

University of New Mexico

## UNM Digital Repository

---

Theatre & Dance ETDs

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

---

Spring 4-15-2022

### Approaching the 'Small Planet': Remain in Light's Starship Road Trip as Metaphor for Theatrical World-Building

Amy Yourd

*University of New Mexico*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/thea\\_etds](https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/thea_etds)



Part of the [Dance Commons](#), [Playwriting Commons](#), and the [Theatre History Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Yourd, Amy. "Approaching the 'Small Planet': Remain in Light's Starship Road Trip as Metaphor for Theatrical World-Building." (2022). [https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/thea\\_etds/55](https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/thea_etds/55)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Electronic Theses and Dissertations at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theatre & Dance ETDs by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact [disc@unm.edu](mailto:disc@unm.edu).

Amy Yourd

---

*Candidate*

Theatre and Dance

---

*Department*

This dissertation is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication:

*Approved by the Dissertation Committee:*

Dr. Dominika Laster, Chairperson

---

Lisa Chavez

---

Kate Clarke

---

Erik Ehn

---

**APPROACHING THE ‘SMALL PLANET’:  
*REMAIN IN LIGHT*’S STARSHIP ROAD TRIP AS  
METAPHOR FOR THEATRICAL WORLD-BUILDING**

by

**AMY YOURD**

BFA Drama  
New York University  
2012

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

**Master of Fine Arts  
Dramatic Writing**

The University of New Mexico  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

**May 2022**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I offer my gratitude and appreciation to Dr. Dominika Laster, Professor Erik Ehn, Professor Kate Clarke, and Professor Lisa Chavez for serving on my dissertation committee and supporting the development of my work.

Additionally, I would like to include the following special acknowledgements: In chapter 3 of this dissertation, the discussion of acts of disobedience that lead to eucatastrophe in *Remain in Light* is inspired by Janet Brennan Croft's article "The Thread on Which Doom Hangs: Free Will, Disobedience, and Eucatastrophe in Tolkien's Middle Earth," published in *Mythlore* 29:1/2, Fall/Winter 2010. I developed the poetic text in the play after attending a workshop led by Caleen Sinette Jennings at the Kennedy Center, and I cannot imagine *Remain in Light* without her influence. I owe immeasurable debt to Chris Frantz, Jerry Harrison, Tina Weymouth, and David Byrne for being in a band called Talking Heads.

For the Linnell Festival of New Plays: thank you to the festival production team, to director Leonard Madrid, and to the incredible, unconquerable students whose labor made the production possible: MEJ, Dani, Emma, Steve, Ari, Taylor, Emmaleah, Amber, Yesenia, Micaela, Alexandra, Colyn, and Jesse.

Thanks to the MFA cohort, to the UNM faculty and staff who have sustained my time in this program, to the students in my *Introduction to Theatre* class, to the SCRAP officers, and to those unaffiliated with the department who supported *Remain in Light* just because they wanted to: Hollis, Lexie, Vince, Bards, Mel, Zed, Andy, and Savannah. Special thanks to Bella Poynton and most especially to Eric Gould.

**APPROACHING THE ‘SMALL PLANET’:  
*REMAIN IN LIGHT*’S STARSHIP ROAD TRIP AS  
METAPHOR FOR THEATRICAL WORLD-BUILDING**

by

Amy Yourd

BFA DRAMA, NEW YORK UNIVERSITY, 2012.  
MFA DRAMATIC WRITING, UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO, 2022.

ABSTRACT

Using Elinor Fuchs’ “Visit to a Small Planet” as inspiration, I consider my play *Remain in Light* as its own small planet, examining theories of world-building, science fiction, and utopian performativity to investigate possible functions of imaginary worlds onstage. In chapter one, I appropriate Fuchs’ script analysis exercise for my own purposes of play development, discovering a world of sensory detail that parallels the characters’ experience in the play. In chapter two, I conceive of the play’s starship as an imaginary world crashing towards this one, its escape a hopeful reflection on the utopian possibilities of alternate worlds. In chapter three, I examine how the play’s characters imagine alternatives to their circumstances while refusing to comply with the rules of their world. In the fourth and final chapter, I consider the play as an incomplete world in terms of my writing process and the inherent incompleteness of theatrical performance scripts.

## Contents

Acknowledgements.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
List of Figures.....	vi
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: World-Building in Theory and Practice.....	12
Chapter 2: The Utopian Function of Imaginary Worlds.....	26
Chapter 3: Refusing World Archetypes in <i>Remain in Light</i> .....	37
Chapter 4: The Incomplete World .....	53
References.....	68
Appendix: <i>Remain in Light</i> .....	70

## Figures

1	Promotional photo of Talking Heads, circa 1985 (Credit: Pictorial Press Ltd / Alamy stock photo).....	13
2	The construction and completion of <i>Remain in Light</i> 's "small planet," 2021 (credit: author).....	19
3	Messenger conversation between the playwright and the actors who played Cap and Lieu in UNM's Linnell Festival of New Plays (credit: author).....	61

## Introduction

The only truly alien planet is Earth.

—J.G. Ballard, “Which Way to Inner Space?”

In January of 2017, I had a vivid dream about flight. This is a common enough theme, but in this particular dream I did not experience the actions and events as though they were truly happening. Instead, I performed them for an unseen audience. When I awoke, I knew with clarity that I needed to realize the dream as a play. I sketched out the arc of the dream in a composition notebook and—after ten days—I had written the first draft of *Mick the Mapmaker*. In the process, I stumbled upon a writing method and an orientation of the self that led me to pursue graduate study in dramatic writing.

In his book *Maps of the Imagination*, Peter Turchi notes the conceptual similarities between creative writing and cartography, likening a piece of writing to a map designed to guide the reader on a particular journey. He proposes that in order to create a legible “map,” the writer must thoroughly explore and observe the “world” that the map attempts to depict (2004: 14). Because the dream had happened to me in my sleep, unprompted, I tried to let the play happen to me as well. Instead of making decisions about character, plot, or theme in the play, I returned again and again to the memory of the dream, observing and listening to that ephemeral world in order to determine what to write.

Set in the aftermath of an apocalyptic event that erased the population’s memories, the characters in the play look to their actions to determine their identities, give themselves names like Chef, Commander, and Mick the Mapmaker, and struggle to maintain these personas when their actions and instincts contradict the ways that they see themselves. In the



creatively stagnant years of my early twenties, I had all but ceased to think of myself as a theatre artist. However, in that dream-world, the struggle to articulate my identity transformed into a play that investigates the methods humans use to explain and articulate who they are. Ironically, by encountering these questions in my dreams and translating them into actions in my waking life, I became a playwright overnight.

Disappointingly, my subsequent writing has not come so easily, but the observation technique that I used to write *Mick the Mapmaker* has persisted as though the method, not the play itself, were the dream's true reward. My most recent play began not from a dream but from a hodgepodge of formal hunches, personal experiences, and pop cultural artifacts, and the early writing process consisted of examining these elements from every angle in an attempt to discover precisely what play, if any, was trying to emerge. *Remain in Light* turned out to be the story of five aliens who work aboard a remote space station, venturing out on interplanetary assignments to gather information about other worlds and report what they have learned back to their employers (a mysterious entity called "Management"). After a night of partying, the team awakes on a spaceship crashing towards Earth. They expect that the trip is a routine assignment from Management, but the newly promoted Captain (Cap) seems more interested in doing hallucinatory space drugs and listening to Talking Heads cassette tapes than preparing for the assignment. As the ship approaches the planet, the team discovers that Cap has stolen the starship in an attempt to escape from Management's exploitation, and secrets are revealed about Management's true intentions for the planets they visit.

Very little about this play was apparent to me at first, but it is possible to trace its development from the earliest ideas to its eventual manifestation. Some of the main formal

characteristics of *Remain in Light* were evident in its original title, *Five Aliens, No Furniture*, and while developing the play I often referred to those characteristics, extrapolating them for more information when I felt stuck. If all five characters were to be as important as the title suggested, it followed that the cast would operate as an ensemble and share similar quantities of stage time. If there truly were to be no furniture in the space (a convention I would break later on), the characters would have limited options for physically engaging with their surroundings. To address the need for shared stage time, I fabricated reasons for the characters to remain in the space, even considering that they might spend the play trapped in a single room. To address the limited physical options, I envisioned ways that the characters could interact with architectural features, which led to scenes in which they slept, wrestled, collapsed, passed out, and hallucinated on the floor. Both extrapolations resulted in affective material as well—as I considered the claustrophobia of the single room and inescapable tug of the floor’s gravity, I noted the discomfort, desperation, and anxiety that both sensations might produce in the characters.

Just as I had observed and recorded the world of the dream in order to write *Mick the Mapmaker*, I was equally able to develop *Remain in Light* by exploring its “world.” In both cases, the material discovered in the exploration process proved crucial to the drafting process as well. As Turchi explains, “If we attempt to map the world of a story before we explore it, we are likely either to (a) prematurely limit our exploration, so as to reduce the amount of material we need to consider, or (b) explore at length but, recognizing the impossibility of taking note of everything, and having no sound basis for choosing what to include, arbitrarily omit entire realms of information” (2004: 14). To address this question of inclusion, Turchi also notes that a map never perfectly recreates its corresponding landscape.

Certain information will be included or excluded in order for the map to serve its purpose, and just as a map's purpose may be deduced by the nature of the information it presents, Turchi suggests that the purpose of a piece of writing may become clear by examining its contents. Conversely, a writer may determine the necessary contents of a work by identifying its purpose. As he elaborates, "Perhaps the only answer is that we can't know what needs to be in, what needs to be out, until we know what it is that we're making, toward what end" (69). Either way, the writer-as-cartographer needs to know a great deal about the world that they seek to share with their audience and the journey that they plan for the audience to take through that world in order to create an effective "map."

I experienced this quite strongly when developing *Remain in Light*, perhaps most notably in the first draft. After months of exploration, I had a vague sense of the play's story and themes but had not quite discovered the conflicts that would propel the characters through the events I had planned. In the play, Cap and the Lieutenant (Lieu) share a deep, lasting friendship, but Lieu becomes jealous of Cap's promotion and furious that Cap refuses to take the assignment seriously. When drafting the play, the two characters bickered endlessly, engaging in stalemates that persisted for pages until the source of their tension finally became clear:

Party with me, Lieu?  
Lieutenant?

CAP

What about the mission?

LIEU

Will you fucking believe me  
When I say that the mission can wait?

CAP

LIEU

No.  
But just because I've never trusted you.

CAP

You trust me.  
You just say you don't.

LIEU

How can you tell?

CAP

Your face.

LIEU

Aaah, what about my face?

CAP

It's so familiar.  
We've known each other for a long, long time.  
Of everybody that I've served with, Lieu, you—  
Your face looks the most familiar to me.  
Your face looks the most like home.

LIEU

Don't be ridiculous.

CAP

I'm not.  
What do you see when you look at my face?

LIEU

...  
Someone that I know very well.  
Someone who knows what I care about,  
What I've been through,  
Who knows what matters to me. (2021: 67-68)

I had not planned to write a love story, but with this exchange it became painfully clear that Cap and Lieu harbored romantic feelings for one another. This discovery about Cap and Lieu shone brightly upon the rest of the play, bringing to light crucial information about Cap's motivations, Lieu's backstory, and additional conflicts, both internal and external, that came

to affect the play's trajectory. In fact, this new knowledge about Cap and Lieu caused such ripples across the surface of the play that the entire narrative came to revolve around the revelation and rekindling of their romance—the love that they share is the eye of the play's storm. However, this discovery was only possible after a lot of drafting and exploration, and addressing its importance required even more drafting and exploration after the fact. In this way, my process feels more like excavating an archaeological site than mapping a pre-existing landscape. Director and playwright Mary Zimmerman has referred to archaeology in her practice, describing the process of discovery that she undergoes when devising work with an ensemble: “From the moment a date for the first preview has been assigned, I feel that the piece is lying in wait for us, buried underground. I tell my colleagues that we must work carefully in excavating this piece.” (2007: 310). Just as Zimmerman envisions her process as an excavation, it has seemed in my practice that a play reveals more of itself with each new draft, taking its unique shape and becoming more specific in its details.

This analogy of the site is clearly illustrated by another example from *Remain in Light*. After examining the formal characteristics implied by the title *Five Aliens, No Furniture*, I had a sense that the action would take place in one location and consist of one continuous scene. Early on, I also wanted to explore New York City as a place of nostalgia by investigating Cap's fixation on the band Talking Heads. I initially described the setting as an empty loft in Lower Manhattan, thinking that the extraterrestrial characters could treat the space as a makeshift base of operations for exploring the city. However, this choice never quite worked—the stakes were low, and the characters had no reason to remain in the space for very long. Additionally, their human-seeming mannerisms and emotions fit in *too* well in this setting, minimizing the alien element that was equally crucial to my early ideas. In order

to address these issues, the next draft of the play included a major change: I set the play in space, aboard the aliens' starship on their journey towards Earth.

Doing so addressed many of the play's issues so naturally that it did not feel like much of a change. Rather, it seemed that I had discovered the play's setting as it had always been, except with greater specificity. Turchi does address this phenomenon in his consideration of the writer-as-cartographer: "Eventually, we find the story not *despite* failed efforts to find the story but *through* those efforts" (2004: 16). In my initial explorations of the archaeological site that would become *Remain in Light*, I observed a handful of things about the setting: I knew that it would be a single room, I knew that the room would be mostly empty, and I even posited that the room would not be easy to leave. Due to my early thematic interests, I assumed that the empty room I had discovered on the archaeological site would turn out to be somewhere in New York. When I uncovered another layer, I saw that this empty room had been the bridge of a starship all along.

With this discovery, I have arrived at the third and final analogy that I feel applies to both my writing process and the theoretical ideas that I engage in this dissertation. Befitting the deep space setting of *Remain in Light*, I describe the play as Elinor Fuchs does in her article, "EF's Visit to a Small Planet: Some Questions to Ask a Play": "A play is not a flat work of literature, not a description in poetry of another world, but is in itself another world passing before you in time and space" (2004: 6). Initially a script analysis exercise for MFA Dramaturgy students at Yale, in the article Fuchs proposes that regarding plays as planets allows for them to be considered not only in terms of language, character, and narrative, but in terms of time and space, the dimensions in which they are seen and performed. Interestingly, however, variations of Fuchs' analogy have been applied to forms beyond live

performance and dramatic literature, perhaps most notably in the concept of “world-building.”

The image of Fuchs’ “Small Planet” evokes science fiction, fantasy, and other genres that depict imaginary cities, islands, continents, and planets or investigate alternate versions of pre-existing ones. While “world-building” is most often used in reference to narratives in these categories, in his book *Building Imaginary Worlds: The Theory and History of Subcreation*, Mark J. P. Wolf describes the relationship between story and world-building in terms strikingly similar to Fuchs’: “Since stories involve time, space, and causality, every story implies a world in which it takes place” (2012: 29). Just as Fuchs warns against analyzing plays solely in terms of language or character, Wolf argues that imaginary worlds benefit from examination beyond the lens of narrative or form, especially when such worlds are “transmedia,” existing across multiple forms of media (7). In his book *Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Politics: Transmedia World-Building Beyond Capitalism*, Dan Hassler-Forest offers some characteristics common to transmedia world-building practices, proposing the following:

1. Transmedia world-building takes place *across* media.
2. Transmedia world-building involves *audience participation*.
3. Transmedia world-building is a process that *defers narrative closure* (2016: 5).

While Hassler-Forest intends for these qualities to be applied to popular transmedia franchises such as *Star Trek*, *The Walking Dead*, or *The Lord of the Rings*, the qualities that he assigns to these worlds seem equally but differently applicable to Fuchs’ play-worlds.

While I have mostly concerned myself with creating the script for *Remain in Light*, perhaps evoking the play’s “small planet” through the words on the page, in performance the world of the play will cease to exist solely as a written text and will instead exist across media, not in a

transmedia sense but in the multitude of design and performance forms that combine in theatrical production. The work of actors, designers, dramaturgs, and other theatrical collaborators echoes the kind of activities that audiences do to participate with transmedia worlds, though transmedia fans are rarely considered to be professional creators in the same way as theatrical practitioners. For transmedia franchises like *Star Wars*, deferring narrative closure refers to the endless possibilities for sequels, spinoffs, adaptations, and remakes that take place in the franchise's world, ensuring that the world will never cease to grow and change. There is again here a parallel to theatre, albeit a narrower one: even when no more changes are to be made to *Remain in Light's* script, the world and the narrative will remain unfinished, with each production or interpretation offering possible versions of the world that bring the script to life.

In this dissertation, I consider *Remain in Light* as a metaphor for its own creation, using the play and the process of creating it to reflect on the uses of imaginary worlds and world-building in writing for the stage. Because, as Wolf and Hassler-Forest note, the theory of world-building can be applied across multiple forms of media, it is useful to describe this subject using generalized language. For the most part, I model my language after Wolf's, which he summarizes thus:

The term "author" is used to include writers, filmmakers, game makers, and so on, whereas "audience" includes readers, viewers, listeners, and players. The media objects in which worlds appear, such as books, photographs, films, radio plays, comics, and video games, are collectively referred to as the "works" set in a world, which the audience "experiences" (by reading, watching, listening, playing, and so on). (2012: 13)

Additionally, texts on world-building use a variety of terms to describe imaginary worlds. In this research, I often refer to J.R.R. Tolkien's essay "On Fairy-Stories", in which he coins the term "sub-creation" to describe both the act of world-building and the imaginary worlds



themselves (Wolf omits the hyphen in his use of the term) ([1947] 2014: 66). Tolkien also distinguishes sub-creations as “Secondary Worlds” that relate to our own “Primary World,” though his specific characterization of these terms narrows their use here (50-51). Again, following Wolf, I default to the term “imaginary worlds” unless engaging directly with Tolkien or related theories (2012: 14). Despite the irrefutable applications of world-building to non-scripted theatrical performance, in this dissertation I adhere my terminology to Fuchs’ script analysis exercise and my position as a playwright, amending the term to “imaginary play-worlds” when discussing world-building in the context of dramatic literature and theatrical performance. Additionally, to describe non-imagined worlds, the “real” world, or what Darko Suvin describes as “the author’s empirical environment” (1979: 8), I use the phrase “the known world.” To explicitly create the potential for gender-diverse casting and queer visibility in productions of *Remain in Light*, no personal pronouns are used in the script, so in this dissertation the characters are referred to by the singular form of “they.”

Throughout the development of *Remain in Light*, I was often asked to explain why I had chosen to write a science fiction play. Deep in the process of exploration and discovery, it was difficult to explain that I was simply doing as I had done since that first dream of flight: observing and listening to the world I imagined in order to depict it faithfully in the script of the play. And so, *Remain in Light* and its desolate starship serve a number of functions as they approach the planet Earth. First, the starship illustrates as a surprisingly literal model of Fuchs’ article: a very small “planet” passing before the audience in time and space. Next, the starship’s journey towards its planetary destination serves as my own metaphor for world-building, approaching the planet Earth just as I approach the planet of the play. Finally, just as it is crucial to the story that the starship reaches its desired destination of

Earth, it is equally necessary to remember that Earth is the destination of all plays. Even though authors conceive of imaginary worlds across media, the final destination for all creative works is the minds of the humans who experience them, minds which later lay down to rest in their shotgun shacks, their automobiles, or their beautiful houses to dream their own imaginary worlds.

## Chapter 1

### World-Building in Theory and Practice

The early characteristics of *Remain in Light*—the band-like ensemble of aliens, the penniless dystopia of a disappearing New York, and even the empty room that resembled my Brooklyn apartment and undergraduate drama studios—all evoked for me the music of Talking Heads, a band that I had long desired to explore in theatrical work. Seeking inspiration, I gathered photos of the band, and I came across one particularly evocative image: the four original members of the band shot in black-and-white, seemingly trying but failing to look like an ensemble that truly belongs together (see Figure 1). Drummer Chris Frantz and guitarist Jerry Harrison are nearly indistinguishable in collared shirts and dark jackets. Tina Weymouth, the band's bassist and sole female member, looks miserably out-of-place in a white dress. But the front man, the favorite, the emerging eccentric David Byrne, stands out from the group. Byrne wears a white shirt and a darker, slightly-too-large suit that matches that of his bandmates. Yet, he stands mannequin-stiff, a neutral expression on his face, his arms hanging loosely at his sides. There is something uncanny about his presence, as though he were not entirely human, but such a hypothesis is impossible to confirm or deny without looking into his eyes—eyes that are conveniently, mysteriously obscured by sunglasses. His styling is at once eccentric, striking, strangely comedic, and aggressively emotionless. He emanates a strange charisma, similar to the kind of charisma I envisioned for Cap, a character who had just begun to emerge in the play that was still called *Five Aliens, No Furniture*. So far, the Cap I had written was magnetic, commanding, ridiculous, and ever-so-slightly mysterious. In the photograph, I saw a sliver of the play's world reflected in Byrne's sunglasses. From that moment on, Cap wore sunglasses.



Figure 1. Promotional photo of Talking Heads, circa 1985. Credit: Pictorial Press Ltd / Alamy stock photo.

I worried a lot about this choice. Early on, I often doubted my choices about the play, so unfamiliar with the emerging world that nothing I had written seemed to make any sense. To make matters worse, my fellow playwrights at UNM expressed similar doubts: Did Cap need sunglasses? Did the Talking Heads motif add anything to the story? For that matter, did the characters need to be aliens at all? Did the play really need to be science fiction? At times, it seemed like everything I thought that I knew about the play was arbitrary, unnecessary, and insignificant. In “Visit to a Small Planet,” Fuchs advises against characterizing play-worlds this way, stating that “we must make the assumption that in the world of the play there are no accidents. Nothing occurs ‘by chance,’ not even chance. In that case, nothing in the play is without significance” (2004: 6). The doubting playwright can take

comfort from the assertion that the elements of their plays are, in fact, significant. However, in the context of script analysis, the play-worlds described by Fuchs are often more fully developed than the worlds of plays that are still being written. If I tried to perceive the “small planet” of my emerging alien play, it was a planet in eclipse. As Fuchs continues, “The play asks us to focus upon it a total awareness, to bring our attention and curiosity without the censorship of selective interpretation, ‘good taste,’ or ‘correct form.’ Before making judgments, we must ask questions.” (2004: 6). Therefore, if I observed that Cap was wearing sunglasses, it was less helpful to ask *if* the sunglasses were important than it was to ask *why* they were important.

In *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, Darko Suvin proposes that this desire to question the world is a key characteristic that sets science fiction (which he abbreviates as “SF”) apart from other literary genres:

Where the myth claims to explain once and for all the essence of phenomena, SF first posits them as problems and then explores where they lead. [...] It does not ask about The Man or The World, but which man?: in which kind of world?: and why such a man in such a kind of world? (7)

One of science fiction’s defining formal characteristics, claims Suvin, is its use of “an imaginative framework alternative to the author’s empirical environment” (1979: 8). While this quality could easily be assigned to genres including fantasy and fairy tale, science fiction differs in the application of that imaginative framework, seeking to question and investigate the laws of the known world by imagining alternatives and extrapolating their potential effects. Folktales, for example, use imagination as an escape or as wish-fulfillment, rather than an investigation of possibilities. As Suvin explains, the folktale “does not use imagination as a means of understanding the tendencies latent in reality, but as an end sufficient unto itself and cut off from the real contingencies” (8). While the characteristics

and generic qualities of a work may be determined by the application of Suvin's "imaginative framework," the other part of his description, "alternative to the author's empirical environment" (8), could refer to a wide array of works set in imaginary worlds.

Suvin proposes that this alternative environment stems from the presence of a "novum," a "totalizing phenomenon or relationship deviating from the author's and implied reader's norm of reality" (64). This "novum," which Suvin characterizes as novelty, innovation (63), or a "strange newness" (4), must be "'totalizing' in the sense that it entails a change of the whole universe of the tale, or at least of crucially important aspects thereof" (64). For Suvin, the novum implies the existence of a changed universe, an imaginary alternative to the known world wherein the possibilities of the novum may be explored. Seeking to distinguish science fiction from fantasy and its associated forms, Suvin proposes that novae in science fiction must be "validated by cognitive logic" (63), but he also asserts that novae can generally be found across variety of genres:

If one takes the minimal generic difference of SF the presence of a narrative novum (the *dramatis personae* and/or their context) significantly different from what is the norm in "naturalistic" or empiricist fiction, it will be found that SF has an interesting and close kinship with other literary subgenres that flourished at different times and places of literary history: the classical and medieval "fortunate island" story, the "fabulous voyage" story from antiquity on, the Renaissance and Baroque "utopia" and "planetary novel," the Enlightenment "state [political] novel," the modern "anticipation" and "anti-utopia." [...] SF shares with myth, fantasy, fairy tale, and pastoral an opposition to naturalistic or empiricist literary genres. (1979: 3-4)

In his introduction to *Science Fiction: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Mark Rose also notes the similarities between science fiction and historical genres such as the imaginary voyage, this time under the umbrella of "romance" (1976: 2). While Suvin asserts that science fiction imagines "cognitive" novae in order to investigate and question the known world (10), Rose addresses romance's tendency to use allegorical narratives to do the same: "Romance, as a

rule, moves freely toward symbolism and allegory, a tendency that contributes to one of its major literary strengths, the ability to treat broad and often explicitly philosophical issues in fictional form” (2). He goes on to detail a number of similarities between science fiction and romance, including the conglomeration of the transcendent and the mundane, the use of representative, archetypal characters, and repeated uses of quest narratives, that also reflect thematic and narrative elements found in *Remain in Light*.

Noting this kinship between science fiction, romance, and other genres concerning imaginary worlds, it is possible to accept the premise of my play as a work of science fiction. Again, perhaps the question is not “Does the play need to be science fiction?” or “Do the characters need to be aliens?” but “What novae exist on this play’s ‘small planet,’ and how do they affect the rest of the play?” Given the existence of five aliens, the characters that I observed on the planet’s surface long before observing much else, what else can I observe or deduce about the planet? What about the other elements that I observed, such as Cap’s sunglasses? In rehearsals for a public reading early in the play’s development, the sunglasses served just the purpose they serve in the original photograph. They drew attention to Cap and made Cap seem larger-than-life in a comedically simple way. They also obscured Cap’s true intentions, characterized Cap as both mysterious and guarded, and served as a catalyst to Cap’s conflict and eventual reconciliation with Lieu. The Talking Heads photo had informed the inclusion of the sunglasses, and the sunglasses in turn had started to inform the play, its characters, and its narrative.

However, in the context of the known world, sunglasses could hardly be said to constitute a “novum.” In those early rehearsals, they began to influence other elements of the play’s world, but they did not do so in a way that was particularly unique to that world over

other worlds. “Small Planet” posits that plays present alternatives to the known world, not by the inclusion of novae that augment the world, but by the exclusion of all else: “The stage world never obeys the same rules as ours, because in its world, nothing else is possible besides what is there: no one else lives there; no other geography is available; no alternative actions can be taken” (Fuchs 2004: 6). The sunglasses affect the play’s world not because they are different from the known world, but because they exist despite the exclusion of countless other known-world elements. Thus, in developing the play and examining the significance of the sunglasses, I need only observe them in relation to everything else that is already present, deducing their significance in relation to these elements and perhaps inferring the presence of additional elements in the process. In this way, everything in the play’s world, including elements of setting, can act upon other elements of the world just as the characters act upon each other.

Notably, Rose also discusses how romance forms differ from their realistic counterparts in their use of setting: “In realistic fiction, setting tends to be primarily a context for the portrayal of character; in romance forms, setting typically receives much more emphasis. Indeed, sometimes the setting of a romance will be more ‘alive,’ will have more ‘personality,’ than any of the characters” (1976: 4). This contradicts the prioritization of language and character in playwriting that Fuchs also dismantles in “Visit to a Small Planet,” stating both that “those who think too exclusively in terms of language find it hard to read plays,” and “to look at dramatic structures narrowly in terms of characters risks unproblematically collapsing this strange world into our own world” (2004: 6). In her article, Fuchs asks the observer to consider a number of questions about the “small planet” and its characteristics. Moving linearly through “Small Planet,” the observer must address space,



time, climate, mood, music, the social aspects of the world, and occurrences of change in all of these, before examining the characters themselves. Fuchs' rich attention to world beyond character is mirrored in science fiction theory, prompting Rose to literally personify such settings: "The phenomenon of *landscape as hero* is particularly common in science fiction, where the truly active element of the story is frequently neither character nor plot but the world the writer creates" (1976: 4). This makes a good deal of sense in the context of *Remain in Light*, where the heroic landscape of the starship remains active, continuing to approach its destination even when the characters devolve into childish stalemates and drug-fueled poetic monologues.

After discovering that the empty room I envisioned for *Remain in Light's* setting was, in fact, a starship crashing towards Earth, a number of things fell into place about the play. The voyage through space clarified the play's timeline, providing the context of a road trip to the characters' inaction and signaling the journey's inevitable end. There would be dire consequences if something went wrong with the ship's systems, and Cap had a reason to keep the purpose of the voyage a secret lest the team turn the ship around if they discovered the truth. New York City became a far-away ideal, a dream of a place that the characters had to imagine rather than experience, and their human-seeming behaviors and emotions could flourish in this setting, distanced as they were from actual humans. However, the starship emphasized some of the play's problems, as well. With no "outside" to the empty room save for the emptier void of space, the play's small planet shrunk significantly, amplifying Fuchs' statement that "nothing else is possible besides what is there: no one else lives there; no other geography is available" (2004: 6). It became clear that while I had made great progress in

exploring the characters, their relationships, and the overall arc of the play, I needed to explore the newly discovered setting in much greater detail.

To address this, I decided to adapt Fuchs’ “Visit to a Small Planet” for my own purpose of developing the world of *Remain in Light*. Instead of simply asking the small planet’s observer to consider the questions in the context of the play, Fuchs begins the exercise with some additional directions: “To see this entire world, do this literally: Mold the play into a medium-sized ball, set it before you in the middle distance, and squint your eyes.” (2004: 6). After locating a spare copy of the script, I did as Fuchs instructed and molded it into a small planet-shaped ball (See Figure 2).

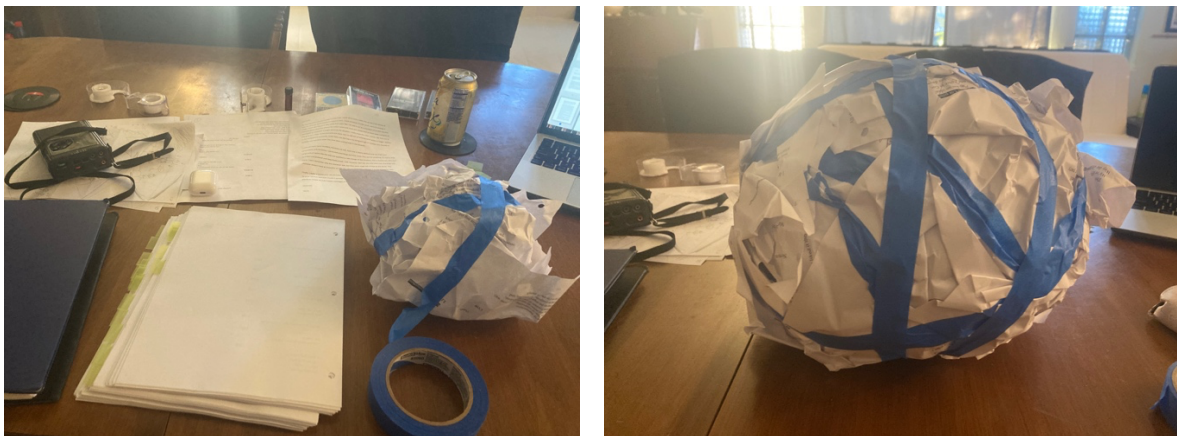


Figure 2: The construction and completion of *Remain in Light*’s “small planet,” 2021 (credit: Amy Yourd).

While molding a printed copy of the script into an entirely un-script-like object, I pondered the relationship of text to performance, noting the similarities to the relationship between a work and the imaginary world it evokes. Words on a page may represent a play, but the words themselves are not synonymous with the play or that play’s world, just as the text of Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* is not synonymous with Middle Earth. Fuchs’ proposal of play-as-world does not quite explain how the script itself, the stack of paper that I

had just molded into a planet, can represent the same world that the play itself will evoke for its audience.

In her book *Narrative as Virtual Reality: Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media*, Marie-Laure Ryan attempts to explain the relationship between language and the imaginary worlds that such language may evoke.

In the metaphor of the text as world, the text is apprehended as a window on something that exists outside of language and extends in time and space well beyond the window frame. To speak of a textual world means to draw a distinction between a realm of language, made of names, definite descriptions, sentences, and propositions, and an extralinguistic realm of characters, objects, facts, and states of affairs serving as referents to the linguistic expressions. The idea of textual world presupposes that the reader constructs in imagination a set of language-independent objects, using as a guide the textual declarations. (2003: 91)

Ryan's description of the audience's imagination calls to mind Suvin's "imaginary framework" that presents alternatives to the known world. J.R.R. Tolkien's concept of "sub-creation" also shares Ryan's interest in the imagination of the audience. In "On Fairy-Stories," Tolkien explains that sub-creation results from the interaction between imagination, which he defines as "the mental power of image-making," and "the achievement of the expression which gives (or seems to give) 'the inner consistency of reality'" ([1947] 2014: 66). While sub-creation, like Suvin's *novae*, could apply to any imaginary world (including those that Fuchs proposes for plays), Tolkien primarily applies his arguments to the stories referenced in his title. After characterizing sub-creation as the result of combining mental image-making with a real-seeming consistency of art, he doubles back to recombine these ingredients for a different result:

For my present purpose I require a word which shall embrace both the Sub-creative Art in itself and a quality of strangeness and wonder in the Expression, derived from the Image: a quality essential to fairy-story. I propose, therefore [...] to use Fantasy for this purpose: in a sense, that is, which combines with its older and higher use as an equivalent of Imagination the derived notions of 'unreality' (that is, of unlikeness

to the Primary World), of freedom from the domination of observed ‘fact,’ in short of the fantastic. ([1947] 2014: 66)

While sub-creation, in its most basic definition, could apply to any imaginary world (including those that Fuchs proposes for plays), the fantasy that Tolkien defines here is purposefully severed from factual observations of the world.

In spite of this, the “inner consistency of reality” that Tolkien requires ([1947] 2014: 66) implies the necessity of logical causality in an imaginary world, even if that world’s novum itself is not justified by cognitive logic as in Suvin’s science fiction (1979: 63). In *Building Imaginary Worlds*, Wolf also proposes that world-building necessitates a certain attention to logic:

If [...] a narrative is constructed from causal, spatial, and temporal linkages, from what is a world constructed? Similar systems of relationships hold a world’s elements together and define its structure [...] When a large enough number of elements from these systems are combined in a consistent fashion, a kind of ‘world logic’ starts to form, by which one can see how a world works and how its various systems are interrelated (2012: 53).

By examining the elements of an imaginary world and combining them in a consistent, logical manner, an author is able to discern how the world functions, perhaps determining the “rules” that Fuchs refers to in “Visit to a Small Planet” (2004: 6).

Despite its intended use as a tool for script analysis, I hypothesized that examining my play’s small planet through Fuchs’ exercise could help me define the “world logic” that I needed to continue to develop the play. The team of aliens who make up the play’s cast live on a desolate space station. Their regular starship journeys shuttle them from the station to planets inhabited by intelligent life, and in the case of the play, that planet is Earth.

Investigating Fuchs’ questions regarding space, time, climate, and mood, I noticed the differences between life on the space station and on the surface of the planets they visit. The

station’s impersonal, militaristic social structures, status as a workplace, and location in deep space commanded a stark, unfeeling atmosphere. I envisioned an existence ungoverned by the sun, perpetually lit by industrial, fluorescent lights, where conceptions of time do not exist outside of cycles of sleep and waking. The station seemed dry, cold, sterile, and starved for sensation—much like the draft of my play.

At that time in the play’s development, I had also been investigating a motif of liquid. Several characters referred “the surface” as a metaphoric boundary between states of being, particularly sleep and waking, inebriation and lucidity, and ignorance and knowledge.

LIEU

So you *weren’t* asleep.

CAP

I was making my way to the surface. (83)

COR

You back on the surface?

CAP

*Juuuuust* above it. (153)

COR

I don’t know,  
I can’t think,  
each time I try to make some sense of it  
I feel like I’m  
Sinking  
away from the light at the surface  
until I can’t see it at all. (149)

In considering Fuchs’ questions, I addressed this metaphoric language as well. Existing in the “liquid” below the surface seemed heavy, dark, and all-encompassing, while breaking through the surface granted freedom and the ability to see one’s surroundings with clarity.

This seemed to parallel the characters' experience as they alternated between the stifling emptiness of the space station and the rich sensations of planetary life. Curiously, it also paralleled my own experience as I tried to examine the play's small planet. Just as I sought to discover a more specific, vibrant, and detailed world on the surface of the planet, the characters sought to experience the sensations that their world had to offer, above the metaphoric surface of the liquid.

Here, "world logic" began to emerge: I imagined that to the characters in the play, sensations like sunlight, humidity, scent, sweat, and breeze would seem like luxuries. I wondered if perhaps the drugs supplied by Management, the regular parties thrown on the space station for any occasion, were intended to address this craving, to give the sensation-starved characters a shot of planetary experience. Cap, who was already motivated to escape Management in the play's narrative, now additionally desired this escape on a purely experiential basis. At last, the sunglasses began to make sense, to contain some of the "inner consistency of reality" that Tolkien values ([1947] 2014: 66). Perhaps Cap wore sunglasses because of a deep desire to stand on a planet, in the sun, above the metaphoric surface, in a light so bright as to require shades.

With this revelation, I discovered the true benefit of using Fuchs' exercise as a tool for script development. My writing began to respond to the "world logic" and detail that I had discovered:

CAP

It's not good for us to be stuck on that station. We need the sun. (115)

---

CAP

I hate the station.  
I hate this ship.

CAP

I hate floating in space, it's like eternally drowning without any liquid. (135)

---

CAP

But what about me, Lieu??  
 I don't like the dark, the quiet.  
 I'm not going in there with you  
 so you gotta to come out.  
 Come out in the light next to me, it's okay.  
 Lieu?  
 Lieu! (171)

---

CAP

Perhaps it would last for a handful of days at the most,  
 But I'd rather live for a handful of days in the light of that beautiful sun  
 Than spend one endless day stuck in space  
 Staring at stars that are  
 Forever far away. (220)

---

LIEU

Touchdown in five...  
*(Cap and Lieu try to control the ship's descent.)*  
 Four...  
*(The sun crests over the horizon and streams into the ship.)*  
 Three...  
*(Cap peers over the sunglasses.)*  
 Two...  
*(Cap stares at the sun.)* (232)

With the discovery of the sun as a significant motif, I abandoned the title *Five Aliens, No Furniture* and decided on a new one: *Remain in Light*, the title of Talking Heads fourth studio album, which seemed to suit the surface metaphor while justifying both the sunglasses and the presence of the band's music in the play. The sliver of the play's world that I had seen in Byrne's sunglasses had evolved into a cohesive concept that contained Cap, the

sunglasses, the surface, and the sun. Continuing his discussion of world logic, Wolf explains how the world-building process can be used to aid development:

Once a world is developed enough, even its author can become beholden to a world's logic and the rules that result from it. This is why one often hears that a story begins 'writing itself' or that characters seem to take on lives of their own and end up saying or doing things the author had not planned [...] At such point, the world's logic has begun to shape and limit further additions to the world, occasionally even suggesting things the author had not considered previously. (2012: 53-54)

Indeed, these findings were not solitary images—their light also illuminated a wealth of related motifs that I continued to develop throughout the play. With the light and heat of the sun came their opposites: darkness, cold, and night. Contrasting the heat of the sun with the recurring motif of liquid, I discovered themes of fire and water, burning and drowning, heat meeting solids and melting them to liquid, that applied interchangeably to Cap and Lieu. By examining and extrapolating my earliest ideas, I was able to develop a world of experience and sensation for the characters that would affect every moment of the play.



## Chapter 2

### The Utopian Function of Imagined Worlds

While the characters in *Remain in Light* seek to emerge from their metaphoric liquid surroundings, the audiences who encounter imaginary worlds are often urged to remain submerged. In *Building Imaginary Worlds*, Wolf proposes a variety of liquid metaphors to describe the ways that audiences encounter media, most notably in this context “immersion” and “absorption.” As he summarized in a later article, “Immersion is when one’s full attention is engaged by the world; absorption occurs while one organizes the world information taken in and reconstructs the worlds in mind, vicariously inhabiting it as it also simultaneously exists in one’s thoughts” (2017: 264). While immersive environments and texts can engage an audience physically, sensually, and conceptually in varying measures, Wolf proposes that the experience of absorption is shared between the audience’s mind and the object it encounters (2012: 49), which parallels Tolkien’s assertion that imagination and art combine to result in sub-creation, ([1947] 2014: 66).

However, absorption also seems to be a more delicate experience; if an audience stops wanting to remain engaged, the construction collapses. This justifies the inclusion of the word “willing” in Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s “willing suspension of disbelief” ([1817] 2004). According to Tolkien, this is also where the “inner consistency of reality” is necessary to assist the audience’s imagination, especially in fairy-stories and other fictions that contain fantastic novae. He argues that “since the fairy-story deals with ‘marvels,’ it cannot tolerate any frame or machinery suggesting that the whole story in which they occur is a figment or illusion” ([1947] 2014: 18). The solution that Tolkien proposes is to present these kinds of stories as true so that the audience will experience “Secondary Belief” (51), and for this he

claims that Coleridge's "willing suspension of disbelief" is not quite accurate. According to Tolkien, "What really happens is that the story-maker proves a successful 'sub-creator.' He makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is 'true': it accords with the laws of that world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, inside" (50). This image of entering an imagined world sounds a lot more like Wolf's concept of immersion than absorption, shifting the balance of Tolkien's sub-creation equation in favor of consistency over imagination.

In possible threat to Tolkien's "inner consistency of reality," Wolf proposes that imaginary worlds may be evoked through "world gestalten," in which "a structure or configuration of details together implies the existence of an imaginary world, and causes the audience to automatically fill in the missing pieces of that world, based on the details that are given" (52). Like world logic, which Wolf explains contributes to this implication, world gestalten can assist the audience with discovering the world by helping them to infer subtext, connect seemingly disparate details, or notice parallels between the presented world and the known world or other, related imaginary worlds (53). Based on the imaginary world's resemblance to the known world, the author may be able to rely more or less on the audience to fill in the unexplained aspects of the world. As Wolf explains, "when Primary World defaults can be used to fill in such areas, the author can leave such information to be extrapolated by the audience" (2012: 53). This can work in the author's favor, allowing the audience to assist in world-building and allowing the author to provide fewer details in areas where the world mirrors the known world or well-known imaginary worlds. As Jennifer Harwood-Smith explains in her article "Destroying Arcadia," "this frees the audience to fill in the gaps based on their own literary, physical, and sociocultural experiences" (2017: 297).

However, she also claims that recognizable details become increasingly useful in less familiar worlds, stating that “the careful incorporation into fiction of social constructs interacting with the physical world obviously or subconsciously is even more important when the world/worlds increasingly relies on imagination and extrapolation, moving away from mundane reality” (297). In these cases, the material that interacts with the known world can serve as a tether or reference for the audience to imagine more elaborately different circumstances.

Additionally, Wolf argues that Tolkien’s conception of “Secondary World” represents a subset of imaginary worlds overall. Characterizing the known world as “the Primary World,” Wolf explains that “every story is set in a world; but some storyworlds have a closer resemblance to the Primary World, or are more integrated into the Primary World, while others are more isolated or detached from the Primary World [...] Thus, fictional worlds can be placed along a spectrum based on the amount of subcreation present” (2012: 25). Wolf claims that in order for a world to be truly “secondary,” like those Tolkien describes, it must be distinctly separated from the known world. Secondary worlds are “usually connected to Primary World in some way, but, at the same time, set apart from it enough to be a ‘world’ unto itself, making access difficult” (25-26). This separation can be temporal (such as *Star Trek*’s imagined future), spatial (such as fictional towns or cities), or conceptual (such as C.S. Lewis’s Narnia or L. Frank Baum’s Oz) (26-28).

However, sometimes the border between the imaginary world and the known world takes the same shape as the narrative itself, as is the case with *Remain in Light*. Throughout the play, the starship approaches Earth, what the audience might take to be their known world, but the play ends with the starship crashing to the planet and the characters exiting

into the known world. As they exit the story, they also exit the stage. In the version produced at UNM, they even did so by stepping over the footlights and exiting through the same door used by the audience. Because, as Fuchs claims, “no other geography is available” within the play’s small planet, the Earth of *Remain in Light* could be considered to be the same Earth that the audience inhabits (2004: 6). Just as I used Fuchs’ questions to observe and approach the small planet of the play, *Remain in Light* uses the starship’s journey to approach the planet Earth, growing closer and closer until the ship crashes, the characters exit into the known world, and the small planet of the play ceases to exist.

In this way, *Remain in Light* depicts an imaginary world crashing towards the known world, metaphorically proposing a function of imaginary worlds overall. Wolf claims that such worlds “direct our attention beyond themselves, moving us beyond the quotidian and the material, increasing our awareness of how we conceptualize, understand, and imagine the Primary World” (2012: 287). However, imaginary worlds, particularly those with a high degree of difference from the known world, can be used as a means for escaping reality instead of a means for reflecting upon it. Escape, coincidentally, is one of Tolkien’s proposed functions of fantasy, defined in “On Fairy-Stories” as the audience’s departure from reality and experience of a freer, alternate world ([1947] 2014: 88). Tolkien’s notion of secondary belief seems to support this function, demanding that the visitor to an imaginary world believe its reality as deeply as they believe that of the known world. However, Tolkien also proposes the concept of “recovery,” summarized as “the recovering or getting-back of something lost: in this case a fresh view of things too long taken for granted,” as another crucial function of fantasy (Flieger and Anderson 2014: 13). Suvin’s notion of cognition in science fiction, previously discussed in the context of novae and the imaginative impulse,

applies here as well. As he explains, “this term implies not only a reflecting *of* but also *on* reality. It implies a creative approach tending towards a dynamic transformation rather than toward a static mirroring of the author’s environment (1979: 10).

Because of this cognitive quality, Suvin believes that imaginary worlds in the realm of science fiction often relate to the real world more directly than their counterparts in other genres. In *The Seven Beauties of Science Fiction*, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr. describes in detail how works of that science fiction (which he abbreviates as “sf”) function in conversation with the known world:

Indeed, sf is ingrained within the quotidian consciousness of people living in the postindustrial world; each day they witness the transformations of their values and material conditions in the wake of technical acceleration beyond their conceptual threshold. So it is that, encountering problems issuing from the social implications of science, and viewing dramatic techno historical scenes in real life, we displace them into a virtual imaginary space, an alternate present or future that we can reflect on, where we can test our delight, anxiety, or grief, or simply play, without having to renounce our momentary sense of identity, social place, and the world. We transform our experience into sf, if only for a moment. (2008: 5)

Here, Csicsery-Ronay proposes a variety of functions for the genre’s reflections on reality, characterizing the “imaginary space” of science fiction narratives as a testing ground for the audience’s emotional reactions to those scenarios. In addition to evoking Aristotle and the process of catharsis in the sense that audiences “test [their] delight, anxiety, or grief” (5), Csicsery-Ronay’s description of science fiction also includes a quality of “play” that Wolf applies to imaginary worlds overall. As Wolf explains, “By changing the defaults of the Primary World, especially in playful ways that reveal and reverse audience expectations, secondary worlds can make strange the familiar” (2012: 33). Additionally, both of these assertions refer to the defamiliarizing quality of imaginary worlds, an effect also referred to as estrangement.

Estrangement (*ostranenie*, Russian) describes a Formalist technique of presenting familiar concepts in a manner that makes them seem unfamiliar for the purpose of heightening perception. In *Theory of Prose*, Viktor Shklovsky summarizes the technique:

If the complex life of many people takes entirely on the level of the unconscious, then it's as if this life had never been. And so, in order to return sensation to our limbs [...] man has been given the tool of art. The purpose of art, then, is to lead us to a knowledge of a thing through the organ of sight instead of recognition [...] "estranging" objects and complicating form. (1990: 5-6)

Also translated as defamiliarization, estrangement is associated with both Darko Suvin's theories of science fiction and Bertolt Brecht's alienation effect (*Verfremdungseffekt*, German). Coining the term "cognitive estrangement," Suvin proposes science fiction as a genre "whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition," (1979: 7) using estrangement to refer to the presence of a novum (1979: 4) and cognition to refer to the genre's use of imagination and logic as means for questioning the known world (1979: 7-8).

While Shklovsky, Suvin, and Brecht primarily apply their theories to literary fiction, science fiction, and theatre respectively, Hassler-Forest characterizes estrangement as one of the qualities that draws audiences to imaginary worlds overall:

A large part of the attraction exerted on audiences by fantastic genres is the imagined alternatives they offer: fantasy, sf, and other forms of speculative fiction develop environments of estrangement, questioning and sometimes challenging the coordinates of our familiar historical context. (2016: 69)

Hassler-Forest applies the qualities of cognitive estrangement to a broader variety of imaginary worlds, additionally exposing a possible function for such worlds. By heightening the audience's perception and presenting worlds that differ from accepted reality, imaginary worlds can propose vivid alternatives to the known world and its structures. Suvin supports this function through his narrower focus on science fiction, explaining that "in the twentieth

century SF has moved into the sphere of anthropological and cosmological thought, becoming a diagnosis, a warning, a call to understanding and action, and—most important—a mapping of possible alternatives” (12). Marie-Laure Ryan expands upon this function in her introduction to *Revisiting Imaginary Worlds*, an anthology expanding upon the theories of Wolf’s text. As Ryan explains, “Imagining ways things might be or might have been is indeed essential to planning future action or evaluating past ones. It extends our mental horizon beyond the here and now and opens possible worlds to the mind” (2017: 12). Evaluating the past and planning for the future are useful actions, and granting the ability to do so seems like a suitable function for imaginary worlds, but Ryan’s framing also points to notions of nostalgia and futurity, themes reflected in queer conceptions of imaginary worlds.

In his book *Cruising Utopia*, José Esteban Muñoz explores the concepts of past and future as a means for locating utopia within queer performance and practice. For Muñoz, this de-centering of the present serves as an escape hatch for the seemingly immovable structures of contemporary society. As he proposes:

We must strive, in the face of the here and now’s totalizing rendering of reality, to think and feel a *then and there*. Some will say that all we have are the pleasures of this moment, but we must never settle for that minimal transport; we must dream and enact new and better pleasures, other ways of being in the world, and ultimately new worlds. (2009: 1)

Frequently referencing Ernst Bloch’s *The Principle of Hope* in his desire to locate utopia outside the realms of fiction and fantasy, Muñoz associates utopia with hope and hope with “a backward glance that enacts a future vision,” entangling utopia with both the past and the future (4). However, Muñoz does not encourage a complete abandonment of present reality, instead citing Bloch to emphasize the importance of historical consciousness and collectivity in conceptions of utopia:

[Bloch] makes a critical distinction between abstract utopias and concrete utopias, valuing abstract utopias only insofar as they pose a critique function that fuels a critical and potentially transformative political imagination. Abstract utopias falter for Bloch because they are untethered from any historical consciousness. Concrete utopias are relational to historically situated struggles, a collectivity that is actualized or potential. In our everyday life abstract utopias are akin to banal optimism [...] Concrete utopias can also be daydream like, but they are the hopes of collective, an emergent group, or even the solitary oddball who is the one who dreams for many. Concrete utopias are the realm of educated hope. (3)

Thus, Muñoz's interest in the past serves a practical purpose in regard to utopia. Instead of serving as an escape from the present, Muñoz proposes that "the past, or at least narratives of the past, enable utopian imaginings of another time and place that is not yet here but nonetheless functions as a doing for futurity, a conjuring of both future and past to critique presentness" (106).

Muñoz's notion of hope, the "backward glance that enacts a future vision" (2009: 4), is illustrated in the plot of *Remain in Light*. On the journey towards Earth, Cap serves as both the official commander and spiritual ringleader, dictating the team's activities and reminiscing about a previous visit to New York City to enhance their excitement. Recalling the freedom and happiness they experienced in New York, Cap guides the starship and its crew towards Earth and hopes to recover their remembered happiness upon arrival. By keeping the escape plan a secret, Cap begins as Muñoz's "solitary oddball" (3) dreaming for many, hoping to transform their vision into a collective dream by conjuring the "concrete utopia" of the New York City they remember. However, Cap's hopes are immediately cast into doubt when Lieu does not share this positive recollection of New York. Due to the long lifespan of their species, Lieu also warns that the city could have transformed for the worse in the time that they have been away:

LIEU

There might not be a CBGBs.



CAP

Don't say that.

LIEU

I mean it, the planet won't be like it was.  
 We live a long time,  
 We can monitor change.  
 I bet a lot of things have fucking changed.

CAP

Well yeah, it could be better.

LIEU

Or it could be *worse*.  
 Society may have collapsed.  
 The city might be empty,  
 Or unrecognizable.  
 The sea could have risen,  
 With glaciers collapsing,  
 And storms...  
 And you want to live on an island? (219-220)

In addition to questioning Cap's hopeful nostalgic desires, characters in the play also doubt Cap's decision to flee to New York in the first place. As the team discovers the truth about Management's actions and Cap's treachery, they are thrown into turmoil over how to proceed. The Recruit (Ree) and the Corporal (Cor) want to go along with Cap's escape plan, but the remaining team members argue that they should return to the space station. Unable to conceive an existence outside of Management's control, Lieu hopes to maintain the circumstances of the present and continue living within the structures that they know. On the other hand, the Sergeant (Sarge) wants to share what they have learned with the rest of their colleagues, thus transforming Cap's future vision into an opportunity for collective action.

This unfolding of events supports Muñoz's conception of hope, but it also illustrates the challenge of imagining alternatives to reality while engaging with imaginary worlds.

Although Cap seeks to transform their present circumstances by means of the "backward

glance” (2009: 4), they do so with a naïve, nostalgic attachment to the past and without considering how the escape might affect the present reality—personified in the unforeseen reactions of the other characters in the play. Cap’s romanticization of 1970s New York is also an issue here, ignoring both the “historically situated struggles” of Bloch’s concrete utopia (3) and the potential challenges the team could encounter on the Earth of the present.

Hassler-Forest argues that transmedia portrayals of imaginary worlds are capable of avoiding both these shallow conceptions of the past and potential escapism from the present:

While twenty-first-century world-building often presents a fantasy of pastness [...] it isn’t any longer typically the kind of depthless play with empty signifiers that makes up postmodern pastiche. Nor do we find as a dominant mode of engagement the kind of full immersion popularly dubbed “escapism” that is so often attributed to genre fiction in general, and to fantastic genres in particular. Instead, transmedia world-building provides a form of engagement that involves a constant negotiation between sincere immersion and radical self-reflexivity. (2016: 16)

Here, Hassler-Forest claims that transmedia world-building, which he earlier suggested to occur across media, invite audience participation, and defer narrative closure (5), can potentially defer the escapism of Tolkien’s secondary belief by punctuating the audience’s engagement with imaginary worlds with shifts in form, opportunities to participate, and a sense of incompleteness. If we accept theatrical performances as suitably “transmedia” based on Hassler-Forest’s characteristics, then it follows that theatrical performances could also avoid the problems of escapist or nostalgic engagement with an imaginary play-world. Further, if imaginary worlds allow audiences to conceptualize alternatives to reality, then so too must imaginary play-worlds invite the same.

Muñoz points to the embodied nature of performance to support the ability of theatre to evoke those possibilities, as does Jill Dolan in *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theatre*. For Muñoz, performing, demonstrating, and embodying queerness evokes

possibilities for existence outside of the present norm. He asserts that queerness is inherently performative because “it is not simply a being but a doing for and toward the future. Queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world” (2009: 1). Dolan also notes the possibilities that embodied acts represent, proposing that “theatre and performance offer a place [...] to embody and, even if through fantasy, enact the affective possibilities of ‘doings’ that gesture toward a much better world” (2005: 6). According to Dolan, performance helps to bridge the gap between the present and the possible, what Muñoz calls “the here and now” and “the there and then” (2009: 1). As Dolan explains, “Utopia is always a metaphor, [...] a no-place that performance can sometimes help us map if not find. But a performative is not a metaphor; it’s a doing, and it’s in the performative’s gesture that hope adheres [...] that the not-yet-conscious is glimpsed and felt and strained toward” (2005: 170). For Muñoz, the utopian embodiment of possibilities is also inherently anti-capitalist:

[Capitalism] would have us think that it is a natural order, an inevitability, the way things would be. The “should be” of utopia, its indeterminacy and its deployment of hope, stand against capitalism’s ever expanding and exhausting forcefield of how things “are and will be.” Utopian performativity suggests another modality of doing and being that is in process, unfinished. (99)

This argument illuminates a crucial question about the function of imaginary worlds: if such worlds propose alternatives to the present, what kinds of alternatives are being proposed?

### Chapter 3

#### Refusing World Archetypes in *Remain in Light*

In *Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Politics: Transmedia World-Building Beyond Capitalism*, Dan Hassler-Forest investigates the relationship between transmedia storytelling and global capitalism, giving weight to both the possibilities that these imaginary worlds produce and the economic structures that allow them to do so on a massively popular scale. Hassler-Forest argues that these opposing forces expose the contradictions of global capitalism, especially for the audiences that engage with them, claiming that “these popular fantastic storyworlds offer immersive, participatory, and endlessly expansive environments in which audiences can safely negotiate the tensions of capitalist culture” (2016: 15-16). In his book, Hassler-Forest presents four pairs of case studies that illustrate the archetypal ways that imaginary worlds engage with capitalism.

Guided by these case studies, I argue that *Remain in Light* illustrates Hassler-Forest’s world archetypes within its narrative while also self-reflexively questioning the tropes and systems of the genre itself. On the starship’s journey, Cap refuses to do anything of consequence, including dictate the activities of the team they are meant to command. Granted unexpected free space by Cap’s lack of leadership, characters are able to experiment with new ways of being, thus engaging in personal and collective acts of world-building by questioning the imperialist and capitalist structures imposed by Management. Considering the play as a metaphor for its own creation, I envision *Remain in Light*’s characters as authors of their own worlds, imagining alternatives to their small planet, reflecting upon their circumstances, and embodying conceptions of utopia.

First, Hassler-Forest analyzes two imaginary worlds that claim to portray non-capitalist societies: one, Tolkien's Middle Earth, that glances backward to an imagined, idealized past, and another, *Star Trek*, that envisions a post-capitalist future. However, Hassler-Forest argues that neither of these worlds truly escape their circumstances, and by shifting away from the capitalism of their authors' environments they instead move towards imperialism. Tolkien's Middle Earth reflects values that are arguably Eurocentric, racist, masculine, and resistant to change (2016: 28), while *Star Trek* perpetuates a "fantasy of a peaceful and benevolent imperialism" (50). The second case study presents imaginary worlds that demonstrate the characteristics of capitalist realism, a term coined by Mark Fisher and defined by Hassler-Forest as an "apparent lack of viable political, ideological, or economic alternatives" to capitalism (68). Labeling these non-realistic iterations of the genre as "fantastical capitalism," Hassler-Forest explains that these narratives reinforce capitalist values by refusing to imagine any alternatives:

[...] there is no outside, no future, no alternative. Its storyworlds aren't utopian, because they lack the ability to imagine a future that is fundamentally different, let alone better. But they also aren't traditionally dystopian, because their dark worlds aren't warnings of what is yet to come. Instead, they constantly reiterate what is considered a basic truth of neoliberal capitalism: it's a harsh world out there, and nice guys always finish last. Fantastical capitalism therefore offers storyworlds that are turned in upon themselves, embracing neoliberalism's cynical business ethic: every individual is looking out for themselves, and those who aren't will inevitably be left behind as a "loser" in the game of capitalism. (70)

Muñoz suggests that utopian performativity can resist the seemingly inescapable structures of capitalism by suggesting alternative modalities of doing and being (2009: 99), but in Hassler-Forest's third case study, fantastical capitalism resists itself by centering imaginary worlds around narratives of resistance. These texts maintain popularity by asking the audience to support the in-world revolutions, managing to "critique their own genre conventions while at

the same time finding new and spectacular forms for them” (106). In the fourth and final case study, Hassler-Forest positions posthumanism as the potential hero that can liberate transmedia storytelling from the throes of global capitalism, arguing that “the only way for fantastic storyworlds to express a truly radical anticapitalist world would therefore be to embrace the posthuman turn and move from liberal humanism’s stifling individualism to the multitude’s infinite diversity” (194). Hassler-Forest illustrates that while imaginary worlds can portray a wide variety of values and propose a range of conceptual alternatives to the structures of the known world, it is difficult to truly escape them, but he also finds hope in the ways that audiences engage with such worlds by balancing “sincere immersion” (a phrase that calls to mind Tolkien’s secondary belief) with “radical self-reflexivity” (16). Following Suvin’s concept of cognitive estrangement, this self-reflexivity asks the audience to reflect on familiar concepts-made-strange by questioning their effects on the world around them.

Ironically, Hassler-Forest’s analysis of posthumanism seems the least relevant to this exercise, even though *Remain in Light*’s alien cast easily fits that category. When writing inhuman characters, I prefer Suvin’s description of narrative novae as reflections of humanity to proposals that such characters support the abandonment of human nature:

Whether island or valley, whether in space or [...] in time, the new framework is correlative to the new inhabitants. The aliens—utopians, monsters, or simply differing strangers—are a mirror to man just as the differing country is a mirror for his world. But the mirror is not only a reflecting one, it is also a transforming one, virgin womb and alchemical dynamo: the mirror is a crucible. (1979: 5)

My use of alien characters in *Remain in Light* is primarily an exercise in estrangement, reflecting on my experience of the known world by making it recognizable, but unfamiliar.

Throughout the plot of the play, *Remain in Light* struggles to locate itself within the archetypes outlined by Hassler-Forest, a process that is fully reflected in the actions of the

characters in the play. Instead of fully buying into one set of values or another, the characters continually question themselves and each other, mirroring the self-reflexivity that Hassler-Forest values in transmedia audiences. Management’s dogmatic rhetoric reflects the utopic ideology of Middle Earth and *Star Trek*, indoctrinating the characters with a deep belief in the importance and integrity of the “cosmic purpose” they assign to their imperialist explorations of the galaxy. However, the reality of the characters’ circumstances reflects a society that is anything but utopian, immediately creating a tension between Management’s ideology and the “atmosphere and aesthetic of gritty realism” that Hassler-Forest assigns to fantastical capitalism (2016: 106). Their starship has no sleeping quarters or furniture of any kind, the Recruit (Ree) has not been properly trained for assignments, and nobody seems surprised that the ship needs extensive repairs:

LIEU

What happened?

COR

I guess that the ship had gone in for repairs,  
Except they forgot to repair anything.

LIEU

Typical. (104)

Just as fantastical capitalism presents worlds where there are no alternatives to capitalism, the rhetoric the characters repeat regarding the “cosmic purpose” assumes an ideology where there are no alternatives to Management:

REE

Aren’t you excited?  
To explore other worlds,  
to learn about life forms and civilizations,  
to report what we’ve learned back to Management— (81)

With a verbal homage to the mission of *Star Trek*'s starship *Enterprise*, this description fuses the ideological spirit of utopian worlds like *Star Trek* with a mundane focus on labor, exposing the capitalist nature of Management's imperialist agenda.

Thus, Management has ensnared their workers in a system that purports to exist beyond capitalism, but like Hassler-Forest's case studies, the values of that system continue to reflect capitalist values and structures, mirroring *Star Trek*'s fraught status as a "postcapitalist" world that nevertheless "maintains so clearly its emphasis on individualism, hierarchical authority, and generalized competition" (2016: 64). However, while *Star Trek*'s characters are fated to exist in a world that contains these contradictions, the escape narrative of *Remain in Light* removes the characters from their circumstances so that they may analyze and question them openly. As an authority figure disillusioned by their newfound knowledge, Cap encourages the team to defer their usual responsibilities and disregard Management's values, but does so while upholding the individualism and hierarchical structures that granted their authority over the team in the first place:

CAP

My music is better than anything Management says.  
Turn down the cosmic rhetoric  
and turn up Talking Heads! (118)

Meanwhile, Cap's refusal to work within the pre-determined structures heightens Lieu's sense of competition with Cap, enhancing the strength of the hierarchical system instead of exposing the chance to escape it:

LIEU

Did you even want this promotion?

CAP

'Course I did.



LIEU

Then why aren't you taking it seriously?

CAP

What's the point?  
No one is giving us orders,  
it's just you and me together at the top—

LIEU

Except that I'm your second-in-command. (121)

On one hand, this displacement from Management's authority creates a space where the characters can openly experiment with alternatives to their circumstances. On the other, it enhances the emotional material that lingers beneath such structures and systems, calling to mind Suvin's description of pastoral narratives, which take place in a kind of imaginary world "without money-economy, state apparatus, and depersonalizing urbanization [that] allows it to isolate, as in a laboratory, two human motivations: erotics and power-hunger" (1979: 9). The isolation that the characters experience on their journey brings these motivations to light, urging self-reflexivity in the context of their Management-sanctioned social roles and their personal self-image.

Returning to Rose's conception of science fiction as a romance form, we could consider characters from imaginary worlds like *Remain in Light* and *Star Trek* to be defined by their relationship to the world's ideology. Rose contends:

If the narrative follows the quest romance pattern, as most science-fiction stories do, then the figures in the tale tend to be characterized principally by their ideological relationship to the quest. Put simply, characters are either for or against the quest: the "good" or "enlightened" assist it, the "bad" or "ignorant" obstruct it. (1974: 3)

For the majority of the play, the characters in *Remain in Light* see each other in this way, but with differing definitions of the quest and thus, opposing attitudes about what constitutes "good" and "bad" in relation to it. Lieu believes that abiding by Management's regulations

and completing the assignment on Earth is good, and so Lieu sees Cap's disregard for Management's assignment as an inhibition to the quest's success. Alternately, Cap's enlightened status with regard to Management's intentions allows them to see escape as the true quest, characterizing Lieu's attempts to adhere to Management's norms as obstructions to that escape.

However, this oppositional thinking fails to fully function within narratives of fantastic capitalism. Hassler-Forest argues that characters in these worlds are "difficult to divide into a stable good/evil binary" (2016: 95), a position that is reflected in the shifting and subjective characterizations of Cap and Lieu. Within the inescapable yet unpredictable structures of capitalism, characters stand the most chance of survival if they are able to be flexible and adaptable to the world's circumstances (106). In *Remain in Light*, this is illustrated by Cap's apparent success under Management. Although they are both idealistic by nature, Cap has adopted a morally neutral, survival-minded attitude to Management's treatment, while Lieu has coped by merging Management's ideology with a personal moral standard. Thus, Cap is able to adapt their behavior to suit the situation, thriving in the process:

CAP

You wanna know why I "screw around"?  
 Because it works.  
 If Management thinks that I'm screwing around,  
 They disregard me.  
 And then when it matters,  
 I always impress them.  
 I get the promotion.  
 They leave me alone.  
 I've learned how to be what they want me to be when it benefits me  
 but I can't be that all of the time. (126)

Meanwhile, Lieu struggles within the system when others fail to abide by the ideology to which Lieu holds themselves accountable:

LIEU

This is just a special case.  
A big mistake.  
This cannot happen all the time.  
If Management needs us to  
blow up planets or whatever  
and we're resistant to it  
then they *should* make us forget.

COR

How can you say that?

LIEU

Because I trust in Management.  
I serve a cosmic purpose.  
It's my job.  
I'm lucky to have this job. (198)

Lieu believes so deeply in the inherent integrity of others that they are unable to accept the truth about their assignments, instead arguing in favor of Management's treachery and repeating the same ideological rhetoric.

While Cap's individualistic adaptability works in their favor under the oppressive structures of Management, Cap struggles to escape these patterns of behavior in the process of executing their actual escape. Having abandoned their natural idealism for a pragmatic survival mechanism, Cap cannot achieve personal fulfillment by means of their actions and begins to measure their value by their esteem in the eyes of others. Torn between idealistic aspirations to a higher morality and the desire to escape at any cost, Cap is willing to wield their Management-granted authority to command the Corporal (Cor) to assist in their escape, nearly getting the team killed in the process, and to force Cor to swallow a drug that will erase the memory of the incident while preserving Cap's friendly persona:

What's wrong? CAP

I'm scared. COR

Of Management? CAP

We escaped,  
 You don't have to be scared.  
*(Cor gestures no)*  
 There's nothing here to be scared of, Cor!  
*(Cor gestures no again.*  
*Cap begins to comprehend.)*

Okay.  
 There's lots of reasons why you might be scared.  
 You should be scared.  
 The things they've done?  
 Management is the worst.

...  
 I'm  
 Trying to save a piece of us,  
 A piece of galaxy.  
 ...  
 You'll be glad I brought you with me.

...  
 Come on, Corporal,  
 Don't be scared of me!  
 Uh...  
 I am gonna  
 Give you something  
 So you won't be scared, okay?  
 Then you'll forget this, Cor.  
 You won't remember anything at all.  
 You'd like that, yeah?

...  
 Cor, hey.  
 Is that okay?

Do I have a choice? COR

What? CAP

COR

Do  
I have  
A choice.

CAP

...  
Open up. (175-176)

When the truth about these events comes out, Cap is unable to justify their actions in terms that make sense, instead making a string of excuses that ultimately fail to prove whether Cap has truly escaped Management's influence:

CAP

I'm not like Management.  
I'm not.  
I have been  
hurt,  
I've been  
manipulated,  
and and  
overworked and  
broken and  
neglected  
just like all of you.

...  
I didn't think.  
I didn't plan it.  
I just saw the chance to go and then I went.  
I was—  
It was a party!  
It was  
*My* party.  
It was supposed to be a  
Celebration of me  
And all that I've achieved  
Except instead it was  
A fucking nightmare.

...  
I wasn't myself,  
I wasn't  
Thinking clearly,  
And I  
Didn't want you to remember me being that way,

## CAP

That isn't who I am,  
 Cor, I was  
 Fucked up, and I was  
 Scared.  
 ...  
 It seems like they're the only ones with power,  
 But it's because they've stolen ours.  
 They've stolen  
 Everything.  
 I wanted to  
 Take something back.  
 Make sure that they can't  
 Do this to us  
 Ever  
 Again.  
 ...  
 ...  
 I'm not like Management.  
 I'm not like Management. (207-208)

This failure to make sense of their actions again sparks self-reflexivity, compelling Cap to consider their behavior and values beyond the shadow of Management's control.

Hassler-Forest's case study pertaining to narratives of revolution and resistance is perhaps the most applicable to the world of the play. However, due to Cap's individualistic approach to survival, the revolution in *Remain in Light* takes form in acts of escape, disobedience, and refusal, rather than outright resistance. In his discussion of "escape" as a function of fantasy, Tolkien resists the negative connotations associated with such escape, preferring to evoke "the Escape of the Prisoner," which he regards as acceptable and even heroic, in preference to "the Flight of the Deserter" ([1947] 2014: 88), a dialectic which mirrors the opposing perspectives of Cap and Lieu with regard to the starship's journey. Avoiding active struggle with the oppressive force by means of escape allows for continued demonstrations of self-reflexivity, placing the conflicts of the play between characters with

opposing opinions and desires and not between protagonists and antagonists characterized by their moral actions.

Additionally, by replacing direct conflict with the system with acts of disobedience and refusal, *Remain in Light* could potentially provide more space for the characters to imagine alternate worlds. Cap's refusal to fill their assigned role is inherently resistant to Management's agenda, but it also creates a negative space of possibility for the characters in the play. Muñoz briefly refers to the possibilities of negation in the introduction to *Cruising Utopia*, citing both Shoshana Felman's theory of radical negativity (the act of saying 'no') (2009: 13) and Paolo Virno's "negation of the negation" (12). According to Muñoz, Virno's notion of negation "functions as a 'modality of the possible,' 'a regression to the infinite.' Virno sees a potentiality in negative affects that can be reshaped by negation and made to work in the service of enacting a mode of critical possibility" (12). In this way, acts of refusal or negation make possible an infinite array of alternatives to that which is refused, and in narratives like *Remain in Light*, these acts and the alternatives they reveal prove crucial to the play's outcome.

In the play, Cap resists Management's authority by refusing to fill the role assigned to them, instead encouraging the team to enjoy themselves and obstructing them from doing any work. When Cap does actually give orders, failing to fully disown the authority granted to them, they do so in resistance to Lieu's demands for normalcy and structure on the ship. Lieu equally resists Cap's orders because they do not align with Lieu's understanding of the team's responsibilities on the journey, and this continued disobedience finally leads Lieu to discover the true purpose of the starship's voyage. Acts of refusal even predate the events of the play: in the past, Lieu's refusal to obey orders led to the erasure of Lieu's memories,

which prompted the rift that grew between Cap and Lieu and inspires Cor's ultimate refusal to fix the ship and return the team to Management at the end of the play:

COR  
 What if I  
 Couldn't fix it?

LIEU  
 What do you mean?

COR  
 Presently,  
 Without the beacon,  
 With the systems down,  
 Nobody knows where we have gone.  
 If we can make it to the surface of the planet,  
 We could hide.

LIEU  
 They'd find us.

COR  
 But we might get lucky.

LIEU  
 You would gamble all our training,  
 All of our experience,  
 For luck?

COR  
 You would willingly go back to them,  
 And let them do to you again what they've  
 Already done?

LIEU  
 I don't think that we have a choice.

COR  
 I think that  
 We have always had a choice.  
 And I  
 Don't think that I can fix this.

LIEU  
 What does that mean?



## COR

It means that I refuse. (227-228)

The notion of choice is important here, echoing the moment earlier in the play when Cap forcibly erased Cor's memories. Management would have their employees thinking that they have no choice but to participate in the system, but Cor identifies an alternative: the choice of outright refusal, which may bring suffering and death to all involved. However, Cor's refusal to pilot the ship to safety results in an unexpected outcome when Cap and Lieu, who have spent the play arguing with each other instead of doing their actual jobs, work together to land the ship without calamity. This single moment of unity leads to heightened understanding and communication as they process their miraculous escape, finally resulting in their romantic reconciliation at the end of the play.

Throughout the play, acts of refusal and disobedience threaten to dismantle the structures that define the characters' world, but in the end these actions are crucial to the story's fortunate outcome. Tolkien refers to events like this when describing escape and his other functions of fantasy, coining for such events the term "eucatastrophe," meaning "good catastrophe, the sudden joyous 'turn'" ([1947] 2014: 99). Tolkien too delights in the eucatastrophic possibilities enlightened by refusal, except in this case, it is the narrative itself that refuses to give in to nihilism and defeat:

This joy, which is one of the things which fairy-stories can produce supremely well, is not essentially "escapist," nor "fugitive." In its fairy-tale—or otherworld—setting, it is a sudden and miraculous grace: never to be counted on to recur. It does not deny the existence of *dyscatastrophe*, of sorrow and failure: the possibility of these is necessary to the joy of deliverance; it denies (in the face of much evidence, if you will) universal final defeat. (99)

For Tolkien, the ultimate act of refusal is the refusal of defeat, an act which the author can manifest in their imaginary worlds by the inclusion of eucatastrophic events in the form of

happy endings and unexpected instances of “sudden and miraculous grace” (99). If we follow his logic, it could be that the function of imaginary worlds is not just the proposal and exploration of alternative possibilities to reality, but the hope that “in the face of much evidence” (99) such possibilities might even be preferable to the seemingly inescapable circumstances of the present:

The peculiar quality of the “joy” in successful Fantasy can thus be explained as a sudden glimpse of the underlying reality or truth. It is not only a “consolation” for the sorrow of this world, but a satisfaction, and an answer to that question, “Is it true?” The answer to this question that I gave at first was (quite rightly): “If you have built your little world well, yes: it is true in that world.” [...] But in the “eucatastrophe” we see in a brief vision that the answer may be greater—it may be a far-off gleam or echo of *evangelium* in the real world. (103)

It is here that Tolkien reconciles his fondness for escape and “inner consistency of reality” with that which the audience will take with them back into the real world. The true purpose of Tolkienian escape is not a complete and permanent departure from one’s circumstances, but the glimpse of the possibility of changing those circumstances. The inadequacy of escape for its own sake is mirrored in *Remain in Light* as well, evident in Cap’s failure to fully break free from Management’s influence in their personal actions the way they have in their external circumstances. However, through the eucatastrophic turn of events at the end of the play, Cap and Lieu are able to reconcile their differences and glimpse the possibility of a future unencumbered by the individualistic, hierarchical, and authoritarian structures imposed by Management.

Allow me, then, an additional rumination on *Remain in Light* as a metaphor for its own creation: in the play, the characters’ refusal to comply with the given circumstances of the world is the crucial action that leads to the transformation of those circumstances. However, if I continue to consider *Remain in Light*’s characters as the authors of their own

world of possibilities, this refusal directly contradicts one of Fuchs' essential characteristics of the play-as-world: "In its world, nothing else is possible besides what is there: no one else lives there; no other geography is available; no alternative actions can be taken" (2004: 6). Within the metaphor of this dissertation, Fuchs may be right. In *Remain in Light*, the refusal to abide by the imagined world's "rules" causes that world to cease to exist, when Cor's ultimate refusal to pilot the ship back to Management results in the destruction of the starship (the play's "small planet") and the play's ending. However, how can the small planet of a play's world reckon this unchanging existence with the proposed function of such worlds: the exploration of possible alternatives, the chance through refusal to transform one's circumstances, and the brief but stimulating glimpse that such transformations could have a positive outcome?

## Chapter 4

### The Incomplete World

Earlier in this dissertation, I considered Elinor Fuchs' notion of play-as-world in the context of developing a script for theatrical performance. Having cultivated a writing practice that resembles a process of discovery rather than production, I appropriated the script analysis technique outlined in Fuchs' "Visit to a Small Planet" as a tool for observing, inferring, and clarifying the world of my play *Remain in Light*. Particularly bolstered by her assertion that "the stage world never obeys the same rules as ours, because in its world, nothing else is possible besides what is there" (2004: 6), I delighted in the opportunity to decide exactly "what is there" in the small planet of the play.

However, in the process of considering the world of *Remain in Light*, I frequently confused the "small planet" represented by the script itself with the world of the play as it would eventually be produced. In Tolkien's definition of sub-creation, which I have earlier discussed at length, imaginary worlds are evoked by the interaction between "the mental power of image-making," and "the achievement of the expression which gives (or seems to give) 'the inner consistency of reality'" ([1947] 2014: 66). In Tolkien's practice, this process occurs in relation to prose fiction, folk tales, and other forms in which the text encountered by the audience is the same text composed by the artist. For plays, however, this process occurs in two different forms, first as the text is encountered on the page, and again as the text is encountered as a theatrical performance. Because the "achievement of the expression" that Tolkien describes will differ depending on in which of these modes the encounter takes place (66), it follows that the world evoked by each encounter will also be different.

This additional or alternate layer of sub-creation is Tolkien's major argument against theatre and other non-literary modes of art as viable forms for fantasy. Because, as he argues, narrative elements in theatre are "not imagined but actually beheld" ([1947] 2014: 73), theatrical performances are deficient as forms of sub-creation. Tolkien believes that the representation of imagined events onstage cannot support additional abstraction or imagination in the representations of magical, fantastic, or otherwise unnatural events that do not occur in the known world:

Drama has, of its very nature, already attempted a kind of bogus, or shall I say at least substitute, magic: *the visible and audible presentation of imaginary men in a story* [...] To introduce, even with mechanical success, into this quasimagical secondary world a further fantasy or magic is to demand, as it were, an inner or tertiary world. It is a world too much [...] it cannot be claimed as the proper mode of Drama, in which walking and talking people have been found to be the natural instruments of Art and illusion. (72)

Earlier chapters of this dissertation have already complicated Tolkien's argument by investigating the qualities and functions of imaginary worlds across a variety of theories, genres, and forms. Hassler-Forest's extensive analysis of transmedia storyworlds, many of them works of science fiction and fantasy, would certainly not be possible if Tolkien's assessment of fantasy as "a thing best left to words, to true literature" (70) held much water. And since I have in turn used this body of research to analyze the world evoked by my science fiction play *Remain in Light*, it should come as no surprise that I generally disagree with Tolkien's assessment of theatre.

However, the additional layer of sub-creation required for the performance of a play challenged me when creating that initial text, the finite script that would prompt the second sub-creative process in the play's production. Prior to focusing on playwriting, I primarily studied theatre as a deviser and designer, developing performances using a multitude of

artistic media and collaborative techniques. As I investigated the more solitary art of scriptwriting, I thought often of my experiences on collaborative devising teams, and if I did not have a strong sense of an element of the play's world, be it an abstract concept or something directly related to a certain design discipline, I simply left it out of the script in the expectation that those who would eventually work on the play would fill in the gaps.

Wolf contends that imaginary worlds are “inevitably incomplete,” containing only the information that the author chooses to include and, by that process of inclusion, also excluding a measure of information (2012: 38). Wolf also echoes Fuchs in this assessment, suggesting that incompleteness is “one of the main ways [imaginary worlds] differ from the actual world” (38). The incompleteness of an imaginary world can also inspire audience participation in the form of speculation as to the nature of the omitted information (13). According to Wolf, the audience is more likely to do this if the imaginary world is particularly well-developed in the first place because “the possibility of completion seems much closer and attainable; smaller gaps are more likely to be bridged than larger ones. Authors, then, cannot rely on speculation occurring unless their worlds are substantial enough to generate theories for their completion” (62).

While what passes for “substantial” varies with regard to the imaginary world's resemblance to the known world, Wolf contends that the audience's capacity for speculation requires the illusion that such information actually exists:

Before speculation occurs, curiosity must be aroused, and it will only be aroused if there is the possibility that a correct, or at least plausible, answer is thought to exist somewhere. While completeness can never be achieved, a *sense of completeness* can, which gives the impression that all questions could, in theory, be answered [...] For the areas of a world in which speculation is encouraged, the ideal balance of information is one in which enough information is provided to support multiple theories, but not enough to prove any one theory definitively. (2012: 61)

According to Wolf, achieving this balance is the trick to providing the “sense of completeness” necessary for an audience to engage with an incomplete world. Thus, there may be areas where it benefits the writer to provide much more detail than others, but it is not always apparent what to include and what not to include. “While incompleteness is not desirable in certain areas necessary for comprehension of the story or the world, room for speculation in other areas is a valuable asset to an imaginary world, as this is where the audience’s imagination is encouraged and engaged” (60). Thus, the completeness of an imaginary world does not depend on whether it achieves a “sense of completeness” overall, but on whether it results in the desired engagement and comprehension by the audience.

In the case of an imaginary play-world, this conundrum applies equally, if not more so, to deciding what is and is not included for the sake of future collaborators. In developing *Remain in Light*, I struggled to determine in which areas such omissions benefited the work of future collaborators and where they impeded engagement with the story. While rehearsing for UNM’s Linnell Festival of New Plays, I discovered that at times I had been too sparing or subtle on certain details. In the short amount of time that designers and actors had with the play, some of the elements that I valued in the script had trouble making their way to the surface. For example, the script says almost nothing about the characters’ clothing, and I hoped that this omission would allow future costume designers to express maximum freedom and creativity in their work. Despite this intentional space, the costumes, or rather, Cap’s costume in particular, require one specific element that it proved difficult to advocate for in the rehearsal process: pockets.

There are two types of props in this play: pieces of the ship and things that Cap keeps in their pockets. Cap’s power comes in large part from the items that they control, a fact that

Cap lords over the other characters as a sign of their authority. In addition to the Management-issued drugs, Cap also holds the less-approved party drugs, a stolen piece of the ship, and the security briefing that holds Management's secrets. In fact, Cap has based their identity on things they are able to claim as their own, outside of Management's control:

CAP

I've learned how to be what they want me to be when it benefits me,  
but I can't be that all of the time.  
I want something that is mine.  
I am mine,  
the music is mine,  
my hands,  
my sunglasses—  
All mine.  
It's all I have. (126)

Thus, it is very important that Cap is able to hold these items, to hide them on their person, and to keep them close to their body, within their control. However, nowhere in the script did I explicitly state that Cap's costume needed pockets. The information is there to find, but it is not easily accessible to collaborators, especially if they have limited time to work with the script.

I also encountered questions of this sort when observing the actors in rehearsal. Once again, I had hoped that collaborators would discover and interpret the details of the play as I had intended, but this was not always the case. In the first half of the play, for example, Lieu twice refers to their headache:

LIEU

I am thinking about the assignment!  
Or I'm  
Trying to.  
My head is pounding. (83)

---



## LIEU

I'm sick of this.  
 I'm sick of you.  
 I'm sick of chasing you around the ship.  
 I can't hear myself think,  
 my head hurts, and  
 I'm tired!  
 I'm so tired. (134)

Based on this and the fact that Lieu had spent the previous night partying, I envisioned that Lieu would spend the first half of the play in a disgruntled, hungover state, struggling to function against both Cap's antics and their internal malaise. However, this idea never surfaced in rehearsals, raising a couple of questions: first, is the affect that I envisioned necessary in the first place? Additionally, would it benefit future actors and directors if I outright described the affect in a more accessible manner? Since many play development opportunities, such as workshops and concert readings, receive limited rehearsal time, doing so could benefit the play's collaborators—provided, of course, that my ideas about Lieu's behavior are preferable to other interpretations. This encouraged me to think more closely about how the actors and director encounter the characters in rehearsal. Where could the writing be more helpful in telling the story, not just to the reader or the audience, but to those who are working with the script to bring it to life?

In the chaotic first section of the play, Cap, the only character with enough power and information to take meaningful action, refuses to do so. Believing that they have escaped from Management, Cap wants only to enjoy their newfound freedom, but as Lieu's behavior reveals that their memories have been altered, Cap becomes increasingly frightened at the prospect of telling Lieu the truth. From then on, Cap enters a manic sort of survival mode, trying to prevent the team from contacting Management and learning the truth about their journey for as long as possible. Cap starts petty arguments with Lieu, takes a lot of drugs,

waxes poetic about the planet Earth, spars with Sarge and Ree, and tries to distract Cor from fixing the ship. Cap's activities are meant to be scattered, sparsely motivated, and illogical not because the play is those things, but because Cap is unable to compose a logical response to the situation. However, this distinction is difficult to convey effectively on the page, and it has been challenging to determine when the source of the chaos is Cap's behavior and when the writing requires further exploration. While revising the play before rehearsals, I spent the majority of my time on this opening sequence, trying to construct a sense of causality that would retain the audience's attention throughout the chaos. The director of the production, Leonard Madrid, worked to expose the structure of this section as well, hoping that if the actors balanced the textual messiness with the subtextual narrative, then the audience would come along for the ride. This strategy helped to frame moments that punctuated the chaos, but Cap's impulsive and unconsidered sequence of actions remained difficult to access.

In order to address this, I tried to identify the affects, actions, and motivations that I feel are most necessary to the story and thus, most necessary to communicate to the collaborators who will tell that story. I composed brief character descriptions in which I described Lieu as "perpetually hungover" and Cap as "looking for distractions." With this shorthand, I hope that future collaborators can bypass the trouble of decoding these subtle traits and spend more time on other subtextual elements of the play.

According to Wolf, intentional areas of omission have the potential to enhance a world's believability, strengthening the illusion of its completeness. He proposes that "Deliberate gaps, enigmas, and unexplained references add to a world's verisimilitude by making it more like the Primary World, where ambiguity and missing pieces often remain in the search for knowledge" (2012: 62). While I have just described at length the ways that I

failed to provide the deliberate gaps that Wolf recommends, *Remain in Light* also contains successful instances of such omission. In the process of discovering the extent of Lieu's memory loss, Cap and Lieu frequently disagree about how many interplanetary assignments they have completed together:

Sixteen. LIEU

Seventeen. CAP

This one makes seventeen. (129) LIEU

Ultimately, Cap uses these opposing memories as evidence to prove Management's duplicity:

After all of this time,  
After sixteen *fucking* assignments— LIEU

Seventeen. CAP

No, this one doesn't count. LIEU

I wasn't counting this one. CAP

So you think I'm wrong? LIEU

I think you don't remember. CAP

I remember. LIEU

Or you counted wrong. (202) CAP

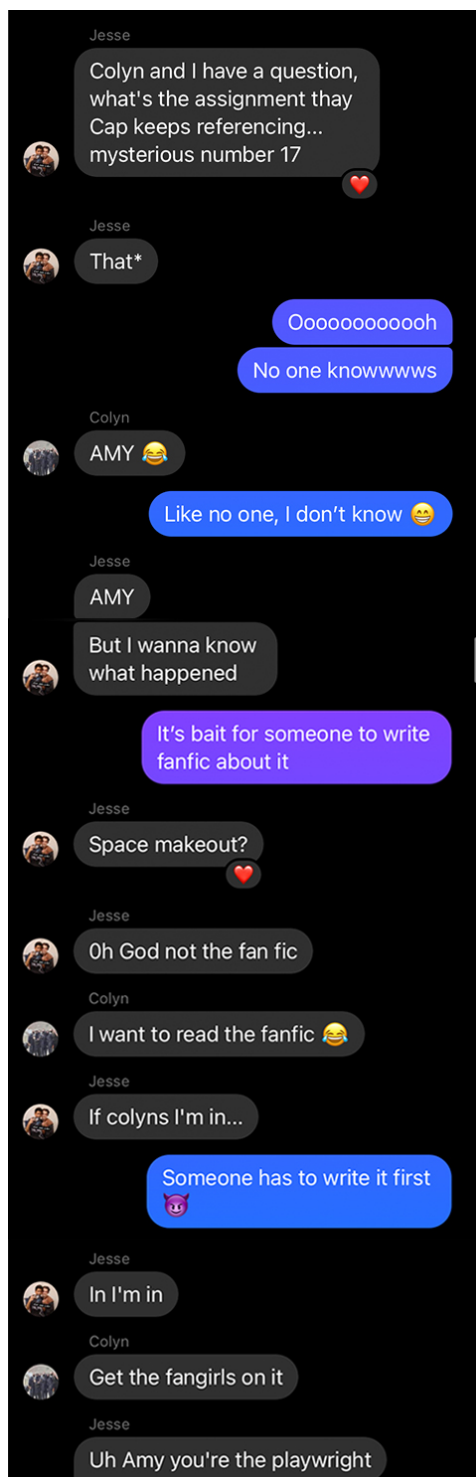


Figure 3: Messenger conversation between the playwright and the actors who played Cap and Lieu in UNM's Linnell Festival of New Plays.

However, in the play, Cap and Lieu never quite get around to discussing what exactly they do and do not remember. Following Fuchs, I decided that “nothing else is possible besides what is there,” (2004: 6), meaning, in this case, that the seventeenth assignment that Cap remembers probably did occur, but that because no other information exists about it in the play, everything else about the assignment is impossible to determine. This is acceptable within the play-world because the existence of the assignment is important to the story, but neither the nature of the assignment nor the reason for the characters’ differing memories bear the same importance, so they are easily omitted to leave room for speculation. In the rehearsal process, the actors who played Cap and Lieu discussed a number of possible explanations based on evidence presented in the script: did Lieu’s other memory erasures bleed into the memory of the seventeenth assignment, as they had with Lieu’s memory of their romance with Cap? Did Cap, prioritizing survival, agree to follow objectionable orders at a time when Lieu, prioritizing integrity, did not? No correct version of that assignment exists, but

as Wolf suggests, the script provides just enough information to suggest multiple possibilities for speculation (2012: 61).

In order to allow collaborators the freedom to engage in this speculation, thus infusing the play's world with detail beyond that which the script presents, I have to be equally deliberate about the information that I include as I am about the information that I omit. I can still provide negative space, but I need to craft the parameters of that negative space in a way that supports the story. Future drafts of the script can support collaborators by directly referencing Cap's pockets but may continue to omit other information about the costumes, for example. By being specific about what the script contains but also leaving room in the negative spaces of the script, the play's world can continue to grow and transform without compromising the world's logic. To reckon the inherent limitations of the play-world, prompted by Fuchs' definition of the plays as finite, with the desire to let the play-world grow and transform through the acts of future collaborators, I return to Dan Hassler-Forest's characteristics of transmedia world-building:

1. Transmedia world-building takes place *across* media.
2. Transmedia world-building involves *audience participation*.
3. Transmedia world-building is a process that *defers narrative closure*. (2016: 5)

In the case of theatrical productions of scripted plays, Hassler-Forest's first two statements justify the third. In other words, imaginary play-worlds are inherently incomplete, deferring narrative closure, *because* they are interdisciplinary and participatory. The addition of other forms of media and storytelling, in this case the contributions of actors, directors, costumers, and other design collaborators, augment and transform the world evoked by the play's script, filling in the empty spaces but also contextualizing and commenting upon the events portrayed there.

Wolf's description of shared authorship can be applied here: he explains that world authorship "can be conceptualized as a series of concentric circles extending out from the world's originator (or originators), with each circle of delegated authority being further removed from the world's origination and involving diminishing authorial contributions" (2012: 269). Wolf also draws a distinction between "closed" worlds, to which, by decree of the author, no further material may be added, and "open" worlds, those that are still developing due to the addition of new material (270). Because performances of the play will always contain new material in the form of interdisciplinary additions and interpretations, I propose that playscripts represent "open worlds" subject to the contributions of future collaborators, and that the degree of that world's openness is determined by the information presented in the script and the level of authority delegated by the script's author.

Additionally, while it is possible for one person to write, direct, act, and design all of the aspects of a play necessary to evoke its world for an audience, the world of the play will still remain open to some degree due to the presence of that audience. While this audience might not "participate" in the way implied by Hassler-Forest, by engaging in multiple iterations of an imagined world across a variety of media, their presence could still involve participation in the form of fannish engagement. Hassler-Forest expands upon the participatory nature of transmedia worlds by proposing a range of modes of audience participation. He explains that "One of the most typical features of these popular franchises is their 'drivable' nature: highly accessible to casual audiences but deliberately layered to offer rewards to 'fannish' groups willing to invest more time and energy" (2016: 16). Thus, the "layers" of an imaginary play-world may be accessed by way of engagement, whether by the

participation of an official collaborator or by the time and energy invested by a member of the audience.

Finally, with this assertion that play-worlds invite engagement from their authors, their theatrical collaborators, and their audience, we can return to address Tolkien's distaste for theatre as an effective mode for fantasy. To do so I need not revisit his arguments in full, I need merely entertain his definition of enchantment, a craft to which "fantasy aspires, and when it is successful all forms of human art most nearly approaches" ([1947] 2014: 76). Tolkien attributes this aspirational form of fantasy to the direct experience of an imaginary world, one which, in his conception, causes one to confuse it with reality. However, one aspect of Tolkien's enchantment betrays the usefulness of imaginary play-worlds. He states that "enchantment produces a Secondary World into which both designer and spectator can enter" (75), an assertion which directly describes the participatory nature of imaginary play-worlds. Additionally, while many kinds of imaginary worlds can be entered by both designers and spectators, the worlds evoked by theatrical performances have the unique quality of being entered simultaneously. However, the enchantment that occurs during a theatrical performance does not cause its participants to confuse its imaginary world with reality, as Tolkien fears. Instead, perhaps what occurs may be better described using Dolan's concept of utopian performatives:

Utopian performatives describe small but profound moments in which performance calls the attention of the audience in a way that lifts everyone slightly above the present, into a hopeful feeling of what the world might be like if every moment of our lives were as emotionally voluminous, generous, aesthetically striking, and intersubjectively intense. (2005: 5)

This description echoes the effects discussed in the previous chapter that Tolkien attributes to eucatastrophe: “But in the ‘eucatastrophe’ we see in a brief vision that the answer may be greater—it may be a far-off gleam or echo of *evangelium* in the real world” (103).

I propose that in theatrical performances of fantasy, science fiction, and other narratives evoking worlds that greatly differ from our own, Tolkien and Dolan may be speaking of the same kind of experience. Additionally, just as both contend that such experiences provide glimpses of better worlds, they equally claim that those who experience these glimpses carry those impressions with them, sentiments echoed by Muñoz and Fuchs. Fuchs includes the changing experience of the visitor to the small planet in her article:

Seeking what changes, don’t forget to ask what changes in you, the imaginer of worlds. Ask, what has this world demanded of me? Does it ask me for pity and fear? Does it ask me to reason? To physically participate in the action on the stage? Does it ask me to interact with other spectators? To leave the theater and take political action? To search my ethical being to the core? (2004: 9)

Dolan attributes the change in the audience to the experience itself, stating that “The experience of performance, the pleasure of a utopian performative, even if it doesn’t change the world, certainly changes the people who feel it” (2005: 19), while Muñoz speaks to the lasting power of such performances “The best performances do not disappear but instead linger in our memory, haunt our present, and illuminate our future” (2009: 104). Finally, while Tolkien does not directly relate these experiences to theatrical performance, his final words on fantasy in “On Fairy-Stories” speak to an equally utopian sense of hope:

[Man] has still to work, with mind as well as body, to suffer, hope, and die; but he may not perceive that all his bents and faculties have a purpose, which can be redeemed. So great is the bounty with which he has been treated that he may now, perhaps, fairly dare to guess that in Fantasy he may actually assist in the effoliation and multiple enrichment of creation. All tales may come true; and yet, at the last, redeemed, they may be as like and as unlike the forms that we have given them as Man, finally redeemed, will be like and unlike the fallen that we know. ([1947] 2014: 106)



In one final evocation of *Remain in Light*, I conclude this dissertation with the play's version of this hopeful belief. Having dared to imagine a world unlike their own, Cap expresses to Lieu the fantasy of the world they might escape to, the eucatastrophic vision that has kept them going in spite of all of the less fortunate possibilities:

CAP

But at least  
 We would get to be free of that terrible place.  
 Perhaps it would last for a handful of days at the most  
 But I'd rather live for a handful of days in the light of that beautiful sun  
 Than spend one endless day stuck in space  
 Staring at stars that are  
 Forever far away.  
 ...  
 And we're young.  
 We're so young.  
 If we're lucky,  
 We could live  
 A hundred thousand days together on that planet  
 Twice that, maybe  
 Lieu, you do the math  
 It wouldn't matter  
 We could burn  
 Or float in the sewage  
 Or drown,  
 We could witness the last days of human existence,  
 Or wait 'till the planet is hit by a comet.  
 We could lie  
 In the sun  
 On the archipelago of lower Manhattan as the oceans rise,  
 The tides come in,  
 The streets are flooded,  
 Grinning from our rock.  
 And when Management finally comes looking for us,  
 Their flagship  
 Like a cloud  
 Would block out the sun  
 But I would use the planet's surplus weaponry  
 To take them down  
 The ship would fall into the East River  
 Or what's the other one  
 The Hudson

## CAP

Like a glacier to the sea  
And it would be over  
They could never get to us  
To me.

...

And even if  
More likely  
They defeat me,  
Lieu, it doesn't matter.  
'Cause I won.  
I learned the truth.  
I escaped.  
I own destiny.  
And  
I brought you with me. (220-221)

As Cap finally confesses at the end of this divulgence, it does not matter if the escape results in the permanent and lasting transformation of their circumstances: the true victory resides in the enlightened sense of the world's possibilities engendered by the escape, and more importantly, in the fact that Cap brought Lieu and the others along to see this new world.

## References

- Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *Biographia Literaria*. 1817. Project Gutenberg, 2004.  
<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/6081/6081-h/6081-h.htm>
- Csicsery-Ronay Jr., Istvan. *The Seven Beauties of Science Fiction*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2008.
- Dolan, Jill. *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2005.
- Flieger, Verlyn and Douglas A. Anderson. Introduction to *Tolkien On Fairy-Stories*, 9-23. Edited by Verlyn Flieger and Douglas A. Anderson. London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2014.
- Fuchs, Elinor. "EF's Visit to a Small Planet: Some Questions to Ask a Play." *Theater* 34, no. 2 (2004): 5-9.
- Harwood-Smith, Jennifer. "Destroying Arcadia: The Construction and Deconstruction of Earth in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*." In *Revisiting Imaginary Worlds: A Subcreation Studies Anthology*, edited by Mark J.P. Wolf, 294-309. New York: Routledge, 2017.
- Hassler-Forest, Dan. *Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Politics: Transmedia World-Building Beyond Capitalism*. London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2016.
- Muñoz, José Esteban. *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. New York: New York University Press, 2009.
- Remain in Light*, written by A Yourd, dir. A Yourd, The Linnell Festival of New Plays Fall Reading Series, The X - Experimental Theatre, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM, 22 October 2021.
- Remain in Light*, written by A Yourd, dir. Leonard Madrid, The Linnell Festival of New Plays, The X - Experimental Theatre, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM, 9-12 February 2022.
- Rose, Mark. Introduction to *Science Fiction: A Collection of Critical Essays*, 1-7. Edited by Mark Rose. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1976.
- Ryan, Marie-Laure. *Narrative as Virtual Reality: Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media*.
- . "Why Worlds Now?" In *Revisiting Imaginary Worlds: A Subcreation Studies Anthology*, edited by Mark J.P. Wolf, 3-13. New York: Routledge, 2017.

Shklovsky, Viktor. *Theory of Prose*. Translated by Benjamin Sher. London: Dalkey Archive Press, 1990.

Suvin, Darko. *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979.

Tolkien, J.R.R. (1947) 2014. *Tolkien On Fairy-Stories*. Expanded edition, with commentary and notes, edited by Verlyn Flieger and Douglas A. Anderson. London: HarperCollinsPublishers.

Turchi, Peter. *Maps of the Imagination*. San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 2004.

Wolf, Mark J.P. *Building Imaginary Worlds*. London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2012.

———. “The Importance of Overflow and Chunking in World-Building and the Experiencing of Imaginary Worlds.” In *Revisiting Imaginary Worlds: A Subcreation Studies Anthology*, edited by Mark J.P. Wolf, 264-275. New York: Routledge, 2017.

Yourd, A. “Remain in Light.” Unpublished manuscript, 19 July 2021. Google Docs file.

———. “Remain in Light.” Unpublished manuscript, 31 January 2022. Google Docs file.

Zimmerman, Mary. “The Archaeology of Performance.” In *The Performance Studies Reader*, 2nd ed., edited by Henry Bial, 310-319. New York: Routledge, 2007.

APPENDIX: *REMAIN IN LIGHT*

MFA Dissertation Play

Linnell Festival of New Plays, University of New Mexico

9-12 February, 2022

Production Draft: 31 January, 2022

*Playwright's Note: The draft used in rehearsals was dated January 7, 2022, and the updated script was provided to stage management on January 31, 2022. The red text in this draft indicates cuts and changes made to the script during the rehearsal process.*

Remain in Light  
(a starship road trip)  
By A Yourd

The Characters:

the Captain (Cap):  
perpetually looking for distractions, occasionally betrays a hidden confidence.

the Lieutenant (Lieu):  
perpetually kind of hungover, occasionally betrays a natural generosity.

the Sergeant (Sarge):  
perpetually preparing to protect everybody, occasionally betrays a fear of everything.

the Corporal (Cor):  
perpetually trying to maintain composure, occasionally can't.

the Recruit (Ree):  
perpetually encouraging harmony through understanding, occasionally does so by leading.

Their Species:

Alien.

Largely human in manner and appearance.  
Though the lifespan of their species is somewhat longer than a human's,  
These aliens essentially are in their early twenties.

Their Pronouns:

In reading they may be referred to by they/them pronouns.  
In rehearsals they may be referred to by  
The pronouns of the actors playing them.

Scene:

*The interior of a starship  
in a state of disrepair.  
Cables, wires, and bits of machinery are scattered around.  
There is a constant low hum from the engine,  
punctuated by scraping, grinding, creaking sounds  
that signal the need for repairs.  
Inside, loose panels occasionally rattle.  
Outside is the void of space.*

*The Corporal (Cor), is piloting the ship.  
The others are asleep,  
The Captain (Cap) in a captain's chair (the only furniture),  
The other three on the floor.  
The Recruit (Ree) wakes and approaches Cor.*

**REE**

Hey, you.

...

Why're you still awake?

...

Hey.

...

Hey!

Are you okay?

It's like you weren't listening.

**COR**

Oh.

I'm just tired I think.

**REE**

Well you  
should get  
some sleep.  
Come on.

*Ree tries to pull Cor away from the controls.*

I can't.

**COR**

Why not?  
Let's go back to the dorms—

**REE**

But I have to keep flying.

**COR**

What do you—?

**REE**

*(Ree notices the view of space.)*

We're not at the station...  
We're in SPACE.

**COR**

Yeah, we're always in space.

**REE**

But not like THIS!  
I must have been so deep asleep  
that I thought I was back at the station.

*(the noise stirs the Lieutenant (Lieu).)*

COR.  
THIS IS AMAZING.  
WE'RE IN SPACE!

**LIEU**

*(noticing the mess of cables and machinery.)*

What's all this?  
Fuck.  
Fuuuuuuck.

**REE**

Sorry for waking you, Lieu!

**LIEU**

That's "Lieutenant" to you.



**LIEU (cont)**

...

That noise.

Something's wrong.

Something's wrong with the ship, it's—

*(to Cor)*

Are you flying manual?

*Lieu joins Cor at the controls.**The Sergeant (Sarge) awakes.***SARGE**~~Where we going?~~ Where—?**LIEU***(to Cor)*

Think it's the propulsion system.

Show me the coordinates.

**SARGE**~~Where are we going?~~ Where—?**LIEU**

Dunno, Sarge.

I must have been far fucking gone.

*(to Cor)*

Coordinates.

**COR**

I don't have them.

**LIEU**

So where are you taking us?

**COR**

?

Hang on...

**LIEU**

You don't remember?

**COR**

I'm sure I remember,  
I just have to think.

**LIEU**

~~Corporal~~, This is unprofessional!

**COR**

I know.  
Apologies, Lieutenant.

**LIEU**

No one knows what's going on?  
*(the others gesture no)*

Where is the Captai—?  
Oh.

*(Lieu sees the final sleeping passenger,  
The Captain (Cap), who is wearing sunglasses,  
A cool captain's jacket with lots of pockets,  
And headphones attached to a Walkman.  
Lieu nudges Cap.)*

Hey.

*(Cap feigns sleep. Lieu removes the headphones.)*

Hey.

*(Begrudgingly:)*

Cap.

**CAP**

Yo.

**LIEU**

Get up.

**CAP**

What's that noise?

**LIEU**

We're flying manual.  
Your pilot can't remember where we're going.

**COR**

I don't know what happened.  
Can't find the coordinates—

**CAP**

I got it, I got it.

*(Cap feels around in pockets.)*

Coordinates,  
coordinates—

*(Cap finds a card.)  
Cap gives it to Cor.)*

Coordinates.

*(Cor inputs the coordinates  
and turns off the manual flight system.  
Lieu glowers.)*

What?

*The ship lurches.*

**REE**

What was that?

**COR**

The propulsion system switching to autopilot.

**REE**

Should it sound like that?

**COR**

Not really.

*The ship changes direction.*

**REE**

What's that?

**LIEU**

Means that we were going in the wrong direction.

Sorry, Captain. **COR**

No, don't worry.  
This is going perfectly. **CAP**

*(Cap looks at the team, waiting.)*

Well?

...

Happy promotion to me!

*A cascade of nearly-overlapping response.*

Happy promotion, Cap! **REE**

Happy promotion. **COR**

~~Congrats!~~ Woo! **SARGE**

Yeah, yeah. **LIEU**

**CAP**  
Can you believe that after tireless work and a lifetime of service,  
Management has finally deemed me qualified  
to lead assignments to support our cosmic purpose?

...

~~What were they thinking?~~

~~You're pretty young for a captain.~~ **REE**

~~Yeah, what were they thinking?~~ **CAP**

**LIEU**  
It's so annoying that they sent us out like this.  
No one's prepared.

**CAP**  
Not prepared? Would you look at this team?  
We've got the best recruit—

**REE**

Hi, Cap!!

**CAP**

The strongest, baddest sergeant—

*(Cap and Sarge fist bump)*

The hardest-working corporal for a pilot—

**COR**

Thanks.

**CAP**

*(to Lieu)*

— And you.

**LIEU**

*(looking at the controls)*

How much longer?

**CAP**

The life of the party as usual.

*Cap beckons to Sarge. They spar.*

**LIEU**

Hope we didn't waste the fuel by flying in the wrong direction.

**CAP**

Fuel is fine.

**LIEU**

*(the mess)*

So what about the rest of this?

**CAP**

*(distracted by sparring)*

I said that it's fine.

Corporal, isn't it fine?

**COR**

I think so...?

~~*Cor goes to the mess and tries to make sense of it.*~~

**LIEU**

It figures that they'd stick us with a shoddy ship.

**CAP**

Lieu,  
we're awake,  
we're alive,  
we're away from the station.  
The ship will be fine.

**LIEU**

Are you sure?  
The propulsion system sounded—

**CAP**

Just trust me, okay?

~~*Cap continues to spar. Cap beckons to Sarge. They spar.*~~  
*Cor approaches Lieu.*

**COR**

Lieutenant, I  
want to apologize  
about my flying.

**LIEU**

I hope that you remember how to land the ship.

**COR**

I do.

...

I'm glad to be assigned with you.

**LIEU**

I doubt that's true.  
I'm watching you.

*Cor retreats.  
Cap loses the spar.*

**CAP**

*(to Lieu)*

That was terrifying.

**LIEU**

Good. They should be terrified.

**CAP**

This won't be very much fun if the team is afraid of you.

**LIEU**

Is it supposed to be fun?

**CAP**

Just wait.

It's gonna be the *best!*

*Cap challenges Sarge to another spar.*

**LIEU**

Hey, where are we going?

*(Cap has stopped listening.)*

Great.

**REE**

*(quietly to Cor)*

Are you okay?

You seem kinda  
dazed.

**COR**

Yeah, my thoughts are all blurry.

**REE**

Are you sick?

We should tell someone.

**COR**

Just think I need some sleep.  
I'll be okay.

*Cor tries to sleep on the floor.  
Ree approaches Lieu.*

**REE**

So this is it.  
We're really going.  
Way far off on an assignment.

**LIEU**

~~Not that far.~~ Let me see those coordinates...

**REE**

Aren't you excited?  
To explore other worlds,  
to learn about life forms and civilizations,  
to report what we've learned back to Management—

**LIEU**

Not really.

**REE**

How can you forget how amazing this is?  
We serve a cosmic purpose.  
It's the best job in the universe!

**LIEU**

~~I think~~ I know these.

**REE**

So where are we going?!

**LIEU**

Sector nine...



**REE**

What's it like?

**LIEU**

Where have I been assigned in sector nine?

**REE**

I hope that it's warm.

You think it will be warm?

**LIEU**

No, I *can't* think because you keep talking to me!

*(Ree retreats.*

*Cap loses the sparring match with Sarge.)*

These fucking recruits.

*(Cap approaches, grinning)*

Don't you think you should show them some discipline?

**CAP**

What do you mean?

*Lieu gestures towards the others.*

*Ree is wandering around the ship,*

*Cor has fallen asleep on the floor;*

*And Sarge is continuing to spar with invisible enemies.*

**LIEU**

It's unprofessional. Tell them to stop.

**CAP**

If it bothers you so much, you tell them.

**LIEU**

You're the captain.

**CAP**

Yeah, but I don't want to be an asshole.

**LIEU**

You want them to think *I'm* an asshole?

That's not what you're going for?

**CAP**

!

Why would you say that?

**LIEU**

I thought that it was.

**CAP**

I am thinking about the assignment!  
Or I'm  
Trying to.  
My head is pounding.

**LIEU**

Bad party?

**CAP**

Yeah. I can't remember anything.

**LIEU**

Good party.

**CAP**

I hate partying with you.  
I can't even remember getting this assignment.

**LIEU**

Is that because you were  
"far fucking gone"?

**CAP**

So you *weren't* asleep.

**LIEU**

I was making my way to the surface.  
I noted the phrase:  
"Far fucking gone."

**CAP**

You're so obnoxious.

**LIEU**

Hey—  
 "You're so obnoxious,  
*Captain.*"

**CAP**

Haha.  
 Fuck you.  
 ...  
 Captain.

**LIEU**

*They look at each other.  
 They laugh.*

I'm so glad you're here with me, Lieu!

**CAP**

Take those glasses off.  
 You look ridiculous.

**LIEU**

You don't like them?

**CAP**

I don't like *you*  
 with a  
 quirky accessory.

**LIEU**

Quirky?

**CAP**

Take them off.

**LIEU**

**CAP**

Not if you think that they're quirky.  
I love that.

**LIEU**

I can't see what you're thinking.  
I don't trust it.

**CAP**

If there's something that you want to know, just ask me.

**LIEU**

Okay.  
Where the fuck are we going?

**CAP**

Look at the coordinates.

**LIEU**

I did.  
Sector nine.  
I can't remember.

**CAP**

You will.

**LIEU**

What does that mean?

**CAP**

You'll like it. I promise.  
Hey, Team!  
Listen up!  
I have an announcement.

*The team gathers.  
Except for Cor,  
Who has fallen asleep on the floor.*

Heyyy, Cor.  
 Cor.  
 Cor!  
 Cap is talking.

**REE**

I'm listening.

**COR**

Come on, silly.

**REE**

Please no,  
 Let me sleep...

**COR**

*Cap approaches and kneels next to Cor.*

Heeyyy Cor.  
 Corporal.  
 I'd really like you awake for this.  
 ...  
 I have something to tell you.  
 I think that you'll like it.  
 ...  
*(holds up the Walkman)*  
 You could put on some music.

**CAP**

Cap, I'm so exhausted—

**COR**

We could wake you up.  
*(Cor sits up agrees)*  
 That's my pilot.

**CAP**

**COR**

*Nice glasses.*

*Thank you.*

**CAP**

*Cap gives Cor a pill. Cor swallows it.*

**REE**

What was that?

**CAP**

Didn't you know?

*(showing off an impressive collection of pills)*

The captain gets to hold all of the pharmaceuticals.

**REE**

I thought those were for emergencies.

**LIEU**

They are.

*Cor plugs the Walkman into the ship's communication system.*

*Cap speaks into the microphone.*

**CAP**

Attention everyone, this is your captain speaking.

By chance or fate or kind alignment of the stars,

this voyage through the galaxy is headed for a planet so extraordinary  
that the memories of my time there have sustained me as I've suffered  
endless boredom in between assignments.

And now I am pleased to share this place with all of you.

Corporal.

Music.

*Cor starts the Walkman.*

*"Psycho Killer" by Talking Heads*

*But it sounds like cassette tape ass.*

**LIEU**

Wait...

**CAP**

*(teasingly to Lieu)*

Do you remember now?

**LIEU**

That was sector nine??

**CAP**

*(into the microphone)*

And so, as captain I am honored to announce that  
we are going  
to  
the greatest city on  
the greatest planet in  
the galaxy —  
— New York City!

*Cascade:*

**COR**

Really?!

**SARGE**

Woah!

**REE**

Amazing!

**LIEU**

Fuck.

**CAP**

*(to Lieu)*

I thought you liked it there.

**LIEU**

No,  
*You* liked it there.

**CAP**

That's not what I remember.

*Cap pulls a dossier out of the jacket and flips through it.*

**REE**

~~So what are we doing there?  
What's the assignment?~~

**CAP**

~~Um, gimme a second...~~

*Cor's pill kicks in.*

**COR**

*(singing)*

Don't touch me,  
I'm a real live wire.

**COR / REE**

*(singing)*

Psycho killer,  
Qu'est-ce que c'est?  
Fa fa fa—

**LIEU**

How do you know this?

**COR**

I love Talking Heads.

**REE**

Cap played it all the time for us back at the station.

**COR**

It's the greatest music from  
the greatest planet in  
the galaxy!

*Sarge agrees.*



**LIEU**

————— *(doubtful)*  
~~Talking Heads?~~

**~~COR~~**

~~Yeah, I love Talking Heads.~~  
~~I love Talking Heads!~~

**LIEU***(to Cap)*

What are the odds you've been assigned to take us to  
 your favorite fucking planet?

**CAP**

Aren't I lucky?  
 Management must really love me.

**LIEU**

That's the assignment briefing?  
 Show me.

**CAP***(putting it away)*

No  
 I'll  
 Go over it later.

**~~LIEU~~**~~Seriously? Cap—~~**~~ALL (except Lieu)~~**

————— *(singing)*  
~~Oh, oh, oh,~~  
~~Ohhhhhh,~~  
~~Ayayayayay—~~

**LIEU**

Cap.

Let's talk about it later.

**CAP**

But I want to be prepared.

**LIEU**

*(an order)*

**CAP**

Seriously! Lieu!  
I do not want to talk about it.  
Not right now.  
Okay?

**LIEU**

...

Fine, okay.

**CAP**

Great.

**LIEU**

...

Cranky.

**CAP**

No.  
Just tired.  
Couldn't sleep.

**LIEU**

Slept enough to leave the Corporal  
piloting on manual alone for—

**CAP**

Yes, I know.  
...  
I feel bad about it!

**LIEU**

You know.  
It's okay if you don't think you're ready to lead.

**CAP**

I'm ready.  
Fuck off.  
I am totally ready.

**LIEU**

Then why are you acting so weird?

**CAP**

I thought you'd be happy to get to go back there with me.

**LIEU**

Does it matter? It's just an assignment.

**CAP**

I thought it would be fun.  
Remember when we went to CBGB's?

**LIEU**

I remember there were bodies everywhere  
And that we got in trouble later.

**CAP**

Yes, but you enjoyed yourself eventually.

*Cap shows off a vial full of space drugs.*

**LIEU**

Where did you get that?

**CAP**

Found it in my pocket.

**LIEU**

You're not supposed to have that.

**CAP**

~~I know.~~

~~I wonder what we should do with it...~~

**LIEU**

~~Don't you dare—~~

**CAP**

I know.

*(to everyone)*

~~Attention, team!~~ Okay, team. Listen up.

I know it's weird they sent us out like this,  
so quickly after my party.

But the thing is,

I don't feel like going over our assignment,  
yet.

And,

it isn't fair we didn't get to fully celebrate my new promotion.

So,

seeing as we have a ways to go before we get there,

I've been thinking we could

keep the party going.

*Cap reveals the vial.*

*The others react with excitement.*

**REE**

~~Are you sure?~~

**SARGE**

~~We'll get in trouble.~~

**CAP**

~~There's no one here to get us all in trouble.~~

~~Who can you report me to? Myself?~~

*Lieu goes to the console.*

**LIEU**

I'm calling Management.

**CAP**

Lieu, don't call Management...

**LIEU**

I won't if you ~~start acting like a captain~~ tell us about the assignment.

**CAP**

But I want to celebrate!

What else are we gonna be doing 'till we get there?

**LIEU**

*(trying to work the controls)*

The comms are down.

**CAP**

And when else will we get to combine all of these?

*Cap selects a couple of pills and swallows them.*

**LIEU**

Corporal!

The comms are down!

**CAP**

*(offering the vial)*

Hey Cor, you want some?

**COR**

I don't take that stuff.

**CAP**

So what about the pharmaceuticals?

Ree, check it out.

*Cap hands Ree the stash of pills.*

**REE**

*(to Cor)*

What do you think?

**LIEU**

Corporal!

**COR**

I think I have to fix the ship.

**CAP**

No! Come on, Corporal.

Cor Cor Cor Corporal, come party with me!

**COR**

You gave me that stuff to help keep me awake.

I think I've had enough.

**CAP**

But stimulants don't count, that's no fun!

*(Cap takes the pills from Ree and  
Hands them to Sarge)*

Sarge.

Party?

**SARGE**

!

*(Sarge glances at Lieu,  
Senses disapproval)*

...

*(Sarge looks between Cap and Lieu,  
Cap gesturing yes,  
Lieu gesturing no.  
Sarge becomes distraught.)*

Uh...

**CAP**

*(brandishing the vial)*

Lieu, come on.

I know you want some of the good stuff...

*(Lieu snatches the vial.)*

Hey!

Give it back.

Lieu.

Lieu!

*Cap chases Lieu around the ship.  
Sarge examines the pills.*

**COR**

*(to Ree)*

You should party if you want to.

**REE**

I don't. I want to hang with you.

*Ree pulls Cor towards an intimate embrace.  
Cor pushes Ree away.*

**COR**

Not here.

**REE**

No one's watching.

**COR**

I can't break the rules.  
I'm already in trouble with Lieu.

*Cap gives up on the chase.  
Lieu pockets the vial.*

**CAP**

No one's gonna party with me?

*Cascade:*

**LIEU**

Fuck no.

**COR**

No thank you.

**REE**

Maybe later.

*Sarge gestures no.*

**CAP**

Okay then, try to cover me,  
I'm flying solo.  
Freed from orbit,  
Flinging towards a planet—  
Flinging?

*The drugs begin to hit.*

**LIEU**

I thought you were taking too much.

**CAP**

Lieu you know I have an excellent metabolism!  
It'll be over in—  
Hang on—

**LIEU**

This was a better look before you were a captain.

**CAP**

Yeah? This was a better look before you were an asshole,  
Rolling,  
Rushing through space,  
Follow the singing,  
Ringing silence—  
Fuck—

*(Laughs)*

Listen to me—  
I am climbing the walls.  
This frigid atmosphere  
This forced fake climate  
I abhor the stuck trapped bore of it,  
Poor veins forlorn,  
Oh pharmaceutical,  
I'm fragile,  
A sarcastic chemical,  
Cut like a tickle,



**CAP (cont)**

Till the ripple at the surface bursts,  
 Refine me,  
 Free forbidden turns of phrase,  
 And spiral into brighter places.  
 Basest station  
 Place of space  
 Have flown  
 Afar  
 Forever  
 Farther—  
 Fa Fa Fa Fa,  
 Fa Fa Fa Fa Fa, Far.

*Cap wanders away and rides the high,  
 dancing strangely,  
 contorting into strange positions  
 and muttering to no one.*

**REE**

What do we do now?

**LIEU**

Whatever you normally do.  
 You're competent, or I assume.

*Lieu turns down the music and  
 collapses on the controls, distraught.  
 Ree approaches Cor.*

**COR**

Ree.  
 Seriously.  
 I have this work to do.

**REE**

But I've waited so long to go out on assignments with you.  
 And now that I can, I thought that we could be together all the time,  
 Like Cap and Lieu.

**COR**

I'm not sure that their relationship is one we should aspire to.

**LIEU**

*(to no one)*

Could punch that fuck.

**COR**

They might not send us out together if they knew.

**LIEU**

Corporal, what's the status on the comms?

**COR**

Still looking.

**LIEU**

Then stop socializing!

You.

Recruit.

Stop distracting the Corporal.

**REE**

Yes, Lieu!

**LIEU**

—tenant.

**REE**

Lieutenant.

**LIEU**

*(seeing Sarge with the pills)*

Seriously, Sarge?

**SARGE**

!

*Sarge drops the pills.*

**LIEU**

We're supposed to be the best of the best.  
If you can't act like it, they should have sent you to the mines!

**SARGE**

I know. ~~Sorry, Lieutenant.~~

**LIEU**

*(to everyone)*

Remember that we serve a cosmic purpose.  
We are heading for a planet  
to study the populace,  
source important information,  
and report that information back to Management.  
Parties are a privilege,  
even if you get promoted.

**REE**

Um, Lieutenant?

...

I don't exactly know what I'm supposed to do.  
This is my first assignment.

**LIEU**

Who did your assignment preparedness training?

**REE**

No one.

**LIEU**

How could Management expect success on this assignment from  
an untrained recruit,  
two overworked technicians,  
and one

*(To Sarge)*

of you.

**SARGE**

I am ready for anything.

**REE**

~~That's what I want.~~

~~I wanna be ready for anything.~~

*(to Sarge)*

Really? Would you train me?

**SARGE**

*(unsure)*

Uh...

**REE**

I'd love to learn some of your moves.

They look pretty cool.

**SARGE**

...

You think they look cool?

**REE**

Of course I do!

Lieutenant, could the Sergeant train me?

**SARGE**

*(alarmed)*

!

Uh...

**LIEU**

Yeah, whatever.

Stop bothering me.

~~*(the team begins to disperse)*~~

You all don't

think I'm an asshole or something?

**REE**

No!

*(Sarge gestures no)*

We like you Lieu—

**SARGE**

—tenant.

**REE**

Lieutenant.

*(Sarge gestures yes)*

You care about assignments. That's important.

*Sarge and Ree ~~run off to~~ train together.*

*~~Lieu approaches Cor.~~*

**LIEU**

*(to Cor)*

What about you?

Do you think I'm an asshole?

**COR**

No.

**LIEU**

I'd understand if you did.

I've been tough on you.

**COR**

I

Actually

Admire you, Lieutenant.

**LIEU**

...

Really?

Why?

**COR**

You're the kind of pilot I would like to be.

**LIEU**

Corporal, you don't even know me.

**COR**

I know you  
a little  
I think.

**LIEU**

Then my reputation precedes me.  
...  
What's the matter?

**COR**

Nothing.  
The job.  
I haven't slept.

**LIEU**

Get used to it.  
Give up on sleep and social ties, like I did.  
You'll survive.

**COR**

You have social ties.  
You and Cap are  
Friends.

**LIEU**

I suppose that we're close.  
Doesn't mean that we're friends.

...  
Here's what you do:  
Pick up the slack when others fail,  
take stimulants to stay awake,  
and make sure the ship won't explode.  
You'll be promoted eventually.

*(examining the mess)*

What happened?

*Sarge shows Ree stretching exercises.*

**SARGE**

~~Why do you want to train with me?~~

**REE**

~~I dunno. It looks pretty cool.~~

**SARGE**

...

~~You think it looks cool?~~

**REE**

~~Yeah, of course I do!~~

**LIEU**

————— *(to Cor, examining the mess)*

~~What happened?~~

**COR**

I guess that the ship had gone in for repairs,  
Except they forgot to repair anything.

**LIEU**

Typical.  
Tell me when the comms are up and running.

**COR**

Lieutenant?  
Um—

**LIEU**

*(picking up a small device)*

These stupid beacon transmitters are always shorting out.  
What is it?

**COR**

...

Do you think you could help me with this?

**LIEU**

You seem to know what you're doing.

**COR**

Yes, but  
there's a lot of stuff torn up down here.  
It's gonna take a while.

**LIEU**

I'm a lieutenant.  
I don't do *this* anymore.  
I've got to  
see what I recall about the planet.

*Lieu tries to think.***REE***(to Sarge)*

What do you think the planet will be like?

**SARGE**

Dunno.  
Sounds and  
atmospheres and  
smells.

**LIEU**

The smell...

**REE**

But ~~like~~, what does it *feel* like?  
To be there  
on the surface  
in the *sun*?

**SARGE**

All planets feel a little different.

**LIEU**

It was also  
Hot.  
...  
And



**LIEU (cont)**

Sticky.

**REE**

But I don't know what any planets feel like!

**LIEU**

Moist.

Disgusting.

**REE**

I don't know what to expect!

*Ree tries to imagine what it feels like on a planet.*

**CAP**

*(coming to)*

It's hard to imagine  
 stationed far away.  
 The endless emptiness,  
 Of neither night nor day,  
 Unchanging distance,  
 Silence,  
 Darkness.  
 But on the surface everything is always changing,  
 Floods of sights,  
 And sounds,  
 Sensations,  
 Incalculable quantities of stimulating data,  
 All of it lit by stars,  
 by stars so close and bright the heat can burn—  
 And if you pay attention  
 Every moment  
 Fills you  
 Overwhelming your mind  
 And exhausting your eyes  
 Until you can't possibly see anymore  
 And you finally  
 Sleep.

So kind of like a party?

**REE**

Exactly.

**CAP**

Are you back?

**LIEU**

**CAP**  
*(fetching the pills from the floor)*  
 Turns out if you combine some of these with the good stuff, you'll get  
 way more fucked up way more quickly.  
 Now we know.

What all did you take?

**LIEU**

**CAP**  
 One was to relax 'cause I want to relax,  
 and one was for pain 'cause you're being a pain.

Fucking obnoxious.

**LIEU**

Ah—

**CAP**

Fucking obnoxious "Captain."

**LIEU**

Thank you.

**CAP**

Some kind of punishment, I guess,  
 to serve as your lieutenant.

**LIEU**

**CAP**  
 Is there some other captain you'd rather be traveling with?

**LIEU**

I'd rather be back at the station asleep.

**CAP**

No you wouldn't. Be good to spend time on a planet.

**LIEU**

Depends on the planet.

*(Cap holds out a hand.)*

What?

**CAP**

The captain holds the pharmaceuticals.

**LIEU**

*(Holding up the vial)*

You're not supposed to have this.

**CAP**

It's from *my* promotion party.

It should be mine, anyway.

**LIEU**

I think Management would disagree with you.

**CAP**

Management isn't here, Lieu.

*They stare at each other.*

*Lieu hands over the vial.*

*Cap wanders over to Sarge and Ree to join the training.*

*Sarge coaches Ree in a spar with Cap.*

*Lieu tries to keep Cap's attention.*

**LIEU**

Why are they sending us back there again?

**CAP**

I don't know.  
Does it matter?

**LIEU**

There's nothing of value in New York  
Or anywhere else on that planet.  
I think.

**REE**

Did you ever go anywhere else on the planet?

**LIEU**

No, according to our information  
New York is the only place worth seeing.  
Everybody says so.

**CAP**

And they're right!  
All of the lights and the noise and the rumbling—  
No you don't!

*Ree nearly gets the upper hand.  
Cap recovers, and the spar continues.*

**LIEU**

I've been trying to remember their lifespans.  
Figure how much time has passed for them,  
In generations,  
Since we visited.

**CAP**

You are such a technician.

**LIEU**

Because I'm thinking practically?

**CAP**

No, 'cause you're thinking in math.  
Don't worry.

**CAP (cont)**

It's gonna be fun.

**LIEU**

You've had plenty of fun.  
Besides, you need to focus,  
Or you're gonna get distracted.

**CAP**

*(distracted by sparring)*

Distracted? By what?

*Ree overtakes Cap and wins the spar.*

**REE**

YES!  
I AM READY FOR ANYTHING!  
I AM READY FOR THE PLANET!

**LIEU**

You've got a long life ahead for seeing planets.  
Try not to freak out.

*Ree retreats and continues to train with Sarge.*

**CAP**

You used to be excited for assignments.

**LIEU**

And you used to care about assignments.

**CAP**

I care!  
I'm  
Celebrating with my friends.

**LIEU**

They're not your friends,  
You're their captain.

**CAP**

Then I'm a friendly captain  
And unlike you,  
I don't need the team to be afraid of me  
To do my job.

**LIEU**

~~But you aren't doing anything.~~ But you haven't been doing your job.

**CAP**

I've been delegating.

**LIEU**

*I've* been delegating.

**CAP**

Lieu, you haven't been doing anything at all.

**LIEU**

I've been  
Trying to remember what I know about New York.

**CAP**

Well, I'm the Captain.  
I am delegating.

**LIEU**

What is everybody doing, then?

**CAP**

I'm delegating,  
Ree is training.  
Sarge is keeping us in shape—good job.  
And *you're* being an asshole.

**LIEU**

What about the Corporal?

**CAP**

...  
?

What are you doing, Corporal?

**COR**

Fixing the ship.

**CAP**

Cor is fixing the ship.  
What is wrong with the ship?

**COR**

Everything.

**SARGE**

*(alarmed)*

Wait.

~~What?~~

*What's* wrong with ~~it~~ the ship?

**COR**

Do you want the list?  
The steering's off,  
the interfleet comms network is completely fried,  
so we can't talk to Management  
and Management can't talk to us,  
and—hear that?  
There's something off with the propulsion system.  
When we land, assuming we can do so properly,  
I get to climb around inside the ship  
and hope that the propulsion turbine's still intact.  
Then there's the navigation sensors,  
there's the beacon—

**REE**

What's the beacon?

**COR**

The device on the ship that lets us broadcast our location.

**SARGE**

~~But~~ What does this mean?

**COR**

If I don't fix this, we could all go down in flames.

**CAP**

Come on, the landing will be fine.

Two pilots like you and Lieu?

Perfect and smooth.

**COR**

But what about the takeoff?

Without the propulsion system we might have to fire the plasma rockets—

**CAP**

Just take things one step at a time.

We'll get to the planet, then

we'll figure out what happens next.

**SARGE**

...

*(to Cor)*

Your job is hard.

**COR**

It's okay, Sarge.

It's better than the mines.

**CAP**

*(laughing)*

Hey Lieu, you remember?

**LIEU**

No.

**CAP**

*(to the others)*

We came from the same repopulation colony



**CAP (cont)**

and then when we were on our way to the station for training  
Lieu was freaking out about how well we had done on the tests,  
and I lied and said that I did bad on the tests  
and Lieu thought that we were going to the mines.

**LIEU**

Because you *said* you knew where we were going!

**CAP**

So I start going like:

“Yeah, we’re gonna go underground where ~~we’re~~ we’ll never see sunlight again,  
and we’re gonna dig around in darkened caves  
and breathe in the dust till we choke and *die*—”

**LIEU**

You were so mean.

**CAP**

And Lieu is crying like

“STOP IT STOP IT YOU’RE LYING THAT’S NOT TRUEEEEEEEEE”

**LIEU**

It wasn’t true!

And this is why I’ve never trusted you.

**CAP**

You trust me.

**LIEU**

I don’t.

**CAP**

Yes, you do.

**LIEU**

*(to the team)*

The Captain cried too.

**CAP**

Ha. That's right...

**LIEU**

When you figured out how dark it was in space.

**CAP**

It's not good for us to be stuck on that station.

*(gestures to the sunglasses)*

We need the sun.

**LIEU**

You don't need sunglasses.

There is no sun.

**CAP**

"Quirky"

**LIEU**

There is  
no sun  
in space.

**REE**

~~There's suns in space,  
'Cause everything's in space!~~

**LIEU**

~~Shouldn't you be training?~~

**COR**

Where did you get those?

**CAP**

...

The depository.

~~Hey.~~

~~You wanna pick the music?~~

**LIEU**

So you stole them?

**CAP**

*(to Cor, ignoring Lieu)*

Hey.

You wanna pick the music?

*Cap reveals a few more cassette tapes,  
All Talking Heads albums.*

**LIEU**

Not more Talking Heads.

**CAP**

Yes more Talking Heads!

*(Cor chooses a tape and switches it into the Walkman.  
Cor rewinds the tape to find the right song)*

Once we get to New York,  
I promise,  
There won't be much work for you.  
You and Ree could go to CBGB's.

**COR**

Why me and Ree?

**CAP**

Just thought that you might like to go together.

*Cor starts the music.  
Something off More Songs About Buildings and Food.  
"The Good Thing" into "Warning Sign"?*

**REE**

I love this song!

**COR**

I know. ~~I got to pick it.~~

**LIEU**

*(to Cap)*

See? It's distracting.

**CAP**

No, it's not.

**COR**

It's not.

**LIEU**

We need the Corporal to repair the ship.

**CAP**

The ship  
Is fine.

**LIEU**

No, it's not!

**COR**

It's not.

**CAP**

I promise,  
The repairs can wait.

*(holds up ~~a small device~~ the beacon transmitter)*

What do we even need this for?

**COR**

The beacon.

**CAP**

We don't need the beacon.

*(another)*

What's this for?

**COR**

The comms.

**CAP**

And we don't need the comms!

**LIEU**

You know we need the comms.

**CAP**

*(pocketing something subtly pocketing the beacon transmitter)*

No we don't.

My music is better than anything Management says.

Turn down the cosmic rhetoric

and turn up Talking Heads!

*(another device)*

What's this one?

**LIEU**

You know what that is.

**CAP**

And we don't need it.

**COR**

Yes, we do.

*Cor takes the device from Cap and connects it to the mainframe.*

**REE**

~~But I don't!~~ We do?

So, what is it?

**LIEU**

Who did your emergency training?

**REE**

No one. Sarge!

**SARGE**

Oh.

Uh,

if something goes wrong in the ship,

**SARGE (cont)**

just—

*Sarge demonstrates throwing the switch.*

**REE**

What's that do?

**SARGE**

Uh...?

**COR**

Switches to auxiliary power.  
Keeps the atmosphere,  
the pressure,  
shuts off the rest.

**REE**

What do you mean if something goes wrong?

**COR**

Like a radiation surge,  
an electrical fire, or—

**SARGE**

A fire??

**COR**

Like I said.  
We could go down in flames.  
Literal flames.

*(Cor finishes reattaching the switch.)*

And that  
is  
Fixed.

**REE**

~~You mean it works now?~~

**COR**

~~Yeah. On to the next.~~

**CAP**

Congratulations!  
Take a break.

**COR**

I'd rather get this done in case something goes wrong.

**CAP**

What could go wrong?

**SARGE**

A fire!

**CAP**

Come on,  
You deserve a break.  
Let's celebrate!

~~I want us all to have some fun before we get there.~~

*(Cap pulls Cor away from the work.  
Cap urges Ree and Cor to dance together.  
Cap dance-fights with Sarge.)*

~~Have fun!~~

~~Turn it up!~~

Isn't this great?  
We're singing,  
We are dancing,  
We are taking pharmaceuticals—

**LIEU**

Corporal, stop. Get back to work.

**COR**

Sorry, Lieutenant.

**LIEU**

Recruit, stop distracting the Corporal.  
Sergeant, go train the Recruit.

**CAP**

Lieutenant, stop being an asshole.

**LIEU**

*(pulling Cap aside)*

Did you even want this promotion?

**CAP**

‘Course I did.

**LIEU**

Then why aren’t you taking it seriously?

**CAP**

What’s the point?

No one is giving us orders,  
it’s just you and me together at the top—

**LIEU**

Except that I’m your second-in-command.

**CAP**

You’re jealous.

**LIEU**

No.

**CAP**

You are!

You wanted them to make you captain.

**LIEU**

It’s not fair.

You’re pulling ahead of me.

**CAP**

No I’m not,

I’ve only been on more assignments.



**LIEU**

Then I'm falling behind.  
It must be nice to have Management love you.

**CAP**

Heh. That's not—

**LIEU**

But it hurts to see you rising through the ranks like it's an easy thing to do,  
When I have had to work *so hard* just to keep up with you—

**CAP**

Lieu.  
You don't think I deserve this?

**LIEU**

I think you should be acting like a captain.

**CAP**

Better than acting like an asshole.

**LIEU**

Just promise that you will not screw this up for me?

**CAP**

Lieu, will you  
Trust me when I tell you everything is fine?

**LIEU**

After sixteen assignments with you?  
Fuck no.

**CAP**

What's that supposed to mean?

**LIEU**

It means I know what to expect.  
If we don't prepare you'll get distracted,  
Or forget something important—

CAP

And you help me remember.  
We make a good team.

LIEU

You think we make a good team?

CAP

I think it's seventeen...

~~LIEU~~

~~I mean it.  
I'm not putting up with your nonsense.~~

~~CAP~~

~~What nonsense?~~

LIEU

~~Goofing off,  
breaking the rules,~~  
You think I *like* it when you ~~letting~~ let me do ~~all~~ the work  
so you can take the credit for it—

CAP

That's not what I do.

LIEU

I'm sick of covering for you.  
I'm sick of picking up the slack so you can screw around.

CAP

Is this really what you think of me?

LIEU

I think they promoted the wrong fucking captain.

CAP

Maybe they ran out of good lieutenants to promote.  
*(getting the team's attention)*

Team team team,

**CAP (cont)**

listen up:

It has just been revealed to me

that some of you don't trust that I can do this job effectively.

But friends,

you know me.

And you trust me, right?

**REE**

We trust you, Cap!

*Sarge gestures yes.*

**CAP**

Cor, you trust me.

**COR**

Of course.

**CAP**

Sorry, Lieu.

It doesn't matter if you like me.

Everybody else does!

**LIEU**

*(grabbing Cap by the jacket)*

Give me that assignment.

**CAP**

No!

You didn't say you trust me.

**LIEU**

So I have to *break* you.

**CAP**

Doooooon't.

*Lieu wrestles the dossier out of Cap's jacket.  
And holds it aloft.*

**LIEU**

I wanna tell you all exactly how this goes.  
 We're gonna get there,  
 get to New York *fucking* City  
 then  
 the Captain's gonna realize that  
 we should have been preparing this whole time,  
 and we'll double our workload to make up for it.  
 When we return,  
 it will be as if the  
 spiral of dysfunction never happened.  
 The Captain will  
 put on a brand new uniform,  
 fool Management with charms,  
 and take credit for the results.  
 It doesn't matter what actually happens.  
 As long as you're willing to feign perfection  
 at others expense,  
 you'll never have to confront your own  
 weakness.  
 Isn't that correct, Captain?  
 That is how you earned your accolades?  
 That is how you plan to go on  
 leading teams out on assignments  
 without actually doing anything?  
 Brilliant, I think,  
 except for all of us  
 you're leaving in the dust.

**CAP**

Lieutenant, that is out of line.

**LIEU**

If you want me in line,  
 You should give out some orders  
 Instead of pharmaceuticals!

**CAP**

*(snatching back the dossier)*

I mean it.

**CAP (cont)**

Don't say that in front of the team.

**LIEU**

What team?

You aren't leading anybody,  
you're not doing anything,  
you're just putting on music  
and screwing around!

**CAP**

You wanna know why I "screw around"?

Because it works.

If Management thinks that I'm screwing around,

They disregard me.

And then when it matters,

I always impress them.

I get the promotion.

They leave me alone.

I've learned how to be what they want me to be when it benefits me  
but I can't be that all of the time.

I want something that is mine.

I am mine,

the music is mine,

my hands,

my sunglasses—

All mine.

It's all I have.

We have given our lives to serve their cosmic purpose,

We wait in the dark and silence so we can be sent to a planet,

And I'm drowning in it, Lieu.

Management doesn't love me.

They just think that they know me.

They think I don't care about anything.

I care a lot more than they think.

And I refuse to give up

any more of my life caring what Management thinks of me

I'll do exactly what I need to do and nothing more

And you should do that too,

'Cause they aren't worth it.

**CAP (cont)**

I promise they're not.  
 That's why I've pulled myself so far away  
 that they can't find me,  
 they can't get to me.  
 You can't let them get to you, Lieu!

...

What if I promise you  
 that I will not be charming Management,  
 that I will earn no accolades from this assignment?  
 I would rather screw around on pharmaceuticals forever  
 drifting through the black of space,  
 'cause you don't fucking trust me!

*(Lieu picks up the Walkman.)*

Hey! Careful.

*Lieu unplugs the Walkman and tosses it to the floor.*

*Cap scrambles to catch it.*

*They storm off to opposite sides of the ship.*

**REE**

...

...

...

It's so quiet.

...

Is that the engine?

...

How do you know what it sounds like if something goes wrong?

...

I bet there's a lot of sounds.

The engine,  
 the propul—whatever you said.

How are we breathing in here?

What system powers that?

Can that go wrong?

...

Sarge, what do we do if we run out of atmosphere?

Or if the hatch comes open?

What then?

**REE (cont)**

Sarge?

**SARGE**

Uh...

I don't know.

I don't know.

I don't know...

**COR**

*(whispered)*

Ree!

**REE**

What?

*(Cor gestures towards Sarge.  
Sarge is distraught.)*

Oh.

We can talk about something else.

Let's talk about assignments or something.

Is that okay, Sarge?

*(Sarge gestures yes.)*

And

Let's all talk about them, okay?

The whole team.

We can act like a team.

It will be fun.

Is that okay, everyone?

**COR**

It's fine with me.

**LIEU**

...

Whatever.

**REE**

...

Cap?

**CAP**

...  
Sure.

**REE**

So,  
How many assignments has everyone been on?

**COR**

Five.

**SARGE**

Seventeen.

**LIEU**

Twenty-six.

**CAP**

Thirty-two.

**REE**

How many assignments together?

**LIEU**

Sixteen.

**CAP**

Seventeen.

**LIEU**

This one makes seventeen.

**SARGE**

A few with each of you.

**COR**

And I've been out with—  
Most of you.



Who keeps a count of that?  
**LIEU**

It's seventeen with Lieu,  
eight with Sarge,  
and twice with Cor,  
before I was a captain.  
**CAP**

Who do you think will get the next promotion?  
**REE**

Dunno.  
**CAP**

Fuck off.  
*(to Cap)*  
**LIEU**

I want one.  
**COR**

I don't.  
I'm not a leader.  
**SARGE**

But you're such an awesome trainer, Sarge!  
**REE**

You think so?  
**SARGE**

Yeah, of course I do.  
And you'd win in a fight against all of us.  
**REE**

That's not true.  
**SARGE**

**REE**

Who would win if you fought against me?

**SARGE**

I would win.

**REE**

Against Cor?

**COR**

Sarge would win.

**REE**

Against Lieu?

*(Lieu points to Sarge)*

What about you and Cap?

**SARGE**

Then the Captain would win.

**CAP**

*(Laughing)*

How?

**SARGE**

I would let you win.

**REE**

Which one's the better pilot,  
Cor or Lieu?

**SARGE**

I dunno.

**CAP**

You both are good pilots.

**LIEU**

That wasn't the question.

I haven't flown with Lieu. **REE**

The Lieutenant is better. **COR**

But you haven't flown with me, either. **LIEU**

You're more experienced. **COR**

I'm confused. **REE**

I'm sick of this. **LIEU**

No, let's keep talking. **REE**

**LIEU**

You want to talk about the job?  
 Want to know what it's like?  
 Take a good look, Recruit,  
 this is where you will be after twenty-six assignments,  
*if* you work hard,  
*if* you can survive this long.  
 This isn't fun.  
 It's important,  
 And it's an honor,  
 It's great to be one of the best of the best  
 And to get to see planets,  
 Learn about them,  
 Make a record of them so that something remains when they're gone,  
 But it's exhausting.  
 It will wear you down.  
 The Corporal can tell you.

**REE**

I  
I'm sorry, Lieu.

**LIEU**

It's *Lieutenant*. I have *told* you.

...

You're annoying me.  
Stand over there.  
Don't talk to anyone.

**CAP**

Come on,  
Don't bully recruits.

**LIEU**

I'm not.  
I'm giving orders.  
Which is what *you* should be doing.

**CAP**

But I wouldn't be such an asshole about it.

*Ree turns away and starts to cry.  
Cor starts to get up.*

**LIEU**

*(to Cor)*

Don't you move.  
Keep working.

*(to Sarge)*

You have something to say, Sarge?

*Sarge gestures no.  
Lieu tries to storm off,  
but there's nowhere to go.  
Ends up next to Cap, distraught.*

**CAP**

...

...

What?

**LIEU**

I'm sick of this.

I'm sick of you.

I'm sick of chasing you around the ship.

I can't hear myself think,

my head hurts, and

I'm tired!

I'm so tired.

**CAP**

Take a stimulant, if you're so tired.

**LIEU**

...

Gimme one.

*(Cap gives Lieu a pill.*

*Lieu swallows it.)*

I wish I could relax...

*(Cap holds up another pill.*

*Lieu checks to see if anyone is looking.*

*Lieu takes it and swallows it.*

*Cap swallows one as well.*

*Cap fiddles with the Walkman.)*

...

Just let me fix it.

*Cap hands it over.*

*Lieu fixes it.*

**CAP**

I don't always screw around.

Not when it matters.

I'm trying to handle it,

keep things in line,

~~I am trying to balance things all of the time~~ But I can't seem to

**CAP (cont)**

Figure it out on my own all the time.  
 And I deserve to party after everything I've done for them.  
 Lieu, I deserve to have fun.  
 I've worked hard for this promotion,  
 same as you.  
 I hate the station.  
 I hate this ship.  
 I hate floating in space, it's like  
 eternally drowning without any liquid.  
 I go on assignments as much as I can  
 so I don't have to sit in the cold, in the dark, all alone.  
 I'd rather feel anything else.

*Cap prepares the vial.*

**LIEU**

Take it slow with that stuff.

**CAP**

I'm *celebrating*.

*Cap applies more eyedrops.*

**LIEU**

...  
 I *am* an asshole.

**CAP**

*(sarcastically)*

You think so?

**LIEU**

I've upset the Recruit.  
 I'm always mean to Sarge.  
 The Corporal's like,  
 afraid of me or something.

**CAP**

I thought you wanted everyone to fear you.

**LIEU**

!

I *do*, but

...

I want them all to like me too.

**CAP**

So you're not  
entirely an asshole.

**LIEU**

I am.

I'm always tired.

I hate everyone.

I hate going out on assignments.

I'm always pissed off about something.

I want to stay inside,

up on the station,

in the dark, if possible,

where I can't feel anything.

No heat, no sun, no

Anything.

**CAP**

That stuff doesn't make you an asshole.

**LIEU**

You're the one who's been saying so all of this time!

**CAP**

I was just making fun of you.

**LIEU**

Don't do that! You know I can't stand that.

*(returning the Walkman)*

Should be better now.

*Cap puts on the headphones and starts the music.*

**CAP**

...

Thank you for fixing it.

**LIEU**

Sorry for breaking it.

...

Hey,

We *are* friends, right?

**CAP**

?

Yeah.

Yeah, Lieu of course you're my friend.

We're friends.

Why so?

**LIEU**

Why am I like this?

**CAP**

...

Lieu, you

Want me to tell you?

**LIEU**

Yes.

**CAP**

Okay.

Uh.

...

Fuck.

**LIEU**

What's wrong?



**CAP**

I don't know  
How to say this, Lieu.

**LIEU**

I can take it.

**CAP**

I know,  
But I can't—  
...  
Come on.

**LIEU**

Where?

**CAP**

I wanna show you something.

**LIEU**

How much did you take? *(groans)*

*Cap leads Lieu in circles around the ship.  
A song begins, from far away at first.  
Electric instruments bending their tune.*

*The music grows louder.  
The sound of a crowd.  
"Heaven" from Fear of Music.*

*Cap and Lieu squeeze through the crowd until  
They find a place where they can see the band  
Cap is no longer wearing sunglasses.*

**CAP**

See, I told you ~~this place~~ CBGB's was the greatest!

**LIEU**

You stop making sense when you're starting to party.

**CAP**

There they are,  
Talking Heads,  
Can you see 'em?

**LIEU**

Where do you think—  
Where did you go?

**CAP**

Please tell me you remember?

That one, there?  
That's *David Byrne*.

**LIEU**

I don't understand you.

**CAP**

It's a name.  
Come on,  
We don't have anything like this back at the station!  
Doesn't it make you feel...  
everything?

**LIEU**

No.  
I don't feel  
anything.

**CAP**

You did at the time.

**LIEU**

Well, I don't remember.

**CAP**

Could you try?

...  
Okay.

**LIEU**

**CAP**

...  
They're going on tour.  
They're leaving soon.

**LIEU**

So are we.

**CAP**

You want to go with them instead?

...  
I don't want to go back.  
I don't want to leave.  
I want to stay on this planet forever  
In this city.

...  
I'm gonna miss the sun.

**LIEU**

...  
...  
It's late.  
We should go.  
...  
Hey.

**CAP**

Just a **minute moment**.

**LIEU**

We're gonna get in trouble.  
Let's just go.

**CAP**

Just wait till the end of the song.  
Please?

*Cap sways and listens.*

*The song reverberates through space.*

*It fades beneath  
the rumble of the ship.*

**LIEU**

What was that supposed to show me?

**CAP**

I dunno, that you  
Used to enjoy stuff.  
You used to be fun.  
I kinda hoped you'd remember.

**LIEU**

I remember, I just didn't  
Feel the same.

**CAP**

I know.

**LIEU**

...  
I'm fun.

**CAP**

No.  
You're not.

**LIEU**

Well I like to have fun.

**CAP**

No you don't. You like giving and following orders.

**LIEU**

I would love to get to follow orders.

**CAP**

I should order you to have some fun.

**LIEU**

If that's what it would take for you to start behaving like a Captain.

**CAP**

So, maybe it is!

**LIEU**

So do it, then.

**CAP**

I will!

**LIEU**

I'm waiting!

**CAP**

*(holding up the vial)*

Have some fun, Lieutenant.

That's an order.

**LIEU**

...

FINE.

*Lieu applies the eyedrops.  
Cap and Lieu look at each other.  
They laugh.*

*The Walkman plays "Born Under Punches"  
Ree is crying, comforted by Cor,  
While Sarge looks on, distraught.*

COR  
Come on, Ree.  
Calm down.

REE  
I'm okay.

COR  
Lieu was just being mean,  
it has nothing to do with you.

REE  
It isn't that.

COR  
Then what's the matter?

REE  
I've been so excited to go on assignments.  
It's not what I thought it would be like,  
That's all.

COR  
I wouldn't  
call this  
normal, Ree.

REE  
But everyone is so unhappy.

COR  
No we're not.  
I'm not.

REE  
But Lieu was saying—

COR  
*(harshly)*  
Forget what Lieu said!

**COR (cont)**

Just forget it, Ree!

...

I'm sorry.

**REE**

... Are you okay?

**COR**

*(pulling away)*

I'm fine.

I'm fine.

I promise.

Sarge?

**REE**

Wait—

**COR**

*(to Sarge)*

Could you talk to Ree?

**REE**

Why won't you talk to me?

**COR**

I have to fix the ship.

**REE**

Cor, don't—

**COR**

I can't—

**REE**

Sarge, help me—

**COR**

Sarge, please—

**SARGE**

I can't do this!  
I can't talk to  
Everybody  
All the time.  
Goodbye.

*Sarge joins Cap and Lieu.  
Cap gives Sarge the eyedrops.  
Sarge blinks, stumbles.  
Cap and Lieu laugh.*

**COR**

So no one's in command?

**REE**

Cor.  
Are you okay?

**COR**

Yeah. You're the one who's upset.  
I'm fine.

**REE**

Really?

**COR**

I am, Ree, I swear.  
I think I'm just tired.

**REE**

Okay... You promise?

**COR**

...  
Yeah.  
I'm happy.  
I'm so happy.



I'm happy too. **REE**

I can't wait to get to New York, I wanna  
Dance at CBGBs, just the two of us. **COR**

You do? **REE**

Of course I do. **COR**

~~Are you sure you're okay?~~ **REE**

~~I'm fine, I promise.  
Be glad when we get there.~~ **COR**

**LIEU**  
*(joining them, pretty fucked up)*  
Ree—  
Reeeeeeeeeee—  
I'm an asshole.  
I wanna be better.  
Be more fun—  
'Cause you *deserve* a fun—  
A better leader.  
You're the *future*.

**REE**  
*(touched)*  
Thanks, Lieu.

**LIEU**  
You two, you're the future,  
future of the cosmic  
purpose—  
Corporal—

**LIEU (cont)**

Cor—  
You scared of me?

**COR***(not convincingly)*

No...

**LIEU**

But you said you like me.  
mm—admire me.

**COR**

I like and fear you both, Lieutenant.

**LIEU**

Funny!

Funny.

~~Future:~~

~~You're the future.~~

~~And I'm sorry.~~

Phew...

I'm

Fucked up.

I

Fucked up.

**COR**

~~Why?~~ It's okay, Lieutenant.

**LIEU**

~~I fucked up.~~ No.

I fucked up the future.

**COR**

~~What did you say?~~

**CAP***(also pretty fucked up)*

Lieu don't bully them,

**CAP (cont)**

They want to be alone.

**LIEU**

I'm not, there's two of them.

**CAP**

*(slipping Ree a couple of pills)*

Alone together, Lieu. For fun.

**LIEU**

But that's against the rules.

**CAP**

Let's goooooo.

**LIEU**

I'm fun.

**CAP**

Yeah you're so much fun. You're the best.

**LIEU**

But I fucked up the future.

**COR**

No you didn't, Lieu.

**CAP**

Come on! Let's go! Let's party!

**LIEU**

Where's the party?

**CAP**

You're the party, Lieu!

You are the party.

*Ree swallows the pills.  
Cap drags Lieu away.*

**REE**

I think the Captain knows about us.

*Ree laughs. Cor tries to laugh, but can't.*

**COR**

Ree I gotta tell you something.

**REE**

... Okay.

**COR**

Something happened  
out on an assignment  
And no one will talk about it.  
They're just  
Pretending like it never happened.

**REE**

What happened?

**COR**

That's just it,  
I can't remember  
all of it I  
I don't even know what I'm seeing,  
it happened so fast  
and  
...  
I don't know,  
I can't think,  
each time I try to make some sense of it  
I feel like I'm  
**sinking** Sinking  
away from the light at the surface  
until I can't see it at all.

*(Ree giggles. Tries to contain it.)*

What?

Sinking... **REE**

Did you take something? **COR**

Yeah... **REE**

Ree! **COR**

What? **REE**

I'm the only one who isn't partying? **COR**

You could party *with* me. **REE**

Ree, I'm trying to talk to you! **COR**

But I didn't know you were going to!  
...  
Why don't you want to party? **REE**

'Cause I always end up freaking out or  
feeling weird or something, it—  
It's all too much. **COR**

That's not what happened at Cap's promotion party.  
You were fine. **REE**

I didn't take anything at Cap's promotion party. **COR**

**REE**

Didn't you?

**COR**

...

I can't remember.

**REE**

I was thinking about what Cap had said about the planets,  
how it feels amazing, kind of like a party—

**COR**

What happened

*after*

Cap's promotion party?

**REE**

I can't wait 'till we get there!  
I want to feel all of the things!

**COR**

Why can't I remember?  
Ree!

**REE**

I'm sick of spinning, smiling,  
empty and alive in stasis on the station.  
I want to know time and rotation,  
days and nights, spin slowly on a planet.  
Seeing planets is a pleasure  
of commendable importance,  
collecting clarity,  
a catalog of data,  
science and charisma.  
It's such a lucky life,  
to live so long that we escape ~~importance~~ extinction,  
benevolent Management granting the freedom to know and to see without needing,  
released from the planetary march through time,  
safe on our station on top of the galaxy.

**CAP**

Stuffy station, orderly society,  
 give me skyscrapers and subways,  
 give me liquid boiling underneath the surface of the earth  
 bursting up through solid ground into the air.  
 Give me lights and noise and sun and night and  
 Heat!  
 Instead of freezing up in space  
 while we inhale sterile atmosphere,  
 We'll inhale  
 a thousand brilliant unnamed chemicals,  
 Unchecked atmosphere condensing into  
 Sweat upon our skin,  
 Quenching thirst,  
 Cleansing and clarifying by  
 Chaotic chemistry—

**LIEU**

Kind changes  
 Climates change  
 Continents crumbling  
 Smile flock  
 Flat chunk of pavement, this  
 Fortress of rock  
 Bleat blighted herd  
 As rivers reverse  
 And currents rise  
 And glaciers fall into the sea  
 And wading through the streets  
 Islands of buildings  
 Soaking  
 Sinking  
 Dark and drowning.

**SARGE**

I want to be a fish!  
 I want to live in liquid,  
 Blur my vision,  
 Fill my mouth and lungs  
 And flood my ears,

**SARGE (cont)**

To swim in silence  
 Underneath the surface  
 So I'm free to move in every direction.

*Everyone laughs (except for Cor).  
 The drugs have made this all seem very funny.  
 Everyone dances (except for Cor).*

**CAP**

YES!  
 We are singing,  
 We are dancing,  
 We are taking pharmaceuticals!!!

*(The stimulant begins to wear off.  
 Cor shudders to stay awake.  
 Time stutters and shakes.)*

Cor Cor Cor Cor—

**COR**

You back on the surface?

**CAP**

*Juuuuust* above it.  
 Take a break!

**COR**

*(looking for something)*

No, too much work to do.

**CAP**

Well lemme help or something.  
 What are you looking for?

**COR**

The cable for the navigation—  
 How did you know about  
 me and Ree?



**CAP**

I'm the Captain.  
I know everything.

*(finding a cable)*

That it?

**COR**

You *do* know your way around the ship.

**CAP**

Yeah, I was just annoying Lieu.

**COR**

Were you ever a pilot?

**CAP**

Just in training.  
Terrible.  
I prefer pharmaceutical flights.

**COR**

*(suddenly remembering)*

Did you fly earlier?

**CAP**

...  
What?

**COR**

Earlier,  
I can't remember.  
There's a  
span of time  
that I can't quite—  
Did I fall asleep?

*Lieu stumbles and falls to the floor.  
Grabs at Cap's feet.*

Hey. **LIEU**

Yeah. **CAP**  
 You fell asleep.  
 I gave you stimulants.

Hey! **LIEU**

What, Lieu? **CAP**

*I want a stimulant.* **LIEU**

You've had enough. **CAP**

*Lieu reaches into Cap's pocket and finds some pills.*

Then give me one of **LIEU**  
 whatever of these—

**CAP**  
*(snatching the pills away)*

NO—  
 No.

What are those? **COR**

Ha! I don't remember. **CAP**

Ow! *(Lieu thwacks Cap)*

**LIEU**

Cap you're a  
fucking asshole!

**CAP**

Woah, so—  
Don't  
combine the good stuff with the stimulants.  
So now we know.

*Cap tries to put the pills in a pocket  
And the dossier falls out of the jacket.  
Papers scatter everywhere.  
Among them, the beacon transmitter.  
Cap scrambles to pick everything up.  
Cap slides the beacon transmitter into the dossier.  
Lieu goes to the controls.*

**LIEU**

Hello?  
Can anybody fucking hear me?

**CAP**

Lieu, the comms are down.

**LIEU**

The beacon—

**CAP**

Lieu, the beacon's down.

**LIEU**

*(testing various controls)*

No one can find us?  
We need help!

**CAP**

We're fine,  
calm down,  
don't touch that—

*Cap pulls Lieu away from a device.  
The ship lurches.*

**REE**

What was that?

**COR**

The stabilizers—

**LIEU**

*(going for another device)*

Then I—

**COR**

*(stopping Lieu)*

No!

**CAP**

*(to Cor)*

What is—?

**COR**

The plasma rockets!

**CAP**

Okay Lieu, let's  
get away from the controls.  
Let's talk or something—

*(Lieu grabs a piece of equipment from the mess and breaks it.)*

Oh?

Yeah!

Good idea, Lieu.

Let's break stuff!

*(Cap breaks something else.)*

No one needs to touch the plasma rockets!

See?

Feel better?

*Sarge breaks something and Lieu recoils.*

*Cor grabs ~~a piece of equipment~~ the beacon to protect it.*

**COR**

We need the ship to fly,  
Stop fucking breaking it!

**CAP**

*(to Lieu)*

It's okay.

*(to Cor)*

It's okay.

**COR**

I've been flying the ship,  
I've been fixing the ship,  
I can't fucking believe this!

*Sarge and Ree freeze guiltily.*

**LIEU**

Enough of spinning, swimming, screaming,  
*fucking* fish,  
They'll file us down,  
Grind dust from our bones,  
Metal and stone—

**COR**

*(approaching Lieu)*

Lieu— ?

*This gets Lieu's attention  
Lieu speaks directly to Cor.*

**LIEU**

But we gleam in the light,  
Our sweat,  
That sheen,  
Weeps from our skin.

**CAP**

Lieu, leave the Corporal alone.

**LIEU**

*(still to Cor)*

Please smile.  
 We'll face it out of spite,  
 Our last sterile gasp,  
 Be empty but alive.  
 The blighted shine—  
 Every planet dies.

**COR**

Lieu, do you  
 Know who I am?

**LIEU**

...  
 You're that corporal who lost the coordinates.  
 That was unprofessional.  
 Who trained you?

*(something in Cor breaks.  
 Lieu notices what Cor is holding)*

Is that the beacon?

*(Cor gestures yes)*

The transmitter is missing.

*Lieu stumbles away. Cor shakes.*

**COR**

I want to party.

**REE**

Now? Are you sure?

**COR**

Fuck it.

*Cor sets the beacon down on the console.*

**CAP**

Cor.  
Hang on—

**COR**

Can we put on different music?

*(Cor sets down the beacon.*

*Cor goes to the Walkman and switches the tapes.*

*The tail end of “Drugs” off Fear of Music.*

*Sarge has tried to reassemble the broken devices.*

*Sarge offers them to Cor.)*

Not now, Sarge!  
I’m sick of working.

**REE**

Cor.  
I think  
you seem upset—

**COR**

Ree,  
I’m fine,  
but I  
can’t be here right now.

*Cor approaches Cap.*

**CAP**

Um, I don’t think we should—

**COR**

Cap, if you tell me I can’t after all of this, then you—  
You—

**CAP**

Okay.  
Yeah.  
Okay.

*(Cap fumbles with the vial and pills)*

So what do you want?

**CAP (cont)**

Do you want to relax?

**COR**

*(grabbing the vial)*

I want that.

*Cor applies the eyedrops.*

**CAP**

Slow down.

**COR**

Cap, I trust you.

The ship will be fine.

*Cor blinks and applies again.*

**CAP**

Slow down—

**COR**

No one's gonna party with me?

...

Come on.

I want to have some fun.

Let's party, please?

*Sarge and Ree tentatively allow Cor to give them eyedrops.*

*They dance around Cor;*

*Who sways erratically between them.*

*Cap pulls the dossier from the jacket.*

*Lieu surfaces.*

**LIEU**

*(still fucked up)*

Hate partying with you.



**CAP**

Yeah, so do I.  
I gotta tell you something.

**LIEU**

Now?

**CAP**

Yeah.

**LIEU**

But we're *celebrating*.

**CAP**

Lieu—

**LIEU**

We're celebrating *you*.  
Asshole.  
It's what you wanted.  
Happy fucking promotion.

*Lieu joins the others.  
Cap watches the party.  
Cap looks around the ship.  
Cap holds the dossier tightly.  
The song ends. The Walkman clicks.  
The album starts over as Cap takes a handful of pills.*

*Time shifts,  
bending through  
Fear of Music, Side A  
to an earlier party  
before the assignment.  
before the ship's voyage.*

*The same ship in tidier shape,  
docked at the edge of a hangar that's part of  
a massive command station floating through space.*

*Outside, elsewhere in the hangar,  
is a party.  
Inside, the engine is quiet.  
Cap is alone,  
pouring over the assignment dossier,  
headphones on, Walkman turned up,  
“Heaven” droning sadly.  
Sarge enters.*

**SARGE**

Hey, Cap?

**CAP**

*(hiding the dossier)*

Sarge.

**SARGE**

You okay?

**CAP**

I'm fine.  
Full of joy.  
Happy promotion to me.

**SARGE**

Why aren't you at the party?

**CAP**

I was, I—  
Love it when they throw us parties here,  
Among the old and decommissioned vessels, it—  
There's lots of places you can hide if you would  
Rather be alone—

**SARGE**

*(calling out of the ship's entrance)*

Found the Captain!

*(to Cap)*

Recruits were looking for you.

**CAP**

Appreciate it...

**REE** *(offstage)*

Captain!

**CAP**

*(to Sarge)*

You seen Lieu?

**SARGE**

Which one?

**CAP**

The one that's my friend.

*Ree enters, followed by Cor.*

**REE**

We got you something!

*(Ree presents Cap with a pair of sunglasses  
Affixed with a large catalog tag.)*

Congratulations.

**CAP**

These are from my favorite planet.  
Where'd you find them?

**COR**

The depository.

**CAP**

*(examining the tag)*

~~Contraband!~~ I am impressed.  
Thank you, Recruits.

**COR**

It's Corporal, actually.

**CAP**

Congrats, when was this?

**COR**

After my last assignment.

**REE**

*(seeing the view of space)*

It's so beautiful!  
We should party in here!

**COR**

*(taking the Walkman)*

Can I hook this up to comms?

**CAP**

The ship's been decommissioned.

**COR**

They don't bother disconnecting everything.  
*(Cor switches on the power.  
The ship's consoles light up.)*

Or anything.  
This one's even got fuel.  
I could probably fly it.

**CAP**

You're a pilot, too?

**COR**

Yep. Learned from Lieu.  
*(Cor connects the Walkman to the ship.  
"Heaven" continues to play.)*

How is Lieu?

**CAP**

*(the tape)*

Turn it over.

*(Cor does.)*

You were on that assignment.

**CAP (cont)**

...  
With Lieu.

**COR**

I was.  
Is Lieu okay?

**CAP**

Dunno.

**COR**

I thought you were close.

**CAP**

Lieu has a special way of dealing with things,  
so we don't talk about the job or  
anything  
much  
lately.

**REE**

What happened to the music?

**COR**

Hang on.

*Cor starts the music again.*

*"Life During Wartime," on the other side of the tape.*

*Ree dances and encourages Sarge to dance.*

**CAP**

*(to Cor)*

Are you okay?

*Lieu enters to investigate the noise.*

**LIEU**

*(has clearly been partying)*

What is that—?

**LIEU (cont)**

Oh. It's you.

**CAP**

*(removing the sunglasses)*

Hey!

I need to talk to you.

**LIEU**

*Congratulations, Captain.*

**CAP**

*(detecting sarcasm)*

Thanks...

**LIEU**

It's too loud in here.

**CAP**

*(Lieu starts to leave.)*

But it's my party.

Why won't you talk to me?

**LIEU**

Is there something we should talk about?

**CAP**

Yeah.

...

How are you?

**LIEU**

That's it?

**CAP**

No! It's—  
Did I do something, or—  
Lieu, Did something happen  
That you want to  
Talk about?

**LIEU**

When?

**CAP**

Like on an assignment?

**LIEU**

No.

**CAP**

But—really?

**LIEU**

My assignments have been fine.

**CAP**

No, they haven't...

**LIEU** (*again starting to leave*)

It's like whenever I party with you,  
You start talking nonsense I don't understand.

**CAP**

Lieu, wait.  
I have to tell you something.

**LIEU**

Fuck off.  
I'm going to party.

**CAP**

Don't go.  
Don't  
Leave me,  
Lieu.  
Please.  
Stay.

**LIEU**

In here?  
With the recruits?

**CAP**

With me.  
I'll make them leave.

**LIEU**

No...  
They're having fun.  
They want to celebrate with you.

**CAP**

You don't?

**LIEU**

...  
Congratulations.

*Lieu exits.*

*"Life During Wartime" fades out.*

*Cap puts on the sunglasses.*

*Pulls the vial out of a pocket.*

**COR**

*(to Cap)*

You okay?

**CAP**

Yeah.  
Who wants to fucking party?

*Time shifts again.*

*Next song:*

*"Memories Can't Wait"*

*The parties overlap.*

*Cap applies the eyedrops to everyone,  
Nearly empties the vial.*



*Everyone is lost in the party,*

*Except for Cap, who  
in defiance of the drug's effects  
Remains standing,  
Remains dancing,*

*And tries to remain above the surface.*

*Cap and Lieu dance together.  
Cap holds Lieu closely, tightly.  
For a moment, gets lost in the feeling.*

*The walls of the ship undulate.*

**CAP**

Fuck!!

*Cap slips beneath,*

*Resurfaces a moment later  
with a barely-conscious Lieu.*

**CAP**

Come on.  
Come on.

**LIEU**

Where?

**CAP**

Here. It's time to go.

**LIEU**

*No. Can't do more assignments—  
Wanna sleep.*

**CAP**

You can't sleep  
I need you fly this thing—

**LIEU**

Wanna stay in sleeping  
Darkened place—  
No noises—

**CAP**

But what about me, Lieu??  
I don't like the dark, the quiet.  
I'm not going in there with you,  
so you gotta come out.  
Come out in the light next to me, it's okay.  
Lieu?  
Lieu!

*Cap compels Lieu to wake,  
But Lieu is far fucking gone.*

**COR**

What's going on?

*(Cor's still here,  
Fallen asleep by the Walkman.  
Sarge and Ree unconscious on the floor.)*

You going somewhere?

**CAP**

*(laughing)*

No,  
don't be silly,  
what a party!

...

You're not  
all fucked up and everything.  
Why?

**COR**

I don't really  
like to party.

**CAP**

What kind of Corporal doesn't like to party?

**COR**

Me, I guess.

...

You're not  
all fucked up either?

**CAP**

Ha!

I am,

but I am practiced at remaining  
juuuuust above the surface.

...

You fly.

**COR**

Yes.

**CAP**

You're a pilot.

**COR**

Yes?

**CAP**

Let's go.

**COR**

The ship's not in commission.

**CAP**

You said you could fly it.  
Fly us out of here.

**COR**

You're not thinking clearly—

**CAP**

Cor, I'm giving you an order.  
Start the engines.

**COR**

But—

**CAP**

Just do it,  
Corporal!

*(Cor starts the engines.*

*An alarm sounds elsewhere in the hangar.*

*Cap paces.)*

Come on, come on,  
Come on, come on, come on!

*(Cap turns away and seals the entrance to the ship.)*

Corporal, what is taking so long?

**COR**

Cap, I think we should  
Think about this for a moment.

**CAP**

If you don't start flying this ship,  
*I'll* start flying this ship.

*Cap takes the controls.*

**COR**

But you're not a pilot!

**CAP**

Yeah, this should be fun.

*Cap operates the controls and  
steers the ship away from the station.  
An explosion outside, close to the ship.*

**COR**

Let me fly it!

**CAP**

*(to Management, into the comms)*

Can't hear you!

**COR**

Cap, just let me fly it!

**CAP**

*(same)*

Die slow, ya fucks!

**COR**

But you'll get us all killed!  
You and me and Lieu and Ree—

**CAP**

I don't care!  
I'm drowning,  
Suffocating, Cor.  
I can't go back!

**COR**

*(another explosion)*

Cap, we have to go back.

They're shooting us!

**CAP**

*(another explosion)*

Let me get us out of range.  
They'll stop.

They'll stop.

...

...

...

You see?  
They've stopped.

**CAP (cont)**

...

YES! Happy promotion to me!

*(Cap abandons the controls.**Cor takes over.**Cap disables anything that doesn't look important,**Piling cables and devices on the floor.**Cap notices that Cor is crying.)*

Hey.

What's wrong?

**COR**

I'm scared.

**CAP**

Of Management?

We escaped,

You don't have to be scared.

*(Cor gestures no)*

There's nothing here to be scared of, Cor!

*(Cor gestures no again.**Cap begins to comprehend.)*

Okay.

There's lots of reasons why you might be scared.

You should be scared.

The things they've done?

Management is the worst.

...

I'm

Trying to save a piece of us,

A piece of galaxy.

...

You'll be glad I brought you with me.

...

Come on, Corporal,

Don't be scared of me!

*(Cor continues to cry.**Cap reaches into a pocket,**Removes a package of pills.)*

Uh...

**CAP (cont)**

I am gonna  
Give you something  
So you won't be scared, okay?  
Then you'll forget this, Cor.  
You won't remember anything at all.  
You'd like that, yeah?

...

Cor, hey.  
Is that okay?

**COR**

Do I have a choice?

**CAP**

What?

**COR**

Do  
I have  
A choice.

**CAP**

...

Open up.

*(Cap removes a pill from the stash and  
Sticks it into Cor's mouth.*

*Cor resists,*

*Cap holds Cor's mouth closed.)*

I'll explain this  
Later, Cor, I swear.  
I need you flying now.  
Don't stop.  
Don't look back.  
Those are your orders.  
Swallow it.

*(Cor does.)*

Thank you.

*Cap releases Cor.*

**COR**

Cap...  
Where are we going?

**CAP**

Somewhere  
Far away.  
Uh.

Let me get you the coordinates.

*(Cap rips the catalog tag from the sunglasses,  
marked with the coordinates for Earth.  
The thrill of escape subsides,  
A night of partying prevails,  
Cap slips beneath the surface.)*

I didn't mean to scare you, Cor,  
I swear I'm  
Gonna be a better captain.  
I'm gonna be  
The *best*.

*(Cap pockets the catalog tag.  
Cap stumbles, disoriented.)*

But we escaped  
And this will all be worth it, Cor.  
I promise.

*(Cap snatches the Walkman  
And puts on the headphones.  
Can barely stay awake.)*

Lemme  
Get you those coordinates.  
Just trust me.  
It's gonna be fine.

*Cap sinks into the captain's chair.  
Starts the Walkman.  
Slips beneath the surface  
and sleeps as Cor pilots the ship.*

*Time shifts once more,  
twisting through Side B  
and righting itself*



*on the ship as it  
glides across  
space*

*The party expended—  
All five are asleep.  
No they're not.  
Cor is awake,  
but regretting it,  
trying to surface.*

**COR**

I hate it.  
I hate it!  
Ree.  
It's awful.  
Are you listening?

*(Ree is certainly asleep,  
But it seems Cor needs to say this.)*

I can't do it anymore  
I can't keep  
It's not  
Gonna stop  
It's never—

...

I saw something, Ree  
But I can't tell you  
It's not  
You  
You cannot

...

It's spun us far apart to separate worlds  
And I'm trying  
Really  
Fighting  
To find my way back home except  
I can't stop seeing.

*(Sarge wakes and listens, unnoticed.  
A dim golden light streams into the ship.)*

It's easy when you're still in training.

**COR (cont)**

Everything makes sense.

Well it only makes sense cause that sense hasn't ever been tested.

It stops if you can make it to the surface,  
melts away to nothing once exposed  
to the heat of the sun in some faraway place  
and not those cold fluorescents.

**SARGE**

Who are you talking to?

**COR**

!

Uh

No one.

Ree, I guess.

**SARGE**

Ree's asleep.

**COR**

...

Yeah.

I'm sorry,

Did I wake you, too?

**SARGE**

Maybe you should talk when Ree's awake.

**COR**

I don't even know what I'm saying.

**SARGE**

?

**COR**

I'm fine, though.

See?

I'm fine.

**SARGE**

...

No, you're not.

*Lieu wakes.*

**LIEU**

*(to Cor)*

Please tell me you are not still working.

**COR**

No.

I'm thinking.

**LIEU**

Huh.

I used to think.

I get too tired now.

But I'm good at my job.

I don't think about it too much  
anymore.

*Lieu goes to the controls and checks the coordinates.*

**REE**

*(waking)*

Are we there yet?

**LIEU**

Not much longer.

**REE**

*(to Cor)*

...

I think

I heard you.

Were you saying something?

**COR**

Nah, just—

Winding down the party.

Did you get some sleep, at least?

**REE**

...  
Yeah, yeah.  
Back to work, I guess.

**COR**

...  
Let me tell you something.

**LIEU**

*(to Cor)*

...  
Sleep.  
If everything is going down in flames,  
Someone will fix it.  
They won't have a choice.

**REE**

*(seeing the golden light)*

Woah, what's that?

**LIEU**

That  
is  
the planet's sun.

**REE**

It's  
so  
*bright.*

**LIEU**

Don't stare right at it!  
Who did your planetary safety training?

**REE**

No one.  
Sorry, Lieutenant.

**LIEU**

...

It's not your fault.  
 There aren't enough trainers.  
 We keep getting younger.

...

They've run out of good ships,  
 they've run out of good trainers,  
 run out of good—

*Lieu notices that Cap is still asleep.*

*Lieu approaches Cap.*

*Lieu reaches into Cap's jacket and  
 removes the assignment dossier.*

*Lieu opens it.*

*Out of the dossier falls  
 the missing beacon transmitter.*

*Lieu picks it up.*

*Cap wakes.*

**CAP**

What are you doing?

*(Lieu hides the transmitter.  
 Cap sees Lieu with the dossier.)*

Give it back.

**LIEU**

But we're almost there.

**CAP**

So wake me up or something!

*Cap snatches the dossier and tucks it into the jacket.*

**LIEU**

*(to no one)*

Always cranky...

You have something to say? **CAP**

...  
No. **LIEU**

...?  
**CAP**

Captain. **LIEU**

...  
Why don't you trust me? **CAP**

...  
Cap— **LIEU**

I want a reason. **CAP**

Why does it matter? **LIEU**

**CAP**  
Because I want to know  
if I have truly been untrustworthy to you  
or if it's something else.  
Come on,  
You know me.  
You *know* me.  
I know I annoy you, but  
did I do something?  
Lieu, did I ever do anything?

**LIEU**

Yes. You did.

*(Lieu reveals the transmitter.)*

What is this?

**CAP**

I don't know.

**LIEU**

Really?

**CAP**

Looks like part of the ship.

**LIEU**

So why'd you have it in your jacket?

**CAP**

...

**LIEU**

I found it in your jacket.

**CAP**

You shouldn't have gone through my jacket.

**LIEU**

What was it doing there?

**CAP**

I found it.

On the floor.

It looked important.

**LIEU**

But you didn't give it back to me or Cor?

**CAP**

We just woke up.

**LIEU**

You don't know what it is or what it's for.

**CAP**

No. 'Course not.

**LIEU**

...

Fair enough.

Corporal,

found your transmitter.

*(Lieu tosses it to Cor.)*

That should get the beacon up and running.

**CAP**

We don't need the beacon.

**LIEU**

What if Management has tried to find us?

**COR**

Should be pretty quick to fix it.

**CAP**

You don't need to fix it right away.

**LIEU**

Corporal, fix it right away.

**CAP**

But you don't have to.

**LIEU**

Might as well just fix it.

**COR**

It's so quick.

I might as well just fix it.



You can fix it later.

**CAP**

I don't need to.

**COR**

Put it down.

**CAP**

It's almost—

**COR**

**CAP**

*(suddenly commanding, betraying a competence  
that perhaps did rightly earn this promotion)*

CORPORAL.

Put it down.

That is an order.

**COR**

...

*Cor drops the transmitter.*

**CAP**

Thank you.

...

Sergeant.

Pick it up and hand it to me.

*Sarge picks up the transmitter and holds it.*

**SARGE**

Um.

I am

confused.

Don't we need to fix this?

**CAP**

No.

**LIEU**

Yes.

**SARGE**

Cap, you said you didn't know what it was for.

**CAP**

No.

**LIEU**

Yes.

**SARGE**

So you lied to us?

**CAP**

No.

**LIEU**

Yes!

**SARGE**

Yes, you did.

**CAP**

No.

**LIEU**

Yes, yes you did!

**SARGE**

Lieutenant,  
I would like to hear this from the Captain.

**CAP**

*(laughing)*

This is ridiculous Sarge!

...

**SARGE**

...

*Cap grabs Sarge and tries to take the transmitter.*

*Lieu joins the fray, and Sarge, in panic,*

*Tosses the transmitter to Cor.*

*Cap and Lieu try to get to Cor.*

*Sarge holds them off. All ad lib shouts during transmitter fight.*

*Ree looks around, sees the auxiliary power switch.*

**REE**

Stop it!  
Stop it!  
Everybody, STOP!!

*Ree throws the switch.*

*Blackout.*

*The scrape of metal as the engine powers down.*

*Everyone cries out in the confusion.*

**LIEU**

Oh, what the fuck!!

*(Lieu turns on a flashlight.*

*Finds Cor at the console.)*

Corporal!

**COR**

I'm starting a reboot.

**LIEU**

What happened to the power?

**REE**

I'm sorry!

**COR**

I'm starting a reboot!

**LIEU**

*(to Ree)*

The ship is approaching the planet,  
You want to get sucked in a freefall??

**COR**

That's not gonna happen.

**REE**

I'm sorry!

**LIEU**

*(to Ree)*

The fuck is the matter with you?

**SARGE**

*(to Lieu)*

Ree hasn't done the emergency training!  
We started but we got distracted by the party.  
If you're gonna yell at someone yell at—  
Me, or someone else.  
Don't yell at Ree.

**LIEU**

...  
...

*(to Cor)*

Get some lights on.

*(Cor sets up emergency lighting.  
Lieu's flashlight finds the transmitter.  
Lieu picks it up.  
Lieu's flashlight finds Cap.)*

Start talking.

**CAP**

You couldn't have let me sleep?

**LIEU**

Now.

**CAP**

Fine, okay!  
Fuck!

...

Where to start?

**LIEU**

Just start with the assignment.

**CAP**

The assignment...

**LIEU**

Or you could tell me what is going on with you.

**CAP**

There's not—

**CAP**

Listen— Lieu—

There isn't— There's not—

**LIEU**

Is being a captain so awful a burden to you  
that you want this assignment to fail?

**CAP**

This is not an assignment,  
It's not an assignment!  
It's  
an escape plan or a fucking  
suicide mission if you turn on that beacon because  
I cannot let them find me, Lieu.  
Not after this.  
You understand.  
I can't go back.

**LIEU**

You're a deserter.

...

Fuck.

...

You've made *me* a deserter.

...

You total fucking asshole,  
I will never be a captain now.

**CAP**

*(brandishing the dossier)*

You want to be a captain?

You can have it.

Read it.

I don't want it.

*Cap drops the dossier on the floor.*

*Lieu picks it up.*

What's that? **REE**

My security briefing. **CAP**

You're meant to destroy this. **LIEU**

Please just  
Read it, Lieu? **CAP**

*Lieu reads.*

I don't understand. **REE**  
I thought that  
You were glad to be a captain,  
lead us on assignments.  
It's an honor.

**CAP**  
No, it's not.  
They told us that it was of cosmic importance to  
Learn everything that we possibly could about the planets.

**LIEU**  
*(reading)*  
Record and catalog, observe and plan,  
preserve the place so time does not forget.

**CAP**  
They didn't tell us—  
We didn't think about  
what they do with that information.

**LIEU***(reading)*

Structures collapse and generations pass,  
 compounds degrade and when they're broken down  
 their parts may be of use but no one will remember what they used to be.

**CAP**

We didn't think about  
 what happens to the planets.  
 To the things that live there.  
 To us.

**LIEU***(reading)*

Populations migrate  
 Societies die out  
 Or they're eradicated  
 Or they're diseased.

**CAP**

We're identifying resources to serve their purposes.  
 That way if Management needs something from the planet they can  
 find a way to get it.

**LIEU***(reading)*

Every planet dies.  
 ...

**CAP**

They are only concerned with expanding their reach,  
 They have done it to dozens of planets.  
 They did it to ours.  
 Our home.  
 Before  
 They  
 Took it for themselves  
 And then  
 Because we live a long time, and we're intelligent,  
 We're good at something that they need,

**CAP (cont)**

They've made us  
Instruments of their destruction.

**REE**

But if Management was hurting populations,  
Hurting planets, then  
We'd know about it.  
We would talk about it.  
Why doesn't anyone talk about it?

**COR**

'Cause they make us forget.

**CAP**

...

**REE**

What do you mean?

**COR**

I mean they make us do things and then  
they make us forget about them.  
Captain, aren't I right?

**CAP**

...

Yeah.  
Yeah you are.

**SARGE**

They can't do that.

**CAP**

Yes, they can, Sarge.

**SARGE**

But I wouldn't let them.  
I wouldn't do anything I didn't want to do.  
They couldn't make me!

...



**SARGE (cont)**

How do they do it?

**LIEU**

*(perusing the dossier)*

The pharmaceuticals.

And then when we party the stuff we take

Floods our minds with images before we fall asleep.

Keeps the memories there,

Beneath the surface,

~~Where we've forgotten them~~ So they'll remain forgotten.

**COR**

~~So the captains have them?~~

**CAP**

...

~~Yeah.~~

**COR**

*(to Cap)*

Can I see them?

**CAP**

What?

**COR**

The captains get to hold them, right?

**CAP**

...

~~Okay:~~ Yeah.

~~Yeah:~~ Okay.

*(Cap rummages around in pockets.)*

I'm supposed to

Monitor the psychological well-being of the team.

Keep you awake when we need you awake.

Make sure you get some sleep.

And um—

*(Cap finds a small package of pills)*

**CAP (cont)**

If you become reluctant,  
 Or defiant,  
 Or you couldn't live with  
 What I've made you do,  
 I could make you forget.

...

A captain has to  
 Do this to you  
 And I  
 Couldn't.  
 You're my friends.  
 I refuse.

...

*(to Cor)*

How did you  
 Figure it out?

**COR**

I wasn't sure.  
 But I've been thinking for a while and—  
 I talked to Lieu.

**LIEU**

...

???  
 Excuse me?

**COR**

I thought perhaps you were pretending  
 That you didn't recognize me,  
 That you didn't want to talk about it.  
 But now I think  
 You don't remember anything at all.

**LIEU**

Remember what? We've never been assigned together.

**COR**

But we have.  
You don't remember. Me or the assignment.

**LIEU**

Not remembering *you*  
Does not mean that I can't remember *the assignment*.  
What assignment was it?

~~**COR**~~

~~But you can't  
Remember the assignment.~~

~~**LIEU**~~

~~What assignment was it?~~

**COR**

Not  
The kind that you'd forget.

**LIEU**

Or maybe I'm just not obsessing over it like you.

**COR**

Tell me what happened, then.  
If you can say what happened,  
And then explain to me why  
What we did together  
What we went through  
Wasn't worth remembering to you  
Then maybe I can understand you.  
If you can't,  
Then I'm right.  
They're making us forget.  
And they did it to you.

**LIEU**

...

*(to Cor)*

Tell me.

**COR**

Okay, I don't remember all of it—

**LIEU**

Then how am I supposed to believe you?

**REE**

Cor doesn't party!

I mean

The stuff that keeps the memories forgotten.

Cor, you don't take that stuff.

Not usually.

**COR**

You're right. I don't.

...

There were eight of us.

On the assignment, I remember that.

The planet had advanced more quickly than we realized.

They figured out who—

What we were.

Most of us didn't make it,

so our captain ordered us to—

*Cor mimes an explosion.*

**LIEU**

How?

**COR**

The plasma rockets.

*(explaining to Ree)*

They're supposed to be for launching us out of a planet's atmosphere  
but they can also—

...

*(to Lieu)*

You didn't want to.

You

refused

**COR (cont)**

until our captain ordered me to do it  
and then you agreed.

Then you agreed.

And you  
destroyed them.

We  
destroyed them.

**LIEU**

...

...

You swear to me  
that what you say is true?

*(Cor gestures yes)*

Then I don't  
want  
to be remembering this.  
This is just a special case.  
A big mistake.  
This cannot happen all the time.  
If Management needs us to  
blow up planets or whatever  
and we're resistant to it  
then they *should* make us forget.

**COR**

How can you say that?

**LIEU**

Because I trust in Management.  
I serve a cosmic purpose.  
It's my job.  
I'm lucky to have this job.

**COR**

I don't feel lucky.  
I do not feel lucky.  
I wish I could  
go back and, and

**COR (cont)**

choose another,  
any other thing to do.

**LIEU**

I don't remember any other options!  
This job is an honor reserved for the best of us.  
Did it ever once occur to you to turn this down?  
Was it a choice for us,  
for any of us,  
really,  
what we would train to do?  
You want to breed? Or farm?  
Or work under the surface of a planet in a mine?  
All of this seems pretty good to me.

**SARGE**

How would you know?  
If you've forgotten something,  
if you've done something you didn't want to.  
How would you know?

**LIEU**

They are bound to keep records.  
We just have to ask them—

**CAP**

There are records.  
Tons of them.  
Back on the station.

**LIEU**

So you saw them?

**CAP**

Fuck, no!  
I don't want to know the things they've made me do,  
And then made me forget.  
I can't  
Put up with that.

**LIEU**

So you're a coward.

**CAP**

So I *am* a coward,  
 so I ran away when I found out that  
 we're being lied to, that  
~~we are exploited, that~~ we've been manipulated, that  
 they throw us parties to keep us complacent because  
 if they didn't they know that we'd  
 fall the fuck apart?

**LIEU**

You're the only one who has fallen apart.  
 I'm fine.  
 The rest of us are fine.

**CAP**

But you're not fine, Lieu.  
 You're miserable.  
 And you're  
 Fading away,  
 And I needed to get you away from that place.

**LIEU**

I didn't want to leave.  
 You didn't ask me.  
 Cap, you didn't talk to anybody,  
 you brought us along without thinking.

**CAP**

And aren't you glad that I brought you along?  
 Now that you know what's going on?  
~~What they've been doing to us?~~  
 Team. Come on, aren't you happy?

**REE**

No.

...

**REE (cont)**

I'm not.  
I'm devastated.  
Everything that I have wanted is—  
It's all a lie.  
And I don't  
Know what I'm supposed to do.

**CAP**

I know, but Ree, I wanted to—  
Cor, you're happy, right?

**COR**

What?  
No.  
No, Cap.

**CAP**

Heh. Sarge?

*(Sarge stares)*

...  
But I saved us.  
We escaped.  
Lieu, I  
Thought you'd be happy.

**LIEU**

Then you don't know me at all.

**CAP**

I thought that I did.

**LIEU**

But you don't.  
After all of this time,  
After sixteen *fucking* assignments—

**CAP**

Seventeen.



No, this one doesn't count. **LIEU**

I wasn't counting this one. **CAP**

So you think I'm wrong? **LIEU**

I think you don't remember. **CAP**

I remember. **LIEU**

Or you counted wrong. **CAP**

Cap, why the fuck did you bring me along?? **LIEU**

You know why. **CAP**

But I thought we were friends— **LIEU**

Friends? **CAP**

Yes, Cap. We were fucking friends. **LIEU**

You think we were friends. **CAP**

But clearly you're not capable of friendship! **LIEU**

**CAP**

You *really* think that's what we are?

**LIEU**

You're unbelievable.

**CAP**

Lieu I wanted you to—  
 Needed you to—  
 Stop that, Lieu, I needed you—

**LIEU**

Nothing matters to you.  
 I don't matter.  
 Don't mean anything to you.

**CAP**

I NEEDED A PILOT.

Okay?

That is it.

I couldn't fly the fucking ship and so I had to find a pilot.

It wasn't about ruining your life.

It wasn't about you at all.

**LIEU**

It wasn't me who flew the fucking ship.

**CAP**

It was a party, you were so far fucking gone!

**COR**

I flew the ship.

**CAP**

...

Yeah.

**COR**

Lieu couldn't,  
 So you made me fly it.

**CAP**

...

Yeah.

**COR**

Except I can't remember.

...

Why can't I remember?

...

Cap.

**CAP**

I had to.

**COR**

No.

You didn't.

**CAP**

We needed to leave,  
and there wasn't much time.

**COR**

You could have told me—

**CAP**

And what if you didn't believe me?

**COR**

I would have.

After everything I've been through?

**CAP**

Cor, calm down.

It's fine now, isn't it?

We got away,

No one is looking for us!

**COR**

Cap I

Trusted you, and I

Looked up to you, and I

Even thought we were friends or something

But you

**COR (cont)**

Are not worth  
Any of it.

*Cor ~~turns away and~~ goes to the console.  
Cap notices Sarge,  
Who has been quietly simmering,  
Staring at Cap.  
Cap smiles.  
Sarge yells and attacks.  
Cap tries not to get hit.  
Sarge immobilizes Cap and seems about to finish the job.  
Then, Sarge releases Cap.  
Cap scrambles away.*

**CAP**

I'm sorry.  
...  
I'm sorry.  
...  
I'm sorry, Sarge.  
...

**SARGE**

I said  
That I  
Would let  
You win.

**CAP**

...  
...  
That was letting me win?

**SARGE**

Under the circumstances.  
You survived.

**CAP**

...  
You were gonna kill me, Sarge?

I wanted to.

**SARGE**

**CAP**

...

And the rest of you.

You want to kill me too?

**LIEU**

**COR**

**REE**

...

...

...

**CAP**

Oh.

Happy promotion to me.

...

...

**LIEU**

...

...

*(to Cor)*

How's the reboot?

**COR**

Lieutenant, could I have a moment?

**LIEU**

We are cruising towards the planet with no power.

**COR**

I'm upset.

**LIEU**

We're all upset!

Just do your job.

**COR**

I thought that you might understand—

**LIEU**

I understand you're disobeying orders to reboot the ship.

**COR**

You don't feel  
Anything at all about the things I told you?

...  
...

*(to Cap & Lieu)*

You two  
Are just as bad as Management.  
You're manipulative,  
and you're controlling,  
and you never let anyone else have a say.  
It doesn't matter if you hurt who's in your way,  
as long as the important work gets done,  
as long as everyone still loves you, and  
as long as I'm awake enough  
to pilot the ship when you are too fucked up to do it yourself!

*Cor turns away.  
Ree tries to comfort Cor;  
But Cor rebukes the comfort.*

**LIEU**

...  
I don't care, I can sit in the dark!

**CAP**

I'm not like Management.  
I'm not.  
I have been  
hurt,  
I've been  
manipulated,  
and and  
overworked and  
broken and  
neglected  
just like all of you.

## CAP (cont)

...

I didn't think.

I didn't plan it.

I just saw the chance to go and then I went.

I was—

It was a party!

It was

*My* party.

It was supposed to be a

Celebration of me

And all that I've achieved

Except instead it was

A fucking nightmare.

...

I wasn't myself,

I wasn't

Thinking clearly,

And I

Didn't want you to remember me being that way,

That isn't who I am,

~~It was all a mistake,~~ Cor, I was

Fucked up, and I was

Scared.

...

It seems like they're the only ones with power,

But it's because they've stolen ours.

They've stolen

Everything.

I wanted to

Take something back.

Make sure that they can't

Do this to us

Ever

Again.

...

...

I'm not like Management.

I'm not like Management.

**REE**

...

Cap.

You *are* Management.

**CAP**

Oh.

**REE**

*(to Cor)*

You okay?

**COR**

Yeah.

I'm fine.

**REE**

...

I didn't know it was so horrible.

I didn't know.

Cor, I thought that

We were doing something special,

And that everything was fine.

Why didn't you tell me?

**COR**

Because you wouldn't understand me, Ree.

You cannot understand what I've been going through.

I haven't slept.

I can't forget the things I've seen.

I'm isolated.

**REE**

But you won't talk to me.

Why won't you talk to me?

**COR**

I tried.

You were partying.



**REE**

So try again.  
I've tried.  
I have been there for you,  
I've been paying attention.  
I could tell something was wrong,  
and I've never stopped asking you about it, but  
you are  
unreachable.  
You just say that you're fine,  
or you're tired,  
and I know you're not fine!  
And you don't  
care.  
You're not  
listening.  
You're not  
where I know to find you.  
You have moved beyond my reach.  
But I keep trying,  
stretching till it hurts to catch you, but  
I can't keep you from drifting.  
Someday I'll try to reach you and you won't be there at all.

**COR**

...  
I think you're right.  
I don't care.  
I  
I don't.  
I only  
want to sleep.  
I only  
want this all to stop.  
I feel  
like I'm in freefall.  
I just  
want to stop this feeling.  
I just  
want to stop the falling.

**COR (cont)**

I just  
want  
to hit something that pushes back.

**SARGE**

...  
I know something you can hit that pushes back.

...  
Come on.

*(Sarge and Cor square up.  
Sarge readies.  
Gestures for Cor to attack)*

Come on.

*(Cor charges at Sarge,  
And hits.  
Sarge doesn't move.  
Sarge gently pushes Cor away.  
They square up — ready.)*

Come on!

*(Cor charges at Sarge again,  
And hits again.  
Sarge pushes Cor away. )*

Come on!

*(They repeat)*

Come on!

*(And repeat it)*

Come ON!

*(Again)*

Come ON!!

*(And again)*

COME ON!!!

*(Until Cor is crying and exhausted.  
Sarge embraces Cor.  
Doesn't let go.  
Cor wails.)*

Shhhhhh.  
It's okay.  
We're okay.

**LIEU**

...

*(to Cap)*

I think you broke the Corporal.

**CAP**

Yeah. I think I did.

**LIEU**

I suppose that I'm glad that I wasn't your pilot.

**CAP**

I wouldn't have  
done that  
to you.

**LIEU**

You shouldn't have done that at all.

**CAP**

I know.

...

I feel bad about it.

*Sarge lowers Cor to the ground.  
Sarge and Ree huddle around Cor,  
Watching as Cor finally gets some sleep.*

**SARGE**

I don't  
think we're supposed to be anything like this.  
We're curious,  
hard working,  
and intelligent and  
Strong.  
We're strong.  
We wouldn't stand this if we knew.

...

But someone knew.  
Someone believed this was correct,

**SARGE (cont)**

that they could do this to us,  
make us move against our nature.

...

Maybe they're the ones ~~they choose for captain~~, that Management chooses for captain,  
the ones they're confident won't care.

The rest of us,

we

wouldn't stand this if we knew.

*The light of the sun blinks out.*

**REE**

What happened?

**SARGE**

The planet's blocking out the sun.

It's nighttime.

*Everyone sits in the dark.*

*Lieu uses the flashlight to examine the dossier.*

**CAP**

*(to Lieu)*

Congratulations.

**LIEU**

I am not getting promoted over this.

**CAP**

You're next in command.

...

Are you taking me back?

...

Please don't.

...

We are so close.

The planet is right there.

We still could

make it out.

I hate that planet.

**LIEU**

That's  
not what I remember.

**CAP**

It never got dark  
in that city.  
You couldn't see any stars.

**LIEU**

Couldn't see any faraway stars.

**CAP**

...  
You should have left me.  
I could be captain, and you could be free.  
What the fuck were you thinking?

**LIEU**

Lieu, you don't—  
You really don't know?

**CAP**

...  
Fuck.  
Fuck!

**LIEU**

What's wrong?

**CAP**

I need to tell you something.

**LIEU**

Something else?

Yeah. **CAP**

...

*(whines)*

Uuuggghhh—

What's the matter with you? **LIEU**

I'm scared. **CAP**  
 Scared that you won't believe me,  
 Or you'll laugh at me, or—  
 ...  
 You'll hate me.

I already hate you. **LIEU**  
 Spit it out.

Okay, uh **CAP**  
 It was  
 After the assignment that the Corporal mentioned—

They erased my memories. **LIEU**

Yeah they did, but **CAP**  
 Something  
 Else  
 Might have been lost.

So? **LIEU**  
 I can't remember.  
 So it doesn't bother me.

**CAP**

It should.

It would have.

...

I think it would have.

**LIEU**

Well it doesn't.

I am fine.

It doesn't matter.

**CAP**

But it does.

**LIEU**

Why?

**CAP**

Cause you're not the only one affected by the things they've done to you!

**LIEU**

You're not making sense, just ~~spit it out~~ tell me what you mean.

**CAP**

We weren't friends,

We weren't friends.

**LIEU**

We were,

I can remember *that*—

**CAP**

No, Lieu,

You can't remember

You've forgotten

You've forgotten

Me.

...

...

...

I knew something was different, Lieu.

I knew that you weren't  
 Okay.  
 I thought that you were handling things  
 The way you always do  
 And that you didn't want to talk about it.  
 But then  
 You treated me differently, too.

**LIEU**

How am I supposed to treat you?

**CAP**

...  
 You stopped talking to me.  
 Not entirely,  
 Just  
 Not like we were.  
 You stopped touching me,  
 My hands.  
 You stopped touching my hands.  
 You stopped visiting my quarters.  
 Then,  
 When I would try to visit yours,  
 You asked me what I wanted.

**LIEU**

What does that even mean?  
 Why would you visit my—  
 ??

!!!

...

We

Were

Um

...

Really?

*(Cap does not respond,  
 But it's a yes.)*

...

That's against the rules.



**CAP**

Yeah.  
You hated it.

**LIEU**

Why didn't you say anything?

**CAP**

I wanted to!  
I should have,  
But  
You're always going on about the ways that I annoy you.  
I thought—  
I was afraid  
That you'd decided  
That you'd had enough.  
And in your way of handling things  
You didn't want to talk about it.  
So I left you alone.

**LIEU**

I don't remember any of those things.

**CAP**

I know that *now*,  
I didn't—

**LIEU**

You don't understand,  
There's nothing.  
I have never  
Felt about you  
In a way that  
Compares to the things you describe.

**CAP**

Except that you did.  
I  
I know you did.

**CAP (cont)**

...

I should have said something.  
I never should have let you go—

**LIEU**

You didn't, though.  
You put me on a fucking ship  
And flew me half the way across the galaxy!

**CAP**

I thought that  
When you heard the truth  
You might forgive me.

**LIEU**

Yeah? Then what?

**CAP**

I don't know.  
We could relax.  
Go back to CBGB's.

**LIEU**

There might not be a CBGB's.

**CAP**

Don't say that.

**LIEU**

I mean it, the planet won't be like it was.  
We live a long time,  
We can monitor change.  
I bet a lot of things have fucking changed.

**CAP**

Well yeah, it could be better.

**LIEU**

Or it could be *worse*.  
 Society may have collapsed.  
 The city might be empty,  
 Or unrecognizable.  
 The sea could have risen,  
 With glaciers collapsing,  
 And storms...  
 And you want to live on an island?

**CAP**

I know.  
 But at least  
 We would get to be free of that terrible place.  
 Perhaps it would last for a handful of days at the most  
 But I'd rather live for a handful of days in the light of that beautiful sun  
 Than spend one endless day in space  
 Staring at stars that are  
 Forever far away.  
 ...  
 And we're young.  
 We're so young.  
 If we're lucky,  
 We could live  
 A hundred thousand days together on that planet  
 Twice that, maybe  
 Lieu, you do the math  
 It wouldn't matter  
 We could burn  
 Or float in the sewage  
 Or drown,  
 We could witness the last days of human existence,  
 Or wait 'till the planet is hit by a comet.  
 We could lie  
 In the sun  
 On the archipelago of lower Manhattan as the oceans rise,  
 The tides come in,  
 The streets are flooded,  
 Grinning from our rock.  
 And when Management finally comes looking for us,

**CAP (cont)**

Their flagship  
 Like a cloud  
 Would block out the sun  
 But I would use the planet's surplus weaponry  
 To take them down  
 The ship would fall into the East River  
 Or what's the other one  
 The Hudson  
 Like a glacier to the sea  
 And it would be over  
 They could never get to us  
 To me.

...

And even if  
 More likely  
 They defeat me,  
 Lieu, it doesn't matter.  
 'Cause I won.  
 I learned the truth.  
 I escaped.  
 I own destiny.  
 And  
 I brought you with me.

**LIEU**

What did you think would happen?  
 You'd fly me off to  
 New York City and I'd magically remember?

**CAP**

No, Lieu, maybe, I don't know.

**LIEU**

You think that I'm vulnerable to your emotions?

**CAP**

No, I  
 Didn't want you  
 Getting hurt

**CAP (cont)**

Anymore.

**LIEU**

Nothing  
 Can hurt me.  
 I am fine.  
 I don't know what they made me do,  
 Or why they have done this to us,  
 But I  
 Will figure it out  
 Myself  
 And not with your unwanted help.  
 I will earn my own promotion.  
 I will make them tell me what is going on.  
 And when they do  
 Then I'll decide what I will do.  
 And whatever that is,  
 I'll feel the same  
 About the way you lied to me.

**CAP**

~~I didn't lie to you on purpose.~~  
 I've been trying to tell you.  
 I just couldn't figure out how to—  
 Lieu, you know me!

**LIEU**

But I don't.  
 I don't know you.  
 I know  
 Your face.  
 I recognize  
 It's shape  
 But  
 There is nothing  
 Else.  
 I don't feel  
 Anything  
 About you.

**CAP**

Oh.

...

That's okay.

That's okay, Lieu.

**LIEU**

*(to Cor)*

Corporal.

Wake up.

**COR**

No.

**LIEU**

That's an order.

**COR**

Noooooooo.

**LIEU**

I don't have time for this.

*(Lieu goes to Cap and holds out a hand.*

*Cap hands over the pills.)*

Corporal, if you don't stay awake,

We'll give you something to keep you awake.

*(Cor gets up.)*

Thank you.

~~Where are we with~~ What's the status on the ship's repairs?

**COR**

Um.

Working on them.

**LIEU**

Anything to keep us from flying?

**COR**

No.  
Well,  
The propulsion turbine—

**LIEU**

Get us turned around and heading for the station right away.  
We don't have long before we hit the planet's atmosphere.  
Once we're moving,  
Continue the repairs.  
Fix the beacon,  
Get communications back online.  
The sooner we can make contact with Management,  
The more likely they'll accept that we weren't part of this sedition.

**COR**

And if they don't accept it?

**LIEU**

Those are your orders.  
Sarge,  
Keep guarding the—  
Traitor.

**CAP**

Don't bother.  
I'm not doing anything.

**LIEU**

Shut up.  
Sergeant,  
Those are your orders.  
You, Recruit...  
...  
Just sit there.  
Don't touch anything.  
And don't ask questions.

**REE**

But—

**LIEU**

Those are your orders.

*Lieu waits.  
Nobody moves.*

**REE**

Lieutenant,  
Are you sure that  
This is what you want to do?

**LIEU**

I don't see why your opinion matters.

**REE**

But if we go back,  
They could make us forget all of this.

**LIEU**

Why would you want to remember this?

**REE**

Please, Lieutenant,  
I do not want to lose my memories,  
I couldn't bear if I forgot  
Something I care about.

**SARGE**

I won't let that happen.

**REE**

Sarge, you wouldn't stand a chance.  
They're far too powerful.

**SARGE**

Oh no they're not,  
*I'm* powerful.  
And angry.  
I could stop them.



**LIEU**

Sarge, what the fuck are you talking about?

**SARGE**

...

All the recruits,  
The others,  
They don't know.  
They're being lied to,  
Just like we were.

**LIEU**

So?

**SARGE**

It isn't fair.  
They ought to know.  
Somebody ought to tell them, it—  
It isn't fair.

**LIEU**

Who is gonna tell them?  
You?

**SARGE**

...

Yeah.

**LIEU**

You're not doing anything.  
You're going to stand there and guard the deserter  
And when we get back we are never speaking a word of this.

**SARGE**

But I will.  
I'll tell everyone what we know.  
Everyone deserves to know.

**LIEU**

Management will be sure that you forget.

**SARGE**

I will remember.

**LIEU**

Then I'll make you forget this right away.

*(Sarge takes the pills from Lieu)*

Hey!

No, give 'em back, Sarge!

**SARGE**

I hold these now.

**LIEU**

Corporal, we need to report this as soon as we can,  
Set a course for the station,  
And get the comms working.

**COR**

...

**LIEU**

WILL NOBODY FOLLOW MY ORDERS?

**COR**

I, uh.

**LIEU**

What?

**COR**

What if I  
Couldn't fix it?

**LIEU**

What do you mean?

**COR**

Presently,  
Without the beacon,  
With the systems down,  
Nobody knows where we have gone.  
If we can make it to the surface of the planet,  
We could hide.

**LIEU**

They'd find us.

**COR**

But we might get lucky.

**LIEU**

You would gamble all our training,  
All of our experience,  
For luck?

**COR**

You would willingly go back to them,  
And let them do to you again what they've  
Already done?

**LIEU**

I don't think that we have a choice.

**COR**

I think that  
We have always had a choice.  
And I  
Don't think that I can fix this.

**LIEU**

What does that mean?

**COR**

It means that I refuse.

**LIEU**

...

Fine.

That is fine.

I will do it myself.

I have to do everything anyway.

*Lieu reboots the ship.*

*The lights power on.*

*The sputtering sounds of a struggling engine.*

*Lieu inputs the coordinates.*

*A thunk as the ship tries to shift to autopilot.*

*Something is jammed.*

*Scraping metal.*

*The ship lurches unsteadily.*

**COR**

Ah.

The propulsion turbine.

*Something breaks.*

*An alarm sounds in the ship.*

*The ship starts to rumble.*

**LIEU**

No no no no no no no.

**COR**

I thought that might happen.

**LIEU**

Corporal, on the stabilizers.

*(Cor switches the tapes in Walkman*

*And starts the music— the end of “No Compassion”)*

Corporal!

**COR**

Not now.

**LIEU**

Everything is going down in flames!

**COR**

And someone else is gonna have to fix it.  
Or else just leave it,  
Leave us floating in this emptiness  
Until we get sucked in a freefall,  
Or run out of fuel,  
Or just keep fucking talking 'till we suffocate and die.

*Cor sways with the music and the movement of the ship.*

**REE**

Sarge, what do we do??

**SARGE**

Uh...

**REE**

I don't know what to do!

**SARGE**

Just  
Get down.  
We get down.

*Sarge and Ree take cover.  
The rumbling grows stronger.  
A great roaring sound.*

**REE**

What's that?

**LIEU**

We're hitting atmosphere—

*Cor sways,  
Eyes closed,  
Arms floating upward*

*As the ship falls.  
Ree turns back to try to reach Cor.*

**SARGE**

*(grabbing Ree)*

No, don't!

**CAP**

Lieu.

**SARGE**

*(to Ree)*

You have to stay down, or you're gonna get hurt.

**REE**

But what about Cor?

**SARGE**

I—I got it.

*Sarge tries to stand.*

**CAP**

Lieu!

**REE**

Sarge! Aren't you scared?

**SARGE**

...

We're crashing.

I think it's okay to be scared.

**CAP**

Lieu.

Let me help.

**SARGE**

*(to Ree)*

Stay down.

*Lieu gestures for Cap to take the controls.*

**LIEU**

*(to Cap)*

Think you remember how to do this?

**CAP**

Kinda.

**LIEU**

Go.

I trust you.

Stabilizers.

*Ree takes cover.  
Sarge tries to reach Cor.*

**SARGE**

Corporal!

**LIEU**

Touchdown in five...

*(Cap and Lieu try to control the ship's descent.)*

Four...

*(The sun crests over the horizon  
And streams into the ship.)*

Three...

*(Cap peers over the sunglasses.)*

Two...

*(Cap stares at the sun.  
Cor stumbles. Sarge pins Cor to the floor and braces for—*

*Impact.*

*Dust.*

*Everything shakes.*

*Part of the ship is torn away.*

*Light streams in from outside.*

*The ship comes to a halt.*

*The shaking stops.*

*The music stops.  
Nobody moves.*

...

*Cap lets go of Lieu's hand.*

**COR**

Get off.  
Get off.  
Get off me, Sarge!

*Cor pushes Sarge off and scrambles away,  
Towards the part of the ship that isn't there anymore.*

**REE**

...  
Cor?  
...  
Cor.

**COR**

What, Ree?

**REE**

...  
You were gonna let us crash and die.

**COR**

Yeah  
...  
I was.

**REE**

...  
Even me.

**COR**

...  
Yeah.



*Ree blinks in the sunlight.*

**REE**

...

I've never been to a planet before,  
Or not since before I remember.

...

I hoped we could see it together.  
I've been looking forward to it.

...

...

Did you mean any of it?  
Were you excited to visit the planet together at all, or  
Were you always  
Hiding this from me?

...

You can't keep saying you're okay and letting me believe you.  
When you do, it's like  
We're living in different worlds.  
And I want to live **with** in this one, Cor,  
With you.  
I thought that  
You would want to live here, too.

**COR**

...

I'm  
Not okay.

**REE**

I know.

**COR**

No, I mean—  
Something's wrong and I  
I don't know  
How to fix it.

**REE**

...

I don't know  
How to fix it either.  
I wish I did.

...

The sun is  
So bright.

...

I think I want to go...

*(points)*

That way  
Until I find some water.  
I want to swim.

*Ree starts to leave.*

**COR**

Ree, wait.

**REE**

Are you coming along?  
Or are you gonna wait till someone orders you to fix the ship?

**COR**

This isn't fixable.

**REE**

Okay.  
So you want to come with me?

*Ree exits.*

**COR**

...

...

*(gesturing for the exit)*

Sarge, we're gonna—

*Cor exits.*

**SARGE**

...  
...  
...

*(to Cap)*

Excuse me,  
Captain?

*(Cap points to Lieu)*  
*(to Lieu)*

Lieutenant Captain?  
If I stay here with you, I'm the lowest in command,  
But out there, that's not true.  
I'll have the most experience.  
And I think they need me  
More than you do  
So—  
I'm going to leave now.

**LIEU**

...  
Yeah.  
I think that would be fine.

**SARGE**

I wasn't asking.  
...  
Okay.  
Goodbye.

*Sarge leaves.*  
*Lieu bursts into tears,*  
*Unending.*

**CAP**

...  
...  
...  
Lieu.

**CAP (cont)**

...

Lieu.

...

Stop crying.

Lieu.

...

...

*(Approaching)*

Come on, Lieu,

Stop it.

I can't stand it when you cry.

**LIEU**

...

This is your fault.

**CAP**

I know.

**LIEU**

So it's your fault I'm crying, asshole.

**CAP**

Yeah.

I know.

...

*(Lieu keeps crying.**Cap reaches for Lieu tenderly.**Lieu bats Cap away.**Cap reaches for Lieu again, warmly.**Lieu bats Cap away.**Cap reaches for Lieu again, tentatively.**Lieu swats at Cap repeatedly.)*

Ow!

**LIEU**

You ruined

My fucking

Life.

**CAP**

I know!  
I'm sorry.

**LIEU**

Shut up.  
I don't—  
I do not give a fuck.  
At all.

**CAP**

...  
Stopped crying though.

**LIEU**

Fuck off.  
...  
...  
I don't  
Want  
To know this about myself.  
I wish  
That everything was as they said it was,  
Instead of how it is.  
Now I have to live with this,  
This guilt and knowledge.  
...  
Thank you  
For landing the ship.

**CAP**

Sorry for stealing the ship.  
...  
...  
I am,  
Lieu.  
I should have  
Talked to you.  
I'm  
I'm really sorry, Lieu.

*Lieu approaches Cap.  
 Slowly,  
 Curiously,  
 Lieu pulls the sunglasses from Cap's face.  
 They look into each other's eyes.  
 There you are,  
 Familiar face.  
 They smile.  
 Lieu puts on the sunglasses and looks around.*

**LIEU**

These are stupid.

**CAP**

...

**LIEU**

I can't see a thing.

**CAP**

Give 'em back, then.

*Lieu takes off the sunglasses.  
 Takes Cap's hand and places them in Cap's palm.  
 Doesn't let go of Cap's hand.  
 Considers the sensation.*

**LIEU**

...

Was it nice?

*(Cap ~~nods~~ gestures yes.)*

Was I happy?

**CAP**

...

No.

**LIEU**

No.  
I'm never happy.

*(They laugh.)*

...  
I think  
I miss it.

**CAP**

What?

**LIEU**

Whatever I am missing.

**CAP**

...  
Do you  
Want me to tell you?

**LIEU**

Don't be weird about it.

**CAP**

You uh.  
You were fun.  
And you were funny.  
And you were really petulant.  
And sometimes you could be an asshole but you usually apologized.  
You couldn't stand the idea that  
Someone was upset because of you.  
And you were like that all the time,  
Not just to me,  
To everyone.  
And you  
Truly believed  
Our cosmic purpose would bring peace and unity to the galaxy  
Or something like that.

**LIEU**

...  
 And  
 Now I'm— ?

**CAP**

You're still there,  
 I think  
 You're just  
 Somewhere that's  
 Far below the surface.

...  
 I know you don't care anymore what we've lost, but  
 I hate it,  
 More than anything.  
 I hate the fact that what we had is gone,  
 And I can't get it back.  
 It doesn't matter if they took it from you,  
 Or if you decided you were through with me,  
 Either way, I am  
 Forever  
 Far away from you.

...  
 And I can't find you, Lieu.  
 You're there,  
 You're right in front of me,  
 But it's not—

*(Lieu initiates an intimate moment of connection.  
 Cap breaks away.)*

Please don't do this if you still don't—

**LIEU**

Just stop talking.

*(They share another moment of connection,  
 One that continues on for much longer,  
 As they plunge through waves of  
 Passion, longing, lust, elation, grief,  
 And finally find themselves again.  
 Cap remembers something and laughs.)*

What??



**LIEU (cont)***(Cap keeps laughing)*

What?!?!

**CAP**

You said that you trust me.

**LIEU**

I know what I said.

**CAP**

I knew it.

I knew it.

**LIEU**

Shut up.

*Sirens approach outside.***CAP**

Where did you put us?

**LIEU**In that big, uh,  
Rectangular green space  
Whatever they call it —**CAP**

Park?

**LIEU**

The big one.

**CAP**

Central Park?

**LIEU**

Sure.

**CAP**

You put us *uptown*?

**LIEU**

Where was I supposed to put us?

*(The sirens grow louder.)*

We should go.

**CAP**

Good idea, let's go.

*They run for the exit.*

*Cap ~~remembers and~~ runs back to the console,*

*Finds the Walkman and cassette tapes,*

*Pockets them.*

**LIEU**

You're kidding me.

**CAP**

Hang on!

*Cap finds the beacon transmitter,*

*Pockets that as well.*

**LIEU**

Let's go!

**CAP**

You know, you were a terrible captain.

**LIEU**

*You were a terrible captain!*

*As they exit,*

*They're nearly run over by a man on a bicycle.*

*They disappear into the city.*

*The ship sits quiet,*

*broken and abandoned*

*as sirens approach.*

*End of play.*