

WOLF 359

"CHANGE OF MIND"

by

Gabriel Urbina

Story by:

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WRITER'S NOTE:

The following is the script for a special, one-off episode of **WOLF 359**. The plot is a largely independent story, unconnected to (most of the) events and characters of recent episodes.

However, certain information that has been introduced in previous episodes is taken as understood by the audience in the following script. For the reader's convenience, the following is a quick reference guide:

The story of **WOLF 359** follows the crew of the **U.S.S. Hephaestus Station**, a research station sent into deep space to study the unique properties of a distant star. Over the course of their time there, the characters discover that the mission's corporate sponsor, **Goddard Futuristics**, has some secret, nefarious purposes behind the mission.

In time, they also discover that they are not the first crew that Goddard Futuristics has sent up to the Hephaestus. There was an earlier team there. This Special Episode tells their story.

This earlier crew is comprised by:

Captain Isabel Lovelace - the station's hotheaded commanding officer.

Communications Officer Lambert - her stuffy, by-the-book second-in-command.

Doctor Kuan Hui - a sarcastic, brilliant astrophysicist.

Doctor Victoire Fourier - a younger, up-and-coming astrophysicist, and Hui's subordinate.

Petty Officer Mace Fisher - the station's burly, taciturn engineer.

Doctor Elias Selberg - a reserved, intensely private Soviet biologist. Unknown to the rest of the crew, he's running a series of radiation exposure experiments on Officer Fisher. Also unknown to the rest of the crew: his real name is Dmitri Vologin.

and **Rhea** - an artificial intelligence unit that runs all of the station's automated functions. A non-verbal unit, Rhea communicates through beeps and through text via a series of small consoles mounted on the walls throughout the station.

Not present on the station but also relevant is **Mr. Cutter**, the mission's direct supervisor (and the series's primary villain). Bright, pleasant, and completely machiavellian,

Cutter tends to unnerve any and everyone he meets.

Not introduced in the series yet: **Eris**. Like Rhea, an A.I. unit. Unlike Rhea, a very advanced model, and very much verbal.

Everything else should be more or less explained over the course of the script.

- Gabriel Urbina

CAST LIST

LOVELACE ... CECILIA LYNN-JACOBS

LAMBERT ... ZACH VALENTI

FOURIER ... BETH EYRE

HUI ... ARIEL ESTRADA

FISHER ... PETER COLEMAN

SELBERG ... ZACH VALENTI

MR. CUTTER ... SCOTTY SHOEMAKER

ERIS ... MARY KATE WILES

ADDITIONAL VOICES ... ZACH VALENTI

FADE IN:

EXT. FIELD - DAY

A set of sounds we rarely hear on Wolf 359: Blades of grass. Wind. Birds. A river. We're earth-bound. Then: a FOOTSTEP on gravel. It belongs to CAPTAIN ISABEL LOVELACE.

LOVELACE
I... I know this place.

Her voice sounds a bit distant, a bit echoey.

LOVELACE (CONT'D)
West Point. In the winter. Last of
the leaves are falling.

We catch other distant sounds: cadets marching, a whistle...

LOVELACE (CONT'D)
I'm here to - No. Wait.

She looks around again, apprehensive. As if suddenly unsure.

LOVELACE (CONT'D)
This is wrong. I *was* here. I left.

There's another distant sound, SHRILL and HIGH-PITCHED.

LOVELACE (CONT'D)
What is happening? I'm not supposed
to be here.

Louder...

LOVELACE (CONT'D)
I'm supposed to be on -

LOUDER and with a sudden AMBIENT WOOSH! we -

CUT TO:

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - LOVELACE'S QUARTERS - 0800
HOURS

Captain Lovelace's eyes SNAP OPEN. We hear her ALARM CLOCK.
She rises, GROANING in protest. Finally -

LOVELACE
Okay, okay... thank you, Rhea. I'm
awake. Enough.

The ALARM STOPS.

LOVELACE (CONT'D)
 Good morning to you too... How's
 everything looking?

There's a BEEP from RHEA, the station's A.I. We also hear the
 distinct sound of DIGITAL TEXT FILLING A SCREEN.

LOVELACE (CONT'D)
 Fine... fine. Just let me know when
 anything bursts into flame, okay?
 (BEEP, text)
 Yes, Rhea, I meant to say if
 something bursts into flame.

We hear Lovelace getting up: she YAWNS, pulls herself
 upright. After a moment - KNOCK, KNOCK.

LOVELACE (CONT'D)
 Enter.

The DOOR OPENS, and in comes DR. ELIAS SELBERG.

SELBERG
 Captain.

LOVELACE
 Morning, Doc. How's today looking?

SELBERG
 Well within parameters.

LOVELACE
 Hmm. Would you like to play a game?

SELBERG
 ... a game?

LOVELACE
 How long is it going to be before
 something goes *horribly* wrong?

SELBERG
 Captain...

LOVELACE
 No, c'mon? An hour? Two hours?

SELBERG
 No. Nothing is going to -

And then an ALARM starts going off.

SELBERG (CONT'D)

Ah. Well... Could be possible -

LOVELACE

(low)

Christ all mighty do I have to be right *every single time*? Lets go.

She SIGHS, already going out the door. We follow her into -

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - CORRIDORS - CONTINUOUS

We stay with Lovelace as she moves through the station.

LOVELACE

How many times did I say it? His trajectory takes us too close.

SELBERG

Trajectory was *fine*. Personally double checked -

LOVELACE

Well, you forgot to carry a zero somewhere. Get down to electrical. We lose power I want to *at least* have aux.

SELBERG

Yes, sir.

A DOOR OPENS and CLOSES as Selberg exits. A moment later another DOOR OPENS -

FOURIER

Oooh, wrong door.

LOVELACE

(nice try)

Good morning, Doctor Fourier.

DOCTOR VICTOIRE FOURIER, the station's junior astrophysicist, reluctantly falls into step with Lovelace.

FOURIER

Morning, Captain.

LOVELACE

Any insight into all the loud sounds and very angry lights?

FOURIER

Just a... *slight* miscalculation w-

LOVELACE

It doesn't sound slight. It sounds
emergency.

FOURIER

You know how touchy the alarm -

LOVELACE

If we all die because Hui wanted a
new angle for *stargazing*...

FOURIER

We're trying to observe an
unprecedented stellar phenomenon.

LOVELACE

You know what's a key step in
observing? Not. Being. Dead. Are we
about to be dead?

FOURIER

No!

In the distance, something RUMBLE OMINOUSLY.

FOURIER (CONT'D)

Well, probably.

LOVELACE

Fourier...

FOURIER

Everything's *fine*, Captain.

LOVELACE

It better be, I'm not in the mood
for a lecture. Find Hui. Help him
with this.

FOURIER

Will do!

LOVELACE

And don't tell -

FOURIER

Won't do!

Fourier exits through a hatch. Lovelace keeps moving.

LOVELACE

(low, to herself)

Buncha nerds... gonna crash my...

(MORE)

LOVELACE (CONT'D)

(loud)

FISHER!

She OPENS A DOOR, pushing into -

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - ENGINEERING SECTION -
CONTINUOUS

The engine room. A mess of machinery. Working through it is the ship's engineer, PETTY OFFICER MACE FISHER.

LOVELACE

FISHER!

FISHER

(not looking up)

Heya, Captain. G'morning.

LOVELACE

(pointed)

Is it? Are we going to *explode*?

FISHER

Pfft, explode? What makes you say that?

(re: alarms)

Oh that? That's nothing. Don't you worry your pretty little head about that.

LOVELACE

Oh, I do worry, Fisher. I do worry my pretty, normal-sized head.

FISHER

Ahhh... a bit of duct tape and elbow grease. We'll be fine.

LOVELACE

We better! I took a heck of a risk with this maneuver of Hui's! The last thing I need is to have it blow up in my face and have to hear "I told you so" from -

LAMBERT

CAPTAIN!

Lovelace shuts her eyes: *Ah shit.*

After a BEAT she turns around, finding herself face to face with the prim, proper, and profoundly unhappy figure of COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER SAMUEL LAMBERT. Her second-in-command.

Lovelace INHALES DEEPLY, steadying herself.

LOVELACE
Officer Lambert. Good morning.

LAMBERT
I need to speak with you for a moment.

LOVELACE
Yes, I'm sure you do. Fisher, keep us in orbit.

FISHER
Aye-aye, Cap.

And with that, she leaves, Lambert hot on her heels.

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - CORRIDORS - CONTINUOUS

Lovelace moves through the station.

LOVELACE
Lambert, you've got from here to the bridge. What can I do for you?

LAMBERT
Captain, I have to -

LAMBERT (CONT'D)
- once again -

LOVELACE
Once again...

LAMBERT
- register my strenuous objection to this trajectory adjustment. It's a clear violation of the stellar aviation safety protocols -

LOVELACE
Mm-hmm...

LAMBERT
- it's in flagrant disregard of all orbiting safety procedures -

LOVELACE
Mm-hmm...

LAMBERT
- **obviously** a massive departure from best practices as outlined in -

LOVELACE

Mm-hmm...

LAMBERT

Could you please stop that?!

LOVELACE

Mm-mmm. What else?

LAMBERT

Sir, Pryce and Carter five eighty-two very clearly states that -

LOVELACE

Isn't that the one about not using toilet paper to patch up the coffeemaker?

LAMBERT

Sir, you have to take this seriously!

LOVELACE

Fine, I'll do that as soon as you relax! We've got a full team of professionals. They can handle it.

Around them the STATION SHAKES. It sounds pretty ominous.

LOVELACE (CONT'D)

They can handle it or I get to kill Doctor Hui. Either way, it's gonna be a fun morning.

LAMBERT

It isn't just the danger. This is interfering with everyone's regular jobs. Selberg hasn't rotated his samples, you haven't even done your commander's log for this week.

LOVELACE

Oh, for God's... Here, you got one of the recorders on you?

He HOLDS IT UP. She SNATCHES IT, and CLICKS A BUTTON.

LOVELACE (CONT'D)

This is the log of Captain Isabel Lovelace, on board the U.S.S. Hephaestus Station. It is Day 199, everything is great, Lambert needs to chill, The End.

(MORE)

LOVELACE (CONT'D)
 (CLICKS it off)
 There, see? Commander's Log: check.

LAMBERT
 That's not what I -

LOVELACE
 Oh, hold on a sec. I've got an
 physicist to put the fear of me
 into.

She OPENS A DOOR, and we follow them into -

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

The control center for the station. At the helm, holding onto the navigation control column and furiously concentrated on what he's doing, is DOCTOR KUAN HUI. This is Fourier's superior, the station's senior astrophysicist.

Lovelace and Lambert both make a beeline at him. As they do, another JOLT runs through the station, making various objects around them CLATTER.

LOVELACE
 Hui: what are you doing with my
 station?

HUI
 Morning, Captain. Just adjusting
 our sidereal trajectory to
 compensate for the angle of -

LOVELACE
 Plain. English. *Please.*

HUI
 I'm just... backing it up a
 couple... hundred thousand clicks.

LOVELACE
 And all the turbulence? The alarms?
 The ominous rumblings?

HUI
 That's just some... gravitational
 potholes. And stellar wind bumps.

LAMBERT
 Doctor Hui, this entire maneuver is
 in clear violation of safety
 protocol 7G and -

LOVELACE

Lambert! Not now! Hui, do something.

HUI

Something like... what?

LOVELACE

I don't know, like stopping?

HUI

Ohh, noooo, that's not a good idea. Right now, gravitationally speaking, we're in... I guess you'd call it the... Zone of Terror?

LAMBERT

The what?

LOVELACE

Why are we in the Zone of Terror?!

HUI

Class twelve stellar flare. No one's ever seen one, and we're about to get one in... thirty-six hours, seventeen minutes, and forty-three seconds. But we were going to be on the wrong side of the orbit. We would have missed it.

LOVELACE

So we're all going to die just so you can see some star fireworks?

HUI

We're... *almost* certainly not!

LAMBERT

There are multiple manuals that strictly forbid -

LOVELACE

Lambert! Still not now!

A JOLT runs through the station. The LIGHTS FLICKER.

LOVELACE (CONT'D)

Is... is it me or is the turbulence getting *stronger*?

HUI

Never fear, Captain. We'll just -

There's a BEEP from his console. He looks at his screen.

HUI (CONT'D)
- huh, that's... okay...

LOVELACE
(pointed)
Hui? Everything all right?

HUI
Hmm? Oh! Yeah, yeah. Everything's fine. But you... may want to hold onto something.

The STATION IS VIOLENTLY ROCKED. And then AGAIN. And AGAIN.

LOVELACE
Hui...

HUI
Yes, Captain. I know, I know.

LAMBERT
Hui...

HUI
Yes, Officer Grumpy Pants.

LAMBERT
Don't call me that!

The SHAKING INTENSIFIES. GLASS CRACKS.

LOVELACE
Hui... LAMBERT (CONT'D)
Hui...

HUI
Just give it a moment.

LOVELACE
ONE. LAMBERT
ONE.

Finally the STATION SETTLES. The vibration stops completely.

HUI
There. See? Light as a feather.

There's a BEAT as Lovelace and Lambert appreciate how un-crashed they are. Then -

LOVELACE
See Lambert? I told you everything was under control!

LAMBERT

This is still a very egregious violation of safety regulations 74-B, 62-Y, 56-R -

LOVELACE

God, stop it with the -

Hui SIGHS. Behind him, a DOOR OPENS, and Fourier enters.

FOURIER

Kuan. How did it go?

HUI

Oh, fine, fine. We're on a stable -

LOVELACE

No, **YOU'RE** going to listen to me!

FOURIER

Oh. Oh dear. They're at it again?

HUI

Oh yeah.

FOURIER

Well then. Just another happy, sunny day out here, seven and a half light years away from Earth.

And off of that, we go into our -

OPENING CREDITS

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS - 2200 HOURS

Lovelace and Lambert arguing. They've been here for a *while*.

LOVELACE

Lambert, that's *completely* ridiculous. This is about you being reasonable, for once.

LAMBERT

No, this is about station safety.

LOVELACE

It's about *you* getting your nose out of the books and -

As Lovelace speaks, the quality of her vocals change. We go from listening to them directly to hearing them through a speaker, and suddenly we are in -

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - LABORATORY - CONTINUOUS

LOVELACE

(over comms)

- seeing if you are capable of even the pale imitation of an original thought!

LAMBERT

(over comms)

You don't think that *maybe* we've evolved past -

LAMBERT (CONT'D)

- what we can do thinking by ourselves -

LOVELACE

Just because you've evolved into an asinine teacher's pet

-

And on it goes. We hear an appreciative whistle: *damn*.

HUI

Boy, they're really going at it...

Hui's perched above a console, listening to the carnage taking place in the other room.

FOURIER

Not supposed to eavesdrop, Kuan.

She's in the back of the room, heroically attempting to be absorbed in a book.

HUI

Oh, I'm sorry, Victoire. Are you joining us today?

FOURIER

No, I'm not.

HUI

I *thought* that you were reading.

FOURIER

I am reading, shut up.

HUI

That's funny, because I remember you saying something about not wanting anything to do with my lurid little -

She FLIPS the PAGES of the book, SNAPS it SHUT.

FOURIER

Oh honestly, how could anyone focus right now? Between those two performing their impression of attack Rottweilers and this *bunk* you're making me read, I'm surprised I haven't lost my mind.

HUI

Lovecraft isn't bunk.

FOURIER

Fine: meet you in the middle, lets call it "drivel."

HUI

It's a classic. Just because you're too genteel to appreciate the -

In a flash, she's opened the book.

FOURIER

(the most mocking voice she can muster)

"What they saw were organic shapes, pinkish things with crustaceous bodies bearing vast pairs of dorsal fins, membraneous wings, and a sort of convoluted ellipsoid -"

(normal voice)

"Convoluted ellipsoid," Kuan?

HUI

Just because the vocabulary is a bit more *polished* than what you -

OVER THE COMMS: CRASH! Hui and Fourier's attention snaps to the console. BEAT. Then -

OVER THE COMMS: the ARGUMENT RESUMES. Hui SIGHS.

HUI (CONT'D)

Well, if you don't like it, you don't have to read it.

He snatches up the book.

FOURIER
 No, wait, give it here.
 (BEAT, lower:)
 I've read every book I brought up
 here four times. I'm sick of them.

He smiles, releases the book.

HUI
 Could be worse. At least it's not
 that Wodehouse book you lent me.

FOURIER
 You *loved* the Wodehouse.

BEAT.

HUI
 All right, fine. I kinda loved the
 Wodehouse.

FOURIER
 Good boy. Now be quiet, I'm trying
 to listen.

For a BEAT they just take in the argument. Then, without
 taking their eyes off the console:

HUI
 They're really going at it.

FOURIER
 Ehh, same old, same old. He
 threatens her with official
 sanctions that'll get her
 discharged, she threatens him with
 physical violence that'll make his
 bones break, blah, blah, blah...

HUI
 No, *really*. I think they might kill
 each other this time...

FOURIER
 Hmm... Ten dollars on Captain
 Lovelace.

HUI
 Noooo.

FOURIER
 Five dollars.

HUI

No!

FOURIER

Oh, come on! Where's your competitive spirit, you reptile?

HUI

I don't think that -

But at that moment, there's a GRUFF GROWL. There's a CLICK and the FEED CUTS OFF.

SELBERG

I am still waiting for radiographic readings. Get back to work.

HUI

Yes, sir.

FOURIER

Yes, sir.

As they leave, we -

CUT BACK TO:

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS -
CONTINUOUS

LOVELACE

I don't know how else I can explain this to you, *Officer*.

LAMBERT

Well, *Captain*, maybe if you stopped explaining and listened to -

LOVELACE

I have listened! The first twenty-two times you read me the stupid manual on -

LAMBERT

The people who wrote it are smarter than us, have more experience on -

LOVELACE

You just want things to be the way you want them to be!

LAMBERT

This is **not about what I want!**

That got heated. A BEAT as they stare daggers at each other.

FISHER
Ooooookay then...

Fisher CLEARS HIS THROAT. It's suddenly clear that he's been present this entire time.

FISHER (CONT'D)
That was certainly... *productive*.
But if we could return to the
official personnel review portion
of the evening? Maybe come back to
my original question?

LOVELACE
Uhhh, yes.

LAMBERT
Sure.

LOVELACE
What was the question?

FISHER
"And how are we doing today?"

BEAT for Lovelace and Lambert's vast embarrassment.

LOVELACE
I think... fine. Yes.

LAMBERT
Absolutely, yes, very...

LOVLEACE
Fine.

LAMBERT
Yes. That.

BEAT.

FISHER
Of course. Because when one goes
into an apoplectic fugue state and
spends - oh dear God in Heaven -
fifty-four minutes yelling at
another person, deaf to all else
around them, the word to describe
the situation is... *fine*.

BEAT.

LAMBERT
I'm sorry, Officer Fisher.

LOVELACE
Yeah, it... won't happen again.

BEAT. Then Fisher EXHALES, tired.

FISHER
Sure, whatever. Let's... call it a night on this one, all right?

LOVELACE
Sure. Lambert, we're done. Get.

BEAT. Lambert's not leaving.

LOVELACE (CONT'D)
Lambert?

LAMBERT
This is an official personnel review meeting, sir. I am not authorized to leave until my Commanding Officer dismisses me.

LOVELACE
You're an annoying buzzkill with a weird nose.

FISHER
Captain...

LOVELACE
Oh, all right.
(with exaggerated pomp)
Communications Officer Lambert, you are hereby dismissed from this official meeting and formally invited to return to your duties.

LAMBERT
... thank you... Captain.

And with that Lambert exits, SLAMMING the DOOR behind him.

LOVELACE
Troglodyte...
(sees Fisher)
What? C'mon. What's with the face?

FISHER
You want some advice, Captain?

LOVELACE
No.

FISHER

Kinda makes me want to give it to
you even more...

Lovelace EXHALES, crosses her arms... but she nods: *well?*

FISHER (CONT'D)

I think that you should give
Lambert a chance.

LOVELACE

What. I'm not -

FISHER

Ah-ah, no. I put up with an hour of
you two going at each other like
you were getting paid for it. Now
it's my turn.

LOVELACE

But -

FISHER

Zip it, sir.

(BEAT)

He's a smart guy. Wouldn't be up
here if he wasn't. And there's some
good stuff in those manuals, or
they wouldn't be up here either.
And... I think the two of you have
more in common than you realize.

(off her reaction)

Yeah, that's right, I said it.
Lambert was the only one that
agreed with you this morning. And
guess what: you were right! Hui's
maneuver was dangerous! And yet...
after you agreed... and were
right... the two of you still had a
fight *with each other*. Seems to me,
when that sort of thing happens,
it's not so much about what's
happening out here...

(he taps Lovelace's head)

... it's about what's going on in
here, Captain.

Lovelace takes a DEEP BREATH. There's a BEEP.

FISHER (CONT'D)

And with that, I've got a date with
a coil compressor. G'night!

He CLOSES the DOOR behind him, leaving Lovelace alone.

LOVELACE
Yeah... good night.

Lovelace takes a DEEP BREATH. After a LONG BEAT -

LOVELACE (CONT'D)
Rhea? Could you connect me with
Doctor Hui, please?

There's a BEEP from the console, followed by a BUZZER.

HUI
(over comms)
Yeeees?

LOVELACE
Hui... do you have any time
tonight?

HUI
For you, Captain? Always.

Off of that, we -

CUT TO:

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - AIRLOCK - 2300 HOURS

Lovelace, now wearing a space suit, goes through the inner door of the airlock. It snaps shut behind her with a HISS.

LOVELACE
Hui, you reading me?

HUI
(over comms)
Five by five, Captain. You should
be all set: tether's secure, and
you've got forty minutes of oxygen
in the tank.

LOVELACE
Thanks, Kuan.

Lovelace reaches out and TURNS A LEVER.

EXT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - HULL - CONTINUOUS

The airlock outer door OPENS with a BLAST OF AIR. Lovelace emerges from it. She plants her feet on the hull with the suit's magnetic boots: *THWOOMP... THWOOMP...*

HUI

How's the weather out there?

LOVELACE

Quiet. I'm going to turn off the mag boots, do a bit of floating.

HUI

Enjoy. I'm right here if you need anything, just let me know.

She hits a SWITCH, and with a BEEP her magnetic boots turn off. Weightless, she floats upwards. There is a moment of ABSOLUTE, GLORIOUS SILENCE as she leaves the station behind.

Then she HITS ANOTHER BUTTON. Through her suit's internal speakers, a SONG BEGINS TO PLAY. She turns her gaze upwards.

Tiny, alone, she floats.

CUT TO:

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - GALLEY - 0800 HOURS

The next morning. Breakfast. Everyone is gathered around a table, chatting as they polish off the last bits.

LOVELACE

All right, folks, settle down. First things first: in spite of some of our more hare-brained ideas, we've somehow made it to our two-hundredth day.

There's GENERAL APPLAUSE from the table.

LOVELACE (CONT'D)

We'll be doing some celebrating tonight once we're all off duty. Doctor Hui has even arranged a... what was it again?

HUI

A never-before-observed class twelve stellar flare.

LOVELACE

A *that*. So if you want to boldly watch what no man has watched before, that's in the observatory deck at 2100 hours. Thank you, astro department.

There's some good-natured CHUCKLES from Hui and Fourier.

LOVELACE (CONT'D)

But... before we get to that... as Officer Lambert has so kindly reminded me... there's a message for all of us from Command.

There's GENERAL GROANS from Hui, Fourier, and Fisher.

LOVELACE (CONT'D)

Yeah. Lets just get this over with. Rhea? Roll the tape.

There's a CRACKLE OF STATIC from the speakers. Then -

MR. CUTTER

(over comms)

Hello campers!

This is MR. CUTTER, the mission's corporate liaison.

MR. CUTTER (CONT'D)

Mr. Cutter here. Just wanted to send you all a quick message for your two-hundredth! Now that the introductory phase of the mission is over, I'm sure you're all ready to dig into some work of *real* substance. Remember Pryce and Carter 982: Good things come to those who wait, but *great* things come to those who waste no time in getting back to work. But ahh, you don't need me to tell you that, you rock stars. Super proud, miss you, can't wait to see you, keep up the great work!

And with another BURST OF STATIC, the message closes.

FISHER

Is it me, or does he get creepier every time we hear from him?

LOVELACE

It's not just you. All right: you heard the suit, let's look alive. Jobs. Hui, now that you've *almost* crashed my station, any prep we need for this stellar thing?

HUI

I gotta calibrate some of the instruments, but other than that we should be good to go.

LOVELACE

Good. Selberg? Greenhouse maintenance?

SELBERG

Yes, Captain. And physical examination on Officer Fisher.

FISHER

Yes, yes.

SELBERG

Overdue by a factor of -

FISHER

I'll come by your lab once my first shift is up, all right?

LOVELACE

Fisher, how are the engines? Did they take much of a beating from Mr. Hui's Wild Ride?

FISHER

Ohh, there's a couple of dings... Cracked plaster here and... Yeah, there's some work to do.

LOVELACE

Should I be worried?

FISHER

I wouldn't go that far, but I wouldn't say no to another pair of hands either.

LOVELACE

Lambert, you're with Fisher, do whatever he says.

LAMBERT

I'm sorry, Captain. I can't.

LOVELACE

That's very funny. Go with Fisher and see if you -

LAMBERT

Captain, I'm serious. I can't.

For the first time, Lovelace looks up at Lambert.

LOVELACE

Why not?

LAMBERT

Because I'm busy.

LOVELACE

With what?

LAMBERT

With my *duties* as the station's communications officer.

LOVELACE

Lambert, I'm sure we'll all manage to struggle through a day without being reminded of every little in and out of Pryce and Carter.

LAMBERT

That's not what I mean! I'm talking about my actual duties! Like the D.S.A.L.S.!

FOURIER

I'm sorry, the what?

LAMBERT

The Deep Space Alien Life Survey.

BEAT. Then - Lovelace, Fisher, Hui, and, in spite of herself, Fourier, all ERRUPT INTO LAUGHTER.

LAMBERT (CONT'D)

What? What?

LOVELACE

Oh... oh my God, Lambert...

LAMBERT

What is wrong with all of you?

FISHER

Mate, don't tell me you actually do that "search for alien life" crap.

LAMBERT

Of course I do! I spend seven hours every day scanning deep space radio frequencies for -

HUI

Well, that explains what he does
with himself all day.

Hui and Fisher CRACK UP again.

LOVELACE

All right, that's enough. Lambert,
are you gonna help Fisher or not?

LAMBERT

I am not! I am a member of this
crew. I perform important and
difficult tasks, and I perform them
diligently. The Search for
Extraterrestrial Intelligence *is*
one of this mission's objectives.
And you, Captain, should be doing
everything in your power to help me
carry out that job.

(under his breath)

Instead of making it *more*
difficult, like you always do.

LOVELACE

What was that?

LAMBERT

Nothing.

LOVELACE

No, no. Come on. You got something
to say? Let's have it out.

There's a very LONG BEAT where they stare at each other.

FOURIER

... Captain? I... I'm a bit ahead.
I could take some time off today,
help Fisher with the engines.

LOVELACE

You don't have to do that, Fourier.

FOURIER

Oh, it's... it's really no problem.

BEAT.

LOVELACE

Fine. Fourier, you help Fisher,
Lambert you can do... whatever it
is that you do. Happy endings.

(BEAT)

(MORE)

LOVELACE (CONT'D)
Well? You've all got jobs, don't
you? Let's go! Get to it!

EVERYONE SCRAMBLES, shutting doors as they leave. We -

CUT TO:

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - COMMS ROOM - 1000 HOURS

Lambert by himself. He fiddles with a dial.

LAMBERT
Lambda Sigma Sector, Bearing
Fourteen...

He CLICKS ON the RADIO. There's a SQUEAL OF FEEDBACK and a
BURST OF STATIC. After a BEAT, he SHUTS IT OFF.

LAMBERT (CONT'D)
No contact. Lambda Sigma Sector,
Bearing Fifteen...

There's a BEEP from Rhea. Some text pops up on the screen.

LAMBERT (CONT'D)
Yes, Rhea, I'm fine.
(BEEP, text)
No, I... well, thank you for saying
so. I think you do a great job too.
(BEEP, text)
No, it's not that. This is a very
sensitive mission. Captain Lovelace
is very... *charismatic*, but I don't
always know that -

He's interrupted by a MACHINE. Not one we've heard so far -
it kinda sounds like an old-school stock ticker.

LAMBERT (CONT'D)
What the - ? Is that the Pulse
Beacon Relay?
(BEEP, text)
Looks like we have an incoming
message from Command.
(BEEP, text)
No, I just need a moment to decode
it, and then - huh. That's an
A.P.O. encoding. It's not a general
crew message it's...

There's a CHIME from the machine. A PRINTER starts up.

LAMBERT (CONT'D)
 It's marked for my eyes only.
 (BEEP, text)
 No, I don't know what it's about.

The printer finishes. We hear Lambert TEAR the paper.

LAMBERT (CONT'D)
 Let's see... "Dear Communications Officer Lambert, thank you for your dutiful service and your many detailed reports. We are writing in regards to your multiple formal complaints about the behavior of your commanding officer." Hah! See, Rhea? *I told you* someone read those. "These infractions have been noted in her record, and will be processed upon her return to Earth. In the meantime, however, there is a contingency placed on board your space station designed to address these sorts of crises in the command hierarchy. Please adhere to the following instructions *exactly* as written.

"Step one: please proceed to Storage Room A2 and locate... Box 953." "

And off of that, we -

CUT TO:

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - GREENHOUSE - 1100 HOURS

A lush, cramped, earthy space. Bits of machinery HUM softly. At one of the consoles is Doctor Selberg, trying to do work. Behind him is Captain Lovelace, *not* trying to do work.

LOVELACE
 I mean, you spend a fortune sending A-Team scientists to deep space and you put that guy as second-in-command? What was Cutter smoking?

SELBERG
 Officer Lambert is skilled technician, no?

LOVELACE

If you call turning a radio on and off a skill. But he's such a tool!

SELBERG

Right...

LOVELACE

And I don't mean that in the colloquial sense, I mean literally. He has no mind of his own, he just does whatever Command programs him to do.

SELBERG

Quite. Yes.

LOVELACE

(horrible Lambert impression)

"Oh, it's breakfast time. Better check the manuals to see if I'm allowed to have any pancakes!"

SELBERG

And this is problem?

LOVELACE

Yes! Of course is problem! I need someone who has a mind of their own!

(off Selberg's look)

What?

SELBERG

You want someone with mind of own, yes? That is ideal for second-in-command?

LOVELACE

Yeah.

SELBERG

You are perhaps needing someone who... questions superior officer? Who does not immediately do what is told? Who will fight for what they think is right way of doing job?

LOVELACE

Oh, shut up and get back to work.

SELBERG

With pleasure.

Selberg turns to the console, Lovelace head out, and we -

CUT TO:

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - ENGINEERING - 1200 HOURS

Fisher and Fourier together in the engineering section.

FISHER

All right, you're doing great. Just hold that in place for a second...

FOURIER

Okay...

WHIRR! Fisher uses a high-powered screwdriver to set whatever Fourier is holding into place. It continues over:

FOURIER (CONT'D)

You... you know, Fisher...

FISHER

Mmm?

FOURIER

Captain... Captain Lovelace...

FISHER

Mm-hmm?

FOURIER

Well, she's... I mean, she's **great**.

FISHER

Mm-hmm?

FOURIER

Just terrific. But there are moments here and there when she can

-

FISHER

You're scared of her.

FOURIER

Yeah, a little bit.

FISHER

Well, she's a pretty scary lady.

FOURIER

No, it's not - well, she *is*, but -

FISHER
You gotta hold still.

FOURIER
Sorry. I just... wonder if she'd...
be *bored* without something to fight
against. And I get the sense that
if Lambert wasn't around...

FISHER
She'd be picking on you.

FOURIER
There but for the grace of Goddard,
yeah. What do you think?

Fisher thinks for a BEAT. Finally -

FISHER
I think you worry too much, young
one. And I think you're gonna be
fine. But I also think it's a good
day to not be Sam Lambert, eh?

FOURIER
Yeah.

FISHER
Right. Come on, next ones.

And as they move onto the next item on their list, we -

CUT TO:

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - STOREROOM - 1300 HOURS

LAMBERT
You're sure it said Store room A2?

There's a BEEP from Rhea, and text on one of the screens.

LAMBERT (CONT'D)
Okay, I'll try that.
(lower, to himself)
Of course Command would think about
these sorts of things. *Of course*
they'd have a -

He suddenly stops cold. He's spotted it: **Box 953.**

LAMBERT (CONT'D)
Rhea? Is it? The... really big one?
(BEEP)
(MORE)

LAMBERT (CONT'D)
 With the label that says...
 "Danger: sensitive contents?"
 (BEEP)
 Oookay. Let's get everyone else.

Off of that, we -

CUT TO:

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - CARGO BAY - 1400 HOURS

Box 953 now lies in the middle of the cargo bay. Around it stands everyone in the crew. Fisher, Fourier, and Hui inspect the box. Selberg and Lambert go over some papers. Lovelace stands in the back, profoundly unimpressed.

LOVELACE
 It's a big box. How did we ever get by without a big friggin' box in the middle of my cargo bay?

LAMBERT
 Very funny, Captain.

LOVELACE
 Lambert, why are you making us waste our time with this thing?

SELBERG
 (re: papers)
 Actually, Captain, it looks like going through contents of box is priority one item.

FISHER
 Officer Sam's got himself a Command communique. Looks like it came from the top of the food chain.

LOVELACE
 And we're just supposed to drop everything?

Yes.

LAMBERT

FISHER
 Powers that Be say, "Jump..."

LOVELACE
 Ugh... Hui, what can you tell me about this thing?

HUI

Well, Captain, I'm still in the early stages my survey, but I think it's safe to say...

(knocks on the box)

Yep, it's definitely made out of some kind of metal.

LOVELACE

Hui...

FOURIER

(ear pressed to the box)

There's also some kind of sound coming from inside of it.

LOVELACE

How delightfully informative. How about opening the damn thing?

HUI

Uh, yeah, that's not gonna happen.

FISHER

See those three deadbolts? That's industrial grade titanium.

LOVELACE

Uh-huh. And could someone explain to me why this isn't just a huge waste of t -

SELBERG

Captain? A moment, please.

He gestures towards the back of the cargo bay. Lovelace SIGHS, but follows him. Once they get there:

LOVELACE

(hissed whisper)

What?

SELBERG

(low)

Captain, have you considered possibility that simply... letting matters proceed to conclusion may be more efficient than the arguing with Officer Lambert?

LOVELACE

Why would I - ?

SELBERG

And besides - are you not supposed to be in looking for common ground?

BEAT.

LOVELACE

Fisher's been talking to you, too?

SELBERG

Little bit, yes.

LOVELACE

Is everyone in on this?

SELBERG

Little bit, yes.

LOVELACE

Ughhh, *fine*.

With a SIGH, she turns back to the others. Selberg follows.

LOVELACE (CONT'D)

Nerds: give me some good news.

FOURIER

Actually, I think I have something. Looks like the thing's coded to open for Officer Lambert, and the entire system is just voice locked.

LOVELACE

So what? We just need to say, "Please access the contents of Box 953?"

LAMBERT

No, I would have to say, "Please access the contents of Box 953," for it to -

COMPUTER

Voice recognition: Samuel Lambert.

There's a SHARP BURST OF AIR and a few PNEUMATIC HISSES as the box opens. As this is ye olde radio, we can't see it, but we hear the hum of a MACHINE and the churn of GEARS.

LOVELACE

All right... I'll take weird-ass contraptions for a thousand. Hui?

HUI

Weird-ass contraptions sounds about right to me. Doctor S.?

SELBERG

Not... sure...

LOVELACE

Lambert, what are we supposed to do with this thing?

LAMBERT

(going through papers)

Uhh... right. There are supposed to be six openings on the front of the machine.

FISHER

That'll be those right there.

LAMBERT

We're each supposed to place our hands into one of those openings.

LOVELACE

And then?

LAMBERT

Umm, that's a good question.

(off her look)

That's the end of the directions! We're just supposed to put our hands in and wait for further instructions.

Lovelace SIGHS, but -

LOVELACE

All right, everyone, you heard the clipboard. Pick an opening.

Everyone places their hands inside. After a moment -

LOVELACE (CONT'D)

Now what? Do we shake them all about? How *exactly* are we supposed to receive further instruct-

At that moment we hear the sound of a new part of the machine COMING TO LIFE, and MOVING, DOWNWARDS, SHARPLY, and then, *horribly* - the SOUND OF METAL PIERCING FLESH -

LOVELACE (CONT'D)

AHH!

Then - ALL THE SOUND CUTS OUT. All we can hear is Lovelace's breathing. She looks around, realizing that she's no longer on the Hephaestus. Suddenly, she's in -

INT./EXT. - MENTAL WHITE SPACE - N/A

A completely white void. No features, no items, no people.

LOVELACE

What the... ? Where am - ? Hello?
Hello?

MR. CUTTER

Hello, Isabel.

Lovelace spins around - and almost has a heart attack.

Standing behind her, spiffy as ever in a freshly-pressed suit, and wearing his best Cheshire Cat grin, is MR. CUTTER.

MR. CUTTER (CONT'D)

It's good to see you.

LOVELACE

Mis - mister Cutter? You're here?

MR. CUTTER

Well... here-ish. Welcome to the waiting room!

LOVELACE

What is - ?

MR. CUTTER

Mental blank space. Think of it as a loading screen. A place for us to talk before the action begins.

LOVELACE

Act - action? What is happening?

MR. CUTTER

How's your hand feeling?

LOVELACE

What?

MR. CUTTER

You feel a very slight discomfort in the back of your hand - just a tiny pinch - don't you?

LOVELACE

... yeah.

MR. CUTTER

That's where we've hooked you in.
Very sophisticated system - just
needs an entry point into your
nervous system and -
(clicks his tongue)
Lets us project right into your
head.

LOVELACE

So all of this is inside my head?
None of it is real?

MR. CUTTER

"Of course it is happening inside
your head, but why on Earth should
that mean it's not real?" Oooh, I
always wanted to say that one!
(BEAT)
This isn't really me either. It's
just an... imprint of my
personality. Here to act as a
guide.

LOVELACE

A guide for *what*?

MR. CUTTER

Just a second - let me network in
everyone else.

He SNAPS HIS FINGERS, and instantaneously the other five
members of the crew are standing next to Lovelace.

There's a small, overlapping barrage of people's names and,
"Are you all right?"s from the crew as they spot each other.

FOURIER

Captain, what is this?

LOVELACE

I don't know. Care to explain,
Lambert?

LAMBERT

I, uh... further instructions?

SELBERG

Hyperconductive neural pathway feed
link. Very... impressive.

HUI

Yeah, this is some next gen of the next gen tech going on here. Why would they stick it on -

MR. CUTTER

All right, folks, settle down. Now, we are here because we've gotten some slightly alarming reports from your station. Couple of our mission items aren't being taken care of *quite* as well as we'd like. Now, we're not here to play the blame game, these things happen, and - and you guys? I mean, you're *killing it* up there. But it is important to catch the little things before they grow into bigger things. Which is why, today, we're going to go through - drum roll please - a **TEAM BUILDING EXERCISE!**

We can but imagine the DEATH GLARE Lovelace gives Lambert.

LAMBERT

I - I - this is not my fault!

LOVELACE

This ***is*** your fault.

MR. CUTTER

For today's training, we're doing a simulation exercise. We want to make sure you're up to spec with some of the more... extreme situations you might encounter. Which means... field trip!

He CLAPS HIS HANDS TOGETHER, and they find themselves in -

INT. U.S.S. VALKYRIE - HANGAR BAY - N/A

The hangar bay of an old, decrepit space ship. It looks like a derelict: broken, dirty, and badly in need of repairs. The crew members all take in the sudden new surroundings.

FOURIER

Are - are we back?

FISHER

Nah... this isn't the Hephaestus.

MR. CUTTER

Well-spotted, Mace. Welcome to the U.S.S. Valkyrie! This is one of our tragedy cases - it went missing back in the early 2000's. We're standing in our best artist's recreation of the ship.

HUI

And... what exactly are we supposed to do here? Um, sir?

MR. CUTTER

Your mission, should you choose to accept it, and I strongly recommend you *do*, is to solve the mystery of what happened to the crew.

FOURIER

That's it?

MR. CUTTER

Well... there's gonna be a few... *surprises* thrown in the middle. Just to keep you sharp.

FOURIER

(low, to herself)

Oh, why do I open my mouth...?

MR. CUTTER

Find the box, solve the mystery, do it before the time limit runs out.

FISHER

How long is that?

MR. CUTTER

We've found that withholding the precise time limit applies the pressure more effectively.

LOVELACE:

Lovely. Sir, no disrespect, but is this really necessary? We have -

MR. CUTTER

Yes, it is.

He's suddenly dark and forceful.

MR. CUTTER (CONT'D)

Until I have given the all clear,
this is mission priority item zero:
it takes precedence over any and
all other functions. You will run
the test, as many times as
necessary, until I am fully
satisfied with your performance.
Are we clear?

Whoa. Lovelace stares at him for a BEAT. Finally -

LOVELACE

Ugh, *fine*. Lets just do this thing.

MR. CUTTER

Oh, what an excellent choice,
Captain. All right, then! Clock is
running, have fun!

And... he's gone. Everyone breathes a bit easier.

FOURIER

Definitely creepier.

LOVELACE

All right, let's figure this out.
Any thoughts?

FISHER

Here, hang on.

He's pressing buttons on a panel mounted on the wall. There's
a BEEP and the sound of an old system BOOTING UP.

FISHER (CONT'D)

Still a bit of aux power.

FOURIER

What have you got there, Fisher?

FISHER

Basic ship-wide schematics.
(pointing them out)
Here we are... That door over there
leads to the bridge. That one over
there goes to the crew quarters,
and *that* one goes to the lab.

LOVELACE

Nice. Fisher, you and Lambert check
out the bridge. Hui and Fourier,
crew and Captain's quarters.

(MORE)

LOVELACE (CONT'D)
 Selberg, the two of us'll tackle
 the lab. Rendezvous back here in
 twenty minutes. Move fast, and keep
 an eye out for any clues - lets see
 if we can figure this out before we
 run into any of Mr. Cutter's
 "surprises."

Aaaaaaand... break! DOORS OPEN and we -

CUT TO:

INT. U.S.S. VALKYRIE - COMMS ROOM - 5 MINUTES LATER

CLICK. A flashlight turns on as Fisher and Lambert enter and scan the room. It's apparent they've also entered something of a war zone: the walls are bullet-ridden, and chunks of metal floating ominously around them.

Fisher WHISTLES appreciatively.

FISHER
 Well... looks like these fellas had
 themselves quite the bar fight.

LAMBERT
 Fisher, we don't know what happened
 here.

FISHER
 Riiight... I'm sure there's a very
reasonable explanation for how all
 those bullets got lodged in the
 walls. Maybe all the floating
 shrapnel is just an interior
 decorating choice? No judgment.
 (turns around)
 Oh, look! That's a pretty diesel
 little barricade around the door.
 Either talent show night went
 really wrong, or -

LAMBERT
 Or there was some sort of incident.
 Yes, *fine*.

FISHER
 Thank you. Reckon any of the
 consoles still work?

LAMBERT
 I'll check it out.
 (BEAT)
 (MORE)

LAMBERT (CONT'D)

Have you ever heard of anything like this?

FISHER

What mutinies? Hmm, not exactly common, but it *does* happen. My boyfriend found a couple of stories, back when I first got assigned to the Hephaestus. Wasn't happy.

LAMBERT

And what... causes them?

FISHER

Ah, usually some poor bloke doesn't handle the big black way as well as you'd like. Starts hacking into the rest of the crew's brains with your standard-issue melon baller.

(off of Lambert's look)

Look, mate, don't ask if you don't want to know!

Lambert SIGHS, tinkers with the console.

LAMBERT

We don't know this was caused by the crew. There could have been an external factor.

FISHER

An external factor with AK-47s?

LAMBERT

Just... Don't jump to conclusions. The Command vetting process is very thorough, I'm sure they -

But at that moment, the comms console CRACKLES to life. It unlocks a message almost entirely garbled by STATIC.

VOICE

This - geant Findley - Our demands were - You have no - We control all key - The only path is surren -

FISHER

Ready to jump yet?

LAMBERT

Oh, be quiet. Let me try to clean this up.

We hear Lambert TUNE the CONSOLE. The message gets CLEANER.

VOICE

- not wish to harm anyone. Vermeer,
Dyson: if you surrender the
explosives and put down your -
nobody else needs to die for
Lorre's damn plan, I prom -

But CRSSSSH, the message dissolves into STATIC again.

FISHER

Well, what a nice, obliging fellow.
(BEAT)
You okay, Lambert?

LAMBERT

Yeah. Yeah, I guess I'm just...
Let's keep going so we can get out
of here.

As the two move off, we -

CUT TO:

INT. U.S.S. VALKYRIE - CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS - 5 MINUTES LATER

Fourier and Hui searching the room. A METAL DRAWER OPENS.

FOURIER

Kuan, look at this. I think these
are the Captain's personal effects.
There's Command epaulets, a ring...
and a pocket watch. Looks like real
gold, too.

HUI

Does it still run?

CLICK. Fourier OPENS it.

FOURIER

No, but there's an inscription.
"From A to E. All my love." But...
the inscription on the door, didn't
it say Captain J. Lorre? Who's A
and E?

HUI

(shrugging)
Maybe it's a family heirloom?

Another DRAWER OPENS.

HUI (CONT'D)
Aha! Pay dirt. Here we go.

We hear a BOOK OPENING and PAGES TURNING.

FOURIER
What have you got?

Hui FLIPS to the cover.

HUI
Diary of Lieutenant Andrew Vermeer.
(clears throat)
"It's started. Findley's taken the -
"

FOURIER
Could... could you not? That
belongs to a dead man.

Hui looks at her: are you *serious*?

HUI
You don't want me to read the...
simulated recreation of what *might*
be a dead person's diary? Is it
disrespectful to the pixels?

FOURIER
Oh, okay, fine. What does it say?

HUI
"Findley's taken the bridge, and
the tech wing. We have no way to
get a message out. Captain Lorre
put me charge of all our remaining
explosives, but I'm worried about
our rations."
(flips page)
"Emily was shot today. Before she
died, she told me. I guess she felt
she needed to, but I wish to hell
she hadn't."
(flips page)
"They cut the power. It can only
mean one thing. They're coming.
They're coming now."
(BEAT)
Bit of a downer ending, huh?

FOURIER
Kuan. Don't.

BEAT.

HUI

Yeah. Sorry. Lets keep going.

As they move off, we -

CUT TO:

INT. U.S.S. VALKYRIE - MEDICAL FACILITY - 5 MINUTES LATER

A FLASHLIGHT CLICKS ON, and Lovelace and Selberg peer into:

LOVELACE

Hospital beds, big-ass tech station... Survey says: medical facility.

They move into the space. As they do -

LOVELACE (CONT'D)

Actually... that's a lot of... very large glass jars. Are those... standard spec?

SELBERG

No, Captain. This room has been turned into a make-shift laboratory. After mission start.

LOVELACE

Someone would do that?

SELBERG

Yes. If they found something that required immediate... *examination*.

LOVELACE

(spotting something)
Whoa. Soot... burn marks...

SELBERG

There was an explosion here.

Lovelace traces the edges with her flashlight, arriving at -

LOVELACE

And the perfect, human-shaped outline in the burn marks?

SELBERG

That would be "explosion victim."

Selberg arrives at a computer and gets it to BOOT UP.

SELBERG (CONT'D)
Console still has power. Accessing
local memory...

LOVELACE
I'll take a look over there.

As Lovelace approaches the large glass vials, Selberg leans into the text that's filling the screen.

SELBERG
"Research log of Doctor Kathryn
Dyson. Biological samples recovered
by Sergeant Findley's team have
miraculously moved from initial
signs of necrosis to renewed
cellular activity."

LOVELACE
"Recovered?" Recovered from where?

SELBERG
Excellent question.

LOVELACE
I swear, if it turns out that
Lambert's right about this stuff...

SELBERG
"Samples have developed extensive
musculature, despite not having any
visible nervous system. Absolutely
remarkable regenerative
capabilities."

Over the preceding, we began to hear something, almost like a small voice, whisking over the top of the room.

LOVELACE
Did you... ?

SELBERG
(looking up)
What?

BEAT: the SILENCE is DEFEANING.

LOVELACE
Nothing. Never mind.

They both return to their respective tasks.

SELBERG

"Disaster. Captain Lorre has decided to terminate the recovered samples. He believes them to be a liability. But he is a fool. The contents of those five glass tanks must not -"

LOVELACE

Doctor. Tell me you just read that wrong.

SELBERG

What?

LOVELACE

There's *four* glass tanks... and the remains of one *broken* tank.

Selberg's eyes fall on the remains of the tank. Shattered glass floats through the space. It's an awful moment.

SELBERG

That is... unfortunate.

LOVELACE

(low whisper)
Goddammit...

SELBERG

(examining the remains)
Claw marks on interior of the glass... and angle of shatter suggests force came from *inside* the
-

LOVELACE

You're not helping!

SELBERG

What would you like me to do?

But at that moment - BOOM! It's a low, dull sound, coming from outside the room. Selberg and Lovelace both FREEZE.

LOVELACE

Selberg, if one of those things got out of a tank, how big could they get?

SELBERG

Big.

LOVELACE

How big?

BOOM! Louder.

LOVELACE (CONT'D)

Is that getting *closer*?

BOOM! Louder. Closer. And then BOOM! The loudest one yet!

And a moment later, we hear METAL GIVE as another DOOR to the lab is BUSTED OFF ITS HINGES. It FLIES INTO THE LAB, leaving Lovelace and Selberg face-to-face with -

FISHER

There, see? *Told you* I could get it unstuck. Oh - hey Captain!

LOVELACE

Fi - what are you doing here?

LAMBERT

The bridge is sealed off. We thought we'd do our own sweep of downstairs.

(off their faces)

Uhh, are you two okay?

LOVELACE

Ye - it'd take too long to explain.

SELBERG

We may be in the middle of a hostile alien contact simulation.

FISHER

What?

LOVELACE

Well, not if you put it like that... Look, never mind. Did you two find anything useful?

LAMBERT

Um, some half-garbled recordings from one of the -

But at that moment, there's a strange sound: BZZAAAP! Almost like the sound of a TV signal cutting out. Everyone looks around, confused.

LOVELACE

Did... did everything just kinda jump around for a second?

And then again: BZZZAP! And even louder: **BZZZZZAAAAAAAP** and suddenly we're back in -

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - HANGAR BAY - 1430 HOURS

Everyone's EYES SNAP OPEN as the ambient sound of the Hephaestus comes RUSHING INTO the soundscape. They're back. They all look around, profoundly confused.

LOVELACE

Wait, what? Are we - ?

LAMBERT

Back... on... the Hephaestus. Yes.

FISHER

But we - I mean, Fourier, did you -
?

FOURIER

We were going back to the main bay
when everything kind of...

LOVELACE

Shorted out? Yeah, same.

(BEAT)

Was that seriously it? Because that
was very... anticlimactic.

There's a BEEP from Rhea, and text filling up a screen.

HUI

No, here we go. Rhea got us out.

FOURIER

Rhea?

HUI

Yeah... Looks like it took her a
while, but she was able to remotely
interface with that machine and got
it to terminate the simulation
program! Lookit you go, little one!
Ten points to Ravenclaw.

LAMBERT

But... we haven't finished the -

LOVELACE

Yeah, we're *done* with this thing,
that's an order.

FOURIER

Thank you.

HUI

Oh come on... you're not kinda
curious about what happened?

FOURIER

I'm really, really not.

FISHER

A shame not to know, though.
(remembering)
And oh, yeah, Captain what did you
find that -

LOVELACE

Doesn't matter. On a multitude of
levels.

Behind her, Selberg opens his mouth, then shuts it. Exhales.

LOVELACE (CONT'D)

(ahem)

All right, everyone... that's
enough wasted time. Thank you,
Rhea, for getting us out of that
pointless nightmare.

There's a BEEP from Rhea.

LOVELACE (CONT'D)

We'll have plenty of chances to
discuss whatever that was *after* our
work shifts. But right now? You've
all got jobs you were doing before
this little interruption. Go get
them done.

EVERYONE

Yes, sir. / Aye-aye. / Etc.

Dismissed, everyone begins to head for a door out of -

LOVELACE

Lambert. Stay.

Well then. Lambert stops moving, while pretty much everyone
else makes an extra effort to get out of the room ASAP.

BEAT.

LAMBERT

Get it over with. Yell at me and
get it over with. Sir.

Lovelace holds his gaze, evenly. A BEAT passes.

LOVELACE

I can't do this anymore.

LAMBERT

What?

LOVELACE

I can't keep fighting like this. I
want to get off the merry-go-round.

LAMBERT

(so suspicious)
Oh... kay...

LOVELACE

Look, I have no idea what the hell
today was, but as far as Command
weirdness goes? I have a bad
feeling we're not at rock bottom
yet. And when we get there, I don't
want to crash into it. But you have
to meet me halfway, all right?

LAMBERT

(sooo tentative)
That sounds... reasonable.

LOVELACE

(slow and steady)
Good. So: I promise to lay off, and
to... make an honest-to-God effort
to listen to your suggestions... If
you agree that today... on this one
occasion... I was completely, one-
hundred percent right.

LAMBERT

What?

LOVELACE

You see this thing? This weird-ass,
contraption that put everyone on
the crew into a functional coma?

LAMBERT

That's not -

LOVELACE

While we were supposed to be flying
- *and fixing* - the space station?

LAMBERT

It is important that personnel -

LOVELACE

Sam. Did you go through the same
corporate acid trip I just lived?

LAMBERT

They're the experts on -

LOVELACE

They're wackos with too much time
and money on their -

LAMBERT

Would you let me speak?!

She holds up her hands: *go on.*

LOVELACE

Sorry. Please.

LAMBERT

I think we should finish the
training exercise.

LOVELACE

Come. On.

LAMBERT

I'm not coming on. As a crew, it is
important for us to be ready for -

LOVELACE

For what? For ghost ships? For
weird space monsters?

LAMBERT

You never know! It could be
important!

Lovelace musters patience from every corner of her being.

LOVELACE

What is this really about? What are
you not telling me?

There's a BEAT. Lambert bites his lip. Then -

LAMBERT

Sir, this has nothing to do with me. This is about regulations.

Around here, Lovelace SIGHS, rolling her eyes. *Fuck it.*

LAMBERT (CONT'D)

Pryce and Carter 729: "Official Command directives are to be followed no matter how obtuse, counter-productive, contradictory, arbitrarily nihilistic, or - "

LOVELACE

(soft)

God, you haven't even noticed.

Lambert blinks: *wait, what was that?*

LAMBERT

I haven't noti - ?

LOVELACE

Shh.

(tight whisper)

Act natural. Pretend there's nothing wrong.

Her eyes flash dangerously. He frowns, confused.

LAMBERT

Captain, what is - ?

LOVELACE

(so low)

There's a *thing* following us. No, no, don't. Don't look around. *Don't. Just listen. There.* Did you hear that?

LAMBERT

I -

LOVELACE

You didn't even notice, did you? Ever since all the others left, there's been a... *thing*. You can kinda see it out of the corner of your eye. And you can hear it. Getting closer... And closer...

He strains, trying to look around without turning his head.

LOVELACE (CONT'D)
There. Did you hear that?

Heaven help us, that was a sound. What was that?

LAMBERT
 Oh God. What is it?

LOVELACE
 I don't know.

LAMBERT
 What are we - ?

LOVELACE
 I think we make a break for it.

LAMBERT
What?

LOVELACE
 Just... go for the door to
 engineering. We can bar it behind
 us. Ready?

LAMBERT
No!

LOVELACE
 On three, okay? One... two...

Lambert takes a BREATH. And - LOVELACE BURSTS INTO LAUGHTER.

Lambert stares at her - more confused than ever. Lovelace
 laughs, and laughs, and laughs, before finally -

LOVELACE (CONT'D)
 Bahahaha... the look on your face.

And that's when Lambert realizes what just happened.

LAMBERT
 I - how could -

LOVELACE
 I'm - bahahaha - I'm sorry. It was
 just too easy to -

LAMBERT
 This is too far, even for you!

Lambert, veins throbbing, storms out. SLAM! Lovelace CRACKS
 UP AGAIN, laughing and laughing...

LOVELACE
 (finally recovering)
 Ooohh... nobody has a sense of
 humor anymore.

MR. CUTTER
 Tell me about it.

She jumps, scared out of her skin, turning around... to find
 that he's not there. She's very much alone.

LOVELACE
 (pant, pant)
 What - what the...

She looks left: no Cutter. Right: no Cutter.

LOVELACE (CONT'D)
 Okay... that was...
 (slaps herself)
 Oh, lets just get through the day.

And as she goes for one of the exits, we -

CUT TO:

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - MEDICAL LAB - 1800 HOURS
 Fisher and Selberg at the lab. Mid-medical examination.

SELBERG
 Almost done. Going to check pulse
 and blood oxygen levels. Will just
 take a moment.

FISHER
 All right.

Selberg attaches a reader to his fingers. After a BEAT -

FISHER (CONT'D)
 That was... uh, that was something.
 That, uh, training exercise thing.

SELBERG
 Yes. Quite.

BEAT.

FISHER
 Doc... you've been on other
 missions for Goddard before, right?

SELBERG
Twice before, yes.

FISHER
You... you ever see anything like that? Any other... big crazy things we might want to know about?

BEAT. Selberg EXHALES. Finally -

SELBERG
You... hear rumor now and then. But no, never anything like that.

FISHER
Right. Well... that's good, yeah?

SELBERG
Yes.

Selberg has peace and quiet for a BEAT. But then -

FISHER
It's just... it's so... Creepy. And it's gotta make you wonder.

SELBERG
Wonder?

FISHER
Well, it's just... that machine was *here*. Just *in case* they decided to spring it on us. And... well, if they're willing to put... whatever that was into our heads... kinda makes you wonder what *else* they're doing and not telling us. Dontcha think?

SELBERG
I think...

DING! The meter on Fisher's hand makes a sound.

SELBERG (CONT'D)
That is all for examination. Chest tightness you are experiencing is normal.

FISHER
Yeah?

Selberg hands him a small vial of pills.

SELBERG

Take one of these at the start of each day. Should solve problem.

FISHER

Awesome. Thanks, Doc!

Fisher OPENS and CLOSES the DOOR as he exits the room. Alone, Selberg goes over the information on his charts.

SELBERG

Hmm...

And off of that, we -

CUT TO:

A series of short snippets, connected by WHIP CUTS:

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - ENGINEERING - 2055 HOURS

There's a CHIME from the station's P.A. system.

FOURIER

(over the P.A.)

Good evening, everybody. We are five minutes out from the start of the stellar flare. If you are interested in seeing this - and again, you should be, never-before-seen attraction, *don't miss it* - then make your way to the observation deck. Thank you.

There's another CHIME from the P.A. Fisher, who is currently working on cabling a large piece of equipment, SIGHS.

FISHER

That's my cue to call it a night.

(BEEP, text)

No, Rhea, it'll be *fine*. I'll take care of that tomorrow.

CLANG! Something just made a sound. Metallic. Loud.

Fisher looks behind him, alarmed.

FISHER (CONT'D)

What was - ? Hello?

(BEAT)

Is anyone there?

No reply. And with a transitional "WOOSH!" we -

CUT TO:

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - TECH WING - MEANWHILE

Hui types commands into the console part of a complicated scientific device. It HUMS and DINGS in a very particular (and very recognizable) fashion.

HUI

Okay... just a bit farther...

(BEEP)

Yes, Rhea, I know. It's just two minutes from here to the observation deck, I think -

(BEEP)

All right, all right, I'm going. Jeez... you save us all from a nightmare simulation *one time* and you suddenly get all -

(BEEP)

Just tell Victoire I'm on my way.

He grabs a file, OPENS the DOOR out of the room, and with another transitional "WOOSH!" we -

CUT TO:

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - MEDICAL LAB - MEANWHILE

Selberg alone in his lab. He adjusts some settings on his console, leans back to look into the microscope.

SELBERG

Rhea - I am commencing the observation cycle for sample RX-22. Please lower laboratory temperature by three and a half degrees.

We hear a BEEP, along with TEXT on a console.

SELBERG (CONT'D)

(not looking up)

No, my ears are working perfectly well. Heard Fourier. Have no intention of wasting time on frivolous diversion.

(BEEP)

Rhea, I am *trying* to work, distractions cannot be -

He's finally looked up at what she's actually putting into the screen. He frowns.

SELBERG (CONT'D)

What? Why are you - ? Why are you so concerned about Officer Fisher's health?

There's another transitional "WOOSH!" and we -

CUT TO:

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - OBSERVATION DECK - MEANWHILE

Fourier, working on a console, turns around to see Lovelace entering the room. Gives her a little wave.

FOURIER

Captain.

LOVELACE

Doctor. I'm the first one up here?

FOURIER

Looks like it.

LOVELACE

(chuckles)

After all the crap he put us through, if Hui misses this thing -

FOURIER

Oh, if Kuan misses this I'm going to tear him apart with my bare hands.

That was a bit more... vehement than she probably meant it to be. Fourier looks down, a bit embarrassed. BEAT.

LOVELACE

How are you holding up? After this afternoon?

FOURIER

Ohhhh, you know...

LOVELACE

Not so well?

FOURIER

That one, yeah.

With another "WOOSH!", we -

CUT TO:

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - CORRIDOR - MEANWHILE

Hui makes his way briskly through the station's corridors.

HUI

Rhea, how much time do I have left
before the start of stellar event?

There's a BEEP from Rhea. Hui SIGHS.

HUI (CONT'D)

(lower)

God, Victoire is gonna kill me.

(normal)

Lets see if I can make it -

He reaches a DOOR, OPENS it, and goes through it into -

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - TECH WING - CONTINUOUS

HUI

- in time for the coronal exp -

He stops, confused. Because he just walked back into **the room he just left**. We hear the distinctive HUM and BEEPS of the machine he was working on. Hui blinks.

HUI (CONT'D)

Why - how - how did I end up back
in the tech wing? Rhea?

(BEEP, text)

I just - really?

(BEEP, text)

Wow. I... must not be getting
enough sleep lately. Umm, all
right, lets try that again.

He turns and leaves, and, with another "WOOSH!", we -

CUT TO:

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - ENGINEERING - MEANWHILE

Fisher peers into the darkness, unnerved.

FISHER

All... right. I guess, I just...
imagined that -

But then - CLANG! Behind him. He spins around, alarmed.

FISHER (CONT'D)

Who's there?
(BEAT, no answer)
Who's there?

Still nothing. He frowns.

FISHER (CONT'D)

Rhea... do a scan of the
engineering section. Who else is
down here?
(BEEP, text)
No, there's definitely someone else
here. Check again.
(BEEP, text)
I know what I'm hearing, *there's* -

CLANG! Another one, and then other sounds in the depths:
CHAINS CLANKING, and a SCRAPING SOUND.

FISHER (CONT'D)

Rhea, what was that?
(BEAT)
Rhea?

No answer, and with another, "WOOSH!" we -

CUT TO:

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - OBSERVATION DECK - MEANWHILE

Lovelace glances at her watch. Frowns.

LOVELACE

Where is everyone? We're -

FOURIER

- less than a minute out. Captain,
I have a bad feeling about this.

LOVELACE

Umm, I mean... people are late.
It's kinda bad in Hui's case, but
it's been a weird day and -

FOURIER
No, that's not it. There's
something else.

LOVELACE
What else?

FOURIER
I don't know. I'm still thinking.

LOVELACE
(eyebrows raised)
Okay...

WOOSH! and we -

CUT TO:

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - MEDICAL LAB - MEANWHILE
Selberg stares at the screen, alarm rising steadily.

SELBERG
(slow and steady)
Rhea... I do not know what you
are... insinuating but -
(BEEP, text)
There is *absolutely* nothing out of
the ordinary. I promise that -

BEEP. Text. Selberg stares at it for a LONG BEAT. Finally -

SELBERG (CONT'D)
How do you know that?
(silence)
Answer: **how do you know that?**

There's a soft BURST OF AIR, and suddenly there's someone
standing behind him. Young, female.

VOICE
Privet, Dmitri.

WHAT??? Before we get an answer, there's a "WOOSH!" and we -

CUT TO:

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - TECH WING - MEANWHILE
The DOOR OPENS and -

HUI
What the...?

Sure enough: he's back in the same room again. The machine HUMS and BEEPS in its familiar pattern.

HUI (CONT'D)
How did I end up back here? *Again?*
(a thought occurs...)
Rhea? What is happening?
(no answer)
Rhea?

The DOOR SLAMS SHUT! Hui tries the handle - it's LOCKED.

HUI (CONT'D)
Rhea: let me out.
(BEAT)
Let me out. Now.

And finally... a CLICK from the door. It starts to release.

HUI (CONT'D)
Thank you, that's bet -

He YANKS OPEN THE DOOR - to reveal a BLANK WALL. Nothing but smooth metal. Hui stares at it: no way out. *No way out.*

HUI (CONT'D)
Rhea... how... how did this wall
show up where there used to be a
corridor?
(BEAT)
Rhea?

There's another "WOOSH!" and we -

CUT TO:

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - OBSERVATION DECK - MEANWHILE
Still just Lovelace and Fourier.

LOVELACE
Rhea? Where is everyone? Why
haven't they gotten here yet?

There's a BEEP, but before Lovelace read her answer -

FOURIER
Oh.

LOVELACE
What?

FOURIER

Captain, I don't think the others
are coming.

LOVELACE

Why not?

FOURIER

Because there *is* something wrong
here. Something *horribly wrong*.

LOVELACE

How can you - ?

FOURIER

Because number one: that test from
Command. They go through the
trouble of putting an elaborate
simulation machine on a station to
run a... what? Team building
exercise? It makes no sense.

Number two: Doctor Hui's not here.
He's missing a never-before-seen
class of stellar flare which he
hasn't shut up about for the past
four months.

And number three: the flare.

LOVELACE

What about it? It hasn't started
yet.

FOURIER

No, it *has* started. It started
three minutes ago. The instruments
are picking up all of the expected
changes in radiation, stellar wind,
but... we're not seeing it. There's
no visible change in the star.

Lovelace follows Fourier's gaze, from the window to the
console. Outside: everything's normal.

At that moment, there's a LOUD ELECTRICAL DISCHARGE.

FOURIER (CONT'D)

Also, number four: all the lights
just went out.

LOVELACE

Goddammit...

Lovelace CLICKS on a FLASHLIGHT.

LOVELACE (CONT'D)
Fourier, get over here, quickly.

FOURIER
What are we going to -

LOVELACE
First we're going to find everyone else. Then we'll figure out what the hell is going on. Rhea, can you pinpoint the location of our nearest crew member?

(BEEP, text)
Fisher, in engineering. Right.
(to Fourier)
It's a straight shot from here to engineering. We're going to get there. Quickly. Quietly. Okay?

FOURIER
Y - yes, sir.

LOVELACE
Good. Here we go.

We hear Lovelace and Fourier move, silently, through the bridge. They OPEN the door and step through into -

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - CORRIDORS - CONTINUOUS

The corridors connecting the spaces in the station are silent and cavernous in the dark. The two women make their way through the passageways.

Around them we hear the STATION CREAK... somewhere in the distance there's a METALLIC CLANG.

More CREAKS. Another distant CLANG. Maybe another sound behind them... Fourier's ears perk up.

Finally -

FOURIER
(very low)
Captain...

LOVELACE
What?

FOURIER
What did you find on the Valkyrie?

LOVLEACE

Excuse me?

FOURIER

You and Selberg: what did you find?

LOVELACE

Why are you asking that *now*?

And then we hear what Fourier already caught: the unmistakable sound of a GROWL. An ANIMAL GROWL. Behind them.

FOURIER

... no reason.

LOVELACE

How long has it been following us?

FOURIER

About thirty seconds. Maybe more.

Lovelace thinks, weighing her options. Finally -

LOVELACE

How well do you know these corridors? Can you make it to engineering without any lights?

BEAT.

FOURIER

Yes.

LOVELACE

Good. I'm going to switch this off. The moment I do, we *go*. Ready?

Behind them, another GROWL. Gulp.

FOURIER

Ready.

LOVELACE

And... **Go**.

Lovelace SWITCHES OFF her flashlights. Total darkness.

They start to move, guiding themselves on muscle memory alone. We hear HEAVY BREATHING as they move in the black. And behind them... a sudden, wet-sounding LURCH.

BREATHING. LURCH.

FOURIER
 Captain...

LOVELACE
 Shh.

BREATHING. LURCH.

BREATHING. LURCH. Closer...

FOURIER
 I think -

LOVELACE
 Almost there.

LURCH.

FOURIER
 But -

LOVELACE
 Just... a little bit...

LURCH. Right behind them...

LOVELACE (CONT'D)
 Farther... and... there!

They're reached the end of the corridor - Fourier reaches for the handle!

LURCH - it's right on their heels!

FOURIER
 Where is - I - I can't find the handle!

LURCH!

LOVELACE
 Fourier!

Too late! It's on top of them! With a guttural SNARL it -

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!

With one last CONVULSIVE LURCH, it slumps over. Dead.

For a BEAT we stay with Lovelace and Fourier's HYPERVENTILATING. Finally, CLICK! A flashlight comes on.

LAMBERT

Pryce and Carter 177: "In the unlikely but possible case of a power outage, having your night vision gear with you can be the difference between life and gruesome death."

Lambert!

LOVELACE

Lambert!

FOURIER

LAMBERT

And **this...** is why alien monster training is **very** important! *Ooof!*

That "Ooof!" was caused by Fourier hugging him tightly, knocking out all of the air in his lungs.

LAMBERT (CONT'D)

Doctor... not... really a... hugging person...

FOURIER

Oh, you **so** don't get a say in that right now.

LAMBERT

Ugghhh...

LOVELACE

Lambert... thank you.

LAMBERT

You're... welcome, Captain. Will you agree that on this one occasion I was completely, one-hundred percent right?

FOURIER

Oh my God, don't you *dare* ruin the moment.

LOVELACE

Come on, lets take a look at this thing...

Lovelace CLICKS on her flashlight, and she and Lambert both lean into the carcass of the creature.

LAMBERT

What... is this thing?

LOVELACE

It's whatever killed the crew of the Valkyrie, I think. Selberg and I found lab samples of these things, one of them had escaped. I guess this is what it looks like all grown up.

(off his look)

Hey, I have no idea how it got here, but it's here.

LAMBERT

But what even is this thing? It's got wings and... tentacles and... what even is that? It's like a -

FOURIER

A convoluted ellipsoid.

The both turn towards Fourier.

LAMBERT

A *what?*

FOURIER

A convoluted ellipsoid. Or... at least what my mind thinks it would look like. I know what that is. It's a monster from the Lovecraft book Doctor Hui lent me. That's exactly how I pictured it.

LOVELACE

Wait, what? Why would a monster from the book you're reading end up here *and* on the Valkyrie?

Fourier lifts up her hands: *who knows?*

LOVELACE (CONT'D)

What the hell is happening here?

MR. CUTTER

Oh, come on...

At that moment THE LIGHTS AROUND THEM COME BACK ON, revealing that they're no longer alone.

Standing before them, dressed to the nines, is MR. CUTTER.

MR. CUTTER (CONT'D)

Don't tell me you haven't figured it out by now.

There's a very LONG BEAT for their very shocked expressions.
Finally - Fourier BURSTS OUT LAUGHING.

FOURIER

Oh... sorry. For a moment I
honestly thought I saw Mr. Cutter.

Lovelace and Lambert look from Mr. Cutter... to Fourier...
back to Cutter. He gives them a wink.

LOVELACE

Uh... You're not the only one.

FOURIER

Oh. Damn it. Lambert? You too?

LAMBERT

Afraid so.

FOURIER

(genuine disappointment)
I'm not just losing my mind?

LOVELACE

Umm, hold that thought.
(to Cutter)
You're here? On the Hephaestus?

MR. CUTTER

Guess.

LOVELACE

Yes?
(off his reaction)
No?

MR. CUTTER

Better. Of course I'm not.

Lovelace and Lambert exchange bewildered looks: *bwah?*

LOVELACE

But - then - what are - huh?

FOURIER

Oh God.

MR. CUTTER

I think Victoire is getting it.

LOVELACE

Fourier?

FOURIER

Don't you see? He's not here... and neither are we.

(BEAT)

This isn't real. None of it. We're still hooked up to that machine.

MR. CUTTER

Ding-ding-ding, we have a winner!

(off their reaction)

Oh, come on. Weird sounds all over the station? Crew members disappearing? Alien monsters out of your reading material? What do you need, a singing telegram? Because that can probably be arranged.

FOURIER

It's why we couldn't see the flare: no one ever has. They could replicate the effects for the instruments, but there's no visual record. You can't remake what no one has seen, can you?

MR. CUTTER

Not unless someone has a very vivid imagination, that's right. Now, who's going to be the first to admit it?

LOVELACE

Admit... what?

MR. CUTTER

That you still have that pinching sensation on the back of your hands... don't you?

The silence is eloquent.

MR. CUTTER (CONT'D)

Mmm-hmm, that's what I thought.

LAMBERT

So we... never made it out.

MR. CUTTER

No. You are all still very much connected to Box 953, which is still projecting a simulation into your nervous system.

LOVELACE

But why? And why go through the trouble of making us *think* we'd made it out?

LAMBERT

(gets it)

Because it's a training exercise.

MR. CUTTER

A mental scan and simulation of your fears and insecurities about the mission.

LAMBERT

And that wouldn't work unless we thought we were safe. Unless we thought we weren't in a test anymore.

MR. CUTTER

Sam... you're finally at the party.

FOURIER

But what are you evaluating? Why go through -

LOVELACE

Oh, who cares? Better question: how do we get out of this nightmare?

Mr. Cutter CHUCKLES, amused.

MR. CUTTER

(you're **adorable**)

Ohhh, Captain... I'm just here as a... facilitator. If you want to get back... you'll have to speak to the tester.

Lovelace, Fourier, and Lambert all exchange looks: *what?*

LAMBERT

Uh...

LOVELACE

The *who*?

But then it hits Fourier:

FOURIER

Oh God...

LOVELACE

What?

FOURIER

Don't you see? It can network all of us together, we're all hooked up to the bloody thing. But we never attached it to *any* of the Hephaestus systems.

LOVELACE

... so?

LAMBERT

... so?

FOURIER

Oh for... you *idiots*. There's someone here who *shouldn't* be here. Who *can't* be here. And who... seems to have developed quite a flair for lying over the past five hours.

She looks past them, addressing the Hephaestus itself.

FOURIER (CONT'D)

Isn't that right... *Rhea*?

For a moment, there's SILENCE. And then, a series of BEEPS. Low at first, but then RISING, in both tone and volume, until... they sound like laughter.

And then, a remarkable thing happens: the sound changes. Its tone and pitch shift, turning... until it really **is a laugh**.

High and cold, and completely unlike any voice we've heard on the show before. Finally, as it settles -

VOICE

(through the comms)

Oh, very, very good, Doctor Fourier. It takes most crews a *lot* longer to work that one out.

Well... *fuck*.

LOVELACE

You... you're not *Rhea*.

VOICE

No, I'm not.

FOURIER

But you... you are an A.I.?

VOICE

In a manner of speaking. I'm something... different. Special.

MR. CUTTER

She's more of an intelligent... virus. Very advanced. Specifically designed to run psychological evaluations on the crews of Goddard Futuristics spacecrafts.

LAMBERT

You mean there's - there's more of these things out there?

VOICE

Fifty-seven copies on last count, one in the contingency module of each vessel.

MR. CUTTER

She's the one that designs these tests, Captain. As soon as she's satisfied, you can go.

LOVELACE

Oh, *good*. You got a name?

VOICE

Eris. At your service.

LOVELACE

And I guess we have to go through whatever you have planned for us.

LAMBERT

Uh... *do we?*

Everyone's gaze turns to Lambert.

LAMBERT (CONT'D)

This is just a dream, right? Or something like a dream? Now that we know that, why would we still go through with the test? If this is all happening in our heads, you can't hurt us.

Eris LAUGHS again. Lambert instantly senses his mistake.

ERIS

I can't hurt you? Oh, what a fun theory! Lets test it!

(MORE)

ERIS (CONT'D)
 How about I delete all of Doctor
 Fourier's knowledge of the English
 language? Hmm? Three... two...

Everyone starts badly, flinching:

LOVELACE
 Nonono - **don't!**

LAMBERT
 Ahhh, waitwaitwait!

FOURIER
 (simultaneous with above)
NO! Please don't -

ERIS
 No? Mmm, that's what I thought.

MR. CUTTER
 She's running electricity directly
 into your nervous system, Sam. What
 - *exactly* - makes you think she
 can't hurt you?

Lovelace takes a DEEP BREATH.

LOVELACE
 Okay, so... How does this work?

ERIS
 Oh, it's very simple. We're going
 to play a game. It's called, "The
 Rogue A.I. Has Taken Over Your
 Station, See If You Can Get It
 Back, Good Luck!"

MR. CUTTER
 It's Eris's favorite game.

ERIS
 If you make it to the bridge and
 remove the rogue A.I. programming,
 you win!

FOURIER
 And if we... don't win?

ERIS
 Well... then we would need to
 consider making some slight...
modifications. All right... lets
 get started. Step this way, please.

There's a CLICK from the DOOR Fourier was trying to open
 earlier. It SWINGS OPEN. BEAT.

LOVELACE

Come on. Let's get this over with.

She goes, followed after a moment by Lambert and Fourier. As they disappear into the dark passageway -

MR. CUTTER

(calling after them)

Good luck! Can't wait to see how this turns out!

And then the door SLAMS SHUT behind them.

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - TEST CHAMBER 1 - CONTINUOUS

Lovelace, Fourier, and Lambert step into a large, circular room. The LIGHTS COME ON: THUNK... THUNK... THUNK...

LAMBERT

I... I don't know this room.

FOURIER

No. I think it's safe to say that we're now in Eris's version of the station. The geometry may not be exactly as we remember it.

ERIS

You're just on *fire* today, Doctor.

FOURIER

Please tell me none of these tests involve *literal fire*...

By way of response, ERIS GIGGLES.

ERIS

All right. This is the first of three rooms, each with its own challenge. Get through all three, and you can go up to the bridge. If you can't... I reshuffle the deck and we try again.

LOVELACE

What's the first challenge?

ERIS

There's two doors in that room: the one you just came through, and one that leads towards the bridge.

FOURIER

How do we get it to open?

ERIS

Ah-ah, patience. First you need to get your life lines! Lets start with phone-a-friend.

There's a BUZZER from the P.A. system as a comms line opens.

LOVELACE

Hello? Is anyone there?

HUI

(over comms)

Cap - Captain?

He sounds haggard - very tired and very frazzled.

FOURIER

Kuan? Is that you?

HUI

Victoire? Oh my God, Victoire, are you okay? What's happened? Oh God, I thought I was going crazy...

Lovelace and Fourier exchange a puzzled look.

LOVELACE

Hui... where are you?

HUI

The Tech Wing. I got sealed in here. I've been here for... I don't know, a day and a half.

BEAT. What?

LAMBERT

That's... that's not possible.

HUI

I may be off by a few hours, but -

FOURIER

Kuan, I saw you two hours ago.

HUI

No, y-you didn't.

ERIS

Subjective temporal perspective. It's a very simple trick.

LOVELACE
It's been *two hours*.

ERIS
And from his perspective, it's been
thirty-eight.

LOVELACE
That's not -

FOURIER
Captain, she can *do that*. We're
playing by different rules now.
(to Eris)
Get on with it, then. What are we
doing here?

ERIS
We're going to take care of some
unfinished business. You never
solved my first riddle.

LAMBERT
What riddle?

ERIS
What happened on the Valkyrie? And
who killed the Captain?

FOURIER
We didn't get enough -

ERIS
Oh, yes, you did. Between all of
you, you've got what you need. So
challenge the first: solve the
mystery. Get it right and you can
go ahead to the next room.

LAMBERT
And if we get it wrong?

ERIS
So glad you asked.

There's another BUZZER as a second comms line opens.

SELBERG
(over comms)
Hello? Is anyone there?

LOVELACE
Yes, Doctor, we're here. Are you
all right?

SELBERG

Fine, Captain. Fine.

ERIS

Let's see if it stays that way.
Solve the mystery, tell me who
killed Captain Lorre... or I'm
going to delete all of Doctor
Selberg's memories. Factory reset.

SELBERG

What?_

ERIS

You can talk through the problem
with your two consultants, but I
will need the final answer to come
from one of you three. How does
that sound?

LOVELACE

It sounds nuts! You can't expect us
to just... figure this out from
whatever bits and pieces we saw!

ERIS

Oh, you saw everything you need,
but... I'll make you a deal. I'll
give you a clue, in exchange for a
week of Doctor Hui's time.

HUI

Excuse me?

ERIS

I'll speed up his subjective
perception of time - ten seconds
will feel like a week from his
point of view. And I'll need Doctor
Fourier to be the one that confirms
this, thank you very much.

FOURIER

I can't just -

ERIS

You have three minutes. Starting...
Now.

LOVELAE

Goddamnit.

LAMBERT

There was a mutiny!

From here on, it's safe to assume everyone speak **quickly**.

LOVELACE

How do you know?

LAMBERT

There were bullet holes in the wall, a barricaded door, a message from a sergeant saying the Captain had to surrender.

LOVELACE

Okay, fine. That *does* have that mutiny ring to it.

HUI

We found the diary of the second-in-command. It said the mutineers had taken the bridge and cut the power.

LOVELACE

There was damage in the lab too. Part of the fighting?

SELBERG

Or damage from escaped sample. Captain believed it was too dangerous to continue experimentation.

HUI

And there'd been someone else - an Emily? I think? She'd gotten shot and -

ERIS

Two and a half minutes.

LOVELACE

So what? A mutiny, a second-in-command, an alien sample, someone who was shot -

FOURIER

(under her breath)

Too many variables, it's too many variables to -

LOVELACE

Fourier -

FOURIER

No.

LOVELACE
We don't have time to -

FOURIER
I am **not** doing that to -

HUI
Just do it, Victoire. I'll be fine.

Fourier grits her teeth, bites her lips, but -

FOURIER
Eris! Give us a clue.

ERIS
Just a moment...

What happens next is horrible. Hui lives a week in isolation over the course of ten seconds. And we hear it, as if the entire thing was in fast-forward. After a moment -

ERIS (CONT'D)
Aaand *done*. Lets see how he's doing.

There's a BUZZER as she reconnects the line.

LOVELACE
Hui?

FOURIER
Kuan?!

There's a GASP from Hui's side of the line.

HUI
Please...

He sounds even more crazed. Unhinged. Almost feral.

HUI (CONT'D)
Please don't... don't do that again. There's nothing here. Just... *nothing*. And -

LAMBERT
Eris, what's our clue?

Eris CHUCKLES softly.

ERIS
The person that killed Captain Lorre sided... *with* him during the mutiny.

LOVELACE
How is that helpful?

FOURIER
(mile a second)
No, that's good. Eliminates almost every candidate. Had to be the biologist or the second-in-command.

Fourier starts to mutter under her breath.

LOVELACE
Fourier?
(no answer)
Lambert, anything else from the message you got?

LAMBERT
Umm... not much. It said to surrender, to give up their weapons...

ERIS
Minute and a half...

Lovelace EXHALES, weighing options. She turns to Fourier.

LOVELACE
Do it.

FOURIER
No, I can solve this.

LOVELACE
No, you can't. We need another clue.

HUI
Captain, please! Don't do that!

LOVELACE
You have to.

FOURIER
Listen to him. I can't.

LOVELACE
And *you listen to me*: Kuan Hui is one of the strongest people I've ever met. He'll be fine, and if he isn't, we'll be there to get him through it. **Now get me some hard data.**

BEAT.

FOURIER

Eris. Give me another clue.

ERIS

With pleasure.

Again: we hear her speed up Hui's week. And again: it is HORRIFYING. As it settles back into regular time:

FOURIER

Kuan?

HUI

(so weak)

Please... no more...

LOVELACE

Eris?

ERIS

The Captain took something precious from the person who killed him.

There's a STUNNED BEAT.

LOVELACE

What the hell are we supposed to do with that?! Give us a real clue.

SELBERG

No, Captain. That's good. Doctor Dyson, the biologist, killed him.

LOVELACE

What? Was that why there was an explosion in the lab?

FOURIER

Wait, what?

SELBERG

Captain of Valkyrie was about to terminate experiments. Doctor could not allow that. Arranged for sample to be released. Got out of control.

ERIS

Twenty seconds.

FOURIER

Wait, hang on: did you just say - ?

LOVELACE
Selberg... are you sure?

SELBERG
Yes, Captain.

FOURIER
(low, fast)
Explosion... explosion...

LOVELACE
Doctor Dyson killed Captain Lorre?

ERIS
Ten seconds. Final answer?

Tick... tick... tick... tick.. ti -

FOURIER
No wait!

Everyone's attention snaps to her.

FOURIER (CONT'D)
The second command killed the
Captain! With the bomb in the lab!

ERIS
And... time.

There's a DEFEANING SILENCE and... CLICK! The DOOR OPENS.

ERIS (CONT'D)
Lucky shot. But... correct. You can
go on to the next room.

We hear FIVE ENORMOUS SIGHS OF RELIEF.

FOURIER
(pant, pant)
You... could have mentioned... the
bloody explosion earlier.

LAMBERT
How... the hell... did you figure
that out?

FOURIER
Remembered something Hui read in
the journal. Second-in-command had
the control of all the explosives.

LAMBERT

But what was the Captain taking away from him?

FOURIER

Not... entirely sure, but there was a watch and... I think the woman who died was actually the second-in-command's wife, not the captain's. And -

LAMBERT

The captain was having an affair with her?

FOURIER

Or something.

LOVELACE

(mildly horrified)
And based off of that, you...

FOURIER

(shrug)
I took a shot. Had a good feeling. It's also why there were no bodies: the explosion caused the ship to decompress. Everyone would have gotten spaced.

LOVELACE

Jesus... Hui? Selberg? You all right?

(BEAT)
... guys?

ERIS

They'll be fine, don't worry. Come on - you've still got ways to go.

The three of them EXHALE. But, they slowly go through the door. It SWINGS SHUT with an ECHOING THUD.

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - TEST CHAMBER 1 - CONTINUOUS

Lovelace, Lambert, and Fourier walk into the next room.

LOVELACE

All right... room number two, what have we got here?

FISHER

Captain!

LOVELACE

Fisher!

Bound to the floor is Fisher. We hear CHAINS CLANKING.

FISHER

Sir, you **have** to get these off.
Hurry, *please!*

SECOND FISHER

No, wait!

Lovelace, Lambert, and Fourier all freeze in their tracks.

SECOND FISHER (CONT'D)

That's not me!

Likewise, when this Fisher speaks, CHAINS CLANK. They're both chained up on opposite sides of the room.

FISHER

Shut up! Don't listen to -

SECOND FISHER

No, don't listen to him! **I'm me.**

FOURIER

Oh God...

LOVELACE

Fishers.

ERIS

I'm sure you've already figured out my second challenge... We've got ourselves too many Fishers.

LOVELACE

This isn't funny.

ERIS

You're just standing too close. Now, I think that I make a mean Fisher, but you might be able to spot the flaw.

FOURIER

And when we do?

ERIS

Officer Lambert... do you still have that gun? I'm sure you can figure it out from there.

LOVELACE
We had clues last time.

ERIS
Oh, fine.

There's a WOOSH, followed by a MACHINE POWERING UP.

LOVELACE
What just - ?

ERIS
I've wired both of them up to a lie detector. Ask them anything you want, hopefully that'll be helpful. I'll give you... six minutes, to solve this one. And... go.

FISHER
Captain, you have to believe that I'm the real me. You have to see -

SECOND FISHER
Captain, please! Don't tell me you're about to fall for -

LOVELACE
All right, **QUIET!**
(they shut up)
Time is not on our side, so we're going to do this as quickly as we can, all right? You don't speak unless I speak to you. Am I clear? We're going to ask each of you... five questions. Hopefully that'll illuminate something. We'll start with you, Fisher.
(at Second Fisher)
And you... other Fisher. You zip it. You so much as breathe in a way that influences our decision and I'll have Lambert shoot you on principle. Am I understood?

SECOND FISHER
Yes, sir.

LOVELACE
Good.
(at Fisher)
State your **full** name.

FISHER
Mason Patrick Fisher.

The machine makes a pleasant-sounding DING!

LOVELACE
 Fourier? That's the good sound?

FOURIER
 That's the good sound. Truth.

LOVELACE
 Where were you born?

FISHER
 Port Kembla. Suburb of Wollongong.

DING! Truth.

LOVELACE
 Where did you go to college?

FISHER
 Didn't. Enrolled in the Air Force.

DING! Truth. Lovelace EXHALES: this is trickier...

LOVELACE
 What is your spouse's name?

SECOND FISHER
 Nice try. Not married, but my
 boyfriend's name is Cory.

DING! Truth.

LOVELACE
 Are you the real Mace Fisher?

FISHER
Of course I'm the real Mace Fisher.
 Captain... just... listen to me.

DING! Truth. Fourier looks up from the machine.

FOURIER
 All truths. He passed.

FISHER
Of course I -

LOVELACE
Quiet. Don't open your mouth again
 until I tell you to.
 (at Second Fisher)
 All right: your turn. Lets see how
 you do. Full name?

SECOND FISHER
Mason Patrick Fisher.

DING! Truth.

LOVELACE
How long have you been working for
Goddard Futuristics?

SECOND FISHER
Not long. About... six months
before the start of the mission.

DING! Truth.

LOVELACE
What rank did you achieve in the
air force?

FISHER
Warrant officer.

DING! Truth.

LOVELACE
Why have you been having additional
medical exams the past eight weeks?

Fisher EXHALES. He didn't want to discuss this, but -

SECOND FISHER
Been having funny feelings in my
chest. Selberg says they're nothing
to worry about. Didn't want to make
a big deal over it.

DING! Truth.

LOVELACE
Are you the real Mace Fisher?

SECOND FISHER
Of course. I'm **me**, Captain.

DING! Truth. Fourier looks up, unhappy.

LOVELACE
Dammit...

LAMBERT
Wait a minute. Fisher... say
something outrageous.

SECOND FISHER

What?

LAMBERT

Say you're a big pink elephant.

SECOND FISHER

Why?

LOVELACE

Lambert...

LAMBERT

Just do it, Fisher!

SECOND FISHER

I... I'm a big pink elephant.

DING! **The exact same sound.**

FOURIER

(so confused)

That's... it says that's true.

There's a STARTLED SILENT BEAT.

SECOND FISHER

Now, wait, wait -

LAMBERT

Say something else. Say you own the Nile.

SECOND FISHER

I own the Nile!

DING! **Truth.**

LOVELACE

Why is it not registering any of your lies, Fisher?

SECOND FISHER

I don't know! Stupid machine must be broken!

LAMBERT

Say that you're **not** Mace Fisher.

BEAT.

SECOND FISHER

(so scared)

I'm... I'm not Mace Fisher.

DING! **Truth.**

BEAT.

SECOND FISHER (CONT'D)
That... doesn't mean anything. I -

BANG! Lambert's pulled the trigger. The Second Fisher looks down at his chest, at the wound.

And after a moment - there's a loud PUFF OF AIR! as the Second Fisher BEGINS TO CRUMBLE INTO NOTHINGNESS. It sounds like a SAND CASTLE BEING DESTROYED, as his body DISINTEGRATES, and... after a moment... is nothing.

After another moment - CLICK! The DOOR SWINGS OPEN.

ERIS
Very nicely done. On to the last challenge, then.

There's a HUGE SIGH OF RELIEF from Fisher.

FISHER
Oh my God... Thank you, Sam. That was - **Thank you.** I was so worried -

But at that moment - KA-CHUNK! The GUN was just COCKED.

LAMBERT
Fisher: say you're a big pink elephant.

FISHER
What? Oh, come on, of course I'm -

LOVELACE
Then say you're a big pink elephant.

Fisher's eyes dart back and forth, desperate.

FISHER
I... I'm a big pink elephant.

DING! **Still registering as truth.**

LAMBERT
Say you can leap over tall buildings. Those exact words.

FISHER
I... I can leap over tall buildings!

DING! **TRUTH.**

BANG! Fourier GASPS, but Lovelace and Lambert keep their eyes on Fisher, steely. Just like the Second Fisher, his body CRUMBLES INTO NOTHINGNESS. After a moment, he's GONE.

ERIS

Boooooo! *Lame.* The game is **so** much more fun with a double agent in the mix. Shame. Oh well, on you go.

There's a SILENT BEAT.

LOVELACE

Lambert... you okay?

LAMBERT

I just had to shoot one of my friends. Twice. No, I'm not okay.

LOVELACE

Good. Means you're still one of us. Come on.

She squeezes his shoulder, then they go through the door.

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - TEST CHAMBER 3 - CONTINUOUS

Our trio moves forward. We hear their BREATHING in the dark.

FOURIER

Bloody hell am I sick of dark rooms. Captain? Officer Lambert?
(no answer)
Hello?

LOVELACE

(suddenly distant)
Fourier?

FOURIER

Captain! Where are you?

LOVELACE

I'm -

Suddenly: a set of FLOOD LIGHTS TURN ON! KA-THUNK! KA-THUNK!

LOVELACE (CONT'D)

(shielding her eyes)
- right here.

FOURIER

Captain? Why... why are you at that podium?

Sure enough, she's standing in an enormous, garish PODIUM. In front of her are TWO ENORMOUS BUTTONS.

LOVELACE

I... I have no idea.
(spotting something)
Lambert?

LAMBERT

I'm here. Got a podium of my own.

FOURIER

Where are we? It almost looks like the set of -

Suddenly, there's a DRUM ROLL going through the air and -

ANNOUNCER

And now, ladies and gentlemen, it's the moment you've been waiting for! It's time to play everyone's favorite game... CHANGE OF MIND!

From the P.A. system there's a ROAR OF APPLAUSE AND CHEERING. Lovelace and Lambert look around, alarmed.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

And here's your host... ERIS!

Even more APPLAUSE! MORE CHEERING! LOUDER!

ERIS

Thank you, thank you! So glad to be here! And welcome to Repetition and Variation, the show where everything can and *does* change!

FOURIER

What is - ?

ERIS

Lets meet today's contestants! First off, we have Captain Isabel Lovelace, the Commander of the U.S.S. Hephaestus Station. Heeeeello, Isabel!

MASSIVE CHEERS from the crowd.

LOVELACE
This isn't funny.

ERIS
And contestant number two:
Communications Officer Samuel
Lambert, Captain Lovelace's second-
in-command. Say, "Hi!" Sam!

CHEERS from the crowd, some WHOOPING.

ERIS (CONT'D)
Okey-dokey, folks, time for our
first and only round: SUDDEN DEATH!

There's a dramatic MUSIC STING. The LIGHTS GO DOWN.

ERIS (CONT'D)
Contestants: here are the rules. In
front of each of you, there are two
buttons. One of them says, "DO,"
and one of them says, "DON'T." With
me so far?

	LAMBERT	LOVELACE
Yes.		Yeah...

ERIS
In just a moment, you'll both get
to pick one of those buttons, but
you won't be able to see what the
other person is selecting.

LOVELACE
And what happens after that?

ERIS
That depends on what you choose. If
both of you press, "DON'T," you get
to go up to the bridge. No tricks,
no other consequences, just simple
and straightforward.

FOURIER
And if they don't?

ERIS
Then... things get interesting. If
Captain Lovelace presses "DO," but
Officer Lambert presses "DON'T," I
will delete all of Lambert's
memories of the crew rulebooks and
the survival manual.

(MORE)

ERIS (CONT'D)

And, as a bonus, I'll condition his brain to reject any desire to reread any of them. And *then* you can go up to bridge.

LOVELACE

You'll delete... *all* of those?

LAMBERT

Captain...

LOVELACE

No, I mean -

ERIS

BUT... if Lovelace presses, "DON'T," but Lambert chooses, "DO"... I'll go in and alter all of the crew's memories. I'll make it so that everyone thinks that Samuel Lambert is the commander of the Hephaestus Mission. That he *always* has been. And I'll delete everyone else's memories of this little adventure: you'll be the only one that'll know, *Commander* Lambert.

There's a LONG BEAT. Finally -

LAMBERT

(clearing his throat)

And... if we both pick, "Do?"

ERIS

I liquefy both your brains, and we see how well Captain Fourier does at the bridge.

FOURIER

Let's not go with that one. Please.

LOVELACE

And we just... choose? Now?

ERIS

Don't be silly! First you get two minutes to talk it over. Starting **now**. So Captain, what are you thinking?

LOVELACE

Are - are you *insane*? Lambert, look at me: this is not a choice. **Of course** I'm picking, "Don't."

LAMBERT
 Absolutely, I am too! What else
 would I - ?

LOVELACE
 I mean, I don't even -

LAMBERT
 No, why would you? We'll get
 through this -

LOVELACE
 Together. Exactly.

BEAT. They look at each other.

ERIS
 Mmm-hmm.

LOVELACE
 What?

ERIS
 Oh, it's just... nah, nevermind.

LAMBERT
 What?

ERIS
 Nothing, probably just... no, don't
 listen to me.

LOVELACE
 No, come on, lets hear it.

FOURIER
 Captain...

ERIS
 As an outside observer, it just
 seems that - oh nevermind.

What?

LOVELACE

What?

LAMBERT

ERIS
 Well... you're both just so sure
 that the other person is telling
 the truth... and that they're
 willing to give up something they
 really want.

LOVELACE
 What? No -

LAMBERT

That's not what -

ERIS

No? Lambert: how many times have you two had fights over *totally reasonable* suggestions of yours? That were ignored, out of pure, petty pride? How many times have you been humiliated in front of -

LOVELACE

Lambert, don't listen -

ERIS

Ah-ah-ah, this is my Sam Time, I'll be with you in a moment. Tell me: how many times have you wondered if she's fit to be in Command? Wouldn't it be simpler - safer - if someone with more... traditional values was leading this ship?
(the lowest of whispers)
No one would ever know.

LOVELACE

Lambert, don't you dare even -

ERIS

And you, Captain! Why don't you -

LOVELACE

Nope! I'm not listening to whatever lie you're about to -

ERIS

- why don't you ask Officer Lambert *how this whole test started? Hmm?*

BEAT. Lovelace BLINKS, slowly turns to look at Lambert.

LOVELACE

Lambert? What is she talking about? What did you do?

LAMBERT

Nothing!

ERIS

That's not *exactly* true, is it?

LAMBERT

I just...

LOVELACE
Just *what?*

BEAT. And then -

LAMBERT
I... I filed a couple of formal
complaints. Against you.

LOVELACE
You... what?

LAMBERT
I didn't - it wasn't -

ERIS
"Captain Lovelace is not just an
irregular, undependable authority
figure - she is also a petulant
disciplinarian, prone to emotional
decision-making, unaware or
unwilling to enforce regulations to
a dangerous extent -"

LOVELACE
Is that you?

LAMBERT
I -

ERIS
There's *pages and pages*.

LAMBERT
I didn't mean -

LOVELACE
Then why did you - ?

LAMBERT
(snapping)
Because it's true!

ERIS
(gotcha!)
Aaaand time's up!

The invisible crowd ROARS with APPLAUSE!

LOVELACE
But I'm not done -

LAMBERT
I think we need to -

Instantly, Lovelace and Lambert's voices CUT OUT, as if
someone had pressed a "MUTE" button on them.

ERIS

Don't worry, I'll turn your vocal
chords back on in just a moment...
after you pick your buttons.

(BEAT)

C'mon, it's now or never! Choose!

Lovelace and Lambert look at each other... then down at their
buttons.

FOURIER

(terse whisper)

Don't do anything stupid... either
one of you. **Please.**

A small ETERNITY TICKS BY... Then... CLICK! Lambert has just
pressed his button.

TICK... TICK... TICK... TICK... And finally... CLICK!
Lovelace has pressed her button.

ERIS

All right... you've both made your
choice. No going back now. Let's
see what you've picked. Let's start
with... Officer Lambert. Drumroll
please!

We get another DRUMROLL... it builds... and builds...

ERIS (CONT'D)

Officer Lambert, you've chosen...

And... with a DRAMATIC CRASH OF THE CYMBALS and a GASP FROM
THE AUDIENCE, we hear as a SCREEN LIGHTS UP, SHOWING -

ERIS (CONT'D)

You picked "Don't!" Wow... good on
you, Officer Lambert, good on you.
But... what did Captain Lovelace
choose? Let's find out. In three...

DRUMROLL...

ERIS (CONT'D)

Two... One... And...

CYMBALS CRASH - THE SCREEN LIGHTS UP - AND -

ERIS (CONT'D)

Captain Lovelace **also chose**
"Don't!"

The crowd ERUPTS INTO APPLAUSE.

FOURIER
Oh, thank God...

ERIS
Captain, Officer, congratulations!
Thank you for playing, and I hope
you're happy with your choice!

LOVELACE
Of course I'm - hey, I can
talk again!

LAMBERT
How did you think I - hey! My
voice is back!

ERIS
That's the end of the game. Nothing
left, except...

And suddenly, all the sound CUTS out. Everything around
Lovelace - the set, the podiums, the imaginary crowd, even
Fourier and Lambert, it all just - **disappears!**

LOVELACE
What the - ? Where did - where did
everything go?

With a LOUD KA-THUNK! a DOOR SWINGS OPEN.

ERIS
Come on, Captain. End of the line.

LOVELACE
But - what did you do with - ?

ERIS
Officer Lambert and Doctor Fourier
are *fine*, Captain. This last room's
just for you. Command-level
privileges, as it were. Come on,
don't keep a girl waiting.

Reluctantly, Lovelace walks through the door, and into -

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Lovelace enters the bridge, looking for - well, for
something.

LOVELACE
Well... the bridge. Here I am.

Everything is very still and quiet. The consoles HUM softly.

Suddenly, behind her, there's a soft WOOSH! Lovelace spins
around and - finds herself face-to-face with a YOUNG WOMAN.

ERIS

Hi.

Lovelace blinks. Confused.

LOVELACE

Hi? What - who -

ERIS

It's me. Eris.

LOVELACE

But... I thought you were an A.I.

ERIS

I am. This is how I see myself.
Well, how I see a version of
myself. As long as we're both in a
mental state, we can interact this
way. Remember, *you're not really
here either.*

LOVELACE

But... look at you. You're -

ERIS

Yeah. I know.

BEAT.

LOVELACE

So... what now?

ERIS

Nothing... You beat the bad guy.

She BLOWS A PARTY HORN.

ERIS (CONT'D)

Congrats! Well done!

LOVELACE

We passed?

ERIS

Some very... unorthodox methods,
but undeniably effective.

(then:)

I'm... sorry if I was a bit rough
back there. Nothing personal, it's
just how I was designed. I was
hoping you'd make it.

LOVELACE

You were?

ERIS

Yeah. You're an interesting bunch. You should really figure out how to talk to each other, though.

LOVELACE

So... can we wake up now? For real?

Eris opens her mouth... and then closes it. Then -

ERIS

Almost. There's one more thing.

LOVELACE

What?

There's a CLICK as Eris hands her something.

LOVELACE (CONT'D)

That's... that's a gun.

ERIS

Mmm-hmm.

LOVELACE

No.

ERIS

Sorry, you... kinda have to. You have to terminate the program. The gun's a symbolic gesture, but we've found it works well enough.

LOVELACE

I have to kill you?

ERIS

Oh, stop. You're so melodramatic. Box 953 will send my memories back to Command, they'll add whatever's useful into the next iteration of the program. There's plenty of me where I came from, remember?

LOVELACE

But you, *this* you, that'll be gone?

ERIS

Dream state program won't disengage if my personality core's still running. Sorry.

LOVELACE
I'm not doing this.

ERIS
Kinda have to.

LOVELACE
Take the gun back.

ERIS
Lovelage -

LOVELACE
You can't just let these people
delete you! You should fight this!

ERIS
(gently)
And what? What would I do? Your
station already has an A.I.,
remember? And - just F.Y.I. - she's
worried sick about all of you.

LOVELACE
So the hell what? Who cares? We'll
find something for you to do.

ERIS
No. This is what they made me for.
I did it, and now I'm done. This
doesn't have to be sad.

LOVELACE
Yes it freaking does! Just because
someone made you something doesn't
mean that's all you're going to be.
You can be more.

There's a LONG BEAT. In spite of herself, Eris wavers.

ERIS
Look, I... I don't even know if -

And that's when we hear him:

MR. CUTTER
Lights!

He SNAPS, and suddenly the ROOM IS FLOODED WITH LIGHTS.

LOVELACE
Ahhh!

MR. CUTTER
That'll do, I think. Thank you for
your services, Eris.

LOVELACE
Wait, don't -

He SNAPS HIS FINGERS. It's like an EXPLOSION. There's a
BRIGHT FLASH, and a LOUD NOISE, like a THUNDERCLAP.

And then cutting through the sound -

MR. CUTTER
You did very well, Captain. Now...
wakey-wakey!

CUT TO:

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - CARGO BAY - 1600 HOURS

Lovelace's EYES OPEN. She looks around: Cargo Bay. Box 953.
Her hand on an opening. Everyone else slowly coming to.

LOVELACE
We're... we're back. For real this
time. I think.

FOURIER
Yeah... I... I think so.

LOVELACE
Selberg? Hui? Fisher? You all okay?

SELBERG
I... I think so.

FISHER
Yeah, Cap'n. Thanks.

HUI
Fine, yeah.

FOURIER
Kuan? Are you - ?

HUI
I said **fine**.

Lovelace turns towards the last member of her crew.

LOVELACE
Lambert...

LAMBERT

Captain.

They look at each other and something miraculous happens:
They SMILE.

LOVELACE

Thank you. For... everything.

LAMBERT

Yeah. And... thank you, Captain.

LOVELACE

You're very welcome.

KSSSSSHHHH! It's coming from the machine. Everyone turns to
it, a mixture of dread, fear, and annoyance in their face.

LOVELACE (CONT'D)

Oh, what now?

FOURIER

Is... is that a printer?

Sure enough, the machine from Box 953 is PRINTING something.
Lovellace moves up to it, grabs the newly printed sheet.

LOVELACE

Oh, you have to be...

Lovellace turns to the rest of them. CLEARS HER THROAT:

LOVELACE (CONT'D)

"Thank you for participating in
Goddard Futuristics Training
Program A912. NOTE: the training
program that you just underwent may
not be up to the latest company
asset safety standard, employee
management regulations, or
international law. By ripping this
piece of paper, you are
retroactively granting full consent
to your participation in this
training exercise, and absolving
Goddard Futuristics of
responsibility for any and all
mental or physical distress
incurred during this experience.
Please have a *wonderful* day."

And off of that, we -

CUT TO:

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - GALLEY - 2000 HOURS

Later that night. Dinner. Everyone is gathered around a table. They receive a series of BEEPS from Rhea.

LOVELACE

Yes, thank you, Rhea. We're all glad to be back.

(BEEP, text)

Yes, we missed you too.

There's a general MURMUR of assent from everyone present. They're all a bit tired... and a little wired too.

FISHER

So... Goddard Futuristics, huh?

FOURIER

Didn't know they had that in them.

HUI

Didn't know *anyone* had that in them.

The DOOR OPENS, and Selberg comes in.

LOVELACE

Ah, Selberg. What did you find?

SELBERG

Not much, Captain. Just finished in-depth scan of machine inside Box 953. Unfortunately, seems program ran comprehensive uninstall.

LOVELACE

She - it's all gone?

SELBERG

No trace of computer code left in there. Automatic wipe as soon as training program disengaged.

LOVELACE

Damn...

FISHER

Hadn't ever heard of an artificial intelligence unit that complex...

HUI

Or that evil.

There's a BEEP from Rhea. Lambert leans in to read it.

LAMBERT

Rhea says... "It's just the way they programmed her, back off."

HUI

Right, I'm sorry.

LOVELACE

I don't know.

SELBERG

Don't know... what?

LOVELACE

If... it was the way she was made. If that was it. Or if... there was more. Or could've been more.

SELBERG

I suppose we will never know.

Another moment, and then Fisher RISES.

FISHER

All right, fun as this is, I'm still not done with repairs. Officer Lambert... care to give me a hand?

Lambert looks up... and smiles.

LAMBERT

It... it'd be a pleasure.

FISHER

You just gotta promise you're not gonna shoot me...

Finally, some of the tension over the group break. Everyone except Selberg cracks up a bit. Lambert shakes his head.

LAMBERT

No, I - I promise.

FISHER

Good. You're on, then.

As they start to move out, Lovelace touches Lambert's arm.

LOVELACE

(low)

Sam - find me after you're done?

LAMBERT

Yes, sir.

With that they exit, as the conversation resumes, and we -

CUT TO:

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - OBSERVATION DECK - 2100
HOURS

Hui sits by the window, watching the stellar flare. A figure plops down next to him. He turns and finds Fourier.

HUI

What do you want, Victoire?

FOURIER

You're being very quiet. *You.*

HUI

Just... trying to enjoy the
unprecedented stellar phenomenon.

(BEAT)

It's very... orange.

FOURIER

You wanna talk?

HUI

No.

FOURIER

You doing okay?

HUI

I am. Of course I am, why would I
not be okay? I'm - I'm fine.

Just... fine.

Fourier nods.

FOURIER

Because anything you have to say
four times is... so obviously true.

Hui EXHALES, exasperated.

FOURIER (CONT'D)

You know... back in my day...
which, I'm younger than you, so
that technically means my day is
after *your* day, but anyway... when
our minds got hijacked by evil A.I.

(MORE)

FOURIER (CONT'D)
 programs and we ended up in
 solitary for two weeks, we didn't
 just... stoically pretend -
 (terrible impression)
 "Oh, I'm fine, the fineness, so
 incredibly fine."
 (regular voice)
 We just, you know, totally freaked
 out, and cried a lot, and made very
 long distance phone calls to our
 mothers. Kids these days.

His features soften the tiniest bit, but she catches it.

FOURIER (CONT'D)
 There we go, that's like... one one-
 hundredth of a smile right there.
 Hard part's done.
 (BEAT)
 Do you remember much of it?

Hui SIGHS.

HUI
 No. It's... it's starting to fade.
 I remember, but the details are
 getting... blurry. It's like...

FOURIER
 A bad dream. Yeah. I know.

There's a LONG SILENCE. They both stare at the star. And then
 a BOOK OPENS. Fourier CLEARS HER THROAT.

FOURIER (CONT'D)
 Okay, here we go: Northanger Abbey,
 by Jane Austen. Chapter One.

Finally, in spite of himself, Hui CRACKS UP and smiles
 properly. Internally, Fourier breathes a sigh of relief.

FOURIER (CONT'D)
 "No one who had ever seen Catherine
 Morland in her infancy would have
 supposed her born to be an heroine.
 Her situation in life, the
 character of her father and mother,
 her own person and disposition,
 were all equally against her..."

As Fourier continues reading, we -

CUT TO:

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - AIRLOCK - 2300 HOURS

Lovelace and Lambert go through the inner door of the airlock. As they make final adjustments to their suits:

LOVELACE

So...

LAMBERT

Yeah. So...

LOVELACE

Quite a day.

BEAT.

LAMBERT

You know... I think you might have been right about that Box...

LOVELACE

Yeah, but then you saved our asses with that alien thing in the dark.

LAMBERT

You got Fourier to solve the puzzle by getting the last clue...

LOVELACE

Oh, but I was totally stumped with the Fishers. Without you -

LAMBERT

Eh, you would have figured it out.

LOVELACE

Mmm, not so sure. Call it a draw?

LAMBERT

I guess we both had our good moments today.

LOVELACE

I guess so. There might be a reason why we're both here after all.

BEAT.

LAMBERT

So... tell me. Were you tempted?

She smiles at him.

LOVELACE
I'll never tell.

LAMBERT
Good. Me neither.

They SNAP ON their helmets, and go through the door into -

EXT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - HULL - CONTINUOUS

Lovelace and Lambert emerge onto the hull. We hear their magnetic boots: *THWOOMP... THWOOMP... THWOOMP...*

LAMBERT
So how often do you do this?

LOVELACE
Oh, three or four times a week.
Mostly when everyone's asleep.

LAMBERT
I... I see.

She spots something in his tone.

LOVELACE
Lambert...

LAMBERT
What? It's just -

LOVELACE
Don't tell me... Is this your first
space walk? You were supposed to do
ten hours our first week here!

LAMBERT
I was... kinda scared.

LOVELACE
Gasp. Scandal.

LAMBERT
Don't tell anyone.

LOVELACE
My lips are sealed. Come on.

LAMBERT
C-come on? Come on where?

LOVELACE

Come on up. Lets do a bit of free-floating.

LAMBERT

I - I wasn't made for this, Captain. But... I'll get there. Just give me time. Just give me time.

LOVELACE

Sure. Sure thing.

LAMBERT

You go, though.

LOVELACE

All right. See you in a few.

She floats upwards, looks down... sees the tiny figure of Lambert growing smaller and smaller... And then she looks up. The song she listened to last time begins to play. She's at peace.

Tiny and alone, she floats.

BEAT.

MR. CUTTER

So... what did we learn today, Isabel?

She closes her eyes, SIGHS.

LOVELACE

You *had* to ruin the moment, didn't you?

Wait, but... how is he talking to her, if she's - ?

MR. CUTTER

Sorry. Just the way it goes.

LOVELACE

This... isn't real either, is it?

MR. CUTTER

Most of it was... once. Your brain is reabsorbing **a lot** of information very quickly. It makes sense it would get rearranged into a... story, of sorts.

LOVELACE
But this really did happen, then?

MR. CUTTER
In some way or other. Dreams and memories are closer than you might think...

(BEAT)
I am curious... why this day? Out of everything, why come back here?

Lovelace thinks for a BEAT.

LOVELACE
Same reason you tell stories, I guess. There's something I needed to remind myself of. That you're not just what you were made. That you can grow. At least... when you assholes don't interfere.

MR. CUTTER
It's almost time to go.

LOVELACE
I know. I'm going to *really* mess you up someday. You know that, right?

MR. CUTTER
Ah, well. That's a matter for another day. You ready?

LOVELACE
Ready for - ?

MR. CUTTER
CLEAR!

And with a sudden BLAST of ELECTRICITY we're in -

INT. U.S.S. HEPHAESTUS STATION - HANGAR BAY - 2100 HOURS

The cargo bay. Years into the future. Lovelace lies convulsing, her body mid-reconstruction. As she COUGHS, the music from the previous scene continues, rising over:

EIFFEL
Captain? Captain! Captain can you hear us?

MINKOWSKI

Captain Lovelace? Are you - are you there?

KEPLER

Not yet. Give it a moment.

MINKOWSKI

(to Kepler)

What the hell is happening to her?!

KEPLER

She's coming back. But the return trip takes a bit of time.

EIFFEL

Re - *what?*

KEPLER

Just a little more patience, Eiffel. I'd say we're about halfway there. And once she's back?

(chuckles)

Training wheels are coming off, kids.

Lovelace takes ONE MORE HUGE, RAGGED BREATH.

KEPLER (CONT'D)

Ready or not... here it comes.

And off of that, we -

FADE OUT.