

The Lost Sheep

By

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"Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?"
Luke 15:4

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Cast of Characters

Captain: He's in charge of the ship and devoted to his crew.

OPAA: She's the computer system onboard the ship.

Officer Ivanov: She's second in command, in charge of personnel onboard. Micromanager, wants to be informed and in charge of everything. In Monday's play.

Tech Reyes: She's the Technical Specialist. Scientist and survivalist. Carries a knife in a pouch/on her belt. In Monday's play.

Sergeant Pash: He's in charge of the petty crew and quarters. On his first tour in space. In Tuesday's play.

Linguist Franco: She's an expert in communicating in alien languages. Carries a radio. Outgoing and self-confident. In Tuesday's play.

Engineer Ferris: He's the chief engineer, in charge of engines and fuel. He is precise in all things, possibly compulsive. In Wednesday's play.

Doctor Kildare: He's the ship's medic. Nervous to a fault. Trying to make sure no one gets hurt, he sometimes comes across as a little motherly. In Wednesday's play.

(MORE)

Cast of Characters (cont'd)

- Lieutenant Case: She's equal in rank to the Chief engineer, but in the line of personnel. She is utterly devoted to the navy; a career officer. In Thursday's play.
- Cook Fessbein: He's the ship's cook. Boisterous and easy-going, but not an exemplar of military form or discipline. In Thursday's play.
- Cow: A dream-cow. In Monday's play.
- Carryax: Carryax is strong and self-confident. Styles itself "the defouler." Still looking for mightiness. In Tuesday's play.
- Egument: Egument is afraid of authority, especially Plox the Hammer. In Tuesday's play.
- Quip.: Quip isn't ambitious. It just loves company. In Tuesday's play.
- Plox, the Hammer: Plox is the decision-maker and title-giver of the Manos. It is also not a fan of Carryax. In Tuesday's play.
- Wild One: The Wild One is an unfettered human who lives on a mostly-deserted planet. In Wednesday's play.
- Bigs: He may not be the most influential or the most popular, but he's fanatical. He believes the prophecies without question or examination. In Thursday's play.

(MORE)

Cast of Characters (cont'd)

- ZooZoo: She's sensitive to prophecy in the way only a fanatic can be. In Thursday's play.
- Feral: Feral is the right hand of the previous Pureborn, but his/her fawning ways have not put Feral in such a funk that he/she can't latch onto a new prophetic interpretation. In Thursday's play.
- Pureborn: The Pureborn is a being of first prophecy. He or she wears a smooth white mask that covers their entire face. As a prophetic interpretation, he or she is sensitive to being replaced, but welcomes the next pureborn when she comes. In Thursday's play.

SUNDAY

Scene 1

*Upstage center there is a console with spaceship controls on it. Nearly all action takes place in **front** of the console.*

OPAAL stands comfortably in center front, either in front of or beside the console. Her hands are folded and her head is bowed. As the Captain enters, she raises her head.

ENTER Captain RIGHT

OPAAL

Captain.

CAPTAIN

Computer, have we heard from home?

OPAAL

I have not contacted the space federation yet. The situation does not seem out of our control.

CAPTAIN

Good. We'll have Doctor Kildare take a look. Can you start reading the alien libraries, keyword "Right" and "Left."

(calling offstage)

Officer Ivanov! Come pilot this boat for me!

ENTER Officer LEFT

She stands behind the console, as if she is the pilot.

OFFICER

Yes, sir. Right here.

CAPTAIN

Officer, when did you notice the problem?

OFFICER

When we left for the planet, everyone was right as rain, sir. But right after we left the capsule, I noticed the crew was acting strangely.

OPAAL

Why didn't you come back immediately?

OFFICER

We would have 'ported back to the Irenic right away, but the capsule had fallen to the left when we landed. We had to work for an hour to put it upright again.

CAPTAIN

(shouting now)
 Doctor Kildare! Speed it up!

ENTER Doctor RIGHT

The doctor is walking slowly. When he needs to make a corner, he shouts the direction he's turning and spins that way to keep walking.

DOCTOR

Captain, has OPAaL found this disease in the databases?

OPAAL

So far, I have found three thousand, four hundred twelve entries. I will refine your search.

DOCTOR

The problem appears to be mental, since none of us are physically sick like throwing up or coughing. What I'm saying is that our brains were hacked. How did they do this? I cannot say.

OFFICER

Can we treat everyone right away?

The doctor turns right involuntarily.

DOCTOR

No. Everyone's symptoms are different. Please stop saying directions. I turn when you say . . . those words. I can't help it. Anyway, Chief Engineer Ferris seems to be mirrored. Tech is confusing directions. Fessbein, bless him, has somehow become left-handed.

When the Doctor says "left," he turns left.
 Officer Ivanov seems to be the least affected, but I have yet to document everyone's problems.

CAPTAIN

Start a list, Doctor. We'll need to know.

OFFICER

I already started one, sir. I have a few names left to write down.

Doctor turns left.

DOCTOR

Uh, Officer Ivanov, can you just let me write the list? Its my job. I wouldn't want you to get it wrong and hurt someone.

Doctor turns right.

OPAAL

By using Doctor Kildare's information, I have isolated the condition. Apparently, the reversing magnetic poles of a planet the crew landed on has confused their understanding of right and left.

The doctor spins right, then quickly reverses left.

DOCTOR

Can you stop that?

OPAAL

The condition can damage the taste buds and cause blindness if the affected person--

*ENTER Lieutenant RIGHT.
She is breathless and urgent. She stops and salutes with her left hand.*

LIEUTENANT

(interrupting after "blindness")

Captain, we need to get Engineer Ferris out of the engine room. He's having a mental breakdown because he can't put anything back when he knocks it down. Also, I deserve fifteen hours hard labor for saluting with the left hand.

Doctor spins left.

CAPTAIN

We'll deal with that later, I'm sure. For now, just get everyone to the bridge. Everyone.

LIEUTENANT

Sixteen hours hard labor now, sir.

*Lieutenant salutes with her left hand again.
EXIT Lieutenant RIGHT.*

OFFICER

I'll add Lieutenant Case's left-hand salute to the list.

Doctor spins left again.

She won't like that. She's pretty devoted to protocol, you know?

CAPTAIN

Yes, Ivanov. She'll be hard on herself even if it is an illness. OPAAL, I need you working on solutions. Shut down non-essential systems and focus on this.

OPAAL

Of course, Captain. You should know that the condition will make everything taste like broccoli if the affected patient--

DOCTOR

(interrupting after "broccoli")

Right! Right! I guess if Officer Ivanov thinks her list is better than mine, I'll be over here with earplugs in.

He spins twice to the right as he speaks.

OFFICER

Do you think we're in any danger? We should send for help right away; I mean, we're left hanging in space if the crew isn't in their right minds.

CAPTAIN

I think we can solve this.

OFFICER

Right now? Captain, you know we're left out here alone. How much faith do you have in us to put this right?

CAPTAIN

I hand-picked you all as my crew. If I thought even one person was lazy or incompetent, they wouldn't be here. Each one of you is here to do a job, so, I value each person on my crew higher than I value my own life. I won't lose you. *No one gets left behind.*

(pause)

Listen to me, Ivanov. You're not alone. I know it may seem like the situation is hopeless, but I'm here with you. I'm in charge, and I will always come back for you. Let me handle it.

OFFICER

Yes, sir.

ENTER Engineer and Tech LEFT

Engineer Ferris is hopping instead of walking.

Every action he takes is duplicated exactly on both sides. He stops and salutes with both hands.

ENGINEER

Captain! I may have shut down the engines, or locked them on full blast. I'm not really sure.

TECH

And every time I try to help, he yells at me.

ENGINEER

It's delicate equipment, Reyes, and you're not in your right mind.

TECH

I would be in my left mind, *Ferris*, except everyone else has gone crazy! You're all confusing left for right and right for left!

Engineer raises both hands.

ENGINEER

You keep saying and doing the wrong direction. Which hand am I holding up?

TECH

Both of them.

ENGINEER

Again!?!?!?

(sighs)

Confusion number 233. Both hands.

He looks in desperation at his hands.

ENTER Sergeant, Linguist, and Lieutenant RIGHT

OFFICER

Okay, so nearly everyone's here. Linguist Franco, report your condition.

Every time the linguist says a direction in a new language, she could hold up the hand of the direction she's indicating.

LINGUIST

I keep saying rechts and izquierda instead of gelaat and destra.

OFFICER

So, just a language issue?

LINGUIST

Hopefully you don't ask me to steer the ship, because I can't tell sinistra from gauche right now.

OFFICER

Okay. And Sergeant Pash? Anything to report?

SERGEANT

Well, I can't tell exactly what's going on, but if every trip to space is this nutty, I'm not coming back.

CAPTAIN

So, there's nothing wrong with you? You're not only able to walk on your left foot or only able to use one eye or something like that? Raise your right hand for me for a minute.

Sergeant holds out both his hands/thumbs to check which one makes the "L" and then raises his right hand.

OFFICER

Oh.

CAPTAIN

Huh.

TECH

That's your left hand, genius.

*Everyone listening is shaking their head "no."
Sergeant goes to check again. He spends way too long looking at which hand makes an "L."*

OPAAL

It appears neither one of them knows left from right.

SERGEANT

Ma'am, I've always been this way. See, I've got my boots labeled so that I can--

OFFICER

(interrupting at "labeled")

Is anyone left unaffected? This is too much! I can't make the list *and* fly the ship.

CAPTAIN

Officer Ivanov, stand down. You don't need to do everything. We've got other personnel. Everyone has a job. Everyone is here for a reason. OPAAL's job is to solve our problem, and when she has, we can move on with the mission.

OPAAL

Captain, I have found no solutions.

The entire crew begins shouting. The Doctor takes out his earplugs and starts spinning left and right. Ferris is waving both hands in bilateral symmetry.

CAPTAIN

(over the din)

What do you mean, no solutions!?

OPAAAL tries to respond, but the entire crew is shouting about how they want to be fixed, or trying to stop the doctor from spinning, or arguing over which hand is right or left.

The Captain takes a step forward and looks up at the ceiling. He takes a huge sigh and holds up his hand in a fist. The entire crew falls silent immediately.

CAPTAIN (cont'd)

I have a solution, but you're not going to like it, OPAAAL. Doc, we have a neural mapper, right?

The doctor spins right.

I mean, we can copy part of my brain to all of you, right?

The doctor spins right.

DOCTOR

Right. I'll go get it.

The Doctor spins right.

EXIT Doctor LEFT.

OPAAAL

Captain, the risk to yourself is enormous. The neural backlash alone could fry your entire brain.

CAPTAIN

That's a risk I have to take.

OFFICER

No, sir. It's left to me. According to my list, there's nothing wrong with me; I have every right to offer myself instead of you--

CAPTAIN

Thanks, Ivanov. But nearly every time you open your mouth you say "right" or "left."

OFFICER

That's downright incredible. I was left untouched! I'm alright! Okay, maybe you're right. I'll shut up right now.

OPAAAL

Sir, I have to insist--

CAPTAIN

OPAAAL, there are no other options. Our crew is completely trashed. The Irenic engines are either

(MORE)

CAPTAIN (cont'd)

broken or full blast, the doctor can't put on a bandaid without spinning in a circle, our linguist can't speak, and I'm the only one with a proper understanding of right and left. This can fix everything.

OPAAL

You might die, Captain. The neural mapper isn't designed to re-write other people's brain cells. The wiring might burn through your head like it was left in a microwave.

ENTER Doctor LEFT

He's carrying a colander hat with an impressive tangle of long wires hanging from it. There's a pile of dials and lights and gadgets on the hat.

CAPTAIN

Or it might save the crew. Anyhow, it's the only chance we've got.

The doctor places the hat on the Captain's head. Every crew member takes a loop of wire and places it on their head, forming a semi-circle around the Captain. As they do this, the Captain says his good byes.

Ivanov, you're the best chief officer I could have hoped for. Engineer Ferris, you've somehow fixed every break we've ever thrown at you. Lieutenant Case, you'll have your own crew some day, count on it. Sergeant Pash, your first time in space won't be your last, I promise. Tech, don't forget the mission; add it to your stories. And Franco? Hasta la vista.

LINGUIST

Hasta luego, Capitán.

CAPTAIN

Doctor Kildare? Begin map and overwrite. My life is in your capable hands.

When Kildare hits the button/flips the switch, every crew member mimes extreme head pain and a few crumple slowly to their knees. The Captain sags until he's on his hands and knees. A few seconds after it begins, the Captain collapses and everyone recovers.

OPAAL

Captain?

OFFICER

Sir, are you alright?

SERGEANT

You said right again! Is it fixed?

Officer Ivanov claps a hand over her mouth. The Captain doesn't move. There's a long moment of silence.

OPAAL

Let me try something.

(turning to Doctor Kildare)

Left.

DOCTOR

What?

OPAAL

You didn't turn. That's a good sign.

The crew starts talking all at once about how they're fixed and they don't have to mirror/switch/say right or left. Suddenly:

OFFICER

Hey! Shut up! He's awake.

Officer Ivanov helps the Captain to his feet amid cheers.

CAPTAIN

Well? Did everyone get fixed?

Everyone nods.

It's good that everyone on-board the ship was here to get fixed.

ENTER Cook LEFT.

COOK

What's everybody doing? Can I get some help in the cafeteria? I'm left-handed now and it's driving me nuts.

CAPTAIN

Ohhhh.

ENGINEER

Captain? I hate to interrupt, but I was right. The engines were jammed on at full thrust.

OFFICER

We don't have time to fix Fessbein because we're headed straight for a wormhole!

CAPTAIN

Stations, everyone!

Everyone starts talking as they're running out.

LINGUIST

(into radio)

Mayday, mayday! This is the space ship Irenic, do you copy?

SERGEANT

If it isn't locked up, tie it down! Move, move, move!

OFFICER

Everybody, crash suits on! HELMETS!

ENGINEER

Reyes, I need you! Let's go!

COOK

What's happening!?

EXIT all but Captian and OPAaL, scattering left or right. The Captain steps back behind the console.

CAPTAIN

Computer, can you steer us clear?

OPAAL

I'm trying, Captain. Setting a course is very difficult with the -- no, I think we're going in.

CAPTAIN

What do you mean?

OPAAL

I can't find a course around it. Its gravity is drawing us in.

CAPTAIN

What happens if we hit it?

OPAAL

No one knows. Wormholes play games with time and space. We could end up anywhere on the other side. We could end up a thousand anywheres.

CAPTAIN

Alright.

He steels himself and stares straight out over the audience.

Punch through it.

Lights down.

FRIDAYScene 1

OPAAAL stands center stage. Two alarms are ringing at once.

OPAAL
Captain?

Captain walks across the stage.

CAPTAIN
Is the scanner up yet?

OPAAL
No, sir.

CAPTAIN
Get it up.

EXIT Captain RIGHT.

OPAAL
Sir, the scanner is not important. If you don't fix the life support systems, you will die while trying to find the crew.

ENTER Captain RIGHT.

CAPTAIN
I get that, OPAAAL. I get that.

He unplugs a wire from the back of the console. The alarms cut, but the lights still flash.

CAPTAIN
We're gonna find the crew.

EXIT Captain.

OPAAAL looks disappointed.

ENTER Captain, with a crate of tools and wires.

CAPTAIN (cont'd)
How's the scanner?

OPAAL
Full functionality. Half power.

Disapproving look from the Captain.

OPAAL (cont'd)

What should I cut, sir? Oxygen? Communication? Should I turn myself off, sir?

CAPTAIN

Well, can you cut the lights?

LIGHTS DOWN

OPAAL

Of course. Done. Scanner is nominal. I have a signal.

CAPTAIN

Good. Good, who is it?

OPAAL

It is Officer Ivanov.

CAPTAIN

Where is she?

OPAAL

That way.

CAPTAIN

What? What's the name of the planet? How far away is she? Is it dangerous? Can we get her off?

OPAAL

I don't know. I can't access my memory. I think it was damaged or destroyed in the accident.

CAPTAIN

Well, can you guess?

OPAAL

Sir.

CAPTAIN

Okay, so we know where she is. Can we call her? Does the radio work?

OPAAL

Yes, sir. At least, I think so.

CAPTAIN

Call, please. Officer Ivanov, do you copy? This is the Captain of the Irenic calling for Ivanov. Please respond.

OFFICER

(off-stage)

Captain, it's so good to hear your voice.

CAPTAIN

(hoots with joy)
Where are you?

OFFICER

Um, I think we're on some kind of desert planet. Can you come get us?

CAPTAIN

Yeah, I don't know. The ship might not fly.

OFFICER

Wow. It's that bad? What happened?

CAPTAIN

Don't worry about me. OPAaL and I are on our way. We're gonna get you and the rest of the crew. You know my one rule. Nobody--

OPAAL

Signal lost.

CAPTAIN

What?

OPAAL

Signal lost.

CAPTAIN

If you tell me that another thing broke, I'll lose my mind.

OPAAL

Not this time, sir.

CAPTAIN

Ok, OPAaL, all we have to do is fly to this desert planet and pick them all up. Do we have the juice?

OPAAL

Four planets, sir.

CAPTAIN

(pause)
How's that?

OPAAL

It's four different planets. I am tracking four different sets of signals, all very far apart from each other. And we don't have the ability to get to even one planet.

CAPTAIN

So call them all, OPAAAL! Boost the signal and get me anyone who can respond.

OPAAL

The ship's energy is low, but I'll do what I can.

(cont'd)

Is it working? Ready?

Do you copy? This is the Captain of the Irenic, calling his crew.

ENGINEER

(off-stage)

Captain, I copy! It's Engineer Ferris with Doctor Kildare, sir!

CAPTAIN

Good! Hold tight. We're coming up with a plan to get you out. Just stick to the mission, and we're coming to get you. Over and out.

OPAAL

Sir, we can't. I must remind you we cannot go to four different planets to retrieve your crew. I have no way to "boost" the engines.

CAPTAIN

That's bad. Isn't it? This is bad. I don't leave people behind, OPAAAL. I never have, and I won't this time.

A new alarm and light start up.

CAPTAIN (cont'd)

What's that one?

OPAAL

The containment field. If it shuts off, it will cook the entire ship in radiation.

CAPTAIN

Is there anything I can do?

OPAAL

I don't know; are you an expert in molecular thermodynamic entropy?

CAPTAIN

Shut it off. Not the containment field, the alarm.

OPAAL

Yes, sir. There are some other problems, though.

CAPTAIN

Like what?

OPAAL

Oxygen is at 22% and dropping.

CAPTAIN

Well, I guess . . . tell me when it drops to 10%. I'm trying to think. My suit has a battery. I'll plug that in.

OPAAL

You will need it, sir.

CAPTAIN

For what? Tell me, please, what I will need it for if my entire crew is trapped on foreign planets? I can tell you haven't been thinking of this. If they don't survive, nothing I do here matters. The point of this mission isn't to scout out planets or learn about alien life. The mission is to save people who are going to die. But the crew is *my* people, and I'm adding them to the mission. I won't start by losing them. Do you understand?

OPAAL

Yes, sir. What will you do?

CAPTAIN

I don't know yet. What *can* we do?

OPAAL

The engines are not responding. Life support is failing. The reactor is dying and the containment field is barely holding. Many other systems are offline or damaged.

CAPTAIN

Can we teleport?

OPAAL

We cannot teleport to anyone; the ship would be destroyed so close to a planet's gravity. And the crew have no capsules to teleport in.

CAPTAIN

Okay, what about this: can we teleport humans instead of capsules?

OPAAL

That's . . . not . . .

CAPTAIN

Wait here!

EXIT Captain LEFT

OPAAL

This ship does not have a warp drive set up for unprotected teleports. Humans are too squishy. Their edges are bad.

CAPTAIN

(offstage)

But what if we could?

OPAAL

What?

ENTER Captain LEFT

He is dragging a long cable.

CAPTAIN

This is the interface from the warp drive. Let's see what we can do from up here. Now, we have to disable all the safety settings, all the standard medical garble.

OPAAL

Oxygen is down to 18%.

CAPTAIN

Disable the shielding, the neural dampeners. I'll crank the targeting system to 11. Okay! Ready, OPAAL?

OPAAL

Teleport failed.

CAPTAIN

I don't get it. Oh! Let's try opening the failure threshold totally wide and run it again!

OPAAL

Teleport failed.

CAPTAIN

Don't say that! There's got to be a way. I'll target their suits! Maybe we can use those as a capsule, sort of. What about that?

OPAAL

Teleport failed.

CAPTAIN

No! Why isn't it working, OPAAL?

OPAAL

A human is too complex. You can't teleport a human alone.

CAPTAIN

Wait a second. Why cant you?

OPAAL

There has to be an exact target; a version of what I'm teleporting. In order to lock, I need to read the atomic structure of the target and the copy. I also need to read their DNA, which I cannot do. All these problems are solved by the teleport capsule, but it is not with them. There is no solution for this.

CAPTAIN

Wait here.

OPAAL

Oxygen at seventeen percent and falling. Although I doubt he wants to know.

ENTER Captain, carrying an armful of blood bags. They're rigged to one tube with a needle on the end.

CAPTAIN

So here's my plan. You need a target to copy and the DNA of the crew. Well, these are Dr. Kildare's reserve supply of each of the crew's blood. If I get this in my bloodstream, you can read their DNA through my suit.

OPAAL

Maybe.

CAPTAIN

And I'll be the target you read. It's not perfect, anatomically, but a 90% match ought to get you there.

OPAAL

Maybe.

CAPTAIN

You don't like it. What's wrong?

OPAAL

It's never been done before.

CAPTAIN

Does that mean it's impossible?

OPAAL

Probably.

CAPTAIN

Okay, just one more question. Is the ship safer than where they are?

OPAAL

Captain, we're . . .

CAPTAIN

Is the ship safer, though?

OPAAL

We don't even really know where they are. All I have is signal lock.

CAPTAIN

But we do know where they are. We came to this system because it's dying. Everyone on all these planets are going to die unless we can save them. And we can't save them unless the crew can fix this ship. It's a choice, OPAAL, between death for sure, or life, maybe.

OPAAL

Maybe.

CAPTAIN

That has to be good enough. So I'll ask you once again: is the ship safer than where they are? If it is, then teleport them here. Shut off life support. Shut off gravity. Shut off everything and steal from the battery backup, just get them on my ship. They're my crew and I want them back.

OPAAL

There's just one more thing, Captain.

CAPTAIN

Yes, OPAAL?

OPAAL

You will die. The teleport system is not designed for this. When all the crew are on-board, the computer will treat you as extra material and discard you. Even your atoms won't exist anymore. The crew may live, but you will die.

CAPTAIN

I guessed as much. I don't mind. Start teleport.

Lights. Sound. Smoke. Teleport. The Captain and OPAaL are gone. The stage is dark.

Scene 2

The lights come up. Eight people stumble through the smoke to center stage.

OFFICER

The Irenic is dying. Captain? OPAaL? What's going on?

LIEUTENANT

Officer Ivanov!

COOK

Are you guys all here? Onetwothreefourfivesixseven?
Who's missing?

LINGUIST

You forgot to count yourself.

OFFICER

So, everyone's here? Let's save the Irenic. Ferris, get to the engine and turn things on. Doctor Kildare, check your life support. Tech, can you get the heading of the ship? Lieutenant Case, scour the ship for the Captain. Franco, I need comms up. Go.

EXIT Engineer and Cook LEFT

EXIT Doctor and Lieutenant RIGHT

Tech and Linguist jump behind the console and begin jamming buttons.

OFFICER (cont'd)

What's wrong with the ship, Reyes? Report.

Tech just shakes her head.

SERGEANT

Ok, it's only my first time in space, so I have no idea how bad this is. How bad is it?

TECH

Well, we're at ten percent oxygen remaining. There's no engines, no navigation, no OPAaL.

LINGUIST

No comms, no distress signal, no contact.

OFFICER

So, things look really bad.

SERGEANT

How are you so calm?! I just came from a planet where I narrowly avoided being used as a coffee table for the rest of my life. Now, even though I'm on the ship, I don't feel "saved." We are just as lost now as we were ten minutes ago. Things are just as bad here, and maybe worse.

OFFICER

I've learned to have a little faith that things will work out okay. If there's one group of people in the universe who can fix this ship, I think they're right here. It's something the Captain said to me right before the wormhole: everyone is here for a reason.

TECH

Do your job, Pash, and we'll get out of this.

SERGEANT

Get out where? Where exactly are we supposed to be going?

LINGUIST

Well, I guess we're supposed to finish the mission. Warn everyone of the coming destruction and then get them off their planets.

OFFICER

For right now, that's the mission objective. Franco, can you get me a sit rep from the Engine room? Reyes, can you help Doc Kildare get oxygen back online?

They salute.

EXIT Linguist LEFT

EXIT Tech RIGHT

SERGEANT

You really meant that stuff? About how we'll be okay?

OFFICER

Three days ago, I was you. I doubted everyone and everything. I wanted to do everything myself. I was sure we were all going to die in the wormhole. But you know what? I've been pleasantly surprised. I have faith in the crew. I have faith in the Captain. I have faith we might get through this.

SERGEANT

But we might not. That doesn't scare you?

OFFICER

Oh, don't get me wrong. I'm freaking out.

(pause)

Pash. Do you know how OPAAAL got turned off? Or how to switch her back on?

SERGEANT

No, I have no idea. I bet the Captain knows.

ENTER Lieutenant RIGHT
Lieutenant salutes.

OFFICER

Speaking of, where is the Captain? Is he alright?

LIEUTENANT

Ma'am, I . . . he's not on the ship.

OFFICER

You mean you haven't found him.

LIEUTENANT

I mean he's not on the ship at all. He couldn't be. I checked every footlocker, every cabinet, every panel that opens. The airlock won't open and the cargo bay door is open to space. There's nowhere he could be.

OFFICER

That's not the end. We can do this without him. Pash. Do you hear me? We will live through this.

SERGEANT

Whatever. I'm not sure I believe you, now.

ENTER Engineer, Cook, and Linguist LEFT

COOK

Officer Ivanov!

ENGINEER

We've probably got the engines fixed. Probably. When we cycle them on, they hang up somewhere and won't fully power on. But I reconnected the carbonic fuel limiters and restored the containment field, so they're fully fixed.

TECH

I think it's OPAAAL. We've never had to work the ship without her, and I think when she's gone there's something stopping the engines from turning on.

ENGINEER

It's a good idea. I wouldn't have thought of it.

ENTER Tech and Doctor RIGHT

DOCTOR

Our oxygen is holding steady at five percent reserve. I had to steal some parts from the shield generator, but the air will stay breathable for a while. How are things up here?

OFFICER

Looking better, actually. But we can't get radios or navigation, and the engines don't spin up. And . . .

SERGEANT

The Captain is dead.

Everyone explodes into noise.

OFFICER

Quiet! I said QUIET! Please. Sergeant, I know you're freaking out, but one more comment like that and I will throw you out the airlock. Remember what I said about having faith? You've got to work on that.

Sergeant walks sullenly to the opposite side of the stage from where OPAAI normally stands.

OFFICER (cont'd)

Let's work on one thing at a time. Help me get OPAAI back online.

Everyone but Sergeant works around OPAAI or fiddles with the console.

SERGEANT

Have you tried turning everything off and on again?

OFFICER

What?

SERGEANT

I said, have you tried turning the ship off, then back on?

ENGINEER

No, that's not really possible. I've never seen a spaceship totally powered off before. I would love to, though.

TECH

And there's not really a big power button anywhere.

OFFICER

But what's stopping us?

LIEUTENANT

It's against regulations to sabotage the ship, ma'am.

DOCTOR

And how long will it take? Oxygen is dangerously low.

OFFICER

Well, I'm the commanding officer, so it's not sabotage.
And we can just hold our breath. Anything else?

No one speaks.

OFFICER

So turn it off. Sergeant Pash, go disconnect the main
battery power and the backup battery, then plug it back
in.

EXIT Sergeant RIGHT

LINGUIST

This won't work.

TECH

I'm not sure the ship has a power-on sequence.

LIEUTENANT

It's illegal.

COOK

Plus, Officer Ivanov, Sergeant Pash has never been to
space before. Not even once. I'm just a cook and this
is my fifth tour. So why are you following the ideas of
the new guy?

OFFICER

You're right. I don't like rookies. When he came on
board, I didn't like it either. But before the wormhole
chewed us up and spat us out, I was freaking out. Do
you know what the Captain said to me? "I hand-picked
you all. If I thought one person was lazy or
incompetent, they wouldn't be here." Everyone is
important. Nobody gets left behind.

Lights down.

Scene 3

Lights up.

OPAAAL is standing in her usual spot, surrounded by the entire crew (except Sergeant).

OPAAL

Computer rebooting.

OFFICER

It worked!

Everyone runs behind the console.

DOCTOR

Oxygen rising--

LINGUIST

Comms online--

ENGINEER

Engines too--

ENTER Sergeant RIGHT

OPAAL

Welcome aboard the SS Irenic.

LIEUTENANT

So everything is fixed?

SERGEANT

No, not everything is fixed!

OFFICER

Don't say it.

SERGEANT

Well, where is he?

OFFICER

Please, Pash. We don't need to hear it right now.

SERGEANT

The Captain is dead!

Everyone is very quiet.

OFFICER

I need you to stand very still and say nothing, Sergeant. We have all done our very best to keep this space ship from killing us. Just now, your idea brought the computers back online, and everything finally looks

(MORE)

OFFICER (cont'd)

like we might live. We have struggled. We have fought. This is our victory, and it's the only one we get. We can't bring him back, so let's feel good about this small thing.

SERGEANT

Permission to speak?

(pause)

When the Captain hired me for this voyage, he said that no one gets left behind. That's why I'm here. I was scared before, but he promised me that no one gets left. He would do everything it takes to save every one of us. Well, now we're leaving him behind. We failed him when he needed us most--

OFFICER

Shut up--

SERGEANT

We lost him after he saved us!

OFFICER

Shut up--!

SERGEANT

He died for us!

OFFICER

Shut up!

She rushes at him, and the other crew throw themselves at the two and pull them apart, revealing OPAaL at rear center.

OPAAL

Why are you crying?

(pause)

There should be no reason to cry. The Captain is dead. But, if my calculations are correct, he will never die again.

All speak at once.

COOK

What does that mean?

DOCTOR

Is he hurt?

ENGINEER

Did we break OPAaL?

LIEUTENANT

This is unprecedented!

LINGUIST
OPAAL, This is a bad
time.

OFFICER
Explain yourself!

SERGEANT
I couldn't find him!

TECH
Is he on the ship?

OPAAL (cont'd)
What? The Captain is not here. He is waiting for you.
Would you like me to teleport now?

OFFICER
What? Where?

SERGEANT
It doesn't matter where! The Captain is waiting!

*He jumps behind the console and slams hard on a
button.*

Lights down.

Scene 4

Lights up.

*The crew is standing exactly where they were a few
momments before.*

COOK
So, what happened, exactly?

ENGINEER
We teleported.

LIEUTENANT
But what about the Captain?

ENGINEER
OPAAL said he was dead?

TECH
She also said he wasn't dead.

DOCTOR
So which is it?

*From the back center doors, there comes a loud
banging.*

*The Sergeant runs to the doors and throws them
open to reveal the Captain.*

ALL

Captain!

All the crew run to meet him as he walks to the front.

OFFICER

Captain, you owe us an explanation.

CAPTAIN

OPAAL needed a human model to build you all on when she teleported you. Only, she had to disintegrate me. I guess she found a way to bring me back. How's that, OPAAL?

OPAAL

I stored you in the computer and rebuilt you when the ship teleported again. Thanks to the crew, the Irenic is back in order.

CAPTAIN

You guys fixed the ship? I knew I could count on you. I'm glad I get to see you all again. But before we get all weepy, we have a mission, and it's more important than any of us. Ivanov?

OFFICER

Okay, everyone, we're going back to the system to save everyone's lives. We've already scouted, so this should be a walk in the park. Get to your stations. Prepare for teleport.

EXIT Engineer, Cook, Tech LEFT

EXIT Lieutenant, Doctor, Linguist RIGHT

Officer takes her place behind the control console. Sergeant approaches the Captain.

SERGEANT

Captain, a word?

CAPTAIN

Yes.

SERGEANT

Did you know you would live?

CAPTAIN

No, Sergeant Pash. I had no idea, but honestly? It didn't matter. I would do it again in a heartbeat if I knew it would save you.

SERGEANT

But why, sir?

CAPTAIN

I love my crew.

After a beat or two, Sergeant turns to go.
Sergeant?

SERGEANT

Sir?

CAPTAIN

I know this is your first time in space. Will you join me again? Will you be a part of my crew?

SERGEANT

I wouldn't miss it for the world.