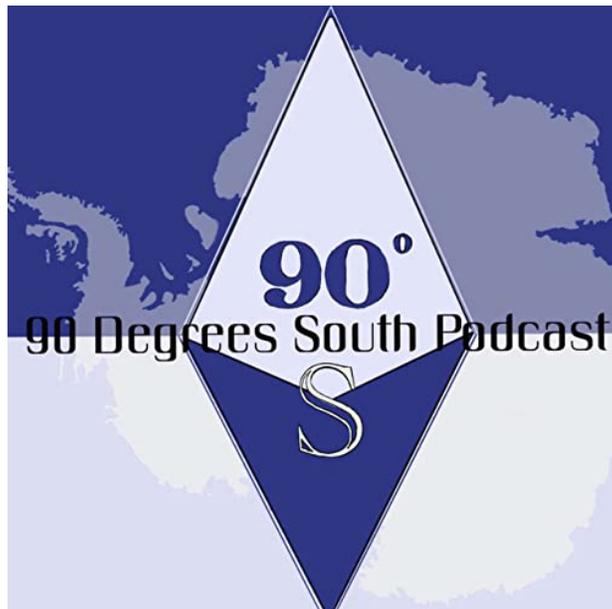


Ninety Degrees South

SEASON THREE
EPISODE FOURTEEN: **CROSSHAIRS**

DRAFT 1: DEC 12, 2023



by
Brian M Bradley

BMB Productions LLC

INTRO MUSIC

**MUSIC CUT AT 10 SECOND MARK: INTERRUPTED BY AN OLD SCHOOL
EIGHTYS "THIS IS A BMB SPECIAL REPORT"**

ACT I

ANNOUNCER

Our regular programing will not be heard tonight
so we can bring you a special report from . .
.CROSSHAIRS! From exposing drug operations in the
jungles of Cambodia. Shedding light on corruption
in major investment banking firms, to criminal
injustices of the wrongly accused, it's
'CROSSHAIRS' with your host, Alexa Rydell!

**SOUNDS FROM THE SKIWAY OUTSIDE THE STATION. CARGOLOADERS
BUSILY GOING ABOUT THEIR DAYS. FOOTSTEPS IN THE SNOW LEAD
TO THE BASE OF DESTINATION ALPHA**

ALEX

Amundsen-Scott, Antarctica Polar Research
Facility. It's as remote as one can get on planet
earth. Yet, even here in this barren, frozen
wasteland, the footprints of humanity, are far
from absent!

Since the mid 20th century, the United States has
maintained a presence at the South Pole. Named
Amundsen Scott in honor of Norwegian Roald
Amundsen and Briton Robert F. Scott, who led
separate teams that raced to become the first to
reach this spot in the early 1900s. The current
station, as you see it today is the 4th version
to stand watch over an endless desert of Ice.

The elevated station, or "El station" as the
locals call it was constructed in 2008 and is
just one of many buildings on the complex which
house researchers, scientist, and operation
support teams year-round.

While normally a center for scientific research
and studies, not so long ago, it became the site
of Antarctica's first recorded homicide in the
history of human exploration. More on that,
later!

With recent tensions and a growing concern from the international community, The White House recently announced it was taking steps to temper the disagreements. A presidential invitation was sent to several foreign environmental & scientific cabinet ministers from 11 different nations to tour the Amundsen Scott Research Facility. Selected to conduct and lead the tour was the house minority whip, as well as up-and-coming Senator, Louisa Buxton. Viewed by some to be a strong party favorite for the nomination in the 2024 elections.

Crosshairs was given permission by the office of polar projects and the National Science Foundation to visit the station, interview her residents and international tours. While we were there, we also wanted to ask the ever-growing public question. . .is it station still relevant; or even truly necessary?

ACT II

SCENE CUTS TO INSIDE OF LARRY'S OFFICE IN THE STATION. HAVE SOFT BACKGROUND OPERA MUSIC PLAYING

LARRY

Lawrence Emmerson Waynewright. Doctor, Head of this Research Facility, and most recent Nobel Laurette.

ALEXA

Doctor, what is it like, managing a science research facility so far away from basic civilization? Out here on the frontier.

LARRY

While it most certainly has its unique challenges, I like to think myself and my scientific colleagues bring refinement and western civilization with us as we arrive. The works done here benefit not only humanity and betterment of scientific research and development; but increase understanding on the very nature of our universe!

ALEXA

You mentioned the Nobel prize. I see it sitting behind you on the shelf. Would you consider that the defining accomplishment of your career?

LARRY

Winning the Nobel was. . .unexpected of course. The field of competition and discoveries made each year are a testament to mankind's academic aspirations. However. . .defining accomplishment of my career? [INTERNAL PONDERING] perhaps of my career. . .to date.

ALEXA

Speaking now of the upcoming tour from foreign scientists and ministers, are you concerned on America's current trend, or regarding what some have termed the "President Campbell Isolationist Era"?

LARRY

Not concerned in the least! I put my trust and faith in our nation's elected officials. Most have made public service their life's ambition and goal. While perhaps not as glamorous or holding the prestige as science enjoys; it is an admirable profession, nonetheless.

ALEXA

So, then you're looking forward to receiving so many dignitaries? In having Amundsen Scott be the site to showcase America's resolve to maintaining positive and productive relations hand in hand, with our allies.

TWO BEAT

LARRY

[MEASURING HIS TONE AND TEMPER]

There are simply no words to describe; just how I feel to have my station selected for this illustrious honor. To act as guide to these. . .academic allies and demonstrate how critically vital our works are!

QUICK CUT

MUSIC REPLACED WITH THE SPT AMBIENCE TO ENSURE WE MAKE IT CLEAR THIS IS A SEPARATE INTERVIEW.

KARL

Oh, OHHH. The science we do. . .we do here is absolutely critical for the human race! This. . .facility is at the south pole exactly for the optimal observational environment it provides. No light pollution, no magnetic or radio frequency noise interference. There simply is no better place, no better place to conduct scientific research into the climate or our galaxy and the whole universe, other than Amundsen Scott. Maybe Fresno.

ALEXA

And as the head scientist, you oversee all the divisional operations?

KARL

Oh yes, yes very busy, very busy. I oversee scientific operations in the South Pole Telescope station, the Martin A. Pomeranz observatory, the Ice Cube Observatory [Under breath] *Mama cooked that breakfast with no hog!*. . . as well as the Atmospheric Research Observatory.

ALEXA

Impressive! And all these projects, as well as the scientific operations on the station, are taxpayer funded?

KARL

Well, well we have the usual academic grants, cooperative agreements, and fellowships of course but um. . .yes, yes we do receive. . .some. . . .taxpayer funding. Couple buckarenos here and there.

ALEXA

Don't be so modest Doctor! The NSF petitioned congress for funding of Amundsen Scott under the Antarctic Infrastructure Modernization for Science project or AIMS & the Antarctic Infrastructure Recapitalization , or AIR program for eighty million over fiscal year 2020 and over

one hundred million in Fiscal 21 and 22 each!
Quite a lot of investment capital.

KARL

It's a large sum, large sum alright, but all well spent, all very well spent on research and development. Not to mention the private funding from the very fine and generous Beauregard-Lowing foundation. All funding put into groundbreaking research!

KECK

[IN BACKGROUND]

Chamomile. Chamomile. Chamomile

KARL

[NERVOUS]

Oh um. . .that. . .Must be. . .teatime!

SCENE CUTS TO THE ARO WEATHER ROOM

WE'RE IN THE ARO STATION OFFICE. WE HEAR THE SOFT, SULTRY AND PERVY SOUNDS OF SOULFULL BABY MAKING, LOVE GROOVES PLAYING.

TOPPER

But I'll tell ya Lexi.

ALEXA

Alexa.

TOPPER

Al timmiter here isn't just your adrenalin addicted storm chaser trill seeker. I'm the premier chief meteorologist, stationed high atop the frozen tundra and an oasis for atmospheric accumulation!

ALEXA

Pardon me. . .Doctor Hunt. It is Doctor Hunt, yes?

TOPPER

Oh, I'll answer to anything you want to just, scream out when the feeling moves you! May I interest you in a Pina Colada?

ALEXA

[SKEIVED OUT]

No. no thank you. Just how long. . .

TOPPER

Nine and a half.

ALEXA

. . .Have you been on station. Pardon?

TOPPER

Oh, barometric pressure must be playing tricks on my ear drums. Accumulating my station build up for almost four years now. I start strong, maintain strength, and finish with gale-force intensity and rapid incoming tides!

ALEXA

Yes, I get it Doctor. In all that time, you must have mentored a good number of university researchers, doctoral candidates, and grad students.

TOPPER

A good storm chaser never keeps track of the many tornados he's pursued. Driven directly towards and penetrated the swirling cyclone of danger and adventure. [MODEST PRIDE CHUCKLE} Yeah it's sixty-four.

ALEXA

With all those researchers under you, there's never been any. . .complaints?

TOPPER

Oh, trust me Lexi, after I'm done working, [TWO BEATS, CREEPY 'CLICK-CLICK' NOISE] there aren't any complaints!

QUICK CUT

JULIA

I wouldn't use the word. . .complaints exactly! You must understand, The National Science Foundation, The office of Polar Projects and. . . [FADE DOWN BACKGROUND OF HER TALKING]

ALEXA

[VOICEOVER EXPLAINER]

This is Julia Chipperfield. Head of Human Resources and Employee relations here at Amundsen Scott. Julia has been on the station only a short time, missing last summer season due to recovering from an automobile accident, but is charged with ensuring a safe, non-threatening and harassment free workplace.

JULIA

[FADE BACK IN] is researched and investigated completely, fairly and without any preconceived prejudice, guilt, or blame assigned. Also without any fear of retaliation or reprisals.

ALEXA

So then, the various . . . concerns . . . as you called it directed at Doctor Topper Hunt are. .

JULIA

That is, a confidential matter. Privacy laws and non-disclosure agreements don't allow me to go into specifics. There is also sensitivity over those with the concerns. We need to protect anonymity. You understand?

ALEXA

Sensitivity. I completely hear what you're saying and the importance you put upon it. Me too. What do you find to be the most challenging aspect of working with such a diverse; cross-spectrum of scientists, contractors, and administrative staff?

QUICK CUT

THOMAS

Well, gosh! That's a very difficult question! I don't think of it so much as a challenge. I think of it, as an opportunity! You know, how can I go about making each person's job and function down here, just a bit easier every day. It's what I love to do. Be as helpful as possible!

ALEXA

You are such an energetic young person Mister Kelley!

THOMAS

Oh please, just call me Thomas. [CONCERN] oh were your quarters acceptable? We repurposed one of the offices for you to use for editing, for any paperwork you might have. . .or just a quiet place to retreat to if needed.

ALEXA

Everything was perfect, Thomas. We absolutely appreciate all the effort you went to!

THOMAS

If you're happy. I'm happy!

ALEXA

You're quite young for such a lofty role on the station, if you don't mind me saying. Just how old are you?

THOMAS

Oh, well I know I look like I'm really young; but don't let the baby face fool you. [CHUCKLE] I'm actually twenty-four!

ALEXA

[SURPRISED]

Twenty-four. If I read correctly, you've been on the station for five years, so you started. . .

THOMAS

Right out of school. I did some interning at a data-management center summer after I graduated. Not where I wanted to be. Sitting in a cube, day after day and just crunching numbers. I just had a. . .well, huh, I don't really know what to call it actually. A pull I guess; to head down here to the Ice, to work. Been on the station ever since.

ALEXA

And the roles you perform. Are they fulfilling?

QUICK CUT

ZEKE

[NERVOUS]

I'm uh. Just I mean I guess. . . .are we live?

ALEXA

Oh, no no. It's all recorded in advance. What we're doing now. It will air later in the year.

ZEKE

[NERVOUS]

Ok. You mean like. . .on television?

ALEXA

Television, streaming. You and the station, all her residents will be on multiple platforms!

ZEKE

[NERVOUS]

So. . .I'm. . . .should I look at. . . .you. .
.or should I look at. . .my man with the camera?
I'm. . . .yeah.

ALEXA

You, haven't been interviewed for television before have you?

ZEKE

[NERVOUS]

I'm sweatin here just a bit. Ummmmmmmm. Can I phone a friend? That still a thing?

QUICK CUT

ALEXA

[NARRIATING]

Of all the residents of the station. More than the scientists, or 'Beakers' as they're called. More than the contract workers or 'DeWalts'; one person stands out and it something of an enigma on Amundsen Scott. Supervisory United States Deputy Marshal, Bass Wyatt Marlow. The 'Ice Sheriff' as he enjoys calling himself.

Originally assigned to the station almost one year ago. Deputy Marsal Marlow was sent to investigate not only the station's first recorded

homicide, but also the entire continents! Doctor Mark Rodney was viciously attacked and murdered by one of his research assistants, Joshua Nichols. Upon apprehending his suspect and transporting him back to the mainland for his crime, his plane experienced a catastrophic malfunction and crashed on. . .THERE HE IS!

STEVE, OVER THERE! THAT WAY! DEPUTY MARSHAL! DEPUTY! ALEXA RYDELL; CROSSHAIRS. CAN WE GET A QUICK. . .

BASS

[HURRIED]

Ma'am. I apologize but there is an urgent matter I need to attend to. Perhaps later?

ALEXA

THIS WILL ONLY TAKE A FEW MOMENTS. . .

BASS

[FADING AS HE HEADS OFF]

We'll have to chat later ma'am. Apologies. . .

ALEXA

[FRUSTRATED]

Damn it! Okay, let's reset. I'm gonna get this interview, even if I have to. . .

ACT III

MUSIC INTERJECTION

ANNOUNCER

Now, Crosshairs, with Alexa Rydell continues!

ALEXA

Prior to traveling to Amundsen Scott, we scheduled several interviews with members of the U.S Senate and house of representatives; as well as previous academic occupants of the station.

Since the introduction of the Office of Citizen Morale by President Campbell; initial favorability surveys are showing an overwhelming popularity in the current United States Administration, Close to 87% favorability across all key demographics.

One interview we were very honored to get; was current speaker of the house, Representative Lillian Hammer.

ALEXA

Madam Speaker, thank you so very much for agreeing to this interview. We fully understand how precious your time is.

MADAM SPEAKER

Nonsense Ms. Rydell! I enjoying speaking to all members of the press; despite what you may see in the tabloids!

CHUCKLING

MADAM SPEAKER

When the Antarctic peace treaty was signed back 65 years ago, the world was a much different place. Yes, we were neck deep in a Cold War with Russia and communism, but that was it. We weren't facing dangers from a multi vector approach and from numerous hostile actors. It was a much different time in America. You didn't have to lock your doors at night. Kids played outside all day without any external dangers. There was a keen sense of community and national pride. When you look around at the United States today, that picture is more nuanced, and not in particularly favorable ways.

The idea of international scientific exploration is an admirable goal. Its aims are for beneficial purposes, but overtime as bickering. . . And I even dare say, congenial nations and their internal goals and intentions evolve, shouldn't then we too take a breath? Take a breath and ask the question. . . do we evolve & align to the present day, or remain behind in a bygone and outmoded era?

ALEXA

So, you're saying. . .

MADAM SPEAKER

What I'm saying is: maybe it's time to pause, and really take stock in where our priorities should lie!

QUICK CUT

HELENA

All due respect to the Speaker, that is a ludicrous statement!

ALEXA

[VOICEOVER EXPLAINER]

Doctor Helena McKendrick is a world-renowned geologist teaching at the University of Maryland and previously worked at Amundsen Scott for two years. She returned to the States last year, shortly after the murder of Doctor Rodney was solved.

HELENA

The research conducted at the South Pole represents some of the most meaningful and thought-provoking endeavors science can pursue. The geopolitical issues on the globe should have no bearings on continuing those works. That was the original goal of the Antarctic treaty signatories! To establish a communal environment where it was science that had the emphasis, not politics or national ideological agendas.

ALEXA

It sounds like you see the work being conducted at Amundsen Scott as being . . . beneficial, even despite of the ongoing international disagreements?

HELENA

I think work should be continued TO SPITE those international disagreements! Science is the pursuit of knowledge and attempt to gain a better understanding. Not to gain a strategic advantage over conflicting interests. Our current government could take a lesson or two from Scientific academia!

A BABY STARTS TO FUSS

HELENA

Our newborn. He seems to only want to sleep for two hours at a time. Will you pardon me a moment? Mommy is coming Bass.

MICHAEL

I have him sweetheart. You perform your interview, besides. . .it's my turn to change the diaper genie! WHOES THE FUSSY BABY? WHOES THE FUSS-FUSS BIG BOY?

ALEXA

Bass. That's quite a unique name.

HELENA

Named for the man who. . .helped me back onto the path I was always meant to be upon. Without him, that little one wouldn't be here.

ACT IV

QUICK CUT

WE'RE NOW OUTSIDE THE STATION. WIND IS FAIRLY TAME. ON THE SKIWAY AS WE HEAR A PLANE LOW-IDLING. WORKERS ARE MOVING AROUND QUICKLY ALL IN A HUB-BUB

ALEXA

Fifteen minutes ago, an announcement came over the station's loudspeakers, announcing an incoming plane was be given priority the land. A sudden sense of urgency and drive overcame the staff who work out here, on the stations single air terminal, called Pax station.

The plane you hear behind me, literally just came to a halt after landing and crews are scrambling to get inside. I see. . .yes I think I see the pilot exiting now.

RUNNING TO THE PLANE

ALEXA

CAPTAIN! CAPTAIN! ALEXA RYDELL, CROSSAIRES.

URGENT FOOTSTEPS HEADING TOWARDS THE STATION

TREAGER

AND MAKE SURE TO CHECK ENGINE THREE! IT'S RUNNING SLUGGISH! Oh, You're the reporter we were told about last month.

ALEXA

Alexa Rydell. Captain, can you tell us what's taking place that necessitated landing priority and being rushed to station operations.

TREAGER

I was on a standard supply run back to Amundsen when a call came over the radio about an hour ago. A Herc that departed McMurdo and set to land here is having some issues.

ALEXA

What kind of issues? Is it serious?

TREAGER

The kind of issues where the plane could potentially crash, so I'd say serious; yeah. If you'll pardon me!

TWO BEAT

ALEXA

[REALIZATION]

WAIT! WHAT FLIGHT?

TREAGER

ANG-813.

ALEXA

THAT'S THE INTERNATIONAL DELEGATION FLIGHT.

TREAGER

[FROM A DISTANCE]

LIKE I SAID. . .SERIOUS!

QUICK SHIFT

WE HEAR THE NEWS CREW AND REPORTER RUSING DOWN A HALLWAY. THE CROWD AROUND THEM SEEMS TO BE PRE-OCCUPIED. A CROWD HAS GATHERED OUTSIDE OPERATIONS. MUSIC IS AS TENSE AS THE MOOD

ALEXA

We've re-entered the station and there is a palpable sense of tension in the air. [PUSHING THROUGH CROWD] Excuse us, press coming through, please. . .we have to get through. . .

RANDO

[ANXIOUS]

MA'AM! MA'AM! NO CAMERAS IN HERE, IT'S NOT THE. . .

THOMAS

Let them in! We're to provide them full and unfettered access.

RANDO

Alright!

THOMAS

Any luck on contacting Doctor Waynewright?

RANDO

No, he's still not answering pages or his radio.

THOMAS

Aw heck! What a time to be working on At. . [SEES THE NEWS CREW] at least five different things that I'm sure are important!

DOOR OPENS, BOOTSTEPS COMING IN

BASS

I'm here Mister Kelley, what do we have?

THOMAS

The incoming diplomatic flight stopped responding to air traffic about an hour ago. They're still showing up on radar and following their flight plan. We just can't reach them.

BASS

Radio issues on their end?

THOMAS

Possible. I had Captain Traeger called to the ops deck to assist. He's flown LC-130s for years. He's changing out of his flight suit now.

BASS

Any word from McMurdo? Any mention of trouble from the ops team there?

THOMAS

Spoke with them a short time ago. They said the flight took off as scheduled. No issues they saw or were reported. Routine take off.

BASS

[FRUSTRATED]

Where's Waynewright?

THOMAS

We've been trying to reach him. He's . . .ahem. . .indisposed.

BASS

Just perfect. [TWO BEAT; DAD VOICE] Alright everybody, listen up. I'm assuming command of ops center. I need everybody to stay calm and focused on the task at hand. We don't know what the full story is, but the only priority we have at this time is to re-establish communications with the Ice bird and get them safely on the ground.

DOOR OPENS.

TREAGER

Alright, I'm all set. Bass! What's the word?

BASS

Still silence. Do we know what the crew and passenger count on the plane is?

TREAGER

It's a C130-J Super Herc. Two pilots, one load master and a dozen passengers. She's also hauling incoming cargo for the station. [LOOKS AROUND] I need a . . .going borrow your clipboard here guy!

BEGINS WRITING ON A PIECE OF PAPER, DOING CALCULATIONS

TREAGER

Okay. Assuming max weight of 22 tons, full fuel load at 18 thousand pounds. Cruising speed of 400 M.P.H and at angels twenty-two. . .
[MUTTERING AS HE DOES THE CALCULATIONS]

BASS

Talk to me Captain!

TREAGER

Okay. Good news is the J series is one of the more recent planes and top of the line. It has two mission computers, dual redundancy, Terrain Awareness and Warning systems and ground collision avoidance systems. Best of all, it has an autopilot and Autoland system. So, if something happened to the crew, that thing will stay in the air for as long as it has fuel.

BASS

Which will be how long?

TREAGER

They're still set and on target to land in three hours. Assuming they had full tanks which we almost always do, they could go another 4 hours after the pass us.

BASS

Let's make sure they don't pass us! Let's get them on the ice!

TREAGER

Bad news is. . .even with autopilot and Autoland, there is human interaction needed on the control and instruments panels. If the pilots are indeed impaired, we'll need a plan B.

TENSE MUSIC STRINGER OUT COMMERCIAL.

ACT V

ANNOUNCER

WE'LL BE BACK, AFTER THESE MESSAGES

SAPPY BACKGROUND MUSIC PLAYS. A BOY SITS AT HIS DINNER TABLE, MOM MAKING A WHOLESOME FULL 'MURICAN MEAL.

MOM

How was school Billy?

BILLY

I hate it and don't ever want to go back!

MOM

What happened?

BILLY

Some of the kids said America wasn't the best country in the world, and on the wrong track. I said THEY were wrong, and they laughed at me.

KNOCK AT THE DOOR, MOM ANSWERS

MOM

TV's Michael Breckenridge! What are you doing here?

TV's MICHAEL BRECKENRIDGE

I was walking by and couldn't help but hear. Billy, the problem isn't the faith you have in America; it's in the fact that your school friends, have no faith at all!

BILLY

You mean I was right?

TV's MICHAEL BRECKENRIDGE

Absolutely! It's not that your school friends are evil or dangerous. Not yet. It just means that they don't know any better. They didn't have the wholesome and proper upbringing your mom installed in you!

MOM

Awwwwwwwwww.

TV's MICHAEL BRECKENRIDGE

Instead of being mad at them, you should work to help them see a better way.

BILLY

How can I do that? I'm just a regular kid!

TV's MICHAEL BRECKENRIDGE

By calling us at the Office of Citizen Morale!
The O.C.M. has specialist, trained to seek out
those who may be sowing the seeds of discontent.
Talking to them, engaging, and showing them there
is a better way, to express their views and
frustrations. But even we're not perfect.

MOM

[GASP] Ooooo I need to sit down after that.

BILLY

That can't be true Mister Breckenridge, you're
America's sweetheart!

TV's MICHAEL BRECKENRIDGE

[CHUCKLE] We need **YOU** Billy, and all you out
there to help us identify these misguided, but
well-meaning American souls. So, we can find
them, talk to them and help them see the error of
how they think.

BILLY

Whatever I can do Mister Breckenridge, to help my
country!

TV's MICHAEL BRECKENRIDGE

[SAY IT LIKE IT'S FOR 'MURICA! ((EAGLE
SCREECH))]

Th Office of Citizen Morale. We're here to help
America, stay on the proper track!

CHEESEY OUTRO COMMERIAL MUSIC

ANNOUNCER

NOW BACK TO OUR SHOW

ACT VI

CROSSHAIRS REJOINER MUSIC

ALEXA

Amundsen Scott Station boasts a wide variety of demographics in the contractors and scientists who live and work on the station. When looking at gender statistics, males. . .make up 68% of the current facilities population, with females at 28%; non-binary and non-specified at 2% each.

While the station may be overwhelmingly male, to call the female population, underwhelming, would be quite a mistake!

With the majority being found in the scientist population, we spoke with the longest serving female doctor. Kendra Jennings.

QUICK CUT

WE'RE NOW IN THE GALLEY. LUNCH CROWD AND FAIRLY BUSY.

KENDRA

[A TOUCH OF NERVES]

I'm uh. . .WHEW. . .this is a new experience for me. I'm Doctor Kendra Jennings, I am the department head of the Dark Sector Lab. [chuckle] It's not as scary as it sounds! The two primary projects under me are the BICEP and my first assignment: the South Pole Telescope array.

ALEXA

BICEP?

KENDRA

That stands for Background Imaging of Cosmic Extragalactic Polarization. Quite the mouthful, so we just say 'BICEP'.

ALEXA

According to your profile, you are one of the longest tenured scientists on station with almost five years. In fact, . . .next to doctors Waynewright and Jovac, you hold the record.

KENDRA

It's. . .[NERVOUS LAUGH]when I first applied for the research grant, I knew this had the potential to be a long-term project. Away from the more populated centers for research. For me, well at the time it was very appealing!

ALEXA

So, that appeal has lost some of its luster?

KENDRA

Oh no. No not at all! I **LOVE** what I do here, the studies, the research, papers I've written and all the accomplishments while working at Amundsen Scott; all of them! It's just. . .as my motivations have matured, so have I. Where remoteness and isolation were quite the allure, it's [CONSIDERING WORDS] the friendships, the close sense of community and [SMIRK AND QUICK CHUCKLE] relationships I've formed that have become equally rewarding.

ALEXA

A brilliant scientist, chipper, and bubbly, not to mention attractive; I imagine you get quite a bit of attention.

KENDRA

[UNCOMFORTABLE WITH COMPLIMENTS]

Thank you. Um, actually no. Up until a year ago; I kept mostly to myself. I didn't really get to; I mean I didn't [DEEP BREATH] I couldn't interact with people. Comfortably. Certainly not like I can today!

ALEXA

You mentioned, relationships. I assume that means. . .you met a special. . .man? Woman?

KENDRA

[BEING DISCRETE]

There is, a special person in my life. Somebody that I hold closer to my heart than others.

ALEXA

I see. [TWO BEAT] I sense that you're not going to give me much detail about this specific mystery person.

KENDRA

We're both; very private people. Very reserved and modest. Neither of us really want to have our personal lives on public display.

ALEXA

Interesting! You're worried that such may become, a distraction? Interfere with the work you both do on station?

KENDRA

No. That's not really it; and I certainly wouldn't consider it distracting or. . .what is it Doctor Waynewright always says. . .[HER IMPRESSION OF HIM] "*Interrupt the operational efficiency of critical station research!*"

BOTH CHUCKLE

ALEXA

Good impression! So being a woman, you haven't found that to be an obstacle in your work here on station. Never spoken down to or demeaned for not being. . . male gender?

KENDRA

[BACK TO UNCOMFORTABLE]

I'd be lying if I said I'd never faced any prejudice, or misogyny. Both in my time on the station or in my career as a whole. I doubt you could find a woman alive who hasn't at one point or another. But here on station; I've found it to be exceedingly rare.

ALEXA

One big happy family?

KENDRA

Most days, yes. I guess my answer would be most days it's happy.

ALEXA
Moreso when you're with certain people?

KENDRA
I suppose that's true too.

TWO BEAT

ALEXA
You're not going to tell me the name of your special person, are you.

KENDRA
Nope.

QUICK CUT

WE'RE NOW IN THE LITTLE GYM. FIRE CREW WORKING OUT

FRED
[ZERO TACT]
Deputy Marshal Bass Marlow! That's whose she's banging! Two of them are like wild rabbits, you know what I'm sayin? I don't think it was the sound of the station's generator why them foam ear plugs was given to new polies in A-2 section of berths.

ACT VII

QUICK CUT

BACK IN OPERATIONS

THOMAS
GOT SOMEBODY!

SOUND OF CLICKING AND KNOBS TURNING

THOMAS
Flight Alpha November Golf 8-1-3 this is Amundsen Scott flight deck. Please respond, over.

BIT OF STATIC AND THEN SIGNAL OPENS

LOADMASTER
Hello? Can. . .can you hear me?

THOMAS

Alpha November Golf 8-1-3; Yes! We hear you loud and clear. Who is this, please identify and give us your situation. Over.

LOADMASTER

This is Airman First Class Peter LaChance, New York Air National Guard. 109th airlift wing. I'm the loadmaster. The pilot and co-pilot are both dead. They have blood coming from their eyes, nose and ears. Over.

THOMAS

How are the passengers? Over.

LOADMASTER

They're all fine. I was in the rear with them since we left. They aren't even aware anything is wrong up here. It was only when I . . . [STARTING TO PANIC] I can't fly this thing! Over.

BASS

Get Captain Taggart from the Galley! Quick!

FOOTSTEPS RUNNING OUT

BASS

Let's get plan B going. Thomas, I'll take over for you on comms. DO me a favor and determine what time they would normally be starting their landing procedure.

THOMAS

Here's the deck cans!

BASS

Thanks. What's his name?

THOMAS

Airman First Class LaChance.

BASS

No! His first name.

THOMAS

Oh, ummmm. It was Peter.

BASS

Got it.

CLICK OF A KNOB

BASS

Peter? Peter, you still with us? Over.

PETER

Who is this now? Over.

BASS

Hi Peter. My name is Bass. I'm going to be leading the team down here at the pole and the guy that helps get you and your passengers down safely. Over.

PETER

Not going to lie. I'm hella scared right now sir. Over.

BASS

You remember your boot training Peter? Over.

PETER

Yes sir. Over.

BASS

What did they tell you about fear when you were going through? Over.

PETER

It makes you either shit your pants or tighten your stance. Will either make you foc-us or stop and choke-us, sir. Over.

BASS

Perfect! I knew I wasn't dealing with some pencil pusher when I heard your voice! You got this Peter. Let's go with the focus part. Over.

PETER

What do I need to do sir? Over.

BASS

Well first off, you're going to start calling me Bass, not sir. Second, I have the most seasoned flyer with the most hours over the ice going to be on my deck here in seconds. I'm going to hand him over to you while I get everything else ready for your safe landing.

FOOTSTEPS QUICKLY APPROACH THE ROOM, DOOR OPENS.

TREAGER

I'm here I'm here! That him?

BASS

Lastly, you're going to listen to every word our flyer has to say and let the skill he has work his magic through you. He's going to make your first solo landing like you just laid your head on one of those foam memory pillows. Peter, let me introduce you to Air National Guard, Captain Traeger. Over.

PETER

Thank you Bass. Over.

SHUFFELING AS TREAGER TAKE THE SEAT

TREAGER

Okay Airman, Captain Hank Trager on the line. Hear you're having a real shit day today. Let's see if I can't improve it for you; whatta say? Over?

BASS

Get Zeke and Chief Landry on the line. Let them know we have a flight declaring an emergency and potential for a crash landing. Want them both up here in . . .15 minutes.

RANDO

On it.

BASS

Mister Kelley?

THOMAS

They should be ready to start putting down in thirty minutes.

BASS

We can work with that! Please call Doctor Ambrose and let him know we may have a mass casualty incident, level 2 heading our way. He needs all staff on hot standby and find anybody with even rudimentary medical training. Send them Ambrose's way.

THOMAS

Yes Marshal!

ALEXA

Deputy Marshal, Deputy Marshal!

BASS

[POLITE BUT FIRM]

Ma'am, I understand you have a job to do, and you're cleared to be here; but for everybody's safety and to ensure we focus, I need you and your crew back against that wall for as long as you're in here. Need you out of the way.

ACT VIII

FADE OT ON VOCALS WHILE NARRIATION SPEAKS OVER

ALEXA

For what seemed like an eternity, we watched as the team put all the preparations in place they could. Unsure what the outcome would be but preparing for the worst. Captain Hank Traeger gave the young airman instruction after instruction to ready the aircraft, Until the final, tense moments. Here's what we recorded. .

.

QUICK CUT

TREAGER

You're doing great airman, almost there. Next to your right leg and back a bit, on the center console, you see the letters A.F.C.S going from top to bottom, over?

PETER

I see it, over.

TREAGER

Okay, that's your autopilot system. I want you to flip the left switch to down but leave the right one up. That's going to keep it engaged in the number 2 chair; but you'll take over in 1. Over

PETER

OK, switch flipped. I have the yoke, over.

TREAGER

Good Job Airman. Now, call it out, just like we went over. Eyes on the Standby Attitude and Altimeters. They're your battle buddies now, over.

RADIO CLICK

BASS

ZEKE, Mister Thibodeaux; You in place?

RADIO SQUAK

ZEKE

Me and the Cajun ready lawman.

RADIO SQUAK

BASS

Doctor Ambrose?

RADIO SQUAK

AMBROSE

Medical response team on standby. ER's 1, 2 and 3 prepped and ready.

PETER

Flaps down. Landing lights left and right on, Flap and trim indicator above the pilot lighting panel. . .just like you told me.

1000. . . 900. . . 800. . .

TREAGER

Doing good kid.

PETER

6. . . .5. . . air speed 105 knots.

TREAGER

You got this Peter!

PETER

3. . .2. . .100. . . .we're down.

TREAGER

ALL FOUR LEVERS IN THE MIDDLE; ALL THE WAY DOWN!

THOMAS

He's slowing. Slowing!

TREAGER

Above the windshield, 2 engine and 3 engine, turn both to stop! Now hit the break! STEP ON IT FOR ALL YOU GOT!

THOMAS

Slowing, slight drifting to the right. .
.slowing. .they stopped!

ERIE SILENCE FOR TWO SECONDS AND THEN THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE!

ALEXA

Absolutely incredible! The Amundsen Scott team has managed to get the international flight down safely and with no formal pilot on board! We're. .we're hearing the rear cargo doors on the flight have been opened and the medical teams are beginning their triage.

TREAGER

On behalf of myself and the entire flight operations crew in the elevated station, we'd like to welcome you to Amundsen-Scott South Pole Research Facility. First round is on Deputy Marshal Bass Marlow!

BASS

I can't take any credit Captain. You did all the heavy lifting on this one.

TREAGER

Bass, before I took over, what the hell did you say to the kid? Nobody, and I mean no.damn.body has the right to have their head screwed on that tight in a situation like he was in.

BASS

Just said. . .some words of encouragement.

TREAGER

You'll have to fill me in over the first round!

MORE APPLAUSE.

ALEXA

Medical and Fire-Rescue technicians tended to the pilots of flight 813; however, it was too late. The bodies were taken into Amundsen Scott for initial review, prior to being sent back to the United States and their next of kin. None of the 12 passengers, including Senator Buxton experienced any injury. Indeed, if not for the bravery of the young United States Airman, this mission of peaceful expression, could have become just one more tense international incident.

Upon learning of the fate of their pilots, the fledgling and ambitious senator thanked Airman First Class LaChance, and pledged to initiate a full investigation into what took place on the flight. The visitors, senator and station leaders all met that night for what we were told, was a banquet par excellence!

Prior to ending our stay at the South Pole Station, we wanted to leave with one important question to each person we interviewed. What future does the station hold?

ACT IX

QUICK CUT

MADAM SPEAKER

I'll be honest Ms. Rydell; I'm not confident there is a future for Amundsen Scott. When you consider the incident that took place during your visit; I think we need to weigh the danger inherent in operating within such a dangerous and inhospitable atmosphere.

Is the science being conducted there worth the peril our scientist, citizens. . .[slight snark] Senator Buxton and foreign dignitaries were exposed to? I just thank the one true God above that our United States military was on hand to save the day. That. . .THAT is where funding for such antiquated programs should be redirected into. Funding the brave men, women. . .and others who take the oath to defend the United States of America!

QUICK CUT

LARRY

[INSULTED]

Of course, this station has a future! Anybody who attempts to tell you otherwise; is a philistine. A vulgarian!

QUICK CUT

THOMAS

Well, gosh, I hope it has a future. A long one at that too! It took me forever to get everybody around here trained perfectly. There's no place on this entire planet I'd rather be!

QUICK CUT

FRED

Eh. I ain't Halen jumping no more so can't tell the future. What I can tell youse is there are worse places to be! Could be in Newark being forced to watch those girl scouts the locals call the Jersey Devils try to play hockey! Don't want to break a nail, ain't that right 91 Dawson Mercer! Know what I'm sayin'?

QUICK CUT

ZEKE

[SUPER NERVOUS]

So, should. . .should I put my hands in my lap, .
. . .or, do I just keep 'em at my side? Wow! Is
it just me, . . . or is it really hot up in here?

QUICK CUT

KENDRA

The universe is full of endless and wonderful
mysteries. Our understanding of them hasn't even
scratched the surface. No, we may not be
designing the next microchip, developing
artificial intelligence, or working to cure
diseases, but the fundamental question of what is
out there? Where did the universe come from and
what's our place within. I know I may be biased,
but I feel that's important as well. Yes, this
facility absolutely has a future.

QUICK CUT

ALEXA

The old saying goes. . .all things come to she
who waits. After many attempts, and many
requests; we were finally able to get some time
with the very striking and hero of Amundsen
Scott: Supervisory United States Deputy Marshal
Bass Marlow.

BASS

[UNCOMFORTABLE]

I'd like to start out by setting the record
straight. I'm no hero. I'm just a man, doing a
job he was asked to do. The word, 'hero' is a
title deserving of those who made more
sacrifices, sometimes the most selfless
sacrifices one can make. I'm no hero.

ALEXA

[FLIRTING LEVEL SET TO 9]

You're too modest Deputy Marshal! Wow, those are
firm arm muscles. [CLEARS THROAT]. I read in the
station dossier that you're now a full-time
resident of Amundsen Scott.

BASS

Well, technically I'm a full time Deputy Marshal assigned to help oversee legal operations and keep the peace at the three different stations the United States operates on the Ice. I just happen to currently be storing all my stuff here at Amundsen Scott.

ALEXA

Would. . .it be possible to get a tour, of your office, your. . .berth? I'm sure my audience would like to see the Ice Sheriff, laid out bare!

BASS

[NERVOUS CHUCKLE] Ice Sheriff. People told you about that nickname did they?

ALEXA

Hardly surprising Deputy. Solving murders, escaping a plane crash, uncovering the largest drug smuggling operation the U.S. and most nations have ever seen, protecting the citizens of both McMurdo and Scott stations from an escaped and dangerous mobster. Adding on the rescue today of twelve different foreign leaders and a United States senator. . .I'd say it was a title well earned.

BASS

I'll respectfully agree, to disagree Mrs. Rydell.

ALEXA

[FLIRTY LAUGH]

Please call me Alexa; and it's . . .Miss; for the record. I don't happen to see a wedding ring on you deputy. No lucky woman has managed to tie you down yet?

BASS

I um. I was married, previously. She passed on twenty years ago.

ALEXA

I'm so sorry! It must be, difficult and lonely. Being down here with no companionship. No moments of tenderness.

BASS

Actually, I um. Recently starting seeing; somebody again. It wasn't planned, I didn't see it coming and when it happened, it reset almost everything in my life that I knew to be true. Or, I guess you could say that I thought I knew to be true.

ALEXA

[POUTING FLIRTY]

Oh. So, it's a happy relationship then. No issues?

BASS

No ma'am. No issues. I'm very happy.

ALEXA

Who was the lucky woman who gets to be the focus of your love and admiration then?

BASS

[NERVOUS CHUCKLE]

There are, some things; I would like to just keep private and, to ourselves if that's okay.

QUICK CUT

FRED

I'm telling youse! Four, sometimes five nights a week! Now, I ain't no perv or sleaze or nothing! It's not like I camp outside Deputy Marshal's berth late nights; but I'm gonna be honest here. I'd pay money to know what he's doing to Doc Jennings that gets her to make noises like that! You know what. . .

QUICK CUT

BASS

Does this place have a future? [DEEP BREATH IN CONTEMPLATION] I know it does. But not just the South Pole station. Not just the U.S. research centers. I think the question, better put is what future does Antarctica have? Does the Ice have.

There is no better metaphor, no better example of future potential than Antarctica. There is strong and firm land underneath our feet right now. [CHUCKLE] It's about oh...three miles down and you could get there. It will just take time. It's untapped potential.

That's how I see Amundsen Scott. How I see the Ice as a whole. There is so much. . .potential down here. Not just for Americans; mmm-mmm. For Humanity. Up till. . .well very recently; there were very few places on planet earth where national squabbles and state-led disagreements. . .had little to no meaning. Antarctica is the best example of that. So yes. Yes there is a future for this place. [TWO BEAT] It will just take some time.

QUICK CUT

ACT X

ALEXA

Although we only had forty-eight hours to spend at Amundsen Scott, one gets the impression that it would take YEARS to even scratch the surface of what makes this very remote research station, such a polarizing and complex place. Not just a center for research and scientific exploration, it's become a symbol that just as many find dated, or hokey as there are who rally behind the international cooperation and original ideals the Antarctica treaty was founded upon.

As a result of the foreign diplomatic visitation, there is a renewed focus on trying to find a common ground between those who feel a more internal national focus is warranted; and those who feel an outstretched hand of friendship, is the correct answer.

Before we end tonight's episode of Crosshairs, I want to play a segment we were fortunate enough to record in the course of our many interviews. A candid and unfiltered view of what takes place in some of the more hushed quarters of the station.

We need to warn viewers in advance, what you are about to see, may be unsettling to some.

QUICK CUT

NOW IN THE VMF, WE'RE IN A SIDE OFFICE AND MID INTERVIEW

ALEXA

. . .and everybody in the VMF told us YOU were the man to go to for a real, unfiltered view of what life on the station and in the Arches is Truly like. So, Keenan, what can you tell us?

DEEP INTAKE OF BREATH AS HE IS READY TO GIVE HIS ANSWER, WHEN THE DOOR TO THE OFFICE OPENS.

PRODUCER

[HUSHED BUT URGENT]

IT'S THEM! THEY'RE MOVING!

ALEXA

[RUSHED]

Sorry Kennan, we'll pick this up later today!

RUSHED FOOTSTEPS DOWN THE HALL, FOLLOWING.

ALEXA

Shhhhhhh!

FUMBLING NOISE ON THE MICROPHONES. WE CAN ALMOST HEAR BASS SPEAKING IN THE BACKGROUND, BUT THE WORDS ARE A BIT MUFFLED.

ALEXA

[WHISPERING]

Give me the mic. THE MIC! Hurry up. Here, here.

RUSTLING ON THE MICROPONE AS SLOWLY BASS' WORDS BECOME CLEARER. MIC IS STILL SOME DISTANCE FROM THE TEAM, DAPPEN DB LEVEL LOWER THAN NORMAL.

BASS

What did Ambrose and the medical team say?

THOMAS

They're not really set up for autopsy's or anything close to operations a coroner would perform; but from the general exam and observation. . .Gee, his best guess was a severe cerebral hemorrhage; but he wanted to make sure I fully understood; that wasn't his formal diagnosis, just educated guess.

BASS

No, no. I get that. So, what about the other pilot?

THOMAS

[CONFUSED]

What about him?

BASS

What did Ambrose guess happen to him?

THOMAS

OH! I'm sorry Deputy, the cerebral hemorrhage was his determination on both pilots.

KENDRA

BOTH? That's not statically possible. For two people, to suffer the exact same alignment, sitting feet apart.

ZEKE

Anybody else on the plane suffer anything like that themselves?

THOMAS

Nobody. Doctor Ambrose, Timms, Blake & Chu examined everybody on the flight, including the air force guy. Clean bills of health!

KENDRA

Well, that would rule out environmental causal factors. Unless the pilot and co-pilot were direct relatives, genetic causal factors are out.

BASS

Alright, so that leaves. . . what causal vectors?

If not Environmental, or Genetic what about external ones. . .

ZEKE

You mean like chemical?

BASS

[REMEMBERING]

Maybe like food or beverage, or Chamomile tea.

ZEKE

Yeah, they don't serve no airplane meals on flight runs between Mudtown and us. People just bring they own snacks if they want.

BASS

Doctor Pantani called me earlier today. Said the Keck spoke up again. Said Chamomile, standard three times. Zeke: can you call your counterpart in McMurdo; see if plane crews there or anybody can remember seeing the pilots eating or drinking anything before the flight? Keck has had a perfect record up to now, I'm betting that streak continues.

KENDRA

The only reason to target the pilots would be.

THOMAS

To crash the plane!

ZEKE

To kill the diplomats.

BASS

And the Senator. The political shockwave would be massive against the United States, potentially resulting in more seclusionary edicts and policies from the government. The fact that a potential national political challenger in the 24 elections was also on the plane; makes this very. . . incendiary.

THOMAS

Add that onto the disappearance of flight 990[PAUSE] Golly! Whoever is behind all this

really has something against planes. Today's, The Indonesian flight; Deputy Marshal's flight.

BASS

[DEEP SIGH]

Look, I said I was only going to be gone for 10 minutes. I need to get back up to the banquet. Let's keep in mind we don't know ANYTHING for a fact. All we have right now are suspicions and educating guess. No facts. No proof. Given everything taking place in the world today; talk like this in dangerous. Keep this amongst us only. We can update the others; but seriously; let's keep it contained in the barn! I need to get back.

CAMERA MIC QUICKLY BROUGHT DOWN, ALEXA AND PRODUCER HIDING IN CORNER

ALEXA

[WHISPERING]

SHHH SHHH! DON'T MOVE.

DOOR OPENING AND BOOTS WALKING BY, RST OF THE FOOTSTEPS HEADING OTHER DIRECTION.

QUICK CUT

BACK TO THE SEATTLE BROADCAST STUDIO

ALEXA

When my editor first handed me this proposal, I honestly thought this was going to be nothing more than what we call in journalism, a fluff piece. Devoid of any meat, merit, or motivation. Just window dressing to lure in prospective viewership. Forty-Eight hours in a frozen box on the tail end of the planet covering a dinner, not the prizes Pulitzers are made of.

The more we looked around the station and the interviews of the local residents, the more perplexing the view. Allocation of tax-payer funding on dubious experiments. Long term effects of human isolation in some of the more seasoned senior scientist. Talk of missing commercial airliners and a potential assassination attempt

against a young maverick U.S. Senator. Hardly, a fluff piece after all. We're conducting additional investigations, and I have a feeling; we may be returning to the South Pole. There is just something about[SLIGHT PAUSE] that Ice.

NEWS OUTRO JINGLE

BEGATHON AND 90 DS OUTRO JINGLE