

The Rak'Zhan Dilemma

a play in one act

by

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Setting: A Coffee Shop - Present Day  
Carrie's Mind - Present Day

Characters: 4 Female Characters, 2 Male Characters

CARRIE MAY (21, Female)

a BARISTA (27, Female)

a STUDENT (16, Female)

a PUNK (21, Female)

a HIPSTER (25, Male)

a TUTOR (32, Male)

characters may play, at various times,

a CAPTAIN

a FIRST OFFICER

a COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

an ENSIGN

an ADMIRAL

## Notes

Dialogue written in "quotation marks" denotes narration of what is being written or has been written on Carrie's laptop. At the director's discretion, some of this dialogue should at times be projected or otherwise made visible to the audience as it is read, formatted as a play script.

Scenes flow directly into each other with minimal transition time, designated by a change of lighting; normal stage lighting for the **Coffee Shop**, dim blue lighting for **Carrie's Mind**.

*(A single blue light illuminates CARRIE MAY, a young aspiring playwright. She sits alone at a small round table. A laptop sits before her. The rest of the stage is shrouded in darkness. This is **Carrie's Mind**.)*

CARRIE

*(to herself)*

Title... start with the title...

*(Carrie narrates aloud as she types)*

CARRIE

"The Rak'Zhan Dilemma. A play by Carrie May"

*(Carrie pauses. She deletes her name from the page, then types.)*

CARRIE

"by Carrie Z. May". That's better. Okay.

*(Carrie mashes the Return key several times and starts on a new page.)*

CARRIE

"Scene One. Setting: Space."

*(beat)*

How the heck am I supposed do space on a stage?

*(beat)*

I mean, I guess I could use some sort of projection thing for that. Cast a bunch of stars or something against a dark background.

*(A projection illuminates the back of the stage, giving the impression of stars against the dark background. The sound of an ethereal, atmospheric ambiance fills the room. After a moment of contemplation...)*

CARRIE

No, that'd just look stupid.

*(The projection sputters out, as does the ambiance.)*

CARRIE

What if I just did a title crawl?

*(The ambiance returns.)*

CARRIE

"Begin Title Crawl:"

*(Carrie deletes that. The ambiance stops.)*

CARRIE

That's not a thing I can do, right? Begin Title Crawl? Eh, whatever. "Begin Title Crawl:"

*(Ambiance resumes. Carrie's words slowly scroll like the opening of a Star Wars film.)*

CARRIE

"The year is 2104. Humanity has begun to explore beyond the stars. Mining ships travel to distant galaxies, gathering valuable resources for a population that has grown wildly beyond what its home can support."

*(The Ambiance stops)*

CARRIE

...is that too much exposition? Should I just start it?  
*(beat)*

You know what, I'll just come back to this.

*(Carrie mashes the Return key repeatedly. She starts on a new page. The Ambiance returns.)*

CARRIE

"Scene Two. Setting: The bridge of the Deep-Space Mining Ship... Honir."

*(she deletes that)*

"Anubis"

*(she deletes that)*

"Enterprise"

*(she deletes that)*

"TBD. At Rise--"

BARISTA (O.S.)

*(softly)*

Carrie May?

*(Ambiance stops. Carrie looks around.)*

CARRIE

*(As Ambiance returns)*

"At Rise: The noble CAPTAIN--"

BARISTA (O.S.)

*(louder)*

Order for Carrie May?

*(The ambiance cuts out. The blue light fades out, replaced with bright lights that illuminate the entire stage. Carrie's table sits in the middle of a **Coffee Shop**. Three other identical tables surround it, each occupied by other patrons. A young HIPSTER sits at one, enraptured by his phone; at another, an exasperated TUTOR speaks silently with an annoyed high-school STUDENT as she works on her homework; at the third table, a PUNK sits by herself, headphones on, oblivious to the world. Behind a counter, a BARISTA checks the name on a drink.)*

BARISTA

*(yelling)*

Chai Latte for Carrie May?

CARRIE

That's me! Sorry, that's me.

*(Carrie stands. She crosses to the counter and takes her drink. The Barista places another drink on the counter.)*

BARISTA

Got an iced caramel macchiato?

*(The Hipster stands and strolls to the counter. He bumps into Carrie as she walks back.)*

HIPSTER

Oh, my apologies.

*(Carrie nods. She walks to her seat and sits. The Hipster picks up his drink. Carrie*

looks back at him as he walks away from the counter. She turns to her laptop.)

CARRIE

At Rise: The noble Captain-

*(The light shifts to the dim blue of **Carrie's Mind**. The Hipster stands at attention. He faces the audience and places his drink-holding hand against his chest as best he can. Carrie types as he speaks.)*

HIPSTER/CAPTAIN

"The noble Captain Henry Noah. Twenty-Seven. Caucasian. His bravery and charisma matched only by his roguish good looks. A real Malcolm Reynolds type."

CARRIE

*(to herself)*

Wait, do people know who Malcolm Reynolds is?

TUTOR

*(turns around)*

I doubt it.

HIPSTER

Don't listen to him. All your friends have seen Firefly.

TUTOR

Good, so at least two people know who he is.

STUDENT

Yeah, not everyone watches your nerd shows.

CARRIE

Okay, okay, I'll take it out. Let's just move on.

*(The Hipster acts out the actions that Carrie narrates)*

CARRIE

*(typing)*

"The Captain, alone on the bridge of the..."

*(beat)*

"...TBD, paces back and forth. He stops to check a monitor, then resumes his pacing. He settles down in the Captain's Chair."

*(The Hipster attempts to squat and fails. He looks around, grabs an empty chair, and drags it center stage. He sits.)*

HIPSTER/CAPTAIN

"This is Entry number 437 of the ship's log. It's been a long 5 years. The crew of the TBD is ready to return home. I know how they feel. You don't realize just how liberating it is to be able walk beneath the open sky until you've been stuck in a hunk of metal for half a decade. There are so many wonders on Earth that we take for granted. The endless oceans, the majestic mountains, the beautiful women. But we have a job to do. We have to do our part to make sure those wonders will endure. And so we remain out here, lightyears from our home, our sanctuary, bouncing from rock to rock, searching for the one resource our planet most desperately needs: Plulithonium."

*(Carrie deletes that)*

"Fluxominium."

*(she deletes that)*

"Unobtainium."

*(she deletes that)*

"TBD-um"

*(The Hipster looks at Carrie)*

CARRIE

I'm not good with names, okay?

STUDENT

No kidding.

HIPSTER

Hey now.

*(he stands)*

You can always come up with cool names for stuff later. That's half the fun!

CARRIE

I guess.

*(The Punk stands. She takes the 'Captain's Chair' and quietly moves it back to its original position, then goes back to her seat)*



HIPSTER

Don't listen to them. It's a great monologue. I know you said the Captain was more of a roguish, Mal Reynolds sort, but honestly, I'm getting some serious Kirk vibes from him.

CARRIE

Oh. Well, I didn't-

HIPSTER

I think that's a good thing! It's like you're writing Star Trek fan fiction!

CARRIE

No, but I don't want it-

*(Stage lights come up. They illuminate the **Coffee Shop**. The Hipster walks to his seat. Everyone acts as if the previous scene had not happened. Carrie stares at her screen.)*

CARRIE

...to be fan fiction.

*(Carrie sighs. She takes a sip of her drink and types. After a few moments...)*

BARISTA

Places everyone! Places!

*(The patrons of the shop all look at her. The lights shift back to **Carrie's Mind**. The Barista claps her hands)*

BARISTA

I said places, people! Chop chop!

*(The Punk and Student move the empty tables and chairs to the sides of the stage. They make a line of four chairs on one side and sit. The Hipster and Tutor move Carrie's table to the side. Carrie stands. The Hipster grabs her chair and puts it with the table. During this, the Barista reaches under the counter and pulls out a beret. She puts it on and walks to Carrie.)*

BARISTA

So what do you got for us?

CARRIE

I mean, I don't know if it's ready yet... it's just a rough draft.

*(The Barista shoves past Carrie and looks at her laptop. She scrolls through it.)*

BARISTA

"The Rak'Zhan Dilemma"

*(beat)*

What the hell is a Rak'Zhan?

CARRIE

Its... they're this sort of... I guess you'd say they're like this race of alien instectoids... They're like locust, but on like a galactic scale-

BARISTA

Oh, Christ. I get it. It's a nerd play. Hey, if you want to limit your audience, that's your call.

CARRIE

But, I mean, the play's not really *about* the Rak'Zhan at all, see? It's about the people on the ship, and how they decide that-

BARISTA

What's the Z stand for?

CARRIE

What?

BARISTA

It says "by Carrie Z. May". Last time I checked, your middle name wasn't "Zarie". What's the Z stand for?

CARRIE

Well... it doesn't really stand for anything. It just sort of... makes my name sound more interesting?

*(The Barista rubs her temples)*

BARISTA

You know what? Fair enough. Let's get this show on the road. You got something for us

CARRIE

Uh... yeah, sure, here...

*(Carrie scrolls through her laptop)*

CARRIE

Again, it's rough. I mean, it's probably not any good.

*(The Barista reaches over. She pulls several sheets of paper out of the laptop. She glances them over, then waves them at the others. They approach her. She hands out papers to each of them.)*

BARISTA

*(indicates Tutor)*

Okay, so you're the uptight prick First Officer.

CARRIE

He's just, well, he's focused on maintaining order on the ship, but I wouldn't call him a-

BARISTA

*(indicates Punk)*

You're the Communications Officer. I guess you handle the phones and such.

CARRIE

No, see, the Comms Officer is an interesting character because-

BARISTA

*(indicates Student)*

You'll be the Ensign.

STUDENT

Ooh, sounds important!

CARRIE

Well, um, not really. The Ensign doesn't actually have that much of a role.

STUDENT

Why the hell not?

CARRIE

Well, it's just that the Ensign's not really much of a character. She's just kind of there because-

HIPSTER

Hey, can I still be the Captain? I love the Captain!

BARISTA

Sure, whatever. You're the Captain. Okay, people, this is "Scene Four. Setting: The bridge of the... TBD".

*(The Barista looks at Carrie)*

CARRIE

I'm not good with names!

BARISTA

Jesus Christ. Places, people!

*(The cast creates a makeshift "Bridge" set out of the scattered furniture. They position themselves around a table in the center, except for the Hipster, who stands off to the side. Dramatic music plays softly. The cast acts out the stage directions the Barista reads.)*

BARISTA

"The crew of the TBD sits anxiously, awaiting word from their Captain. After a moment, the Captain enters the bridge. The crew stands at attention."

HIPSTER/CAPTAIN

"At ease."

BARISTA

"The crew sits."

TUTOR/FIRST OFFICER

"Captain, tell us what's going on."

BARISTA

"The Captain looks away."

HIPSTER/CAPTAIN

"...We received a transmission from Earth. It was sent about a week ago, but it only just now got to us."

BARISTA

"The Captain presses a button on the console. On the viewscreen, the face of the ADMIRAL appears."

*(Beat)*

You didn't list an Admiral.

*(The music stops abruptly.)*

CARRIE

What?

BARISTA

Your character sheet. There's not an Admiral. I didn't cast an Admiral.

CARRIE

Oh, well he just has the one line.

*(The Barista rubs her temples)*

BARISTA

That doesn't matter. I have to know that I need to cast an Admiral, otherwise there's no Admiral.

STUDENT

I'll read it! I can be an Admiral!

BARISTA

Fine. Whatever.

*(Music resumes. The Student attempts a deep, commanding voice, but sounds ridiculous.)*

STUDENT/ADMIRAL

"All outbound mining ships, this is Earth Central Command. You are hereby ordered to--"

*(Music cuts out)*

BARISTA

Stop! Stop, nevermind. Christ, I'll just read it.

*(She takes a moment to calm down. The music starts once more.)*

BARISTA/ADMIRAL

"All outbound mining ships. This is Earth Central Command. You are hereby ordered to flee as far from our Solar System as possible. The worst has come to pass; The Rak'Zhan are upon us. End of Message."

TUTOR/FIRST OFFICER

"Gods. The Rak'Zhan. Our greatest and oldest enemy. That vicious race of hive-minded insectoids that swarms through the universe like locusts, consuming all life they encounter. We've been preparing for their return ever since we fought off their vanguard in 2972, and..."

*(The Tutor breaks character as the music cuts out)*

TUTOR

Holy hell, I can't read this anymore.

CARRIE

I know, I know, it's a bit too much exposition, but-

BARISTA

I think maybe the less we know about the... Rak'Zhan, the better. Let them be more of an unknown. We don't need to get bogged down in the history of a bunch of bug aliens.

HIPSTER

I disagree. I wanna know more about them. Where did they come from? Why are they conquering the galaxy? How did we fight them off in 2972? This stuff's important. You gotta let us know exactly what kind of threat they are. It's sci-fi! Making up crazy shit is half the fun!

CARRIE

I know, but-

BARISTA

I think the whole space ship and vague alien menace stuff is all the sci-fi it needs. Otherwise you start losing the drama, and then it's just niche garbage.

CARRIE

Yes, but-

HIPSTER

And just what's wrong with niche 'garbage', huh? If that's how she wants to write it, let her write it!

CARRIE

Why don't we just keep going, okay?

BARISTA

Fine. Where were we?

CARRIE

We can skip ahead a bit... here, let's take it from "We have a decision to make."

HIPSTER

That's me, right?

CARRIE

Yeah, when you're ready.

*(The Hipster takes a moment to prepare himself. The music starts again.)*

HIPSTER/CAPTAIN

"We have a decision to make."

TUTOR/FIRST OFFICER

"What decision? Central Command issued a clear order."

BARISTA

"The Communications Officer stands up."

TUTOR

Wait, hold on.

*(The music cuts out)*

CARRIE

What?

TUTOR

You said she stands up. You don't have to say up. Where the hell else would she stand? Just say she stands. Jesus.

CARRIE

Okay, okay.

BARISTA

"The Communications Officer stands."

*(The music starts again.)*

PUNK/COMMS OFFICER

"We can't just abandon Earth. My family is there. I know yours is too."

TUTOR/FIRST OFFICER

"You don't have to remind me. You heard Command. The Rak'Zhan are coming. We can't fight them. What good would The TBD do against their swarms?"

PUNK/COMMS OFFICER

"We don't have to fight them."

TUTOR/FIRST OFFICER

"Then why would we go back?"

PUNK/COMMS OFFICER

"To save our families. We still follow Command's orders, only first we rescue our families. The ship has enough space and resources for them."

HIPSTER/CAPTAIN

"That's a hell of a risk. By the time we get there, the Rak'Zhan could have already destroyed the planet, and we'd be flying right into the horde."

TUTOR/FIRST OFFICER

"We need to ensure our survival! I'm sorry, but it's too risky. We have to follow protocol."

PUNK/COMMS OFFICER

"With all due respect, sometimes you just have to take a risk. Even if it seems like you might fail, even if it doesn't pay off, you have to do it, damn the consequences. Isn't that what it means to be the Captain?"

BARISTA

...and scene.

*(beat)*



TUTOR

*(mocking)*

"Isn't that what it means to be the Captain?" Jesus, why don't you just bash my skull open and scream "THIS IS THE THEME" at my brain. That would have more subtlety than this shit.

STUDENT

Hey, I had a quick question about my role. Where the hell was it?

CARRIE

Well, again, the Ensign isn't supposed to have much of a role.

STUDENT

Yeah, but I feel like she could be a super relatable character. Why not make her more important?

*(During this exchange, the Punk silently moves the furniture back to its original layout)*

CARRIE

Well, that's sort of the problem. See, originally the whole play was gonna be from her point of view.

STUDENT

Ooh, yeah, I like that. Make her the voice of the show.

CARRIE

Yeah, but I felt like she was, you know, *too* relatable. She was pretty much just, well, me, but like on a space ship.

STUDENT

What's wrong with that? Who doesn't like a story about them, but like on a space ship?

BARITSA

That's enough.

*(she sighs)*

Okay, Carrie, why don't you try writing a different scene. Maybe something a little more... character focused.

CARRIE

Oh. I-

TUTOR

Maybe something that doesn't suck.

*(The Barista silences him with a look. He and the other actors return to their seats)*

BARISTA

Do you think you can handle that?

*(The Barista pulls off her beret and walks back to the counter as the lights bring back the **Coffee Shop**. The Barista uses the beret as a rag and wipes off the counter. Carrie rubs her temples. She lets out a groan.)*

BARISTA

All good over there?

CARRIE

What? Oh yeah, totally fine.

BARISTA

Whatcha been working on?

CARRIE

Oh, nothing, really. Just an idea for a play.

BARISTA

Oh, you're a writer?

CARRIE

Well, we'll see.

*(nervous laugh)*

I've had this idea for a long time, y'know, since I was a kid, but now that I'm actually sitting down and trying to write it...

*(beat)*

I'm sorry. You probably don't care.

BARISTA

You hate it, don't you. Your idea.

CARRIE

No, it's... Yeah. I do. I feel like I'm stuck with this shitty concept.

BARISTA

You know, my sister always tells me that no idea is inherently good or bad; what matters is if it's an idea that's done poorly or done well.

CARRIE

I mean, sure, okay, but what if I have an idea that I can't well? What if it's not the idea that's shitty, but me?

BARISTA

Well, you won't know until you write it, right? You gotta take a risk. Even if you end up failing, at least you tried. Isn't that what it means to be a writer?

*(The Barista turns back to the counter. Carrie sits in silence, then types.)*

CARRIE

"Scene Six. Setting: Corridor of the TBD."

*(The lights shift back to **Carrie's Mind**. The Barista puts on her beret. The cast moves the furniture to create a makeshift corridor, with four chairs off to one side. The Student and Hipster sit, while the Punk and Tutor follow the stage directions that Carrie reads.)*

CARRIE

"Enter First Officer and Communications Officer."

PUNK/COMMS OFFICER

"You can't be serious!"

TUTOR/FIRST OFFICER

"I am always serious."

PUNK/COMMS OFFICER

"You would run away when your home, your family needs you most."

TUTOR/FIRST OFFICER

"I don't think you understand what's at stake here. We could be the only hope for the human race. You don't think I want to return to Earth, to see my wife and child, hold them lovingly in my arms?"

*(The Tutor stares at Carrie)*

TUTOR

I'm sorry, did you have a stroke or something? What is this crap? "Hold them lovingly in my arms"? Have you never heard a human being talk before?

CARRIE

I didn't- I'm not really great at writing dialogue-

TUTOR

*(oozing sarcasm)*

No, really? You? I would never have guessed.

*(He walks over to Carrie and waves his script pages in her face.)*

TUTOR

I don't know which would be worse; that you're not even trying, or that you're really giving it your all, and this is what you come up with.

CARRIE

Look, I can change it. I was gonna keep working on it.

TUTOR

*(to Barista)*

I don't know why we're wasting time with this amateur. She has no business writing anything, let alone a goddamn space opera.

STUDENT

Oh, I've got an idea! What if we tried this scene, but with the Ensign instead of whatserface.

CARRIE

No, I don't think-

BARISTA

Why don't we just give it a shot? Ok, take it again from the top, with the Ensign this time.

*(The Punk sits down. The Tutor and Student stand off to the side)*

BARISTA

"Scene Six. Setting: Corridor of the TBD. Enter First Officer and Ensign."

STUDENT/ENSIGN

"You can't be serious!"

TUTOR/FIRST OFFICER

"Ensign, have you ever know me to joke around?"

CARRIE

Wait, that's not-

STUDENT/ENSIGN

"You would run away when your home, your family needs you most."

TUTOR/FIRST OFFICER

"Please, you think I'm gonna risk my life just to save my bitch wife? I took this job for a reason; to get as far away from her and our brat kid as possible. This whole apocalypse is a blessing!"

CARRIE

Hold on, I didn't-

BARISTA

And scene! That's good, I like what you've done with the character.

TUTOR

I thought I'd have a little fun with it, you know, play up his whole 'asshole' schtick.

CARRIE

But he's not supposed to be an asshole! The whole point is that neither he nor the Comms Officer... Or, I guess the Ensign now... neither of them are necessarily wrong! He's focused on the big picture, but that doesn't mean he doesn't care about his family!

BARISTA

I think taking the scene in this direction works better. Why don't we stick with the changes for now, and move on to another scene.

HIPSTER

Another scene with the Captain, maybe? I think he's your best character. Do you have anything for him?

CARRIE

Well, I do have a new monologue...

HIPSTER

Lemme see!

*(Carrie pulls out a sheet of paper as the Hipster walks over. She hands it to him)*

CARRIE

So, uh, the character might feel a little different, I wanted to try some things out.

*(The rest of the actors sit)*

HIPSTER/CAPTAIN

"This is Entry number 438 of the ship's log. A decision needs to be made. The crew stands divided; risk returning to Earth to save our families, or flee the unstoppable horde of the Rak'Zhan. The crew expects me to make a decision, and I know whatever I decide, the crew will follow, no matter their own feelings. I know they trust me to make the right call.

*(beat)*

The truth is, I've never really had to lead. I'm a company captain. Every situation we've run against, there's been a solution right there in the company manual. Dealing with tensions between the crew, or unexpected mining incidents, the answer's always been given to me. There's nothing in the book for handling an alien onslaught. I have to make that decision myself. And if I choose wrong, I'll have condemned the crew and their families to die, all because they gave their trust to a man who didn't deserve it."

*(beat)*

What the hell is this? What happened to the Captain?

CARRIE

I just thought he was too familiar, you know? I didn't want people to feel like I was ripping off anything. I figured if I could give him some more depth, some darkness, that could be interesting.

*(During this, the Punk quietly puts the furniture back in its original layout)*

HIPSTER

Or it could ruin the entire character. If you wanted to write a garbage soap opera, you should have just done that. But this is supposed to be science-fiction! Exploring grand ideas of what could be, celebrating the endless possibilities the future holds! You had that! And now you're smothering it behind trite melodrama! What, are you embarrassed by it? You think people won't take it seriously because it's "nerd stuff"? Maybe they won't. But who cares! At least it would have been interesting and true to itself, not burying itself behind this crap.

*(He crumples the paper and throws it to the ground)*

TUTOR

Oh, that's hilarious! You can't even write sci-fi schlock right! Really, you're just embarrassing yourself.

BARISTA

Maybe he's got a point, you know. What if you took out all the science-fiction mumbo-jumbo? Focus on the drama! Set it in the modern day, or maybe even a historical piece!

STUDENT

What if you put the Ensign in this scene, like she was the captain's confidante, and she helps him figure out what to do? Give her a bigger role!

*(The Hipster, Barista, Student, and Tutor crowd around Carrie. The Punk continues moving the furniture)*

HIPSTER

Make it sci-fi!

BARISTA

Focus on the drama!

TUTOR

Take a writing class!

STUDENT

Give me a bigger role!

*(The four berate Carrie, repeating those last lines as their voices overlap. They walk back to their seats while facing Carrie. Carrie puts her hands on her head. The actors continue their chant until they are seated. Once they are, Carrie slams her computer closed. The lights change back to the **Coffee Shop**. Carrie looks around. Everyone stares at her. She turns back to her laptop and opens it. Everyone goes back to their business. The Barista crosses to Carrie.)*

BARISTA

That bad, huh?

CARRIE

What? Oh, god, I'm so sorry, I didn't-

BARISTA

Don't worry. You're not the first writer I've seen lose their cool. At least you didn't chuck your laptop at someone's baby.

CARRIE

That happened?

BARISTA

Oh yeah. He's not allowed within 50 feet of this place. What's got you stuck?

CARRIE

I... I don't know. Every time I think I start making progress, I realize that I hate it. I keep saying to myself that it's too silly, or it's poorly written, or I'm strangling it with 'trite melodrama'.

BARISTA

Sounds like you don't know what you want it to be.

CARRIE

I guess? It's more like, I want it to be like four different things at the same time, and I can't get them to cooperate. I just keep second-guessing it, I go too far one way, or not far enough, and then I'm just fighting myself.

BARISTA

You're giving yourself too much credit.



CARRIE

What?

BARISTA

That came out wrong. What I mean is, you're letting your doubts wreak havoc on your story. You're giving them too much credit.

CARRIE

I know, I know, I probably just need to ignore them.

BARISTA

I mean, you're welcome to try that, but good luck.

CARRIE

Then, what do I do?

BARISTA

Well, my sister always says you should try to listen to your doubts.

CARRIE

But you just said-

BARISTA

Listen. Not obey. Not let them walk all over you. You should hear what they have to say. Some of them might have a point. But never take what they say as gospel. If what they want works for you, use it. If it doesn't, then you tell them to piss off.

CARRIE

But how do you know what to use, and what, you know, not to?

BARISTA

That's up to you to figure out. But if you wanna write, you gotta figure it out. Otherwise, you'll end up like my sister. Dying to write but cursed to serve coffee and dole out sage advice that she could never follow.

*(The Barista winks and returns to the counter. Carrie takes sip of her drink, considers, then tips it back and downs the entire thing. She types intently for several seconds. The lights shift back to **Carrie's Mind**. Dramatic music fades in. As Carrie*

types, the cast moves the furniture back into the Bridge set. They take their places surrounding the center table, and start in the middle of a scene.)

TUTOR/FIRST OFFICER

"You all know where I stand. We need to ensure our survival."

PUNK/COMMS OFFICER

"I think our survival is worthless if it means giving up on our home."

HIPSTER/CAPTAIN

"I won't make my decision without hearing from everybody on this bridge."

BARISTA

"The crew turns to look at the Ensign."

*(Silence)*

Ahem. I said, "The crew turns to look at the Ensign."

STUDENT

Oh shit, I actually have lines? Uh, ok...

*(She flips through her pages and clears her throat.)*

STUDENT/ENSIGN

"What do you want me to say, sir?"

HIPSTER/CAPTAIN

"I want you to say what you think. Be honest. I want your opinion on the situation."

STUDENT/ENSIGN

"Well... to be honest, I'm terrified, sir."

HIPSTER/CAPTAIN

"You want to know a secret, Ensign? So am I. So is everyone. Am I wrong? But you know what? That doesn't matter. What matters it doing what's right, even when success isn't guaranteed. Even in the face of utter, catastrophic failure. I don't know about the rest of you, but I would rather die, attempting to do everything I could, than live, knowing we chose to do nothing. What say you all?"

BARISTA

"A moment of silence. The Ensign steps forward"

STUDENT/ENSIGN

"Aye."

BARISTA

"The Communications Officer steps forward."

PUNK/COMMS OFFICER

"Aye"

BARISTA

"The First Officer steps forward. He looks around, then nods to his Captain."

TUTOR/FIRST OFFICER

"...I'll set a course, sir."

HIPSTER/CAPTAIN

"Make it so, Number One.

*(beat)*

We're going home."

BARISTA

And sce-

CARRIE

Hold on. That's not the line.

*(the music fades out)*

HIPSTER

I improvised a little.

CARRIE

You can't say "Make it so, Number One". That's literally what they say on Star Trek.

HIPSTER

Well, I just thought that line needed to be a little more, you know, epic. Right now it's basically just "Good. Do that", and then it's over.

CARRIE

...Okay, I can see that. I do like that last bit you added. But you can't say 'Make it so'. What about...

*(Carrie types. The music comes back.)*

HIPSTER/CAPTAIN

"Thank you, old friend. Thank you, all of you. I will do everything in my power to ensure your trust hasn't been misplaced.

*(beat)*

We're going home."

*(The Barista looks at Carrie. She nods.)*

BARISTA

And scene.

*(A moment of silence passes.)*

CARRIE

It's a little clumsy, but I can keep working on it.

HIPSTER

No, I like it. Now it really feels like this is the moment the Captain becomes 'The Captain'.

BARISTA

I agree. I think it really works from a character perspective.

STUDENT

And I actually got lines!

TUTOR

I don't know. I still think the whole scenario is contrived. Honestly, you should just take out the sci-fi junk.

CARRIE

Okay, thank you.

TUTOR

What?

CARRIE

I appreciate your feedback, but I think I like it the way it is. This is gonna be a science-fiction play, so the science-fiction stays.

TUTOR

I don't think that's the best call.

CARRIE

Maybe not. But it's the call I'm gonna make.

TUTOR

Oh.

*(beat)*

Well, I guess for what it is, you did a pretty decent job this time.

*(The Barista, Hipster, Student and Tutor move the furniture back to its original layout. Carrie lets out a sigh of relief. The Punk approaches Carrie. She speaks out of character for the first time.)*

PUNK

Sounds like you think that went pretty well.

*(Carrie can barely contain her joy)*

CARRIE

I, uh, I guess. I mean, they all seem to think so.

PUNK

Yeah, well, I suppose you were bound to get something right eventually. Broken clocks tell time twice a day and all that.

CARRIE

Excuse me?

PUNK

Sorry, was I not clear? I'm saying that even a phony writer like yourself can accidentally do something right. But don't let a fluke fool you.

CARRIE

I don't... I don't think it was a fluke.

PUNK

Hmm, yeah, you may be right. They could all be lying to you.

CARRIE

What? I didn't say-

PUNK

Maybe they felt sorry for you? Yeah, that would explain why they were so nice. They've been trying so hard to help, keep you from embarrassing yourself, and now they realize that there's really nothing they can do to fix this, so they might as well stop fighting it. Maybe they're thinking, look, we've been so hard on her, it's her first play, and it doesn't look like she's giving up anytime soon, let's just give her a break.

*(she shrugs)*

Hey, who knows, right? Either way, I think it's important that you understand.

CARRIE

Understand what?

PUNK

Oh, come on. Please tell me you know that if you take this play out into the real world, you'd be a fucking laughing stock. You think your little fanfic is some sort of high art? Your crazy space-drama nonsense? It's stupid. It's absurd.

*(beat)*

Well, I don't know. Maybe a talented writer could've made it work.

CARRIE

But I-

PUNK

Please. You couldn't write your way out of a paper bag.

*(beat)*

Look, I'm sorry I have to be the one to tell you this. Really. I don't want to tear you down. I'm just trying to help you. Save you from making a fool of yourself.

CARRIE

...yeah, I guess it's really not that good, is it.

PUNK

Well, on the bright side, no one would mistake you for a playwright if they read this. I mean, you're really not one, no offense. We both know that. The question is, do you want the world to know that?

*(Carrie stares at her. The Punk sighs. She holds out her script pages)*

PUNK

Here. I made a few changes to the scene, rewrote that big Captain's speech. I think you might appreciate it. Makes the play feel a little more, you know, true to life. Feel free to use it. Or don't. It's up to you.

*(The Punk smiles at Carrie. She waves her script pages in front of her. Carrie takes them. The Punk returns to her original seat. Carrie stands alone center stage. She looks at the pages.)*

CARRIE

"You want to know a secret, Ensign? So am I. So is everyone. Am I wrong? Everyone is afraid of what might happen. And they're right to be afraid. The threat of the Rak'Zhan is impossible to ignore. We can't stand against it. The best we can do is flee, survive at any cost. We all be bold, take a risk, try to do the right thing. But I can't have your blood on my hands. If we don't take the risk, there's no chance of failure. I'd rather live another day than risk dying for nothing. What say you all?"

*(Carrie sits at her seat. The lights shift back to the **Coffee Shop**. A moment passes. She clicks something on the laptop. Behind her, a computer window is projected: "ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT TO DELETE 'STUPID\_PLAY'?". Carrie moves the mouse to YES. She hesitates for a moment, then clicks. The window is replaced by one that reads: "DOCUMENT DELETED". Carrie closes her laptop. The lights go out)*

FIN