

(click and short feedback squeal)

Captain (deep crooner voice)

This is your captain singing, Saratoga. *You and I/we'll travel far/Together we'll touch every star/I just want one more look/at that pale blue dot.*

(short feedback squeal and click)

Arli/Andy/Adam

Who was that?

Andy

He said he was the captain.

Adam

Can't be captain, Andy; boat's not even finished yet.

Andy (softly, as though correcting a line during a rehearsal)

Call it a ship.

Adam

Ship's not even finished yet.

Andy

I'm just saying he *said* he was the captain.

Adam

And I'm just saying it don't matter what he *said*. He also crooned an old martian classic, that don't make him Sonny Ecl-

Arli

Quiet, both of you.

Andy

I happen to like Sonny Ecl-

Arli

I said quiet! I'm trying to think and I'm sick of you two bickering.

Adam

Engineers don't bicker; we're not designed that way.

Andy

Neither do computer programmers, we don't have the language for it.

(both laugh)

Arli

How can you still think that joke is funny? It's just the two of you, every day with that nonsense.

Andy

Well you're here too, Arliana.

Arli

I'm working on that.

Adam

What are you thinking?

Arli

If there's someone on the bridge, that means this boat didn't just malfunction, it means the core didn't just decide to leave Earth, it means someone is at the wheel, and in all probability doing everything it can to avoid the SPU.

Andy

But why?

Arli

I have no idea. Where ever the Saratoga is going now, it's away from Earth and I doubt it's going back. Whoever's driving the boat probably doesn't want to swing back and drop us off.

Adam

Making a lot of assumptions. We don't even know-

Arli

We know the ship wasn't supposed to leave orbit without a crew, unfinished. We know it's been a week, which is more than enough time for SPU command to send a retrieval ship, and we now know there is someone on board who is in charge.

Andy

But we have enough food, water, and air to last-

Adam

You suggesting we just live in the infirmary forever, Andy?

Arli

I don't want to die in this gilded hell.

Andy

No, but surely the SPU will come-

Arli

when? They haven't yet. Who knows how long till they do, IF they do? Who knows where we're going and why? We can't just sit here for another week, or month or lifetime. We have to get to the bridge.

Adam

What if whoever is up there wants us dead?

Arli

There are three of us.

Andy

What if he's not the only one up there?

Adam

She's got a point, we've only heard one voice.

Bright eyes (over shipwide)

(horrific digital whirring and moaning. A sort of soft grinding growl.)

(beat)

Arli

What the hell?

Andy

was that another person?

Adam

Maybe it was the ship.

Arli

No the ships core was installed months ago. If the boat is sailing, the ship is online.
Probably without any restraints or protocols.

Andy

Definitely without. If someone is sailing her, she's functional, mostly.

Arli

Okay, but we still have no idea if they know we're here.

Adam

'They'?

Arli

The ship and the crooner.

Adam

and the third voice.

Andy

didn't sound like a voice.

Arli

No it sounded more like-

Captain

(Audio click as he goes shipwide)

The ghost of the Saratoga!

(Audio click as he ends shipwide)

(BEAT)

Adam

What the hell?

Arli

Can he hear us?

Andy

It would seem so.

Arli

Son of a bitch DOES know we're here.

Adam

That's unsettling.

Arli
WHO ARE YOU?

(beat)

Arli
WHAT ARE YOUR INTENTIONS WITH US?

(Beat)

Andy
Maybe he can't hear us. Maybe it was a coincidence.

Arli
That's stupid and gimmicky.

Adam
agreed. He's up there. listening. In all likelihood we are expendable to him.

Andy
Expendable?

Adam
For a week he has listened to us, ignored our attempts at contacting anyone in the ship, presumably blocked our SOS, and now he begins to taunt us. We must be nearing our destination. I don't like to think what happens to us next.

Andy
What makes you think he's blocked our SOS?

Arli
All the construction robots are inactive. They should have been signaling to the SPU for a solid week, but I haven't heard any work all week.

Andy
I thought you said they were down because the malfunctioning-

Arli
I did say that! That's what I thought! I didn't think someone could have stolen a ship before it's even finished! HE must have turned them off somehow!

Adam

How could anyone have taken a ship before it's complete? Not even the three of us together have managed to do much more than get the toilet working.

Andy

Wish we could take a stab at unclogging it.

Arli

Wait. Who could do that?

Andy

A plumber I suppose...

Arli

No, who could take a ship before it's complete? The ship isn't even finished, who could steal that?

Adam

Anyone with working knowledge of advanced-

Andy

No, no. No one could. At this stage in construction the ship is spaceworthy, but it's also protected against anyone but military officials. No one without clearance can command a ship with a self-tessaracting core, even without restraining protocols. No one.

Arli

Mutiny?

Andy

I don't think its mutiny; we're not even official crew members...

Adam

The crooner, dick. The crooner is the mutineer.

Andy

I see, that does make an amount of sense.

Arli

Only a captain or higher rank could command. That's insane. Why would a SPU officer steal a ship? Can anyone outside of the SPU military command a ship?

Adam
The president.

Arli
Why would the President steal a brand new, top of the line, starship?

Andy
Maybe he became president *to* steal a starship.

Arli
It's not the president!

Adam
Whoever it is is still listening to every word we say.

(beat)

Andy
What's the ghost of the Saratoga?

Arli
No clue.

Adam
An old superstition. From the frontier Martian days. They used to say every ship was haunted by the ghosts of the people who died building it.

Andy
Was death that common during the construction phase?

Adam
There weren't 'phases' back then. The colonials just built ships best they could. Those men and women were trying to establish off world cities and build sparefaring ships at the same time. There was no SPU, no unions, no frame of reference. It was just build as many ships as fast as they could. A lot of people died stupid deaths.

Arli
So this is supposed to be the ghost of someone who died building the Saratoga?

Adam

No. No eventually it just became a tradition, it was accepted. Every ship has a ghost. It represents the history of sacrifice. Captains would make up some story about the spirit, something for the crew to rally behind as either companion or trickster.

Andy

How do you know all this?

Adam

My father grew up on Mars. Near Cerberus. Very superstitious man, my father.

Andy

So if it's not a real ghost then what was it?

Adam

No way of knowing down here.

Arli

Good point. Let's get out of here.

Andy

And go where?

Arli

To the bridge.

Andy

And do what? Overpower whoever commands the ship? Hope the ship listens to three civilians? Pray no one else on board has allegiance to the captain?

Arli

We have to try.

Adam

As good a plan as any, Andy.

Andy

Our failure means-

Arli

Death. Same as if we just sit here. What's stopping us but fear?

Andy

Arliana, fear is what keeps us alive.

Arli

Andy, fear is what's going to kill us.

Adam

Hell is full of cowards and heroes. Let's not let someone else decide who we are when we get there.

Andy (genuine)

I've heard less inspiring speeches.

Arli

You coming then?

Adam

Course he is.

Arli

Okay, where's the bridge?

(silence)

Arli

Really?

Adam

I don't know.

Andy

I just oversaw the team of programmers for the project. Why would I need to know where the bridge is?

Arli

Haven't you been to the bridge?

Andy

Probably! I was busy working! I didn't pay attention to where every single little room was.

Arli
it's not like I'm asking where the bar is! It's the bridge!

Adam
Do you know where it is?

Arli
The bar?

Andy
isn't it at the front?

Adam
the bridge.

Arli
No I don't, actually.

Adam
hrrm.

Andy
Oh. Well we can't just go wandering around the ship.

Arli
We're going to have to.

Andy
That seems like a bad idea.

Arli
I'm open to suggestions.

Adam
Can you pull up a map?

Andy
On what?

Adam
The console we used to send the SOS.

Andy

No that's just a communications table. It doesn't do other things.

Adam

It's still wired into the mainframe right?

Adam

None of those words actually mean anything.

Adam

This is the newest ship the SPU has to offer, you're saying the communications table can ONLY do communications?

Andy

Yes, and the toilet can ONLY do waste disposal, it doesn't cook, or steer the ship, or pull up maps.

Adam

But the toilet's not a computer.

Andy

It's not a magic solve everything box, Adam! It's a machine built to do one thing, and we did it. I can't just "pull up a map."

Adam

Can you hack into-

Andy

Please stop. Just stop. Stop that forever.

Arli

OH!

Adam

What?

Arli

The life boats!

Andy

YES! OF COURSE!

Adam

What?

Andy

We can leave on the life boats!

Adam

That kind of sounds like trapping ourselves on a smaller, less well equipped, slower, version of this ship.

Andy

Yeah but...uh. No no! They can...why do we want the lifeboats?

Arli

We don't. But in case of devastating emergency, next to every elevator is a map showing where the life boats are.

Adam

But we don't want to get to the life boats...

Arli

A MAP, ASS. WE WANT A MAP!

Andy/Adam

Ooooohhh.

Arli

Right, let's go.

Andy

Wait w-wait wait. Shouldn't we get some weapons?

Adam

Agreed. But there wouldn't be any guns in the armory.

Arli

You sure?

Adam

Even the infirmary is only half stocked. They wouldn't bother to load in most of the supplies until the ship was finished. And putting a bunch of guns on a spaceship isn't the highest priority.

Andy

Right of course. If it's a powerful military spaceship, why would there ever been a need for individually armed troops?

Adam

Exactly.

Arli

That makes sense. Okay I've got an idea.

(Infirmary door swooshes open and closes. Muffled clanking is heard in the distance. The doors woosh back open again.)

Arli

Okay I got us some clubs at least.

Andy

Those look like robot arms.

Arli

They were. Now they're clubs.

Adam

You tore the arms off a robot?

Arli

No, the construction robots are in pieces out there, along with the rest of the ship.

Adam

The ship being in pieces makes sense; it's not finished yet-

Andy

But why the hell would the robots be in pieces?

Adam

Let me see.

(Door swooshes open.)

Adam

These robots have been dismantled and abandoned.

Andy

They're not damaged, just taken apart. Why would someone do that?

Arli

The crooner probably did it to keep them from signaling the SPU.

Andy

Why not just have the ship disable them?

Adam

There are too many robots for anyone to go through the entire ship and take each one apart. It would take weeks.

Arli

What *could* do this?

Andy

The Ghost of the Saratoga!

Arli

Andy, could you plea-

Andy

NO I MEAN IT'S THE GHOST OF THE SARATOGA!

(that same electronic whirring growl, not over the intercom though. It's Bright Eyes. It's right there with them. It's advancing toward them, limping and clanking, all the time trying to speak through its corrupted programming. Andy, Adam, and Arli scream.)

Arli

GET INSIDE THE INFIRMARY, NOW!

(The infirmary doors swoosh open and then closed. The noise gets muffled, but continues getting closer.)

Arli
Lock the door!

(A click, a beep, and the clank of a practical lock)

Arli
What the hell was that?

Andy
THE GHOST-

Adam/Arli
SHUT UP.

Adam
Looked like a construction robot of some kind. Badly damaged.

Arli
Did it do that to itself?

Adam
Probably. If it took care of those robots in the corridor I doubt very much there's anything else that can put up that kind of fight.

Arli
But why?

Andy
It's broken.

Arli
Very helpful, thanks.

Andy
No I mean it. Didn't you hear it trying to talk? Something's very wrong with it, that's probably why it did that to itself. It's trying to make repairs.

Adam
Or take its own life.

Arlie

Life?

Adam
Or whatever.

(LOUD CLANKING AND CRASHING AT THE DOOR)

Andy
Ah! What do we do?

Adam
We can't take it down with the parts of the robots it's already destroyed.

Arli
It's pretty slow, we can outrun it.

Adam
We don't even know the way, if we get cornered...

Arli
Okay then if we can't outrun it and we can't destroy it-

Andy
We'll die!

Arli
The lifeboats!

Andy
I thought we didn't want to die in the life boat!

Adam
No she's right! If we can get it to follow us into a life boat-

Andy
We can trap it inside!

Arli
I'm going to unlock the door, let it come inside, then we bolt.

Adam

Stay close Andy.

(Door unlocks, beeps, and wrenches open. The horrible sounds bright eyes makes fill the room and he scrapes his way inside.)

Arli

Now! Follow me! Go! Go! Go!

(Three sets of footsteps clanks out of the room and down the hall.

Arli

Elevator!

(Footsteps stop)

Adam

There, lifeboats are down this hallway and two rights.

(Bright Eyes is getting closer, his shuffling is getting faster)

Andy

Run!

(More running, more clanking, Bright Eyes pursues. Andy yelps.)

Andy

There it is!

(The footsteps stop and a few beeps go beep boop. Air rushes out of the hall and a door is heard opening. Bright eyes is whirring and growling.)

Arli

Inside!

(Clambering over metal and scuffling as the climb in. Bright Eyes is right on top of them. Dragging and clanking and trying to speak. He loudly enters the lifeboat. He shuffles and moans and whirrs. Then he stops. He shuffles again. He growls and creaks. A sudden clank followed by the sound of air pressure hissing.)

Arli

Clear?

Adam
Clear.

Andy
Launch it.

(Then a loud shot and a series of low hisses as the life boat is ejected into space. They sigh in relief)

Andy
Well that was terrifying.

Arli
You guys did great. That went pretty smoothly.

Adam
Why would it chase us? What could was going through its mind?

Andy
Mind?

Adam
Or whatever. What was it trying to accomplish?

Arli
I bet he knows.

Andy
The Ghost?

Arli (angrily)
The Captain.

Adam
Let's go ask him then.

Andy
I saw where the bridge is on the map.

Arli

Then you take point. Everyone still got there robot arms?

Adam

Taking up arms against our captor. Appropriate.

Andy

Nice wordplay, Adam.

Arli

You boys ready?

Andy/Adam

Ready.

Arli

Good. Andy correct me if I'm wrong but that badge on the wall there, that's the intercom right?

Andy

It is...

Arli

Good.

(Footsteps. The click of a few buttons being pressed.)

Arli (through shipwide)
Captain...I'm coming for you!

