

Ninety Degrees South

EPISODE FIFTEEN: GiftS

INTRO MUSIC

FADE INTO DARK SECTOR LAB. LAB BACKGROUND NOISE.

GEETA

Yes, Deputy Marshal. I called as soon as I saw the printout.
Kendra said you were interested.

BASS

I am, thank you, Doctor. When did this printout?

GEETA

About ninety minutes ago.

BASS

Idaho?

GEETA

That is what Keck translated. Interestingly, the confidence level for the translation is 96%. That's the highest level we've seen yet!

BASS

Pretty confident then. When did the message print out?

SOUND OF PAPER BEING HANDED OVER

GEETA

(Reviewing)

According to this...uhhhh, 9:47 AM this morning. Why?

BASS

The last two times your machine provided this level of confidence, the word tied into an event as it was happening elsewhere. A phrase my boss uses, and when a pilot saw the Norwegians...the Trolls getting ready to visit the station.

GEETA

So you hypothesize that whatever 'Idaho' pertains to, it was most relevant at quarter to ten this morning? 2 hours ago?

BASS

If the pattern of prediction holds...yes.

DOOR OPENING

IT EMERY

Okay, Doctor Patani...everything checks out. Diagnostics are all good.

GEETA

Thank you, Emery. This is the person you should be asking about the interpretation, Deputy Marshal. I may have

developed the hardware configuration for imaging, but the translation matrix and decryption algorithm was all Emery.

IT EMERY

(Embarrassed, normal dorky voice)

No, no. It's just coding. Nothing fancy or special.

BASS

(Remembering)

That's right, Mr. Waters. I remember you mentioning that back in November. You helping Doctor Patani with her project.

GEETA

His work is revolutionary. If only we could only get him to take the proper credit for it.

IT EMERY

(Embarrassed)

No, no, no no no no no. I just did some math.

GEETA

(Imitating Emery)

'Just did some math?' Deputy Marshal, he modified an Rijndael block cipher algorithm by introducing and blending a 512-bit decryption logic matrix. The most sophisticated decryption systems in use today only use 256 bit systems. Any intelligence organization or government in the world would pay billions, hell...probably tens of billions for this technology.

IT EMERY

It's simple when you compress and prioritize numbers and key schedules using the golden ratio and the Fibonacci sequence. (looks over) I remember when she first asked my opinion. M87. Em is my nickname, and 87 was when I was born. A galaxy so distant. Trying to communicate to people so far away to itself. I could relate. I had to help.

2SP

IT EMERY

(Flips topics)

I'm going to use your bathroom before I suit up and head back to the station. Thanks, Doctor Patani.

FOOTSTEPS LEADING AWAY AND THEN DOOR CLOSING

BASS

(Almost to himself)

Just when you think you have somebody figured out...

SOUND OF PAPER RATTLING

BASS

Doctor, do you mind?

GEETA

No no, take it. Please. Just let me know once you find what 'Idaho' means.

BASS

(Graciously)

Thank you, Doctor

GEETA

(Slyly)

You know, I believe Doctor Jennings is still upstairs... if you wanted...to check in?

BASS

(Accepting the teasing)

Thank you kindly, Doctor.

OPENING DOOR OUT OF THE LAB AND CLIMBING STEPS TO THE SECOND FLOOR, WALKING BY SERVER CABINETS AND EQUIPMENT HUMMING

BASS

(Happily)

Hey you.

KENDRA

(Surprised)

Hey you. What are you doing all the way... out here in the Dark Sector?

BASS

Got a call from Doctor Patani. Said the Keck translated another word. 'Idaho'.

KENDRA

Any connection yet?

BASS

No, not yet, but usually, it doesn't take more than a day or two before we tie it together.

KENDRA

I know Geeta has been getting worried as it has...it was a while since the last...message. She thought it may have stopped.

BASS

Well, it's back to spitting out the cryptic messages, it seems.

KENDRA

(flirting)

Soooooo; we still on for...this eve...tonight?

BASS

(Nervous)

We are, but I wanted to suggest something different than movie-night. Promise you'll hear me out before deciding?

KENDRA

(Intrigued)

...Okay?

BASS

(hesitant)

So Nic has scheduled an open-mic night later this evening, and while I know that is too much and too soon for you, I was able to make arrangements for a much smaller private event just before the larger open-mic night starts.

KENDRA

(nervous)

What...what do you mean...smaller?

BACKGROUND NOISE, DOOR OPENING AND CLOSING

BASS

I spoke to Mx. Webster and they'll be setting up for the mic night in the large gym. The first act goes on at 7PM. Nic said we could use the music room and have it all to ourselves for an hour before. They'd leave a guitar, amp, and cables for us to use...I thought, maybe...I could convince you to do a song or two?

KENDRA

(Anxious)

In front of....people?

BASS

(Reassuring)

No no! Beside me...two or three people, max. That's it. Plus, those people are friends! Zeke, Thomas...Nic said they'd be there if you'd be okay with it.

KENDRA

Bass, I've already....you know how much...singing in front of people, even three or four...I don't. (Deep breath) I'll try. For you...for baby steps...I'll try. Just, I can't...I need you to...just okay, I'll try.

BASS

That's the critical part. The more you try, the easier it will be in the future. Your singing...well, that is already phenomenal and performance grade material. Its just getting use to performing for slightly more people, gradually. Baby steps!

KENDRA

(Slightly less nervous)

Bass! I sang, one time. For you, weeks ago. Performance grade material, really?

BASS

Hey, I stand by my statement! We can grab dinner after the private performance?

KENDRA

Food **after** the panic attack-inducing event...Helena was right, you are...you're more than...not just a pretty face.

BASS

(chuckles) I'll come to get you around 17:30.

KENDRA

See you then.

KISS AND BASS HEAD BACK DOWN STAIRS

FADE OUT AS WINTER PROTECTIVE GEAR IS BEING PUT ON

DIGITAL RECORDER BEEP

RAPID DILING OF PHONE TONES; SLIGHT WIND. BASS IS OUTSIDE

CHUCK

(VO)

BASS, what the hell you doing down there boy?

BASS

(Confused)

I don't get ya, Charlie? I'm Investigating, hunting a killer, same as last week.

CHUCK

(VO, Stern)

Bass, an official complaint has been filed from one of the station's scientist.

BASS

(Annoyed)

Waynewright!

CHUCK

(VO)

Negative. A doctor Gustav Van Zandt.

BASS

(Surprised)

Van Zandt? Is he whining about the Atlas thing or me interviewing him and calling him out as a potential murderer?

CHUCK

(VO)

Neither. Fraternization, distracting his staff, interfering in research grant operations.

BASS

(realization)

Kendra?

CHUCK

(VO)

Bingo! Bass, I'll ask you again...what the hell are you doing down there boy?

BASS

(Defensive)

Charlie, it's not what you think...

CHUCK

(VO)

Good! Perfect! Cause what I think you're doing is starting to play kissy-face with a woman who is material and a potential suspect in an ongoing murder investigation and doing so on the Marshal's nickle.

3SP

BASS

Okay. It's sorta what you think...

CHUCK

(VO)

Hell's Bells Bass! Please tell me you've already cleared her as a suspect. At least give me that?

BASS

I'm.....

SOUND OF HANDSET BEING PICKED UP, GOING OFF SPEAKER PHONE ON OTHER END.

CHUCK

(Angry(VO))

Bass, you're putting me in a real awkward spot here, boy. I know you can be stubborn and I kid you about having donkey brains, but now I'm starting to get that acidy feeling in my gut.

BASS

(Defensive)

Look, Charlie, If it makes you feel...

CHUCK

(Cut's him off(VO))

Uhh uh!! This is the part where you, the Deputy Marshal, zips it, and you let the adult on the call talk. Now I know the Marshal's office isn't officially an investigative arm of the DOJ. We hunt down fugitives, transport criminals, protect judges and witnesses. But we do get investigative training in Glynco. You do remember Glynco, right Bass? I mean it was only twenty years ago.

BASS

(Feeling guilty)

I remember.

CHUCK

(VO)

What was one of the first lessons we taught you about being called to investigate?

BASS

Don't get personally involved.

CHUCK

(VO)

Are you personally involved with this Kendra Jennings?

BASS

...I wouldn't call it involved...exactly.

CHUCK

(Frustrated(VO))

For the love of Pat Sajak...tell me you're not sleeping with her!

BASS

Not that it's any of your business Charlie, but no. We're not.

CHUCK

(Relieved,VO))

Good, cause any other answer, and I'd have to seriously consider taking your badge, suspending you, and turning over the investigation to another deputy.

BASS

So what about the complaint?

CHUCK

(VO)

Our new friends in the National Science Foundation will squash this for us. The NSF...at least the side that's working with us doesn't want you taken off the case. I don't know who you impressed, but they seem to like you. Respect you and

the work you're doing. Hell, there's even talk about longevity for you. Obviously they haven't discovered how much donkey brains you have yet.

BASS

What about Van Zandt and Dr. Jennings?

CHUCK

(VO)

Your girlfriend is working on some brilliant cutting-edge stuff. They tried to explain it to me, but...way above my head. Real egghead stuff. They don't want to lose her. Sounds like they can't afford to lose her. As for Dr. Van Zandt, they'll talk to him and get this resolved, but Bass...

BASS

(VO)

Not my girlfriend, but I know, I know Charlie. This is a complication the Marshal's Service can't afford.

CHUCK

(VO)

Bass, what I'm about to say isn't as a Marshal. It isn't as your boss or your mentor; I'm saying this as a friend. You got a bright and promising career ahead and you're heading for the big desk one day. Hell, you might get mine if I ever retire. Don't toss it out the window by being stupid. That said...if you are going to be stupid, I best hope she's worth it. You hear me...no, I know you can hear me ...are you **LISTENING** to me?

BASS

I'm listening Charlie.

CHUCK

(VO)

Good, now. What else you have for me?

WIND GUST

BASS

We continue to monitor outgoing net traffic, and thus far, the killer hasn't made a move to transmit the remaining data. My theory is that they use the laptop and data ports in the berth of a departed station worker to attempt the email out.

CHUCK

(VO)

When's the next scheduled departure of staff?

BASS

(Thinks)

We have a geologist leaving the station in just a little over two weeks. She's one of the Winterovers, so a prime candidate for the killer to leverage. I don't have the whole plan mapped out yet, but given this person's familiarity and ability to spot hidden cameras, I may need to be on-site in the berth.

CHUCK

(VO Concerned)

You fully healed up from the murder attempt. Chemical scrub your lungs took?

BASS

Tip-top Charlie. I'm up for it.

CHUCK

(VO)

So what happens if you don't find your killer in this plan? You prepared to winterover yourself?

BASS

(Concerned)

Trying not to think about that. Waynewright is already starting to talk about legal intervention to not unduly detain the people who should have been gone already. We can't officially hold them and up to now, their remaining here has been voluntary. I fully suspect several, if not most will make the argument. Not even sure our new NSF friends could help with that one.

CHUCK

(VO)

I'll see what I can do on my end, but I see where you might get nervous. You need anything from up here?

BASS

No, I'm good for now Charlie.

CHUCK

(VO, Reminding)

I'm serious about the woman, Bass. Watch what you're doing! Be smart about this.

BASS

I'm listening to you.

CHUCK

(VO)

That's my boy!

CALL END SOUND. FADE OUT SNOWY WIND BACKGROUND

ELECTRONIC VOICE – RECORDING STARTED

IN A HALLWAY OF THE STATION, WALKING DOWN COORIDOOR.

VARIOUS PEOPLE CHATTING IN SMALL POCKETS

KENDRA

(Low voice, nervous)

Great, now when I make ...when I'm embarrassed, your...the camera will....*(Mild panic onset)* Bass!!

WALKING STOPS

BASS

(Reassuring)

Kendra, you have this. If I thought it was something you couldn't do, I'd never suggest you try this.

KENDRA

(low voice)

I...it's my biggest fear. Facing it....it's...it's...

BASS

I'm going to be there, standing close by the whole time. There's only going to be a couple people in the room, only Zeke and Nic. Mr. Kelley couldn't make it. I believe you can do this. Just close your eyes and focus on the song!

WALKING RESUMES

KENDRA

(Low voice, nervous)

(Deep breath) I'll try to do this.

DOOR OPENS TO BASS AND NICE TALKING

ZEKE

(telling story)

...but that's when he wasn't trying to pull something or come up with some new master plan to get rich quick! Hey guys! Good to see you.

NIC

Doctor, Deputy Marshal.

BASS

(cordial)

Hey everybody. Just wanted to say thanks Mx. Webster for helping arrange this. Means a lot to us.

NIC

(Concerned)

No, I'm happy to do it....Doctor Jennings, you alright?

KENDRA

(Low voice, Anxious)

I'm..a bit...Just need to sit a second.

NIC

Here, take mine..

SOUND OF SITTING IN PLASTIC BAND CHAIR

ZEKE

You sure you okay, cause I can go....

KENDRA

(steady)

No, Zeke. Just, give me a second...need to calm down and catch my....my breath

2SP

KENDRA

(low voice, nervous)

Bass is right. I need to...baby steps. I want to do this..

NIC

(Supportive)

Take all the time you need. We have an hour, no rush necessary.

2SP

KENDRA

(Low voice)

I think I'm...I'm good.

ZEKE

I meant to ask. You been singing long? This something you did since a kid or more recent?

KENDRA

(Low Voice)

I guess I've been singing...um..it started in high school. I...my anxiety was even bad...back then. I found that singing, it helped...it was calming. I..sing every now and then.

NIC

(Reassuring)

Well, when you're ready, or if you're not ready; that's fine.

2SP

COUPLE OF DEEP BREATHS

ZEKE

You guys hear me and Tommy at the new year's party? We massacred Darius' Wagon Wheel. It was fun!

KENDRA

(Gathers herself)

Okay. If I'm going to do this...I need to do it.

NIC
(Excited, but low key)
Okay. Here is a guitar. I'll plug you into the amp here...

AMP ON NOISE

NIC
And when you're ready...take it away.

2SP

KENDRA STARTS HER REDITION OF 'GIRL CRUSH' by LITTLE BIG TOWN.

AFTER A FEW SECONDS, SHE STRUGGLES AND THE GUITAR STRING
SCRATCH

KENDRA
(Upset, emotional)
I'm sorry....I

DROP GUITAR. TWO BEAT...DOOR OPENS

BASS
Kendra! Wait....(turns) Guys I'm sorr

ZEKE & NIC TOGETHER
Go! Go go go lawman.

BASS JOGGING DOWN THE HALL

BASS
(apologetic)
Kendra. I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to push you.

HALLWAY AMBIENCE, SLIGHT CONVOS DOWN THE HALL

KENDRA

(Low voice, anxious)

I knew it. I knew this would happen. Every...everytime I think, I think things may be getting better, something...huge happens. Like this.

BASS

(apologetic)

It was too much, too soon. At that is on me...I should have.

KENDRA

(Low voice, cuts off)

No Bass, don't you see. I had the ability. I had the ...I could have just said no, not the time...for me to sing. I didn't...don't. I need to get faith in myself, before I...sing for people.

BASS

Kendra, I swear to you; I will not bring this up again. Won't ask you to sing until you think you're ready. **YOU** should tell **ME**...when you think the time is right.

2SP

KENDRA

(Low voice, sad, solemn)

Bass, do you know what that song is about?

BASS

(Confused)

The song you were...Girl Crush? Um...having a crush on a girl?

KENDRA

(Low voice, getting a bit angry)

No. It's about the lament of a young girl's heart. She loves this guy. He's everything...everything she ...she wants. Only

problem is, he's already taken. He's married or he's engaged...he's unavailable. All she can do. The only way she can even be close to him, without being a home wrecker, is to be friends with his girl. It will tear her up inside. She'll suffer, but she'll suffer...even more without him in her life.

2SP

KENDRA

(Low voice)

Bass. You'll be leaving in under a month. Let's not prolong this. It'll just be rougher...when you're leaving the station than it will be now.

WALKING DOWN THE HALLWAY

2SP AND THEN FADE OUT WITH HALLWAY NOISE.

ELECTRONIC BEEP

BASS

(Formal, no emotion)

Deputy US Marshal Bass Marlow. Tuesday, February 1, 2022. Doctor Mark Rodney homicide investigation. Amundsen-Scott Research Center. South Pole. Day 122 of the investigation. Diane; please note the following and submit for formal submission to US Marshal's office as well as National Science Foundation, Beauregard-Lowing Corporation and Department of Justice records office.

2SP

Item one: Observation and surveillance of David Brewster, AKA Reno Dave continues. Am not able nor have the resources to follow around the clock, however with limited means available subject has not conducted any action which might implicate himself.

Item two: Next scheduled departure of station staff from winter over is on 5 February, four days from now. Doctor Helena McKendrick, Base geologist will be departing. Utilizing technological staff we have meticulously planned out an elaborate trap. Intention is to catch the perpetrator as they attempt to upload the remaining file data once Doctor McKendrick is off station.

2SP

Final Item: Diane, please notify US Marshal Godwin his conversation with me of two weeks ago was taken to heart. He should have no more concern for incidents nor complaints. The problem resolved itself despite my wishes.

End update. Diane, my apartment should probably be aired out and whatever I left in the refrigerator before my departure, burned. Please ask operations to identify a cleaning service and ensure my apartment is livable. Expense to Marshal Goodwin. Transmission to be sent in data burst tonight at 23:30 hrs. End Update.

DESK PHONE RINGS, BASS PICKS UP AFTER FIRST RING

BASS

Deputy Marshal Bass Marlow speaking.

ZEKE

(Concerned)

Lawman, need you down in the food storage arches, right away.

BASS

Chief, if this is one of your emotional interventions, this is not the time. I have paperwork...

ZEKE

(Anxious)

Not joking round lawman, I'm dead serious...we found something, you need to see this.

BASS

(Sighs)

On my way.

PHONE CLICKS OFF.

BASS

(To himself)

I'm so done with this place...

STANDS UP, RACKS A ROUND, DOOR OPEN AND FADE OUT

FADE IN, ARCHES BACKGROUND NOISE, PPL TALKING QUIETLY FOOTSTEPS APPROACH.

FOOTSTEPS

ZEKE

OVER HERE LAWMAN!

BASS

(Put out)

Okay Chief. You got me down here. What's up?

ZEKE

(serious)

Walk up the steps, second shelf. The open crate...you'll see.

FOOTSTEPS UP THE METAL STEPS. CLICK OF A FLASHLIGHT

ZEKE

Annie found it while doing update inventory in preparation for

2022 winterover. Seal was intact when she opened the lid.
Nobody opened since last inspection. She found that...called
me right away. She said she didn't touch it.

ZIPPER UNZIPPING. REMOVAL OF ITEMS FROM POCKET

BASS

You instruct your people well Chief. Most would have touched
this. Gonna...take some photos with my phone first.

2SP

ZEKE
(Sorrowful)

There was a time, you used to call me Zeke.

IPHONE PICTURE SOUND

BASS

We can reminisce about old times later Chief and
inappropriateness of familiar interactions during an
investigation...but for now. I have a murder weapon to finally
process. Placing ...in evidence bag...and dating.

BASS
(Surprised)

Huh! A crate full...of Idaho potatoes. Chief, if I had to guess
when that seal was placed prior to Annie opening it. Was the
seal dated for two weeks ago, January...22nd to be exact,
around 9:45 in the morning.

ZEKE
(Amazed)

Damn lawman, you're two minutes off. It was 9:47AM but yeah; how'd you know?

BASS

(Remembers)

Keck prediction. Wait...don't your people always sign and date the seal after inspections? Whose name was on the seal, who was the last to open it before today, who signed the seal?

AKWARD PAUSE

2SP

ZEKE

(unhappy)

It was Reno's seal.

CLIMBING DOWN THE STEPS

BASS

(All business)

Chief, I need to see David Brewster immediately.

ZEKE

I already had him sent to my office. He's in there waiting. Thinks it's a performance review. He doesn't know what we found...or that you're coming.

BASS

Great, Let's go.

SOUND OF WALKING ON ICE. DOOR OPENS AND GARAGE SOUNDS IN THE VMF WALKING DOWN THE HALLWAY

ZEKE

(Surprised)

The hell? He was supposed to wait here. Hey...Matt. You seen Reno?

MATT

(Rando)

Yeah, Keenan went in, told him something and then he ran out. Ducked into the old Fuel room.

BASS

(Questioning)

Franklin?

ZEKE

(Panicked)

He's going to release him!

RUNNING DOWN THE HALLWAY. THEY GET TO THE DOOR AND STOP.
SOUND OF GUN BEING REMOVED FROM HOSTER.

BASS

(Low voice)

Stay behind me. If I have to shoot, I don't want you in the line of fire! On three. *(Beat)* One...two...

DOOR FLYS OPEN

2SP

BASS

(Commanding voice)

Mr. Brewster don't move! Step away from the tube and Franklin.

FRANKLIN

(Muffled from behind the cage, Human voice)

Gentlemen. Please be advised that as of four minutes ago, Mr. Brewster has engaged my services as his lawyer. As such, he

will not be speaking to you without me being present to ensure his legal rights are respected and adhered to.

ZEKE

(Shocked)

Oh, this is ten times worse than releasing him!

FRANKLIN

(Muffled , Demon's Voice)

It's Franklin's time to shine!!

Outro and credits