

Ninety Degrees South

SEASON TWO
EPISODE TEN: MIDSUMMER BALL

DRAFT 1: APRIL 18, 2022

DRAFT 2: APRIL 21, 2022

by
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WE HEAR WIND, FIERCE. SOMEBODY IS YELLING TO BE HEARD AS WE ZOOM IN.

GENERAL STONE

BASS MARLOW, ESEKIAL BUSTMANTE, THOMAS KELLEY AND KENDRA JENNINGS. YOU HAVE HEREBY BEEN FOUND GUILTY OF SEDITION, TREASON AND CRIMES AGAINST THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. BY ORDER OF PRESIDENT CAMPBELL, YOU ARE TO BE EXECUTED BY FIRING SQUAD! THIS DAY, FOURTEEN JUNE, TWENTY-TWENTY FOUR. MAY GOD HAVE MERCY UPON YOUR SOULS.

NOW, WHICH ONE WE GET TO SHOOT FIRST?

BASS

GUESS THAT WOULD BE ME!

ZEKE

FUCK THAT, SHOOT ME FIRST GENERAL ELECTRIC!

GENERAL STONE

NAH, WE'LL TAKE OUT THE CHIEF TROUBLEMAKER FIRST. TAKE THAT STUPID THING OFF.

SOUND OF FABRIC RUSSLING

GENERAL STONE

CORPORAL, TAKE THIS

RANDO

YES SIR!

FOOTSTEPS.

GENERAL STONE

UP AGAINST THE WALL TRAITOR. ANY LAST WORDS?

RANDO II
SIR! ON THE RIDGE!

GENERAL STONE
Unintelligible. [Loud Fierce Winds.]

BASS
Unintelligible. [Loud Fierce Winds.]

GENERAL STONE
READY! TAKE AIM!

***GARBLED DISTORATION ON THE RECORDING, MIX IN STAMPEDE.
SCREAMING, GUN FIRE, LOUD WIND.***

INTRO

ANNOUNCER
Two. Years. Earlier.

DIGITAL RECORDER BEEP

BASS
[A little excited]
Okay Diane, it's oh-five-thirty in the morning and it's fourteen June, twenty-twenty two. Midwinter here at the station. Hell, Mid-winter here in all of Antarctica. This is the biggest celebration across the continent. Every station, every nation celebrates! Each has their own little unique traditions, but the primary ways to celebrate are the same to each station.

The Station Manager gets up and cooks breakfast for all the station's 40-60 residents. [snicker] Yeah, apparently that one hasn't been celebrated since Waynewright arrived down here five years ago. Figures!

There are presents! Both from people back home that get shipped separately as well as people who were here over the summer season and left. They always leave a small something for the friends they made while they were on station! We'll open those at mid-day.

Oh! Since it's an official holiday, that means no work! Nobody does anything science wise. Other than anything that is critical to the station, nobody works if they can help it. Lunch Lady Alice and her crew have NO shortage of cooks, sous chefs, preparers, and gophers.

People have fun and activities planned. We'll send greetings and messages over radio and phone to the other stations. Rumor has it Mikhail has prepared his famous . . .hold on I had to write this down. . .

PAPER UNFOLDING

BASS

[Reading]

Special Janitor makings of Potato Vodka that has orangy flavors and puts chest hairs on chests.

There is a HUGE feast tonight. Two special cocktail choices! One that may cause temporary blindness! A seven-course meal with three different main entrée selections. There will be after dinner deserts and more cocktails. Plus, I was invited to a very special celebration. It seems Thomas, Nic, Zeke and others all get together for 'Jack's Night.'

Jack is Jack Torrance from The Shining. Jack Nicholson played him back in the 80's. A small group gets together to tell scary stories to try and outdo one another. I snagged an invite from Mister Kelley. [Chuckles] Reluctantly. . .Zeke has agreed to have it in Franklin's fuel room. Thomas and Nic consider it the creepiest part of the entire station. I have no idea how they managed to talk him into it, but I have to admit. . .this really is

a big deal around here. You have elements of Christmas, Thanksgiving, Halloween and St. Patrick's Day all in one. I'm kinda into it! Excited even.

I've decided that I too. . . need a bit of a break. Not saying I'm going on vacation, far from it. . . but after the last year, I'm entitled to a day off as well. So, major drug smuggling operations, attempted homicide. . . twice! Murders, time traveling. . . also. . . twice, prophetic dead jerk scientist ghost and prehistoric snowmen notwithstanding. . . Diane. . . you should sit down. [Pause] I'm taking . . . a holiday off!

This is US Deputy Marshal Bass Marlow. Investigation suspended one day. Fourteen June, Twenty Twenty-Two. Happy Midwinter! . . . Merry Midwinter? I'll have to ask. . .

ELECTRONIC VOICE: RECORDING STOPPED

FADE IN TO THE OLD FUEL STORAGE ROOM. BEING NIGHT WITH NO WORK, THE STANDARD BACKGROUND HUM OF THE ARCHES SHOULD BE DIFFERENT. MATALLIACLY ECHO OF WIND FROM OUTSIDE. OUR CAST IS SITTING IN FOLDING CAMPING CHAIRS AROUND AN ELECTRIC LANTERN.

THOMAS

[Recounting a scary story]

. . . So the police officer met the woman on her porch. The two of them walk to her car in the driveway, investigating the sound she heard each time she stopped the car, and there. . . on her door handle.

EVERYBODY AT THE SAME TIME

[Unimpressed]

Was the hook.

THOMAS

[Disappointed]

Gosh! I guess you all heard that one before. It's the scariest story I have!

BASS

Everybody knows that one Mister Kelley. It was old when I was still young, and that was a long time ago!

THOMAS

Well. . . I guess I can always tell you about a dermal abrasion I went through one time?

ZEKE

PASS!

KENDRA

Okay. Mx. Webster. How about you go next?

NIC

[Thinking]

Scarry story, scarry story? Um. . . okay. I remember one. I remember reading about this when I was a kid. It was one story in a bunch of scary stories that I bought at a school scholastic book faire.

BASS

Wow! They still do that?

NIC

Absolutely! All us kids used to love flipping through the paper catalogues to select the books that looked the best. Back then, I was. . . eh, I guess you would say nerd. I loved to read about sci fi, fantasy, anything scary.

BASS

Okay, let's hear what you have.

NIC

A man, driving home from his office super late one evening, decided he should take a shortcut to get home faster. It was Two AM in the morning and after a long day. . .the sooner he could get home; the better!

Rather than take the main roads and highways, he cut through old dirt roads and remote country two-lane streets which gave him a direct route. He'd only ever taken this route one time before, but it was during the day.

Now, it was middle of the night. There was no moon out. The sky was overcast so there was no light from the stars or above at all. To make matters spookier, a thick fog was in place on these side streets as they were in forested lowlands. The man slowed his speed to remain safe. It would be twenty minutes from the time he took the off ramp to the time he re-entered the freeway closer to his home.

As he drove these darkened roads, his windows started to frost up. He said there was a low hum coming from the outside of his car. The forest trees looked like twisted figures. Their arms outstretched as if trying to grab him up and off the road he traveled.

Hairs. . .on his arms and the back of his neck, started to raise. Just like with clouds, his mind started to make out shapes and forms in the fog ahead, as his headlights would crest each small hill or rise.

Nervous, he switched on his radio, only to find static. Station after station, there was nothing, but white noise. He turned the knob, up and down the radio line. Switched from FM to AM stations, turning fast at first, then slowly, methodically. He needed something, anything as a connection to the outside world.

Now, in addition to the static, a very quiet metallic scratching noise began to be audible over the radio. Every station he passed, that same noise, slowly growing in volume. Getting louder and louder.

He locked his doors, looked at his cell phone to find he had no signal at all. His eyes went from the road in front of him to the radio dial. The noise getting louder and louder! He struggled to find anything, any signal. He looked up to see an animal. . a deer maybe. . .whip in front of his car headlights and off into the darkness. He jerked the wheel to the side, narrowly missing the animal. He thought to himself, it ***HAD*** to be a deer, but it looked. . .off. Not quite right. His heart pounding, adrenaline pumping, he struggled to get the car back to the center of the road.

He remembered that up ahead, for a few miles was an old dirt road. It was still on maps but hadn't been maintained in decades being so far off the main roads. Just as the car went from paved road to dirt, his engine started to sputter. The headlights started to flicker, and the radio began to drop in and out.

The last thing he wanted, was for his car to stall out. Here, in the middle of nowhere and with this. . .weird energy all around him. He continued searching for any radio signal he could find. The metallic signal growing louder and louder as he went back to the AM stations.

His headlights went dark for a few moments. He pulled the knob out and back in to try to get them to turn back on. Slowing the car as he had problems adjusting to the total darkness. On the 4th pull they came back on. He was just about to miss a turn on the dirt road that would have had him hit a large tree. He swerved the steering wheel just in time.

FINALLY! He heard a voice on the AM range. A small, distant signal. It was Spanish he thought. Might even be Portuguese. He didn't speak the language, but a voice, any voice no matter the language was reassuring. Just as the signal got stronger, the vehicle stopped sputtering. The metallic screech stopped altogether. The lights no longer flickered, and soon. . .he found himself at the end of the shortcut. With a lot of relief, he got back onto the main highway and was only five minutes from his home.

Arriving back home, he couldn't fall asleep. He was too worked up. He got up and searched his bookcase, for a book he recalled buying years ago about the lore of the town he lived in and nearby areas. As he sat to try to take his mind off the events of that evening; he found an account. About the same road and area he had just been on.

For decades. . . vehicles would be found abandoned on the road or off the side. Their engines dead and no sign of the drivers. Doors would all be open, purses, jackets, valuables all still in place. Always discovered by locals early in the morning. Sometimes after a day or two.

Some said when the weather conditions were just right. . .when it was late and a moonless sky. . .worlds would intertwine. Portals from our reality to others would open and close. Any car passing through would need a tether. A signal, anything that would bind them to their own reality before the portals would close. If they could get that connection, that signal. . .they'd pass through safe. If not. . .anything living in that car would be taken. Leaving only the car itself to make it through.

The road was closed off a few years later. A new bypass was established which avoided that area. Still. . .every so often . . .on stretches of that new bypass, that come closest to the old

dirt road shortcut. . .people swear, they can hear a metallic scratching sound over their radios.

Several moment silence.

APPLAUSE FROM THE LOCAL AS THE STORY FINISHES.

ZEKE

Damn that gave me goosebumps!

THOMAS

Me too! Wow, that beats my hook on the handle story!

KENDRA

[Surprised]

That was a story they put in children's books?

NIC

That wasn't even amongst the scariest ones I remember! Just one that stood out in my mind because it was so unique.

BASS

Well I liked it! Not ghosts, not vampires or werewolves, just something unknown and not recognizable. Very nicely done. Ok, so now how do we decide who goes next?

THOMAS

Oh. Nic gets to choose since their story was last!

NIC

Alrighty. . .um. . .Zeke. You're next!

COUPLE MOMENTS OF SILENCE AS ZEKE CONSIDERS.

ZEKE

Okay. . . .hrm. Alright. Spooky story? Ummmm. . .right!
I gots ya! This here one takes place back in my home state of
Mississippi.

THOMAS

I thought you were from Tennessee.

ZEKE

Shush! Whose telling this story Tommy?

THOMAS

Sorry! Sorry Zeke!

ZEKE

Any-damn-way. . .so it's 1922. Summer down south
which if'n you ain't ever experienced Mississippi in the summer
months. It's HOT! And keep in mind this is before air
conditioning. Was on the Mississippi delta in Clarksdale. Where
my family is from. And to think about it. . . It was one hundred
years ago. Almost . . .exactly!

My great, great uncle Josiah Watkins was working his fields. He
was a sharecropper. Grew wheat. Raised hogs. It was him, my
great great aunt Viola and their six kids. Now, life back in the
1920 deep south U.S. is everything you've seen in movies and
on TV, just smellier! And on a farm with Hog in the summer
heat, we talking some real STANK! You from farm people
Lawman, can I get an amen?

BASS

Amen!

ZEKE

See, he knows! Anyway, so it's early August 1922. The height of the summer heat. It's later in the day and the family is just sitting down to supper. They talking about what they did that day, or whatever little house on the prairie shit happened. Eating food, they grew on the farm or in the garden when there's a knock on the front door.

Now, this is farm country. Ain't no other house for five miles and in only one direction, so people back then didn't just 'pop-in'. Anyway, Uncle goes to the front door and there is this hobo.

TOMMY

Wait, wait. . .what's a hobo?

ZEKE

[Inpatient]

Hobo! A Tramp! a Gentleman of the Road? Drifter? A Bum!
Damn Tommy. . .now a days they'd be called homeless.

TOMMY

Oh! Okay. . .just never heard that term before.

ZEKE

Anywho, so here is this hobo. Says his name is Orius. Orius Elegba and he's been traveling for a long, long time. Says he saw the farmhouse, smelled the down-home cooking, and hopes he can get a meal in exchange for doing some work on the farm. Uncle Josiah says yeah, sure. Viola always cooks more than they can eat, anyway. Makes him a deal. Tells him if he heads over to yonder barn. Mucks it. Sweeps it. Slops the hoggs, he'll give him 2 big old turkey legs. Potatoes, Corn and even promises to toss in a piece of blueberry cobbler and says he can sleep in the barn for the night if'n he can deal with the funky-ass STANK!

The two shake hands on it and the hobo gets to work. My boy does a great job. No slacking! No shortcuts! He's gets that barn so clean that to this day; they be pictures of it hanging up inside Better homes and barns magazine all over the south!

So anyway. . .He heads on back to the farmhouse, ready to get his grub on and some of that cobbler when Unc meets him on the poarch with a shotgun. Tells him to get on and be on his way. Ain't nothing here for him. Now, Unc shook hands on the deal. He committed himself. Gave his word!

Butttttt, Ol Josiah was also known to be little lying bitch-ass hustler. My great uncles on that side, all the same thing. Like my Gramma B used to say. [OLD GRANDMA IMPRESSION] "ZEKE! You best not go trusting no Watkins. Don't give them no money, and don't pass them the plate at church. They make change! "

COUPLE OF CHUCKLES

ZEKE

My man Orius ain't about to go arguing with no scatter gun with a buckshot fillin' So he turns around and heads for the gate. Unc has him covered the whole time, says he best not try coming back late at night either, cause he gonna shoot first, no warning.

Orius takes out a small gold pocket knife, and carves something on his fence. Saying Unc won't never see him again, oh that he promises. But that he will get his payment due, soon. So anyway. Josiah stays up that night. Doesn't see any sign of the hobo. Thinks he scared him off good. Days go by without no

sign of him. Then a week. Josiah and his kids go back to working the farm, just as they always did.

They start to notice things around them. Nothing big or obvious at first. Just little things. Water from their well started to taste a bit off. Wheat, they harvest, looked like it got burnt, but only on the grains, making it almost useless. The cows they kept for milk all starting producing sour.

Then, a few weeks later. Things started to get . . .interesting! In the girls room, they say they hear knocking on the walls, all through the night. The boys would get woked up by the hogs screeching. They go out and find one slaughtered. Big. . .HUGE dog prints in the dirt around their pen.

Friends, family, even the local reverend when he come by. . .well they'd say the house was touched by old scratch himself. Everything was going wrong. They had them a hoodoo curse on the house. A hoodoo curse on the family. On Uncle Josiah! Aunt Viola. . .see got real sick. Took to her bed and complained that every time she'd cough, she's cough up stones from her belly. My Great Uncle Nester. . .got kicked in the head by the family horse when he weren't looking. Died on the spot.

Crops started to wither. Some same family and church friends, wouldn't dare come near the house. They'd fear that hoodoo spell would rub off on them. Time was coming up where Josiah, well he'd have to give the landowner his cut of crops since he was only a sharecropper. He knew, he wouldn't have enough to pay off the owner and keep feeding his family.

Now, Uncle Josiah. Well. . .according to Gramma B; Josiah weren't no man of God. He turned his back on the almighty years ago. Aunt Viola and the kids. . .different story. They knew! They believed. Would beg their daddy to come with

him. Uncle Josiah? Nuh-uh. . .he have no part of it! Weren't going to no church!

He goes up the drive. Starts looking at what's left of his fields and trying to figure out how to make everything work out. Well in no uncertain terms, he knew he was in the SHIT! He turn to go back through the gate and into the house when he remembers what Ol. Orius did as he left. He looked down to the gate post and saw a mess of carvings. Symbols. Unc took out his own pocketknife, tried to scratch them out, only to have the blade snap in half.

He went into the house to get some paint, tried to paint over it, but the paint wouldn't stick. Just dripped down the post to the grass below. Josiah, now panicking got a huge ax. Said he'd rather make kindling and rebuild his fence then let some drifter hobo hoodoo man drive him out. Unc lifted that axe up and come down on the post with the carvings. Hard as he could. Axe blade exploded like a cannon! Pieces of metal went all over the place, including Josiah's forehead.

He fell to the ground. Dead as a doornail. Axe handle still gripped in his hand. Well . . .they go to bury Josiah the next day. Somehow managed to talk the Reverend, the choir and a couple deacons to show up so as to make sure Unc get a good Baptist send off. They dig a hole back of the house, back field where they have a big ol' elm. Reverend reads from the good book. Choir all sing they songs. People say words over him and then they part.

Story goes, that night as Viola is just washing up after supper, there comes this knock at the door again. She don't think nothing of it. Probably family showed up late or well-wishers with food for the family. Viola goes to open the door. . .ain't nobody there. On the front Poarch swing, she sees a note, gold pocketknife holding it down. She looks at the knife

and see's her husband's name etched in the handle. She goes to pick up and read the note. It says. . ."debt paid in full!"

Next day . . .people in town say they saw a man. Looked EXACTLY like Orius! Talking with this 'ol boy Bobby just outside Clarksdale. Bobby, see he was this Two-bit string plucker. Used to play guitar with Charlie Parker and Bill Brown in the local bars. Son House too.

BASS

Hold up hold up hold up! You trying to tell me. Orius, same guy who cursed your great Uncle Josiah is the same cat who made a deal with Robert Johnson? Guitar player? In Mississippi? At the Crossroads?

KENDRA

I thought the Devil's Crossroads was in Georgia?

BASS

Probably the song you're thinking of. Devil went down to Georgia.

FRANKLIN

The devil wouldn't be caught DEAD in Georgia! He detests pecan nuts more than anything on the planet. Things don't have a place in a pie, let alone any food. As for the Crossroads, that wasn't the Morningstar either. That was Jemarax, and it wasn't the demon that tricked Robert Johnson! Jemarax got wasted on local moonshine and Lucifer's lettuce. He stumbled into this local bar, some local kid asked him to watch his guitar while he went outside to urinate. Jemmie tuned it and by doing so, next human to pick it up had perfect pitch and

talent. H.R. was ***PISSED*** after that one! Oh we all had to go through training refresher courses. Compliance and Legal mandated no booze or drugs would be allowed to be expensed to corporate for close to forty years after that! Jemarax is an ass-hat, shouldn't be celebrated!

ZEKE

HEY! Don't go ruining my family story here Debbie-Demon-Downer! You just hush up and be happy I'm letting you have company! Shit! Okay. . .I choose. Um. . .Doctor Jennings, you new here. You up for sharing?

KENDRA

[Nervous] Oh! I um. . .[cough]. . .oh wow. I'm not sure I have anything. . .not sure that it would compete with. . .the others.

THOMAS

Oh, this isn't a competition, Doctor! Gosh, nobody is trying to outdo anybody else. This is just . . .well having full telling a good story! We just make them scary since it's the mid-point of the winter season.

KENDRA

[Thinking] well. . .it's not ***my*** story, but I have one about something that happened to my Brother and he told me about!

NIC

Only speaking for me, but I'd love to hear it!

KENDRA

Alright. And. . .I'm not really a good. . .not a storyteller or anything.

ZEKE

That's okay, if you had some of that BBQ Lawman here cooked today for the ball, he ain't much a cook!

EVERYBODY CHUCKLES!

KENDRA

Well. . .so this was, back in the early two thousands. Back. . .well he passed on a couple years after this. [clear throat] Sorry. . .anyway, so he was with the U.S. Marines.

They had established an airbase at the end of . . .um two thousand one. Southwest of the city of Kandahar. They named it Camp Rhino, their first . . . [clear throat] Forward Operating Base in Afghanistan. The Marines and coalition forces later moved north to the local Airport, where they set up a new forward operating base. But. . .I'm jumping too far ahead!

Anyway. . .um. . .so as Devon told it. . .They had been in country for a few months now and word had got out that UN forces established a base in the area. Local militia decided they were going to take some potshots at the base and then would flee. . .start heading back to their homes. This one time, the Marines decided to pursue them.

Once they found out the local village they were operating from, they headed back to report and wait for new orders. Well; it didn't take long. . .their bosses radioed in. . .they got ordered to head into that small village and conduct a routine clearing mission. They were to search for and clear out any arms or materials that could be used for conflict. It . . .the name of their village . . . I think it was called . . .uh. . .it was called Towrzi.

So it's late at night. They come in on foot from the desert, leaving their vehicles a mile out so. . .they didn't want. . . .don't want anybody to know they were approaching.

My brother was in the lead and they had found the main . . . house . . . or . . . building where the militia were hold up. They start to get ready . . . to . . . kick in the door and search for guns. The house is surrounded and they all move in.

Apparently they knew the Marines were coming . . . there was an escape . . . an exit tunnel that was dug and ran to another structure. The Marines broke off into three separate groups to go house by house to . . . hunt . . . to search for them.

Devin said he and the three guys with him went to one building and were getting ready to enter. He got this . . . butterfly . . . odd feeling . . . something just wasn't right.

He pushed that feeling down, gave the signal that he would kick in the door when his helmet radio went off. "Danger" he heard over the radio. "Hostiles! . . ." "Trap!"

He pulls his team back and they . . . it gets called in that hostiles have been found. They use those . . . flashing light and bang things to incapacitate . . .

BASS

Flash-Bangs

KENDRA

Those! They get everybody outside, disarmed. Find the weapons cache and nobody got injured. US or Afghani. During the . . . the mission debriefing, Devon was asked how he knew the main door was rigged with bombs. With explosives that would have taken . . . killed him and his team? He said it was the radio transmission.

Everybody looked around at each other. Said they hadn't heard anything over their radios. They went back to the recordings of the mission logs. Nothing. He said you could hear he and his team stacking at the door . He gave the . . .

signal to prepare to breach and a few seconds later, you hear call out to fall back.

It was a few days later, Devon got the official word through H.Q. Command that our dad had passed away. He suffered a heart attack at our home in Minnesota. One hour before that mystery radio signal came in. After he thought back about it. .he swore,. .to the end that it was our dad, warning him.

SILENCE FOR A BIT

ZEKE

[Sincere]

Man! That's some heavy stuff right there! I for one believe that it was your pops! I believe our loved ones check in on us. Watch out for us from Heaven.

FRANKLIN

[Makes a retching sound]

ZEKE

You about five seconds away from a holy water enema in there goat head!

KENDRA

[Somber]

I'd like to think so Zeke. [Deep Breath] Okay sweetie, your turn!

FRANKLIN

[DEMON VOICE]

Wait what? You were. . .ARE THE ONE HE LUSTS FOR! [sniff sniff] WHOA! It's on you too!

KENDRA

[Embarrassed]

FRANKLIN!

FRANKLIN

[DEMON VOICE]

You throw a ball, dog's going to fetch it. Give him a bone, Dog's going chew it! So, speaking of bones. . .

BASS

[Shuts him down]

Kinda personal Counselor!

FRANKLIN

[DEMON VOICE]

You already have handcuffs. I can amazon order you some ball-gags and whips on that iPad!

BASS

[Ends it]

OKAY, My turn for a story!

FRANKLIN

[DEMON VOICE]

French maid outfit. Naughty Librarian maybe.

ZEKE

[Resigned]

Alright, let me go get the holy water and a hose! Going to get all Winter's eve mist in that tube!

FRANKLIN

[DEMON VOICE SWITCHING BACK TO HUMAN]

Alright alright alright! I'll behave. Besides, with all the infidelity up there with your ice wives and ice husbands. . . what you two have going on is too [bluck] pure! Lollipop cavity causing pure.

BASS

AS I WAS SAYING. . . . So this is a story I heard back in my early days as a deputy Marshal. Took place in Northern California, I'm not sure exactly when. The Marshal's office out of Sacramento got word of a fugitive we'd been looking for was hiding out with an old friend in the town of Fort Jones.

He was spotted by a Firewatch ranger who crossed paths with him near his lookout tower in the Kalamath National Forrest. The two were camping over the summer up in the mountains. Once the ranger got back to his station and looked through mugshots they get for BOLO's; he recognized the man and radioed into the Ranger's office and had the Marshal's called.

So, a few days later, two state officers, a ranger and the US Marshal get to the Firewatch tower. They pour over maps of the region, find what would be some of the most likely campsites, as well as get updated on all the grow activities in the region.

KENDRA

[Confused]

Grow?

BASS

Production of Marijuana. Cannabis. It was probably the 70s or 80's. Everybody back then was supposed to 'Just say no!' Anyway, so morning the next day they say their goodbyes to the Firewatch Ranger and tell him they'll radio in if there is any problem. They agree on the trails to take and the order they'll visit each of the camping spots. They anticipate being out there for a week and will either come back with their fugitive, or empty handed and start searching elsewhere. Then they head off.

The ranger said for two or three days the search party would check in several times a day. Just to update their status. See if

there had been any additional sightings. Get weather updates or any word on approaching bad weather.

They had radioed in that they had checked in on the first three sites by day two. No signs of their man or . . . anybody for that matter. Really really quiet. After day three the daily check in slowed to once a day. Then after day five. . . nothing. No more check in, no more updates, no more request on weather forecasts. Nothing!

The first week went by and the group failed to return on their scheduled date. The ranger waited another forty-eight hours, and then called them in as missing.

A massive search and rescue operation commenced. The Marshals service, forestry service, state and local police. . . even the national guard were called in to search for any sign of the officers.

Keep in mind this was before the advent of cell phones, G.P.S positioning, satellite phones or global reconnaissance and mapping satellites. Other than by horse, ATV or foot, the best you could hope for would be helicopter searches.

So two weeks go by and a radio signal goes out from one squad that they had located. . . remains. So everybody converges on their location and what they found . . . WHEW!

Without getting too graphic. . . the national guard squad had found a campsite. Makeshift walls had been put up of felled trees and logs. It looked like the fugitive and his buddy had built and reinforced a camping site. Built a little makeshift fort in the Forrest. Inside of this little fort they found the bodies of the two woodsmen, and the law enforcement officers. They'd all been pummeled and torn limb from limb. Their camps ripped to shreds.

All of their firearms had been fired, including the fugitive they had been hunting as well as the officers. All their rounds expended. Empty shells littered the grounds all around. Using metal detectors they found rounds that had been fired into trees and logs in all directions.

[Pause for effect] The odd thing, one of the things they could never understand, is that none of the bodies had any bullet wounds. Whatever they were firing at, it wasn't one another. It was out there, in the forest.

Other than their own and those of the campers, no prints could be found. No animals, no people, nothing. A search several miles in all directions didn't find anything unusual or abnormal. No signs that anybody. . .or anything else had been in the region. Yet, for all the damage and carnage the national guard had discovered. . .something had definitely been there.

For the next several years, camping was restricted in that region of the national forest. The Firewatch rangers would sometimes report. . .noises, coming from the distance, late into the night. An animal, sometimes several animal sounding yelps and callings. Always far off.

Officially, after all the investigations had been completed. After all the autopsy and medical examiner reports were filed; it was found that all eight individuals had been mauled and killed by a brown bear infected with rabies. Despite there being no tracks, signs or spore found nearby.

LITE APPLAUSE

NIC

[Questioning]

So. . .what was it supposed to be that got them? Bigfoot? Aliens?

BASS
[Spookily]
Nobody. . . knows!

FRANKLIN
[Disgusted]
Why do all your stories have to have ghouls or ghosts or. . . us to be considered scary? Seriously, for somebody like me, whose seen all the things I've seen. If you really want to hear about scary and frightening. . . I have one for you all!

ZEKE
Oh here we go! Gonna be how God is wrong and Evil is good.

BASS
Zeke, come on. This is supposed to be the night for spooky and scary tales. Let Franklin share his!

ZEKE
Alight, I'm just telling you now. . . be prepared for a bullshit anti-lesson how ain't go righteous in the world. Try's to depress us all.

NIC
Zeke, play along!

ZEKE
[Huffs] Fine! Let's go sin-sniffer. Whatchu got?

FRANKLIN
This takes place in 1984. San Francisco. For those who weren't around for my older stories. . . I possessed a guy ten years before this story takes place. A kid who was in university to become a lawyer. I stuck with him, controlled when I wanted to and became one megastar attorney up and down the West Coast. Licensed to Practice in California, Oregon,

Nevada, Washington State. There is no shortage of legal needs when you live through the 80's!

We get a call one morning. Around five AM from one of the Sr. Partners. He wants me to head down to the mission district and to the city Courthouse where one of our clients who has us on retained. Some corporate banking firm C.F.O. has been arrested. They want me to get down there, make sure his rights aren't violated and be there for his bail hearing.

So I kick the Rodeo clown and hooker out of bed, shower and speed down to the sheriff's office in the court complex. Sure enough, Mr. Big-shot banker is cooling his jets on a cot. Eight Thousand dollar suit looked all wrinkled and like he's sweated through it. I get him to an interview room. Get him fresh clothes and half-decent food to eat. Get him calmed down so I can get him to tell me what happened.

So the night before, he's at a special event held at the penthouse of a Hollywood Film Star. The name isn't important, but believe me, you've heard of them. Afterwards my client, and several of his less than reputable friends go to a club, well lets just say you wouldn't find it listed in any phonebook and the preferred menu item at this club, is underaged.

KENDRA

Ewwwwww!

FRANKLIN

I'm talking. . . young. I get his story out of him. How he was there to indulge. How he was fully aware what he was doing and had been doing for years. He's there for around an hour before. . . entertainment comes out. At this same time, the police burst in to serve a warrant. Turns out one of my clients associates flipped and started naming names. My client being one of the bigger names on their lists.

At the same time they raid the underground club, the raid his office, his apartment and a little house in the country he thought he had managed to keep under the radar. They find polaroid's, videos, magazines and enough evidence where they're able to build a substantial case. We go in front of the magistrate that morning for bail proceedings. I get the guy bail, given no previous record and what was obviously a smear job and illegal search based upon highly questionable methods.

Bail is granted. Our client gets to go to one of his residences on the Alameda shore. Millions upon millions are spent in the defense of the client, researching. Payments are made to the proper people in power. Monies are paid to families of poor means to quiet them and get them to go away. Reporters and news veterans find their editors and boards want them to move onto other stories; many out of fear that THEY will be named in something similar. He gets a more than lucrative package to retire from the firm he worked for, to include stock options, bonds, and enough commodities to run any number of 3rd world countries for decades. It short, he and his cronies pay to ensure he receives justice. Out of the multitude of charges that would have had him disappear from society forever, he walked.

He of course is thankful to the firm. Thankful to the partners, and to me. . .his defense lawyer who helped him go free.

ZEKE

[Angry, outraged]

And you proud of that?

FRANKLIN

What?

ZEKE

Got scum of the earth, got a kid toucher free and safe from justice! Didn't have to serve one day cause he rich. That's evil right there!

FRANKLIN

Demons are evil personified; but even *we* have rules. One of the highest is that the innocent cannot be touched. We can't compel them, we can influence them, tempt them. . .as long as they are children and retain their innocence, we stay clear. Every demon, every imp, every denizen of the pit knows and obeys that rule. Consequences of ignoring it are. . .beyond serious. This person, this human. . .had no such compunctions or regard for innocence.

So he decides to take a trip to Cambodia after his case was dismissed. A trip to meet with colleagues of his that were of similar appetites. Meet them in a local club that catered to him. Meet with local producers, if you will. Suppliers of these appetites. He went so far as to notify our firm that he'd be out of country and in the event, something might happen, pre-paid for a round trip and hotel for me . . .just in case.

Didn't require a plane to travel. [SWITCH TO DEMIN VOICE] I found out where his club was. Went there in the middle of the night and got anybody who was without a touch of sin removed.

With as fast as we move when not tethered to a human body, it was easy. Found a new temporary host who had just OD'd, took control of their body and chained down all the doors. All the exits. Then. . .there was finally justice to be delivered.

Nothing was out of bounds that evening. I had hours to adjudicate. Hours to administer the punishments I cast upon these. . .people, It was more than deserved, it was earned! That evening, even the angels. . . wept in happiness over righteousness delivered for sins they themselves did not want

absolved. For the innocence that was soured by their master's most beloved creation. Humans. Sins that I would not allow to go unanswered for even one more day.

The papers said it was a club fire. Blamed bad wiring, poor adherence to safety codes and overcrowding. There was a fire alright! Flames will cleanse everything without prejudice. The Truth, evil, crime, crops, history. . .all equal. The local authorities set the fire it to cover up what I had done. What horrors they saw from the pedophiles and sinners. Still living, with the wounds and torture they endured, hours after I had left them. They begged, pleaded to be killed when the officers arrived.

All your spooky, scary stories, each one of them require a monster, a supernatural villain or paranormal source to account for the atrocities done. Look within your own hearts, humans. They evils you are capable of visiting upon one another pale in severity, in cruelty and depravity to what we do.

Monster? Humans defined that particular word. [HUMAN VOICE] No. . .better put. . .they define it.