



Captain Bennett of the Hemera and Captain Karunch

The 7th Officer

by

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The Surviving Command Crew

Lieutenant Brandon Bennett: Previously the 7th officer (Acting as 5th officer) who finds himself in command when the senior crew is killed.

Lieutenant Croz Gebbanon: A Polaraxi Supply specialist who becomes 1st officer under Bennett. She has bright blue skin with red markings. A good officer, but not as serious as Rhodes.

Lieutenant Megan Rhodes: The Communications officer and acting 2nd officer. Matter of fact demeanor, has leadership ambitions.

Ensign Bria Kresseck: A pilot originally from the Sangenno System. Extremely skilled, but lacks confidence.

Ensign Michelle Akers: Senior living medical officer, completely out of her element leading a department.

Staff Sargent Chad Keefer: Acting Chief of Security, Easy going and somewhat disorganized.

Ensign Neal Benson: Acting Weapons Officer. A happy-go-lucky career screw up. Well meaning, but prone to lapses in judgement.

Lt. Commander Ted Tadeki: Highest ranking surviving officer but not in the line to command. Chief Engineer who is extremely petulant, cranky and hard to work with. Knows his job.

The ones that didn't make it...

Captain Derek Tanner: Captain of the ship. Very confident and known throughout the sector.

Commander Joshua Corbett: 1st Officer of the Hemera. Dutiful and Ambitious.

Lt. Commander Amelia Fenton: 2nd Officers, easy going with a quick smile.

Lt. Commander Crinika C'Saon: Another Sargenni Officer. Head of the Science division.

Lt. Commander Greg Fields: An extremely accomplished I.F. Pilot

Lieutenant Jen Taddock: Stern, Professional head of security.

The Bad Guys

Ezmet Karunch: Damigri Captain. Imposing, quick to anger and violent.

Brizanna: Karunch's 1st officer. Devious and cunning. Not a pleasant being. Karunch's right arm.

Kizik: 2nd Officers and Helmsman, Kizik is a lackluster officer who is well placed due to family connections. Trying to advance.

Trakin: Damigri Officer, violent and ill tempered.

Pelza: Damigri Science Officer. Intelligent, but amoral.

Ajimhere Nidlit: Elmorean Ambassador. Quick to anger and very used to being in a position of power. Corrupt.

Adan Crasam: A lead Elmorean Scientist who is in on the plan to defraud the Benzonites.

Everyone Else

Engineer 1: (Johnson) Bright Eyed new transfer to the Hemera

Engineer 2: (Irving) Another bright eyed transfer to the Hemera

Admiral Curtis Hodge: Commanding I.F. officer of the sector.

Representative Tabbane: The official representative of the Benzonites at the conference. Aloof and condescending, but basically a good enough guy.

Nedick Barg: Under Representative of the Benzonites who has telepathic gifts.

The Sector Regent: Stern, but mostly apathetic to both sides of the conflict.

In our show we doubled the following characters:

Engineer 2/ Ambassador Nidlet

Capt. Tanner/ Trakin

Cmdr. Corbett/ Pelza

Cmdr. C'Saon/ The Regent

Cmdr. Fields/ Barg

Lt. Taddock/Crasam

The World Premier of the Seventh Officer took place from April 18-21st, 2018 at Laney High School in Wilmington, NC.

Original Cast:

Lt. Bennett: Garrett Smith

Ensign Benson: Michael Costagliola

Lt. Gebannon: Eyma Villasenor

Lt. Rhodes: Ana Stinson

Ensign Akers: Carli Batson

Ensign Kresseck: Arabella Grigley

Sgt. Keefer: Ian Bradshaw

Cmdr. Tadeki: Izaya Huynh

Engineer 1: Hyrum Van Slyke

Karunch: Logan Hester

Brizanna: Natalie Williamson

Kizik: Cameron Rieman

Engineer 2/Nidlet: Grayson Sullivan

Capt. Tanner/ Trakin: Jonathan Buckley

Cmdr. Corbett/Pelza: Sofia Kooyman

Cmdr. C'Saon/The Regent: Kat Spivey

Cmdr. Fields/ Barg: Dakota Buck

Lt. Taddock/Crasam: Marie Wells

Admiral Hodge: Doug Hernandez

(The Lights come up on a badly wounded starship, Lt. Brandon Bennett is sitting in the captain's chair and the room is filled with smoke and a general sense of emergency. The ship is under attack as the lights rise. There are a total of seven officers on the bridge of the ship)

Benson: *(who is positioned at the weapons array)* Shields at 18 percent!

Bennett: *(frantic and not thinking clearly)* That's bad right?

(Another explosion)

Benson: *(losing patience)* 13 percent... and yes... 18 percent was bad.

Bennett: Kresseck... are we online yet?

Kresseck: *(in the primary pilot's chair, Bria Kresseck is obviously not human)* No sir. Long range jump drive is still off line.

Bennett: *(Speaking into the air)* Commander Tadeki! I need that drive back on line now!

(Lights come up off stage on Commander Ted Tadeki, chief Engineer. This scene could also be done with voice only if space is limited)

Bennett: Commander Tadeki!

Tadeki: *(angry)* What?

Bennett: We have to get out of here!

Tadeki: *(after another explosion)* I'm a little busy here!

Bennett: We need those drives back on line!

Tadeki: *(indignant)* We're not exactly playing checkers down here!

Bennett: When can we jump?

Tadeki: How in the hell would I know? Maybe it would help if you got out and pushed!

(Another explosion)

Tadeki: When I get it fixed, you'll know. Tadeki out!

(His area of the stage goes dark)

Bennett: Tadeki! *(no answer)*

Rhodes: *(The com officer)* Lieutenant... another ship has jumped in... it's a Damigrian Frigate.

Bennett: How long until it's in range?

Benson: *(after another explosion)* Shields are gone!

Bennett: Understood!

Benson: And that's bad.

Bennett: *(exploding)* Thank you!

Rhodes: 15 seconds until the Frigate is in firing range...

Gebbanon: *(1st officer, sitting near the Captain)* Rhodes, open a channel to the Damigri...

Bennett: Stay that order!

Gebbanon: *(desperate)* Sir... this is suicide! Open that channel Rhodes!

Bennett: This ship can't fall into Damigri hands. Sergeant Keefer, insert your key.

Keefer: Sir? *(astonished)* My Key?

Bennett: *(insistent)* Insert your key! That's an order

Gebbanon: We're going to blow up the ship??

(another explosion rocks the deck and then all freeze. The Voice of the captain is heard...either pre-recorded or live)

Bennett: I am Lieutenant Brandon Bennett of the USS Hemera and you are probably wondering how I got into this mess... Until 24 hours ago I was the 7th officer, acting as 5th officer until replacement personnel arrived. The closest I had ever been to sitting in this seat I occupy right now was as acting first officer on a graveyard shift on a holiday weekend. Needless to say, I have no idea what I am doing. What I do know is that in a matter of seconds, 739 members of this crew...myself included are going to be vaporized the moment Sargent Keefer and I turn our keys. But I guess I should start at the beginning...

(Black out)

(The ship is now calm and the personnel is almost completely different with the exception of communications officer Megan Rhodes, who sits at her station.)

Rhodes: Sir, we have a distress beacon coming from the Calandran System.

Capt. Tanner: The Calandran System?

Cmdr. Corbett: We have an outpost there... mostly agricultural I think... *(looks at his display)* Yes...agricultural research.

Capt. Tanner: Put the beacon on display.

Rhodes: *(apologetically)* I'm sorry sir... it's just a beacon. No communications are included.

Capt. Tanner: Open a channel to the Calandran System.

Rhodes: We are out of range for that, sir.

Capt. Tanner: *(decisively)* Commander Fields, set course for the Calandran System...

Cmdr. Corbett: But Captain, we are under orders to proceed directly to Presban Station. The Sector Regent is waiting for us and the hearing we are supposed to attend on behalf of the Benzonites...

Capt. Tanner: *(interrupting)* Fields... how far off schedule will a fly by of the Calandran System put us?

Cmdr. Fields: At maximum speed, the jump would set us back less than 12 hours sir.

Capt. Tanner: How many citizens are stationed in the Calandran System?

Cmdr. C'Saon: Two hundred and eleven. Mostly scientists and their families.

Capt. Tanner: The Sector Regents will have to wait.. Commander Fields, set course for Calandra.

Cmdr. Corbett: Would you like me to communicate our plans to the Presban Station explaining our delay?

Capt. Tanner: Please do.

Cmdr. Corbett: And if command orders us to come directly?

Capt. Tanner: *(comforting)* Leave that to me Josh. You know I have a way with the brass.

Cmdr. Corbett: *(laughing)* You most certainly do.

(at the Calandra Outpost... the Dimigri Military has already wiped out the residents. Ezmet Karunch leads the raiding party. He is a bigger than life intimidating figure)

Karunch: Has the beacon been sent?

Brizanna: Yes sir. It has been intercepted by the Hemera and they have changed their course.

Karunch: Predictable fools! How long until they arrive?

Kizik: They should be here by this time tomorrow sir.

Karunch: *(pleased)* Excellent. Is everything set in order?

Brizanna: Yes sir. When they fall into orbit we have left just enough for it to be an irresistible mystery for them. Add in our intelligence division discovered that the commander of this outpost is an old flame of the Captain Tanner and I would be willing to guarantee that he will fall right into our trap.

Kizik: *(curious)* But sir... we set enough charges to blow the station, but if we set a few more we could easily take the Hemera in orbit out as well.

Karunch: Kizik... tell me something. Is it your position among us to think?

Kizik: Sir?

Karunch: *(dismissively)* Nevermind. All you need to know is that it is not in our plan for the Hemera to perish?

Kizik: It isn't?

Brizanna: Not yet at least.

Karunch: *(agreeing)* Precisely. Do you know why the Hemera was requested by the Benzonites for the hearing at Presban station?

Kizik: Is it Captain Tanner?

Karunch: Of course it's Captain Tanner! That maggot has thwarted us again and again in this sector and he is well loved by both the Elmoreans as well as the Benzonites. If we allow him within two light years of that conference all of the work we have plotted with the Elmorean government will be for nothing! We must eliminate Captain Tanner.

Kizik: So why not just blow up the ship?

Brizanna: *(knowingly)* because a loss of the ship could cause a delay which could cause the Sector Regency to allow the Benzonites to choose another well seasoned ambassador. What we want is for the Hemera to arrive safe and sound.

Kizik: But without Captain Tanner.

Karunch: Precisely. Now back to the Frigate, we need to be on the other side of Calandra when our guests arrive.

(Black out)

(Back on the Hemera, in orbit around Calandra)

Cmdr. Fields: We are in orbit above the Outpost sir, engines set the one quarter cruising speed.

Cmdr. Corbett: Lieutenant Rhodes, open a com channel with the outpost.

Rhodes: I've established a link commander, but no one is answering.

Capt. Tanner: Lieutenant Taddock... scan for signs of life.

Lt. Taddock: *(frustrated)* The atmosphere of the Calandran system makes it difficult for me to see much. I am calibrating the system, but so far nothing.

Capt. Tanner: Keep at it. *(To Cmdr. Corbett)* What do you think, Josh?

Cmdr. Corbett: Should I form a landing party?

Capt. Tanner: *(thoughtfully)* Perhaps.

Cmdr. Fenton: Sir, take a look at this... *(Corbett and Tanner move to her station)* There seems to be structural damage at the southern power distributor. This is the unit that would have powered their bombardment shield.

Capt. Tanner: Meaning?

Cmdr. C'Saon: *(Joining them)* Meaning that with this damage, the station would have been vulnerable to orbital attack and would have been incapable of preventing a party from porting in.

Cmdr. Corbett: Taddock, Fenton, and C'Saon. Meet me at the Port dock.

Capt. Tanner: I will be leading this landing party Commander.

Cmdr. Corbett: *(objecting)* Sir, I will be needed to...

Capt. Tanner: You will be coming as well Josh. Taddock, Fenton, and Fields, to the port dock. C'Saon you have the bridge.

Cmdr. C'Saon: Sir. If you want that power distributor fixed you are going to need either me or Commander Tadeki on this mission.

Capt. Tanner: *(hitting a button that makes the engineering section of the ship light up)* Commander Tadeki.

Tadeki: *(contemptuously)* What??

Capt. Tanner: I need to you to join us at the port dock immediately. Your skills are required for a mission to the surface of...

Tadeki: *(interrupting... with a tinge of fear in his voice)* Sir... do I look like I have time for sight seeing? I am up to my eyeballs in repairing the jump drive you keep over using.

Capt. Tanner: Ted... I really need you on this one.

Tadeki: Well that's too bad captain. I'm busy. *(he hits a button and his part of the stage goes dark.)*

Capt. Tanner: *(disbelieving)* He just hung up on me.

Cmdr. Corbett: Do you want me to go down there and order him to meet us?

Capt. Tanner: No, that would only make him angrier. We will need the doctor though, Commander Fenton... go down to medical and explain the situation to the doctor. Let her know there may be casualties and to assemble a small medical team.

Cmdr. Fenton: Yes sir. Meet you on the port dock in ten minutes. *(she leaves)*

Capt. Tanner: That means you will have to go with us C'Saon.

Cmdr. C'Saon: Then who will have the bridge sir?

Capt. Tanner: *(Hitting a button)* Tanner to Lieutenant Briggs

Lt. Taddock: *(interjecting)* Lieutenant Briggs is on administrative leave at the academy sir.

Capt. Tanner: *(remembering)* And Lieutenant Gordon left the crew at Ti'Sai right?

Lt. Taddock: Yes sir. Transfer.

Capt. Tanner: Then with the party assembled, who is senior in the chain of command?

Cmdr. Corbett: *(looking at his station)* With C'Saon as a part of the team that would leave acting 5th Officer Lieutenant Brandon Bennett.

Capt. Tanner: *(appalled)* Lieutenant Bennett?

Cmdr. Corbett: Yes sir. He is acting 5th officer.

Capt. Tanner: Brandon Bennett of Lieutenant Bennett and Ensign Benson?

Cmdr. Corbett: That's the one sir.

Capt. Tanner: How can he be the 5th officer?

Cmdr. Corbett: Well sir, his seniority has placed him as the head of the supply division and that rates 7th officer. With Briggs and Gordon out, he's the guy.

Capt. Tanner: *(Hitting a button)* Tanner to Lieutenant Bennett.

Voice of Bennett: Yes sir?

Capt. Tanner: Report to the bridge Lieutenant.

Voice of Bennett: On my way, sir.

Cmdr. Corbett: Is it wise leaving him in charge sir?

Capt. Tanner: He is our 5th officer Josh. I assume he serves on the bridge in the rotation.

Lt. Taddock: *(helpfully)* He works the graveyard shift when I have the chair sir.

Cmdr. Corbett: Has he ever had the lead?

Lt. Taddock: No sir. He was once bridge first officer, but that was a graveyard shift.

Cmdr. Fields: Must have been a holiday weekend.

Lt. Taddock: Yes sir it was.

Capt. Tanner: *(resigned)* Indeed. Well, it's about time that young Lieutenant Bennett has his first taste in the chair. Lieutenant Rhodes?

Rhodes: Yes sir?

Capt. Tanner: Under no circumstances is Ensign Benson allowed on the bridge while Bennett is in command. I will voice this to the lieutenant myself.

Rhodes: That's a wise move sir.

Capt. Tanner: Well, I guess it's time to figure out what's going on down there. I will catch the Lieutenant on the way to the port dock. *(as they leave, replacements for stations start to trickle in and Gebbaon, and Kressick enter the bridge. Lights out)*

(On the Bridge of Karunch's ship)

Brizanna: A total of 12 have ported down sir.

Karunch: And Tanner is among them?

Brizanna: We left scanners in place and they indicate that Captain Tanner is in forward engineering. We should have an absolute positive identification in 30 seconds.

Karunch: Kizik...ready the charges. I want them vaporized before they know what is happening to them. It's time the Intergalactic Federation feels the strength of Ezmet Karunch!

Kizik: Yes sir, but what about the Hemera?

Karunch: The Hemera will scan for survivors and finding none, will report to their Intergalactic puppet masters. Then if all goes as planned they will be off to the negotiations without their star negotiator.

Brizanna: *(pleased)* We have positive identification on Captain Tanner.

Karunch: (*coldly*) Detonate the charges.

Kizik: Yes sir.

(*There is a flash of light*)

Kizik: Total destruction of the outpost. Scanning for signs of life... nothing. Nothing has survived the explosion.

Karunch: And the Hemera?

Brizanna: The Hemera is being pelted with debris but is holding orbit.

Karunch: If they leave their position...

Brizanna: (*Completing his thought*) I will let you know immediately.

Karunch: Those pathetic whelps. As soon as they leave orbit, set course for Presban. Until then, remain cloaked and on the other side of the planet.

Kizik: Yes sir.

(*Black out*)

(*On the bridge of the Hemera, Bennett is sitting in the Captain's chair. The rest of the bridge crew consists of Kresseck, Rhodes, Gebbanon and Keefer.*)

Keefer: Landing party has safely ported to the surface.

Bennett: Thank you Sergeant.

Gebbanon: So this is your honest to God first time sitting in that chair.

Bennett: Sure is. Until this past week I was seventh officer and in charge of supply.

Gebbanon: Why would the Captain take the entire command team down with him, doesn't that seem a little...

Kresseck: (*interjecting*) I was thinking the same thing actually... not that I mind. I don't get nearly enough time in the pilot's seat as I would like.

Keefer: I haven't been on the bridge in weeks.

(*The door opens, Benson walks in*)

Benson: (*Seeing Bennett in the chair*) You ARE in command. (*He crosses to where Bennett is sitting*)

Bennett: Don't seem so surprised.

Rhodes: (*seeing what is happening*) Lieutenant.

Benson: (*Excitedly*) I mean, Finn down in deck maintenance said he was there when you got the call but jeez... you are really in the seat right now! I mean, there was that time you were in the 1st chair there over thanksgiving weekend right?

Rhodes: (*interrupting*) Lieutenant, the captain left orders that Ensign Benson was prohibited from the bridge while you are in command.

Bennett: (*surprised*) He did what?

Rhodes: I'm sorry Brandon, but the captain said... *(at a loss)* well it's just that you two sorta have...

Benson: *(impressed)* Dude... I had no idea our reputation went that high.

Rhodes: So if you could leave, that would be great. Captain's orders and all...

(Benson goes to leave)

Benson: Nah, it's cool. *(To Kressick)* Is it really that bad?

Kresseck: You guys are legendary.

Benson: *(awed)* Legendary? Hear that bro? We're legendary.

Kressick: *(looking to Gebbanon)* Did I use that word right? I didn't mean it as a compliment.

Gebbanon: Sounded right to me.

Bennett: *(To Benson)* You still good tonight?

Benson: *(At the door)* Yeah, hit me up when your shift ends. Enjoy being the captain.

(There is a bright flash)

Bennett: What was that??

Rhodes: There's been an explosion on the surface.

Bennett: *(moving to her station)* Explosion. How bad?

Rhodes: Atomic...*(pause)* 4 kiloton yield...

Gebbanon: Scanning for survivors...

(A serious tone has set in)

Rhodes: No one could have survived this.

Gebbanon: *(frantic)* Scanning anyways!

Bennett: This couldn't have been a coincidence.

Gebbanon: What do you mean sir?

Keefer: You think this was a trap?

Bennett: Rhodes, scan the sector. Any signs of of Damigri or Kantosian ships?

Rhodes: None sir. Intensifying the scan

Bennett: It doesn't make any sense.

Gebbanon: *(reporting)* No life readings.

(There is a moment of silence while this sinks in)

Benson: *(who has not left)* This sucks.

(another slight pause and then)

Keefer: You think?

Rhodes: *(impatient)* Why haven't you left yet?

Benson: Sorry... leaving now. *(he goes to leave)*

Bennett: Not so fast Ensign... Take over weapons array.

Rhodes: But Lieutenant, the Captain said...

Bennett: (*short*) I know what he said, and if he hasn't been deep fried, then I guess I'll be in trouble but I need someone at weapons in case this isn't one big freaking coincidence and Ensign Benson is trained at that console. Neal, take over at weapons.

Benson: (*going to the console*) Righty-o....

Bennett: Ok then... there was an explosion. (*awkward pause*) Does anyone have any suggestions?

Kresseck: Suggestions?

Keefer: About what?

Bennett: About what we're supposed to do next.

Gebbanon: You don't know what we should do?

Bennett: (*Taken aback*) No...

Rhodes: (*resignedly*) We are so screwed.

Bennett: (*with anger*) What? You think the captain pulled me aside right before he went down there and said... Hey Brandon, in case I get my ass vaporized down there, you be cool. I got this plan for you.

Benson: That woulda been sweet if he had.

Bennett: Well he didn't and now I'm asking for suggestions. I mean, hell... I don't even know where we were headed before this detour.

Gebbanon: We covered that at the senior staff meeting.

Bennett: Well I guess I was daydreaming.

Gebbanon: We were headed to Presban for the Elmorean/Benzonite conference.

Bennett: (*remembering*) That's right... I remember that.

Gebannon: Which we are now going to be late for.

Rhodes: Sir, we need to report this to I.F. Command.

Bennett: Do that, and get orders for what we're to do next.

Gebannon: We should probably progress to the conference, I don't think anything can be done here.

Keefer: But if this was a trap, shouldn't we investigate?

Rhodes: Interspace communications to HQ will take several hours this deep in space.

Bennett: Understood Rhodes, and Sergeant Keefer... I agree. We should try to look into what happened here.

Kresseck: But how can we do that? The planet is toxic...the radioactivity...

Benson: (*again*) This sucks.

Bennett: Yes... it sucks. Ok. Are our fallout suits able to withstand that level of radioactivity?

Gebannon: That's a question for medical.

Bennett: (*tapping his console*) Bridge to Medical.

Keefer: This would probably be a bad time to remind you that most of medical was on the planet when it blew.

Voice of Akers: Bridge, this is medical.

Bennett: Damn it!

Voice of Akers: Bridge?

Bennett: Who's in charge down there medical?

Voice of Akers: This is Ensign Michelle Akers, lead nurse.

Bennett: Report to the bridge Ensign.

Voice of Akers: Yes sir.

Benson: We're going to need a new doctor it seems.

Bennett: We're going to need a new everything.

Benson: This sucks.

Bennett: (*annoyed*) Quit saying that!

Rhodes: Message to I.F. command has been sent Lieutenant.

Bennett: Let me know the second we get a reply.

Rhodes: Of course...(*remembering*) sir.

Kresseck: Sir, we are starting to get debris from the surface explosion.

Bennett: Understood.

Kresseck: It would probably be a good idea to raise shields.

Bennett: Of course. (*face palm*) Ensign Benson, raise shields.

Benson: Aye-aye sir.

(*The door opens... Ensign Michelle Akers walks in*)

Akers: (*To Gebbanon*) There are rumors going around that there was an explosion on the surface.

Bennett: It's true. Atomic. The fallout suits we have in medical... could they be used on a group to port down to the surface?

Akers: Atomic, are there survivors?

Bennett: None that we can tell.

Akers: Wait... are you Lieutenant Bennett?

Bennett: Yes...

Akers: The captain left you in charge?

Bennett: Yes...

Akers: You're the senior officer on the ship?

Bennett: Yes, I am. Are you getting somewhere with this?

Akers: No... it's just that... (*Seeing Benson*) And Ensign Benson too... wow. (*Back to business*) And there are no survivors?

Gebbanon: None.

Bennett: About the suits...

Akers: Right...the suits. (*refocusing*) How big was the detonation?

Rhodes: 4 Kiloton.

Akers: Those suits wouldn't last five minutes this close to a 4 kiloton blast.

Benson: *(looking at his console)* This sucks.

Bennett: Yes, we know it sucks, Neal.

Benson: No... this. On the screen. This REALLY sucks.

Bennett: What?

Benson: A Kantosian Battlecruiser just uncloaked and is headed right at us.

(Black out)

(On the Bridge of Karunch's frigate, Brizanna, Kizik and several other Damigri are present)

Trakin: *(excitedly)* First officer! A Kantosian Battlecruiser has just uncloaked in range of the Federation ship.

Brizanna: *(Into the com)* Captain, please report to the bridge immediately. Are you sure navigator?

Trakin: Yes first officer.

Kizik: What are the odds?? Why didn't we know? I thought these guys were our friends!

Brizanna: The Kantosians have no honor. They are only our friends because the supreme council told us they are.

(Karunch enters the bridge)

Karunch: Report!

Brizanna: A Kantosian Battlecruiser has uncloaked and is on an intercept course for the Hemera.

Karunch: Navigator! Time to intercept?

Trakin: 3 minutes sir.

Kizik: It will take us three times that long to get around the planet.

Karunch: Set course for the Hemera.

Trakin: Yes sir.

Kizik: What are we going to do?

Karunch: *(ominously)* Whatever we have to.

(Pause)

Kizik: *(ruining the moment)* That being?

Karunch: Whatever we have to!

Kizik: So you don't know?

Karunch: Kizik, if your father were not so well placed...

Kizik: You would blast me out of an air lock. His placement is truly a blessing captain.

Trakin: Intercept course laid sir.

Karunch: Full speed, Navigator. Kizik, I want our weapons hot and shields up.

Brizanna: We are going to engage the Hemera? Our thought our plan was to...

Karunch: We are not going to engage the Hemera. *(looking totally disgusted)* We are going to save her.

(Back on board the Hemera)

Bennett: Open a communications link to the Kantosian ship.

Rhodes: They're jamming us. I don't think they're in the mood to talk.

Keefer: They are in missile range now sir, laser cannon range in... wait... missile launch detected.

Bennett: Shields up!

Kresseck: Shields are already up!

Bennett: *(oh yeah)* Well, keep them up.

Kresseck: That's the plan sir.

Benson: Do we return fire?

Bennett: Yes! Give them everything we have Ensign.

(An alarm goes off)

Bennett: Why is the alarm going off?

Gebannon: Red alert always sounds when we fire on another ship.

Bennett: Gotcha.

Voice of Tadeki: Tadeki to the bridge. What in the hell is going on up there?

Bennett: No time for chat right now commander.

Voice of Tadeki: You know the Red Alert is going off right??

(an explosion, the ship has been hit and people are flung about)

Gebannon: Missile impact sir.

Benson: *(sarcastic)* Really? Is that what that was?

Bennett: Damage?

Benson: Shields at 88 percent. *(explosion)* 74 percent.

Rhodes: Communications still jammed.

Benson: Our missiles hit, negligible damage.

Bennett: Fire again.

Benson: Already on it.

Bennett: Ensign Kresseck, maneuver us to get into position to jump out of here.

Akers: *(astonished)* We're leaving the captain?

Bennett: The captain is atomic residue lady, and we aren't in a position to go head to head with a battlecruiser.

(Another explosion)

Benson: 58 percent *(Big explosion)* What was that?

Gebannon: They just hit us with all four frontal lasers.

Keefer: Several systems offline sir.

Kresseck: Jump Drive offline Lieutenant.

Bennett: That means we can't jump right?

Kresseck: *(louder)* That's pretty much the definition of offline sir.

Benson: Shields at 32 percent and everything we have just isn't getting the job done.

(lights up On the bridge of Karunch's ship)

Karunch: When we get into position I want a full laser and torpedo launch we are only going to have one shot at this.

Trakin: Coordinates in the system sir as exact as can be programmed.

Karunch: *(with finality)* This HAS to look like an accident.

Brizanna: Based on what you have given me, I think we can make this look right. We are going to have to uncloak, fire and calculate the exact track of the Kantosian ship.

Kizik: If we get this wrong, we're all going to be executed.

Karunch: All the more reason to get it right.

Trakin: One minute to destination sir.

Brizanna: We have a potential lock on weapons sir. When we uncloak we should have their range.

Karunch: Fire on my command first officer.

(Lights back up on the ship off the Hemera)

Benson: *(who is positioned at the weapons array)* Shields at 18 percent!

Bennett: *(frantic and not thinking clearly)* That's bad right?

(Another exploding)

Benson: *(losing patience)* 13 percent... and yes... 18 percent was bad.

Bennett: Kresseck... are we online yet?

Kresseck: *(in the primary pilot's chair, Bria Kresseck is a Polaraxi with blue skin)* No sir. Long range jump drive is still off line.

Bennett: *(Speaking into the air)* Commander Tadeki! I need that drive back on line now!

(Lights come up off stage on Commander Ted Tadeki, chief Engineer. This scene could also be done with voice only if space is limited)

Bennett: Commander Tadeki!

Tadeki: *(angry)* What?

Bennett: We have to get out of here!

Tadeki: *(after another explosion)* I'm a little busy here!

Bennett: We need those drives back on line!

Tadeki: *(indignant)* We're not exactly playing checkers down here!

Bennett: When can we jump?

Tadeki: How in the hell would I know? Maybe it would help if you got out and pushed!

(Another explosion)

Tadeki: When I get it fixed, you'll know. Tadeki out!

(His area of the stage goes dark)

Bennett: Tadeki! *(no answer)*

Rhodes: *(The com officer)* Lieutenant... another ship has jumped in... it's Damigrian Frigate.

Bennett: How long until it's in range?

Benson: *(after another explosion)* Shields are gone!

Bennett: Understood!

Benson: And that's bad.

Bennett: *(exploding)* Thank you!

Rhodes: 15 seconds until the Frigate is in firing range...

Gebbanon: *(1st officer, sitting near the Captain)* Rhodes, open a channel to the Damigri...

Bennett: Stay that order!

Gebbanon: *(desperate)* Sir... this is suicide! Open that channel Rhodes!

Bennett: This ship can't fall into Damigri hands. Sergeant Keefer, insert your key.

Keefer: Sir? *(astonished)* My Key?

Bennett: *(insistent)* Insert your key! That's an order!

Gebbanon: We're going to blow up the ship??

(Back on Karunch's Ship)

Pelza: The Hemera is in serious trouble sir.

Karunch: What incompetent is running the ship now that Tanner is dead?

Brizanna: Fire sir?

Karunch: This has to look like an accident and the Kantosian ship must die.

Traken: Coordinates are set sir.

Kizik: *(reporting)* Their shields are concentrated forward, a full weapons sweep could do the trick.

Karunch: It better. *(pause)* Fire at my signal. Set the angle to look like we are firing on the Hemera... Three... two... one.. Fire!

Brizanna: Multiple missile, torpedo launch, all lasers firing.

Kizik: Multiple hits...

Karunch: Damage report!

Pelza: Shields down, major structural damage to the hull. Engineering is compromised.

Kizik: The Kandosian ship is hailing us sir.

Karunch: Ignore them. Hit them again.

Brizanna: If we hit them again sir, it's going to be hard for the Hemera to think it's an accident.

Karunch: *(Insistent)* Hit them again!

(A Flash)

Pelza: No need sir, the Kandosian ship has been destroyed.

Karunch: Engineering breach?

Pelza: *(looking at readings)* No sir, a desperation salvo by the Hemera. The Kandosian ship was so damaged that it was enough.

Karunch: Lower lasers to 10 percent and fire on the Hemera. When they return fire, jettison the air locks from engineering and let them think we have a jump drive breach.

Kizik: Sir, should we tell engineering before we jettison the air?

Karunch: What? *(realizing)* Oh... yes. That may be wise. Tell engineering to evacuate their posts.

Kizik: Yes sir.

(Back on the Hemera)

Bennett: This is not open for discussion! Sergeant Keefer do you have your key ready?

Keefer: *(fumbling through his keys)* Finding it sir! *(to himself)* Which one is it?

Bennett: *(Frustrated)* It's the round one!

Keefer: They're all round!

(Another explosion)

Benson: Shields gone, minor damage to C deck.

Rhodes: The Damigrian frigate has a lock on our position.

Bennett: Now would be a good time to get your key ready Keefer!

Keefer: *(panicked)* I must have left it in my room!

Bennett: Why in the hell would you leave your copy of the self destruct key in your room?

Keefer: *(over reacting)* Because I wasn't planning on blowing up the ship!!

Gebannon: Rhodes, can we get an open link to surrender?

Rhodes: Still jamming us.

Keefer: Do you want me to go get my key?

Bennett: Yes!

(Keefer goes to leave)

Bennett: Wait... where are your quarters?

Keefer: Officers quarters, Deck H.

Bennett: Deck H?? By the time you get back we'll be dead!

Keefer: Then I guess we won't need my damn key then!

Gebannon: Ensign, are we still firing on the Kandosian.

Benson: For all the good it's doing, yes.

Rhodes: Injuries reported on C Deck

Akers: *(going to leave)* I should go.

Benson: That's optimistic.. by the time you get down there we'll all be dead.

(There is a flash)

Bennett: What was that?

Kresseck: what did you hit them with Benson?

Benson: Beats me? I was just firing whatever was ready!

Kresseck: Nice shot!

Keefer: Hell yeah!

(Another explosion)

Rhodes: There's still the Damigrian Frigate.

(everyone is let back down)

Akers: Well, do what you just did to the last ship.

Benson: I don't know what I did to the last ship.

Keefer: *(reaching for the console)* Well, keep shooting.

Benson: *(slapping his hand away)* I know what I'm doing! *(He fires)*

Gebannon: The Damigrian Frigate just lost compression in engineering!

Kresseck: Holy Crap... Nice shot again!

Akers: What does that mean?

Gebannon: I mean they have serious issues where their power comes from.

Bennett: Fire again!

Benson: Why does everyone think I won't hit the fire button unless someone reminds me?

Kresseck: The Damigrian ship is pulling away.

Gebannon: They have closed off the leak and are preparing to jump.

(The Door opens, Commander Tadeki walks in looking disheveled)

Kresseck: *(optimistically)* Do we follow sir?

Tadeki: *(answering for the captain)* We won't be chasing anything for a while. Jump drive is off line, compression is lost, the dampening fields are flooded...

Bennett: Commander Tadeki... uh... shouldn't you be down in engineering?

Tadeki: *(Sitting in the Captain's chair)* I'm on break.

Rhodes: The Damigrian ship just jumped out of the system.

(The crew cheers)

Tadeki: Well, that's good I guess. Look kid, I came up here to talk and I was gonna do it private like, but there ain't no point. Rumor has it you're in charge of this bucket now. And you have been in charge for like 20 minutes and your have pretty much ruined the ship.

Bennett: We were being attacked!

Tadeki: The captain got attacked all the time, but he never ruined the ship.

Bennett: *(impatiently)* What do you want from me commander?

Tadeki: I guess starting with an apology would be nice.

Bennett: I am not apologizing for being attacked.

Tadeki: *(Getting up)* Fine, but you need to realize something son. This ship doesn't go anywhere without me and my boys. So until you get down to engineering and apologize for all the work you just stuffed down our throats, we aren't fixing anything.

(He leaves)

(There is an awkward moment)

Akers: I have wounded to attend to... *(She leaves)*

(pause)

Bennett: He doesn't really expect me to apologize does he?

Gebannon: I have seen him do that and more to Captain Tanner.

Rhodes: One time he refused to have any of his men work on the food synthesizers until the Captain admitted that it was his fault for allowing the crew to use them freely during the Christmas party.

Bennett: But he will fix the ship right?

(Black out)

(When the lights come back up we are in engineering, Commander Tadeki is sitting on one of the bulkheads lecturing two new recruits. He is setting up a checker board and while the conversation goes on, plays a game against Engineer 1)

Tadeki: *(insistent)* No! There is no special circumstances!

Engineer 1: I don't think I am following you sir.

Tadeki: The reason I called you two down here today is because you are new to the ship. You really picked a hell of a time to transfer to the Hemera boys.

Engineer 2: *(excitedly)* I have been waiting more than a year for this assignment.

Tadeki: You don't say...

Engineer 2: This is my dream assignment! The Hemera has such a history and it's the first ship I put in for when I graduated engineering school.

Tadeki: Well, it's a good ship and all...

Engineer 2: But the docket came through that the Hemera needed engineers I couldn't get to Ti'Sai fast enough.

Engineer 1: Pretty much my story as well... We just felt so lucky and blessed that Captain Tanner picked us!

Engineer 2: *(a little star struck)* Captain Tanner was a big reason why I wanted this assignment. At the academy he is a legend. The best of the best and I have wanted nothing more than to serve under his command, to see how he runs and ship and just to be a part of his crew.

Tadeki: *(oh boy...)* Yeah... well, about that... No reason to beat around the bush here... He's dead.

Engineer 1: Dead?

Tadeki: *(with finality)* Really dead.

Engineer 2: How?

Tadeki: Well, right before we got the crap stomped out of us and everything around here got trashed, the Captain and some of the senior staff ported to the surface and....

Engineer 1: And?

Tadeki: Nuked. Vaporized. No more captain.

Engineer 1: Who's in command now? Commander Corbett?

Tadeki: No... he bought the farm next to the captain.

Engineer 1: No way!

Tadeki: And Fields, C'Saon, Taddock, Fenton and most of medical including the surgical commander.

(There is a moment of awkward silence)

Tadeki: So, yeah... pisser of a thing really. Well, at least you got to serve under the captain for a few days. *(switching topics)* But that's not what I wanted to talk to you. The fact that a party ported down reminded me that I had not given you the speech yet.

Engineer 2: The Speech?

Tadeki: The most important speech you will ever hear. At least if you want to live to retirement.

(He has their attention)

Tadeki: *(looking at the game)* King me.

Engineer 1: Oh... yes sir.

Tadeki: Ok... this speech is not going to be normal, what with the captain eating it and what not, but here goes. As your commanding officer, I absolutely prohibit you from ever porting to the surface of any planet.

Engineer 2: Ok, is there a reason?

Tadeki: *(looking at him like he is stupid)* Son, you said you have been looking for an opening on our ship... is this the first one you have noticed?

Engineer 2: Uh... no sir.

Tadeki: And have you ever wondered why there seems to be so much turnover in engineering on the Hemera?

Engineer 1: I had assumed people were getting promoted up...

Tadeki: *(laughing to himself)* No... that's not exactly it. *(He makes a move on the board)* I am just going to put it like this... if a

member of senior command ever comes down to engineering and says that your area of expertise is needed a port mission you are to directly and explicitly tell them no.

(They look aghast)

Engineer 1: How can we refuse? Wouldn't that be refusing a direct order?

Tadeki: That's why you have to be ready! If the captain, well not the dead captain, but whoever becomes the new one, comes down here and looks at you and says... Corporal... *(he can't remember the name)*

Engineer 1: Jackson

Tadeki: *(That's right!)* Corporal Jackson, you have a specialty in mechanical engineering and we need you to escort us on a mission to the surface you say...

Engineer: No?

Tadeki: Darn right you say no!

Engineer 2: But why?

Engineer 1: And can we even do that?

Tadeki: You can if you are ready! You have to have a lie at the ready. Tell him that you have explosive diarrhea, or swine flu, or your herpes are flaring up...whatever it takes!

Engineer 2: What's so bad about being a part of a mission?

Tadeki: *(rolls up a paper and smacks Engineer 2 in the head)*
Because that's how you wind up dead on this ship and I am out another engineer.

Engineer 2: You're joking right?

Tadeki: I have been Chief Engineer on the Hemera for 13 and a half years and you know how many engineers I have seen die on the surface?

Engineer 1: *(interested)* How many?

(The door opens and Bennett walks in)

Bennett: *(seeing the checkers game)* I thought you said you weren't playing checkers.

Tadeki: Oh, that. Well, during the attack we weren't.

Bennett: I thought you would be busy fixing the jump drive!

Tadeki; *(pulling out his communicator)* Oh... I didn't know you had sent me that apology. *(looking and then sourly)* Oh, you didn't. Well, that's your problem Lieutenant.

Engineer 1: Should we give you some privacy sir?

Tadeki: I guess so.

Bennett: I'm Brandon Bennett. *(he goes to shake Engineer 1's hand)*

Tadeki: *(introducing)* Lieutenant Bennett, this is Corporal...

Engineer 1: Jackson

Tadeki: And... *(forgetting again)*

Engineer 2: Sergeant Brad Irving. *(shakes, then to Tadeki)* Is this the Lieutenant Bennett you told us about?

Tadeki: He's the one, and not only that, but he's in command.

(The two engineers look horrified)

Bennett: *(seeing their reactions)* Thank you. If I could have a word alone with the commander...

Engineer 1: Yeah, sure. I mean yes sir...

(Engineers 1 and 2 leave)

Tadeki: Nice kids. I don't make a habit of learning their names until they have been here for a few months... no point most of the time.

Bennett: Huh?

Tadeki: Nothing. *(to the point)* What do you want?

Bennett: I need the ship fixed commander. We have heard from I.F. Command and they need us at that hearing yesterday. How long until the jump drive can be back on line?

Tadeki: This is not how we are going to do this.

Bennett: Do what? Fix the ship?

Tadeki: No. This is not how we start things. You broke the ship.

Bennett: We were attacked.

Tadeki: We covered that. You still broke it.

Bennett: Commander, I have looked over your records...

Tadeki: *(sarcasm dripping)* Have you now? And what did you see? Disrespect... not in the command line by order, petulance. But you know what else you saw? 16 service commendations. The book you studied in quantum field generation at the academy? You know who wrote that? This guy. So, don't tell me you didn't break the ship. You did and you know what that means.

Bennett: I'm in command.

Tadeki: Of a broken ship.

Bennett: If you don't fix this ship now, I will write it up in report.

Tadeki: *(mock horror)* A career Lieutenant put me on report! Oh the humanity! Look junior, much better officers have put me on report but I am still here on the job and if you want this ship fixed you admit your broke it and you apologize!

Bennett: That's not how Fleet command works!

Tadeki: Put it in the report, I have a game of checkers to finish. *(shouting)* Corporal Johnson! Get back in here!

(Engineer 1 returns)

Engineer 1: Sir?

Tadeki: Your move. Johnson.

Engineer 1: Jackson.

Tadeki: Whatever.

(They sit and there is an awkwardness until finally Bennett leaves. He is gone for about 15 seconds before returning)

Bennett: *(resigned)* I'm sorry.

Tadeki: Excuse me?

Bennett: I said I'm sorry.

Tadeki: *(feigning deafness)* I can't hear you.

Bennett: *(Shouting)* I'm sorry for breaking the ship!

(pause)

Tadeki: Forgiven. This time.

Bennett: When can I have my jump drive back?

(Tadeki stands up, hits a button on the console)

Tadeki: Jump drive is back on line and fully functional.

Bennett: *(indignant)* How long has it been fixed??

Tadeki: It was fixed the moment you acknowledged what you had done. That's all you need to know. Now get out of here and let me finish this game.

(Black out)

(Lieutenant Bennett re-emerges on the bridge)

Kresseck: *(seeing Bennett)* Jump drive is back on line sir.

Bennett: Of course it is. I had to have a talk with the Commander, but I think we are on the same page now.

Gebannon: You apologized didn't you?

Bennett: *(matter of factly)* Yes.

Keefer: *(disappointed)* Crap.

Bennett: Pardon?

Benson: Pay up Sargey!

(Keefer hands Benson something)

Bennett: What's going on here?

Rhodes: Ensign Benson bet the Sergeant 20 credits that you would apologize for breaking the ship.

Bennett: *(pointedly)* Thanks for having confidence in me amigo.

Benson: Thanks for not disappointing me, compadre.

Rhodes: I wish we could get back to following protocol, Lieutenant.

Benson: I heard that the commander has been on the Hemera for 4 different commanders and each of them have apologized for breaking the ship the first time they were attacked.

Bennett: Well, I'm glad to be a part of such an honored tradition.

Gebannon: While you were in engineering, we heard from I.F. command.

Bennett: Command? What did they say?

Gebannon: Admiral Vatore is aware of our losses but has ordered us to continue to Presban. As you know, Captain Tanner was

supposed to represent the Benzonites in their border dispute with the Elmoreans.

Bennett: Right...

Gebannon: A request has been made of the Sector Regency for a replacement to be sent, but since this hearing has been put off twice and the two sides are on the brink of war the Admiral doesn't think the regents are going to be willing to wait.

Bennett: *(not seeing the picture)* Ok...

Gebannon: So, Admiral Vatore expects you to represent the Benzonites as acting commander of this ship.

Bennett: *(laughs out loud)* Ok. What did he really say?

Gebannon: *(Confused)* Lieutenant?

Bennett: He didn't really say that right? *(pause)* Right?

(There is an awkward moment)

Bennett: This sucks.

Benson: Tell me about it.

Gebannon: I need to confirm bridge placement. As you know, most of the senior staff was on the surface, and the admiral confirmed you as acting captain sir.

Bennett: This is surreal.

Gebannon: If you are not opposed, as previously acting 6th officer, I am moved up to 1st officer. I will also act as the chief science officer. Lieutenant Rhodes was already acting communications officer but will now rank as 2nd officer of the ship as well.

Bennett: Is that all?

Gebannon: No sir. Several members of security were on the landing party leaving Sargent Keefer as the senior member, Ensign Akers is ranking medical officer, but we have no qualified doctor. Ensign Kresseck is the most qualified pilot left aboard with Fields and Fenton gone.

Bennett: I am fine with Sargent Keefer... you have your key on you now right Keefer?

Keefer: Ready to blow up the ship whenever you are, sir.

Bennett: Akers and Kresseck are fine too.

Gebannon: That just leaves weapons.

(Ensign Benson grunts loudly)

Gebannon: We have several qualified officers who are trained on weapons console, but I need you to pick one to act as senior on the rotation.

(Benson makes another noise)

Bennett: I want Neal.... Ensign Benson.

Rhodes: Lieutenant Bennett! The Captain specifically said...

Benson: The Captain's dead. *(pointing at Bennett)* He's the captain now.

Rhodes: Acting captain!

Benson: Which outranks an acting 2nd officer and a corpse put together.

Rhodes: *(to Bennett)* Lieutenant...

Benson: *(Correcting)* Captain.

Rhodes: Grrr.... Lieutenant. I am sure Ensign Benson is a good gunner...

Bennett: Best in our class at the academy. He stays, Rhodes.

Benson: Score! *(he fist bumps Kresseck)* I'm the chief weapons officer now!

Kresseck: *(beaming)* I'm the pilot.

Keefer: *(joining their mirth)* Anyone need something secure?

(They laugh)

Rhodes: *(Sharply)* Sir, we have 46 hours until we arrive at Presban station, would you like to forward the Admiral's instructions on your pending duties there?

Bennett: *(killjoy)* Oh...that. Yeah, I guess so. What do they expect me to do at this thing anyway?

(Black out)

(Back on Karunch's ship)

Pelza: We are in synchronous orbit about Presbin captain. Cutting engines to orbit reserve.

Karunch: Noted. When is my meeting with the Elmorean?

Pelza: Ambassador Nidlit has been notified of our arrival.

Kizik: Porting dock has been notified of one wishing to teleport immediately and sir, please remember Abigan six.

Trakin: What happened on Abigan six?

Karunch: *(snapping)* We're not talking about that again!

Kizik: When dealing with the Elmoreans you have to remember three things... first... they hate it when you mispronounce their names, secondly they hate being touched and consider being touched a very serious insult.

Pelza: What else?

Kizik: They can't stand to have moisture on the back of their necks.

Pelza: *(interested)* Why?

Kizik: No one knows... it's just a thing. I mean, they bathe fully immersed in water like many races...but if you put something damp on the backs of their necks... well... it's just... don't do that.

Pelza: That's a lot to remember.

Karunch: Exactly! Too many rules!

Trakin: So what happened on Abigan six?

(Karunch punches Trakin right in the face, knocking him out)

Karunch: I said we aren't talking about it!

(the Door opens and Ambassador Nidlit walks in escorted by Brizanna)

Brizanna: Ambassador Nidlit, I present the Captain of the Deadly Widow, Ezmet Karunch.

Nidlit: *(flatly)* You are Ezmet Karunch?

Karunch: *(also flatly)* I am Ezmet Karunch

Nidlit: I am Senior Ambassador Ajimhere Nidlit.

Karunch: Well met, Ambassador.

Nidlit: I hope my timing isn't inconvenient.

Karunch: *(congenially)* It couldn't have been better. As you were entering I was punching my helmsman in the face.

Nidlit: I see.

Karunch: A case of temporary stupidity... at least I think it's temporary. I haven't quite decided with that one yet.

Nidlit: The situation has been explained to me by my superiors, but I thought since you were here before the Intergalactic Federation representatives, that I could hear it from you myself.

Karunch: The plan is simple ambassador, the Damigri need a stronghold in this sector but we have been politically blocked at every turn by the Sector Regency. Having an outpost this close to the I.F. border has become a priority.

Nidlit: It's my job to understand the background Captain.

Brizanna: About a year ago, our governments conspired to plant genetic evidence that would show that the Elmoreans were the first to settle the moons of Presban. And while we both know that's not true, it has allowed your government to stake a claim.

Nidlit: Which we have, but how do you plan to convince the sector regent?

Karunch: I am sure you know my reputation in such matters. In representing the Elmoreans, I, Ezmet Karunch absolutely guarantee a victory for our alliance at the conference. We are not asking for much, just one of the smaller moons to re-establish what your ancestors started.

Nidlit: Then, we rent space to the Damigri and the I.F have a powerful foe right in their back yard. However, it is rumored that the I.F. have sent the Hemera and that Captain Tanner will be representing the Benzonites.

Karunch: *(laughing)* I'm afraid the Benzonites are in for a surprise.

(The rest of the crew laugh as the lights go black)

(In the medical section of the ship, Bennett is on the examining table being examined by Akers)

Bennett: So why am I here again?

Akers: Apparently, I.F protocol states that when a new commander takes over a ship they have to have a full medical exam to make sure that they are healthy enough for command.

Bennett: But I had my yearly exam two weeks ago.

Akers: I know... and I thought that would be good enough, but apparently it's mandatory no matter what.

Bennett: (*warily*) is this a full exam?

Akers: Yes. Full. Take off your pants.

Bennett: (*looking around*) Hold on a sec... where is everyone?

Akers: Do you usually have an audience when you take off your pants?

Bennett: (*momentarily confused*) What? No. It's just that this is the most deserted I have ever seen medical.

Akers: The Hemera has, or had, a medical staff of 3 doctors, 6 nurses and a few support staff.

Bennett: And now?

Akers: Almost everyone went down to the surface. (*She has been checking his temp, etc... but now...*) Take off your pants.

Bennett: (*Ignoring that*) Who's left?

Akers: You're looking at the senior nurse, of two. We are running 12 hours on, 12 hours off shifts. We have 3 members of our support staff left.

Bennett: Ouch.

Akers: (*misunderstanding him as she was prodding him*) Did that hurt? (*she goes to check that spot again*)

Bennett: No... I meant Ouch... your entire department is gone.

Akers: Yeah. I will be glad when we can get to the next deployment station.

Bennett: That bad huh?

Akers: I am totally not prepared to take over this entire department. I'm not a doctor...I'm not qualified for this.

(*Bennett gives her a look*)

Akers: Oh yeah...

Bennett: (*laughing*) I didn't know what to say there. I mean, don't you hate people that always one up you? Neal... Ensign Benson and I have a buddy and I swear you could tell him a story of how you woke up in the middle of the night with a team of Tellegrian Love Shamans dancing around you only to find out you have super powers and an endless supply of credits and at the end of the story he would just look at you and say "That's nothing...wait until you hear this..."

Akers: You have odd friends.

Bennett: Anyway, I could have totally one upped you there. Last week I was the seventh officer, today, I'm the captain.

(*Awkward silence*)

Akers: Take off your pants.

Bennett: A full exam huh?

Akers: A full exam.

(*Bennett takes off his pants*)

Voice of Rhodes: Lieutenant Bennett, You have a sublight direct communication from Admiral Hodge.

Bennett: Can I take it here in medical?

Voice of Rhodes: It's classified level 8b.

Bennett: I don't have clearance at that level.

Voice of Rhodes: You do now, sir. Please report to the bridge.

Bennett: Wow... 8b clearance. On my way Rhodes. Sorry Ensign, we'll have to finish this later.

(he leaves without his pants)

(Bennett Hustles onto the bridge of the Hemera, the other officers are present. Everyone is too busy at first to notice he doesn't have pants on.)

Bennett: *(sitting in his chair)* Patch the Admiral into our main feed please.

Rhodes: *(looking at him)* We have a problem sir... uh... make that two problems.

Bennett: Lieutenant?

Rhodes: In order to be on the bridge during this message you have to have 8b clearance.

Bennett: Oh... of course... Well, who doesn't?

Benson: I don't.

Bennett: What do you have?

Benson: 1a.

Gebannon: *(astonished)* 1a?

Kresseck: How can you even be an officer and only have 1a?

Benson: Well... I used to have 3b, but then that incident with the brain bugs.

Kresseck: That was you??

Benson: Well... yeah.

Keefer: Dude... that took brass nuts.

Benson: *(cheerily)* Thanks!

Rhodes: *(interrupting)* The admiral is waiting.

Benson: So, I'm out. *(he gets up)*

Keefer: Me too, I have 4b. *(he moves to leave)*

Gebannon: I'm good...at least as of this morning I am.

Kresseck: Not me... but I will be out in the corridor. I doubt it's a good idea if I drift too far away from the console.

(Kresseck, Keefer and Benson exit)

Bennett: What was the other problem Rhodes?

Rhodes: You're not wearing pants.

Bennett: *(finally noticing)* Damn! Hold on a sec, I need to go get them.

Rhodes: No time sir. Our window for this sublight communication is closing. We must go now.

Gebannon: Maybe the Admiral won't notice. Just stay in the chair.

Bennett: I really need my pants.

Rhodes: *(ignoring him)* Patching in now.

(A screen comes on and the face of Admiral Hodge appears. In our performance we taped this in advance, but it could be done live)

(The admiral looks confused at the site of Bennett)

Admiral Hodge: Uh huh... *(looking at Rhodes)* Lieutenant Rhodes, is this Lieutenant Bennett?

Rhodes: Uh...yes sir.

Admiral Hodge: *(seriously)* He's not wearing pants.

Rhodes: I know, sir.

Admiral Hodge: *(to himself)* This is a level 8b classified communique and the acting commanding officer is sitting on the bridge of one of my ships with no pants.

Bennett: I can explain that sir...

Admiral Hodge: *(not hearing that...)* Alrighty then... Lieutenant Bennett, I am Rear Admiral Curtis Hodge, I assume you received your temporary orders confirming you in command of the Hemera?

Bennett: Yes sir. Thank you for your confidence in me.

Admiral Hodge: Son, you're not wearing pants. Now is not the time to bring up any perceived confidence I have in you. I take it you have familiarized yourself with the current mission.

Bennett: Yes sir I have. Is there any chance the Sector Regency will allow a continuance?

Admiral Hodge: *(resigned)* Unfortunately no. Trust me that it is not from a lack of trying, but our previous extensions have made the regents eager to sew this up.

Bennett: Understood. Is there any way we could get a more seasoned diplomat to the site in time?

Admiral Hodge: If only! It looks like you are it, Lieutenant. I have been reading your file record and trust me, if we could get anyone more senior out there we would spare no expense. But we can't. Moreover, the Benzonites are already going to be disappointed at the death of Captain Tanner, but if we then insult them by handing their case off to a junior officer on the ship, all of the work we have done could be ruined.

Bennett: So what do you want me to do?

Admiral Hodge: Want? I need...the I.F. needs you to pull out a total victory. We simply can not afford to allow the Damigri to set up camp that close to I.F Space. I need you to do whatever it takes to win, Lieutenant.

Bennett: I'll do my best.

Admiral Hodge: I would be wise to remind you that the Damigri, who will be representing the Elmoreans, will not hesitate to lie, steal

or kill to get a foothold in this sector. Their claim is completely false and you need to prove that. They have no ties to that system.

Bennett: Lieutenant Gebannon is more familiar with this sector and she has been familiarizing me with the history of the region. We will be ready sir.

Admiral Hodge: You had better be. There are a lot of nuances in dealing with these cultures so be on your toes.

(The door opens and Akers comes in, with Keefer chasing behind her)

Akers: Lieutenant... you forgot your pants!

Keefer: Sorry sir, she got by me. Won't happen again.

(He escorts her out. There is an awkward silence and the admiral gravely shakes his head.)

Admiral Hodge: Hodge out! *(He hits the button on his console that should end the conversation... but he doesn't cut it off and thus continues the conversation to an unseen target)* Jennings! Get Admiral Wood on the line. It's worse than we thought. *(unheard reply)* Yes... even worse than the file. Jennings, he was sitting on the bridge of the ship without pants on. *(reply)* No, his pants. Yes! I'm not kidding. We are so screwed.

(Bennett, Rhodes and Gebannon look on)

Gebannon: We can do this sir... I'm sure it's not that bad.

Admiral Hodge: *(his unseen target has said the same thing)* No, it's definitely that bad. *(The three react)* How could this happen? Seriously?

Bennett: *(To Rhodes)* Can we cut this connection?

Rhodes: I'm not sure we can, sir.

Admiral Hodge: Why in the hell would Captain Tanner leave an incompetent bungler in charge of a star ship? The entire future of the Federation is in the hands of a supply chief who was counting toilet paper rolls this time last week. I need a drink. Bring me whatever's left in the cabinet.

Bennett: Cut the connection.

Rhodes: I can't! The admiral has to do it!

Gebannon: This is beyond awkward. I'll be in my quarters. *(she goes to leave)*

(as the last couple of lines are said, the Admiral has poured himself a drink and notices the connection is still on.)

Admiral Hodge: Oh...the connection... *(he searches for the button)*

Bennett: *(following Gebannon, still with no pants)* Oh no you aren't! I know this ship is sinking so if you're leaving for your quarters, then I'm going with you!

(there is a silence as the admiral and Bennett make eye contact. Bennett is blocking the door not wearing pants, it is a very surreal scene. The Admiral picks his shot glass up with a shaking hand... throws back his drink and then black out)

End of Act I

(on the surface of Presban the lights come up on what looks like a courtroom. There is a panel where the regents sits and seating for both sides of the conflict. There are two Benzonites on stage as Bennett, Gebannon, Keefer and Benson walk in.)

Tabbane: *(seeing them)* Hello my friends! So nice to meet you! I have heard so much about you and it is such an honor to finally meet. But where are my manners? I am Represenative Tabbane and this *(indicating the other)* is my Under Represenative Barg. We are representing Benzonite interests in this matter. Which of you is Captain Tanner?

Bennett: *(taken aback)* Beg your pardon?

Tabbane: I should be embarrassed not to be able to recognize one as famous as the Captain, but seldom has my job permitted me to interact with members of the I.F. Military.

Bennett: I see.

Tabbane: So?

Bennett: So?

Tabbane: *(still awaiting an answer)* Captain Tanner?

Benson: *(jumping in)* Oh, he's dead.

(Bennett, Keefer and Gebannon look at him)

Benson: *(not understanding)* What?

Gebannon: I told you we should not have brought him along.

Tabbane: Did you say that Captain Tanner is dead?

Gebannon: I'm sorry Representative, I thought you had been notified.

Tabbane: But what happened?

Bennett: En route to Presban, we received an emergency beacon and were sidetracked. The Captain was killed during the rescue mission.

Tabbane: That's horrible. Who will be representing the Benzonites? Are you his first officer?

Benson: No, he's dead too.

Bennett: *(angrily)* Would you shut up!

Keefer: *(To Gebannon)* You're right, we shouldn't have brought him.

Gebannon: Unfortunately several of the senior staff were killed, Lieutenant Bennett is acting captain.

Bennett: But we are well versed on your situation and I am sure we can prove the Damigri claim is false.

Tabbane: I am appreciative of your confidence, but if you wouldn't mind excusing me for a few moments, I need to consult with my superiors.

Bennett: Of course.

(He leaves)

Gebannon: Maybe I should go with him, help explain...

Bennett: Yes. Please. *(she follows)*

(A moment passes and then)

Benson: *(in a humorous tone of familiarity)* Barg!

Barg: *(in a similar tone)* Benson!

Benson: Barrrrrrrrrgggggggg!

Barg: Bennnnnnnnsonnnnnnnn!

(They do a ritualistic handshake)

Benson: How have you been? I haven't seen you since...

Barg: My tour on the frigate ended. I only signed on for 2 years.

Benson: *(remembering)* that's right...

Bennett: You two know each other?

Benson: Yeah, this is Barg...he's awesome. The Frigate he's talking about is the U.S.S. Rasaran.

Barg: Best ship in the fleet. We had some good times on that ship.

Benson: Barg, this is Brandon and this is our head of security Chad Keefer.

Keefer: Nice to meet you. I served on the Rasaran myself. It was my last assignment before the Hemera.

Barg: Excellent.

Benson: We had the best times on the Rasaran. Barg can do this thing...

Barg: Benson...don't.

Benson: Oh come on! He can do this thing... show them Barg!

Barg: Seriously Neal... it's one of those things. We're not supposed to do that in public.

Benson: You never minded before!

Barg: Ok... well you probably know that most Benzonites are at least a little telepathic. We can communicate non verbally, read thoughts to a degree...

Bennett: Yeah...I think I knew that.

Benson: Barg is like a freak... he's like one in a million.

Barg: My mental powers are much more refined... it's a genetic disorder on my planet. But I can't complain... afterall it's what got me the job with the representative. My talents are very useful in negotiations. I have made Tabbane a very rich man.

Keefer: That's pretty awesome.

Barg: But don't let the Representative know that you know that about me. He thinks he is the only one who knows.

Benson: Your secret is safe with us. *(pause)* But show him that one thing you can do.

Barg: Neal...

Benson: You have got to see this one thing... He can literally take over someone's mind and control them.

Bennett: *(impressed)* You can?

Barg: To some degree, yes. I can plant suggestions and in many cases make other beings do what I want them to do.

Keefer: Make me do something!

Barg: The Representative could be back any minute!

Benson: You've already let the cat out of the bag now... may as well show 'em what you've got.

Barg: I didn't let the cat out... you did. *(to Keefer)* Are you sure you want me to?

Keefer: Yes!

(At this, Barg gets a concentrated look... then out of nowhere, Keefer gets a weird look on his face and starts frantically dancing.)

Benson: Wow... sweet moves Chad.

Bennett: That's actually really impressive. I mean, the mind control. The dancing's just ok...

(at this Tabbane re-enters followed by Gebannon. Tabbane notices Keefer, who is still dancing until Barg sees Tabbane.)

Tabbane: *(suspicious)* What's going on here?

Barg: Uh... nothing Representative.

Benson: It's just... it's... we're having a dance-off.

Gebannon: A dance off?

Keefer: Yeah...nothing it's just a thing. I felt like uh...showing the moves.

Bennett: Nicely done, Sergeant.

Keefer: Thank you, sir.

Tabbane: I have spoken to the Archon and we are to proceed. Barg, I would like to go over a few things with you before the hearing starts if you don't mind.

Barg: Of course, Representative. *(He goes to leave)* It was nice meeting you.

(They leave... a moment)

Gebannon: A dance-off?

Keefer: *(To Benson)* That was amazing... I totally couldn't talk or anything.

Benson: I know right?

Gebannon: What did I miss?

(At this the Damigri delegation enters. Karunch, Brizanna, Pelza, Kizik and Trakin followed by Ambassador Nidlit)

Karunch: *(Blustering)* Where is the Sector Regent? I have in my possession, absolute proof that our allies, the Elmoreans settled this system more than a thousand years before the Benzonites were able to crawl off their home world.

(There is silence)

Kizik: *(indicating Bennett and the crew)* Look at them Captain... they know they can't defend their position. And now they know that Ezmet Karunch is personally representing the Elmoreans...

Pelza: *(taunting)* Why don't you just hop back into that pathetic bucket you rode in on and fly back as fast as you can to Federation space? You can't win you know.

Gebannon: *(To Bennett)* This is the way the Damigri work. It's all bluster with no substance. The other is the Elmorean ambassador. Remember the three rules in dealing with them.

Bennett: *(confused)* Three rules?

Gebannon: We went over that right? Don't get the name wrong, don't touch, don't get water on their necks?

Bennett: What?

Karunch: *(To the I.F. Team)* Which of you children will be presenting the cases against the Elmoreans and Ezmet Karunch?

Benson: *(confused)* Which one of them is Ezmet Krunch?

Keefer: I thought it was the one just talking, but now I don't know.

Bennett: I'll ask.

Gebannon: Don't...

(Bennett is already moving)

Bennett: I am Brandon Bennett of the U.S.S Hemera. I will be representing the Intergalactic Federation as well as the Benzonites in this hearing. *(realizing that might not be right...looks at Gebannon)* Right?

(Gebannon gives a thumbs up)

Bennett: So, which of you is in charge of this group?

Trakin: *(awed)* This fool has not heard of Ezmet Karunch!

Brizanna: *(disgusted)* Impossible.

Bennett: No... I'm really serious.

(Karunch stomps forward into Bennett's face)

Karunch: Do you mean to say, you have never heard of me?

Bennett: *(finally)* So it's you?

Karunch: *(with power)* It is I.

Bennett: You're representing the Elmoreans?

Karunch: *(intense)* I am.

Bennett: And you're the captain of the frigate that jumped in ahead of us.

Karunch: *(With deathly seriousness)* Yes. I am Captain Karunch.

(mic drop. There is a moment. Then all of the sudden Bennett, Benson and Keefer all start laughing at the same time. The Damigri, Nidlit and Gebannon are all confused)

Nidlit: *(to Kizik)* Is this a typical human reaction to fear? As ambassador I should know this, but...

Kizik: Either they are terrified into deliriousness or they are fools. *(to the humans)* No one laughs at Captain Karunch!

(The three honestly can't get a grip and are still laughing)

(The Sector Regent walks in, followed by Barg and Tabbane. Upon seeing them, the three humans try to stop laughing with some success)

Regent: Good day to you. I am Sector Regent Tobia. I will be adjudicating the rite of settlement dispute between the Governments of Elmore and Benzoni. Representative Tabbane, you said your counsel in this affair has arrived?

Tabbane: I did regent, but I would ask that you read my petition for continuance. Captain Tanner, who was expected to speak for us in this matter was killed en route to the conference.

Regent: Representative Tabbane, I have granted continuance to your government twice before and I am not going to do so a third time.

Tabbane: But the circumstances...

Regent: Are extreme, but as you well know, your government is on the brink of war with the Elmoreans and this matter needs to be clarified now, with all of the power of the Regent government behind it. Please present your representative.

Tabbane: *(not happy)* This is Lieutenant Brendan Bennett, acting captain of the Hemera.

Bennett: *(correcting)* It's Brandon. Thank you for your time, Regent.

Regent: And Ambassador Nidlit?

Nidlit: *(with aplomb)* The Elmorean government, with its long standing alliance with the Damigrian Dynasty, will be represented by the one and only Captain Karunch.

(another snicker from the humans)

Benson: At least it's not Count Chocula. That guy is fierce.

Bennett: *(trying not to laugh)* Shut up.

Karunch: Thank you regent. We are confident that this hearing will vindicate the claims of the Benzonites and allow them to once again settle in the land of their ancestors.

Regent: Then we will convene first thing in the morning. Opening statements followed by the evidence phase. Remember that the power of the entire sector is behind this conference and protocol will be followed. Any questions?

Tabbane: I would like to speak with you privately Regent.

Regent: Follow me to my chambers then, but know now that I will not delay this hearing any longer.

(The Regent and Tabbane leave. The other are talking in their groups)

Brizanna: Do we return to the Deadly Widow Captain?

Karunch: You and I will first officer. You three will stay planetside. You each know your part in this, so don't fail me.

Pelza/Trakin/Kizik: Yes Captain.

Karunch: As for you! *(To Bennett)* I will enjoy breaking your pathetic arguments and then your puny ship.

Bennett: Good luck with that Captain Crunch.

(As Karunch and Brizanna leave, there is some laughter)

