

Ninety Degrees South

EPISODE FIVE: Would You Like to Swing on A Star?

Brian M Bradley

INTRO MUSIC

ELECTRONIC BEEP, FEMALE ROBOTIC VOICE – RECORDING STARTED

FOOTSTEPS DOWN A LIGHTLY CROWDED HALLWAY. SLOWLY YOU HEAR LAUGHING A SHORT DISTANCE AWAY, GROWING LOUDER, CAMPING SITCOM MUSIC PLAYING. MIC GETS TO DOOR WHICH SLOWLY OPENS, SOUNDS OF GILLIAN'S ISLAND PLAYING.

MIKHAIL:

(Laughing)

Ahhhhhhh, *Tovarishch!* Come, Come join me here!

BASS:

(Loudly)

Thank you!

MIKHAIL:
(In Russian, phonetic - shto)
Chto? Ah, I turn down!

VOLUME ON TV REDUCES

MIKHAIL:
(Curious)
Tell me, Marshal's Deputy. Do you know Jill-a-gan's Island?

BASS:
Of course! I remember seeing quite a few episodes when I was younger.

MIKHAIL:
(Happy)
Excellent, most of the younger smarty pants here at station have no seen. (hrmmm) This makes me sad!

BASS:
(Realistic)
Well, it is an old show.

MIKHAIL:
(Reminiscent)
I only wish, back in my home Vanavara, I could have watched with my Baba.

BASS:
(Question)
Brother?

MIKHAIL:
Grandmother.

BASS:

Ah!

MIKHAIL:

She would love, Story... under story. Is very Russian!

BASS:

(confused)

Story, under story?

MIKHAIL:

(Surprised he doesn't know)

Da! Like Peter and Wolf, like War and Peace, like Watership Downs; all stories with under stories! Meaning deeeeeep in plot, not what the words say. Just like Jill-a-gan!

BASS:

First time I've ever heard War and Peace compared to Gilligan's Island.

MIKHAIL:

(Resolved)

OK. . Mikhail will 'take you to the school house' *Tovarishch*.
What is plot of show?

BASS:

(Signing)

*"Just sit right back and you'll hear a tale, A tale of a fateful trip.
That started from this tropic port..."* It's all in the theme song!

MIKHAIL:

(Seeking understanding)

Neyt, neyt! Those are *words* to song. Not meaning. They tell you who people are. Tell you they all find themselves together on the same ship in life. The weather getting rough, ship is

being lost... Is a metaphor for their lives! They were in great storm of life, tossed around and suffering.

BASS:

(dubious) I don't know about this Mikhail?

MIKHAIL:

(confident)

They land on Island. Beautiful da? Tropical? Beach, warm breeze, cool water? They find *par*a*dise*!

BASS:

(counters)

They were stranded, marooned!

MIKHAIL:

(corrects)

They had whole Island to themselves. No competition, no people telling them when to work, when to clean, when to fight other nation. They could do what *they* want to do!

BASS:

(thinks he has him)

Then why are they trying to get off the island every episode!

MIKHIL:

(Checkmate)

AH-HA! THAT... is story under story, and also tragedy at same times! They have what all peoples want... paradise! They do not see this in their own minds; they want off paradise and back to miserable life they had before because they think '**USUAL**' is being unhappy. (Beat) Is actually very Russian!

BASS:

(questioning)

How could they ever be happy there?

MIKHAIL:

(Sigh)

Tovarishch, you are killing me softly! OK. The Professor was teacher, Da? Is what he loved. He teaches people every day on Island. Bourgeoisie married couple, never have to go to shareholder meeting, worry about stocks, they can retire, together in love. Actress is the only actress on the Island, can perform with no competition. Mary-Ann was farm girl. I am from farm people. We want to grow, to cook, to feed peoples. She makes coco-nut pies all the time. Jill-i-gan was a young navy's man, wanting to learn about life...he gets BEST education on this Island. Skipper was captain of the boat. Is now, Captain of **ENNNTTTIIRREEE** Island!

TV BACKGROUND ONLY, NO TALKING FOR TWO SECONDS

BASS:

I never thought of it that way.

MIKHAIL:

Is no just Jill-i-gan, it's all old U.S. TV sitcoms. All have story under story! Is best American gift to world!

BASS:

(Dubious)

All of them?

MIKHAIL:

(serious)

Da!

BASS:

(challenging)

Bewitched?

MIKHAIL:

Society tell you who to be. Do not listen. You be best you, you can be. Don't hide who you are, witch or otherwise!

BASS:

Happy Days?

MIKHAIL:

Problems are part of living. Learn how to solve yourself without help of leather-jacket Marlon Brando man.

BASS:

(Shocked)

Ummm, Brady Bunch!

MIKHAIL:

Family can be made, not just born into. Just as strong.

BASS:

(defeated)

I give up! You win!

MIKHAIL:

Learn from Mikhail's lesson *Tovarishch*! There is story on surface, then...there is also story...under story!

TWO BEATS

BASS:

What are you telling me here, Mikhail?

MIKHAIL:

(signing line from outro song)

Join me here each week, *Tovarishch*, you are sure to get the smiles!

BASS:

Have fun, Mikhail!

ELECTRONIC BOOP, FEMALE ROBOTIC VOICE – RECORDING STOPPED

FADE IN, INTERVIEW IN PROGRESS

TOPPER:

(VO; always deploys a weatherman / Radio DJ style voice)
...arrived the summer season before the cold front came through, causing the temperatures to plummet. Hot CoCo and cozy fireplace time, friends!

BASS:

(VO sigh)

Doctor Hunt?

WRITING ON PAPER

TOPPER:

(VO Anchorman Voice)

Call me Chief Meteorologist Topper!

BASS:

(VO Deadpan)

...Yeah, not gonna happen. Doctor...how well did you know Doctor Rodney?

TOPPER:

(VO)

We were colleagues here at the Amundsen-Scott Research Center, high-atop the 10,000 altitude range! We co-anchored

with one another several times a week, always an unpredictable system.

BASS:

(VO)

So...not friends?

TOPPER:

(VO)

Not at all. Co-hosts.

BASS:

(VO)

You didn't care for him?

TOPPER:

(VO)

As I can tell you, oh man, there were not many people in the South Pole Station viewing area who **DID** appreciate him! Was killing our ratings.

BASS:

(VO) (sizing him up)

Were there ever any disagreements between you and him?

TOPPER:

(VO)

As I first came into the station, there was a significant elevation in his barometric pressure, indicating his dislike for my style of science. As our research assistants and support staff arrived, it only got worse.

BASS:

(VO)

How so?

TOPPER:

(VO)

The A.R.O. weather team, are the South Poles best environmental, climate, and weather scientist in the viewing area. Comprised of many young and co-ed grad students, EAGER to further their education and learn about 'warm fronts' with Chief Meteorologist, Topper Hunt!

BASS:

(VO)

I...(to himself but aloud) I'm seriously having the water tested. (deep breath) So he was jealous about how many attractive young ladies were working with you?

TOPPER:

(VO)

Very accurate! But he should have been jealous of the attractive young dudes! Artic-16's all day long. Mmmmmm hmmm!

BASS:

(VO, hesitant)

What...and I'm hesitant even to ask...is an Artic-16?

TOPPER:

(VO)

If back in the states' main-studio, you're a 4; down here in the weather center, you'd be an 'Artic-8!' An 8-back home...is an 'Artic 16' down here!

BASS:

(VO, unsurprised)

... and that's why! (sigh) OK...let's wrap this up.

PAPER FLIPPING

BASS:

(VO, Questioning)

Can you tell me where you were the night of Doctor Rodney's murder?

TOPPER:

(VO)

After our work was thorough, we hurried back to my berth and played...

BASS:

(VO)

Sorry, Doctor, you said 'we'. Who is 'we' please?

TOPPER:

(VO)

Rick Mulligan, my grad student.

WRITING IN NOTEPAD

BASS

(VO)

Rick...Mull-a-gan; alright; now if you and Mr. Mulligan were intimate, please just say that, no weather euphemisms.

TOPPER

(VO, chuckle)

Well, not for lack of trying. I did want to expand the heat index and build a pressure front with Rick, he is hot as a scorcher! We just played cards until dinner at seven. I was getting nothing but a wintery mix from him.

BASS:

(VO, Relieved)

Cards,OK.

TOPPER:

(VO,)

Egyptian RatScrew!

LOUD WRITING IN PAD

BASS:

(VO, holding his temper in)

And from 19:00 to midnight?

TOPPER:

(VO)

Had dinner in the galley to refuel and build up strength and then at 9:30 retired for the night and some drinks with my other Grad student, ARO's own...Autumn Robinson!

BASS:

(VO, cautious)

Ms. Robinson can confirm you were together the whole night?

TOPPER:

(VO)

Ms. Robinson, The guy next door, the person across the hall, they'll tell you they heard us!

FLIPS NOTEBOOK CLOSED

BASS:

(VO, Firm)

OK! We're good! No more questions!

TOPPER:

(VO, Bragging)

Oh, it was a wet autumn evening. Humidity was high in my berth!

BASS:

(VO, Firm)

Nope, no-no...you can go, don't need details, good day Doctor!

CHAIR SCOOTS OUT, FOOTSTEPS OUT, DOOR CLOSES.

BASS:

(VO)

Diane! Water testing kits! How soon could you have them here?

ELECTRONIC BOOP

FEW SECONDS SILENCE

PHONE SET RINGS

BASS:

(Over Phone)

Deputy Marshal Marlow

CHUCK:

(VO/connection scratchy)

Bass? It's Chuck!

BASS:

(Over Phone)

Hey Charlie.

CHUCK:

(VO/connection scratchy)

Eggheads from the Computer Crime division ran the email address you sent. Said it took them some digging and time, but they finally found several hits and could connect it to an

I.P. address. 223.165.66.152. The team said they tried to use some masking system, but it was *real* amateur hour stuff.

BASS:

(Over phone)

Could they get me a location when the address was used?

CHUCK:

(VO/connection scratchy, Chuck cautious)

They said the emails have only received or transmitted from one location, so yeah...they got it for you!

BASS:

(Over Phone)

Andddd...

CHUCK:

(VO/connection scratchy)

You sitting down?

BASS:

(Over Phone)

Charlie, just...c'mon huh?

CHUCK:

(VO/Connection Scratchy)

Hold on to your skivvies!!! Binderclip2071945 @ MillworkSolutions has only ever been used from Wellington, New Zealand. Embassy of the People's Republic of China.

BASS:

(Over Phone, Shocked)

WHOA!

CHUCK:

(VO/Connection Scratchy)

You're damned right whoa! Whatever your dead egghead was doing, it sounds like it may be espionage.

BASS:

(Over phone, questioning)

Well, hold on, Charlie, that makes no sense. The Antarctic treaty says all nations will freely share their scientific data. All China would have had to do would be to ask for it.

CHUCK:

(VO/Connection Scratchy)

Oh c'mon Bass! Some treaties also say we won't spy on our allies. There are treaties that say we won't weaponize outer space. Don't tell me you're still that wet behind the ears rook I started mentoring all those years ago?

BASS:

(Over phone, resigned)

Point taken! I already have the techies on this end monitoring any outgoing communications and ensuring anything with the file name or of the same approximate size gets flagged and blocked.

CHUCK:

(VO/Connection Scratchy)

Any idea what the file name means?

BASS:

(Over phone)

Not yet; I'm supposed to meet with the station's lead scientist later today to ask. He may know more about its meaning.

BRIEF PAUSE, STATIC ONLINE

CHUCK:

(VO/Connection Scratchy, coyly)

I hear they have a greenhouse down there. Doing any gardening?

BASS:

(Over phone, has caught on)

.....Yeah.... The people running it gave me a little section to tend. I planted a few peppers and vegetables. You'd be surprised at the *vegetables* down here.

CHUCK:

(VO/Connection Scratchy)

Good to hear. There are no vegetables in my garden back home, but the herbs are going great. Dill, Italian Parsley & Arugula especially. I am having a little problem with weeds, however. Lots of mites and insects. Bugs aren't helping.

BASS:

(Over phone)

No weeds down here. That advice you gave me one time to focus on the vegetables helped. It's keeping the weeds away. You know who has a green thumb and could help with your pest problem Charlie, Diane!! She's sending me some books on gardening.

PAUSE

CHUCK:

(VO/Connection Scratchy)

It is probably best not to concern Diane with this, don't ya think Bass? Girl needs to rest and not worry about gardens.

BASS:

(Over phone)

Right as usual, Charlie! I'll let you know how the vegetables are doing next time we chat.

CHUCK:
(VO/Connection Scratchy)
OK then, you stay safe down there boy!

CLICK, FOLLOWED BY RECEIVER BEING RETURNED TO HANDSET.

ELECTRONIC BEEP

BASS:
(VO)
US Deputy Marshal BASS MARLOW reporting. October 21st, 2021...ahhhhh, 10:30 hours. So you're probably asking, Diane, why I'm sending this specific file encrypted? I just dropped off the phone with Charlie a half-hour ago. He couldn't come right out and say it, but he told me he thinks he's being monitored. Suspects it's the D.I.A. who has him under surveillance. *(Beat)* I can only assume Defense Intelligence have him bugged based on some of the questions I've been asking.

SEAT SCOOTING

BASS:
(VO)
It doesn't take . . .one of these rocket scientists to figure out DIA must be into bed with Beau-Low on something. Something they want to be kept quiet and not brought to attention. *(slight chuckle)* So we have alternate realities, over-sexed scientists, an alleged demon, what may be the world's most insightful janitor and a dead scientist who was killed for something involving Chinese espionage. *(sigh)* Sounds like some lame spy drama or internet podcast; and I'm the one who is going to solve it.

INTERNAL OFFICE SHUFFLING

BASS:

(VO)

I'm off to the DSL lab now. The station's head scientist Dr. Karl Jovac has agreed to meet with me to look over the file name and hopefully explain what we may be looking for. It was suggested that I show the name to Waynewright, but I'll be honest with you, Diane, I don't trust the man. I don't trust that were he to recognize what it was that he would tell me. *(deep breath)* No, I think I'll stick with Jovac. *(ponders)* Plus, as he was the one who discovered the body, it will be good to see his reaction when I show him the paper, see what his response may be. If I happen to see...anybody else while at the Dark Sector Lab, that would be a bonus.

ELECTRONIC BOOP

TWO SECOND PAUSE

ELECTRONIC BEEP, FEMALE ROBOTIC VOICE – RECORDING STARTED

SNOWMOBILE ENGINE REVVING AND COMING TO A STOP, ENGINE CUTS OFF AND SOUNDS OF WALKING IN SNOW. FOOTSTEPS UPSTAIRS AND THEN DOOR OPENING AND CLOSING.

SOUND OF JACKET UNZIPPING

BASS:

(Asking)

Excuse me, Is Doctor Jovac here?

SCIENTIST:

Upstairs, in the Amanda control room.

BASS:

Thank you.

TAKE STEPS UPSTAIRS SOUND FROM DSL LAB OF ELECTRONIC CRICKETS

BASS:

Doctor Jovac!

KARL:

(Surprised)

Ah, Deputy Marshal. More questions for me after our interview?

BASS:

In a manner of speaking, yes. Doctor, I found a reference during my investigation that doesn't make much sense to me or to others we've questioned. I was hoping you wouldn't mind looking.

KARL:

(welcoming)

Of course Deputy Marshal, what do you have?

UNFOLDING PIECE OF PAPER

BASS:

This is what we found. Now; I believe the up pointy arrow thingy is some code...

KARL:

(Cuts off Bass, surprised)

Well, I can tell you right now ... if this is what I think it is, it would be simply revolutionary!

BASS:

(curious)

Can you explain it, Doctor?

KARL:

(Distracted)

Hrmm, oh certainly! This first symbol you circled and footnoted. It's not an up-arrow sign, it's the Greek letter Lambda. And C.D.M after that; that stands for Cold Dark Matter. (*ponders aloud*) how to best...AH!

SQUEAKING MARKERS ON WHITEBOARD

KARL:

(explaining)

It's known as 'The Standard Model' of Big Bang Cosmology. It's a simplistic model that lays out several universe properties. The shape and presence of cosmic microwaves. How the universe's speed is accelerating, measured from light in far off galaxy clusters. How the known universe is smack full of common elements, namely hydrogen, lithium, helium, and so on; finally...the massive scale structure of how galaxies are laid out in the cosmos.

SILENCE FOR A SEC

BASS:

I followed some of that, so in laymen's terms, it helps explain the Big Bang?

KARL:

(agrees)

You could say that... it's one of several models in that regard. Now, the 'M-S-P Solved' ...well this is the intriguing part. M.S.P. is Missing Satellite Problem.

BASS:

Go on, please.

KARL:

(thinking)

oh, of course! Now, when we try to model the Big Bang in simulations, we see several small galaxies which are satellites and should, in theory, orbit the other larger galaxies.

SQUEAKING MARKERS ON WHITEBOARD

KARL:

(as if teaching)

We have... in what we call...the 'Local.. Group'. It is comprised by several Galaxies. Us, in the Milky way,Andromeda, ...Triangulum and others. *(Beat)* Now, each of these large galaxies and the number of their dwarf galaxies should follow the models we have, which they do, with one exception nobody can understand. Why the Milky Way has such a small number of Dwarf Satellites when the model says we should have LOTS!

BASS:

(guessing)

And one potential explanation is due to Cold Dark Matter?

KARL:

(impressed)

Exactly! While only theoretical at this point; well...*(ponders)* even Dark Matter is still only theoretical technically! *(snaps back)* One theory holds the satellites we can't detect are there, they just lack any sufficient quantity of gas to form stars. Another theory says they had sufficient gases at one point in history but have been eradicated by dark matter slowly over time.

KARL:

(Serious)

So finding this file would be of significant value and scientific advancement! If whoever wrote it has indeed solved the Missing Satellite Problem... that in itself is an achievement! *(more serious, almost sad)* The fact that they may have solved both MSP and in doing so, proved the existence of Dark Matter! They'd be referenced with the Science greats of all time. Socrates, Galileo, Einstein, Hawking!

BASS:

(Observing Jovac, suspicious)

Thank you, Doctor!

KARL:

(earnest)

You see why finding this file would be of the utmost importance! Even posthumously, if this was Mark's discovery, *he* should get the honors!

BASS:

(Reassuring, but still observing)

We're doing our best, Doctor!

KARL:

Ifffffffff, you'll excuse me, I need to get back to my research.

BASS:

Absolutely, thank you for shedding light on this Doctor.

WALKING AWAY AND DOWN THE HALL

ROBOTIC MALE VOICE FROM NEARBY

BOT VOICE:

Jotnar. Jotnar. Jotnar.

KENDRA:

(Quietly)

Bass? You're here!

HUM OF SERVER CABINETS

BASS:
(warmly)
Hi Doct... (*breath*) Hello Kendra.

KENDRA:
(shyly)
I didn't know...that you would be coming by?

BASS:
Oh, it wasn't planned. I needed to ask Doctor Jovac to clarify something for the investigation.

BOT VOICE:
Jotnar. Jotnar. Jotnar.

BASS:
(Curious)
If you don't mind me asking...

KENDRA:
(low voice)
That is a side experiment...one of the new researchers set up last week. It's...it's silly; you wouldn't be interested.

BASS:
(friendly)
Try me...

KENDRA:
(still low voice but coming out of her shell)

She thinks ...one of the signals scanned from the region of, Messier 87 Galaxy, well, that it has a translatable pattern.

BASS:

(honestly)

I'd be lying if I said I fully understood!

KENDRA:

(voice little higher)

With microwave telescopes, we...scan parts of the galaxy looking for high...high, energy signals. You can; you can image these signals as part of your data. The new scientist, um. . .Doctor ...Patani wrote a program to (*sniff*) to translate incoming telemetry from M87, into English.

BASS:

(confused)

A signal from another Galaxy is talking?

KENDRA:

(Embarrassed, empathic)

I know...I just...I know what it's like, what people might; what they might think...I didn't want to upset her.

PAPER SHUFFLING

BASS:

(reading)

Are these the words it's translated?

KENDRA:

(shy)

If, yeah, I guess. If her theory is correct, I suppose. Random words flash up on the screen. (*Beat*) That line as it moves across shows percent...percent confidence level in her translation. Anything above 90% gets translated, vocalized, and recorded. (*Makes a shuddering noise*) I'm sorry, my...my

nerves are telling me ...to step away and go back to work. It's part of my anxiety. Buttttt, this is. . .chatting with you ...it's (*said fondly*) wonderful!

BASS:

(happy)

Feeling is mutual. I'm glad that you can be comfort....(BEAT)
Bubkiss?

KENDRA:

(Confused)

Sorry?

BASS:

(not believing)

Right here, one of the words it translated. It was printed on October 8th. Nine Twenty-Two AM. Bubkiss. I...I know somebody who uses; who used that word. Recently.

WRITING NOTE IN NOTEBOOK

BASS:

(To himself as writing)

Oct...eight...nine...twenty, two.

WRITING STOPS

KENDRA:

(worried)

Are...is everything OK?

BASS:

(reassuring, apologetic)

Yes. Oh, No no no no, it's ...mmmrr; it's probably just a coincidence. Don't fret it.

KENDRA:

(Assured)

oh. Well, good then.

BASS:

Oh, oh wow! I'm going to be late! Kendra, I'd like to catch up with you more...

KENDRA:

(nervous)

ohh, yeah, no...I ...I understand. .

BASS:

It's just that I have another interview in 20 minutes, and I need to get back to the station, but (beat) You know I'm more or less caught up on my paperwork; for once! How about I grab us both some dinner from the galley and I'll reserve the small conference room for us around...19:00?

KENDRA:

(Slightly taken aback)

Um...okay...(firm, makes herself answer) Yes! I mean, yes! I'd like that. Seven O'Clock.

BASS:

(Rushing to get his coat, over shoulder)

Perfect! Then it's a date. See you then!

SOUNDS OF JACKET ZIPPING, SLIGHT SHUFFLE OF FABRIC AND THEN DOOR
OPENING. RUNNING ON SNOW AND THEN THE START OF THE ENGINE
(FADE OUT)

FADE IN

BASS:

(questioning)

...More like anybody who would have taken their anger or resentment to the next level?

JOSH:

I guess Firefighter Fred maybe, he and Doctor Rodney got into it one time. (snicker) I heard Rodney sucker-punched him!

WRITING IN NOTEBOOK

BASS:

Anybody else?

JOSH:

...mmm, not that I can think of.

BASS:

How often would you see him?

JOSH:

During the summer season, usually every other day or so. It's a lot busier then. More people to work with, projects to tend to, and various activities. (not fondly) In the Winter...every. fucking.day!

BASS:

Obviously not fond of him!

JOSH:

(factly)

Understatement of the Year! He's a royal douche-canoe to everybody. Always acting smug and superior; even to some of the other doctors! The man thought the entire world owed him, and we should be worshiping the ground he walked upon.

BASS:

So you got his attitude pointed at you too?

JOSH:

(surprised)

Are you kidding me? We got it twice as bad! We're research associates. Doctoral students. He treated us like his personal slaves!

BASS:

We being you and... Jay Riley?

JOSH:

Yeah.

BASS:

(curious)

What would he do?

JOSH:

(Angry recollection)

Name it! He'd tell us to get to the lab at 5 AM to help start calibration of equipment, only to show up 3 hours later himself.

WRITING QUICKLY TO KEEP UP

JOSH:

He tells us to go get him lunch, and when we'd come back he'd say the order was wrong, even when we wrote down what he said. (breath) He was overly critical, would berate us if we forgot to dot an 'l' in our work...clarifies) That wasn't an exaggeration, he'd *literally* yell at you for five minutes for not having the letter l dotted. He'd make us shovel snow outside the lab doors even when not needed.

BASS:

You couldn't stand up to him?

JOSH:

(stern)

Hell no! Doctor Rodney carries...carried enough weight so a bad appraisal of you from him would blackball you from not only significant postings; but from possibly getting grants. There is a rumor that one guy killed himself three years after Rodney tanked him with a bad review because he kept being rejected from one academy after the other!

BASS:

(puzzled)

Hard to believe he'd give a positive appraisal to anybody the way you described him!

JOSH:

That was his power trip! He was well connected, but he was also well known. Academia knows how he treats his staff. Surviving it is almost a badge of honor. (breath) If you deal with all his bullshit, then he knew he couldn't truly give you a negative appraisal. So, he'd just do the next douchiest thing. Give no appraisal.

BASS:

(listening)

mmmmhmmm

JOSH:

If you yelled at him, if you stood up to him, if you swung on him... that's it, you might as well resign yourself to teach Jr. High Science the rest of your life.

BASS:

So him being killed?

JOSH:

(Serious)

Oh, I'll be 100% honest with you, Deputy Marshal; Doctor Rodney's murder was the best thing to happen to Jay and me. I know that doesn't sound good and gives me a motive, but I don't CARE! For the years and years of abuse he piled on students, Karma was bound to catch up.

BASS:

(pushing)

So he bullied you?

JOSH:

(quickly, Loud)

Yes!

BASS:

(quickly, Pushing)

Every week?

JOSH:

(Quickly, louder)

EVERY DAY!

BASS:

(quickly, pushing)

You disliked him?

JOSH:

(quickly, LOUD)

I FUCKING HATED HIM!

BASS:

(quickly, pushing)

He'd never stop.

JOSH:
(Quickly, SCREAM)
ALL WINTER LONG! IT WAS A NEVERENDING NIGHTMARE.

CHAIR SLIDES BACK

BASS:
(Quickly, YELLS)
SO YOU MURDERED HIM!

SILENCE, JUST HEAVY BREATHING

JOSH:
(stunned)
What? . . no. NO! I DIDN'T KILL HIM!

BASS:
(pushing)
Oh c'mon Josh. He treated you like his bitch every day, over the Winter...it would be even worse! So what choice did you have left? (pause) Hell, I wouldn't blame you! Nobody would! How could they?

JOSH:
(out of energy) no.

BASS:
You're all isolated. He's got extra time now to come up with ways to bully you!

JOSH:
(quiet)
no.

BASS:
I know Waynewright; he wouldn't stick up for you. Other scientists here greatly fear him. The DeWalts know they can't

pop him for fear of contract termination. What chance would a research associate have?

JOSH:
(blankly)
I didn't kill him.

BASS:
So you snuck up late at night, grabbed something heavy...

JOSH:
(blankly)
I didn't kill him.

BASS:
Hit him over the head as hard as you could and then stabbed him to make it all...

FIST SLAMMING DOWN ON THE TABLE

JOSH:
(screaming)
I DIDN'T KILL HIM!

MORE HEAVY BREATHING, 3 SECONDS OF SILENCE

BASS:
(calm)
OK, Josh, I'm going to choose to believe you're innocent for now. Just two last things. I need you to tell me where you were the night Dr. Rodney was killed?

JOSH:
(exhausted)
Um...um...let me think, calm down a sec (deep exhale) Jay and I left the IceCube Lab at Five Thirty. We walked back to the station, and by six-fifteen, we were having dinner. I finished

eating around Seven. I chatted with some of the DeWalt girls hanging out in the gally until 7:45. Kitchen staff started to set up for some wine... event? (remembering) Yeah, that was the night and isn't my thing... Jay said he was going to see what was going on in the B-1 Lounge. (Breath)

JOSH:

I went back to my berth, couldn't relax, so I went to the gym to stretch out from 8:30 to quarter till. Worked out in the gym upstairs for about an hour. Walked down to the sauna, around 10, steamed for 30 minutes. Went back to my berth and was finally able to sleep.

BASS:

Anybody see you after you left the galley?

JOSH:

(thinks, zapped of energy)

I know I saw Jenn Florez while I was stretching. There was some DeWalt in the gym for a while who saw me on the treadmill. I honestly don't recall who that was. I was in the sauna alone, went to bed alone.

JOSH:

(getting frustrated)

Look, I'm tired, you just accused me of murder although I've been answering all your questions, and so unless you have more for me, am I free to leave?

TAPS THE TABLE

BASS:

All I need you to do is sign and date at the bottom of the piece of paper in the folder right here, saying I properly explained

your rights to leave at any time and everything you've told me today is of your own free will.

JOSH:

And then I can go?

BASS:

And then you can go!

FOLDER OPENS, SOUND OF PAPER BEING SIGNED, PEN THROWN BACK ON TABLE, CHAIR SCOOTs OUT WALKING OUT AND DOOR CLOSING.

BASS:

(to himself, quietly but frustrated)

Damn it! I thought he was the guy!

TWO SECOND SILENCE, THEN FADE INTO TYPING ON KEYBOARD SOUNDS, LITE KNOCK ON THE DOOR

KENDRA:

(shy)

Um, Hi...Bass?

BASS:

(happy)

Kendra! Come in, come in!

SEAT BEING PULLED OUT

BASS:

Please, have a seat!

KENDRA:

(softly)

Thank you.

DOOR CLOSES

BASS:

So, I got two different meals from the galley; I'm more than happy to eat either, so pick which sounds better to you? Tomato soup and grilled cheese or turkey club with baked potato chips?

KENDRA:

(Happy)

I love grilled cheese & tomato soup! My parents would make it for me whenever, (*smiles fondly remembering*) whenever I had a rough day. My first week here, I was (*half-whispered*) *so nervous* (*back to normal*) that I ordered this for dinner every day and rushed back to my berth.

BASS:

(waiter impression)

Then, grilled cheese and tomato soup for the lady, and the gentlemen will have the turkey club. And to drink!!! We have Water or ...what a surprise; perfectly chilled bottle of vintner's reserve stock of a '21... H2O!

KENDRA:

(Stifled laugh to herself)

oh I'm drivng, do I'll just have Dihydrogen monoxide, please!

BASS:

(continues impression)

Excellent choice!

KENDRA:

(*laugh*) Sit down, please; you're embarrassing me!

BASS:
The customer, is always right!

KENDRA:
(Playful)
Bass!

BASS:
Alright, alright! *(Beat)* So, good day today?

KENDRA:
(thinks, speaks with a little more confidence than usual)
You know... it, um...it was enjoyable. I mean...*(speaks with mouth full of grilled cheese)* most times ...people
(realizes) Mmmm, sorry. Just a sec...*(2 Beat)* I'm sorry, I
not used to...to talking to people. Eating and talking... I haven't
had to correct myself for...in a very long time.

BASS:
(reassuring)
No offense taken. You said... pleasant day?

KENDRA:
Yeah, most people automatically just give me room; they
understand my anxiety, especially after two years here. If they
get too uncomfortably close, I'll find an excuse to go to
another part of the lab. Today, I didn't have the urge to do so.
No 'flight reflex'.

BASS:
(Happy)
Phenomenal!

KENDRA:
(interested)
How about your day?

SPOON IN BOWL

BASS:
(mouth full of food)
Mmmmm...(two beat) Thought I had a major break-through and a prime-suspect. It turns out; I'm leaning toward it not being him.

KENDRA:
(sad for him)
Oh no, why is that? Can you say?

BASS:
Not during the open investigation. Legal rules and policy. It just means I keep hitting the pavement looking for clues.

SPOON IN BOWL, CRUNCH POTATO CHIP

KENDRA:
(hesitant)
Bass...can ...can I confess something?

BASS:
(curious)
Sounds serious!

KNIFE SET DOWN ON PLATE

BASS:
(Stoic)
You have my full undivided attention!

KENDRA:

(embarrassed)

I've...I've not been on a date in 11 years, not since I was twenty-one, and **THAT** was a disaster. It was a blind date, even worse! So, please understand if I'm not the best company!

BASS:

(Assuring)

You're doing perfectly! May I also make a confession and an observation?

SOUND OF SPOON ON PLATE

KENDRA:

(A bit playful)

And now you have MY full undivided attention, Deputy Marshal!

BASS:

I haven't been on a date in about the same time. I (*hesitates, considers not saying*) was married for several years...and then she was gone. I (*deep breath*) just couldn't bring myself to ask anybody out.

KENDRA:

(Mortified)

Oh Bass, I'm so sorry! I should never have, oh my God I'm...

BASS:

(stopping her)

No no, it's fine!! I made my peace with it years ago! You didn't do anything wrong! I promise you! You're fine.

SOUNDS OF ONE OR TWO PEOPLE JOGGING BY THE CLOSED DOOR

KENDRA:

(relieved)

OK, thank you, though I'm sorry if I dug up any...

BASS:

I know, and there is seriously nothing the matter. I'm not upset. Actually... (*deep breath*) quite the opposite.

KENDRA:

(Embarrassed, looks down)

Bass, you're going to make me blush!

ANOTHER SET OF FEET RUNNING BY BEHIND DOOR

KENDRA:

You said there was also an observation?

BASS:

Since you sat down, you've barely stammered; you're talking in a normal tone and not constantly lower. Call me crazy, but I'd almost say you were; at ease!

A COUPLE MOMENTS OF SILENCE

KENDRA:

(surprise in herself)

I didn't notice until you said something, but...yeah, I don't have a nervous feeling in my stomach like normal. (*laughs*)

BASS:

I know they're plastic bottles of water but, here's to baby steps!

KENDRA:

(proud)
To baby-steps, cheers!

MANY FEET RUNNING PAST THE CLOSED DOOR

BASS:
Would you pardon me for a moment?

KENDRA:
Certainly .

MANY VOICES CAN BE HEARD TALKING AT ONCE IN THE DISTANCE. AS
BASS APPROACHES, THE TALKING GROWS IN VOLUME

LARRY:
(doubtful, smugly)
and how was that verified?

VOICE 1:
(Anxious)
Cargo run from Mawson heading to Scott.... picked them up
from the air. They'd set up just a ways past Dome Fuji. It
looked like they were getting...prepared! The pilot got
spooked, didn't want to linger.

THOMAS:
(understanding)
I don't blame him.

VOICE 2:
(Hesitant)
Should we go to lockdown?

VOICE 3:
(panicked)

Will it be as bad as last time?

VOICES TALKING OVER ONE ANOTHER

LARRY:

(Loud voice to be heard, smugly)

PEOPLE!

VOICES TRAIL OFF

LARRY:

(calming voice, but still smug)

People! Most of us have been through this two, three, or more times. It happens almost every summer season, and we always end up fine in the end. Those of you who have not yet been through this event...just listen to those who have. You'll be just as fine.

RADIO CHATTER, INDISTINCT

LARRY:

Mr. Kelly?*(raises voice)* **MISTER KELLEY!**

THOMAS:

(snaps out)

Dr. Waynewright?

LARRY:

How much time do you estimate we have until they get here?

THOMAS:

(thinks aloud)

... weather forecast, wind speeds, however angry they are...
(answers) Gosh...I'd say a week, give a day or two.

LARRY:

(reassuring tone, but smug)

That gives us five days, people. FIVE DAYS to get prepared. Thomas? Start organizing teams like last year. Secure and lockdown any valuable medical supplies and anything else significant. I want teams to keep an eye out for their approach and tell all inbound/outbound flights to keep an eye out and report back.

THOMAS:

Yes, Sir!

LARRY:

You, new person! Radio McMurdo and advise them of our status. Tell them they best start planning to hold all inbound flights and begin assembling carpenter and repair teams to help Mr. Bustamante after the dust settles. Alright people, let's get to work!

CHATTERING PEOPLE START MOVING

BASS:

Waynewright! What the Hell?

LARRY:

(Classical Smug)

Ah, *DEPUTY* Marshal Marlow! Please... let us handle this and do everybody a favor...keep this out of your little reports back to Hawaii!

BASS:

(Confused, and getting Angry)

Handle what? Keep what out of my reports? WHAT is heading our way?

LARRY:
(deadpan and sincere, but hint of smug)

.....Trolls.

Outtro and credits.