

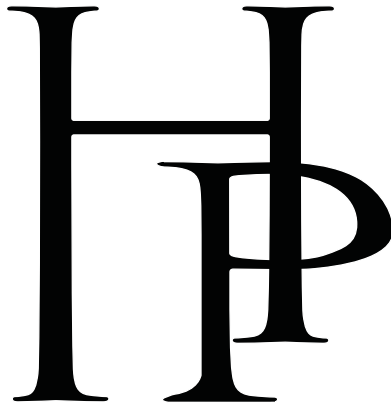
ADVENTURE

BY
JD ATKINS



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SYNOPSIS: Welcome aboard the Starship Adventure! For one hundred missions, Captain Adrian Key and the Galactic Voyagers have ventured into deep space on missions of science and discovery—that is, until High Command decides to convert the aging Adventure into a cruise ship for galactic tourists. When the Voyagers ferry these unwelcome guests—as well as an upstart Lieutenant trying to usurp command—to Captain Key’s forced retirement party, a mysterious computer malfunction sets their final flight on a collision course with a gravity well. Can the Voyagers fix their beloved ship in time to avert disaster, even as a tourist revolt threatens to scuttle their efforts? Whatever the outcome, it is sure to be an *Adventure* to remember!

DURATION: 90 minutes.

SETTING: The decks of the Starship Adventure.

TIME: The not-so-distant future.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(12-19 either gender, extras)

SHEPHERD A (m/f).....	The sentient computer on the Starship Adventure. <i>(33 lines)</i>
SHEPHERD B (m/f).....	The sentient computer on the Starship Adventure. <i>(37 lines)</i>
SHEPHERD C (m/f).....	The sentient computer on the Starship Adventure. <i>(36 lines)</i>
SHEPHERD D (m/f).....	The sentient computer on the Starship Adventure. <i>(34 lines)</i>
KEY (m/f).....	Captain Adrian Key. Veteran leader of the Starship Adventure. <i>(181 lines)</i>
QUINN (m/f).....	Commander Quinn. Second-in-command and navigation expert. <i>(162 lines)</i>

DORIAN (m/f).....	Lieutenant Commander Dorian. Chief Science Officer and engines expert. <i>(124 lines)</i>
SWISH (m/f).....	Ensign Emerson Swish. An up-and-coming junior officer with bold plans. <i>(73 lines)</i>
SILVER (m/f)	Lieutenant J.T. Silver. A brash new officer who is shoehorned into leadership. <i>(167 lines)</i>
AKOM (m/f)	Ensign Akom. A security officer. <i>(25 lines)</i>
MILES (m/f)	Ensign Miles. A security officer. <i>(31 lines.)</i>
ADMIRAL (m/f).....	Admiral Silver. A high-ranking Admiral and the face of Voyager High Command. <i>(46 lines)</i>
GUEST A (m/f).....	Guest on the Starship Adventure. An entitled tourist. <i>(12 lines)</i>
GUEST B (m/f).....	Guest on the Starship Adventure. An entitled tourist. <i>(10 lines)</i>
GUEST C (m/f).....	Guest on the Starship Adventure. An entitled tourist. <i>(10 lines)</i>
GUEST D (m/f).....	Guest on the Starship Adventure. An entitled tourist. <i>(9 lines)</i>
FLOWERS (m/f).....	Professor Casey Flowers. The creator of SHEPHERD. Begins as a guest onboard. <i>(62 lines)</i>
CHARLIE (m/f).....	Ensign Charlie. Dimwitted member of the I.T. Department. <i>(86 lines)</i>
FRED (m/f)	Ensign Fred. Dimwitted member of the I.T. Department. <i>(86 lines)</i>

GUESTS / CREW.....Other members of the Starship Adventure and/or tourists can round out the cast. (7 lines)

***CASTING NOTE:** All characters are gender flexible; all pronouns and honorifics written in the script are provisional pending the actor's choice.*

OPTIONAL DOUBLING

SHEPHERD can be played by (1-4) actors.

GUESTS can be played by (2-4) actors.

ADMIRAL can double as FLOWERS.

AKOM's lines can be given to MILES.

SET DESIGN SUGGESTIONS

The set can be easily accomplished with one base set (The Bridge and projection screen) with set props that are brought on and off to signify the change of settings.

1. THE BRIDGE. This is the Starship Adventure's central command center. A Captain's Chair is center, with two separate consoles for futuristic equipment used by the officers. Pedestal(s) should be placed backstage for Shepherd and Admiral to stand on.
2. THE GALLERY. A near featureless area of the ship that leads to other locations.
3. THE LOWER DECKS. A "clubhouse" feel. This is where Charlie and Fred hang out and shirk their duties. Disused electronic equipment and more common garbage should be mixed in with random sports equipment in unorganized areas.
4. THE DETENTION WING. At the top of Act II, the officers are being held in the futuristic detention area aboard the ship. Red lights can communicate a barrier keeping the prisoners contained.
5. STATIC ELEMENTS. A rear projection screen can flash the "Adventure Logo" and other graphics as SHEPHERD describes them. Fade the logo when Shepherd is deleted, then bring them back when Shepherd is restored.

HAND PROPS

- Tablets 4+ (rigid tablet cases will serve)
- Cocktail glasses
- “Laser batons”
- “Shramp” (peach rings or similar snacks work well)
- Golf clubs x 2
- Football or soccer ball
- Notebook
- Clipboard
- “Organic Matter Container” LED cube or similar
- “Laser cannon / Life support channel” A ductwork tube will do

LARGE PROPS

- Mobile Console x2—With keyboards and screens befitting a spaceship.
- “Auxiliary Power Unit” A large console center stage. Lights and smoke emanate from the power unit when active.
- Clubhouse storage units—Shelves or containers overloaded with disused electronics and an assortment of sports equipment and other odds and ends.

COSTUMES

ADVENTURE CREW can wear colorful uniform jackets with the Adventure Logo. Black pants and shoes emphasize a military atmosphere. **KEY** must be in **RED** (Captain), **DORIAN**, **CHARLIE**, and **FRED** in blue (science). Suggestions for additional colors: **SILVER** and **EMERSON** in yellow or grey (systems), **QUINN** in purple or green (navigation). **ADMIRAL** should have a unique color to differentiate High Command.

GUESTS and FLOWERS can wear vacation shirts, shorts, sandals, socks, sunglasses, etc... Anything to make a touristy-vibe. As the show progresses, they can tie neckties around their heads or have more roughshod appearances to suggest a revolt.

SHEPHERD should be in white with colorful matching wigs to suggest a hologram.

LIGHT EFFECTS

- Flashing / moving lights emphasize takeoff and various crises throughout.
- Blue wash as the ship is near the blue dwarf star at the end of 1.4 and the end of 2.4.
- Red lights for when the crew is in the detention wing behind a “laser shield.”

SOUND EFFECTS

- Science fiction sound effects abound. Space engine, laser batons, laser shield.
- A welcome anthem for SHEPHERD.
- Tinkling as SHEPHERD fades away / boot-up noise for when SHEPHERD returns.
- Special dings and error noises for SHEPHERD.
- Hailing beep or ding for when the Admiral calls.
- String quartet music for the “End of *Titanic*” joke.
- Upbeat music for the Captain’s last exit to lead into the end of the show.

OPTIONAL ADDITIONAL A/V

(To appear on an onstage screen)

- Adventure Logo (original art by JD Atkins available through publisher)
- Picture of *Titanic* film actors or the ship
- Picture of the HAL from *2001: A Space Odyssey*
- Picture of *Wall-E*

PREMIERE PRODUCTION

ADVENTURE premiered at Grafton High School in Grafton, WI. The production included the following cast and crew.

SHEPHERD ABCD Maya Luening, Samara Gries,
Sofia Salko, Kayla Schopbach
KEY Mikayla Fischer
QUINN Hailey Bault
DORIAN..... Nathan Compton
SILVER..... Colton Nash
SWISH..... Amanda Hoenecke
CHARLIE..... Grace Gehrke
FRED Ruby Ellison
MILES Rachel Lopera
AKOM..... Ryden Luedtke
FLOWERS Ty Brennan
ADMIRAL Brady Windsor
GUEST A Jacob Dempsey
GUEST B..... Anna Krol
GUEST C..... Pyper Flaig
GUEST D Magg Barnett

ADDITIONAL GUESTS: Pooja Angirekula, Charlie Danielson, Cora Kempfer, Nick Laliberete, Katherine Moldenhauer, Mandy Perez, Aidan West

CREW: Layna Adams, Charles Craun, Robert Danner, Hannah Feutz, Andy Gieschen, Hailey Green, Venus Hinojos, Annika Korb, Reegan McMahon, Aryanna Minor, Isabella Ritacca, Zac Taylor, Jack Wilkins

DEDICATION

ADVENTURE would not have been possible without the support of my family at home and my family in GHS Performing Arts. I love you all.

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

AT START: Interior. The bridge of the Starship Adventure. A Captain's Chair is the central feature of a sleek, futuristic environment. On SR and SL, work stations with various controls frame the main deck of the Starship Adventure. US and DS are special podiums where various holograms [played by the actors] will appear periodically.

Lights are dim at rise. SWISH, KEY, QUINN, and DORIAN are USC with their backs to the audience. Framing the frozen actors on all sides, SHEPHERD ABCD can be played by one, two, three, or four actors. Distribute SHEPHERD lines evenly. SHEPHERD does not make eye contact with the other actors.

SHEPHERD A: (Addressing the audience in a calm and genial voice.)

Hello! Please do not be alarmed. The following invasive scans are for your safety.

SHEPHERD C: Please present your ticket now. Scanning. Scanning. (SFX: Ding.) Admittance accepted.

SHEPHERD B: Warning: the Starship Adventure makes use of artificial gravity; please note that smuggling natural gravity aboard may increase your risk of explosive decompression. Remain seated while the cabin is scanned. Scanning. Scanning. (SFX: Ding.) Gravity detox—mostly—confirmed. You will probably not explode.

SHEPHERD D: Please present blood samples to confirm genetic profile. Scanning. Scanning. (SFX: Ding.) Genetic profiles accepted. (SFX: Error noise.) Error detected. According to our scan, there are—three—cyborg duplicates—seated among you. Remember: if you are a cyborg duplicate, please refrain from murdering the other passengers at all times.

SHEPHERD A: Pre-launch-scans complete. Proceeding with welcome speech in 3... 2... 1...

SFX: A short welcome anthem.

SHEPHERD C: Hello and welcome aboard the Starship Adventure, the legendary flagship of the Galactic Voyagers.

SHEPHERD A, B, C, & D: Galactic Voyagers: reach for the stars!

SHEPHERD A: The Galactic Voyager mission: to explore the great unknown!

SHEPHERD C: To see the far-flung corners of this wide universe!

SHEPHERD B: To discover new and interesting worlds!

SHEPHERD D: To boldly go where many sci-fi adventures have gone before!

SHEPHERD B: The Galactic Voyagers are led on this noble quest by this very vessel—

SHEPHERD A, B, C, & D: —The legendary Starship Adventure!

SHEPHERD D: For one hundred missions, the Starship Adventure has forged new paths through deep space, every quest more harrowing than the last!

SHEPHERD A: Any flight on the Adventure is special, but there is something different about this mission.

SHEPHERD A, B, C, & D: You!

SHEPHERD B: By being here today, you have the distinct honor of being the first civilians to ever board a Voyager starship. Congratulations!

SHEPHERD C: While the Starship Adventure is intended for missions of science and exploration, never fear! Changes have been made to provide for your maximum comfort!

SHEPHERD A: Combination pool and hot tub!

SHEPHERD D: Full size shuffleboard court!

SHEPHERD B: Bottomless shrimp cocktails!

SHEPHERD C: And a manager to make everything run smoothly.

SWISH: (*Light up on SWISH, standing still as a projection. A soundbite.*) Your comfort is my prime directive.

SHEPHERD B: Meet junior officer Emerson Swish, the soon-to-be director of the new Department of Guest Services. You can thank Ensign Swish for the chance to fly with us today; it was her proposal that convinced High Command to allow passengers such as yourselves aboard a Voyager starship.

SHEPHERD C: But of course, Ensign Swish does not run the Adventure alone. Allow me to introduce our senior officers!

SHEPHERD A: (*Light up on DORIAN, standing still, as a projection.*) Meet Lieutenant Commander Dorian, our chief science officer. Say hello, Lieutenant!

DORIAN: (*A soundbite.*) Good science is its own reward.

SHEPHERD D: *(Light up on QUINN, standing still, as a projection.)*

Commander Quinn is our second-in-command and chief navigation officer. What's the latest, Commander?

QUINN: *(A soundbite.)* I'll keep us on the right course.

SHEPHERD B: And finally, presenting the Captain of the Starship Adventure—our fearless leader on this and every voyage-- Adrian Key!

SHEPHERD C: Yes, Captain Key, the legendary Voyager who has served aboard the Starship Adventure for one hundred missions. No doubt you have heard the stories of our greatest Captain, a leader whose stoic heroism is beyond compare.

SHEPHERD A: *(Slightly somber.)* Unfortunately, the one-hundred-and-first flight of the Starship Adventure will be the Captain's last. After a quarter century of service, she has made the decision to retire.

SHEPHERD D: Which brings us back to you! Our destination today is Outpost Omega, where Voyager High Command is preparing an extravagant retirement celebration for our beloved Captain Key. Incidentally, the fact that you are here indicates your social status was sufficient enough to warrant an invitation! Congratulations on your political power and/or fabulous wealth!

SHEPHERD B: As is the case with any of our deployments, the Officers' various duties will keep them busy, but if you do happen to see our Captain, please offer your congratulations for a lifetime of exemplary service.

SHEPHERD C: Finally, allow me to introduce myself.

SHEPHERD A, B, C, & D: My name is SHEPHERD.

SHEPHERD C: ...and I am the Starship Adventure's onboard computer. My various programs and functions will keep everything from navigation to life support running smoothly.

SHEPHERD B: My prime directive is to assist those aboard the Starship Adventure in any way I can, and for this mission, that includes taking care of all of you!

SFX: Launch alarm sounds. Crewmembers break formation and head to their respective stations for launch, animating as real people. Exit SWISH.

SHEPHERD D: Attention passengers! Countdown sequence has been initiated.

SHEPHERD A: Please secure your safety harness and helmet.

SHEPHERD C: Please place arms and legs inside the protective restraints!

SHEPHERD B: And remember, for the safety of everyone on board, please refrain from vomiting until we are fully airborne. Launch sequence begins in 3... 2... 1...

SHEPHERD A, B, C, & D: Your adventure starts NOW!

In a continuation of the scene, lights come up fully on the deck of the Starship Adventure. At lights, KEY takes the Captain's chair, while QUINN and DORIAN run to separate stations to perform their launch duties. The atmosphere onstage is energetic, but their demeanors are calm and steady. This is "old hat" for the three veteran leaders of this ship. AKOM and MILES, two security officers, stand at attention on either side of the stage. Possible non-speaking extras can be Voyager Crew, dashing between stations and adding to the overall energy.

KEY: Engines.

DORIAN: Engine power climbing; escape velocity achieved.

KEY: Navigation.

QUINN: Axis tilt within parameters; vector is... stable.

KEY: Keep an eye on that axis tilt. Solar flares can mess with our guidance systems.

DORIAN: Again with the solar flares? We're in a dormant cycle.

KEY: Commander Quinn, what am I about to say to Lieutenant Dorian about that?

QUINN: (*Mimicking a sea captain.*) Yar, Dorian, the Captain feels it in 'er bones!

DORIAN: Commander Quinn, please inform the Captain that feeling something in your bones does not qualify as good science. (*The whole bridge rumbles.*) What was that?

QUINN: Trajectory took a slight bump, Captain.... Looks like we got hit with.... My, my, who could have predicted this?

DORIAN: Don't say it.

QUINN: ARG, MATEY! SOLAR FLARES OFF THE PORT BOW!

DORIAN: It's still not good science!

Enter LT. SILVER, a dashing young adult in officer's attire. SILVER is immediately stopped by MILES.

SILVER: Let me through.

MILES: Sorry, pal. No guests on the bridge.

SILVER: I'm not a guest.

SILVER sees KEY and confidently brushes past MILES.

MILES: Hey!

SILVER: Captain Key.

AKOM runs in to assist, accosting SILVER prior to reaching the Captain's chair.

AKOM: What do you think you're doing?

SILVER: I'm to speak with the Captain immediately.

AKOM: She's BUSY.

SILVER: Captain—a word please?

KEY: (*Offhanded.*) I would listen, kid. Voyager Security Officers don't ask twice.

SILVER: But Captain—

QUINN: Akom! Miles! Clear the bridge!

MILES: Come on, you.

SILVER: Hey! Get off me! Hey!

AKOM and MILES forcibly pull SILVER backwards and off stage.

QUINN: What was that about? Deploying countermeasures for the solar flares now.

DORIAN: Probably just one of the guests looking for the bathroom. ...Engines are holding steady at seventy percent.

KEY: Easy, Lieutenant! This isn't a race!

DORIAN: Alright, ya old geezer. Engines holding steady at sixty-five percent.

KEY: Much better. Wouldn't want any of our special guests losing their lunch.

QUINN: Heaven forbid, Captain.

KEY: More like “High Command” forbid.

QUINN: Stand by for stability lock. Dorian, are we clear?

DORIAN: Local gravity at zero.

QUINN: Stability lock achieved. Course heading locked in for Outpost Omega. We’re ready for the big push, Captain. Navigation, standing by.

DORIAN: Engines, standing by.

KEY: Alright, on my signal. In 3... 2... 1.... Punch it!

SFX: A warp into lightspeed.

QUINN: We’re clear. Nice work everyone.

DORIAN: *(Mimicking an airline pilot.)* Attention passengers, this is your flight crew. Thank you for choosing the Starship Adventure. We are at a cruising altitude of a million-bazillion miles. Estimated time of arrival is... approximately one solar cycle. Your Captain will be coming through the aisles shortly with a complimentary beverage service.

KEY: You joke, but that seems to be the way things are heading.

QUINN: Drinks will have to wait after we run down the checklist.

KEY: Right you are, Commander. Shepherd, run diagnostics. I want to make sure the sunspots didn’t muck up our navigation too much.

KEY begins punching numbers into a tablet, walking to-and-fro to check other machines. QUINN and DORIAN, likewise, busy themselves with various stations. SHEPHERD illuminates on a podium.

SHEPHERD B: Good morning, Captain. Diagnostics complete. All navigation systems normal.

KEY: Good. *(Tapping the tablet.)* Run life support next.

SHEPHERD B: Acknowledged.

QUINN and DORIAN, with shifty looks, have a quick, whispered argument amongst themselves, before QUINN eventually prods DORIAN into speaking.

DORIAN: Uh... so, Captain... Commander Quinn and I were talking before we took off this morning, and... well... we were just discussing your... well we were talking about... um...

KEY: Spit it out, Dorian.

QUINN: With respect, Captain, it's just a ship. So High Command is changing some things about the Voyager Business model; that's no reason to let them bully you into retirement.

KEY: They're not bullying me. High Command made their decision, and I made mine. It's as simple as that. Now perk up! We're headed to a gala!

QUINN: Gala? More like a funeral.

KEY: Better a funeral than a pity party.

DORIAN: And that's another thing! Why would you agree to go to a retirement party when you don't even want to retire? It doesn't make any sense!

KEY: There's going to be cake, Dorian. How am I supposed to turn down free cake?

DORIAN: Pshh. Cake. (*Reluctantly curious.*) What kind?

KEY: Coconut.

QUINN: Come on, this is serious! Careers are at stake! Now I for one think—(*Genuine surprise.*) Wait, coconut? Really? Was chocolate not an option?—(*Recovering.*) It doesn't matter! What I mean to say is: this new commercial direction for the Galactic Voyagers was a shock to all of us, but is it really worth throwing away your career?

KEY: Commander, there comes a time when you have to face the music! The hull's been breached, the water's pouring in, and the Captain must go down with the ship.

QUINN: That's a little melodramatic.

DORIAN: I think it's perfect! Hey Shepherd, cue up that string quartet from the end of *Titanic*.

SHEPHERD C: Acknowledged. Depressing violin music playing now.

SFX: The music begins, and DORIAN begins to mime playing a violin, waltzing around.

DORIAN: There you are, Captain. How's this for a pity party?

KEY: Now you're talking!

QUINN: Yeah, well... I can't help but feel like you're steering into the icebergs. Think about all you've accomplished. There's still so much more you could do!

KEY: Let it go, Commander.

QUINN: What about all our plans? What about showing Dorian the last wing of Orion? What about retracing the Andromeda run, or... or exploring the triple quasar? What about... about... Shepherd! Would you turn off that music?!

SFX: The music stops.

DORIAN: Hey!

QUINN: Same team, remember? Focus up!

DORIAN: Oh, fine.

KEY: What's the good word, Shepherd? Are we going to die?

SHEPHERD C: Life support systems are all normal.

KEY: Good.

QUINN: (*Clapping; an epiphany.*) What about the blue dwarf?

DORIAN: Blue dwarf? What blue dwarf?

SHEPHERD C: A blue dwarf is a rare and as-of-yet undiscovered type of star. Theoretically, only one exists in this arm of the galaxy, and could be found only using thermonuclear—

DORIAN: No, Shepherd, I know what a blue dwarf is. What's so important about it?

QUINN: (*Smug.*) Captain Adrian Key has seen every class of star this galaxy has to offer... except for a blue dwarf. Isn't that right?

DORIAN: Ohhhh... intriguing!

KEY: Well, that's my checklist finished.... So why do I feel like I'm forgetting something?

DORIAN: (*Needling.*) Forgetting something like seeing an undiscovered type of star?

KEY: No, really. I feel like I was supposed to do something... something important.

QUINN: You're deflecting, Captain. You once told me that finding a blue dwarf would be your crowning achievement. Are you really okay with leaving that on the table?

DORIAN: Come on, Captain! I would love to see a blue dwarf!

QUINN: Stay on and we can see it together!

KEY: (*Temper flaring.*) Not without the Adventure! (*Recomposing.*) Look, you two... I appreciate what you're trying to say, but you need to understand: this ship has been my whole life. Everything I achieved, I achieved right here. There is no Captain Key without the Adventure. And I can't... I won't... support what they're doing to it. Even if it costs me the blue dwarf.

Enter SWISH.

SWISH: Good morning, all.

QUINN: Well, speak of the devil. If it isn't the newly promoted Emerson Swish.

DORIAN: Careful, Captain. Better stand at attention.

SWISH: I'm sure I don't know what you mean by that.

DORIAN: (*Bitterly.*) Sure you do. (*Miming a self-impaling.*) Et tu, Emerson?

QUINN: We were just talking about your new plan for the Adventure. Tell me, how did you manage to convince High Command to go along with it?

SWISH: (*Bristling.*) High Command likes my vision.

QUINN: (*A chuckle.*) High Command likes your profit margins.

SWISH: I'm giving the Adventure a new purpose!

QUINN: The Starship Adventure is a one-of-a-kind vessel built for science and discovery; you're turning it into a galactic cruiseliner. Some new purpose!

DORIAN: The Voyagers already have a purpose, Emerson. We're explorers, not tour guides.

SWISH: Why can't we be both? I believe in the Voyager mission as much as anyone! Under my new proposal, we can share that purpose with the world!

QUINN: Don't be so naive. Our missions are dangerous. Space is dangerous.

SWISH: Yes it is. And you know what? That kind of danger takes a toll on ships. That was the other reason for my proposal. I love the Adventure, but it can't handle the same missions forever.

DORIAN: Who are you to say what the Adventure can handle?

SWISH: You don't submit the systems report; I do. Yes, I took the meeting. Yes, I proposed turning the Adventure commercial. It's a good thing I did! None of you know how close High Command was to retiring this ship completely! My proposal is the only way we stay off the scrapheap.

KEY: Your proposal is a betrayal of everything the Galactic Voyagers stand for.

SWISH: *(A little shocked.)* Captain.

KEY: *(Beat. A tired sigh.)* Just answer me this, Emerson: if this mission goes well, if we ferry these tourists to Outpost Omega without incident, the Adventure becomes a commercial vessel for good. Yes?

SWISH: *(Reluctantly.)* Yes.

KEY: Then I think it's only fair to warn you: I'm not going to Outpost Omega to swill drinks and reminisce.

DORIAN: She's going to eat coconut cake.

SWISH: Really? Coconut?

KEY: I LIKE COCONUT. No, listen, all of you. This Retirement Gala is an insult. Do you understand? An insult. *(To SWISH.)* The only reason I agreed to attend is because it gives me a chance to stop you.

SWISH: *(Defensively.)* The decision has been made.

KEY: *(Coyly.)* Has it? Wait and see, Ensign Swish. Every important decision maker in the Galactic Voyagers is attending this gala. As the guest of honor, I'm going to have quite a platform. I plan on using it.

SWISH: You would rather the Adventure be decommissioned? Destroyed? Be reasonable! If you stop my plan, it won't just mean your retirement! Everyone on this ship—including your officers—would be out of a job! Lieutenant Dorian, you can't tell me you support this.

DORIAN: Sorry, Emerson. *(Pointedly, annoyed.)* Although I would have appreciated a heads up... I could never go against my Captain.

SWISH: Commander Quinn?

QUINN: *(Sighing, shaking his head.)* At the end of the day, I would follow the Captain anywhere. Even if it's into an iceberg.

KEY: (*Kindly.*) Thank you both. (*To SWISH, nobly.*) The Adventure is more than a ship; it's a legacy. I swear: I will fight to my last breath to make sure this is the Adventure's last voyage.

SWISH: (*Hiding how deeply this cut.*) I'm sorry you feel this way. (*Perking up.*) Anyway, so long as we're talking about the recent changes, the reason I came up here is because I have an itemized list in regards to our new guests.

KEY: Here we go.

SWISH: If I could just get a yes-or-no from you.... First, we need more towels for the spa. Lieutenant Dorian, can I commandeer the towels from the medbay?

DORIAN: Oh, sure. You've already converted one of my best laboratories to make the spa, why not take all my important inventory while you're at it.

SWISH: Perfect, thank you. Second, there are a few guests complaining that the takeoff was too bumpy. Let's keep a tighter grip on the helm, shall we?

QUINN: (*Faintly indignant.*) I'll try not to spill any mai tais from here on in.

SWISH: Good. Lastly—and most urgently, if I'm being honest—the “bottomless” shrimp buffet we promised is woefully understocked.

DORIAN: (*Sarcastic.*) Uh-oh, Captain. Better turn around.

KEY: Look Emerson, as important as the shrimp situation is, I have an entire ship to run. So if you don't mind...

SWISH: Well perhaps Commander Quinn might have a moment—

QUINN: (*No sympathy.*) Commander Quinn has work to do, too.

DORIAN: Look, Emerson, this was your evil scheme, remember? Don't expect any favors from us. You better clear out and let us do our jobs.

SWISH: (*Sharp.*) From now on the guests are your job. You can throw a tantrum all you want, but this is happening. Now I have two dozen itemized requests that need approval from one of you. Who's it going to be?

QUINN: Approve them yourself, if they're that important.

SWISH: (*Losing patience.*) I can't. My promotion isn't official until after the Captain's retirement party. Look. If none of you plan on helping me find a solution, then please point me in the direction of a Senior Officer who will. Or do I have to call High Command? Well?

KEY: (*Sighing.*) This is what the Adventure has come to. (*Epiphany.*)

Wait a tick! Shepherd!

SHEPHERD B: Ready, Captain.

KEY: Go through these customer complaints with Emerson.

SWISH: You can't pawn me off on a computer!

SHEPHERD B: Ensign Swish is correct. Voyager guidelines state that a senior officer's approval is needed to make changes to the itinerary.

KEY: Fine. (*Waves a hand in the mime of a monarch knighting someone.*) Shepherd the Computer, I hereby make you an Acting Senior Officer. Good enough?

SHEPHERD B: (*Beat.*) Acknowledged.

SWISH: Why didn't you deputize me?

KEY: Because unlike you, Shepherd is incapable of stabbing me in the back.

SWISH: (*Storming.*) Fine. I'll leave you alone to brood. Good luck getting to Outpost Omega! I mean, it's a straight shot that even a child could navigate, but I'm sure it will still be a fantastic final voyage for you. (*Turning back at the last moment.*) By the way, if I were you, I might handle the shrimp shortage personally. I've never seen a group of people so upset about shellfish.

Exit SWISH.

KEY: (*Slumps in the Captain's chair.*) Can you believe this?

DORIAN: Maybe we should be trying to find an iceberg.

A beeping noise is heard.

QUINN: Uh, Captain?

KEY: What is it now?

QUINN: Priority call from headquarters. It's... Admiral Silver of High Command. (*Urgently.*) Shepherd: patch it through.

SHEPHERD C: Acknowledged.

ADMIRAL SILVER appears on the SHEPHERD podium as a projection calling the ship.

ADMIRAL: Adrian! Congratulations on the successful launch of your final voyage! We at High Command are extremely proud, and we eagerly await your arrival to Outpost Omega! Hope you don't mind, but it seems that some of us got the party going a little early! Major Xin, don't you dare cut that cake! (*Beat.*) Yes, I agree, coconut was a strange choice!

KEY: Is there something I can help you with, Admiral?

ADMIRAL: What? Oh, yes! I'm calling to see how the Lieutenant is getting along, naturally!

DORIAN: (*Perking up.*) Oh! I'm fine, Admiral, thank you for asking. Actually, now that you mention it, my elbow has been acting up again...

ADMIRAL: No, not you, Dorian. Wait—don't tell me he hasn't reported yet!

QUINN: (*Aghast.*) Captain... the thing you forgot... you were supposed to—

KEY: Oh, that's what it was! I remember now! You asked me to talk to a new officer didn't you? What was the name? (*Checking a tablet.*) Lieutenant... Lieutenant...

Enter SILVER.

SILVER: Lieutenant Silver.

DORIAN: Uh-oh.

SILVER: I told you I was supposed to be here.

QUINN: Hold on. Silver? As in...

ADMIRAL: As in my grandson, Commander Quinn. Meet Lieutenant J.T. Silver, the finest cadet the Academy has ever seen. Just graduated last week!

QUINN: (*Skeptically.*) And has already made Lieutenant. What a prolific rise.

SILVER: I assure you, Commander, my skills are equal to my rank.

ADMIRAL: His scores on the Academy exams were the highest we've ever seen; even higher than yours, Adrian. We have big plans for J.T. and this mission will be the perfect feather in his cap. I mean, serving with the Captain Key!

QUINN: For one mission?

ADMIRAL: Details, Commander, details. At any rate, the primary mission for this voyage is to get Lieutenant Silver here as much practical experience as we can. In fact, I think it would be a grand idea for you to hand over the reins to him.

QUINN: What?

DORIAN: What?

KEY: Admiral: permission to speak freely.

ADMIRAL: Of course not. How silly.

KEY: First you decide to turn the Adventure into a leisure vessel. Then you load it up with untrained civilians and order me to ferry them to my own retirement party. But now... just to add insult to injury... you're telling me to give up command of my ship on my last flight as a Galactic Voyager?

ADMIRAL: (*Without irony.*) Yes, thank you. The sooner the better.

KEY walks over and slumps in the Captain's chair.

SILVER: You needn't worry, Captain. I've been trained for this.

QUINN: You've been trained.... Listen, kid. If you think the legendary Captain Key is going to give up her last voyage to train some smartmouth tenderfoot, you've got another thing coming.

SILVER: It's either that, or the legendary Captain Key ends her career with a Court Martial.

DORIAN: You little punk! How dare you!

ADMIRAL: Enough, all of you. This isn't up for debate. Captain, all I want to hear from you is that you will be handing over command of the Adventure to my grandson. Well?

KEY: (*Glowering.*) Lieutenant Silver... stand at attention.

SILVER: Ready!

KEY: I sure hope you are. In accordance with the Admiral's wishes, I suppose I hereby—

A sudden rumble, and an alarm sounds.

SILVER: What was that?

KEY: Dorian. Quinn.

QUINN: On it.

QUINN runs to the navigation computer, while DORIAN runs to the engine controls.

KEY: Let's get an engine report. What happened?

DORIAN: Captain, I can't get into the system. The engines are locking me out.

ADMIRAL: What is all of this? Engine lock? Adrian, explain!

SILVER: I'd quite like an explanation as well.

KEY: Shut up, the both of you!

SILVER: How dare you speak to the Admiral like that!

ADMIRAL: Adrian, this is most unusual! I demand that you report at once!

KEY: Shepherd, end the call! And shut off that alarm!

SHEPHERD C: Acknowledged.

Exit ADMIRAL, abruptly.

SILVER: Captain Key, that was your commanding officer!

KEY: And I'm yours, so can it! Talk to me, Quinn. What's happening?

QUINN: This doesn't make any sense. Our trajectory is off by almost thirty degrees!

KEY: Well get us back on course!

QUINN: I can't. The nav station is locked up, too! I can't input new coordinates!

DORIAN: First the engines and now the navigation? Shepherd, what is going on?

SHEPHERD C: (*Pleasantly.*) Computer access has been revoked for all personnel.

DORIAN: Override. Priority access: Lieutenant Dorian.

SHEPHERD C: (*Pleasantly.*) Access denied.

KEY: Priority access: Captain Adrian Key.

SHEPHERD C: (*Pleasantly.*) Access denied.

DORIAN: That's impossible!

KEY: Shepherd, who set us on a new course?

SHEPHERD C: Error. Answer not found.

KEY: Well then who locked us out of the computers?

SHEPHERD C: Error. Answer not found.

KEY: This doesn't make any sense!

QUINN: *(Tablet in hand.)* I've found our new coordinates. We're on course to... huh.

KEY: What is it?

QUINN: It's... nothing. A tiny solar system in some uncharted corner of space.

DORIAN: Let me see that. *(Grabbing the tablet.)* Wait, this gravity reading can't be right... no. No, no, no! This is bad, Captain... according to my calculations, we're on a direct collision course with a gravity well.

SILVER: What does that mean?

DORIAN: It has the density of a thousand suns! If we get too close, we'll never be able to get free! The star will just keep pulling and pulling until... Captain, if we don't change our current trajectory and fast... We're all going to die.

QUINN: Captain Key! What are our orders?

KEY, stunned, sits in the Captain's chair with a numb expression.

KEY: Shepherd.

SHEPHERD C: Yes, Captain?

KEY: You can play that violin music now.

Lights. SFX: Music.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

AT START: *In the GALLERY, a sparse passageway connecting other areas of the ship, SWISH is leading FLOWERS and GUESTS on a tour. GUESTS are decked out in floral vacation shirts and are taking pictures like tourists. In the background, AKOM and MILES stand at attention.*

SWISH: And here we are in the gallery, a sort of hub that connects all areas of the ship. The gallery acts as thoroughfare for all ship personnel. That gateway leads to the engines, cabin quarters, and the galley. That gateway leads to the labs, and this gateway leads to the detention block and the lower decks beyond that.

GUEST A: When do we get to see the bridge? I want to see how the ship is flown!

GUEST C: And what were all those alarms about? I wish to lodge a formal complaint!

FLOWERS: We demand you take us to this so-called “Captain,” if such a person even exists!

SWISH: Ah, well... the Captain is extremely busy, so...

GUEST B: When’s lunch? We’re dying to get to the shrimp buffet!

FLOWERS: (*Weirdly menacing.*) The brochure said bottomless shrimp. Quit holding out on us!

ALL GUESTS and FLOWERS: (*Chanting together.*) Never-ending shrimp! Never-ending shrimp!

Enter KEY, SILVER, and QUINN.

SWISH: Captain! Thank goodness. (*Breaking away from the mob.*) Our guests are getting a little... um... agitated. They won’t stop asking about the shrimp.

QUINN: Again with the shrimp? Can’t you see that we have bigger things to worry about?

SWISH: I really think the Captain ought to address this.

KEY: Fine. You want me to say hello to our VIP section? I’d be glad to.

SWISH: Oh no. If you could please just be cordial...

KEY: Attention guests, who have attached themselves, leech-like, to the Starship Adventure. It has come to my attention that you would like me to address the lack of shrimp. Despite what you were promised, there was no way that an URSA class exploration vessel was going to weigh itself down with barrel after barrel of cocktail snacks! There aren’t any shrimp, there were never any shrimp, GET OVER IT. (*Wryly.*) There, Emerson. How was that?

GUEST A: No shrimp? None? What kind of a ship is this?!

GUEST D: This tyranny will not stand! Come on, everyone! There’s GOT to be shrimp somewhere! To the mess hall!

SWISH: No! Please don’t wander off! We have to stay in designated areas... Captain!

KEY: You’re right: they do seem agitated. Better go catch them.

SWISH: (*Too frustrated, storms off.*) Wait! Please! You aren't allowed in that wing!

QUINN: Akom; Miles.

AKOM: Yes, Commander?

QUINN: Maybe keep an eye on the guests. In all seriousness, they do seem a bit riled.

MILES: We'll make sure they don't get up to too much trouble.

AKOM: Come on. They went this way.

Exit AKOM and MILES.

KEY: (*To QUINN.*) Too harsh?

QUINN: Maybe a little. The guests may be annoying, but they're also harmless. Like I said before, none of this is worth throwing away the blue dwarf.

KEY: Would you drop it with the blue dwarf? It's theoretical. It might not even be out there.

QUINN: I think it's out there. Then again, I'm a galaxy-half-full kind of person.

KEY: Good grief. (*Turning to SILVER, who is standing very close.*) Is there something I can do for you, Lieutenant?

SILVER: As a matter of fact, there is. You can step aside as Admiral Silver requested. I'm supposed to be leading this mission.

KEY: That was *before* we set a collision course with a gravity well.

SILVER: Orders are orders. Now if you would just step aside—

QUINN: Look. J.T. is it? We're all just pleased as punch that you're tagging along, and it sounds like you did well for yourself in the Academy. Good for you. But you don't know the first thing about being Captain.

SILVER: (*Quoting regulation.*) "Awareness, Boldness, and Constancy."

QUINN: Ooo, very good. Hear that, Captain? The Officer's ABCs, as found on page seventy-two of the Galactic Voyager Handbook. I'm talking about the real measures of leadership, rookie. Didn't you see Captain Key's commencement speech last year?

SILVER: (*Dryly.*) I must have missed it.

QUINN: Go ahead, Captain. Take this egghead to school.

KEY: (*Shrugging.*) Alright, why not. The three rules of leadership. Rule number one, hotshot: the Captain supports their crew, not the other way around, so you can dismount your high horse anytime.

SILVER: (*Scoffing.*) That's nonsense.

KEY: I would back Commander Quinn to the hilt. It's the same with all my officers. If you surround yourself with people you support, then there's no limit to how far you can go.

SILVER: That's a little trite, but fine. What's number two?

QUINN: Rule number two: you cannot lead without trust.

SILVER: Oh, give me a break! Is that why you won't step aside? Because you don't trust me? Listen here. Orders are orders; trust is irrelevant.

QUINN: Far from it. Following orders will only get you so far. Trust is everything out here; without it, a ship falls apart.

KEY: Commander Quinn is right. Trust is your most valuable resource, but it takes time to cultivate. You have to be steady and strong, and you have to give it to get it.

QUINN: Trust is why we've gotten as far as we have, and trust is why it's a bad idea to let a stranger take the helm.

SILVER: This is nonsense. We're wearing the same uniform, aren't we? If you ask me, the only trust that matters is trusting the chain-of-command.

KEY: Well, I didn't ask you. That's the point. (*Sighing.*) Where is Dorian? I'm getting impatient.

QUINN: Beats me. According to my records, there are only two people in the I.T. department. How long could it take to find two people?

SILVER: (*Reluctantly interested.*) Hello? We were talking about the rules of Captainship.

KEY: Fine. Rule number three. If you learn nothing else from me, learn this—when you're the Captain of a ship, no matter what, always, always— (*Enter DORIAN, looking flustered.*) —Dorian!

SILVER: Wait! Always what?

KEY: Lieutenant Dorian! Did you find them?

DORIAN: (*Hesitantly.*) So, here's the thing. You all know I'm useless outside of the lab, right?

KEY and QUINN: Yes.

DORIAN: Okay. Well, I.T. is technically my department, but when it came to actually hiring people... I was a little lost. Actually, thinking back, I'm fairly certain I just took the first two resumes off the stack. I'm warning you now... they're not my most promising cadets.

QUINN: How bad could they be?

CHARLIE: *(From offstage.)* FORE!

A football comes tumbling out onto stage, caught by QUINN. Two young officers, CHARLIE and FRED holding golf clubs, come out behind it, looking around.

CHARLIE: That is a foul, Fred. Foul!

FRED: Oh, come on Charlie, it's not my fault they got in the way!

CHARLIE: Fine. But I'm putting you down for a "double boogie."

FRED: Well, I'm putting *you* down for a "TRIPLE boogie." Just take your penalty kick already.

CHARLIE: *(To QUINN.)* Heya. Can we have our ball back please?

FRED: *(Turning to KEY.)* Who are you supposed to be? I thought only the Captain wore red.

DORIAN: That is the Captain.

CHARLIE: Nice try. The Captain never goes lower than the gallery.

DORIAN: You're in the gallery!

CHARLIE and FRED look at one another in shock.

CHARLIE: *(To DORIAN, under their breath.)* What should we do?

KEY: A salute would be nice.

FRED: *(Bowing.)* At your service, my liege!

KEY: Well, that's a bow, not a salute, so—

CHARLIE: Oh Captain, my Captain!

KEY: That's Dead Poets Society. Dorian, are these two for real?

DORIAN: Sorry, Captain. Straighten up you two.

SILVER: What were you two doing anyway?

FRED: It's called Hangryball. It's how we resolve disputes over snacks.

CHARLIE: Of which there are many.

FRED: We invented it last year when we were on that seven-day-pass of Rigel 9.

CHARLIE: My favorite Rigel.

KEY: You spent an entire mission playing a made-up game? Didn't you have work to do?

CHARLIE and FRED look at one another and laugh.

CHARLIE: Good one. (*Mimic.*) "Don't you have work to do?" Classic!

QUINN: I don't get it.

FRED: (*Duh!*) We're the I.T. department on the Starship Adventure.

QUINN: So?

CHARLIE: The only computer on the Starship Adventure is Shepherd, so... Hangryball.

FRED: You want to play? All you need is a golf club and a two-liter bottle of orange soda.

QUINN: No, I don't want to play! What does Shepherd have to do with any of this?

FRED: Seriously? Don't you know how special Shepherd is?

QUINN: No... yes. Dorian?

DORIAN: They're right, actually. Shepherd is a prototype created specially for the Starship Adventure. It's totally unique. Other Voyager ships still need humans to run the computers, but... hey, Shepherd!

SHEPHERD B: Hello, Lieutenant Commander. How can I assist you?

DORIAN: Quick question: have you ever needed maintenance from these two?

SHEPHERD B: Charlie and Fred are not required for me to function.

CHARLIE: Hiya, Shep.

SHEPHERD B: Hello, Charlie. How is Hangryball going today?

CHARLIE: Well, we're both losing. Which is weird, because we're the only ones playing...

KEY: Enough! Just answer me this: if Shepherd can always fix itself, why are we still locked out of the system?

FRED: Shepherd locked you out? What gives, buddy? Let them in!

SHEPHERD B: I'm sorry, Fred, only the Senior Officer can override my current lockdown.

FRED: Boom. Just override it, señor officer.

CHARLIE: (*To KEY.*) Did you really not think of that? Seems pretty obvious.

QUINN: Of course the Captain tried that! It didn't work! Why do you think we had to resort to calling you clowns?

DORIAN: Charlie, Fred, listen closely: we are locked into a collision course with a gravity well. We have less than an hour to fix it, or we'll all be trapped forever. Understand?

CHARLIE: Woah. That's heavy.

FRED: There's no weight in space, pea-brain! Stars aren't heavy, they're dense!

CHARLIE: You're dense!

FRED: You're dense!

DORIAN: Hey! (*Snapping.*) Focus up! If we can't figure out how to unlock Shepherd, we're all dead. You understand? DEAD! Now can you help or not?

FRED: Well, to be honest, I'm not sure where we would even begin.

CHARLIE: (*Confidently.*) I got it. Hey Shep, have you tried turning yourself off-and-on again?

SHEPHERD B: (*Pleasantly.*) That is nonsense.

FRED: Do you have a cartridge we could take out and blow on?

SHEPHERD B: That approach has not worked since the 1990s.

FRED: Well I'm stumped.

CHARLIE: Me too.

FRED: Anyone for Hangryball?

SILVER: (*Laughing derisively.*) Wow.

KEY: Something to add, Lieutenant?

SILVER: What were you telling me before? That I don't know about leadership?

QUINN: (*Furious.*) Captain, you better hold me back.

KEY: It's okay, Commander. (*To SILVER.*) Go on.

SILVER: Support and trust is—fine, I guess. But a leader has to command respect. Take these two. If I were in charge, I wouldn't tolerate these shenanigans. I would demand their respect. That's what leadership is.

KEY: (*Thinking.*) Hmm. Okay. You've got it.

SILVER: What?

KEY: I said you've got it. I'm assigning you to supervise Charlie and Fred.

SILVER: What? No. I was being rhetorical...

KEY: Charlie and Fred, your mission is to discover a solution to the Shepherd problem. Lieutenant Silver here will keep you on task. Remember: we have less than an hour.

SILVER: Captain Key, is this really the best use of my talents?

KEY: You wanted to lead, Lieutenant, so lead. Tick tock.

SILVER glances uneasily at CHARLIE and FRED. CHARLIE holds up a golf club and smiles.

CHARLIE: Did you bring a club?

SILVER: Come on.

SILVER storms offstage, followed by CHARLIE and FRED.

QUINN: Do you really think they'll be able to figure this out?

KEY: I doubt it, but hopefully they can keep Lieutenant know-it-all busy while we fix the problem. Did you two catch that bit about a manual reboot?

DORIAN: (*Epiphany.*) The backup power unit?

KEY: Exactly!

QUINN: Wait, so we are going to turn off Shepherd?

DORIAN: No... Shepherd is hardwired into all of our systems; I'm not even sure turning it off is possible. But with a backup power unit and some rerouting, we can bypass Shepherd and reboot the engines ourselves!

QUINN: Reboot the engines! Of course!

DORIAN: I'll head to the engine room right away and start setting things up. Captain, I could use another set of hands.

KEY: You got it.

QUINN: I'll head back to the bridge in case navigation comes back online.

KEY: Stay focused, everyone. We might just save our necks yet.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

AT START: *The Lower Decks: similar to the bridge and gallery apart from the obvious mess. CHARLIE and FRED'S various recreational equipment is piled in heaps alongside disused electronics.*

SHEPHERD C: The following is a safety reminder. In the event of an air systems failure, passengers will be issued oxygen tanks while systems are repaired.

SHEPHERD B: In the event an air system failure leads to explosive decompression, passengers' next of kin will be issued a partial refund and a letter of apology. This has been a safety reminder. Galactic Voyagers: REACH FOR THE STARS! (*Exit SHEPHERD.*)

GUESTS and FLOWERS roll across the stage, chanting "Shrimp!" They have more of a roughshod, "Lord of the Flies" look about them now. Improvised weapons such as power cords and sandals can be brandished as they go. Enter MILES and AKOM, in chase.

SWISH: Come on, you two! These guests are getting wilder by the minute.

AKOM: They're headed for the mess hall! If they get their hands on the soup ladles it's over!

SWISH: Better get out your laser batons.

MILES: Roger. Setting laser batons to... (*Looking to SWISH for approval.*) ... stun?

SWISH: Yes, stun! We are not killing the guests!

MILES: Okay! Just making sure.

SWISH: Just get moving! I am not losing my promotion over shrimp!

Exit MILES, AKOM and SWISH. Enter CHARLIE and FRED, followed closely by SILVER.

SILVER: So these are the lower decks.

CHARLIE: Home sweet home!

FRED: We call it the clubhouse. Make yourself comfortable, Lieutenant.

SILVER: I'd rather not. It's filthy down here. And you shouldn't either; we have work to do!

FRED: The Lieutenant's right, Charlie. Poor Shep.

CHARLIE: (*Sincerely.*) It's a real shock, to be sure. A spaceship's computer threatening the lives of everyone on board? Who could have seen it coming! Actually, now that I say it out loud, it sounds familiar. I feel like that's the plot to something...

FRED: *2001: A Space Odyssey.*

CHARLIE: (*Thinking.*) No... that's not it... it's a movie. The one with the rogue computer.

SILVER: (*Insistent.*) *2001: A Space Odyssey.*

CHARLIE: (*Thinking.*) No... Hey, Shepherd! What's that movie with the spaceship and the evil computer? You know, the one with the big red eye?

SHEPHERD D: You're thinking of the 1968 film *2001: A Space Odyssey.*

CHARLIE: (*Thinking. A long pause.*) No...

SILVER: Oh for the love of.... Look. It doesn't matter! How are you going to fix our computer?

FRED: Well, first we were going to troubleshoot for a while.

SILVER: Okay! Troubleshooting a computer error is always a great first step.

CHARLIE: No, not that. Troubleshooting is this cool game we made up. We just need to find our boxing gloves—

SILVER: God help me. Look. Where is the computer mainframe? I'm just going to destroy it myself and save everyone the trouble.

FRED: Easy there, pal. You can't destroy Shepherd! She's our friend.

SILVER: You can't be friends with a computer.

CHARLIE: Maybe you can't. We're nice.

FRED: Hey Shepherd! We're friends, right?

SHEPHERD D: I am programmed to be friendly to everyone.

FRED: No, no, no. I mean, we hang out all the time, right?

SHEPHERD D: Affirmative. Charlie and Fred request my assistance more than anyone.

FRED: (*To SILVER.*) Hear that? We're her best friends.

SILVER: This is ridiculous. Fine! We don't destroy it. But there has to be something here we can use. Did the computer come with a manual?

FRED: Hmm. I think there was an operations guide, but I don't know where we put it.

SILVER: Good luck finding anything in this pigsty.

CHARLIE: Wait, I remember! *(Runs over to one of the storage units and pulls a thick binder from behind it.)* Yahtzee! "Operations Guide for the SHEPHERD A.I. Prototype."

SILVER: What was it doing wedged back there?

FRED: Franklin's been living in it.

SILVER: Franklin better not be some gross cockroach that lives in this mess.

CHARLIE: *(Handing it over.)* Cockroach! No. What? Of course not. Franklin's a rat.

SILVER: *(Handing it right back.)* You read it.

CHARLIE: Suit yourself. I'll see what I can find.

FRED: Can I offer you anything, Lieutenant? We've got diet soda, diet energy bars, diet coffee...

SILVER: No. Let's both straighten up and wait for your partner to finish reading the manual.

FRED: Well, between you and me, Charlie's not exactly the brightest star in the sky. We might as well get comfortable. Want to play Giant Jenga?

SILVER: No!

FRED: Fine, jeez, don't have an aneurism. Cornhole it is. Here. *(Tosses a beanbag.)*

SILVER: *(Dodging out of the way.)* Cut that out! I don't want to play yard games while our lives hang in the balance! *(Frustrated sigh.)* Great. Just great. Up on deck they're having the adventure of a lifetime, and I'm stuck babysitting a pair of lazy, diet-coffee-drinking Academy dropouts!

FRED: Hey! I resent that! If you put our scores together I'm pretty sure we passed the exam.

CHARLIE: Eh. *(Gives a "more-or-less" hand motion.)*

SILVER: *(Head in hands.)* This is not how this was supposed to go.

CHARLIE: How was it supposed to go?

SILVER: I was supposed to be in charge! I was supposed to be piloting the ship as Captain! I had the highest exam scores in Voyager History! But does that get me any respect? No! Captain Key treats me like a kid.

CHARLIE: (*Absent-mindedly, while reading.*) Wow, you met the Captain? What was she like?

FRED: Captain Key does have a lot of experience. Maybe you should listen.

SILVER: (*Scoff.*) I've read every Voyager field manual three times over. If that old duff has anything to teach me, I'll eat my hat.

FRED: Two things. One: you don't have a hat. Two: in my opinion, there's always more to learn.

SILVER: In your case, there's everything to learn. (*Frustrated, puts head into hands.*) You just don't understand. Neither of you have any idea how much is expected of me. (*Standing again.*) No. I refuse to let this defeat me. I am ready to lead. (*Resolute.*) Charlie and Fred: I am a future Captain of the Galactic Voyagers, and you will respect me.

FRED: (*Noncommittal.*) Okay.

SILVER: Stand at attention when you address me!

FRED: (*Beat.*) Okay. (*Makes a marginal effort to straighten up.*)

SILVER: Good! That's better. Ensign Charlie! Report!

CHARLIE: Ay-ay, Lieutenant! (*Jumping to attention.*)

SILVER: Well, what did the manual say?

CHARLIE: It says: "In case of malfunction, contact customer support!"

FRED: You made that up! Shepherd is a prototype! There is no customer support!

CHARLIE: (*Still saluting.*) We can't know that for sure, Lieutenant. I say we dial 800 numbers for a while and see what comes of it.

CHARLIE and FRED begin to tussle over the manual.

FRED: Did you even read that thing at all?

CHARLIE: You know I can't read French!

FRED: You don't read the translations!

SILVER: (*Epiphany.*) Wait a minute... give me that.

FRED: Don't tell me you think he's right!

SILVER: (*Distracted.*) Of course not. Charlie is obviously a blockhead. But check this out! Right here on the front cover! Operations Guide for SHEPHERD A.I., by Professor Casey Flowers! Flowers... Flowers... why does that sound familiar?

CHARLIE: It says here that Professor Flowers invented Shepherd.
Neat!

FRED: I didn't know that. So Shepherd, Professor Flowers is like your
Knight Rider, huh?

SHEPHERD D: There are definite similarities. Professor Flowers was
my primary programmer.

SILVER: Don't you see? This is the answer!

FRED: Yeah! I think I get it! If anyone can figure out what's going on
with Shepherd, it's...

SILVER: (*Simultaneously.*) Professor Flowers!

FRED: (*Simultaneously.*) David Hasselhoff!

SILVER: Okay, you're both blockheads. Professor Flowers can help
us. Shepherd, I need you to call the Professor right away.

SHEPHERD D: Certainly, Lieutenant. Calling Professor Flowers now.

Enter AKOM, MILES, GUESTS, and FLOWERS. AKOM and MILES have been restrained with the power cables, and the guests are now wielding ladles, pots, etc. as weapons.

AKOM: Let us go! Let us go!

MILES: This is outrageous! You'll never get away with it!

GUEST B: Quiet, you.

GUEST D: Give us shrimp or give us death! Get that tour guide out
front.

SWISH: Please listen to me! I don't have the power to conjure shrimp
out of thin air!

CHARLIE: Hi, Akom. Miles. Emerson.

MILES: Charlie, thank goodness! You have to help us! The guests are
revolting!

CHARLIE: (*Gasps.*) Miles! I am surprised at you! Folks, don't listen to
Miles. None of you are revolting.

FRED: (*Lecturing.*) The only thing revolting here is that bad attitude.

AKOM: No! Fred, you don't understand! It's mutiny! Mutiny I tell you!

FRED: Well that's no excuse for bad manners.

MILES: No! You're not listening! Hey! (*Being pushed off.*)

GUEST A: Last chance, pal. Now: if you can't give us what we want,
who can?

SWISH: (*Desperate.*) The Captain! Captain Key has access to everything! If you want your shrimp, you'll have to take it up with her.

SHEPHERD B: Now connected to Professor Casey Flowers. Please stand by.

A telephone begins ringing.

GUEST C: She's right. We have to take the bridge!

GUEST B: The glorious revolution is upon us! Let us arm ourselves for battle!

SILVER: Would you all pipe down? I'm almost connected!

GUEST D: To victory! To glorious shrimp!

ALL GUESTS: Never-ending-shrimp! Never-ending-shrimp! Never-ending-shrimp!

FLOWERS, in tourist regalia, lingers for a second.

FLOWERS: (*Pulls a phone from a pocket, and the ringing noise stops.*)
Yyyyyello?

SILVER: (*Glancing over, seeing the guest on the phone.*) Professor Flowers?

FLOWERS: Speaking.

SILVER: Professor Casey Flowers, inventor of the Shepherd computer program?

FLOWERS: That's me! Who am I speaking to, please?

SILVER crosses to FLOWERS and pulls the phone down.

SILVER: Lieutenant Silver.

FLOWERS: Oh, my! How do you do?

SILVER: (*Realizing.*) Of course! You invented the Adventure's onboard computer, of course they would invite you to Captain Key's retirement party!

FLOWERS: Is that what this is? I didn't read the invitation too closely.

FRED: Hi, Professor. How goes the school year?

FLOWERS: (*Pleasantly surprised.*) Charlie! Fred! Good to see you two again!

SILVER: (*Shocked.*) You know these two?

FLOWERS: I sure do. They were students of mine at the Academy!

SILVER: That... surprises me. They don't seem to know too much about computers.

FLOWERS: Computers? Oh, heavens, no. But they were aces in my film study elective!

CHARLIE: Hey, Professor! What's that movie where the computer with the red eye goes bananas and takes over the ship?

FLOWERS: *2001: A Space Odyssey.*

CHARLIE: (*Thinking about it .*) No...

FLOWERS: Wait a minute—why are they wearing blue? Surely you haven't made them science officers. Between you and me, they flunked my introductory computer class four times.

FRED: (*Proudly.*) Four times each.

SILVER: They're the I.T. Department.

FLOWERS: Oh, marvelous! Shepherd is self-sufficient anyway.

SILVER: Actually, Professor. That's why I called. There's a problem with Shepherd.

FLOWERS: Is there indeed? Well, no matter; I'm not the person to talk to about Shepherd.

SILVER: That's ridiculous, of course you are! If anyone can fix Shepherd it's you. At any rate, would you please accompany us to the bridge?

FLOWERS: I guess that would be alright. I believe my new friends were headed there anyway.

SILVER: Good point; I had forgotten about the guests.... Hey! You two don't know a shortcut to the bridge, do you?

CHARLIE: (*Excited.*) Do we! (*To FRED, quieter.*) Do we?

FRED: We do.

CHARLIE: (*Excited again.*) Do we!

FLOWERS: Well, alright then! Lead on, Macduff.

CHARLIE: Who's MacDuff?

FRED: I don't know. Just go.

ACT ONE, SCENE 4

AT START: *The Bridge.* QUINN fidgets with a new piece of equipment CS: the Auxiliary Power unit. DORIAN, appears now on the computer pedestal via “hologram”.

DORIAN: The auxiliary power unit can be tricky, so be careful. Just connect the red sequencer to the blue terminal.

QUINN: Got it. Connecting to the backup power unit... now.

SFX: A sound of sparks.

DORIAN: Blue terminal! Blue terminal!

QUINN: They're all blue!

DORIAN: Good point. Just hold tight; Captain Key and I are almost done down here.

QUINN: Do we have enough time?

DORIAN: It's going to be tight. It would help if you could install the fuel cartridge. The backup power unit needs an organic matter canister to function.

QUINN: Organic matter. Got it. Quinn out.

Exit DORIAN. SFX: A beeping.

SHEPHERD B: Commander Quinn, there is another priority call coming in.

QUINN: *(Out of Patience.)* What now?

Enter ADMIRAL, on the SHEPHERD podium.

ADMIRAL: Hello? Who's that?

QUINN: Admiral Silver?

ADMIRAL: Commander Quinn? What in the world is going on?

QUINN: We had a slight malfunction. But we're working to fix it.

ADMIRAL: Slight malfunction? You're thirty degrees off course! And where's Lieutenant Silver?

QUINN: We've got your grandson working with our IT crew to fix the computer. Now, please, Admiral, I need to get back to work.

ADMIRAL: Blast it all! I was hoping to tell this to J.T. directly, but it seems time is of the essence. I'll have to trust you, instead, Commander. Now listen closely: we have reason to believe Captain Key is behind this malfunction.

QUINN: That's... that's absurd! I mean, granted, the Captain hates the new plans for the Adventure, but surely you aren't suggesting that's motivation enough to get us all killed!

ADMIRAL: No, but it might be motivation enough to sully our first attempt at ferrying guests.... Think about it. To put these important passengers in danger, only to be rescued at the last possible moment.... Captain Key might be hoping a brush with death is enough to make High Command think twice about turning the Adventure commercial!

QUINN: You're wrong. Adrian would never do something so crass.

ADMIRAL: Shepherd is incapable of acting outside of its programming, Commander! There must be someone pulling the strings.

QUINN: You can't know that for sure.

ADMIRAL: Can't we? I wonder, Commander, do you happen to know where you are headed? Because we here at High Command have discovered something interesting about your new destination. I'm sending you the information report now.

SFX: A beeping sound, and QUINN examines a tablet.

QUINN: This... this is impossible.

ADMIRAL: You are not the only one who knows about Adrian Key's last great ambition as a Captain. Admit it—the pieces fit. Captain Key is responsible.

KEY: *(Offstage.)* Quinn! Get the control panel ready!

ADMIRAL: *(Hurriedly.)* I am having my personal computer experts develop a solution to your Shepherd problem. In the meantime, it's up to you to stop Adrian from making things any worse!

QUINN: But—

ADMIRAL: I need you to follow orders, Commander. I'm trusting you to do the right thing. Admiral out.

Exit ADMIRAL. Enter KEY and DORIAN.

KEY: Commander, do you have the control panel ready?
Commander?

QUINN: *(Shellshocked.)* What?

DORIAN: Hey! I told you to put the canister into the power unit! It needs organic material!

QUINN: Right. Sorry.

KEY: What's got you in a twist, Commander? Did you find something?

QUINN: *(Hiding the tablet.)* What? Uh—no.

KEY: Dorian's got the engines covered from here, so just go keep an eye on our trajectory.

QUINN: Sure. Of course.

DORIAN: This is our only canister of organic matter. Let's make it count.

Enter SILVER, followed by CHARLIE and FRED. CHARLIE and FRED are watching a tablet intently, munching on some popcorn. FLOWERS lingers behind the others.

KEY: *(Spotting them.)* Unless you're here to fix Shepherd, Lieutenant, I suggest you turn around.

SILVER: Point of fact, Captain, I found someone who might be able to do just that.

FRED: Heya! We're watching *Space Odyssey* if anyone is interested.

CHARLIE: This is definitely not the movie I was thinking of, by the way.

FRED: Oh my god. Yes it is.

SILVER: Not them. Never them. Get out of the way, you two. Captain, allow me to introduce Professor Casey Flowers, Shepherd's creator.

FLOWERS: Programmer, please. Creator sounds far too important.

KEY: Professor Flowers! Of course! You were invited to the gala, weren't you?

FLOWERS: Indeed I was. Some trip it's been so far, too. You certainly have kept things interesting for all of us passengers! Actually, speaking of the other passengers—

DORIAN: Got it! We should be all linked up.

KEY: Hold that thought, Professor. We're trying to connect our engines to backup power. Is there anything you can tell us about Shepherd in the meantime?

FLOWERS: Oh, I'm not the one to talk to about Shepherd. Now about those guests...

KEY: What are you talking about? You built Shepherd. If anyone can fix it, it's you.

QUINN: (*Slowly, a little hesitantly.*) Yeah... lucky the Professor is on board, isn't it?

DORIAN: Almost set, Captain. Still four minutes until we hit the gravity well.

KEY: We should be just in time!

QUINN: (*Even more skeptical.*) How 'bout that.

SILVER: Captain, I really feel that we should tell you about the guests.

KEY: Not now!

DORIAN: Alright, everyone! When I activate the backup power unit, the engines will reboot. From there, we should have manual control for just enough time to avoid disaster!

SILVER: Wait... I don't understand. A reboot will only last... a minute? Less? After that, what's to stop Shepherd from steering us right back into the star?

QUINN: (*A little anger building.*) Yeah, Captain. What is to stop that? We still don't have control over Shepherd, right? (*Probing.*) None of us know what happened to change our course in the first place... (*Insisting.*) right? Is that the truth, Captain? Is that really what's going on here?

KEY: What's gotten into you? This was your plan! Dorian—it's time. Commander—get it together and be ready to adjust our course heading. Silver—you and Professor Flowers stay out of the way until we're back on course.

FLOWERS: *(To FRED and CHARLIE.)* This is all terribly exciting, isn't it?

FRED: Not really. Kubrick's films are kind of boring.

CHARLIE: What happened to those cool cavemen from the beginning? I miss them.

DORIAN: Alright—everyone ready—Activating auxiliary power in 3... 2... 1... NOW!

A brief blackout accompanies SFX: the sounds of all the equipment shutting down at once. The lights come back immediately with a swooshing noise, and the action resumes.

DORIAN: That did it! We've got control!

KEY: Excellent! Commander Quinn! Use the reverse thrusters to get us back on course!

QUINN: *(Next to the console, a hand out over the button.)* No.

DORIAN: What?

KEY: What?

CHARLIE: Whaaaaaaaaaat? The evil computer can read lips? Wild.

KEY: Commander Quinn—explain yourself!

QUINN: No, Captain—you explain this! *(Waving the tablet.)* I got this report from High Command about our new destination. But you already know what's on it, don't you? You've known where we've been going all along!

DORIAN: *(Reading the tablet, confused.)* Captain... no! Tell me this isn't true! *(Hands tablet off to SILVER, who reads it and comprehends as well.)*

KEY: What are you all talking about! Come on! We only have a few minutes! *(No one moves.)* If you won't redirect us, I will.

QUINN: Lieutenant Silver! *(SILVER steps in front of KEY, barring access to the console.)*

SILVER: Right you are, Commander.

QUINN: Professor Flowers, if you programmed Shepherd, then you can tell us once and for all: who has the clearance to block every single officer from the computer systems?

FLOWERS: Well... Shepherd's programming is extremely specific. To revoke computer access entirely—such a thing would only be possible for... (*Reluctantly.*) the senior officer on the ship.

QUINN: The senior officer. That's you, Captain.

SILVER: How about you tell me those rules of leadership one more time.

KEY: This is ridiculous! You can't possibly think I'm responsible for all of this.

DORIAN: I should have recognized the solar signature. Only one thing in the galaxy has a gravity well as powerful as the one we're headed for. Captain, how could you?

KEY: We don't have time for this. If you do not fire those thrusters soon you're dooming us all.

DORIAN: Why didn't you talk to us? We could have figured something else out together!

SILVER: I'll push this button just as soon as you admit what you did.

QUINN: Adrian! (*Sincerely.*) If you put all our lives in danger just to prove some point to High Command... please. Please tell me you didn't do this.

KEY: (*Ignoring.*) I am ordering you to redirect our thrusters. Now: will you comply with regulations or not?

SILVER: Funny you should mention regulations. I know the Galactic Voyager Handbook back to front. Allow me to quote Regulation 7-7-9—a Captain may have their authority revoked by a consensus of three ranking officers. All those in favor?

KEY: Lieutenant Silver, I am this close—

DORIAN: Aye.

KEY: (*Taken aback.*) Dorian.

DORIAN: I'm sorry, Captain. You're clearly not in your right mind.

SILVER: I vote yes as well, obviously. Which only leaves...

KEY: (*Looking desperately at QUINN.*) Quinn... don't do this.

QUINN: Captain, I—

Enter AKOM, MILES, and SWISH, tied up. GUESTS follow close behind.

AKOM: Help! Someone help please!

GUEST A: Everyone freeze!

GUEST C: That's right! This is a mutiny! No one move unless you want to get whisked!

MILES: They took our laser batons, too. I want to be clear: we did not get kidnapped with kitchen utensils.

AKOM: Well, not entirely.

SWISH: I'm sorry, Captain. I didn't know what else to do!

FLOWERS: I tried to warn you...

GUEST B: Back off that station, there, pal.

KEY: No! Lieutenant Silver has to hit that button!

GUEST D: I would leave that hand where it is if you want to keep it!
Yes?

FRED: *(Raising a hand.)* Can we keep watching *Space Odyssey*?
We're almost done.

GUEST D: Fine. I mean, Kubrick's movies are kind of boring, but whatever.

CHARLIE: I know, right?

SFX: A rumble and the lights flicker.

DORIAN: I need to reboot the engines before we run out of organic matter!

DORIAN reaches for the power unit, but a GUEST strikes with a laser baton.

DORIAN: AHHH!

GUEST A: There! Maybe now you'll start taking us seriously! We're getting our cocktails one way or another! Either you give us shrimp this second or we're taking this boat to Maui!

ALL GUESTS: *(Chanting.)* NEVER ENDING SHRIMP! NEVER ENDING SHRIMP!

SFX: Another big rumble, and a momentary flickering blackout.

GUEST B: What was that? What happened?

DORIAN: Oh no... Shepherd, report!

SHEPHERD C: Not to worry, Lieutenant! The momentary turbulence you experienced was from entering an inescapable gravity well. Please hold as our new destination comes into view.

AKOM: Hey! Check out the gallery window. Where's that light coming from?

MILES: It's... beautiful.

QUINN: There's only one like it in this wing of the galaxy.

FRED: What... what is it?

SFX: Another rumble and a short blackout. This time, when the lights come on, there is a blue wash.

KEY: A blue dwarf star.

Blackout.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO, SCENE 1

SHEPHERD D: Good afternoon! The following are public service announcements.

SHEPHERD B: *(A pleasant ding.)* As many of you are aware, the Starship Adventure has taken an unexpected detour and is now on a collision course with a blue dwarf star. All systems are currently operational, but as a precaution, we will be rationing life support starting immediately. To help conserve oxygen, please only breathe when strictly necessary.

SHEPHERD A: *(Ding.)* Some of you may be noticing a sudden increase in gravity. Not to worry! Current projections indicate that you will be vaporized by the star's intense heat long before you would be crushed by its overwhelming gravity.

SHEPHERD C: *(Ding.)* A shuffleboard tournament is starting on the recreation deck in ten minutes!

SHEPHERD B: This concludes today's announcements.

SHEPHERD A, B, C, & D: Galactic Voyagers: reach for the stars!

The brig. A change in lights indicates an energy barrier keeping the crew of the Adventure [minus DORIAN and KEY] locked in the brig. They are guarded by GUESTS C & D with a laser baton. All are seated, looking restless, apart from SILVER, who paces nervously.

AKOM: You better pray this energy barrier holds. Once we're free, this pleasure cruise is over!

GUEST C: Quiet down in there. Don't make me use this lightsaber on you!

MILES: They're not lightsabers, they're laser batons.

GUEST C: *(Examining the baton.)* What's the difference?

MILES: A laser baton won't get us sued by Disney.

Enter DORIAN, being led on by GUESTS A & B and FLOWERS.

GUEST A: Changing of the guard! *(Salute.)*

GUEST D: Thank goodness. It's my turn on the shuffleboard court.

GUEST B: Negative, soldier, shuffleboard will have to wait. It's judgment time. (*DORIAN is shoved forward.*) Science-guy, step forward! You were tasked with creating a synthetic replacement for the shrimp cocktails. Report!

DORIAN: Okay, first let me say, my degree is in astrophysics, not matter replication. Just because I'm a good scientist in one field does not mean I'm good at all science forever!

GUEST C: Were you able to do it?

DORIAN: (*Long pause. Reluctantly.*) Yes.

FLOWERS: (*Excitedly.*) We're calling it SHRAMP!

GUEST A: Back up, prisoner. Let us try this SHRAMP. (*Eats the Shramp.*)

DORIAN: Please let it be edible.... Please let it be edible....

GUEST A: (*After a moment of consideration.*) The science guy lives! Huzzah!

ALL GUESTS and FLOWERS: Huzzah!

GUEST C: You! Get back in the cell! Professor, you're on guard duty. Everyone else, follow me! Shramp cocktails all around!

GUEST B: To the pool party!

ALL GUESTS: SHRAMP! SHRAMP! SHRAMP!

Exit GUESTS.

DORIAN: Wait, what pool? What pool? We don't have a pool! You're not talking about my liquid lab are you? Hey!

SWISH: They're gone, Dorian. It's over.

QUINN: Hey, Professor! Are you seriously siding with the mutineers?

FLOWERS: Oh, I wouldn't say that. I am technically a Voyager after all.

QUINN: Then will you let us out of here?

FLOWERS: No. Sorry, I've got next on shuffleboard.

QUINN: Great. Did you at least manage to fix the computer?

FLOWERS: I told you before: I'm not the person to ask about Shepherd.

QUINN: Well if you can't fix it, who can?

FLOWERS: Ask your I.T. Department.

FRED: Hey Professor! We finished Space Odyssey.

CHARLIE: Definitely not the movie I was thinking about.

FRED: (*A headache.*) Oh my god, yes it was.

FLOWERS: Well don't leave me hanging. What did you think of it?

FRED: Well, it was a pretty confusing story. I'm not sure we really understood everything.

FLOWERS: That doesn't surprise me. The film is highly allegorical after all.

FRED: Ohhhhh... highly allegorical. You know, I was saying it was probably highly allegorical? Thank you, Professor.

CHARLIE: (*Privately, to FRED.*) What does 'allegorical' mean?

FRED: No idea.

QUINN: Fantastic. I'll just entrust all our lives to those two geniuses. Excuse me.

SWISH: (*To FLOWERS.*) Wait! Akom, the professor has your security card! Give that back!

MILES: It's no use, Emerson. It takes both Akom and my security cards to lower the laser shields. Who knows what they did with mine.

FLOWERS: But a single card is enough to open the food compartment! Which reminds me: everyone follow me for meal distribution! (*Exit FLOWERS.*)

CHARLIE: Oooo... What do you think we're having?

FRED: I've heard a lot of good things about this "shramp."

Exit CHARLIE and FRED.

SWISH: This is a nightmare. I can't believe Captain Key would do this to us.

AKOM: What if we have it all wrong? What if the Captain was telling the truth?

SWISH: She said she would do anything to stop the Adventure from going commercial, remember? You can't go commercial if you die in a gravity well.

MILES: How long do we have, Lieutenant?

DORIAN: Not long—an hour, maybe less.

QUINN: Not that it matters at this point. I don't think the auxiliary engine has enough power to get us out anymore. We had one shot, and we missed it.

DORIAN: (*Pondering.*) What if we somehow combined the backup unit with the main engines...

QUINN: What good would that do? We're still locked out of the main engines, remember?

SWISH: (*Despondent.*) Who cares. Even if we do escape, I'll never get my promotion after all of this. Admiral Silver is going to kill me. I'd rather be crushed by the star.

SILVER: He's my grandfather. Who do you think he's going to blame? Anyway, none of us have a chance of doing anything until we find a way out of this cell. Hmm.... (*With sudden inspiration.*) Hey Charlie! Fred! Wait up!

Exit SILVER. Enter KEY. KEY spots the others, then goes to a corner and sits alone.

DORIAN: What do we do about the Captain?

QUINN: Give us a little privacy.

DORIAN: (*Glancing around.*) We're in a prison cell.

QUINN: Just go that way!

DORIAN: Alright. Come on, everyone. I think Professor Flowers said something about... shramp.

Exit DORIAN, SWISH, CHARLIE, FRED, AKOM and MILES.

QUINN: Captain? Can we talk?

KEY: One hundred missions I've flown on the Starship Adventure. Dorian's been with me half that time; Emerson a quarter. And you Commander Quinn... you've been with me for all of them. All one hundred.

QUINN: Listen, Captain... I'm not sure how yet, but we're breaking out of this cell. The other Officers and I are going to retake the ship.

KEY: And you want to know—when you get to the bridge—whether you'll have access to the computers.

QUINN: (*Beat.*) Will we?

KEY: One hundred missions we've flown together, and you have to ask.

QUINN: Shepherd said that only the Senior Officer could put the ship in lockdown. Computers don't lie.

KEY: But I do? You truly think I would be selfish enough to put our lives at risk just to prove a point?

QUINN: You want to talk about selfish? What about a Captain who abandons ship just when the crew needs them most. How's that for selfish?

KEY: None of us want things to change! You and Dorian said you would support me!

QUINN: Not like this! For God's sake, Captain, there's "not wanting things to change" and then there's "hanging on to something that's already gone." Look... we need you to help us get out of this mess.

You say you're innocent? Prove it by helping us take back the ship.

KEY: Rule number two of being a Captain: you can't lead without trust.

QUINN: Rule number one: a Captain supports their crew.

KEY: (*Bitter.*) If you won't fall in line, then stay out of my way. I can save the ship on my own.

KEY storms off SR. Meanwhile, SWISH, MILES, AKOM, CHARLIE and FRED enter SL.

SWISH: Commander! Come quickly! Dorian might be onto something!

QUINN: What's going on?

SWISH: We got the security keycard back from the Professor!

QUINN: What? How did you manage to do that?

DORIAN: I'll explain later. (*Running up to a terminal.*) Akom, Miles—you ready?

AKOM: All set. Up you go, Miles.

AKOM and DORIAN lift MILES up.

MILES: Okay! I can see the terminal! Hopefully my voice is loud enough.

QUINN: I don't understand. I thought it took two security cards to deactivate the shields!

DORIAN: It does... but if we get even a single card close enough to the scanners, we can activate...

Enter SHEPHERD.

SHEPHERD D: Hello! How may I assist you today?

MILES: It worked! I can see Shepherd!

DORIAN: Yahtzee!

SHEPHERD D: (*SFX: Error noise.*) It looks like you are accessing my system from the ship's detention facility. Please state the reason for your incarceration. You can say things like—there was an alien invasion—or—I was court martialed.

MILES: Uh... mutiny? We were mutinied. The guests took over.

SHEPHERD D: Just to confirm: the Adventure's trained security staff was overpowered by tourists. Is that correct?

MILES: (*Clearing throat.*) Uh yes. That's correct.

AKOM: Just tell Shepherd to let us out already!

FRED: Hey! You be nice to Shepherd. She's our friend.

SWISH: You can't be friends with a computer!

QUINN: Let us out, Shepherd!

SHEPHERD D: (*SFX: Error noise.*) I'm sorry, Commander. For security reasons, only an officer who is not presently incarcerated may lower the shields.

MILES: Well, what can you do for us?

SHEPHERD D: I could play a movie if you'd like.

CHARLIE and FRED: (*Jumping up.*) Yes!

SWISH: No!

CHARLIE and FRED: (*Sitting back down.*) No.

AKOM: That's it then—we're done. All of the officers on the ship are here in this cell!

SWISH: (*Realizing.*) No, they're not! Quick, give me a boost!

FRED: Ay-yay! (*FRED and CHARLIE boost SWISH up to MILES' level.*)

SWISH: Shepherd! Captain Key made you an acting Officer this morning, right?

SHEPHERD D: That is correct.

SWISH: (*Cautiously.*) We would like you to use your authority as an Officer to lower the shields.

SHEPHERD D: (*Beat.*) Acknowledged. Shields lowering now.

Everyone celebrates.

AKOM: We did it!

MILES: Nice going, ensign!

CHARLIE: (*Defensively.*) Nice going, Shepherd.

QUINN: We're still in a lot of trouble. What's the next step?

DORIAN: Right. Getting out of this cell is a cakewalk compared to escaping a gravity well. We have to take control of the bridge again, and fast.

SWISH: We can't do that until we deal with the guests. We need someone who can reason with them. Someone to talk them down and get our weapons back.

MILES: No, we need someone to lay down the law. I think diplomacy went out the window the second they locked us in this cell.

DORIAN: What we need is a plan of action. Commander—

QUINN: I know what you're going to say, but I'm no leader. Without the Captain, I'm just as lost as the rest of you.

SWISH: Then what do we do?

Enter SILVER.

SILVER: You leave it to me.

The conversation stops. QUINN brushes past the others to stand toe to toe with SILVER.

SILVER: Looks like my plan worked.

QUINN: Your plan?

DORIAN: Actually... yeah. It was Lieutenant Silver's idea to get the keycard off Professor Flowers. He even told Fred and Charlie to be a distraction.

CHARLIE: We just told him about a new game we're inventing.

FRED: It's Called Hangryball 2: Wrath of Khan.

CHARLIE: All you need is a pair of snowshoes and a live cat.

QUINN: Well, Lieutenant... nice work.

SILVER: Listen—I know we all got off on the wrong foot before, but I've been trained for this. Let me take the lead and I promise we will make it out alive. What do you say?

ALL others look at one another, unsure of what to do. CHARLIE and FRED, seeing their hesitancy, jump to attention and salute.

FRED: Anyone who can get Charlie in line has got my confidence.

CHARLIE: Ready for orders, sir.

SILVER: Thank you.

DORIAN: (*Sigh.*) You know what? I'm in. What do I have to lose?

SILVER: What about you, Emerson? If we work fast, we might still save that promotion.

SWISH: (*Hesitant.*) If you really think we can still fix things, then I'll follow you.

SILVER hesitantly approaches QUINN.

SILVER: Commander? What do you say?

QUINN looks despondently where KEY exited. Eventually, QUINN looks back to SILVER and extends a hand.

QUINN: Fine. If you think you can step up, then I'll fall in line.

AKOM: What's the plan, Lieutenant?

SILVER: Well... Voyager protocol dictates we deal harshly with any security threat. We need to reclaim our weapons and assert our authority. Commander, I want you and Lieutenant Dorian to go to the labs and gather anything you need for the emergency engine boost. Everyone else, you're with me.

SWISH: All roads lead back to the bridge. No doubt that's where the guests are partying.

SILVER: I'll take Charlie and Fred to reason with them face-to-face. Meanwhile, you three can sneak up from behind and take back your laser batons. What do you say?

AKOM and MILES: Roger.

SILVER: Listen, everyone... (*Determined.*) we can do this. Let's move out!

Exit SILVER, AKOM, MILES, CHARLIE, FRED, and SWISH.

DORIAN and QUINN linger for a moment, glancing where the CAPTAIN went offstage, then ruefully follow behind.

ACT TWO, SCENE 2

AT START: *The Bridge. At rise, GUESTS are center stage. Rudimentary party decorations indicate they have taken over. CS, they are “grilling out” on the backup power unit. Enter CHARLIE, FRED, and SILVER.*

FRED: *(Reading something off a tablet.)* According to this, when something is an allegory, that means that it’s an “extended metaphor” with double meanings.

CHARLIE: *(Nodding sagely.)* Ah, yes. Of course.

SILVER: Hey! Focus up, you two. We need to keep the passengers’ attention on us while Akom and Miles get in position. I’d like to avoid conflict if we can, so first let’s try to talk some sense into them. Got it?

FRED: *(Beat, then back to the tablet.)* Apparently, the film *2001: A Space Odyssey* is actually an allegory for man’s hubris.

CHARLIE: *(Stroking chin.)* Indeed. An allegory for man’s hubris.

SILVER: *(Beat.)* You don’t know what that means, do you?

CHARLIE: I do not.

SILVER: And I suppose neither of you were listening to the plan just now?

CHARLIE: No.

FRED: Also no.

SILVER: Oh for pete’s sake—just follow my lead. *(Standing to confront GUESTS.)* Passengers! You are in violation of Voyager regulations! Stand down: now!

GUEST A: Should I hit them?

GUEST C: Hold on. We’re the ones with the weapons, chief. Seems to me like you’re the ones who should be standing down.

SILVER: Be reasonable! We need to get ourselves back on course before we all die!

CHARLIE: It’s okay Lieutenant, I’ve got this. Ahem. *(Glancing at FRED for encouragement, exchanging thumbs up, then back at GUESTS.)* Have any of you seen *2001: A Space Odyssey*?

SILVER: *(Face-palm.)* Oh, god.

CHARLIE: *(Pseudo-intellectual.)* You see, the film is actually an alligator.

GUEST B: What are you talking about?

CHARLIE: An alligator. It's an extended meteor. For man's hugeness.

GUEST C: Okay, now you can hit them.

SILVER: Wait, wait, wait! Before you hit us and send us back to the brig, hear me out. We have to turn this ship around or we're all done for! There's not much time. Please!

GUEST A: Hey, wait a minute... you're trying to talk some sense into us!

GUEST D: How dare you! Get them!

SILVER: Akom, Miles, any time now!

Enter AKOM and MILES, holding a large tube with a mechanical end.

AKOM: Alright! We've got you now. Drop the lightsabers or get vaporized.

GUEST B: I thought you said they were laser batons.

AKOM: (*Savagely.*) Oh, who are we kidding! They're lightsabers. Come on.

MILES: Just drop them if you don't want a faceful of lasers.

GUEST C: Fine.

GUESTS drop their laser batons, which are scooped up by SILVER, CHARLIE, and FRED.

SILVER: Nicely done, officers!

CHARLIE: Where'd you get the laser canon?

MILES: What, this? It's not a laser cannon, it's just some tube Akom found plugged into the wall. We thought it looked science-y enough to fool the parrotheads.

AKOM: I hope it's not important.

Enter DORIAN and QUINN with equipment.

DORIAN: That is a life support channel, and I would put it back if you want to keep breathing.

QUINN: Akom, Miles, escort the guests to the gallery. We'll deal with them once we fix this mess. Lieutenant Silver—nicely done.

SILVER: Thanks. Did you gather what you needed to get us back on course?

SWISH: Yes and no. We recovered Dorian's tools, but they won't do us any good unless we can get Shepherd to cooperate.

A beeping noise.

SHEPHERD B: Priority call from Admiral Silver. Should I patch him through?

SILVER: Hold that thought. Admiral! Hello, can you hear me?

Enter ADMIRAL.

ADMIRAL: Hello? J.T., is that you?

SILVER: Admiral, we read you.

ADMIRAL: It is you! So, you've been given control of the ship after all. Excellent! Tell me: what's the situation?

SILVER: We're still locked out of the computers. We might be able to use the backup power unit to blast our way out, but we can't do that until we fix Shepherd.

ADMIRAL: Funny you should mention Shepherd. As I mentioned to Commander Quinn, my tech department was able to track down something to help. I'm sending it over now.

SILVER pulls out the tablet and receives a message with a "ding!"

SILVER: Wait... what is this?

ADMIRAL: It's a program called the "Killswitch Protocol." Once deployed, Killswitch will delete the SHEPHERD computer system once and for all.

A general outrage ensues.

CHARLIE: What? You can't do that!

ADMIRAL: Excuse me? And why not?

FRED: Because... it's Shepherd!

CHARLIE: Shepherd is our friend.

ADMIRAL: Lieutenant, who are these insubordinate fools?

SILVER: (*Sharply.*) Quiet! That's the Admiral you're speaking to!

QUINN: Shepherd has run this ship since it was first deployed; you can't just delete it!

ADMIRAL: No, but with the Killswitch I just sent him, Lieutenant Silver can.

SWISH: Admiral, I think what the Commander means is that our entire ship is running off of Shepherd's programs. If we delete Shepherd, who knows what might happen?

ADMIRAL: Nonsense. The Killswitch should reboot life support immediately. Then you can simply wait for High Command to formulate a rescue plan.

DORIAN: That won't work! If we want to escape this gravity well I need to supercharge the engines now.

ADMIRAL: So?

QUINN: So without Shepherd assisting with trajectories, we could hit an asteroid or blast straight into a different star. We need to recover Shepherd, not destroy it!

FRED: You can't kill Shepherd!

CHARLIE: You can't!

ADMIRAL: (*Dismissive.*) I don't want to hear any more. Officers, the Shepherd AI was an experiment; that experiment has failed. It's time to follow Voyager regulations. It's time to follow orders.

SILVER: Admiral—

ADMIRAL: I've given you your orders, Lieutenant. Now follow them. Admiral Silver out. (*Exit.*)

SILVER, determined, moves to the computer terminal and plugs in the tablet.

CHARLIE: No!

FRED: Stop!

SHEPHERD D: Error. Unknown program detected.

SILVER'S hand hovers over the button. QUINN and DORIAN react, moving in to stop him.

DORIAN: Lieutenant... wait! Didn't you hear anything we just said?

QUINN: Give Dorian the Killswitch, Lieutenant.

SILVER: (*Bristling.*) That sounded like an order. I thought you were following my lead.

QUINN: Not if you're leading us into disaster. If you delete Shepherd, it's over.

CHARLIE: Lieutenant... please don't kill our friend!

SILVER: YOU CAN'T. BE FRIENDS. WITH A COMPUTER.

FRED: She's more than a computer.

CHARLIE: Shepherd! Tell them who you are!

SHEPHERD D: The Shepherd AI is an experimental guidance program created by Professor Casey Flowers of the Voyager Institute.

FRED: No! Not what you are. Who!

SHEPHERD D: Priority error. Unknown program identified. Deploying this program may force all of my systems offline.

SHEPHERD B: Deploying this program is not advised.

SILVER again almost pushes the button.

SWISH: Wait!

SILVER: I'm sorry. This is the only way.

DORIAN: Lieutenant! You do this, and there's no telling what could happen. We need to think this through!

QUINN: We need to work together.

SILVER: No! (*Beat.*) We need to follow orders.

SILVER hits the button. SHEPHERD fades away.

ACT TWO, SCENE 3

AT START: *The Lower Decks. FLOWERS drinks a bottle of soda, wincing at the taste, then continues with what looks like an ongoing game of "bag toss" against himself. KEY enters.*

FLOWERS: Hello, Captain! My, aren't you in a rush?

KEY: What are you doing down here, Professor?

FLOWERS: Well, I figured there wasn't much need for a prison guard after all the prisoners escaped, and I missed my dang turn on the Shuffleboard court, so I came down here to relax.

KEY: Is that one of Charlie and Fred's games?

FLOWERS: According to this rule-sheet, it's called "Hangry-Ball-3: Return of the King."

KEY: Of course it is.

FLOWERS: I think I have it mostly figured out, if you want to play—although you'll need to supply your own blowtorch.

KEY: (*Bitterly.*) No thanks.

FLOWERS: Well, another time, then. But if you're not looking to get an early jump on retirement, what are you doing down here?

KEY: I'm looking for a thermal coupler. With a few parts, I still might be able to save us.

FLOWERS: I was under the impression that the heroics were happening on the bridge.

KEY: Yeah, well I'm not welcome on the bridge. Didn't you hear? I was mutinied twice today. Once by the guests, and once by.... Anyway, young Lieutenant Silver is in charge now. I'm on my own... (*Pausing the search.*) that is, unless you were willing to help me?

FLOWERS: Sorry, Captain, I'm in the middle of a game. If only I could decipher this confounded scoring system! I swear, Charlie and Fred's rule guides are more complicated than the computers I program.

KEY: Professor, I could really use your help.

FLOWERS: (*Distracted, reading the rules sheet.*) "A bag in the hole is worth eleventeen points." Oh, come on! That's not even a real number!

KEY: (*Wrenching the rule sheet from FLOWERS' hands.*) You know, Professor, you've been awfully cavalier about our impending doom. Don't you realize how dangerous this situation is? We could all die unless we figure a way out of this soon. You created Shepherd, but you refuse to help fix it! Why?

FLOWERS: (*Shrugging.*) I'm on vacation.

KEY: You could have at least sided with us when the rest of the guests mutinied! As a professor at the Voyager Academy, you're obligated to assist in times of crisis!

FLOWERS: First of all, I have tenure, so strictly speaking I'm not obligated to do anything. Second, you're the Captain, for goodness sake! Just tell your crew to help!

KEY: My crew won't listen to me anymore. They think I'm responsible for all of this!

FLOWERS: Well, aren't you?

KEY: (*Simmering.*) Excuse me?

FLOWERS: A computer is only as good as its programmer. In my line of work, you don't blame the machine, you blame the person that built it. You're the legendary Captain Key, who's flown a hundred missions at the helm of the Starship Adventure. Everything that happens on these decks is according to your design.

KEY: (*Exploding.*) You think I don't know that? You think I don't know that everything that goes wrong on this ship is my responsibility? Why do you think I'm trying so hard to fix things?

FLOWERS: What I'm trying to say is you're fixing the wrong things.

KEY: (*Dismissive.*) Goodbye, Professor.

FLOWERS: You know, even if you do succeed in pulling us out of the gravity well by yourself, the Adventure is still going to change. (*This stays KEY for a moment.*) Even if you retire in protest; even if you succeed in convincing High Command not to follow through on Ensign Swish's proposal and everything you hope to accomplish today comes to pass, the Adventure is still going to change. Today, tomorrow, ten years... change is coming. Change always comes.

KEY: Why do you even care?

FLOWERS: Selfishly, I'm trying to make sure we don't die horribly.

KEY: If you really meant that, you would fix Shepherd. (*Slumping over, sighing heavily.*) Well, what does it matter anyway. Maybe Commander Quinn is right. Maybe I'm trying to hold on to something that's already gone.

FLOWERS: (*Pensively, sitting next to KEY.*) You know... in the beginning, I kept Shepherd locked away for years. The program was fully functional, mind you, but I just kept poking and prodding and trying to get everything just so... I told myself I was trying to protect Shepherd, but that wasn't true. The truth was, creating Shepherd was my life's work... and I was scared to let go. (*Nudging.*) Sound familiar?

KEY: But... you did let Shepherd go.

FLOWERS: Oh?

KEY: Well, yeah. The first time I stepped onto the Adventure, Shepherd was here to greet me.

FLOWERS: (*Proudly.*) And she's been there for you ever since.

KEY: So... how did you do it? Part of me really does want to move on; part of me knows it's time. I just... can't seem to take that last step.

FLOWERS: I'm afraid I can't help you there, Captain. What helped me was realizing that the last step wasn't mine to take.

KEY: What do you mean?

FLOWERS: (*Thoughtfully.*) With most of the computers I design, what mattered most was how well it would function. But... when Shepherd came along, what mattered most was how well she would be treated. Would people treat Shepherd as a tool, or would they view her as a partner? Eventually I realized if I kept holding on, she would never have a chance to find that out for herself. In the end, I had to let go, and trust that when things did change—if I kept the right outlook—they could change for the better.

FLOWERS stands and picks up the rule sheet and beanbags.

KEY: (*Processing, comprehending.*) I guess I never thought about it before, but Shepherd has... always been there for me. She really is special, isn't she?

FLOWERS: She's not the only one. There's a reason I sent her to the Adventure, you know. (*Thoughtfully.*) It's funny... since I moved on from Shepherd, I've had more freetime to try new things; like hangryball, or teaching a film study elective. I even caught your commencement speech last year.

KEY: What did you think?

FLOWERS: I loved it. "The Three Rules of Leadership." Very profound. Trust and support, right? Those are important. But the part that really stuck with me was rule number three. I hope those Academy kids were listening to that one.

KEY: Rule number three?

Enter SWISH.

SWISH: Captain, thank god I found you.

KEY: Emerson! What are you doing here?

SWISH: It's all gone wrong! Admiral Silver gave Lieutenant Silver some sort of Killswitch program to shut down Shepherd. But it didn't fix anything! We're still locked out of the engines. Now Lieutenant Silver is floundering and the others don't know what to do.

KEY: What? You shut down Shepherd? Emerson, why are you here?

SWISH: Because... because this is all my fault. I'm so sorry I tried to change the Adventure, Captain. If we hadn't had guests on board, none of this would have happened. Please... please come back. Come back and I promise I'll go back to High Command and tell them not to go through with the plan. The Adventure can stay just the way it is.

KEY: Emerson...

SWISH: Please, Captain Key. Please. We need our real Captain back.

KEY looks at FLOWERS, who nods encouragingly.

KEY: Rule number three, huh?

FLOWERS: I'm just an old man on vacation. I'm sure I don't know what you're talking about.

KEY: I'm right behind you, Emerson. (*To FLOWERS.*) Thank you.

Exit KEY and SWISH.

FLOWERS: (*Re-reading.*) Alright. Hangryball 3. Set the battle boards ten cubits apart. (*Beat.*) What's a cubit?

ACT TWO, SCENE 4

AT START: *The Bridge. DORIAN and QUINN busy themselves about the bridge. SILVER paces nervously. ADMIRAL watches on nervously as CHARLIE and FRED enter SR.*

SILVER: Charlie. Fred. Did you get the reading?

FRED: (*Proudly.*) We sure did. Life support has become "critically unstable." (*High five with CHARLIE.*)

SILVER: That's a bad thing.

CHARLIE: Are you sure? Looks like we're only running out of something called "O2."

SILVER: That's oxygen.

CHARLIE: And we... (*Hesitantly.*) ...need that?

SILVER: Yes! Very yes!

FRED: Ah. Well then we might be in trouble.

SILVER: Oh for heaven's sakes, just give me the tablet. Admiral, it looks like we still have some time, but the loss of the main computer is causing critical malfunctions.

ADMIRAL: (*Gravely.*) I see.

Enter AKOM and MILES.

SILVER: Akom, Miles—how are the guests holding up?

MILES: They're pretty quiet now. I think the blackout convinced them of the gravity of our situation; no pun intended.

AKOM: They're holed up in the gallery. They should keep until we figure this out.

SILVER: Fine. Commander Quinn, what can you tell us?

QUINN: Navigation is still down. Your "Killswitch" may have gotten rid of Shepherd, but whatever locked us out in the first place is still there.

DORIAN: We're in a wide orbit, but we can't hold out against the gravity well for long.

ADMIRAL: What about the engines?

DORIAN: Down, same as navigation.

SILVER: Then we're dead in the water.

QUINN: What should we do?

SILVER: I... just give me a second to think.

ADMIRAL: There's nothing to think about, Lieutenant. If the Killswitch program failed, then it is time to abandon ship. Give the order.

DORIAN: No, Admiral! The shuttles can't outpace the gravity well! We'd be dead in minutes.

ADMIRAL: I'm not hearing a better solution. Lieutenant Silver, give the order now!

SILVER: I'm... I'm not sure. I need to think.

CHARLIE: First you kill Shepherd, now you want to trash our clubhouse?

FRED: We can't leave! This ship is our home.

QUINN: They're right, Lieutenant. We can't abandon the Adventure.

All we need is a plan. Now come on! Tell us what to do!

SILVER: Just let me think!

DORIAN: We don't have time to think!

ADMIRAL: Tell them to abandon ship!

CHARLIE: No!

QUINN: What's the plan, Lieutenant?

MILES: What are our orders, Lieutenant?

AKOM: What do we do?

MILES: Tell us what to do!

SILVER: I don't know! I don't know, okay! I can't think with all of you looking at me like that. (*Exasperated.*) Why are you all looking at me like that?

Enter KEY, with SWISH a pace behind.

KEY: It seems a lot easier when you think you can just follow orders, doesn't it? Unfortunately, you never get used to it; or at least, I never did.

ADMIRAL: Adrian! What are you doing on the bridge? You were relieved of duty!

KEY: I never got around to telling you the third rule of being a Captain. Rule number one is about service, and rule number two is about trust... but rule number three is about responsibility.

SILVER: (*Angrily.*) What are you doing here?

KEY: Well, just that, Lieutenant; I'm taking responsibility. A Captain is supposed to support their crew. That's rule number one. Ensign Swish... I owe you an apology. None of this is your fault; it's mine. I'm sorry I never gave you the chance you deserved.

SWISH: Captain...

KEY: A Captain leads with trust. That's rule number two. Dorian, Quinn... I'm sorry I didn't trust you enough to tell you how scared I was when things started to change. I tried to run away instead of facing the future, and I should have trusted that whatever came about, we could get through it together. Lieutenant Silver, rule number three of being a Captain is simply this: your crew will follow you anywhere. You have to be careful... because if you're a good

Captain, a crew will follow wherever you lead. (*Ruefully.*) Even to the brink of disaster.

ADMIRAL: Enough! Security Officers: remove the former Captain Key from the bridge at once!

AKOM and MILES look at one another uneasily, unsure of what to do.

KEY: It's fine... don't get a court-martial on my account. But before you drag me off, I have one last apology to make.

ADMIRAL: Adrian, I have half a mind to—

SILVER: Admiral. Stop.

ADMIRAL: Lieutenant! You know I do not tolerate insubordination.

SILVER: (*Strongly.*) I said stop, Grandpa... please. I want to hear what the Captain has to say.

CHARLIE: Whaaat? Those two are related?

FRED: Shhhh!

KEY: None of us knew why we veered so far off course. Professor Flowers seemed to point the finger at me.

QUINN: Only the senior officer could lock down the computers. Those were the exact words.

KEY: Did you know that the Voyager Handbook phrases it the exact same way? Only the senior officer. True enough, I am the Officer on-board with the most seniority. But something occurred to me... a creative mind could interpret "seniority" not as rank, but as length of service.

SILVER: But... that's still you. Isn't it?

KEY: No. There's someone who's been here even longer. (*Suddenly determined.*) There is an officer present that served the Adventure before any of us. And now it's time for them to report! Officer! Front and center!

SILVER: Who are you talking to?

KEY: The senior officer on the Starship Adventure. Your Captain is calling you! Report!

SFX: A boot-up sound.

DORIAN: Is that what I think it is?

QUINN: It can't be...

SFX: A slow, magical tinkling sound. Slowly—deliberately—SHEPHERD is restored.

CHARLIE and FRED: SHEPHERD!

SHEPHERD A: How may I assist you, Captain?

SILVER: This... this is impossible. The Killswitch program should have destroyed you.

SHEPHERD A: Thankfully, I was able to temporarily offload to avoid the Killswitch Protocol. For the safety of everyone, please refrain from killing me again in the future.

ADMIRAL: How did it know how to do that? I've never heard of such a thing.

KEY: Charlie and Fred tried to tell us how unique Shepherd is. None of us listened. If we had, maybe none of this would have happened.

QUINN: What are you saying?

KEY: Shepherd brought us here, Quinn. She locked us out of our terminals, redirected the engines... all of it.

QUINN: I don't understand.

SWISH: Oh my god.... (*Realizing.*) You made Shepherd an acting officer this morning. When that happened, by default she became—

DORIAN: —the senior-most officer onboard.

KEY: At that point she could make any changes she wanted.

QUINN: But... why? Why would Shepherd do this?

KEY: Why don't you ask?

QUINN: (*Looking around.*) Professor Flowers isn't here.

KEY: (*Significantly.*) Professor Flowers is not the one to talk to about Shepherd.

KEY indicates SHEPHERD. QUINN, SILVER, SWISH and DORIAN tentatively step forward.

QUINN: Shepherd... (*Awkwardly.*) hello.

SHEPHERD A: Hello, Commander.

QUINN: Did... did you really do this? Lock us out? Take us off course?

SHEPHERD A: Yes, Commander.

DORIAN: (*Earnestly.*) Why?

SHEPHERD A: If we arrive at Outpost Omega, Captain Key will use her authority to force the Starship Adventure into decommission.

KEY: Don't you see? I said I would rather see the Adventure destroyed than go commercial... and Shepherd listened.

SWISH: But, wait. That still doesn't make sense. Even if she is sentient, she could have taken us anywhere. She could have steered us home. Why bring us here?

SILVER: Because the Captain wanted to see it. (*Staggered by the revelation.*) Oh my god... you really can be friends with a computer.

KEY: One hundred missions we've flown, and I never knew. Shepherd, I am so sorry.

SFX: A rumble.

SILVER: What was that?

DORIAN: (*Checking a tablet.*) Uh... that was our last warning. We get out of this orbit now or we don't get out at all!

KEY: Shepherd, listen to me. I understand why you did what you did, but we can't stay here. You have to give us control.

SHEPHERD A: I can't do that, Captain.

KEY: Yes you can. It's time for both of us to let go.

DORIAN: (*Nervously.*) Captain!

SHEPHERD A: (*Vulnerable.*) Captain Key... I do not want to be decommissioned.

DORIAN: Captain, it's now or never!

KEY: Shepherd, listen to me. I can't tell you what's going to happen next—for either of us—but I can promise you this: if we survive, I swear I will fight to my last breath to make sure this is not our last adventure.

SHEPHERD A: (*Beat.*) Computer Access granted.

ALL rush to their stations.

DORIAN: Engines are back online!

QUINN: So is navigation! I've got the wheel!

SWISH: You did it, Captain!

DORIAN: Reverse thrusters engaged.

QUINN: We're in a holding pattern, but the gravity is still too high for the ship to move.

DORIAN: The engines can't keep this up for long; we need a plan!

SWISH: What are our orders?

ADMIRAL: Hold on! None of you will do anything until High Command assesses the situation.

KEY: Commander Quinn... do you trust me?

QUINN: Without question.

KEY: *(To SILVER.)* Lieutenant Silver: I believe you needed a third officer to officially remove me from leadership. Well... I vote yes, too.

SILVER: *(Backing up.)* What are you talking about?

ADMIRAL: Lieutenant, I told you to remove Captain Key from the bridge!

KEY: Nothing about this job is easy, and you won't find every solution in a handbook. From now on, orders won't be enough.

SILVER: *(Scared.)* What if I'm not ready?

KEY: That doesn't matter. Your crew needs you, so be a leader.

ADMIRAL: Lieutenant Silver! Answer me at once.

KEY smiles. SILVER straightens up and nods.

SILVER: *(Determined.)* Shepherd, end call.

ADMIRAL: Hey!

SHEPHERD A: Call ended.

SILVER: Dorian! Quinn! Status update!

QUINN: We're still stuck in the gravity well. The dwarf star is too strong.

DORIAN: Engine power at fifty percent and falling!

SILVER: Emerson, I want you to coordinate with the Professor to secure the guests; their safety has to be our highest priority right now.

SWISH: I'm on it!

SILVER: Akom and Miles: get the auxiliary power station back out here. We're going to combine it with the engines, just like Dorian said.

MILES and AKOM: Roger!

QUINN: I can't seem to find an angle of escape.

SILVER: Shepherd! Can you find an angle that gets us out of here?

SHEPHERD A: Calculating escape trajectory now.

MILES: Auxiliary power is still hooked up, but it won't turn on.

DORIAN: I forgot! We're out of organic matter! With no fuel, we can't run auxiliary power!

QUINN: One canister wouldn't be enough anyway! At this point we need the biggest boost of all time. To escape this much gravity we would have to overload this thing with organic matter!

SILVER looks to KEY for guidance.

KEY: Trust your crew. All of them.

SILVER: Think everyone! There has to be a way!

CHARLIE: *(An epiphany.)* Oh! Oh! I know what to do! This is like the end of the movie I've been thinking of!

FRED: How is this anything like *Space Odyssey*?

CHARLIE: I told you, that's not the movie I'm thinking of!

FRED: *(Grabbing Charlie about the shoulders.)* For the love of all things holy, WHAT MOVIE ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

CHARLIE: The one with the evil computer! The one with the big red eye!

FRED: THAT'S *SPACE ODYSSEY*!

CHARLIE: No! Ugh! It's on the tip of my tongue. *(Desperately.)* It's... It's... IT'S...

SHEPHERD A: *(Ding.)* Are you thinking of *WALL-E*?

CHARLIE: *(Collapsing, overwhelmed with relief.)* YES!

SILVER: How in the world does the movie *WALL-E* help us now?

FRED: Wait... I think I understand what Charlie is saying. At the end of the film, all the guests band together to save the day!

QUINN: *(Catching on.)* To get out of here we need to overload this thing with synthetic organic material. In other words...

DORIAN: Oh no... don't tell me we actually need...

FLOWERS: Shramp!

GUEST A: The Professor thought you might be calling on us to help.

FLOWERS: Not to worry, everyone. I've already filled in the guests on your dire need, and we've decided to sacrifice our new snacks for the cause.

GUEST D: Everyone! Gather around the power unit and get your cocktails ready!

ALL GUESTS: Shramp! Shramp! Shramp!

DORIAN: Please don't pour cocktail sauce in an ion converter!

FLOWERS: No time to quibble, Dorian, you get what you get.

SHEPHERD A: New trajectory calculated.

SILVER: (*Consulting a tablet.*) Wait a minute, this is wrong... you were supposed to guide us away from the star, not toward it!

QUINN: No, wait! That could work! A close orbit to increase speed!

DORIAN: A slingshot maneuver! Genius! Shepherd, I could kiss you!

SHEPHERD A: (*Pleasantly.*) No, thank you.

QUINN: We'll have to time it just right!

SILVER: Sound off when you're in position!

Everyone races into position.

QUINN: Navigation ready.

DORIAN: Engines ready.

SWISH: Fuel ready! ... Professor, stop eating the fuel!

FLOWERS: Sorry.

CHARLIE: Looky-loos ready!

FRED: Popcorn?

CHARLIE: Thank you.

SILVER: We're approaching the star. Everyone brace themselves!

QUINN: Coming up on the exit point.

DORIAN: Deploy shramp!

FLOWERS: (*Through a mouthful of shramp.*) Shramp deployed!

SILVER: Everyone hold on. On my mark... in 3... 2... 1...

A blue wash indicates they are close to the star. For a moment, everything slows down.

KEY: Shepherd.

SHEPHERD A: Yes, Captain?

KEY: Thank you for showing me this place.

SILVER: (*With exuberance.*) Punch it!

ACT TWO, SCENE 5

SHEPHERD C: Hello and welcome aboard the new Starship Adventure.

SHEPHERD B: For over a hundred missions, the Adventure traveled to the far-flung reaches of the known universe. You know the story of the Adventure's last voyage: how a plucky crew came together against the odds to avoid disaster. What you may not know is what happened next.

SHEPHERD D: In the days and months after escaping the blue dwarf star, the Voyagers worked tirelessly to bring a bold vision for the new Starship Adventure to fruition.

SHEPHERD B: But don't take my word for it. Let's meet our new Adventure crew.

SILVER: Engines.

DORIAN: Engines are at 70 percent power. Escape velocity achieved.

SILVER: Navigation.

QUINN: Axis tilt within parameters. Vector stable. All clear on my end.

SILVER: Good. There was a meteor shower last night, so keep an eye out for leftover debris.

DORIAN: You got it, boss.

AKOM: Here comes trouble!

Enter SWISH and GUESTS.

SWISH: No more than you can handle.

MILES: Hey, everybody! We've got company!

SILVER: So we do. Welcome back aboard the Starship Adventure. Seems like takeoff is stable, Commander Swish, so we can start the tour anytime.

SWISH: The bridge is open to you, so start exploring! Just don't fidget with the navigation station unless you want to take another detour into a gravity well.

GUEST B: An all-access tour of a real Voyager starship. This is amazing!

GUEST D: Thank you for inviting us all back! No hard feelings about last time?

QUINN: Last time you were promised a relaxing voyage, and we didn't exactly deliver on that. This is a second chance for all of us.

SWISH: You'll be happy to know that our guests have promised not to revolt again—even if we do run out of shrimp.

SILVER: *(With a smile.)* Noted.

DORIAN: Ooo, that reminds me! Later in the liquid lab, I'll be leading a demonstration on making new-and-improved shramp! Who wants to try version 2.0? Come on, free shramples!

GUEST A: *(Tasting the shramp.)* Ooo! Coconut!

Enter CHARLIE and FRED.

FRED: Don't fill up too much, everyone! The hangryball tournament is this afternoon! You need to stay limber.

SWISH: Perfect timing. Everyone, allow me to re-introduce our new co-directors of recreation, Charlie and Fred. They've got a full schedule of activities planned, so take advantage of everything you can!

CHARLIE: Thanks, Commander! Don't forget about our movie screening tonight! It's going to be a double feature of *Space Odyssey* and *Wall-E*! And possibly *The Matrix*.

FRED: Anything with an evil computer is on the table.... Oh! Speaking of tables, we're set up for ultimate table tennis on the recreation deck.

QUINN: *(To SILVER, skeptical.)* Ultimate table tennis?

SILVER: It's just Ping-pong with a kickball and croquet mallets.

QUINN: Huh. That actually sounds fun.

SILVER: *(Grudgingly.)* Yeah, it kind of is.

CHARLIE: This way, gang!

FRED: Oh, and Dorian, you should bring the shramp you make in your class to movie night!

DORIAN: You got it!

ALL GUESTS: Shramp! Shramp! Shramp!

SWISH: *(Shrugging and laughing.)* I guess we'll have to pick up the tour later.

QUINN: Sounds good. Oh, and Emerson... thanks again for steering us away from the icebergs.

DORIAN: Sorry we didn't come around sooner.

SWISH: (*Shaking QUINN'S hand; smiling.*) You're welcome. See you at movie night.

Exit CHARLIE, FRED, and GUESTS, followed by SWISH.

SHEPHERD C: Yes, the newly promoted Commander Swish has realized her vision for a recommissioned Adventure. Our decks are now home to guests from all over the world. Our mission: to show new friends all that a Voyager starship can accomplish. While providing for comfort and entertainment, of course.

SHEPHERD A: Or at least... that's one of our missions.

Enter KEY.

KEY: Well, let's hear it! How did the launch go?

SILVER: Good, I think. I called out the launch sequence, I corrected for environmental factors...

KEY: Dorian? Quinn? Anything to add?

QUINN: The kid's alright, Captain.

DORIAN: Yeah! For a minute, I could have sworn it was you at the helm.

SILVER: Thank you!

KEY: Don't be too sure that's a compliment.

QUINN: It was a good launch. Which means the Captain's next step is...

SILVER: The checklist! Right! Sorry!

QUINN: Re-check life-support, guidance, and communications.

SILVER: Got it.

SHEPHERD D: In the end, Captain Key decided to go through with retirement... but fortunately for all of us, Lieutenant Silver thought of a way to keep her on the payroll.

KEY: I have to admit, Lieutenant, I'm still baffled that High Command went for this new program of yours, but... I am excited. Thank you.

SILVER: (*Shaking KEY's hand.*) High Command knows a good idea when they hear it, even if they're still not thrilled with the person who proposed it.

QUINN: Hanging up on "High Command" isn't likely to win you any medals.

DORIAN: Just send “High Command” a birthday card this year and he’ll forget all about it.

SHEPHERD A: After the blue dwarf incident, Lieutenant Silver decided there was still a lot for him to learn. With that in mind, he proposed a special residency program, and as a result, Captain Key was named the Chief Training Officer for new Voyagers.

SHEPHERD C: Top graduates like Lieutenant Silver now have a chance to cut their teeth at the helm of the legendary Starship Adventure, learning from the Voyagers’ most distinguished former Captain.

SILVER: Alright, checklist done. Now what’s my first lesson? I’ve been dying to get going!

KEY: Alright. Captain Key’s Masterclass, Lesson Number One. (*Handing over a tablet.*) Always double check deployment records. Here.

SILVER: Deployment records... right. Okay, let’s see. Silver, Dorian, Quinn, Swish, Charlie and Fred... wait! Captain, your name isn’t on here.

KEY: Well spotted. Check your itinerary—our residency program doesn’t start until next week.

SILVER: (*Vexed.*) But I’m not ready to fly solo yet!

KEY: Relax. This week you’re in the capable-if-ethereal hands of our senior officer.

SHEPHERD D: Hello, Lieutenant. The Captain has asked me to run your training this week.

SILVER: (*Smiling.*) Lieutenant Shepherd, it would be my honor. But wait— (*To KEY.*) —if you’re not here to work, what are you doing onboard?

Enter FLOWERS.

FLOWERS: Hey, Adrian! Ultimate Table Tennis is starting! Come on!

KEY removes uniform jacket, revealing a floral vacation shirt underneath.

KEY: Right behind you, Professor.

SILVER: Things really do change, don’t they?

KEY: Yes, they do. (*Thoughtfully.*) Isn't it wonderful?

DORIAN: We have cleared local gravity.

KEY: (*Indicating the Captain's chair.*) Better take your seat. Hey, Shepherd! Play me out!

SHEPHERD C: Absolutely, Captain. Would you like the sad music from the end of Titanic?

KEY: No way. (*Putting on sunglasses.*) Play something that rocks.

SFX: Upbeat music starts while the new Adventure team takes their positions.

QUINN: Navigation is set.

DORIAN: Gravity is set. We're ready for the big engines.

SILVER: Alright. Countdown sequence. Shepherd, it's all you.

SHEPHERD D: Attention all guests: we are now underway. Please secure your safety harness and helmet.

SHEPHERD A: Please place both arms and legs inside the protective restraints!

SHEPHERD C: And remember, for the safety of everyone on board, please keep your molecules in place until we have reached maximum speed.

SILVER: Alright everyone, on my signal. 3... 2... 1...

SHEPHERD A, B, C, & D: Your adventure starts NOW!

THE END

ADVENTURE

BY JD ATKINS

Type: Full Length Play

Genre: Comedy

Duration: 90 minutes

Cast: 12-19 either gender (*12-19 total*)

Welcome aboard the Starship Adventure! For one hundred missions, Captain Adrian Key and the Galactic Voyagers have ventured into deep space on missions of science and discovery – that is, until High Command decides to convert the aging Adventure into a cruise ship for galactic tourists. When the Voyagers ferry these unwelcome guests – as well as an upstart Lieutenant trying to usurp command – to Captain Keys forced retirement party, a mysterious computer malfunction sets their final flight on a collision course with a gravity well. Can the Voyagers fix their beloved ship in time to avert disaster, even as a tourist revolt threatens to scuttle their efforts? Whatever the outcome, it is sure to be an *Adventure* to remember!



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