

STAR QUEST

"Pilot"

Written by

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TEASER

INT. K-KARZAN MOTHER SHIP - OUTSIDE QUEEN'S CHAMBER - DAY

The K-Karzan are aggressive, alien, lizard people. The architecture of the ship reflects their nature; it's like a cave with claw-like decorations and "teeth" over doorways. The large door in front of us leads to the K-Karzan Queen's chamber.

In front of the door are our heroes, the crew of the ESS Niwot. This is a none-too-subtle Star Trek parody, and their color coded near-spandex uniforms tell us that right away. They are taking cover in the doorway, firing with laser pistols at unseen enemies with similar firepower.

COMMANDER NORM LARSON is the first officer. He's about thirty, skinny, and he doesn't come across as a strong leader. Despite this, he's in charge here.

LIEUTENANT NAOMI KYLER is the helmswoman of the Niwot. She's about thirty, tough, and pretty.

ROB-ERT (Robot for Engineering, Reconnaissance and Tactics) is a throwback to the clunky robots of the 1950s. He's roughly humanoid, with two arms and legs, and has a laser weapon built into one of his hands.

CHIEF ENGINEER LIAM HODGES is very nerdy. He's short, thin, and has big glasses. He has a tablet and a holster for it on his belt. He's the only person not firing at their attackers; he is instead trying to hack the door panel.

TWO COMMANDOS and SERGEANT KEEN are also with them. They wear more armored uniforms, and have laser rifles. Sergeant Keen is lying on the ground with a burning hole in his chest, and is extremely dead.

NORM

Hodges, what's the status on the door?

HODGES

I'm working on it! These stupid lizard people have no concept of proper electrical configuration!

DOWN THE HALL - RIGHT SIDE

We see a bunch of the "lizard people." K-KARZAN SOLDIERS are a little bigger than humans, and are basically lizards who walk upright. They have pointy metal armor and laser rifles. They growl and roar as they fire at the humans.

BACK AT THE DOOR

A shot from the enemy hits the doorway right beside Norm.

NAOMI

I think they found that offensive!

HODGES

Frak off, you stupid reptiles!

NORM

(not defending them, just
has to correct him)
They're not actually reptiles, and
they have an average IQ of 106!

Norm looks the other way down the hall.

DOWN THE HALL - LEFT SIDE

More K-Karzan are filing in and opening fire.

BACK AT THE DOOR

NORM

And they've got us completely
surrounded!

ROB-ERT speaks in a near monotone, with a bit of arrogant, judgemental superiority.

ROB-ERT

Well Commander, looks like your
time in charge was brief.

NORM

(introspective)
Oh my god--this was my first time
in charge!

CUT TO BLACK

END TEASER

ACT I

BLACK

Title: "Eight hours earlier"

EXT. SPACE

We see the stars, and nothing more.

NORM (O.S.)
Commander Norm Larson personal log,
stardate--uh--I can never figure
that out. Tuesday.

A small shuttle craft comes into view.

NORM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I am on my way to rendezvous with
the ESS Niwot to assume my new
position as First Officer under
Captain Alfanso Ramirez.

INT. SHUTTLE CRAFT

Norm sits in the pilot's seat.

NORM
I cannot express with words what an
honor this is! Captain Ramirez is a
legend in Earth Fleet. Plus, my
previous assignments maybe didn't
go--so great. Got accused of
nitpicking a lot. But this is a
terrific opportunity to prove
myself as an officer! And maybe
just take one step closer to my
goal of captaining a ship myself.

ROB-ERT (O.S.)
ESS Niwot to shuttle craft, come
in.

NORM
Oh! That's them! I gotta go, buh-
bye!

Norm turns off the recording of his log.

NORM (CONT'D)
 "Buh-bye?" What am I doing? It's a
 log.
 (presses button)
 Niwot, this is Commander Larson,
 requesting permission to come
 aboard.

EXT. SPACE - OUTSIDE SHUTTLE CRAFT

We see the ESS Niwot, one of Earth Fleet's finest ships. It's
 large enough for 150 crew members.

ROB-ERT (O.S.)
 Roger that, Commander. Prepare to
 dock in--

NAOMI (O.S.)
 Wait, sir, there's something wrong
 with the shuttle.

INT. SHUTTLE CRAFT

Norm looks perplexed. Over the communicator, we hear CAPTAIN
 RAMIREZ.

RAMIREZ (O.S.)
 On screen.

A beat.

RAMIREZ (CONT'D)
 My god. Commander, are you
 experiencing some sort of ship
 emergency?

NORM
 What? No. Everything is uh--just
 fine, Captain. Oh, and may I say
 sir, that is an honor to--

RAMIREZ (O.S.)
 What could be causing this? Is
 there some sort of problem with his
 navigational system?

NAOMI (O.S.)
 Sensors don't indicate any kind of
 mechanical problem.

ROB-ERT (O.S.)
 Captain, if I perform a full tactical sensor sweep, I may be able to determine the problem.

NAOMI (O.S.)
 No, ROB-ERT! I'm figuring it out!

NORM
 Captain, I'm sorry, but I just don't understand what problem you're seeing. My instruments show nothing wrong with the shuttle.

RAMIREZ (O.S.)
 It might be nothing, Commander, but I'm just not ready to risk your life over it. Prepare for emergency evacuation teleport.

NORM
 (suddenly afraid)
 What? No no no no! No teleporting! Just let me uh--figure out what--wait--oh, you've got to be kidding me.

EXT. SPACE

We see the shuttle craft right in front of us, and the Niwot ahead of it. The Niwot looks like it's upside-down. A couple of thrusters fire on the shuttle. When the Niwot and the shuttle are oriented the same way, as though they were both travelling along the same plane, the rotation stops.

NORM (O.S.)
 Is that better, Niwot?

INT. SHUTTLE CRAFT

Norm sits with arms crossed, quite peeved.

ROB-ERT (O.S.)
 Shuttle appears to be flying normally, Captain.

RAMIREZ (O.S.)
 Impressive. How did you fix the problem, Commander?

NORM

We're in space! There is no up or down, or common orientation. It's not like every ship would just happen to be--

(forces calm, speaks to himself)

Stop. No more nitpicking. No more nitpicking.

(addressing Niwot again)

Just uh, recalibrated the navigational system, sir. Easy fix.

RAMIREZ (O.S.)

Well, good work. We'll guide you into the docking bay.

NORM

Roger that, Niwot. Shuttle craft out.

(sigh)

EXT. SPACE

The shuttle goes into the Niwot hanger bay.

INT. ESS NIWOT - HANGAR BAY

Norm steps out of the shuttle. He's holding a tablet. Naomi stands ready to greet him.

NAOMI

(peppy, formal)

Commander Larson! Welcome aboard the ESS Niwot, sir! I'm Lieutenant Naomi Kyler, helmswoman.

NORM

Good to meet you, Lieutenant.

NAOMI

If you'll follow me, I'll escort you to the bridge. Captain Ramirez is eager to meet you.

NORM

(the enthusiasm is back)

And I'm eager to meet him.

Norm follows Naomi.

INT. ESS NIWOT - ELEVATOR

The elevator takes them toward the bridge.

NORM

Wow. The Niwot. This is a legendary ship.

NAOMI

Sure is. Hey, as the new First Officer, you're going to be doing crew evaluations soon, right?

NORM

Uh, yeah. Right after I--

NAOMI

Well I just wanted to make sure you don't miss anything about me that might not be in my file. I'm the third youngest female in Earth Fleet to make Lieutenant; the others were too young, little girls, too early, bad decision by the brass. I'm the fourth highest rated marksperson, person, not just woman, in the fleet. That guy Ferguson deserves top slot, no argument, but the others got lucky and I should be number two! A few people on this ship may have bad things to say about me, but it's mostly just our navigator ROB-ERT who hates anybody with skin and he's jealous! So, is that in there? I just want to make sure you've got everything before my evaluation.

While Naomi talks, Norm takes a discrete peek at his tablet. He pulls up her file, and at the top, in big bold letters, is written "HYPER COMPETITIVE." He hides it when she finishes.

NORM

Uh, yeah, they've pretty much got all that.

NAOMI

Good.

The doors open, and Norm's face lights up with excitement.

INT. ESS NIWOT - THE BRIDGE

We follow Norm and Naomi as they step onto the bridge. A few CREW MEMBERS walk around, doing various tasks at the stations. In the center is the captain's chair, and CAPTAIN RAMIREZ stands in front of it, facing away from us. ROB-ERT sits in one of the two seats at the helm, in front of the captain (it's the layout from Star Trek; we're not being subtle here).

RAMIREZ

Navigation, are we ready for the jump to the Katara sector?

ROB-ERT

Course is plotted, sir. Ready for jump on your order.

RAMIREZ

Not just yet. First--

Ramirez turns to face us. He's handsome, suave, and glowing with inspirational confidence.

RAMIREZ (CONT'D)

I need to welcome our new first officer.

CS ON NORM

Norm is in seventh heaven.

SHOT ON NORM AND RAMIREZ

NORM

Captain Ramirez, it's an honor to meet you, sir!

They shake hands.

RAMIREZ

The honor is mine, Commander.

NORM

Really?

RAMIREZ

Well--it's a figure of speech. You know.

NORM

Oh right, right. Yeah. Well, I'm looking forward to serving with you, sir.

RAMIREZ

And you came at a good time; we just finished our negotiations with the people of Rogul 4. I negotiated with their queen myself, if you know what I mean.

(chuckles, elbows Norm)

NORM

Uh, yeah.

(uncertain laugh)

I--know what you mean.

LIEUTENANT SASHA DEETER, the communications officer, sits at the back of the room near the door. She is mid forties, always absorbed in her own business, and always sounds like she's reciting company-approved lines. In essence, the most annoying kind of telephone operator.

SASHA

Sir, there's a Queen of Rogul on the line for you.

RAMIREZ

Uh, tell her I'm not here.

SASHA

Ma'am? I'm afraid he is not here at the moment. Yes ma'am, I know this is the only Earth Fleet ship within fifty light years, but he is not here.

RAMIREZ

(to Norm)

Ah, negotiations. You ever partake in the pleasures of fine, alien females out here in the great universe, Larson?

NORM

Uh, well, there was this one time in the academy.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. EARTH FLEET ACADEMY - NORM'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Norm's room bears the signs of a studious nerd. It's mostly clean, with a desk, computer, and model space ships. On the wall, we see the silhouettes of Norm and TRELLIAN GIRL making out.

TRELLIAN GIRL

So Norm, you even gone all the way with a Trellian girl before?

NORM

Can't say that I have.

TRELLIAN GIRL

Well then, this is going to be your lucky night.

The Trellian girl starts undoing her skirt.

NORM

So, how does this work? Is there a--

The skirt falls away, and a bunch of wiggling tentacles suddenly emerge from her groin area.

NORM (CONT'D)

(recoiling in fear)

AAAAAAAAAAA!!!

END FLASHBACK

INT. ESS NIWOT - THE BRIDGE

NORM

Kind of had a bad experience, actually.

RAMIREZ

(laugh)

Trellians.

(perverted)

Trellians.

AT THE HELM

ROB-ERT and Naomi sit at the helm, a long "desk" in front of the main screen. Captain Ramirez and Norm continue to talk in the background.

ROB-ERT

How did your brown-nosing for a promotion go?

NAOMI

Shut up, ROB-ERT! It's not brown-nosing to be nice to people. And he's just been promoted to first officer, so there's no better time to get on his good side.

ROB-ERT

Transferred.

NAOMI

Huh?

ROB-ERT

He wasn't promoted. He was transferred. This is his third position as first officer this year.

NAOMI

What? You mean command dumped some nobody on us? Oh, man, I totally brown-nosed to him for nothing!

(a beat)

If you had a face, I'd tell you to wipe that look off it.

BACK TO RAMIREZ AND NORM

RAMIREZ

Well, I'm sure you'll want to start meeting the rest of the crew, but first, let's get this mission underway!

(to Naomi)

Helm, ready all stations for jump!

NAOMI

Aye, sir.

Naomi presses a button on her console, and we hear the voice of the NIWOT (The ship's computer is the ship's brain, and so it is effectively the ship itself that makes announcements). The computer's voice is a completely monotone female.

NIWOT

All hands, prepare for jump. All hands, prepare for jump.

Every member of the bridge crew takes his or her position.
Norm stands beside the Captain's chair.

ROB-ERT
All stations ready, sir.

RAMIREZ
Helm, jump!

EXT. SPACE

The Niwot turns toward its destination, and then zooms away faster than the speed of light in a brilliant flash.

INT. ESS NIWOT - BRIDGE

Captain Ramirez presses a button on his chair, and his voice is heard through the intercom all over the ship.

RAMIREZ
Attention crew. This is the captain. Now that we are on our way to the Katara sector, it is time you were briefed on our new mission.

INT. ESS NIWOT - HALLWAY

CREWMEMBERS stop and listen to the announcement.

RAMIREZ (O.S.)
Yesterday, Earth Fleet lost contact with the ESS Longmont. Her last transmission indicated she may have come under attack.

INT. ESS NIWOT - SHUTTLE BAY

More CREWMEMBERS stand, listening.

RAMIREZ (O.S.)
The Longmont is in deep space, and we are the only ship near enough to come to her aid.

INT. ESS NIWOT - MEDICAL

Several NURSES listen.

RAMIREZ (O.S.)
 We don't know what danger might be
 waiting for us, but I say we have
 nothing to fear.

INT. ESS NIWOT - BRIDGE

RAMIREZ
 This is the best ship in Earth
 Fleet, and you are the best crew. I
 know that no matter what we face,
 we will prevail.

Ramirez presses the button again. The speech is over.

RAMIREZ (CONT'D)
 (to Norm, suddenly
 chipper)
 So, we've got a little time, why
 don't you go and meet people, and
 we'll have a full situation
 briefing at 0800.

NORM
 Yes, sir.

INT. K-KARZAN MOTHER SHIP - OUTSIDE QUEEN'S CHAMBER

Two K-KARZAN GUARDS stand by the giant door. A K-KARZAN
 OFFICER walks into the queen's chamber. The door slides open
 and then shut behind him.

IN THE QUEEN'S CHAMBER

It's dark, and even more like a cave than the rest of the
 ship. The officer approaches the K-KARZAN QUEEN. She is out
 of frame, except for her large tail.

K-KARZAN OFFICER
 We have detected the human ship,
 your majesty. It is approaching the
 ambush sight.

K-KARZAN QUEEN
 Good. Bring him to me alive.

END ACT I

ACT II

INT. ESS NIWOT - THE BRIDGE - DAY

The captain exits the bridge. Norm stands near the captain's chair, and has his tablet in hand.

NORM
(looking at tablet)
Okay. Which officer is first for an evaluation?

NAOMI
(overhearing Norm)
Oh, uh, I know I said earlier I was ready for that, sir, but I've got a lot of stuff to do now. Uh--helm, ship, spacey stuff. Really urgent.

NORM
That's all right, Lieutenant. I'm actually pretty sure we covered the basics in the elevator.

ROB-ERT
(quiet)
Not to mention things that were probably uncovered in the elevator.

NAOMI
(whisper, to ROB-ERT)
Shut it, tin man!

Norm walks over to ROB-ERT. ROB-ERT continues working at his console without turning around.

NORM
(looking at tablet)
So, uh, ROB-ERT. Robot for Engineering, Reconnaissance, and Tactics.

ROB-ERT
It's my name. Pretty sure I already know what it stands for.

NORM
Uh, sorry. I'd like to ask you just a few questions.

ROB-ERT

Actually, I'd like to ask you one:
how did you even get this job?

NORM

ROB-ERT, have I done something to
offend you?

ROB-ERT

No. It's what you are that offends
me: a bag of loosely connected
organic tissues and bio-waste. I,
on the other hand, am a state-of-
the-art artificial life form with
superior intelligence, memory,
strength, and every other
considerable attribute. Why is it
that carbon-based drones like you
keep making first officer, and I
never get the position?

NORM

Well, it says on your file that
you've been repeatedly disciplined
for conduct unbecoming an officer.
Apparently you don't get along well
with other crew members.

ROB-ERT

Kiss my exhaust port, flesh sack.

NORM

Uh-huh. It also says here that
you've had trouble interfacing with
the Niwot computer core. The core
is the hard-wired brain of the
ship; effectively the ship itself.
Interfacing and translating the
information from the Niwot is an
essential function of ship robots,
but you haven't done it in nearly a
year. Mind telling me why?

ROB-ERT

First of all, let's get one thing
straight: I have no trouble
interfacing with Niwot. I had
trouble with the hours and hours of
talking she wanted to do after we
interfaced. I was being stifled. I
needed my space. I cut it off.

NORM

Oh. Uh, I'll have to make a correction to the file then. It says you had insufficient hardware.

ROB-ERT

What? Let me see that!

ROB-ERT grabs the tablet out of Norm's hands and reads it. He then looks up.

ROB-ERT (CONT'D)

Niwot! Did you write this?

NIWOT

(still emotionless, like always)
The author of the report is not on file.

ROB-ERT

You god damn, passive aggressive, 325,000 metric ton whore!

BY DEETER'S STATION - A MINUTE LATER

Norm walks up to Deeter. She is facing her screen.

NORM

(looking back toward ROB-ERT, speaking to self)
My god.
(to Deeter)
Lieutenant Sasha Deeter?

DEETER

(without turning around)
Just leave a message, and I can get back to you as soon as I'm available.

NORM

What? Uh, sorry, I was actually hoping to speak to you right now.

Sasha swivels her chair around.

NORM (CONT'D)

Thank you. Now, I see on your file that Earth Fleet has been trying to contact you about filing your personal reports.

(MORE)

NORM (CONT'D)

You uh--haven't actually got anything in your file about your activities for the past two years.

DEETER

Yes, I've been very busy. I can get a full report to you soon.

NORM

Oh, that won't be necessary, you can just give me a summary right now. Now, you last report was--

DEETER

I'm sorry sir, I'm receiving an emergency transmission from Earth Fleet. Can I ask you to hold?

Deeter swivels back to her console.

NORM

Oh. Uh--sure. We'll pick this up later, I guess.

DEETER

Thank you, sir.

Norm walks away.

DEETER (CONT'D)

(to headset)

Hi Denise. No, it was just the new first officer. I can still talk.

INT. ESS NIWOT - ELEVATOR

Norm steps alone into the elevator.

NORM

(looking at tablet)

Seems like a less-than-stellar crew for the legendary Niwot. Let me see here--

(to elevator)

Engineering.

The elevator starts moving.

INT. ESS NIWOT - ENGINEERING

The engineering room is the size of a basketball court, built around the FTL (Faster Than Light) engine.

The engine is a giant cylinder on its side covered with lights and sciency stuff. Several ENGINEERS walk around the engine and stand at nearby computer consoles.

Norm walks up to Hodges (The chief engineer who was trying to get the door open in the teaser), who stands with his arms crossed, looking up at the engine.

NORM

Chief Engineer Liam Hodges?

Hodges whips around.

HODGES

You!

NORM

Me?

HODGES

Who are you, and who authorized you to step into my sanctum?

NORM

I'm Commander Norm Larson, the new First Officer.

HODGES

Oh yeah, the new guy. Well, there are a couple of rules you should get acquainted with new guy. First: don't touch anything! This engine is a high sophisticated, finely tuned instrument that could blow the ship into subatomic particles if you so much as sneeze on it wrong. Second: where the hell are my requisitions?

NORM

Uh, yes, I was going to bring those up. You've requested a lot of new parts for the Niwot's systems. The most recent was a RDJ-224 plasma injector.

HODGES

Space turbo! That injector added to the primary plasma relay system would allow the Niwot go faster than any other ESS ship!

NORM

And I must repeat the answer Earth Fleet gave you, Mister Hodges: that equipment is well outside safety specifications for this ship.

HODGES

Safety specifications written by rules lawyers who've never done anything cool in their lives! Come on, just sign off on the tech; nobody has to know!

NORM

No.

HODGES

(childish whine)
Come on!

NORM

No!

Hodges grumbles, and takes out his tablet from his belt holster and types on it.

NORM (CONT'D)

Well, that settles that. Uh, I don't see anything in your file about deficient eyesight, why are you wearing glasses?

Hodges holds up his "glasses".

HODGES

These aren't glasses. They're high-tech digital visual enhancers that allow me to see information projected onto the image I see.

HODGES' POV

Norm stands in front of Hodges, and there are two FEMALE ENGINEERS and one MALE ENGINEER behind Norm. We see Hodges' hand with the glasses.

Hodges puts the glasses back on, and the world is covered with digital information on everything. Also, the female engineers look like they're wearing skimpy fetish outfits, and the male engineer looks like an orc. Norm appears normal so far.

NORM
That must be uh--very useful.

HODGES
Yes, yes it is.

We see Hodges raise his tablet up to his sight. He presses a button, finishing the typing he was doing. Instantly, Norm appears as though he's wearing a donkey outfit.

Norm turns to leave, and there is a "kick me" sign on his back.

INT. ESS NIWOT - ELEVATOR

Norm stands alone again. He's getting worn down by all this.

NORM
(sigh)
Medical.

The elevator starts to move.

INT. ESS NIWOT - MEDICAL

Norm walks in. We see two of the NURSES from earlier, and then DOCTOR JULES MANSON. Manson is a pasty, thin, worn looking, middle-aged man. He's facing away from Norm with a vacant look on his face.

NORM
(to self)
Well, this can't possibly be worse
than anything else so far.
(to Manson)
Doctor Jules Manson?

Manson turns around. He's very drunk, and grouchy.

MANSON
Who wants to know?

NORM
Oh dear god. Commander Norm Larson,
First Officer.

MANSON
Ooo, fancy title! So whasa madder
with you, huh?

NORM

I've got some questions I need to ask you. Particularly pertaining to your long list of reprimands for intoxication.

MANSON

That's normal. NEXT!

NORM

Doctor, you are drunk!

MANSON

Your face is drunk!
(laughs)

NORM

I am conducting an interview to evaluate you; this is incredibly inappropriate!

MANSON

(suddenly depressed)
Oh god--I know. I have a real problem.

Manson picks up a multi-injector (a high-tech syringe that synthesizes medicine and injects it), presses a button, and injects himself in the neck. He shakes and makes an ungodly groaning noise as the medicine detoxes him in seconds.

MANSON (CONT'D)

(sober)
Ah! That's better. Nothing like a good RXD-50 detox to get you on duty. So, what were you asking about again?

NORM

Doctor, intoxicated behavior and unethical self-medication are incredibly dangerous, and violations of your oath as a medical practitioner!

MANSON

Oh, come on. That's such a twenty-first century way to look at medicine. We live in the freaking future!

NORM

Its actually the present, right now.

MANSON

Whatever. Look, we've gotten chemical interaction with the human body completely figured out. For every problem, there's a solution. For every upper, there's a downer. There's nothing I can't take that I can't balance out, so why not live it up? We're not exactly hurting for drugs around here.

(laughs)

NORM

But you're needed at full capacity when you're on duty! Any mistakes could cost crew members in your care their lives!

MANSON

Please. Look at my record. You've got it right there--look at it. In my nineteen years of service, how many patients have I lost?

Norm looks at the tablet, then back at the Doctor.

NORM

Two hundred and fifteen?

MANSON

Really? Wow. I must have lost count. Well it's--below average--or something. Ah, whatever. I need a drink.

Manson walks away.

NORM

No, Doctor, we're not--done here. Oh my god.

INT. ESS NIWOT - BRIEFING ROOM

Captain Ramirez sits at the end of the briefing table. Norm stands beside him, holding his data tablet like it's proof of a murder.

NORM

Sir, I've just completed my evaluations of the officers, and I am frankly stunned!

RAMIREZ

I know. They're an impressive crew.

NORM

What? No, sir, this is a bad thing.

RAMIREZ

Oh. Really?

NORM

Yes sir. Most of them are in violation of multiple rules of conduct, several don't know proper ship procedures, and I think ROBERT might actually be planning a mutiny.

RAMIREZ

(laughs)
Nah, ROBERT just loves to joke like that.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. ESS NIWOT - BRIDGE

Naomi, ROBERT, and the captain sit in their respective chairs. Everyone is calm, just doing their jobs.

There's a long silence--

ROBERT

I could kill all of you and take over the ship in 6.23 minutes, if I ever wanted to.

NAOMI

I could do it faster!

END FLASHBACK

INT. ESS NIWOT - BRIEFING ROOM

NORM

I know this is my first day, sir, but I feel compelled to share my findings. I recommend immediate action be taken to get the officers up to code, or find replacements.

RAMIREZ

Well, it does seem a bit drastic,
but it looks like everyone's here,
so you can bring it up in the
briefing if you want.

NORM

Briefing?

Norm turns around, and we pan to the side to see that all the officers are standing right behind him. They've heard what he had to say, and they're unhappy.

NORM (CONT'D)

Oh right! The situation briefing.
At 0800. That's--right now.
(Nervous laugh)

END ACT II

ACT III

INT. ESS NIWOT - BRIEFING ROOM

Norm, Ramirez, and all the officers sit around a long table. Ramirez sits at the head, and Norm is next to him. ROB-ERT is standing beside the table, pointing to a large screen. Norm looks nervously at the officers, who mostly look at him with cold anger. Manson stares at Norm with a vacant expression. Only Ramirez looks at ROB-ERT as he gives his report.

ROB-ERT

--And all systems are functioning normally. Estimated time of arrival at coordinates is--

NIWOT

(talking over ROB-ERT)
Estimated time of arrival at coordinates is 0830.

ROB-ERT

--0830! I'm saying it! 0830 hours, Captain.

RAMIREZ

Good. Well, we've got some time, you wanted to talk about problems with the officers, Norm?

HODGES

Yes, please, do tell us how we've failed you, oh mighty, judgey one.

NAOMI

Yeah, we're just dying to hear.

NORM

I am very sorry if I've upset anybody--or everybody, but this crew is seriously sub-par.

NAOMI

We're the most highly decorated crew in Earth Fleet!

NORM

You're the most reprimanded crew in Earth Fleet!

(point at manson)

And he's clearly intoxicated again!

MANSON
(laugh)
People talk with their faces.

HODGES
(to Norm)
Rules lawyer.

DEETER
(to Norm)
Rude.

ROB-ERT
And who are you to talk, Commander?
You've been kicked off three ships
in the past year. Apparently there
are other people who don't value
your opinion as much as you do.

Norm feels the burn from the insult.

NAOMI
Sounds like you should be aiming
some of that endless criticism at
yourself.

HODGES
Yeah!

MANSON
(laugh)
Yeah!

Alarms go off, and red lights flash around the room.

NIWOT
Proximity alert. Earth Fleet vessel
detected.

Ramirez stands.

RAMIREZ
Well, I think we've made some good
progress, but duty calls! Everybody
to your posts!

Everyone stands and heads out. Norm lags behind, depressed.

INT. ESS NIWOT - BRIDGE

Everyone gets to their seats. Norm stand beside the captain
again.

RAMIREZ

Report!

ROB-ERT

Sensors have detected the Longmont directly ahead, Captain. She appears to be experiencing problems.

NORM

(scoff, pouting)
Right. She's probably just not on the exact same planar orientation to us. Like earlier.

ROB-ERT

Really? I think maybe the hull damage and fires suggest otherwise.

ROB-ERT presses a button, and the main screen turns on.

ON SCREEN

The Longmont is a very similar ship to the Niwot. It is drifting, and it looks very damaged. Flames sprout from several parts.

All gasp, and then look critically at Norm.

NORM

Oh! Hey, woah, woah, I am sorry, but that is not my fault! The screen wasn't on when you said--and why isn't that screen just on all the time? Why do we ever turn it off?

RAMIREZ

The Longmont is clearly in trouble! Are there any life signs?

ROB-ERT

Scans show thirteen survivors.

RAMIREZ

Then there's no time to waste! Commander Larson, prepare a boarding party!

NORM

Yes sir!

RAMIREZ

I'll be leading it.

NORM

What? Sir, you're the captain! Are you really sure you should be leaving the ship for a dangerous situation at a time like this?

Ramirez puts his hand on Norm's shoulder.

RAMIREZ

Norm, there are times when the guidelines and regulations just can't tell you what needs to be done. When the unknown rears its head, and the universe is at stake, sometimes you just need to trust your gut and charge in. For all we know Norm, right now, one of those stranded crew members--is really hot.

INT. ESS LONGMONT - HALLWAY

The longmont is only dimly lit. There is smoke in the air, and a broken panel on the wall emits sparks.

Five cylinders of light appear, and crew members of the Niwot materialize. It's Ramirez, two CREW MEMBERS, and two ESS COMMANDOS. Ramirez and the two crew members have laser pistols. The commandos have rifles with flashlights.

Ramirez holds up his communicator.

RAMIREZ

Niwot, we have arrived aboard the Longmont.

INT. ESS NIWOT - THE BRIDGE

Norm is standing by the captain's chair, as before. Everyone is listening to the crew on the Longmont. There isn't anything on the screen for them to see.

NORM

Good sir. Did you arrive all right? No molecules out of place, or-- mutations or body parts switched or anything?

Other crew members look at Norm like he's nuts.

RAMIREZ (O.S.)
We're fine. Heading to the source
of the life signs now.

ROB-ERT
Have a bit of teleportation fear,
Commander?

NORM
What? No.

NAOMI
Is that why you didn't want to be
transported off that shuttle,
earlier?

NORM
No! Now focus!

INT. ESS LONGMONT - CARGO BAY 2

Ramirez and the other members of the boarding party step into the cargo bay. It's dark like the rest of the ship. Giant metal boxes are scattered around the room.

NORM (O.S. VIA COMMUNICATOR)
You're getting closer, sir. Scans
indicate the survivors are right in
front of you.

A commando sweeps his light around the room, and we see the thirteen LONGMONT SURVIVORS. They sit together on the floor, all tied up and gagged. They make some scared noises.

RAMIREZ
Huh. Now why in the universe would
they all tie themselves up in the
cargo bay?

INT. ESS NIWOT - THE BRIDGE

NORM
Oh my god. It's a trap!

INT. ESS LONGMONT - CARGO BAY 2

We suddenly hear a lot of K-Karzan roaring, and shots from their weapons fly past the captain. He and the other Niwot crew start firing back.

INT. ESS NIWOT - THE BRIDGE

Everyone is alarmed. They can hear the fight.

RAMIREZ (O.S. VIA COMMUNICATOR)
We're under attack! Niwot, we--

The transmission cuts out.

NAOMI
We need to send backup!

ROB-ERT
(point at main screen)
Too late. Look.

ON SCREEN

The K-Karzan mother ship emerges from FTL right above the Longmont. The ship is shaped like a giant claw covered in more claws, and it's four times the size of the ESS ships.

BACK TO THE CREW

NORM
A K-Karzan mother ship!

ROB-ERT
Sensors indicate a teleport out.
The captain's transmitter is aboard
that ship.

EXT. SPACE

We see all three ships. The K-Karzan mother ship turns away, then jumps.

INT. ESS NIWOT - THE BRIDGE

NAOMI
They got away!

DEETER
Oh my god!

NAOMI
We have to follow them!

ROB-ERT
 Are you kidding? That ship could
 tear us apart if we tried!

CS ON NORM

Norm is thinking hard. He looks beside him, and we see--

THE CAPTAIN'S CHAIR

Empty. Waiting to be filled.

BACK TO NORM

Destiny is giving him a chance, and he knows it. At first,
 he's afraid, but then he looks determined.

SHOT ON NAOMI AND ROB-ERT

NAOMI
 (to ROB-ERT)
 What are we going to do?

NORM (O.S.)
 We're going after him.

THE CAPTAIN'S CHAIR

Norm is sitting in the chair. He is in command.

NORM (CONT'D)
 As of this moment, I am assuming
 command of the Niwot. The captain
 risked his life to save those
 people, and we will do no less for
 him! I don't know how, but we are
 getting Captain Ramirez back!

SHOT ON NAOMI AND ROB-ERT

They stare at Norm.

A beat.

NAOMI
 (to ROB-ERT)
 What are we going to do!?

END PART I