

# RETROZINE

Two Fandom  
Elders,  
One More Time!

Autumn 2023 \* Issue 9

**SPECIAL ISSUE!**

**The Adventures of the USS TROUBLE:  
TROUBLE - With a Side of Meatballs!**



# RETROZINE 9

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Got questions?

**Contact us!**

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# Why Is This Issue A Thing?

By Germaine Swanson

Why did we create an issue dedicated to one story?

Sometimes a piece of fiction grabs the writer by the shoulders and screams “What going to happen next?” The characters on the *Trouble* were pacing around our collective consciousness screaming “the readers want to know what’s next”. We, the authors, wanted to know what’s next, too.

Literature (writing) only exists when it is read. If we waited for the full complement of promised stories and articles to arrive, it would have been months before the story fully unfolded. This issue exists because the crew of the *Trouble* would not leave us alone. We didn’t want them wasted in the innards of our computers or the cloud.

This issue, therefore, is an homage to the era of the single-topic fanzine, produced by dedicated fans who wrote because they wanted new stuff and there wasn’t any.

The idea in creating a zine might have been influenced by old Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney movies in which they were young people who needed something to do or needed to raise money or something and decided to “get the gang together and put on a show.” Those kids were innocently fearless. They put on their show, sometimes in defiance of the adult world. They met the challenges and the barriers. I’ve never thought there were barriers to creating. We fans needed an outlet for our creativity within a structure we loved and had talent for. We asked ourselves what we wanted to see happen in our favorite show. We knew the ‘men in suits’ weren’t ever going to finish the series or make new stories so we used our wits and made our own. Doing this gave us an outlet for creativity and a way to belong to something we loved that was taken away from us.

Or, perhaps we had too many writing teachers who gave “what happens next?” assignments in which you created the events that followed the official end of a story, play or show. Or, my favorite assignment, define what “happily ever after” means in a specific story.

## **In this issue:**

- It’s a Retro thing to do to create a special issue that showcases some feature of interest to the readers. It is something for which print magazines were famous.

- It’s a Retro thing to give loving attention to characters and to showcase them in a way that fleshes them out. Well, that’s our plan anyway.

- It’s a Retro thing to create music parodies. We’ve got music. Yes, music. Music, in the air Don’t miss the mp3 of the Captain’s song.

We also have content from all the major *Trouble* contributors.

Most of all, like all things fannish, we did because we can.

Enjoy!

# Trouble Brewing

## Episode 8: *Trouble, With a Side of Meatballs*

*In our last episode, a group of Murchees absconded with one the the Stingers, an action they will no doubt come to regret.*

### 1. The Captain Hones Her Italian Invective

1 EXTERIOR; PLANET OF THE GRAD STUDENTS, MIDDLE OF THE SEA

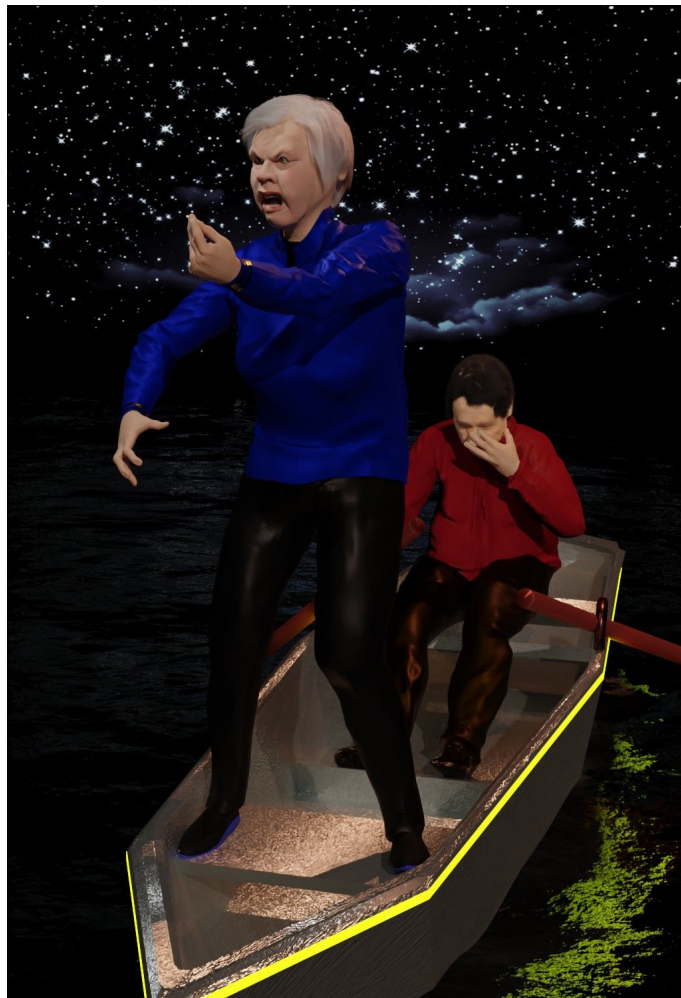
1

CAPTAIN and EBBET are in a rowboat far from land. Ebbet is sitting at the oars. CAPTAIN is standing in the bow, in a white-hot, Brooklyn rage.

CAPTAIN:  
*Ruffiani! Mortacci tui!*  
*Grad-stunadi! Bring*  
*that back! I'm a PhD! I*  
**OUTRANK YOU!**

CAPTAIN turns around and sits down in the boat. The MURCHEES can swim much faster than EBBET can row the boat. EBBET just shakes his head. He turns the boat around, and they head back to the Island.

CAPTAIN (V.O.)  
 Captain's Log, stardate I-have-no-idea. So anyway. Here I am, stuck with this guy Ebbet on what is apparently the Planet of the Graduate Students. All because of britsa oil, which is much overrated in my



opinion. In our last episode, one of my crew-members, Chip, was transported to who knows where after being touched by Ruba Lacincia, Britsa Oil Fan No. 1, let us say. I got transported away, along with my Chief Engineer's cat Iggy and one of my Geologist's Stingers, who I believe is called "Neodymium," by ... accident, maybe?

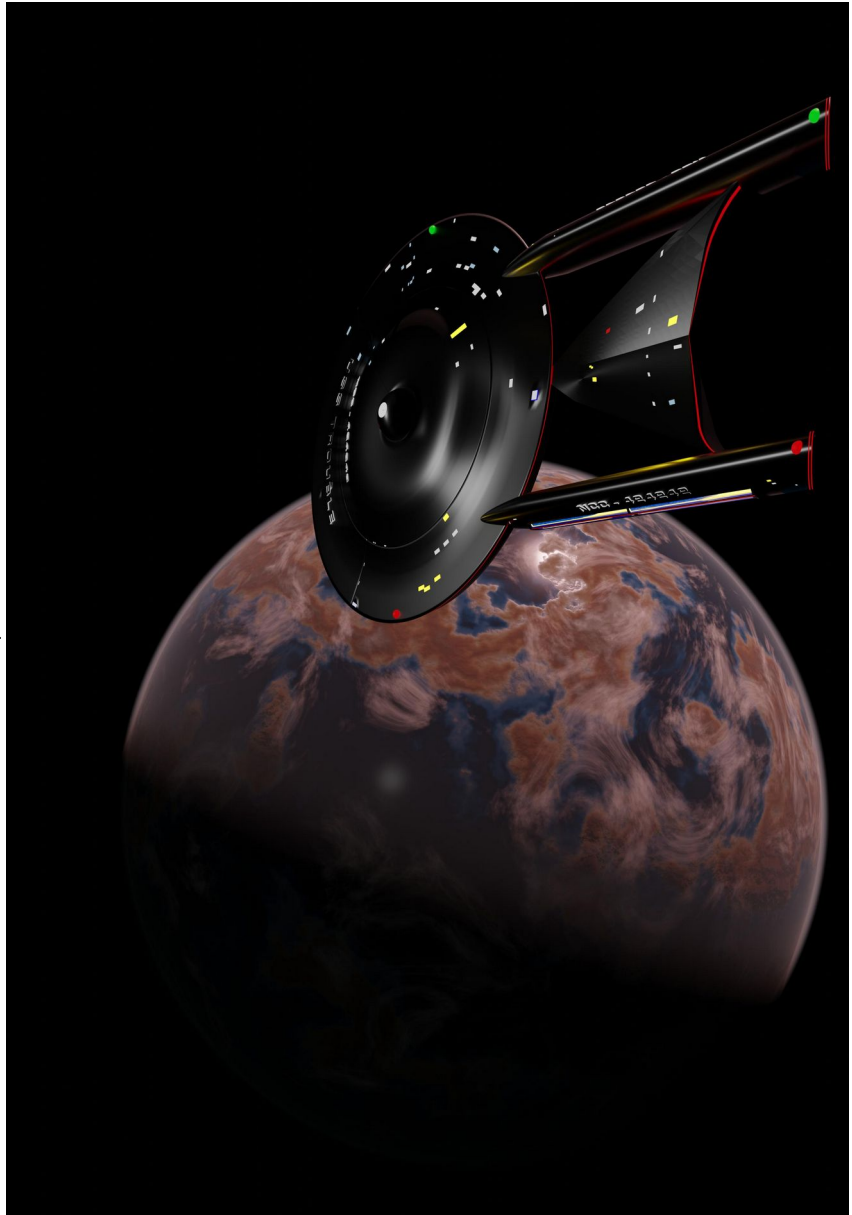
What happened was, there was this giant hairball that turned out to be some kind of computer. My engineer, Gus, found it in a Jeffries tube, and I have no idea how it got there but I have my suspicions (I'm looking at you, Uncle Harry).

Curiously, a "hairball computer" seems to be involved in both of these disappearances, if, perhaps, tangentially.

Iggy was investigating the one Gus found, and BOF1 says she had one at one time, and presumably handled it.

There's also the matter of this egg thing. Uncle Harry's pet satamuri (ha! pet!) found one, and BOF1 says she

has or had one. She also said, if I remember right, that Ebbet disappeared when it opened up right next to the hairball computer. Ours opened up when we put it near the hairball too. Then Gus moved it out of the way. Then Gus handed me the Stinger and Iggy who were being inquisitive, and poof! We all three ended up here.



Where is "here?" Donno. At least according to Ebbet, the food is good.

Anyway, I wonder... is the person who last touched the egg when it was next to the hairball turned into a collector for this weird zoo? Probably not. But anyway, here I am.

The boat docks, or, more properly, runs aground, on the rocky beach of Ebbet's Field. EBBET gets out, but the CAPTAIN does not. Just sits there doing her best Greta Garbo imitation and staring into the distance.

## Scene 2: Ratty And Dorcas And Moulting, Oh My!

### 2 INTERIOR, DORCAS' QUARTERS

2

Dorcas has started to grow new feathers. They are, as they often are, wrapped in "paper" which she is busily picking off. The air in the cabin is full of little bits of this paper, and one can see from the way it moves that she has some kind of air filter running at full speed. She is obviously very uncomfortable, and is talking to herself between each feather.

DORCAS

Could sit in Captain's Chair, Captain gone? No, Dorcas, not you! Admiral on board. (pluck, heavy sigh) Easy, Dorcas. Turn will come. (pick, tear, etc. Peers down at feathers) Oh, breeding colors! I get fancy! (shakes violently, bits of "paper" go everywhere).

The door chimes, and RATTY enters without being invited. Startles a little upon seeing Dorcas in her current state.

RATTY

You look terrible.

DORCAS

In a week, I be fabulous!  
(Twirls to show off what there are of new feathers.)  
Breeding colors!

RATTY

Oh? Will you be breeding then?

DORCAS

(dismissively)

No. Too old. And standards too high. Wanted change.

RATTY

I'm sure you'll look marvelous. Anyway. Command staff meeting, Dorcas, are you ready?

DORCAS

Ready! Everyone else?

RATTY Gives a ferocious sneeze.





RATTY  
Not hardly! Not for you, anyway!

DORCAS  
Ratty?

RATTY  
Yes, Dorcas?

DORCAS  
Before go... opinion, please. Ship doomed?

RATTY  
(somewhat nonplussed)  
I don't understand you, dear.

DORCAS  
(after considering for a bit)  
Our waste-of-money ship. Captain gone-first voyage!  
Coincidence?

RATTY  
You're being paranoid, don't you think?

DORCAS  
Being understanding bureaucracy, I think.

RATTY

(giving Dorcas a friendly pat, speaking quietly and confidentially)

Considering that the ship was built more for public relations than actual usefulness, I think it would be a huge mistake on Starfleet's part to let anything happen to it. Just think of the riot that Chip's people, and Max's people, and Our Deer Centaur's people and all the others would start. I think we're going to be fine, Dorcas, so don't worry.

DORCAS

Still...

RATTY gives DORCAS a friendly pat, and both leave.

## Scene 3: A Cuckoo In The Nest?

3 INTERIOR, READY ROOM

3

ADMIRAL, DORCAS, RATTY, T'PRYL, "First-In Scout" SWANSON, Chief Technician SANDOR and Chief Engineer GUS are seated around the table. Nobody looks happy to be there.

DORCAS

Everyone you asked, here, Admiral. For all, I ask, status of *Trouble* mission as mission?

Everyone turns to look at the Admiral

ADMIRAL

(considers carefully)

Our mission will continue as planned. At this point, we will be focusing  $\frac{2}{3}$  of our attention toward locating the Captain. We are not going to inform Starfleet of the current events until (turning to T'Pryl) unavoidably necessary.

T'Pryl nods.

ADMIRAL

T'Pryl, report from Engineering and Fabrication on progress creating an empathic harmonizer? Or whatever it should be called? I don't need to know how it works, just that it works.

T'PRYL

The project progresses. Lt. Gus and Lt. Sandor are working diligently to resolve the issue, incorporating Vulcan technology into the ship's systems.

ADMIRAL

Swanson, have you any intel from your dragons?

SWANSON

(Somewhat distracted)

We haven't discussed the missing captain. It has not yet been defined as a priority. My First-In Scouts are working on their mission.

ADMIRAL

Please convene a meeting with your dragons and discuss the Captain's situation as soon as this meeting is over, and report to me with the details within the hour.

SWANSON

Aye, Admiral. The First-In Scout detachment remains planetside guarding the suspect and helping to pack up her goods. We are especially interested in the items she is unusually indifferent to. They are also completing their planetary survey. Preliminary reports indicate they believe the planet is worth keeping. Whether it can be terraformed into a safe environment within acceptable costs and casualties is not yet resolved.

At the mention of "costs" and "casualties," the remainder of the *Trouble's* crew cast suspicious glances at each other. DORCAS swats a wall with her tail, and normal demeanor is resumed.

ADMIRAL

Has anyone any suggestions for locating the Captain? Lt. Gussar?

GUS

Yes. Thank you, Admiral. I have spoken to Ens. Maäha at some length. The Stingers, as well as the Lieutenant, are missing their fellow. They believe they know in which direction their missing kinsman is. Approximately that way.

GUS points downward and to the left.

ADMIRAL

Can you be a little more precise?

GUS

No, Admiral, not at this time, I'm sorry to say. They themselves are not certain of the distance. Just direction. "That way" covers a lot of territory, as I'm sure you know. But it's a start.

SWANSON

In order to find the captain the ship should investigate several local star systems using directions from the Stinger host to identify an appropriate region of space. Not many systems are likely in that area. We can then focus on what appear to be advanced civilization outposts. Finally, Admiral, the Emergency Contact Crew is organized, ready and awaiting orders.

(ADMIRAL, DORCAS, RATTY, T'PRYL, SANDOR and GUS respond with noises of surprise.)





DORCAS

Excuse me?

ADMIRAL

(ready to break up what may become a fight)  
Thank you, Commander. Let us table that discussion for the time being. We are not meeting to discuss emergency combat at this time. In the meantime, can the Stingers and the Dragons communicate?

SWANSON

I'll ask.

ADMIRAL

Do you think their skills might allow them to locate the Captain?

SWANSON

Potentially.

ADMIRAL

Cmdr. Addomecaroi, please continue monitoring for any residual signals which might give us an idea

where the Captain has been transported to.  
(considering again)  
Can either of the Captain's companions, Vinny or  
Harry, give us any insight?

DORCAS

Harry knows everything, because he is A Cat. He also  
not saying, because he's a Cat. Vinny may know, but  
only other person who might talk to Vinny is Ruba  
Lacincia.

Heavy sigh from everyone at the table.

ADMIRAL

All right then. Prepare to transport Ruba Lacincia  
back to the ship on my signal. T'Pryl and I will  
meet with her. Perhaps you should join us at this  
meeting, Commander Swanson.

DORCAS

We tell her, tell Ruba, we do this, first?

ADMIRAL

No. Let it be a surprise.

DORCAS

Shall be done.

ADMIRAL

Swanson, prepare your team to complete their  
exploration and secure the planet.

SWANSON

Aye, Ma'am

ADMIRAL

(Folding tablet)

Let's reconvene in two hours, but I want reports  
from all departments within the hour.

Everyone agrees in their own way, and the company disperses except Swanson,  
Admiral and T'Pryl

ADMIRAL

We've at least taken care of the obvious. Any  
suggestions?

SWANSON

Admiral, I am traveling with my Emergency Command  
Crew under orders from Star Fleet. In light of the  
current situation, I need to discuss this with you.

ADMIRAL

Let's include that with your report about your dragons. I believe we are meeting in an hour?

SWANSON nods and departs

T'PRYL

Might I suggest speaking to Mr. Mudd? I'm curious about that creature he travels with. Since it appears to have a means of space travel of its own, it is not outside the realm of possibility that it can pick up signals we may have missed, is it not?

ADMIRAL

I concur.

Both leave.

## Scene 4: "Your Crew Must Hate You."

4 EXTERIOR, EBBET'S FIELD, DAY-ish

4

CAPTAIN is still sitting on a rock, humming "Take Me Out To The Ballgame," when, somewhere, a gong sounds, and EBBET appears from his hut, rubbing his hands together, looking smug.

EBBET

Captain? That was the dinner gong. Prepare for a treat.

CAPTAIN

What? Hagrobiscuit?

EBBET

What?

CAPTAIN

The hoopiest frood food—

There is a roiling on the water, and two MURCHEES burst out. One carries a large box. The other carries the STINGER, which it very cautiously places on the CAPTAIN's lap. It pats the thing in the same way as one tries to pat a cobra, and backs off in way more of a hurry than one would think it can go. The other hands the box to EBBET, backs up, giving CAPTAIN and STINGER a wide berth, and rushes into the water once out of the STINGER's reach.

EBBET folds down the sides of the box, turning it into a table, with place settings for two, a bottle, and three containers, two of which are steaming. IGGY the cat comes over, working his nose furiously.

EBBET

You're going to learn to like this place, Captain.

CAPTAIN  
(sniffing)

You eat first.

EBBET

Why? Do you think it's poisoned?

CAPTAIN

Got a reason I shouldn't think it's poisoned?

EBBET  
(shrugging)

Have it your own way, certainly. More for me!





EBBET lifts the cover off one of the steaming dishes. It is filled with spaghetti and meatballs, sprinkled with cheese.

EBBET

Oh ho! Now this is new!-

CAPTAIN leans in and grabs a large-ish chunk of cheese, smells it, tastes it, ponders...

CAPTAIN

Not Parmigiano Reggiano, but it can certainly pass. How did you teach them to make this?

EBBET

I didn't teach them to make anything. They knew what I liked when I got here, somehow or other. And I'm not complaining, I can tell you.

CAPTAIN

(picking up a meatball with a very passable fork)  
They've never made this for you before?

EBBET

No, no. I prefer Thai food myself.

CAPTAIN

So how did...

EBBET

I have a theory about that!

CAPTAIN

You mean you have a hypothesis.

EBBET

Now, now, don't be a pedant. Let me ask you. Do you happen to have aboard your ship something that looks like an enormous ball of something you'd comb off a scruffy dog?

CAPTAIN

(Suspiciously)

Uhm, yes. I suspect that's part of how I ended up here.

EBBET

Ha! That's how they know, you see. How long have you had it?

CAPTAIN

At least since we launched, a couple of weeks ago.

EBBET

Good, then they'll be able to make you very

comfortable, if you want.

CAPTAIN  
(through gritted teeth)

I see...

EBBET  
Well, seeing as to how we're stuck here, tell me  
about yourself.

CAPTAIN  
(Poking at the spaghetti)  
Fara Marianne Shimbo, Captain, No.7182345789.

EBBET  
Oh, I say... really, I've been on this planet with  
absolutely no one to talk to for I have no real idea  
how long, and you ... are being very disappointing.

CAPTAIN  
(rolls eyes, sighs, twirls spaghetti)  
How do you communicate with the Murchees?

EBBET  
Are you asking how I communicate with them, or how  
one communicates with them?

CAPTAIN  
Yes.

EBBET  
Your crew must hate you.

CAPTAIN.  
Probably. But how, like I asked. How do you know,  
for instance, that they're graduate students?

EBBET  
Ah! Now I know that because every once in a while,  
their thesis advisor, Razatsu, shows up and orders  
them around, and quizzes them on things.

CAPTAIN  
Oh? How?

EBBET  
All done by feel, as far as I can tell. They hold  
out their big side fins a certain way, flat, you  
know, like a table leaf, and Razatsu taps them, and  
kind of draws on them with one of its arms.

CAPTAIN  
(leaning back)



Interesting. So they work by feel, then?

EBBET

Apparently so. I can't say I've ever heard them make sounds other than warning yells. And whenever one of them does that, the others all whip the noisy one with their arms, so I assume yelling is Not The Done Thing.

CAPTAIN  
(grinning)

Good.

(takes a bite of one of the meatballs)  
You're right. These aren't half bad. Have they ever, say, placed something on their fins, to examine it?

EBBET

I think I may have seen them do that once or twice.

CAPTAIN  
Any clay on this planet?

EBBET  
(Puffs out his cheeks and sighs)  
On what watery planet isn't there clay?

CAPTAIN  
(getting up)  
I'll be back.

CAPTAIN leaves the table.

EBBET  
Fine!  
(helping himself to spaghetti)  
More for me!



## 5: It Talks! Who Knew?

### 5 MUDD'S QUARTERS

5

MUDD and ADMIRAL are seated at the table. MORIARTY is hanging from the ceiling by sahn's tail. T'PRYL is examining MORIARTY carefully; MORIARTY is echo-locating on T'PRYL. ADMIRAL has MUDD's biography on her tablet.

MUDD

Admiral, I assure you, I know nothing, absolutely nothing, about what could possibly have happened to my niece. I mean, the Captain. She really is my niece, you know. But I know nothing.

ADMIRAL

In that case, tell me what you know about Beta Kerrotyn.

MUDD

Well, let me see... There isn't much alive or interesting on it. There is britsa, but ... well, it may be natural, and it may not be, but it's there, and there isn't a lot. And that egg was there too. But other than it's got two suns and a breathable atmosphere, I really don't know anything about it.

ADMIRAL

Speaking as an (ahem) entrepreneur, is there anything else of value on that planet?

MUDD turns to MORIARTY, MORIARTY shrugs. MUDD turns back to the ADMIRAL and shrugs.

ADMIRAL

Could you find out?

MUDD

Well, not directly, no, you see. That's part of my parole, as it were. I have to stay on the ship or my niece will set my wife on me. And she would, too, let me tell you.

ADMIRAL

Yes, so it says in the report. And I, for one, look forward to seeing that it is enforced, if necessary. So. Tell me about your friend here?

MUDD

Oh, you know, just a fellow traveller I picked up along the way, as one does.

T'PRYL

Admiral, Starfleet has no record of this species.

MUDD

Should it have? I mean, with the thousands of billions of species in the galaxy. You can't expect to have cataloged every single one. Really!

ADMIRAL

Since it seems to be able to pilot a starship and come and go at will, perhaps it should be, don't you think?

MORIARTY drops down onto the table, and stares at the ADMIRAL from much too close.

MORIARTY

If you're trying to get around to finding out if I speak, I have at least a dozen languages at my immediate command, so there's that.

ADMIRAL

Good to know. Conversing is far less messy than a mind meld.

MORIARTY

(Narrows sahn's eyes, considers this and says nothing. Sahn smiles, exposing many teeth.)  
Aww, that would have been fun. But whatever.

ADMIRAL

Challenge accepted. (Admiral has shifted her posture, subtly as if to engage in some form of combat. Her eyes shine as she surveys Moriarty. She smiles.)

MUDD

(Observing the Admiral)

Admiral, Commander! My friend here means no disrespect. Sahn does not know that you are not bound by Vulcan telepathic customs. Moriarty, my friend, she isn't a touch telepath. From what I know of her, take my advice and step down. You are out of your depth here.

MORIARTY (snorts a sound of derision and sits down at the table.)

MUDD

No challenge intended, Starfleet Admiral. Speaking of sahn as if sahn was not present is considered a rudeness among my people.



ADMIRAL

That is a common feeling among many cultures and species. Let us begin again. In your travels have you ever come across Britsa or its use in distant transportation? Your niece has disappeared without a trace. The only anomaly is the presence of Britsa oil...

## Scene 6: A Private Conversation

6 INTERIOR, ADMIRAL'S OFFICE

6

ADMIRAL and SWANSON are seated at a table in a plain, sound-proof and bug-proof room. The room has somewhat the atmosphere of an interrogation room. It is one of the few places on board where no recording of anything or anyone takes place.

SWANSON:

The dragons will try investigating when the site is found. It is not safe for a starship to try. I'll take an away-team in my ship and command the excursion.

ADMIRAL

Your ship? Command?

SWANSON

My carrier is concealed in the ship's hold. My men are prepared and ready for my command.

ADMIRAL

Your command? Is that the Emergency Command Crew you mentioned?

SWANSON

I have declared this a Class III Emergency Situation so that I can speak openly to you about my orders. My crew is authorized to act as an ad-hoc organization to actively fight the enemy, if needed. With the help of the dragons. I become commander of everything if this order is activated. That means all systems of the ship and this becomes a military mission. However, it is not part of AI programming. So consider that last sentence the equivalent to orders to "burn after reading".

ADMIRAL

Hmm. Well, my orders from Star Fleet might block your orders. Your orders sound like they give you the authority to use this research vessel as a warship—with you in Command.

SWANSON

Hopefully not. This is very much "hot war" or threat of it. I cannot activate it myself. You could activate the Emergency Contact Crew for specific purposes. The Crew follows my orders, independently. Once enforced, Starfleet officers cannot override my

command.

ADMIRAL  
Nods.

Continue.

SWANSON

The Captain seems to be caught in a small outpost of an Old Civilization. General policy is to avoid contact as they are always dangerous. Something on the ship is making the captain and crew members disappear. Whatever it is is probably controlled by it. We can't let it get control of the ship. This is a major security situation. We should be prepared for war.

The ADMIRAL activates her tablet to access information about the old civilization.

ADMIRAL

Tell me about this old civilization. I'm on the curriculum board of Starfleet Academy. I've never heard of anything called the Old Civilization.

SWANSON

What you teach is what your students need to know. To be good soldiers, researchers and engineers, they don't need to know the broader scope of the universe. If they did, you would never be able to rustle up recruits.

ADMIRAL

Never learned about it on Vulcan either.

SWANSON

What is important is that I know about it. I have orders to defend this ship against being lost to intergalactic traders. Unscrupulous traders by our er, your, standards of morality who would love access to, and I quote, "a ship set up to house the major species of our Federation so that they can live and work together for the betterment of Starfleet and the Federation".

ADMIRAL

Yes. Those are my words.

SWANSON

My orders are to protect this asset at all costs. I'm to return to Starfleet triumphantly or with all the pieces. You know "With the shield or on it" as the Spartans used to say. Your suspect and her pals have been lured to an OC outpost. They have activated some system that is collecting things and



transporting them somewhere. We need to find out where and assess the threat to the Federation.

ADMIRAL

My orders are to collect Ruba and her artifacts, and return them to Starfleet and I decide what will happen to the planet. Is it a danger to the Federation? Can it be used or incorporated for some purpose? I can destroy it at my discretion.

SWANSON

It seems we were destined to work together. After all, how could you decide whether to blow up a planet that might still be an active outpost without conferring with me. My orders would have been to block this until I reported to the Agency and received my orders.

ADMIRAL

Even though this is her ship, regulations would have made it impossible for Captain Shimbo to countermand you. Her ship, Ruba and the artifacts would all end up in the hands of whomever is commanding you this time.

SWANSON

You make me sound like a mercenary. My people and I simply flow among the different departments as needed. We have special skills.

ADMIRAL

Hrrumph. As I see this situation, we have to find the captain. We are ordered to assess and clear the planet and deliver the artifacts, with or without Reba, to the Academy. You are here to get intel on the OC and their outpost.

SWANSON

Sounds about right. We are here to protect you if the ship is in danger.

ADMIRAL

And the ship, the *Trouble*, an experimental ship designed to house many disparate species so they can use their unique abilities to explore the Universe is here as bait.

## Scene 7: Behold the Thesis Advisor!

## 7 BACK ON THE PLANET OF THE GRADUATE STUDENTS

7

CAPTAIN and EBBET, along with IGGY and the STINGER, are finishing up a meal and packing things away.

EBBET

So... How long before your ship shows up?

CAPTAIN

(dully)

Who knows.

EBBET

You sound uncertain.

CAPTAIN

I have reason.

EBBET

Don't be ridiculous. You're Starfleet. They will overturn heaven and hell to find one of their own.

CAPTAIN

You think so?

EBBET

I'm more interested in why you think not.

CAPTAIN sits on the beach, where she has a large mound of clay sitting on a rock. Beside this, is a small model she's made. It's a model of CHIP. EBBET comes and stares down at it, as CAPTAIN begins working on it again.

CAPTAIN

Are there tides here?

EBBET

(sitting down)

You're being evasive.

CAPTAIN

(Staring into the void).

They sent a captain on her first command. She refuses to do what she's told because, well, kidnapping is illegal, no matter who does it. Strike one.

I pretty much bullied Starfleet into building the ship I commanded because the non-humanoid races need to see that they are also welcome and valuable. One small ship. Turned out to be very, very expensive.

The common bipeds, quadrupeds, aquatics, etc, were counting on it. There are many among the brass who thought building the Trouble was setting a very dangerous precedent. Strike two.

And worst of all...

(Captain sits up and stares in Ebbet's general direction)

...I was never on the command track. I never even wanted to be on the command track. I'm a zoologist and happy that way. But I got the commission before a great many eager—and if one must say it, younger, slimmer and slicker, but mostly younger—officers who've been on the command track their whole lives. So... is that strike three, or what?

EBBET

(after a quiet chuckle)

Let's agree that's a line-drive foul.

CAPTAIN snorts. Holds up the model. She smooths some areas with a stick, and otherwise perfects it.

CAPTAIN

I wonder ... should I make the compound eyes? Would they even tell?

EBBET

I'm not sure they can actually hear. They must sense vibration in some way, so that's something. But I do know they can see.

CAPTAIN

Compound eyes it is.

CAPTAIN gets up, grabs a handful of coarse sand, and presses it into the eyes of the model. Two scrawny sticks from the local flora are added to make antennae.

There is a great movement of water, and CAPTAIN and EBBET look up. An enormous Murchee, RAZATSU, emerges from the water. EBBET stands up. Smaller Murchees, including BOODRY, follow. The CAPTAIN stands up as if about to dare them all to cross a line.

EBBET

Oh my stars... what have we done to merit a visit from the thesis advisor?

RAZATSU comes dripping up onto the beach. The students gather around, in a respectful semi-circle. RAZATSU waves its forearms and slaps the ground rhythmically, and the students all hold their front fins out flat. RAZATSU uses a tentacle to "write" on one of them, and that one writes the same thing on the next person, and so on down the line.



CAPTAIN stands up, and walks up to RAZATSU with the model of CHIP in hand.

EBBET

Oh, don't do that.

CAPTAIN

Do what?

EBBET

Don't do anything.

CAPTAIN snorts. She stands right in front of RAZATSU who seems almost oblivious to her presence, as it plays telephone with its students. When an answer seems to come back up the line and RAZATSU holds out a fin for it, CAPTAIN places the model on the fin, and gives a loud whistle, as if for a

taxi. All the MURCHEES come to attention.

CAPTAIN  
(Shouting)

Ebbet says you can hear. Fine. This (thumping the model) is Chip. Chip (thumping the model again), is mine! (Grabs the model and holds it to her chest.)  
*Capisce? Mine.* (Turns to Ebbet)  
Right?

EBBET  
(caught very off guard)

Oh, yes, absolutely, yes. Chip is yours.

CAPTAIN  
(nodding)

I'm glad we're agreed. Now, youse guys-

CAPTAIN turns to the Murchees, and all of them, including RAZATSU, are standing in identical poses, and they are buzzing as if something astounding has just happened.

EBBET  
Well, that's different.

CAPTAIN  
Chip! Mine! Now!

The Murchees begin a very rapid game of telephone, with messages going up and down the line. The CAPTAIN takes the model of CHIP and puts it on top of RAZATSU.

RAZATSU begins carefully feeling around it with an assortment of tentacles, "chatting" with its students as it goes. After a few moments, CAPTAIN takes away the model of CHIP.

CAPTAIN  
I want my Chip.  
(turning)  
Come on, Ebbet.

EBBET  
But, but-

CAPTAIN  
Come ON, Ebbet!

EBBET  
You know, your first-contacting techniques leave a lot to be desired.



CAPTAIN

So do theirs. See? Common ground already! Come on.

CAPTAIN grabs Ebbet by the arm, and drags him into his hut, closing the door resoundingly behind them.

The MURCHEES all turn and race back into the water, and are gone.

## Scene 8: Growing Disquiet Among The Senior Officers

### 8 RATTY'S QUARTERS

8

RATTY and DORCAS are sitting at RATTY's kitchen table, where tea is being served.

RATTY

We can speak freely, my quarters are not bugged.

DORCAS

(dourly)

Nobody's quarters are bugged—that I know about.

RATTY

(swishing her tail)

As you say.

(Adding what appears to be sugar—and a very large amount at that—to her tea)

I don't like this, Dorcas.

DORCAS

(picking at her feathers again)

Knew Starfleet would never let Trouble go freely. But this? Got straw? Cup is trifficult.

RATTY rummages through a drawer and finds a straw, and puts it into DORCAS' cup.

DORCAS

Ta, Ratty.

(sips tea)

Where this puts me? Captain gone, is my command. Never authorized away-team. Never even anyone mentioned away-team.

RATTY

You should speak to the Admiral, Dorcas. This is all highly irregular, and I like it no more than you.

DORCAS

What's point? Are married, those two.

RATTY

So?

DORCAS

Are humans, those two. With humans, politics first and always.

RATTY

(resignedly)

That's true what you say.

(Takes a long sip)

But then again, you know, the Captain is human too.

DORCAS

(Putting the cup down and leaning forward) Is odd thing. Captain does not smell human.

RATTY

What do you mean?

DORCAS

What said. Smell, different. No accounting. Peculiar. Got donuts?

RATTY produces some.

RATTY

You should speak to the admiral anyway, Dorcas.

DORCAS

Should get back to bridge. Worry. Worry, worry, worry. Is not good.

DORCAS eats a couple of donuts, nods goodbye, and leaves. As she gets to the door, she bumps into GUS.

GUS

Commander, may I have a few moments of your time?

DORCAS turns back to RATTY and snaps her jaws; then she and GUS leave together.



## Scene 9: Another Reunion—And an Epiphany

9 EBBET'S FIELD, near the shore.

9

CAPTAIN has made a baseball out of clay, and she and EBBET are having a game of catch. After some time, there is a marching sound, like tap-dancers on gravel. Both stop and look around. A contingent of MURCHEES, in two groups, is headed toward EBBET's hut. The first group is carrying CHIP. The second group is carrying what appears to be a giant, hastily-built spider web made of spare parts that were just lying around someplace.

CHIP, seeing the captain, begins struggling and soon the MURCHEES just drop her and stand aside. CHIP crawls up to the CAPTAIN. The CAPTAIN crouches and holds out her arms in welcome.

EBBET

(looking rather green)

Eww, a bug!

CAPTAIN

(Sitting on the ground beside Chip)

EBBET-san, I have the pleasure to introduce you to Lt. Chp Pnthshe Dh, better known as "Chip," my Senior Cryptanalyst. Chip, may I present Mr. Ebbet.

CHIP makes several flustered motions and flicks her antennae back at the MURCHEES.

CAPTAIN

Oh. Did you lose your Babel Fish?

CHIP vehemently, and with a whole side-full of legs, points to the MURCHEES.

CAPTAIN

They took it. I see.

The captain reaches into a pocket and pulls out a small suction-cup like thing.

CAPTAIN

Use this one, I always carry a spare or several.

CAPTAIN puts the suction cup on CHIP. CHIP scratches at it.

CHIP

This one has chocolate on it.



CAPTAIN

Oh, sorry. *Gomen nasai*.

CAPTAIN takes off the Babel Fish and replaces it with one from another pocket.

CHIP

Better. This Self thanks Captain. We here why?

CAPTAIN

Because we're fascinating.

CHIP

(smacking jaws together rapidly)

Of course. How Selves are here?

CAPTAIN

Well, I will tell you what I know after I've dealt with these Graduate Students.

CHIP

(astonished)

Those Selves students? Ought not exist, students. Evil.

CAPTAIN

Did they hurt Your Esteemed Self?

CHIP

No. Annoy, but no hurt, thank you.

CAPTAIN stands up, and walks toward those of the MURCHEES who are holding the "spiderweb."

CAPTAIN

What's all this then?

The MURCHEES put their construction on the ground. Several gather around it. Some hold sticks, others hold stiff brushes, others hold various kinds of ribbons. The largest one stands opposite the captain, holding its two antennae straight up, and begins "conducting" the rest, all of whom are holding tentacles as if they are having a seance. The others use what they're holding to "play" various bits of the instrument00, starting and stopping. The instrument sounds more like singing than what one usually thinks of from an instrument.

THE PLAYERS

UuOuuuuhhhh...pfuh...ssssssssssy...thyyyyyy...ihhhhy...  
shhhOhh...bong!...hsshshsh...EEEEEEEE...zhzhzhzhzhz...

The PLAYERS turn all their antennae to the CAPTAIN and EBBET. EBBET just rolls his eyes. The PLAYERS try again. This time, EBBET looks up, startled.

EBBET

I think I know what they're doing. Listen to it!  
It's familiar!

THE PLAYERS

Uuuuuuhhhh...pfuh...ssssssssssy...thyyyyyyy...ihhhhhy...  
shhhhh...bong!...hsshshsh...

EBBET

See? They're trying to say the alphabet! Listen!

PLAYERS carry on playing. The CAPTAIN's jaw drops. She stands up, and walks up to the instrument, swirling her arms in what she hopes is a "one more time" motion. The PLAYERS comply.

THE PLAYERS

Uuuuuuhhhh...pfuh...ssssssssssy...thyyyyyyy...ihhhhhy...  
shhhhh...bong!...hsshshsh...

CAPTAIN

(to EBBET)

By Jove, I think you've got it!  
(Loudly, so if the PLAYERS can hear, they will)  
AHH... Buh...Say...Day...Eh...Eff...Geh...Hah...

EBBET

No no no no! Eeeh, Beee, Sea...

CAPTAIN

Shh! German is closer to what they're doing.

THE PLAYERS go through a frenzy of "writing" on each other's fins, flashing their tentacles in the air, and after what seems to be a lengthy discussion, they try again.

CAPTAIN

Chip, what do you think of this?

CHIP

Captain, with all due respect, do not talk to This  
Self just now.

CAPTAIN

Suit yourself. But I expect a report later on.

The CAPTAIN walks up to the instrument, and the PLAYERS make room for her to join their "seance." They grab her by the arm, and the two nearest examine her hands with their antennae. Suddenly getting an idea, the CAPTAIN pulls out the chocolate-tainted Babel Fish device from her pocket, wipes it on her jacket, and shows it off, waving it around, and then sticking it to her head. One of the PLAYERS reaches for it, and for a minute or two they all pass it

around. When it makes its way back to her, the CAPTAIN sticks it back on her head, takes it off again, and offers it to the nearest PLAYER (PLAYER 1). PLAYER 1 can't really manipulate it, so CAPTAIN mimes sticking the Babel Fish to one of the PLAYER 1's fins. When she takes it away again and tilts her head, then offers it again to PLAYER 1, PLAYER 1 holds out a fin, and the CAPTAIN attaches the Babel Fish device to the fin. PLAYER 1's antennae and a couple of arms go rigid, and then begin flailing in excitement. Another Murchee, PLAYER 2, tries to take the device. CAPTAIN puts a hand between the two Murchees, then takes one of PLAYER 2's appendages and holds it to her throat.

CAPTAIN

No.

PLAYER 2 rubs CAPTAIN's throat, and a frisson goes around the circle. CAPTAIN points to the Instrument, makes the rolling "do it again" motion with her hands, and the PLAYERS begin.

PLAYERS

Uuuuhhhh... Bdbbbeh... szih...

CAPTAIN holds up a hand to stop them, and says,

CAPTAIN

Ah, bee, see...

Another frisson goes through the Murchees.

PLAYERS

Aaaaaaa... pbeh... szeeee...

CAPTAIN

(squirming and clapping)

Ah, bee, see!

The PLAYERS attempt to clap with their "tail fins."

PLAYERS

Thdeeee... eeeeeeeeeeee ... ffffffff

CAPTAIN

Yes! Dee, Eee, Eff! Good, good!

(Pats her chest)

Ffffff, aaaaaah! Fa! That's me!

More applauding and squirming, and they continue.

CUT TO:

CHIP, EBBET, the STINGER, and IGGY, who are sitting on a rock some distance away, apparently bored.

EBBET

This is going to go on for hours, isn't it?

CHIP

Many hours.

IGGY

MAAAA000!

FADE TO:

## Scene 10: The “Babel Fish” Device

10 A CORRIDOR ABOARD THE TROUBLE

10

ADMIRAL and DORCAS cross paths. DORCAS is anxiously plucking at her feathers, spreading paper-dust all over the place. Muttering to herself in her own language. ADMIRAL observes this, then walks up to DORCAS.

ADMIRAL

Dorcas, is something wrong? Are your feathers giving you trouble growing in?





DORCAS

No more than usual, Admiral, thank for asking.

ADMIRAL

(Pointing to the Babel Fish device)

Excuse me, Commander. Is this jewelry you're wearing?

DORCAS

This? Oh. Is Babel Fish. Captain and Sandor invented it. For talking. Don't need it mostly, but not having lips, sometimes I hard to understand without it. Can't say "m" for instance. No lips.

ADMIRAL

Interesting. Tell me more about this.

DORCAS

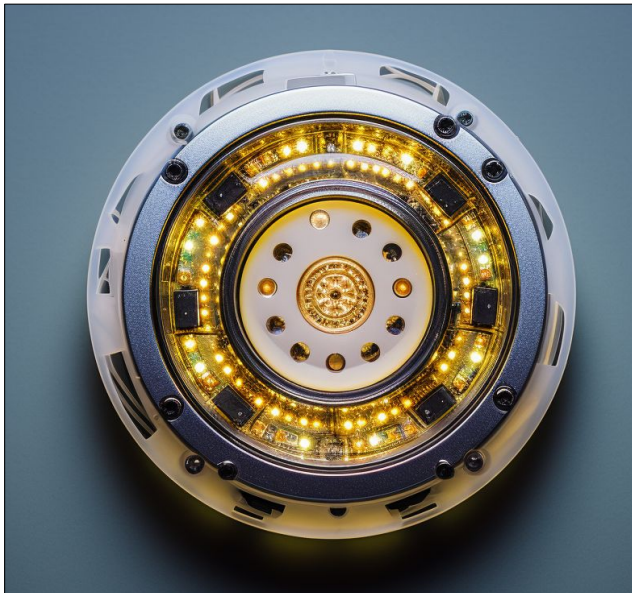
Is useful. Most of us have them. Helps with subtext. Picks up expression from voice, for persons with inflexible faces. Emits code, sends to other Babel Fish. Their Babel Fish emits fractal noise. Bone conduction. Or carapace conduction, whatever there is. Then, receiver understands subtext. Good also for tagging body signals not shared with other species. Very useful. Have several. Want one?

ADMIRAL

I'd like to see one of those.

DORCAS

Will bring to meeting.



ADMIRAL

Can you give it to T'Pryl, please?

DORCAS

Consider done.  
(Considers for a moment)  
Admiral, question. May I?

ADMIRAL

Go ahead.

DORCAS

Question of authority. Know I sound like whining child. But need clarity. You take command of *Trouble*? Or is my responsibility, being First Officer? After meeting, have some doubt. Never authorized away-team and should have been my job.

ADMIRAL

Didn't the Captain authorize an away-team when we first arrived?

DORCAS

Aye. But that away-mission done. Never authorized others.

ADMIRAL

Interesting. Thank you, Dorcas.

DORCAS

But still, is question.

ADMIRAL

(after some consideration)

When the Captain was here, I was in an advisory capacity only.

DORCAS

But Captain gone; so now?

ADMIRAL

Logically, you have a relationship with the crew. We have two missions. The operation of the *Trouble* is under your command. I have a separate set of orders from Starfleet which do not require me to run the ship. Think of yourself as a taxi service, I'm just going to pick up a parcel. Swanson is not in command of this ship in any sense; he is not Starfleet and his orders come from somewhere else. So, the chain of command remains that you are acting Captain. The meeting was just to apprise all the senior staff of how things stand. Just, given everything, give me a heads-up on what you're doing.

DORCAS

This acceptable.

ADMIRAL

It is time to re-convene for department reports and to form a plan to find the Captain.

DORCAS

I bring donuts.

ADMIRAL

That's good, then you can schedule the meeting, and I will explain the chain of command then.

DORCAS

Will do.

## Scene 11: Rock and Roll Is Here To Stay

11 EXTERIOR, OUTSIDE EBBET'S CABIN

11

EBBET is eating dinner, or perhaps Second Dinner, with IGGY on his lap. IGGY appears to have adopted EBBET, and EBBET idly noodles the cat as he eats and every now and then tosses IGGY a treat. The stars have moved and the light has changed, perhaps the only way to know that time has passed on this planet. There is quite a din in the background, and the sound of a voice singing.

EBBET

What's that racket?



EBBET puts down his plate, which IGGY immediately takes possession of. He walks to the shoreline, where the PLAYERS, the THESIS ADVISOR, CAPTAIN, the STINGER, and CHIP are gathered around the Instrument. CAPTAIN is plucking parts of it as if it were a harp, and she is singing the alphabet to the tune of "Teen Angel."

EBBET  
Hey! That's not right!

CAPTAIN  
(finishing the song with a doo-wop G-HighG-E-B...)  
It will be when I can teach them to sing backup vocals!

CAPTAIN stands up and brushes off her pants.

CAPTAIN  
Thank you, thank you! You're such a lovely audience, I'd love to take you home! But honestly, I've had a day, it's time to go to sleep now. Bye-bye!

The PLAYERS make the "again!" motion with their tentacles.

CAPTAIN  
No! Sleep! Or maybe Food, then Sleep. Tomorrow, OK?

The PLAYERS, as a group, pluck on the instrument and something comes out that might be interpreted as "OK, Bye-bye" if one could squint one's ears. They all rise and disappear into the water, leaving the Instrument behind. CAPTAIN, with the STINGER on her shoulder, and CHIP, walk away toward EBBET.

CAPTAIN  
(dramatically)  
And there they go! *How many papers will result from today's epiphanies? Who will be granted a doctorate? Who will go on to be granted tenure?*  
(Yawning)  
Got a spare blanket?

EBBET  
You really are the frozen limit, you know.

CAPTAIN  
Somebody has to do it. Does it get cold at night here?

EBBET  
It doesn't even get night here!

EBBET goes into his hut, and comes out with a blanket.



EBBET

Here you are. Is there anything else you need?

CAPTAIN

No, I'm good, thanks. I found a nice rock. Good whatever.

EBBET nods and walks back into his hut, IGGY following along. CAPTAIN walks off with the blanket, and CHIP follows. They arrive at a large rock with a depression in the middle. CAPTAIN spreads out the blanket and nearly falls onto it in exhaustion. CHIP has a bit of trouble getting up onto the rock, so CAPTAIN rolls over and pulls her up. CHIP settles down beside the CAPTAIN, and the STINGER settles on CAPTAIN's stomach. A short interval passes.

CHIP

Captain?

CAPTAIN

Yes, Lieutenant?

CHIP

Good work today.

CAPTAIN

Thank you, Chip. Get some rest.

CHIP's antennae fall to her sides, and she appears to subside. The CAPTAIN lies awake, staring up at the stars.

CAPTAIN

(quietly, to herself)  
I want to go home.

As the camera pulls out, the CAPTAIN falls asleep.



**FADE TO:**

## Scene 12: "I'd Like To Have An Argument, Please."

12 THE BRIG.

12

The brig is just a very small flat or maybe a large closet, with a wall screen (playing Candid Camera), a chest with an air mattress on it, and a small table with a coffee-maker. The ADMIRAL, SWANSON, RUBA LACINCIA and VINNY are there. ADMIRAL is leaning against a wall in a corner, watching SWANSON and LACINCIA go at each other. VINNY is standing by LACINCIA, whining and occasionally pawing at her—very annoying when your dog has hooves instead of paws.

LACINCIA

Look! I already told you everything I know about all that! As far as the Captain, I have no idea! Absolutely no fucking idea where she is. If you really want to know, go ask Amelia.

SWANSON

Amelia who?

LACINCIA

THE Amelia. Her yacht. Go ask her yacht.

ADMIRAL

She's here?

LACINCIA

(Turning around)

Of course she's here! You know how the Captain is about that yacht.

SWANSON

The Captain has a yacht? What kind of place is this?!

ADMIRAL

I like that yacht. I've used it several times myself. Very comfortable. But why would Amelia know where the Captain is?

SWANSON

What?!

LACINCIA

(ignoring Swanson)

Implants! Technology! All that stuff! What is this? The Spanish Armada?!



ADMIRAL  
Nobody expects the Spanish Armada...  
(to SWANSON)  
You can continue your interrogation.

The ADMIRAL departs. As the door opens, we see T'Pryl waiting outside. As the door closes, the sounds of excited, raised voices booms into the corridor.

## Scene 13: Journeys Begin in Old Friends Meeting

### 13 In the TROUBLE's Hangar Deck

13

ADMIRAL and T'PRYL enter the shuttle bay, and see the Amelia, sitting there in all her glory.

ADMIRAL  
She's as beautiful as I remember.



T'PRYL  
Can you fly her?

ADMIRAL  
In my sleep.  
(to the ship)  
Hello, Amelia, it's Germaine. Permission to come aboard?

AMELIA  
Hello, Germaine. Long time no see. Do come in. I'll put the kettle on.

ADMIRAL  
Thanks, Amelia. Can your sensors locate the Captain?



AMELIA  
(after a short pause)  
She's not aboard the *Trouble*.

ADMIRAL  
Yes, we know that.

AMELIA  
I can tell which direction she has gone, but we are too far away for a more definite fix.

ADMIRAL  
Can you plot a course to find her?

AMELIA  
I can but try. Is she alone where she is?

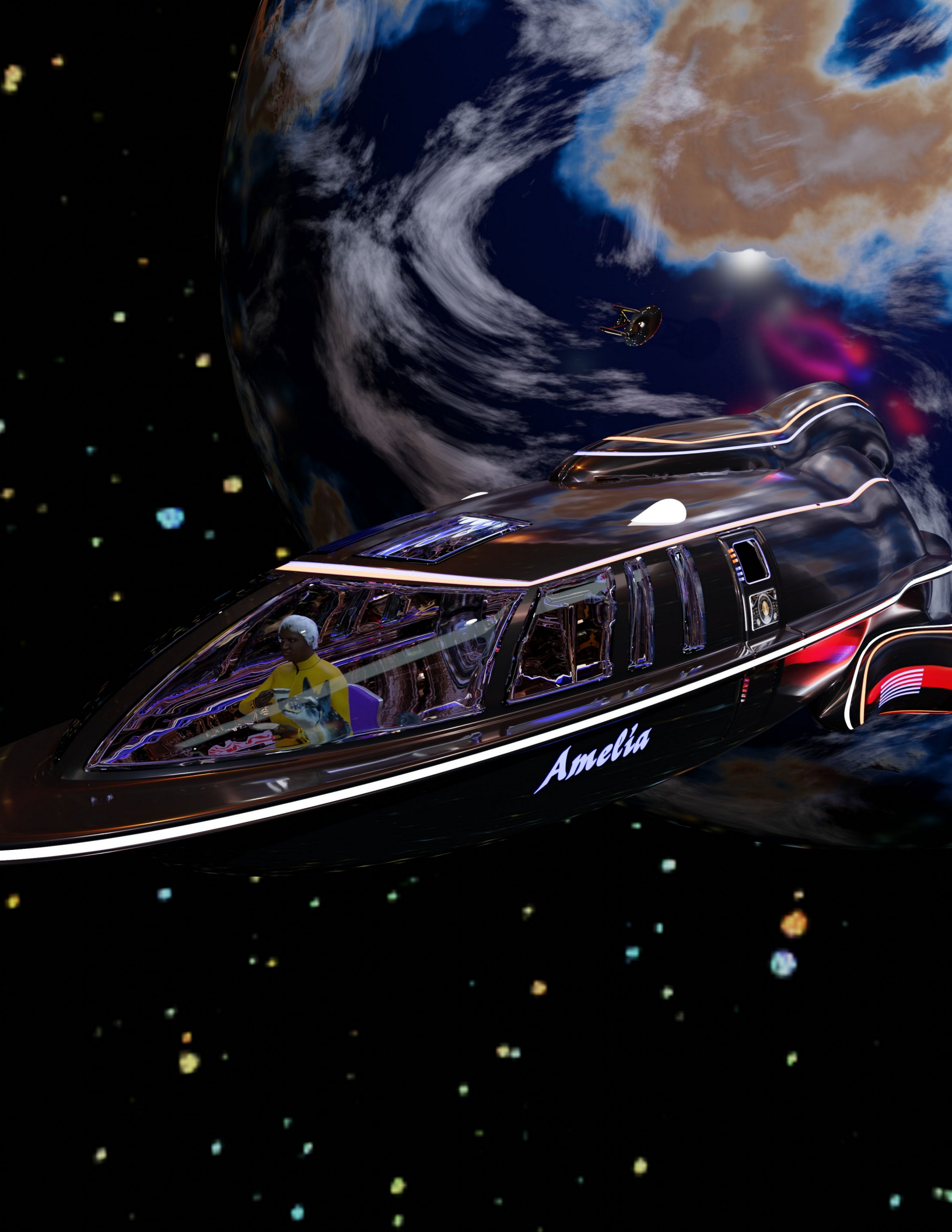
ADMIRAL  
No, there should be a Stinger and a cat with her. And possibly Lt. Chip.

AMELIA  
A Stinger! Excellent! I can work with them. Also, Vinny will help.

ADMIRAL  
(turning to T'Pryl, speaking quickly)  
Please find Commander Dorcas and bring her here. I'll have Vinny brought here. Also, ask Ens. Max and the Stingers to meet me here. You can run the meeting and collect all the reports for me. And, ask Mr. Sandor if he can adapt the Babel Fish device for intra-ship communication. I have somewhere I need to be.

ADMIRAL enters the Amelia. T'PRYL turns and leaves the Hangar deck.

**TO BE CONTINUED...**



*Amelia*