw)

You're right; you're right! (clears throat) and a Merry Christmas to you, Kendra.

KENDRA

(Low)

Did Doctor Waynewright give his ...usual holiday speech? I've heard they can be...self-aggrandizing.

BASS

Oh, he was that and more. I think he may have nominated himself King.

SANTA-ZEKE

And how are you two doing this Christmas season...WHOA!

BASS

(Covering)

Hi Santa. Ken...Doctor Jennings is a bit... self-conscious.

KENDRA

Bass, you don't have....I appreciate you...I'm capable of...(DEEP BREATH) Thank you, Zeke, for that compliment. You are very kind, and I love you as Father Christmas.

ZEKE

Well HO-HO-HO, this *\*is\** a time for holiday surprises! It just so happens Santa has something in his bag for you, Lawman!

SOUND OF DIGGING IN A BAG

SANTA-ZEKE

(Trying to hold back a laugh)

Here ya go! HO-HO-HO. (Distracted) Hey Keenan, You best lay off that eggnog hooch if you are going on night-watch in two hours. Santa gonna get you a boot up your ass if you get drunk!

SOUND OF SANTA-ZEKE HEADING OFF ON SANTA-ROUNDS

KENDRA

(Confused)

A bag of marshmallows? I don't understand.

BASS

(butt of the joke)

It's an inside joke. Nothing important. Speaking of gifts...

WRAPPED PACKAGE BEING TAKEN OUT INSIDE COAT POCKET

BASS



I wasn't sure I would get this arranged in time, but thanks to some buddies and Diane mostly....for you.

KENDRA

Thank you Bass! Should I...here?

BASS

By all means, please!

SOUND OF PACKAGE WRAPPING OPENING.

2SP

KENDRA

(Shocked)

Bass...is it really...how?

BASS

Original CD release. Pain Killer by Little Big Town.

KENDRA

(Flabbergasted)

But it's....it's signed. **To me! By Karen Fairchild!**

(reading) *'Kendra: As a scientist in such a fascinating role, You are a shining example for girls everywhere to be whatever they can dream. You go girl, -Karen F.'*

Bass...this is...

BASS

The band is a huge supporter of law enforcement, especially our locating missing and exploited children. The Marshal's service has partnered with them many times over the....

BIG HUG, BASS 'oofffs'

BASS

Whoa...easy! Lungs are still sore from the chemical exposure.

KENDRA

(Emotional)

Thank you so much! How... did you know I loved this band?

BASS

Remember a couple of months back when I was walking by while you were practicing, singing along? I recognized the song and thought it might have a special meaning.

KENDRA

(Emotional)

They're the band.... that helped me find my voice. Made me... love singing and all the emotions involved. I'm just...I can't do it...not in front of people...yet. This is SO thoughtful; thank you!

BASS

You're welcome.

KENDRA

(Remembers)

Oh..my gift to you!

BASS

Oh you didn't....

KENDRA

Yes. I did. Please.

SOUND OF WRAPPING PAPER BEING REMOVED

2SP

BASS

(Mesmerized)

This was it! This is the bar I was telling you about. Mulligan's where I met my wife. 'Roscoe's Steak & Brew' that's what it was called! This photo must be twenty, twenty-five years old. Where did you find this?

KENDRA

It took a little bit of digging. Posting to various internet groups in the area to see if anybody had old photos of the storefront, but persistence pays off. Somebody who used to live nearby sent this to me. I ordered a frame and printed it up in the mailroom.

BASS

(Remembering)

It looks exactly like I remember it. On the night that I met...(clears throat) Kendra, thank you so much!

START NUTCRACKER SUITE IN BACKGROUND, SOFTLY, SUBDUED

KENDRA

Merry Christmas, Bass.

FROM ACROSS THE ROOM

SANTA-ZEKE

(MERRY SPIRIT)

We got ONE MORE present to hand out. As we always do at Amundsen Scott, the last present always goes to the station manager.

DIGGING IN BAG

SANTA-ZEKE

Here you go, Doctor Waynewright!

LARRY

(Feigned surprise, smugly)  
Oh, what could this be? The annual lump of coal since I'm on  
the naughty list? A whacky-tacky tie? Let's see, why don't we.

SOUND OF WRAPPING PAPER BEING OPEN, BOX OPEN CROWD GOES  
HUSHED

2SP

LARRY  
(In shock, ½ smugly)  
.....Will you all please excuse me. I have some...paperwork  
to do.

WALKING OUT, THE CROWD MURMURS.

BASS  
(Beckoning over)  
Zeke! Zeke!

2SP

BASS  
(Confused)  
Zeke, what was in the box? What made him head out like that?

SANTA-ZEKE  
(Also confused)  
No idea, lawman. That box was left near my Santa bag with  
Waynewright's name on it. I got a quick glimpse, it looked  
like...a doll.

KENDRA  
I got a look too. Almost looked like a doll in uniform.

THOMAS

(factly)

His grandfather made him a nutcracker doll when he was a kid. That was it, the actual doll.

2SP

SANTA-ZEKE

Hey, Santa is good at knowing what the youngins want, but how on earth...

THOMAS

(Explaining)

Six months ago, I wrote to his older sister, Clara. I saw her name and address on a letter he got last year. So, I told her I wanted to do something special for Doctor Waynewright on Christmas. Was there something, some old childhood memory or items that he loved as a kid? Something that would bring him comfort & joy.

BASS

Hard to imagine Waynewright as a kid.

THOMAS

His sister took over their parent's house in Drosselmeyer, Vermont after they passed, and lots of their old toys were in the attic. So, she found one that he would play with all the time when he was little. She said it was his best friend until he was nine or ten. His name is Fritz. I'm sure you've seen for yourself, Doctor Waynewright doesn't have any friends here, and with it being Christmas, everybody should have a friend.

BASS

(Checking)

Zeke? Are you..?

SANTA-ZEKE

(Deflecting)

Hush-up Lawman, I just got something in my eye, is all.  
(mumbling) damn feelings and mushy mush. **KEENAN!** I saw  
you sneak that extra nog! (singing) Here comes Santa boot  
here comes Santa boot right up your ass-lane!

KENDRA

Well, I think... that was very nice of you, Mr. Kelly.

THOMAS

Thank you, Doctor. Happy Holidays. Oh, if you'll both excuse  
me, I think it's time for the airing of the grievances! Have to  
run.

KENDRA

(low, soft voice)

Hey Bass? Look up. Did you notice?

BASS

(nervous)

Huh, mistletoe. Not tied to Firefighter Fred's belt-buckle as I  
would have expected.

KENDRA

(Low, minor flirting)

I do believe the tradition calls for...

BASS

I didn't want to assume. You don't mind?

KENDRA

MMM-mmmm (or whatever no sound is)

1SP

POWER FLICKER, ALARMS SOUND, EMERGENCY LIGHTS FLICK ON  
FROM OTHERSIDE OF ROOM

ZEKE

(goes into professional mode)

ALRIGHT, PEOPLE, I WANT REPAIR TEAMS TWO AND THREE MOBILIZING NOW! KEENAN, Give me that Radio, but you still got an ass-kicking coming, you best believe! Lawman, could use a hand!

KENDRA

But we didn't...

BASS

We will, Kendra. Pretty sure we will soon..... I have to....

KENDRA

Go, go. I understand.

BASS

Where do you need me Zeke?

FADE OUT AND OUTRO.