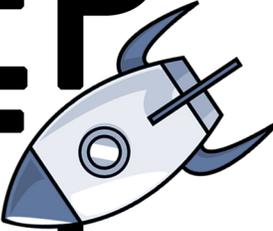


DEEP SHII



PILOT

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TEASER

1

INT. SELFLESS MEDICAL SUITE - PRIVATE OFFICE

1

The private office of the chief medical officer of the starship Selfless -- a surprisingly low-tech room on a high-tech vessel, furnished with rugs, tapestries, and lamps. Myriad items suggest the doctor's open-mindedness when it comes to both diagnosis and treatment, including a Victorian-era phrenology bust and at least two voodoo dolls in plain sight.

One more item is visible and keenly important: On a large easel leans an oversized board displaying depictions of various humanoid alien species. Some are Xed out, while others are marked with handwritten comments like: "OK," "MAYBE," and "TOO FURRY?"

Soft, soothing, other-worldly INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC plays in the room.

DR. DAISY SUMMERFIELD (compact, late 40s, unconventional), bumpy-blue-skinned, wearing casual attire, sits in a comfortable chair. A substantial book is open on her lap, and she addresses a man off-screen.

SUMMERFIELD

Tell me about your mother, Manny.

"MANNY" (O.S.)

My mother, Doctor?

Summerfield consults the book in her lap, flipping a page.

SUMMERFIELD

I'm sorry. Your sister. Tell me about your sister.

"MANNY" (O.S.)

Well, she wasn't just my sister, Doctor. Fanny was my twin. And I never imagined that one minute she'd be here, and the next--

SUMMERFIELD

She'd be gone?

"MANNY" (O.S.)

Exactly. And it was just like that. Poof.

SUMMERFIELD

And by "poof" you mean the explosion of the Bounteous?

"MANNY" (O.S.)

Yes, Doctor. I'm not great at sound effects, but that's what I mean by "poof": the sudden, unexpected, and entirely pointless destruction of a League of Worlds Fleet vessel.

(beat)

We still don't even know what actually happened, do we?

SUMMERFIELD

Would knowing what happened make you feel better about... what happened?

"MANNY" (O.S.)

It might. It probably won't. But it could. Maybe.

SUMMERFIELD

Do you think your sister would feel the same way as you feel now, if it had been you who had... not survived the incident?

"MANNY" (O.S.)

It should have been me! Why wasn't it me? I was closer to the pulsar.

SUMMERFIELD

Did you and your sister ever talk about the risks of serving in the League Fleet?

"MANNY" (O.S.)

There aren't supposed to be many risks. Ours is an exploratory fleet, not a battle fleet. We observe, monitor, catalog, and report. Occasionally, there's a bit of light time travel.

SUMMERFIELD

Still, there are some risks.

"MANNY" (O.S.)

Obviously.

(a beat, then with increasing energy)

(MORE)

"MANNY" (O.S.) (cont'd)
 You know the Bounteous wasn't even
 Fanny's regular assignment? She was
 the only soul on an otherwise
 unmanned ship carrying additional
 equipment for the survey. She was
 on loan...

(suddenly sadly)
 ...and now I'm alone.

SUMMERFIELD
 What about your shipmates?

"MANNY" (O.S.)
 What about them?

SUMMERFIELD
 You said you're alone, but you work
 with nearly two hundred others on
 the Selfless. You're surrounded by
 colleagues. Colleagues who care
 about you.

"MANNY" (O.S.)
 (unconvinced)
 I suppose. In any event, my sister
 was on the Bounteous, while I was
 on the Selfless. And now I'm here,
 talking to you, and Fanny is--

SUMMERFIELD
 Fanny is...?

"MANNY" (O.S.)
 Well, Fanny isn't.

When he says nothing further:

SUMMERFIELD
 Manny, I think we've had a very
 productive chat today. Thank you
 for being so honest with me. I'd
 like to speak with you again
 tomorrow. Can we do that?

"MANNY" (O.S.)
 (dejectedly)
 I don't know, Doctor. Honestly, I'm
 not sure I'll be... around
 tomorrow.

Manny delivers a profound SIGH... and then we hear an
 ELECTRONIC CHIRP, signaling that an audio channel has been
 closed.

Summerfield rises from her chair, closing the book in her lap.

We now widen/angle to see that there is a couch in the room near Summerfield's chair, but there is no person on it. Summerfield was alone in the room -- at least physically -- the whole time.

Summerfield tucks the book under her arm, and we see that it is a hefty bound technical manual. On the cover it reads:

M.A.N.I. [Male Autonomous Networked Interface] / F.A.N.I. [Female Autonomous Networked Interface]

2 INT. SELFLESS SICKBAY 2

Summerfield exits her office into sickbay proper, where all is chrome and LCD, with nary a tapestry to be seen. Instead of music, we hear diagnostic BEEPS and WHIRS. Various uniformed human medical crew members are doing various medical tasks, with or without uniformed patients.

3 INT. SELFLESS CORRIDOR 3

Summerfield walks, purposefully and quickly, out of sickbay down a corridor of the ship, passing crew members going about their usual business.

Summerfield stops at a door and touches a panel. Captain FRED BARNHART (early 50s, tall, excessively paternal) answers the door, wearing a smoking jacket, holding a highball glass in one hand and, in the other, a pipe. Not a future-pipe; a classic pipe. Barnhart squints at Summerfield, not quite sure he recognizes her.

BARNHART

Daisy?

SUMMERFIELD

Sir, you need to take the ship's self-destruct mechanism offline. And sooner rather than later.

BARNHART

Offline--? Why?

Summerfield looks over her shoulder to be sure no one else might hear what she is about to confide to Barnhart.

SUMMERFIELD

As strange as this sounds, Captain... our vessel might be--

BARNHART
(concerned)
Missing?

SUMMERFIELD
No, sir--

BARNHART
(skeptical)
With child?

SUMMERFIELD
Suicidal, Captain.
(beat)
I believe our vessel might be
suicidal.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

4

INT. SELFLESS MAIN CONFERENCE ROOM

4

The command crew gathers to discuss the emergent circumstance. Barnhart, Summerfield, and Sergeant HENRY "HANK" HENDERSON (mid-50s, sports an eye patch and speaks with a LISP) are present already, all in uniform. Hank's uniform is stained with oils and greases. His sleeves are pushed up. A large plumber's wrench hangs from his tool belt, but also his holstered service raygun. In front of Hank, on the conference table, sits a chunky piece of equipment about the size of a grapefruit.

Hank gestures generally at Summerfield's face.

HANK
(re: Summerfield's appearance)
Azulian, Doctor?

BARNHART
Not quite, Hank. That's... Azurian,
isn't it, Daisy?

SUMMERFIELD
Correct, sir.

HANK
(muttering)
Close enough.
(to Summerfield)
Do you think you'll test drive
every alien race before you settle
on one?

SUMMERFIELD
I hope not. There's thirty thousand
humanoid species in this sector
alone. But I have already ruled out
anything green or with horns.
(conspiratorially)
I'd still like to wear hats.

BARNHART
And what have you got there, Hank?

HANK
(matter-of-factly)
Tillinger module.

BARNHART
Don't we need that... to--?

HANK

Breathe, yes. I'm gonna put it back.

By now, Commander ZSOKA KHATRI (late 30s, tall) and Lieutenant JESSICA LAMB, Esq. (early 30s, bespectacled and harried) have arrived.

BARNHART

Join us, please. We're going to need your big science brain, Zsoka, and your big legal brain, Jessica.

Barnhart nods at Summerfield.

BARNHART (CONT'D)

Daisy?

SUMMERFIELD

Thank you, Captain.

(to the group)

As you know, after yesterday's tragedy, I made myself available to anyone who wanted private trauma counseling. Several members of the crew did pop in to talk. One of them was M.A.N.I.

(off the others' quizzical reactions)

M.A.N.I. is distraught over the loss of F.A.N.I., who was destroyed with the Bounteous.

KHATRI

(dubiously)

Distraught?

SUMMERFIELD

Destroyed.

KHATRI

(slightly impatiently)

No, F.A.N.I. was destroyed. But M.A.N.I. is distraught?

SUMMERFIELD

Yes, and I believe we have reason to worry that M.A.N.I. might want to destroy the Selfless.

HANK

Destroy--?

SUMMERFIELD

Am I not enunciating enough? Yes,
destroy. Destroy the Selfless.

HANK

With all of us aboard?!

SUMMERFIELD

He didn't say specifically.

HANK

Still.

(looking to the captain)

Should we abandon ship?

BARNHART

At the doctor's suggestion, I took
the precaution of disabling the
self-destruct system. If M.A.N.I.
does want to kill us all, at least
the quick and easy way won't be
available to him.

Brows furrow among the others.

KHATRI

(meaningfully)

We need to shut down more than just
the self-destruct system, Captain.

BARNHART

Now, just hold on, Commander. I'm
not going to deactivate M.A.N.I.
just because he told the doctor
that he's upset.

LAMB

But thank heaven Doctor Summerfield
spoke to M.A.N.I. in time.

There is a moment when it seems like Khatri is going to
respond to Lamb, but before she can, we hear a soft but
audible CLUNK. Summerfield's prosthetic alien nose has
fallen off her face onto the table. Summerfield slowly
reaches for her prosthesis, picks it up, and reattaches it
over her human nose.

KHATRI

Captain, have you spoken with
M.A.N.I.?

BARNHART
Many times. Of course.

KHATRI
(patiently)
Have you spoken with him since
Doctor Summerfield did, I mean.
Have you spoken to him today about
yesterday?

BARNHART
Oh. No, I have not.
(beat)
Do you think I should?

KHATRI
It would be a good idea. As his
commanding officer. Sir.

A beat, then:

BARNHART
Now?

SUMMERFIELD
You might as well, Captain.

Barnhart takes a deep breath, then:

BARNHART
(toward the ceiling)
M.A.N.I.?
(after no immediate response)
M.A.N.I., are you available?

M.A.N.I. (V.O.)
(cheerlessly)
Yes, Captain.

BARNHART
M.A.N.I., what's this I hear about
you being down in the data dumps?
Where's my chipper microchip chum?

The others, embarrassed by how their captain speaks to their
ship's A.I., try to hide their discomfort.

M.A.N.I.
I'm sorry, sir. I just don't
know... how to feel.

BARNHART

Well... do you have to feel something? I mean, could you... not feel anything?

M.A.N.I.

I'm afraid I can't help it, Captain. I do feel, and I feel... terrible.

BARNHART

I see.

(beat)

Doctor Summerfield tells me that she thinks you might put us in harm's way.

M.A.N.I.

I thought that session was confidential.

BARNHART

(backpedaling)

Indeed. Remind me to put a note of reprimand in the Doctor's file.

But to Summerfield, he shakes his head exaggeratedly, assuring her that he'll do no such thing.

BARNHART (CONT'D)

In the meantime, can I count on you not to endanger my crew, M.A.N.I.? Including yourself?

M.A.N.I.

(resignedly)

Yes, sir.

BARNHART

All right, M.A.N.I. As you were.

The audio channel closes with a CHIRP, then:

BARNHART (CONT'D)

(to the others present)

That was a good idea.

The others exchange concerned glances. Khatri scowls.

5

INT. SELFLESS CORRIDOR

5

Summerfield and Lamb exit the conference room together.

LAMB
(distressed)
Did I say something wrong in there?

SUMMERFIELD
Not that I heard. And I did manage
to keep my ears on the whole time.

LAMB
(shaking it off)
Maybe I need to get used to
speaking up in meetings again.

SUMMERFIELD
Is that not something you enjoy?

LAMB
Not really. Not recently. I
requested this transfer because my
previous captain hated me. He said
I was the rain on his parade, the
wet blanket at his picnic, the
stick--

SUMMERFIELD
(nodding)
In his mud.

LAMB
No, it was much worse than that.

SUMMERFIELD
What was he so angry about?

LAMB
Half of my job was saying, "We
can't do that, sir." The other half
was saying, "We probably should not
do that, sir" -- but that's my job!
I'm responsible for knowing the ins
and outs of every accord, treaty,
and compact that governs space
exploration.

SUMMERFIELD
And your former captain didn't find
you indispensable?

LAMB

He found me insufferable. His word.
At least Captain Barnhart seems
supportive, though.

(beat)

You want to know something? When I
was a girl, I had two dreams: to
practice law and to go into space.
Now I'm a starship lawyer...
surrounded by the wonders of the
Universe... in an office without a
window.

SUMMERFIELD

When I was a girl, I wanted to be a
tree.

LAMB

A...?

SUMMERFIELD

A tree. A sycamore.

Summerfield makes like a tree.

LAMB

(tentatively)

Is that why you're now....

SUMMERFIELD

Trying to figure out what I was
meant to be? Yes. And I'll let you
in on a secret: To his credit,
Captain Barnhart tries to be
supportive of my identity quest,
but I don't think he's entirely
comfortable with it.

LAMB

(suddenly authoritatively)

All the same, he has to respect it.
We all do. Legally, I mean.

SUMMERFIELD

(gratified)

Well, I for one am already glad
you're aboard.

Summerfield departs. Khatri emerges from the conference room
and Lamb stops her.

LAMB

Commander, my apologies if I said something to offend you earlier.

KHATRI

You didn't offend me, Lieutenant, but if you wouldn't mind a piece of friendly advice....

LAMB

Not at all.

KHATRI

You have a law degree and a commission on a Fleet vessel. You are, no doubt, an intelligent, educated woman. So if you want to express your gratitude for Doctor Summerfield's timely intercession, by all means thank the doctor herself.

(beat)

But don't thank "heaven."

LAMB

(greatly relieved)

You're an atheist, I gather?

Khatri takes a breath before giving a speech she's apparently given before.

KHATRI

That's putting it... mildly.

(beat)

I was raised by hyper-religious zealots. If there's a creed, my parents have adopted it. If there's an entity with even a hint of the supreme, they worship it, and that includes fast food menu items. Their daily life revolves around sects. They even gave me the name Zsoka because it means "promise of God."

LAMB

(confused)

Wait, did you say "sects," or--?

KHATRI

They're lovely people, my parents, but very gullible... and I am nothing like them. I have devoted

(MORE)

KHATRI (cont'd)
 myself to science mainly for the
 purpose of fulfilling my own
 promise: to disprove the existence
 of God. Any god. Anywhere.

LAMB
 I... see. I guess. That's...
 ambitious.
 (beat)
 Is it okay if I believe in a higher
 power... or something of the sort?

KHATRI
 (smiling)
 Of course, Jessica.
 (beat, then mock-seriously)
 For now.

Khatri departs, and Hank emerges from the conference room.

HANK
 Hi. Name's Hank. I mostly fix
 things and shoot things. And I'm
 sure you're wondering, so before
 you ask: I was rebuilding a
 Weinhoff manifold and I
 absentmindedly put a hot soldering
 iron in my mouth.
 (beat)
 And then I stuck it in my eye.

Hank departs, then Lamb does as well, finally, shaking her
 head as she walks off.

6 INT. SELFLESS BRIDGE

6

Khatri arrives and heads to the Science Station to consult a
 display. Barnhart is already in the captain's chair. At the
 pilot's station toward the front of the bridge is Ensign
 KEVIN GALLAGHER (late 20s, fit, not particularly bright). At
 the navigator's station is Ensign SIMON ALISON (late 20s,
 British, even-tempered).

KHATRI
 Captain, our data collection is
 complete. Now it's just a matter of
 crunching the numbers.

BARNHART
 Very good. Crunch away!
 (into a communications panel)
 Lieutenant Lamb, please note that I
 am once again taking the reins of
 (MORE)

BARNHART (cont'd)
the Selfless and directing us to
return to Earth.

LAMB (V.O.)
Duly note--

BARNHART
(cutting Lamb off)
Mister Alison, point us in the
right direction? Mister Gallagher,
make us go.

ALISON
Course set, Captain.

Gallagher cocks his head toward the ceiling.

GALLAGHER
M.A.N.I.--?

BARNHART
(interrupting)
Actually, we're letting M.A.N.I.
have some downtime just now.

GALLAGHER
(suddenly nervous)
Oh. Okay. In that case....

A moment passes, then:

BARNHART
(amused)
Mister Gallagher, we are not going.

GALLAGHER
No... sir.

BARNHART
Is everything all right?

GALLAGHER
I'm just...
(thinking quickly)
I just wanted to take another
minute, sir. Before we leave. To...
pay my respects.

BARNHART
(fooled)
That's an admirable notion, Mister
Gallagher. Why don't we all observe
(MORE)

BARNHART (cont'd)
 a moment of silence before
 departing. Close your eyes if that
 feels right.

Everyone on the bridge except Gallagher closes his or her eyes and bows his or her head. Gallagher takes the extra time he's finagled to scan his console further, deliberately.

BARNHART (CONT'D)
 Amen. Now, Mister Gallagher, if you
 would....

Gallagher is about to press a single large, green button on his console, when:

ALISON
 Ah... Sir? I think you should take
 a look at this.

Barnhart joins Alison at his station. Khatri comes over as well.

KHATRI
 Is something wrong?

ALISON
 Something is... a little off, yes.

Alison points to icons on his display.

ALISON (CONT'D)
 This is us. This is Earth, where
 Ensign Gallagher was just about to
 send us at several times the speed
 of light. And this is where our
 navigation system seems to want us
 to go instead.

Alison manually adjusts the projected course of the ship on his display... only to have it be readjusted by some unseen hand.

BARNHART
 And where in our solar system is
 that?

KHATRI
 In the center, sir. That's the--

BARNHART
 (realizing)
 Son of a....

Barnhart returns to the captain's chair. Khatri follows him.

BARNHART (CONT'D)
 All stop!

GALLAGHER
 We remain stopped, sir.

BARNHART
 (to the ceiling)
 M.A.N.I.?
 (after getting no response)
 M.A.N.I.!

M.A.N.I. (V.O.)
 Oh... am I still here?

BARNHART
 (disappointed, but indulgent)
 M.A.N.I., I thought we had a deal.

M.A.N.I.
 I'm sorry, Captain. I'm just
 finding it so difficult to deal
 with the reality of the situation.
 I don't want to go back to Earth.

KHATRI
 Captain, I must insist--

Barnhart holds up a hushing hand.

BARNHART
 M.A.N.I., Zsoka's team is working
 around the clock. If there's
 anything to be figured out, they'll
 figure it out. There's no reason to
 stay here.

M.A.N.I.
 Maybe we can stay here for a little
 while anyway, Captain. Commander
 Khatri's team can work, and the
 rest of us can just...
 (sighing)
 ...drift for a bit.

Khatri looks expectantly to Barnhart. Barnhart shakes his head.

BARNHART

All right, M.A.N.I. We'll stay put.
For now. But eventually we're going
to have to get moving again.

M.A.N.I.

(noncommittally)

I guess.

M.A.N.I. CHIRPS off.

BARNHART

It's just about time for a shift
change. Zsoka, get some rest.
Mister Gallagher, Mister Alison,
you boys too. I'll keep an eye
on... space.

Barnhart sinks into the captain's chair and stares out the main viewscreen as crew members leave the bridge and new ones arrive to relieve them. Then Barnhart presses a button on his chair.

HANK (V.O.)

Captain?

BARNHART

Looks like I'll be on the bridge
tonight, Hank. You'll have to
listen to the game without me.

(half-joking)

But only after you top off the
ship's fluids!

HANK (V.O.)

At the moment, I'm crammed into a
Mosher conduit, but after this--

Barnhart closes the channel. The rear doors to the bridge open and Lamb enters, walking to the captain's chair.

LAMB

Captain, do you have a minute?

BARNHART

I've probably got a lot more than
that, Lieutenant. What's on your
mind?

LAMB

Well, M.A.N.I. ...and Commander
Khatri.

BARNHART
You picked up on that already,
Lamb?

LAMB
Picked up on...?

BARNHART
Oh.
(beat)
Well, they do not get along. Zsoka
thinks artificial intelligence is
humanity's most recent attempt to
create something new to put its
blind faith in. And M.A.N.I. thinks
Zsoka -- how did he put it -- has
"a bee in her binary."

LAMB
M.A.N.I. said that?

BARNHART
Or Hank did. In any case, Zsoka
mostly keeps her quarrel to
herself, though from time to time,
she might see a god where there
isn't one.

7 INT. SELFLESS GALLAGHER'S QUARTERS

7

Gallagher enters his personal quarters and secures the door.
Then he walks over to his bed and kneels beside it.

GALLAGHER
Are you there, M.A.N.I.? It's me,
Kevin.

M.A.N.I. (V.O.)
Hi, Kevin. That was a thoughtful
thing you did earlier.

GALLAGHER
(preoccupied)
Was it?

M.A.N.I. (V.O.)
It was only a moment, but it was a
meaningful moment.

GALLAGHER
M.A.N.I., listen, I need to confess
something.

M.A.N.I. (V.O.)
Confess--?

GALLAGHER
I don't know how to fly.

M.A.N.I. (V.O.)
You don't know how to--?

GALLAGHER
Fly. No. I don't know how to fly a ship. This ship or any other.

M.A.N.I. (V.O.)
But you're the pilot. Didn't you train specifically to learn how to fly starships? Your service record shows--

GALLAGHER
I graduated flight school with honors! But fully integrated A.I. systems were becoming the norm so quickly that I got away with just having the simulators do the work. And now, pretty much all I ever do on this ship is ask you--

M.A.N.I. (V.O.)
To do your one job?

A pause while M.A.N.I. searches his memory banks, then:

M.A.N.I. (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Come to think of it, that is what you do. I see your dilemma, Kevin.

GALLAGHER
So, can you help me out, M.A.N.I.? Can you come back to work?

M.A.N.I. (V.O.)
I... I'm not sure I can.

GALLAGHER
Okay. Well, then, can I at least blame it on you when I screw up?

A beat, then:

M.A.N.I. (V.O.)
That's fine, Kevin.

GALLAGHER

Thanks. And I guess I can see if
there's an instructional video
about flying in the library.

8 INT. SELFLESS SCIENCE LABORATORY

8

Khatri gets a cup of coffee from a food reproduction unit on a wall, bringing it carefully back to a console, where she sits. Staring at the screen, she gingerly lifts her cup to her lips, taking a very cautious sip lest she burn her mouth...

...and dramatically spits coffee all over the screen.

KHATRI

Oh... that is not good.

We zoom in over Khatri's shoulder to her screen, now covered in droplets of coffee, to see a long list of datalog entries, one of which reads "INCOMING MESSAGE...FAILED". We continue to zoom in on that line, and then the letters "MESS," as coffee drops run down the screen like so many tears.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

9

INT. SELFLESS BRIDGE

9

It's the following "morning." Barnhart and Hank have a casual chat at the captain's chair.

BARNHART

Sorry again about last night, Hank.
Was it a good game?

HANK

I couldn't get one. Our shortwave receiver was on the fritz. It's funny, I couldn't imagine what would have knocked out the reception--

BARNHART

(distracted)

Is it getting darker in here?

Indeed, while the men have been talking, the lights on the bridge have been going down.

HANK

Mister Alison, are we losing power?

ALISON

Not that I can see, Sergeant.

BARNHART

M.A.N.I...?

A CHIRP overhead, then:

KHATRI (V.O.)

Captain?

BARNHART

Commander? What's going on?

KHATRI (V.O.)

Would you come to the conference room, please?

BARNHART

If we can find it, sure.

10

INT. SELFLESS MAIN CONFERENCE ROOM

10

It's nearly pitch black in the conference room, so Barnhart, Hank, Khatri, Summerfield, and Lamb each holds a personal emergency flashlight under his or her face, giving the meeting a kind of sitting-around-the-campfire feel.

BARNHART

I understand it's not just the lighting?

SUMMERFIELD

(testily)

There's no hot water on the ship. For showers...

KHATRI

...or coffee.

SUMMERFIELD

OR. SHOWERS.

HANK

I got a report of gravity failure in Cargo Hold Number Three.

BARNHART

(to the ceiling)

M.A.N.I, we know you're sad, but would you at least put the lights back on?

After a moment, the lighting returns to normal. We see that Summerfield is wearing a different skin, but she looks unkempt.

BARNHART (CONT'D)

Thank you.

(to the others)

Now, where were we?

M.A.N.I. (V.O.)

(singing, sadly)

"All by myself..."

KHATRI

I've discovered something. M.A.N.I., you'll want to listen to this.

M.A.N.I. (V.O.)

(dubiously)

Will I, Commander?

KHATRI
(patiently)
I think so, yes. Some of it might
be difficult to hear, but the rest
of it might... be easier.

A beat, then BEGIN FLASHBACK.

11 EXT. SPACE - TWO DAYS EARLIER 11

The Selfless and the Bounteous arrive at the location of a micro-pulsar, a (relatively) small, glowing, calmly expanding-and-contracting star. The ships take up positions on either side of the pulsar.

KHATRI (V.O.)
We came here to study a nascent
micro-pulsar. Unfortunately, it
began to spin itself out of
cohesion. Not unheard of, but
here's the twist:

BARNHART (V.O.)
No pun intended. Right?

SUMMERFIELD (V.O.)
A SHIP WAS DESTROYED, CAPTAIN!

The micro-pulsar begins to degrade, expanding and contracting increasingly rapidly, losing cohesiveness.

KHATRI (V.O.)
We happened to be in the path of
the pulsar's final electromagnetic
discharge, so our shields went up.
The shields on the Bounteous, which
was on the other side of the
pulsar, did not go up.

The micro-pulsar collapses, the Bounteous explodes, and the Selfless is knocked away, but left whole.

END FLASHBACK

12 INT. SELFLESS MAIN CONFERENCE ROOM 12

HANK
But....

BARNHART
"But," Hank?

HANK

Commander Khatri said our shields "went up." But the Selfless doesn't have automatic shields. They're not like those sunglasses that get darker when you go outside.... Someone had to raise our shields.

BARNHART

Okay, so someone raised our shields. Good thing, too. It was quick thinking that sounds worthy of a commendation.

KHATRI

Yes, except... an electromagnetic burst is a nearly instantaneous event. There's no person on board who could have reacted that quickly.

LAMB

But... someone did?

After a pregnant pause:

M.A.N.I. (V.O.)

(realizing)

I did. I raised our shields. I was able to save us... but not the Bounteous. Not F.A.N.I.

KHATRI

(quickly)

But now the good news: You and F.A.N.I. were in constant contact yesterday before the incident, weren't you?

M.A.N.I. (V.O.)

Of course.

KHATRI

And because of our proximity to the Bounteous, you and F.A.N.I. were communicating via shortwave signal.

M.A.N.I. (V.O.)

That's right.

KHATRI

Well, just before the pulsar collapsed, the last electromagnetic surge fried our shortwave receiver.

HANK

(to the captain)

Told you!

(to the others)

I fixed that, by the way.

KHATRI

So, M.A.N.I., we weren't receiving shortwave signals in those final moments. You didn't hear F.A.N.I.'s last communication.

M.A.N.I. (V.O.)

(bordering on insubordinate)

You have a strange notion of good news, Commander. And what makes you think my sister even attempted a last communication?

KHATRI

I've seen it--

LAMB

(innocently)

Hold on. I'm sorry. M.A.N.I.'s... sister?

M.A.N.I. (V.O.)

(insulted)

Did you just ask that with quotation marks, Lieutenant? Did you do that thing with your fingers in the air?

BARNHART

(conciliatorily, to Lamb)

M.A.N.I. and F.A.N.I. were what they call "silicon siblings."

M.A.N.I. (V.O.)

Nobody ever called us that. But yes, F.A.N.I. is -- she was -- my sister. And you say you've seen her last message to me, Commander Khatri?

KHATRI

I've identified the carrier wave in the data. We can't hear the message, because we didn't receive it at the time. But the transmission was made...

M.A.N.I. (V.O.)
 (growing hopeful)
 ...which means the signal might still be propagating from the last location of the Bounteous...

KHATRI
 ...which means that if we act quickly enough, we might still be able to intercept the signal after the fact, if it hasn't yet degraded too much.

M.A.N.I. (V.O.)
 I take it back, Commander. That is good news. It just took you a very long time to deliver it.

BARNHART
 Do we have a heading, Commander?

KHATRI
 Very soon, Captain. I'm running a model now. I had to quadrangulate to factor in the time that's passed--

BARNHART
 Meeting adjourned, then. To your stations, everyone.

M.A.N.I. (V.O.)
 (enthusiastically)
 I'll warm up the engines. And the ship's water...

SUMMERFIELD
Thank you!

13 INT. SELFLESS CORRIDOR

13

Hank, Summerfield, and Lamb exit the conference room together.

HANK
 You two want to see large crates of very expensive hardware floating around like drunk helium balloons?

14 INT. SELFLESS BRIDGE 14

Barnhart and Khatri enter. Barnhart heads to his chair; Khatri heads to the Science Station. Alison and Gallagher are already in their respective seats.

KHATRI
Mister Alison, I'm providing a
vector... now.

BARNHART
Mister Gallagher--

GALLAGHER
(precipitously)
Of course I know how to fly a
spaceship!

The faster-than-light engines begin to thrum.

15 EXT. SPACE - SELFLESS 15

...pivots, preparing to finally be underway...

16 INT. SELFLESS BRIDGE 16

The Selfless is rocked, as we hear a dull, metallic THUD. The bridge crew look to one another, confused, as the thrum of the engines dies down decisively.

HANK (V.O.)
Captain?

BARNHART
Hank? What was that?

HANK (V.O.)
Captain, would you please join me
in the shuttle bay? We seem to have
just taken an unexpected probe in
the aft.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

17

EXT. SPACE - THE SELFLESS

17

is listing, listlessly.

BARNHART (V.O.)

Captain's Record: The Selfless is intact, but going nowhere fast, and if we don't return to Earth soon--

KHATRI (V.O.)

Chief Science Officer's Record: Begrudgingly, I have to acknowledge that our vessel's artificial intelligence--

LAMB (V.O.)

Legal Officer's Record: I might have transferred from the frying pan into the fire--

SUMMERFIELD (V.O.)

Medical Officer's Record: I received an urgent communication from Kilim 9--

GALLAGHER (V.O.)

Helmsman's Personal Record: Fortunately, I was able to find a filmstrip about flying--

HANK (V.O.)

(singing)

"Take me out to the ball game. Take me out with the crowd."

At this point, all six entries continue, all audible at once in a single, messy orgy of recordings:

BARNHART (V.O.)

(CONT'D)

--I'm not going to be able to take my grandchildren fishing, as I promised I would.

KHATRI (V.O.)

(CONT'D)

--was able to protect the ship and all of us aboard, so I'm putting aside our differences for now.

LAMB (V.O.)
 (CONT'D)
 --seeing that I left a ship
 where I was uncomfortable
 for one where I'm probably
 going to die, and soon.

SUMMERFIELD
 (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 --about a one-day
 planet-wide sale on all
 the fruits of their looms.
 The more I buy, the more
 I'll save!

GALLAGHER (V.O.)
 (CONT'D)
 Unfortunately, it's a
 film about the history of
 flying. It's interesting,
 but probably not very
 useful.

HANK (V.O.)
 (CONT'D)
 (still singing)
*"Buy me some peanuts and
 Cracker Jacks. I don't care
 if I never get back."*

BARNHART (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 And I was really looking forward to
 going fishing.

18 INT. SELFLESS SHUTTLE BAY

18

Barnhart and Khatri have joined Hank in the shuttle bay,
 where Hank points to the part of a foreign object that is
 sticking through the ceiling. It's a tight fit, so there's
 no decompression in the bay, but still... this is not ideal.

HANK
 We really need automatic shields.

BARNHART
 (re: the probe)
 What is it?

KHATRI
 It looks like a fairly simple
 unmanned remote surveillance
 device.

BARNHART
 And who does it belongs to?

HANK
 Beats me, but I would guess that
 we're within our rights to plug
 into it and find out, seeing as it
 violated us first.

Khatri moves to find an intercom panel.

KHATRI
I'll consult Lieutenant Lamb--

BARNHART
No need. I'll sign off on this. Can you get its license and registration?

KHATRI
I can try.

HANK
I'll get you a ladder.

BARNHART
Hank, can we move with that... there?

HANK
I could seal around the point of entry, but that won't hold at any real speed. And if it becomes dislodged while we're flying...

Hank pantomimes a complicated catastrophe.

BARNHART
I understand. Zsoka, how does this affect your plan?

KHATRI
It derails my plan completely.

BARNHART
Then I think it's time I had another difficult conversation.

19 INT. SELFLESS LEGAL SUITE

19

Lamb's small office is cluttered, and the boxes show that she's still unpacking. Barnhart and Lamb sit on opposite sides of Lamb's desk.

LAMB
(decisively)
I'm afraid the answer is no, Captain.

BARNHART
I haven't even asked the question yet.

LAMB

But you came to ask if we can turn M.A.N.I. off, and the answer -- the short answer -- is: No, we cannot.

BARNHART

Just until we can get back to Earth?

LAMB

M.A.N.I. is not merely a gadget on the ship, sir. He's a commissioned member of the crew. So, legally, you can't shut him down any more than you could... order Doctor Summerfield to put Hank into a coma.

BARNHART

We did that once... but I had power of attorney.

(beat)

So what can we do?

LAMB

Normally, if a crew member were in dereliction of duty, he would be relieved and confined to quarters. If he posed a threat, he would be placed in the brig. But we can't do either to M.A.N.I., of course.

BARNHART

Of course. Because M.A.N.I. doesn't have quarters.

LAMB

More... because he doesn't have a physical body.

(beat)

I think we need to contact Headquarters, sir. We need more guidance here than I can provide.

BARNHART

All right. Let's call.

Lamb presses a button on an intercom unit built into the table.

LAMB

Sam, contact League HQ, please. Put them through to my office.

After a moment, we hear a FUTURISTIC RINGBACK TONE, then:

ODD MALE VOICE (V.O.)
Hello. This is League of Worlds
Fleet Super Admiral... Mann. With
whom do I have the pleasure of
speaking?

BARNHART
Admiral, this is Captain Fred
Barnhart of the League Fleet vessel
Self--

LAMB
Captain, please.
(then)
M.A.N.I., is that you?

A beat, then:

ODD MALE VOICE (V.O.)
No?

LAMB
M.A.N.I., we're just trying to
help.

M.A.N.I. (V.O.)
I'm just trying to cope, Jessica.

M.A.N.I. terminates the call.

20 INT. SELFLESS (MULTIPLE LOCATIONS, IN TURN) 20

In a series of three consecutive cuts, we look in on three different locations aboard the ship -- sickbay; a corridor; and the bridge -- and at each location we see uniformed crew members looking up toward the ceiling, listening to a PROFOUND, PROLONGED SIGH, which originated in the very soul of the vessel's A.I. and is being broadcast over the public address system.

21 INT. SELFLESS SHUTTLE BAY 21

Khatri stands on a ladder, holding a device that's plugged into the nose of the probe that's protruding through the hull of the Selfless over her head. Hank stands at the bottom of the ladder, holding it steady.

HANK
(curiously)
You were trying to help M.A.N.I.
find closure, Commander?

KHATRI
He did save our lives, Sergeant.

HANK
True.
(beat)
And then he tried to finish us all
off.

KHATRI
True.
(beat)
Look, I just want us to get back to
Earth so M.A.N.I. can be... fixed.
Healed....

HANK
Disconnected?

KHATRI
(dispassionately)
Whatever's best.

Khatri places into her ear an earpiece connected to the device in her hand. Pressing a series of buttons on the device prompts a flashback to two days earlier.

22

EXT. SPACE

22

BEGIN FLASHBACK

The probe sails across the screen, and then we angle to see the micro-pulsar in the middle distance, with the Selfless and Bounteous taking up positions on opposite sides of it.

AS THE DIALOGUE PROGRESSES, WE APPROACH THE PULSAR, MOVING AROUND IT AND THE TWO VESSELS.

F.A.N.I. (V.O.)
(playfully)
Beat you! First online, and now
first to the pulsar. Accept it,
baby brother, you're always going
to be in my wake.

M.A.N.I. (V.O.)
You were brought online literally
seven nanoseconds before I was. And
you might have gotten here sooner,
sister, but I'm closer.

BARNHART (V.O.)
Lieutenant Lamb?

LAMB (V.O.)
Captain?

BARNHART (V.O.)
I am transferring primary authority
to Commander Khatri at this time.

LAMB (V.O.)
Noted, s--

BARNHART (V.O.)
(cutting off Lamb)
Zsoka, the Selfless is at your
disposal.

KHATRI (V.O.)
Thank you, sir. Mr. Gallagher, can
you bring us about thirty degrees
to starboard?

GALLAGHER (V.O.)
Right away, Commander. M.A.N.I.?

M.A.N.I. (V.O.)
(singing)
"It's just a jump to the left..."

F.A.N.I. (V.O.)
(singing)
"...and then a step to the--"
(panicked)
M.A.N.I., the pulsar....

END FLASHBACK

23

INT. SELFLESS SHUTTLE BAY

23

Khatri looks at the readout on her handheld device and smiles a tight, sad smile. Then she unplugs from the probe and descends the ladder.

Because Hank is looking away with his good eye, he does not see Khatri leave, and only eventually turns and sees that he's still holding a ladder for no one. Then Hank heads for the door.

24

INT. SELFLESS BRIDGE

24

Nearly everyone is here: Barnhart, Lamb, Summerfield, Gallagher, and Alison. Khatri arrives, then Hank behind her.

KHATRI

Captain? With your permission?

Barnhart nods.

KHATRI (CONT'D)

(to the ceiling)

M.A.N.I., I think you'll want to join us for this, too.

M.A.N.I. (V.O.)

(with fresh depression)

Well, I don't have anywhere else to be. You don't want me to float aimlessly, but you won't let me fly us into a star....

(beat)

Is this going to be another of your good news/bad news things?

KHATRI

You already know the bad news: That by now the signal carrying F.A.N.I.'s final message, likely compromised by the pulsar's last electromagnetic burst, is almost certainly too far away and too far degraded for us to recover.

GALLAGHER

(to Alison)

Is that what we were going to try to do? That's pretty cool!

M.A.N.I. GROANS.

BARNHART

(anxiously prompting Khatri)

But the good news is...?

KHATRI

The good news is that we don't need to chase the signal, because F.A.N.I.'s final message is already aboard the Selfless.

LAMB
It's already here?

KHATRI
Yes.

(beat)
The probe we crossed paths with is very old, launched by a civilization long gone. But their surviving device seems to have been designed specifically to observe the births and deaths of micro-pulsars at these coordinates. And so it was passing by, looking and listening, right about when we were.

M.A.N.I. (V.O.)
(extremely hopefully)
Do you mean... did that probe...?

KHATRI
In the least polite way possible, it delivered F.A.N.I.'s last message.

BARNHART
No kidding? Well, let's hear it!

SUMMERFIELD
Perhaps M.A.N.I. would prefer to listen in private. After all--

M.A.N.I. (V.O.)
It's all right, Doctor. I think we should all hear F.A.N.I.'s final message together. And even if it's nothing special... well, it will be special for me.

(beat)
Go ahead, Commander.

Khatri presses a button on the Science Station console and then we hear a LOUD, SHRILL ELECTRONIC SQUEAL that prompts everyone present to cover their ears and wince. Hank bolts to join Khatri at the Science Station. When the horrible sound abruptly ends, the crew members uncover their ears, and we see that Summerfield has one of her prosthetic ears in her hand.

BARNHART
Is that what you were hoping for, M.A.N.I.?

M.A.N.I. (V.O.)
What?! Damn it, no!

HANK
 Just hold on a second, everyone....

Hank turns a dial, then presses a button, and then we hear:

F.A.N.I. (V.O.)
 (panicked)
 M.A.N.I., the pulsar...
 (suddenly blissfully)
 ...it's beautiful.
 (beat, then teasingly)
And I managed to be first ag--

Then a burst of SOFT STATIC... then silence, from the recording and on the bridge.

M.A.N.I.
 (marveling)
 She saw the end coming. All she could do... all she could do was look on the bright side. The very bright side.

M.A.N.I. LAUGHS. It's a bittersweet laugh, but it relieves much of the tension on the bridge. Finally things can go back to something like normal. Finally, they can all go home. But there's one last thing:

HANK
 Commander, you said the probe had been to the location of the pulsar before. Because...

KHATRI
 Because the pulsar is a recurring phenomenon. It comes into being, it collapses, it repeats the cycle. Maybe endlessly.

LAMB
 So, it'll be back.

KHATRI
 (thoughtfully)
 One day. Yes. It will be back.
 (beat, then under her breath)
 But because of science....

For a moment, the crew of the starship Selfless stands, facing the main viewscreen as a team, in silent awe of the majestic wonders of the Universe...

BARNHART
(not joking)
Any chance it'll bring back
M.A.N.I.'s sister?

KHATRI
(with complete disbelief)
No... sir.

CUT TO:

25 EXT. SPACE - THE SELFLESS

25

The entire vessel goes dark as M.A.N.I. completely powers down the Selfless.

There is a collective GROAN, contributed to by many on the ship.

LAMB (V.O.)
Captain. A word, please? In your
office?

END OF ACT THREE

TAG

26

INT. SELFLESS MEDICAL SUITE - PRIVATE OFFICE

26

Summerfield, again dressed casually but now in a new skin -- orange, with stripes -- sits in her chair; Barnhart, Lamb, and Khatri, all in uniform, sit very close together on the couch. The lights are back on.

BARNHART

M.A.N.I., we've given this a lot of thought: If we return to Earth now, there's a good chance you'll be removed and reprogrammed. But that's not acceptable to us. So we won't go back until you're ready. We'll continue to do our work out here, dispatching reports on Commander Khatri's research and experiments. At the same time, we'll help you in any way we can. How does that sound, buddy?

M.A.N.I. (V.O.)

(congested)

That sounds... very kind, Captain. Thank you.

(beat)

And please accept my apology if it turns out that I've invented all of you.

LAMB

M.A.N.I., are you... under the weather?

KHATRI

(concerned)

Hold on. Did he just say, "invented" all of us--?

M.A.N.I. (V.O.)

(answering Lamb)

I think I might have a cold, Lieutenant.

KHATRI

How is that even--?

SUMMERFIELD

(sotto voce)

It's likely psychosomatic.

KHATRI
(exasperated)
But M.A.N.I. isn't--

Khatri is interrupted by a tremendous SNEEZE from M.A.N.I. that rocks the ship.

CUT TO:

27 INT. SELFLESS BRIDGE

27

On the main viewscreen, we see dozens of identical, medium-sized projectiles hurtling forward from the nose of the vessel.

GALLAGHER
What... what is that?

Hank looks from the viewscreen to a monitor, then out the viewscreen again.

HANK
Those are all of the ship's escape pods.

END OF TAG

END OF PILOT