

Ninety Degrees South

EPISODE TWO Not Weirdest Thing Here!

Brian M Bradley

ELECTRONIC BEEP, FEMALE ROBOTIC VOICE – RECORDING STARTED

SLIGHT HUM OF THE BASES HEATERS AND VENTILATION IS AUDIBLE IN THE BACKGROUND. SOUND PLAYS IN THE BACKGROUND THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE SCENE

BASS

Interview. October 4th, 2021; 0912 Hrs, local time. US Deputy Marshal Bass Marlow conducting questioning. In my office B-223. Present this morning is Doctor Lawrence Waynewright, station area manager and head of Amundsen-Scott.

BASS

(Dryly)

Please state your name for the record.

LARRY

(snottily)

Didn't YOU just do that **DEPUTY** Marshal Marlow?

BASS

It's for the official record.

LARRY

(Frustrated capitulating)

Very well...Doctor Lawrence Emerson Waynewright, Ph.D.

BASS

Area Manager, South Pole Station?

LARRY

Yes

BASS

(focused)

Doctor Waynewright, can you confirm that although you are not detained nor in custody, that I have properly advised you of your constitutional right to not speak with me or your right to have an attorney present at any time, you fully understand those rights and you have elected to freely provide this interview with no coercion from myself nor anybody else.

LARRY

(ponders smugly)

I have nothing to hide! I'm willing to talk to you and for your *official record*...there isn't a person alive who influences Lawrence Emerson Waynewright; P.h.D to do anything he doesn't want to do!

BASS

(Sarcastic)

Well take that as a yes.

PAPER SHUFFLE

BASS

Are you familiar with a person named Sandra Derecha?

LARRY

Thomas told me about your little midnight chat. Yes. I know Ms. Derecha.

BASS

How did Sandra Derecha come to arrive at Amundsen-Scott?

LARRY

(curtly)

We're ...still working that out.

BASS

Your Operations Manager seems to believe she is from an Alternate Reality.

LARRY

And?

BASS

(Confused)

'And?', And you don't find that the least bit absurd?

LARRY

Now? No. No I do not.

BASS

(Pause, frustrated)

Are you all doing some ...'Haze the new guy' science thing here? Let's mess with the law and have some fun because I assure you, doctor, I have zero time for...

LARRY

(continued Smugly)

Calm yourself, **DEPUTY** Marshal. Nobody is playing any jokes upon you and you'll find I do not abide jocularly during work hours...or in general, to be quite honest. She is ...a visitor to this reality.

BASS

(Confused)

...Seriously, *has* the water been tested around here?

LARRY

DEPUTY Marshal, I have doctorates in Astronomy, Astrophysics, and graduate degrees in various sciences. We don't make definitive statements until the theory has been tested, verified, results analyzed, and conclusions are drawn. Those conclusions are reviewed by scientific peers and validated. (*chuckle*) Perhaps you have heard of . . .'The Scientific Method'?

BASS

(humoring)

Very good Doctor, perhaps you can help me to understand... what tests you ran. . . what results you found to lead you to this conclusion!

LARRY

I can certainly explain them to you. Understanding,... well... that is a different matter.

SOUND OF CHAIR CREAKING BACK

BASS

Whenever you're ready Doctor.

LARRY

Neutrinos are fermions that interact only by weak nuclear force and gravity. Neutrinos are...as the name implies... electrically neutral and have a rest mass which is infinitesimal on the cosmological scale. The weak force with its short-range, coupled with a weak gravitational interaction, neutrinos typically pass through solid matter. You...me...

KNOCKING ON TABLE

LARRY

This table, the planet itself, Neutrinos pass through all of it.

BASS

Go on.

LARRY

The majority of neutrinos detected by laboratories on earth, including those we have here in Amundsen-Scott; which ...by the way are *the* most sophisticated array ever imagined..., all originate from reactions within our sun. They travel in straight lines and pass directly through whatever gets in their way. The flux is ...roughly...6.5 times 10 to the 10th power every second, every square centimeter of a physical object. Except for Sandra.

BASS

Why is it different with her?

LARRY

Every neutrino detector works in tandem with others as the number of sensors required in the network of detectors must be very large to detect any significant number of neutrinos. Sandra can make a single DOM light up, and while it took a while to confirm, not only does she block electron & Muon neutrinos; but she emits...Tau Neutrinos, or so we thought at first!

BASS

... and a 'DOM' is...?

LARRY

(amused)

A Data Optical Module. **THEY** are what detect and report upon that sampling. Ms. Derecha is emitting Tau anti-neutrinos with a right spin and even more perplexing ...not with the opposite chirality!

BASS

...(clears throat)...

LARRY

(sigh, patronizing)

It's like holding a sign up to a mirror, and the WORDS are perfectly legible and not reversed as they should be...Look...

BASS

Doctor?

LARRY

I can sit here all day, and throw various terms and theories in your direction, but much like our friend the Neutrino, it will go right through you.

BASS

Tell ya what Doc. . .why don't we just focus on the crime at hand. I'm more of a 'mystery' book fan than I am Science Fiction! Why don't you tell me about your relationship with Doctor Rodney?

BEGIN FADE OUT

LARRY

Doctor Rodney was one of the scientists assigned to work under me back in 2018. He was assigned to the...

ELECTRONIC BEEP

SLIGHT HUM OF THE BASES HEATERS AND VENTILATION IS AUDIBLE IN THE BACKGROUND. SOUND PLAYS IN THE BACKGROUND THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE SCENE

BASS

(VO, formal tone)

...This is day 2, US Deputy Marshal Bass Marlow reporting. October 4th, 2021 *(Beat)* 1420 hours. Commenced interviews of base personnel who overwintered at the time of the homicide. First Interview with Station Manager Waynewright. Interview recorded on bodycam and will accompany this verbal record in transmission to Honolulu field office. *(chuckle slightly)*
Pompous ass!

SPEAKER ANNOUNCEMENT, SUBDUED OVERHEAD

CHERYL-LYNN

(Over PA Speaker, Southern accent)

Doctor McKendrick, pls call 4843, Dr. McKendrick 4843. Thank youuuuu

BASS

(VO, formal tone)

Waynewright was accounted for during the time of death, having attended a wine tasting course from 2000 to 2230; thereafter seen in his office and the operations center until 0:15 Hours. Unless his alibi falls apart, he is dropped to the bottom of the suspect pool.

FLIP PAPER

BASS

(VO, formal tone)

Interview of operations manager Thomas Kelley equally unenlightening. Unlike his boss, his alibi is a bit more undefined. Suspect said he was sleeping in his Berth A4-211. Nobody can validate. Even the wise-ass across the hall wasn't sure he remembered him being there.

TWO SECOND PAUSE

BASS

(VO; informal tone)

Hey Diane, do me a favor and see if there was anything from last season about a press release involving ...don't laugh... involving alternate realities or parallel universes? The locals around here have a very ... interesting set of beliefs I don't know if it's the recycled 0-2 or the isolation...just see what you can dig up.

BASS

(VO, formal tone)

Interview of suspect three; Ms. Sandra Derecha proved more interesting than the previous two. I apologize in advance for the video & audio abnormalities during this interview. I'm still not accustomed to the bodycam and I may have adjusted a setting that impacted quality. Summary of video as follows.

ELECTRONIC BOOP

ELECTRONIC BEEP, FEMALE ROBOTIC VOICE – RECORDING STARTED

SLIGHT HUM OF THE BASES HEATERS AND VENTILATION AUDIBLE IN THE BACKGROUND. SOUND PLAYS IN BACKGROUND THROUGH ENTIRE SCENE

BASS

Interview. October 4th 2021; 1145 Hrs, local time. US Deputy Marshal Bass Marlow conducting questioning In my office B-223. Present this morning is Ms. Sandra Derecha, meal steward for Amundsen-Scott Research Facility.

BASS

Please state your name for the record.

SANDRA

I'm Sandra Derecha; I'm one of the galley workers.

BASS

Ma'am, can you confirm that I have properly advised you of your constitutional Miranda rights, you fully understand those rights and you have elected to freely provide this interview with no coercion from myself nor anybody else.

SANDRA

You did, and nobody asked me to say anything.

BASS

On the table in front of you is a folder with a document. Would you please read and confirm all this in writing? If you agree would you please sign with that pen?

SOUND OF FOLDER OPENING AND PEN SIGNING PAPER. PEN PLACED BACK ON TABLE

BASS

Thank you. Now, first off ma'am; can you help me understand ...*(confused)* how did you get here?

SANDRA

...You mean to this room or Amundsen-Scott?

BASS

(Flatly)

The station, ma'am.

SANDRA

It was about this time, two years ago. I had been hired by the NSF to work in operations, support meal prep, and serve here at the (word distorted electronically) base.

BASS

(curious)

Who was it at the National Science Foundation who hired you?

SANDRA

(apologetic)

I thought it was National *Scientific* Foundation. Is (words distorted electronically) that what it's called here?

BASS

(Matter of fact)

Fairly sure that is what they call it everywhere. So again ma'am, who hired you?

SANDRA

(ponders)

I remember! It was Jim... *(excitedly)* **COLBY**, Jim Colby. He responded to my resume and after a few interviews he sent me the offer letter from Bethesda.

BASS

(suspicious)

And you arrived here around two years ago

SANDRA

That sounds about right

BASS

On a plane from Christchurch?

SANDRA

LA to Honolulu to Christchurch to McMurdo, and then to here.

BASS

(pause for a few seconds)

May I get your date & place of birth please?

SANDRA

(All words distorted electronically)

October 10th, 1986. I was born at Bridgeport Hospital Capitol Hill, Northeast in DC State.
(end distortion)

BASS

(confused)

Washington DC?

SANDRA

(Laughs)

Haven't heard it called that since we got Statehood back in 2010.

BASS

(Sighs)

Ok...I'm assuming you knew Doctor Rodney.

SANDRA

Oh yes, for a station this small, especially during winter-overs you get to know everybody well.

BASS

How would you characterize your relationship?

SANDRA

We were friendly. I mean, I wouldn't go so far as to say (distort) '**friends**' (end distort) but the Beakers don't tend to socialize heavily with the DeWalts.

BASS

Mr. Kelly was trying to explain that last...*(confused)* help me out; which group are the beakers and which the DeWalts?

SANDRA

The scientist are the Beakers. They'll say it's because of the test tubes they use, but in reality they're called that after the muppet.

BASS

(Slight chuckle)

SANDRA

The station maintenance, cargo, galley staff or anybody charged with keeping the station up and running for day-to-day activities are the 'DeWalts; because of the power tools, or as Doctor Rodney never passed an opportunity to say "They're dumb as a power tool!"

BASS

Got it! Thanks. Did you know, or were you told of anybody who may have had an issue with Dr. Rodney; over comments like that one?

SANDRA

Well ...I don't like to talk ill of the dead, but around here, he tended to get in other people's business a bit more than he should.

BASS
(clarifying)

A gossip?

SANDRA

(hesitating)

...I suppose. Down here people just have their ways. (Distortion) **It's even worse** (end distortion) when you're in the glass hut throwing rocks. Makes you look hypocritical

BASS

(slowly) Glass...huts?

SANDRA

(embarrassed)

He had an...well we call it an 'Ice Wife' or 'Ice Husband'.

BASS

(resigned)

and by you, you of course mean...

SANDRA

(Matter of Factly)

Poleies! Wait, Deputy Marshal...do...do you know?

BASS

(Exasperated)

I know that people seem to think you come from a parallel universe.

SANDRA

(Correcting)

. . no no, (distorted) Alternate reality (End distortion).
Apparently, there is a difference!

BASS

(clear throat)

Ms. Derecha, my purpose here is to investigate and hopefully resolve the murder of Dr. Rodney. Anything else...I need to not let distract me, including the unique theories I've heard since arriving.

SANDRA

(Relieved)

Oh good, so you're aware. NSF and the government told us to not talk about it openly, hush-hush and all that.

BASS

Of course. Let's get back to Dr. Rodney. Can you recall where you were the night before the murder?

SANDRA

ummmmmmm. (*exhale of breath*) As I recall I was serving dinner up until 8PM. (Beat) There was a wine class that started around the same time... so a few of us stayed to help Lunch Lady Alice with the (Distorted) **Hors-d'ourves**. (End Distortion) We cleaned up afterward which started around 1030 or 1045 until 1130. Another 10 minutes to just make sure we were ready for breakfast the next morning and then I went to bed.

BASS

Back to my original question, did he have any enemies?

SANDRA

I can't say for sure, we didn't socialize too much, but I know that more than a few people weren't enamored with him.

BASS

Anybody, in particular, come to mind?

SANDRA

Well... (distortion) **It's well known** (end distortion) that Fred was smitten with Dr. McKindrick. That's Rodney's Ice Wife.

BASS

Yeah?

PAPER FLIP

BASS

You mentioned that a little while ago. What *is* an 'Ice Wife'

SANDRA

Dr. Rodney was having an affair with Dr. McKendrick. They're both married to other people back in civilization. When people get intimate down here for the season, it's called having an 'Ice Husband' or 'Ice Wife'. It happens...more than you might think. You know the saying... 'What happens in Las Cruces STAYS In Las Cruces'.

BASS

I can honestly say...I don't know that saying. (Beat) So Fred was jealous of Dr. Rodney and his relationship with Dr. McKendrick?

SANDRA

(proudly)

That's the rumor. (*Sudden worry*) but I'm not accusing Fred of anything!! Fred is a big 'ol sweetheart who just doesn't know when it's a lost cause. I don't think he has it in him to kill anybody.

BASS

I'm just gathering information, Ms. Derecha, It's only been 24 hours and I have many more interviews to go before I can say I have people of interest.

SANDRA

I understand

BASS

I think that's all I need for the moment, Ms. Derecha, If anything else comes up or I have follow-up questions, I'll come find you.

CHAIR SQUEAK ON TILE

SANDRA

I'm in the galley (distortion) **Saturday through Thursday** (end distortion), you'll see me around! Now that I know you're part of the 'Hush-Hush' club; you'll be getting more fresh fruit!

BASS

(Confused)

I'm not a hundred percent sure of what that means, but appreciate the sentiment intended.
...Afternoon Ma'am.

SHOES ON TILE AND THEN DOOR OPEN AND CLOSE

ELECTRONIC BEEP

PAPER ENVELOPE BEING OPENED

BASS

(VO, Informal)

Diane, sending you a piece of paper along with a large plastic pen sealed in an evidence folder. There is an LC-130 leaving the station in a few hours and flying back to McMurdo. I'm going to radio ahead and have the two Special Marshals there pull fingerprints and scan them over to you. In addition to the facial recognition, I asked for last night, run the prints. Also check for a Sandra Derecha, Born...

PAPER FLIP

BASS

(VO Informal)

... October 1986, Bridgeport Hospital in Washington DC. Trying to stay focused on this one, but the inmates are absolutely running the asylum down here.

ELECTRONIC BOOP

(FADE IN) SOUND OF PEOPLE MILLING IN THE HALLWAYS, BACKGROUND HUM AS ALWAYS.

CONVERSATIONS BEING HAD AS RECORDING GOES DOWN HALL

BACKGROUND SOUND TURN FROM CONVERSATION TO SILVERWARE ON PLATES. LESS CONVERSATION BUT STILL PRESENT, LITE GENERIC MUSIC IN THE BACKGROUND, OBVIOUSLY A CAFETERIA.

SOUND OF LIQUID FILLING A CUP, SPIQUET TURN AND THEN A CHAIR PULLING OUT. BREATH EXHALE AS SOMEBODY SITS IN A CHAIR.

BASS

(sips coffee)

mmm, not half bad.

CLICK OF A BALL-POINT PEN AND WRITING IN A NOTEBOOK FOR 4 OR 5 SECONDS

KENDRA

(Sheepish)

...Um, excuse me. May...I sit there?

WRITING NOISES CONTINUE

BASS

(oblivious, not paying attention)

Don't mind at all, please...

WRITING NOISES STOP, SOUND OF CHAIR PUSHING BACK

BASS

(Formal)

Yes Ma'am, please have a seat.

KENDRA

(Timid)

Thank you. You don't have to be so formal to...stand

CHAIR SLIDES BACK AND TRAY PLACED ON TABLE.

BASS

(Formal)

I apologize Ma'am, but it was how I was raised.

KENDRA

(shyly)

I see

CHAIR SLIDES IN FOLLOWED BY ANOTHER CHAIR

KENDRA

(Shyly)

I'm not used to...people. I'd normally just get food and eat in my room.

BASS

(Interested)

May I ask why?

KENDRA

I uh...*(softly)* woooo... this is hard.

SIP OF WATER

KENDRA

SAD.

BASS

(concerned)

Why are you upset?

KENDRA

(Confused, embarrassed)

No no. Social Anxiety Disorder. I've had it since I was 13.

BASS

Oh I'm sorry, I misheard you.

GALLEY WORKER(F)

(overhead PA, swallowing the mic)

Betttttty pleeeeeease, Pick up.

KENDRA

It's...*(deep breath, looking down at her shoes)* You have no idea how bad I want to run out of this room!. It's taking everything I have to just sit here.

BASS

(Trying to comfort)

For what it's worth, I think you're doing well.

SIP COFFEE

BASS

(concerned)

Would it help if I just left you alone to get settled and we sat quietly?

KENDRA

(raised voice)

NO!..*(embarrassed, softer voice)* No please. I need...I need to work on my social interaction. My doctors say it wouldn't get better...I won't get better until I start to take positive steps. I'd like to...small talk?

BASS

(Reassuring)

Absolutely. Most first meetings start with an introduction, so let me start. I'm Bass, Bass Marlow.

KENDRA

Kendra.

BASS

Kendra...

KENDRA

(Softly)

...Jennings

BASS

Well Ms. Kendra Jennings of the Amundsen-Scott South Pole station. I am **VERY** pleased to meet you.

KENDRA

(Softly)

Thank You.

BASS

(interested)

So what do you do here at the station?

KENDRA

(Softly)

I'm a beaker. My...I have doctorates in Quantum Physics and... and... and in Cosmology.

BASS

(Jokingly)

Whoa!!! I am **SO** cheating off your paper during the next test!

KENDRA

(quiet laugh, tries hard to stifle it with her hands)

BASS

(Earnest)

So she can laugh! She can smile.

KENDRA

(quietly)

Please...no.

BASS

(Apologetic, quietly)

Sorry! Sorry! I didn't mean...I guess it's been a while since I socialized too! So should I call you Doctor Jennings?

KENDRA

(quietly)

No. no. Just Kendra is fine. Please, just...Kendra

BASS

(Reassuring)

Kendra then. (Slowly) I'm very happy you chose this spot to sit down at today.

KENDRA

(Quiet, questioning)

Why?

BASS

I don't get to make many new friends. I'd like to hope I'm making a new friendship right now.

KENDRA

(quietly, reserved)

Thank you.

BASS

For what?

KENDRA

(reserved, but slightly relieved)

Because honestly, I didn't see...I didn't see this going well for me. I was convinced I'd just get my egg salad sandwich, chips and a drink and rush back to my room...I didn't do that. I tried to be brave...

CONVERSATION OF TWO PEOPLE WALKING BY AND THEN PASSING, KENDRA QUIET THE WHOLE TIME

KENDRA

(softer)

I tried to be brave and find somebody to talk to. Not a table full...just...somebody off by themselves.

BASS

(reassuring)

But you're here, still sitting and having; if you don't mind me saying, a **very** excellent conversation. (pause) How is the egg salad anyway?

KENDRA

(partial mouth full)

It's ...alright. I like it better when the bread is slightly toasted.

BASS

hrm, I may order that for dinner then, thanks for the recommendation.

AWKWARD PAUSE

KENDRA

(Quiet)

Are...are you part of the summer staff?

BASS

(ponders)

In a way, I suppose I am.

KENDRA

(confused, quiet)

Didn't you just come in this morning with the first PAX flight from McMurdo?

BASS

Oh, no no. I arrived yesterday afternoon. I'm with the US Marshals service and was sent to investigate...

KENDRA

(Shocked)

Dr. Rodney's death.

BASS

Yes, exactly!

TWO SECOND PAUSE

SOUND OF GAGING AND THEN QUICK VOMIT, CHAIRS PUSHED BACK.

KENDRA

(mortally embarrassed)

I'm so sorry...I'm (wipe mouth) I knew this was a bad idea...

BASS

(raised voice)

No wait, it's not even that...

SOUND OF FEET RUNNING OFF OVER TIME

BASS

(lower voice)

...that much on me.

SOUND OF NAPKINS BEING PULLED FROM DISPENSER AND WIPING ON CLOTHES.
SWEAKING WHEELS SLOWLY APPROACH AND GROW LOUDER.

MIKHAIL

(Russian Accent)

I am impressed *Tovarishch*. In two years she is on ice, I only see her say words to three people.
You come...first day! She tells you story of life!

BASS

(introspective, not paying attention to Janitor)

I should have said I was with the Marshal's service first off.

SOUND OF MOP IN WATER, THEN OUT AND SLAPPING FLOOR.

MIKHAIL

MEH...maybe no...maybe yes. Maybe... you say you *politsiya* when first meet. She runs away...runs back to room with silly little sandwich which smells of feet.

MOPPING SOUNDS

MIKHAIL

Story of life never is told, and she does not see she can be better than being by self all the time...this what I think...

MOPPING SOUND STOPS

MIKHAIL

...You and little church mouse doctor had first meeting the way universe mean for it to happen.

BASS

(Still rubbing shirt)

Very zen outlook for a custodian.

MIKHAIL

(chuckles)

NEYT! Am not (*mocking*) ‘custodian’. (*Proudly! Thump chest*) **I AM JANITOR!** I am best janitor on Ice. Don’t know what fancy (*mocking*) ‘custodian’ do; but janitor..I keep station clean... like whistles.

MOPPING SOUND STARTS AGAIN

MIKHAIL

You go to soda fountain machine, over there. Get club soda, lemon slice and mix. Rub lemon water over smelly egg feet puke and soak...1 hours. Then put in washing machine. You know where is?

BASS

(still rubbing, focused on shirt)

Yeah, it’s uh. The laundry room is next to the greenroom. . .(beat) Have to say it’s still weird to think of a humid greenroom in Antarctica.

MIKHAIL

(still mopping)

MEH! Is not weirdest thing here!

BASS

Then what is?

MIKHAIL

I think...demon what is locked up in fuel room... weirder!

OUTRO AND CREDITS

