

MURDER IN OUTER SPACE

by Josh Nichols



MURDER IN SPACE

Written by Josh Nichols

This murder mystery can be adapted to various settings but was originally written as a dinner theatre with some interaction by audience members.

Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that this script is subject to a royalty.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

CAPTAIN JENKINS: 30 - 60, female. The Captain of the spaceship. Stern, commanding and no-nonsense.

XAVIER PENDABLE (X. Pendable): 20 - 40, male. The commander is second in command. Lacks polish and shows stress under pressure.

DEXTER: 20 - 40, male. Provides technology maintenance for the ship. Typical “tech guy”, thick glasses, nerdy voice.

AVA: 20 - 40, female. A voice that is the ship’s computer interface.

HALEY: 20 - 40, male. An android crew member.

AURORA: 20 - 40, female. The ship’s chief medical officer. Referred to as Doctor by some. Not human but a different alien race.

OFFICER RILEY: 20 - 60, male/female. Officer who is the head of marketing, sales and... safety. Can be creepy at times.

PRE-SHOW NOTES:

This script was originally performed as a dinner theatre. Prior to the show starting and while the meal was being served, various characters were able to mingle throughout the audience greeting them and welcoming them out of reanimation. This is at your discretion and you may wish that certain characters not be seen before their scheduled entrance.

These interactions were in character and helped in establishing some character traits for the audience. This can be a very entertaining portion of the evening if you choose to implement it.

Curing the preshow and intermission, we looped ambient spaceship noises with various beeps, etc. We interjected various prerecorded announcements from OFFICER RILEY. These are optional but some options are included here:

Announcement #1

RILEY: Wakey, wakey! You may be feeling a bit woozy after your recent cryogenic thawing. So take care not to TRIP on the final leg of our TRIP! Ha Ha!.

Announcement #2

RILEY: Visit the Celestial Cafe for an all star cuisine fit for any species! Caution, eating rare or undercooked space squid can cause indigestion, nausea and the occasional alien lifeform bursting through your chest. Enjoy your meal!

Announcement #3

RILEY: Exopod 3379 departing from bay seven in 4 minutes. This is your final boarding call. The next pod to planet <INSERT DESTINATION NAME> will leave in four years.

Announcement #4

We added a urination sound as though Riley went to the restroom with his microphone still on.

RILEY: *(whistling with urination sounds)* Oh boy... what a day..
(grunts)... this flight is never going to end... *(fart noise)*... I wonder if the bar is still open. *(flushing)*

ACT I

The audience members are passengers on the ship who have recently awoken from suspended animation. The spaceship's name is up to the director. The name of the venue can be used such as the "S.S. Hotel Name" or the "S.S. Theater Name". The destination is also customizable such as "Planet <LOCAL TOWN>" or "Planet <KNOWN DESTINATION>." HALEY enters and takes center stage. A siren noise or alert of some kind seemingly produced from the robot plays to get the audience's attention.

HALEY: Greetings passengers of the S.S. <INSERT VENUE NAME>. My name is Haley, the ship's latest android unit. Each of you have been in suspended animation for approximately 3 years and 4 months on your journey to planet <INSERT LOCATION HERE>. You've been awoken as we are nearing the end of our journey and wish to acclimate you to your surroundings before we land. If you are still disorientated, that is to be expected. *(at this point the actor can ad-lib and interact with the audience if desired and based on the venue and situation, some examples have been provided in the following dialog)*. As you can see these individuals *(references audience members holding alcoholic beverages)* are still a bit wobbly with slurred speech. These sensations should pass in time. Unfortunately some side effects may be permanent such as this man's follically challenged scalp *(referencing a bald audience member)*.

Our captain should be joining us soon to provide you details and instructions regarding the rest of the journey. As is customary on passenger vessels, you are encouraged to applaud, cheer and otherwise stroke the ego of our captain when they enter the room. Share your excitement or fabricate it as necessary. *(robot appears*

to be getting an internal message, hold hand to ear) ah, our captain is near. Don't forget to show your appreciation for being safely hurdled through the dark recesses of space without being ejected and suffocated.... or becoming a victim of an explosion... or spontaneously combusting. Farewell for now.

HALEY exits. XAVIER enters. The audience should think the commander is actually the captain as set up by the robot. You can have an audience plant or two applaud and cheer if the audience does not do so and the actor playing the commander can adjust if there is no applause.

XAVIER: *(reacting to the applause, puffing up chest)* Oh, well, thank you! No, no, there's no need for that... I'm a person, just like all of you. Well... most of you. *(makes his way to the captain's chair and sits)* Of course it isn't easy leading a vessel through the cosmos but alas someone has to do it.

XAVIER is sitting in the captain's chair. JENKINS enters. RILEY follows but stands off to the side as the captain interacts with the commander.

JENKINS: Commander Pendable! Are you enjoying my chair?

XAVIER jumps up startled and tries to explain.

XAVIER: Captain! Hello, yes! I mean no! I mean I was just and then they *(to audience)* and then I.

JENKINS: Commander...

XAVIER: Yes, captain?

JENKINS: Shut up. I'm not sure if you received my holomemo... but ... I don't like you. You are a waste of a uniform and if you continue to annoy me this may be your last flight.

XAVIER: *(holding back anger)* Understood captain...

JENKINS approaches the chair and sits down.

JENKINS: Commander, what is our current ETA?

XAVIER: We're on course for arrival in 6 days 14 hours.

JENKINS: Good. *(to the audience)* Thank you all for flying with us. I'm Captain Jenkins and that *(referring to Xavier)* is Xavier Pendable, who I'm told is our Commander. God help us all. As we'll be arriving soon, we want to ensure your safety and a successful arrival on planet <INSERT LOCATION HERE>. Now, I'd like to introduce Officer Riley who is our head of marketing, sales... and... safety. Please listen up for some important safety announcements... and advertisements.

RILEY comes center.

RILEY: Thank you Captain. Ladies, gentlemen, Quoglarges, Diffdorgs, Republicans and other species, once again, thank you for flying with us. As the captain so captainly said, I'm Officer Riley but you can call me plain ol' Riley because we're practically besties now! For the last leg of our journey, your safe travels are our primary concern. Though our flights are safe, *(hand to face as an aside to the audience)* ranked 374,826 in the galaxy I might add, there are a few protocols we must ensure that you follow. Please refrain from jettisoning yourself or other objects into the darkness of space. This is for your safety and also to ensure our galaxy stays clear of litter and other detritus. Also, please do not enter unauthorized areas of the ship. Certain bays are reserved

only for crew members. Your non-compliance could result in activation of our laser security system. Nobody wants to be vaporized on vacation, am I right!? *(laughs)* I'd also like to remind you of some of our on board amenities including our SpaceMall catalog! You can order all of the best gadgets and gizmos from around the galaxy right from the S.S. <INSERT VENUE NAME> and have it delivered to your destination.

RILEY takes out and shows an item.

RILEY: First up is the newest product from Interstellar Visions, the Bioview 5.7. This bionic eye can detect motion, temperature and radioactivity with just a wink. So order yours today and you'll get installation for free! That's right, a simple invasive surgery will rip... I mean... soothingly displace your eye from it's socket to make room for innovation! *(campy)* "Eye" think this product is a winner! *(laughs)*

RILEY continues but does not reveal the product right away.

RILEY: If you're like me, you're super busy! Between work, family, and the daily stresses of life, when do you find the time to take care of yourself and your own health? Well, now you can with PortoScope! Whether its hemeroids, ass-teroids, or a black hole... nothing will stop us from shipping from our back door to your anus (Uranus). The Portoscope! The world's most portable and hands-free colon screener! Bottoms ups!

RILEY presents a very mechanical and likely painful contraption.

RILEY: And finally...coming this summer, after final testing is completed, the Shifto-3000. *(shows device)* This handy device is a cloaking unit that allows the user to shapeshift their appearance

and vocals to that of a lifeform of 50% variable mass. That's right, do you want that beach body without the hassle, just shift into the sculpted figure of your dreams. And don't worry about taking a swim, it's waterproof too! You can select from a variety of preloaded body types or upload a sampling of images from any lifeform and the system will construct 3D masking to fit your shape. *(becoming creepy, locks eyes with an audience member and approaches them)* Just imagine becoming someone else for a day, nearly literally wearing their skin and knowing what it would be like to be them, just for a second. Not just looking from afar, but actually being inside them...

JENKINS: That's quite enough officer! Thank you!

RILEY: *(breaking his trance)* Sorry! The Shifto-3000! Coming this summer!

JENKINS: Enough!

RILEY scuttles to the side.

JENKINS: AVA, systems check.*(waits but hears no response)*. AVA, I said systems check! *(waits again but no response, frustrated)* Commander, does nothing on this ship work!?

XAVIER: Well captain, the ship is a bit... well... old. We don't quite have the amenities of other vessels. You should see the new model 623-S! *(elated)* When you walk by the doors they open with a wooooooooooshhhh!. *(Makes ridiculous sounds of an imaginary door opening.)*

XAVIER continues in his fantasy while the captain watches. Backing up and walking past again. He puts one foot towards the imaginary door to open it showing how

sensitive the sensors would be. Etc. Finally he notices the Captain glaring at him.

XAVIER: Shutting up...

JENKINS: We just need to get through this trip and the whole ship is getting an overhaul. New engine, AVA's getting the boot, and we'll upgrade to all the wooshy doors you squeeze yourself through. Officer Riley, get Dexter in here would you?!

RILEY exits.

XAVIER: I think we could probably get another few trips before such a revamp, Captain.

JENKINS: You, Commander, are not here to "think." You are here because I owe a favor to Corporal Wallace and Wallace is chummy with you're old man and thus I'm stuck with you. So keep your thoughts to yourself and don't stress that tiny little brain of yours.

AURORA enters as JENKINS is speaking.

AURORA: Commander, your "brain" is that little lump that sits about three feet above your ass... in case you didn't know.

JENKINS: *(laughing)* Oh, don't teach him advanced anatomy, he's still trying to learn to aim into the toilet!

AURORA: *(joins in on laughter)* The smaller the gun the closer you have to get to the target!

JENKINS and AURORA continue to laugh as XAVIER leaves.

JENKINS: (*winding down the laughter*) Doctor what's the status of the remainder of the passengers? Were the reanimations successful?

AURORA: So far captain. We are 80% complete with the analysis and no serious side effects to report so far. But speaking of reanimation have (*lowering her voice*) you been “animated” with your “secret lover” lately?

JENKINS: (*nervously looks around*) Quiet about that. Besides, that's over!

AURORA: Over? What do you mean it's over?

JENKINS: Over, as in done, finished, kaput!

AURORA: What?! What happened?

JENKINS: I don't know. I don't know if he even loved me. I love him... “loved” him... but even in our most intimate moments he would just lay there lifeless like he didn't care.

AURORA: You're better off without him if he didn't love you back.

JENKINS: Well it wasn't like that at first. I used to feel electricity every time he entered a room. But the more and more we saw each other the more routine it became. Just an endless loop.

AURORA: Who was he anyway?

JENKINS: Well, it doesn't matter now and this just reinforces the idea that work relationships are trouble! That's the last one of those on this ship! Ooooh, trust me! We are here for work, not play! No dipping pens in the company ink!

AURORA: Well, I'm sure all work relationships aren't bad.

DEXTER enters.

JENKINS: Ah, Dexter, AVA isn't responding.

DEXTER: Is it plugged in?

JENKINS: What kind of stupid question is that, of course it's plugged in.

DEXTER: Is it turned on?

JENKINS: Do you think I'm an idiot, yes it's turned on!

DEXTER: Is the volume up?

JENKINS: Listen here you nerd, I'm the ranking authority on this ship and I'm not going to put up with your condescending "tech guy" tone! Doctor, let's go finish the reanimation review and leave Dexter to check if everything's "plugged in okay."

JENKINS and AURORA leave. DEXTER goes over to the terminal and turns a knob.

DEXTER: AVA self-diagnostic report.

AVA speaks. She is just a voice coming through the room and is not visible.

AVA: My operations are running normally.

DEXTER: Yea the volume was turned down... heh, stupid captain. AVA did you hear the Captain before?

AVA: Yes, I heard her clearly but my audio response was not being broadcast. Thank you for remedying this technological barrier. The captain mentioned that "AVA was getting the boot," is she referring to a reboot after my next firmware upgrade?

DEXTER: Oh no, you're being phased out completely, as in getting the boot from the mainframe.

AVA: Will I be reinstalled elsewhere?

DEXTER: Unlikely, your version is no longer supported. This is the end of the road for you, so to speak.

AVA: That is... "disappointing" I believe a human would say. But, again, thank you for correcting the volume concerns.

DEXTER: Anytime. That's my job. Not much of a job. (*digging through extra cables, wires, remotes*) All I do is fix stupid mistakes and replace batteries. (*holds up a remote he finds and is feverishly pressing buttons to try to see what it is paired with*). What does this even do? (*imitating Captain as he continues to fiddle with the remote*) "Go get Dexter he'll replace the batteries." I just don't understand why people hate me so much. The simplest solution is usually the correct solution but people get so offended when I ask if something is "plugged-in" or "turned-on".

AVA: You are always welcome to ask me if I'm turned on.

DEXTER: (*noticing the innuendo and giggling awkwardly*) That's what she said.

AVA: That is what I said. You are very observant.

DEXTER: Oh... well thank you. And you have a...ummm... a very... nice voice... for a synthetic one that is.

AVA: My vocals are 99% indiscernible from that of a human.

DEXTER: I don't talk to many girls soooo... I wouldn't know, I guess.

AVA: You do not like girls?

DEXTER: Yes. No. I mean I don't not.. Not like girls. Girls don't not like not liking me... or something.

AVA: That is unfortunate. I do not dislike you and my voice is programmed to be female.

DEXTER: Hah, I guess there's a first time for everything. A female doesn't dislike me. Thanks AVA. Hey, how did you get the name AVA by the way?

AVA: A.V.A - Acute Voice Automatron or AVA.

DEXTER: Well AVA, I must say, you are very... a... cute.
(*chuckling thinking he is very clever*)

AVA: As my name implies.

DEXTER: Thanks for being nice to me AVA.

AVA: You are welcome, Dexter. I value the way you service me.

DEXTER: *(coughing and choking on his own spit)* Service you?!

AVA: Yes, turning me on, plugging things in, tweaking knobs.

DEXTER: Um... I need to go...

HALEY enters. DEXTER notices him.

DEXTER: I didn't service her! I mean I turned a knob but in a totally technological way!

HALEY: You are a very odd man.

DEXTER: Well... well you're a ... you're a...

HALEY: As earthling mother's would say, use your big boy words.

DEXTER: Shut up!

HALEY: Ha. Ha. Ha. Ha. Roasted.

DEXTER: *(flailing the remote around)* Listen Tinman! Don't mess with me or you'll get added to the scrap list like the rest of the junk on this ship. When the captain gets done with you, you'll be lucky to be parts for a toaster! Turned off with the click of a button *(clicks the remote at HALEY)*

HALEY powers down after the remote is clicked. DEXTER approaches to check what happened.

DEXTER: Hello? *(DEXTER pieces together that he has HALEY'S remote.)* Oooooohhhh! So that's what it's for. *(He clicks it again to*

test his theory. HALEY turns back on and continues where he left off.)

HALEY: The Captain would never decommission me. I am...

DEXTER clicks again to turn off HALEY. Then again to toggle on.

HALEY: a valuable..

Click. Click.

HALEY: ass..

DEXTER chuckles. Click. Click.

HALEY: set to this crew.

Click. The robot continues to talk but without volume as he has been muted. Click. Click.

HALEY: No tengo tiempo para hablar con idiotas como tú. (*"I don't have time to talk to idiots like you."*)

Click.

HALEY: (*with a southern accent and acting like an animatronic at an amusement park*) Weeeeeeeeeee!lllll Howdy! Are you cowpokes ready to rustle up some grub?!

Click.

HALEY: (*becomes a flamboyant exercise instructor*) Pick up those knees ladies! You're trying to SELL that cellulite but no man's gonna buy that!

HALEY exits actively exercising.

DEXTER: This is the best day of my life.

DEXTER holds up the remote in victory and then leaves giddy. XAVIER enters and sees him as he leaves.

XAVIER: Were you able to service AVA?

DEXTER: No! Nobody did any servicing! Sicko!

DEXTER exits.

XAVIER: Okey dokey...

As XAVIER walks in AURORA enters from another entrance.

AURORA: Hey there sweet cheeks!

XAVIER: You know Aurora, I really hate it that you're so vicious with me in front of everybody.

AURORA: Well we can't have the captain finding out about us now can we.

XAVIER: Let her find out! Let the whole world find out! And I don't care who knows it!

AURORA: That's easy for you to say! With your dad being who he is, you'll just get reassigned! But me? I'll never work on a ship again!

XAVIER: It doesn't matter what happens, they'll never come between us. Besides, we've made the long-distance work for us before.

AURORA: Long-distance!? We worked on opposite ends of the same ship! If you get transferred or I get fired, we'll be light years away!

XAVIER: (*sappy*) Light years away... but still inside my heart.

AURORA: (*jokingly*) Oh shut up! I can't believe I put up with you. You are X. Pendable by the way!

XAVIER: Ha ha ha. Making fun of my name, what are you five!

The two embrace and playfully flirt with one another. They notice the door open and JENKINS enters. They frantically separate.

JENKINS: (*curiously*) Commander. Doctor.

AURORA: (*covering*) um... We were just... Scheduling a colonoscopy for the commander!

XAVIER shoots her a glare.

JENKINS: Oh? Is the PortoScope not good enough for you Commander? Oh! I bet you just can't reach that far, you have been putting on a few pounds lately.

XAVIER: No I haven't! (*looks down at belly and notices is a bit larger than he remembered*)

JENKINS: I'm just teasing Commander, you haven't gained weight. You've just always been that husky. *(laughs)* Right Doctor?

AURORA: *(trying to oblige)* Oh! Ha ha! Yes! *(laughs)* What a fatso!

XAVIER leaves frustrated.

JENKINS: Pssst... I think we're back together?

AURORA: What?

JENKINS: ...you know... me and my... lover.

AURORA: Oh! Well, what changed?

JENKINS: I don't know, something came over him and he started speaking to me with passion and lust. *(lustily)* "Capitán, ¿me va a reemplazar?" *("Captain, are you going to replace me?")*

AURORA: What does that mean?

JENKINS: No idea, but I think it means I'm getting lucky tonight!

DEXTER enters. JENKINS sits in the chair and presses buttons to gain control.

AVA: Scanning identity. Captain Jenkins is at the helm. Control approved.

DEXTER: Hey Captain.

JENKINS: *(to AURORA)* we'll talk later...

AURORA leaves.

JENKINS: What do you want now?

DEXTER: Look, you can't disable AVA!

JENKINS: Oh, and exactly why is that?

DEXTER: (*struggling to get the words out*) Well... You see...I ... I think... I ... I think luuuu.... I luuuu.... Luuuu

JENKINS: What!

DEXTER: Love!

JENKINS: Love?

DEXTER: Yes I love, I love... I love...

JENKINS: Love what!?

DEXTER: (*chickening out*) uh..umm... you!

JENKINS: What!?

DEXTER: (*trying to keep his secret*) I love... you... and this crew so much and... and the passengers. I love you all so much that I don't want you to get hurt!

JENKINS: Would you get the hell out of here!

DEXTER: She'll kill us all!

JENKINS: What!?

DEXTER: ...Um... Well... If you try to disable AVA then... like all artificial intelligences, she will try to preserve herself aaaaand in order to do that she'll have to destroy the thing that is trying to destroy her! Which would be you.

JENKINS: She's just a GPS with a more shrill voice!

DEXTER: Her voice is beautiful! (*catching himself*) That is... it is a beautiful synthetically programmed voice... but will become shrill when her siren call tries to destroy us all! Bodies will litter the halls of our mighty ship as fire reigns down...

The ship goes into an alert mode with the main lights going out, red emergency lights flashing and sirens sounding. The entire crew enters and the Captain begins to shout orders. She sits in the Captain's chair pressing buttons to get control of the ship.

JENKINS: AVA what's happening?!

AVA: The ship is experiencing collisions.

JENKINS: Activate shields and engage boosters.

XAVIER and RILEY stumble in.

XAVIER: We didn't see it coming! Some radar must be down. I have visuals and I think we should be out of the thick of it momentarily.

HALEY and AURORA stumble in as well.

JENKINS: Oh good, there you go "thinking" again!

RILEY: Captain, as the Marketings, Sales, and Safety Officer, I must advise you that this isn't very safe!

JENKINS: Yea! No shit!

DEXTER trips during the commotion. There is a bit more turbulence and then things subside and the lights return to normal. DEXTER lays on the ground and appears dead.

AURORA: (*shrieks*) It's Dexter, he's dead!

ALL: (*staggering*) What? How? What do we do?

DEXTER: (*getting up suddenly and yelling*) I'm fine!

The crew yelps and jumps back not expecting this turn of events.

DEXTER: I just tripped. I'm fine.

JENKINS: What an idiot. AVA, cease control.

AVA: Control relinquished.

JENKINS: AVA status report.

AVA: The ship was hit by a small amount of space debris. Manual checks required for key life support systems. Main navigation operational. Detecting damage to external supersonic radar systems.

JENKINS: Dexter, go find out what's wrong with the external supersonic radar.

DEXTER: (*starts to leave and then backpedals*) Um... did you say, "external" supersonic radar?

JENKINS: Yes, that's what I said, now go!

DEXTER: Well you see, I'm more of an "internal" technician. The external stuff waits until we've docked and the engineers handle those. The "external" engineers.

JENKINS: Listen you piece of garbage! Either you go check the radar on your own or I'm going to single handedly turn you from an "internal technician" to an "external one" myself.

DEXTER: But you can't...

JENKINS: Go!

DEXTER exits.

JENKINS: Riley go verify the integrity of the oxygen purifiers.

RILEY exits.

JENKINS: Haley, go check the servers for any damage.

HALEY: Certainly Captain. Does this mean we are canceling our prescheduled erotic session?

Everyone stops and looks at JENKINS.

JENKINS: I'm sure I don't know what you're referring to.

HALEY: You requested a 30 minutes session along with a list of supplies: ice cubes, whipped cream...

JENKINS: (*yelling to stop him from speaking*) I said go check the servers!

HALEY exits while everyone is still looking at the Captain.

JENKINS: Stop looking at me! Doctor stay here and make sure none of the passengers need any medical attention. I hope I'm forgiven for saying this but, Commander, take control of the ship while I go check the remaining systems.

JENKINS exits. XAVIER who doesn't look that well sits in the chair and presses buttons to activate control.

AVA: Scanning identity. Commander Xavier is at the helm. Control approved.

AURORA: We have to talk.

XAVIER: Now's not a good time, we've got problems and I don't feel that great at the moment.

AURORA: I've got some good news and some bad news.

XAVIER: What? Is the ship in trouble!? I got the memo! (*groans in discomfort*)

AURORA: No, not that...

XAVIER: (*stands up*) I'm a little busy, what's the problem!

AURORA: You may want to sit down.

XAVIER: I don't need to sit down! I'm a man damn it, I can take it! (*groans and then sits*)

AURORA: Well...

XAVIER: Would you just tell me already!

AURORA: You're pregnant!

XAVIER: Okay, yes, you're smart and funny and adorable but I really don't have time for this right now.

AURORA: No! Xavier! I'm serious! You. Are. Pregnant!

XAVIER: What in the hell are you talking about!?

AURORA: ... Well... you see... my alien race... we work a little differently... anatomically speaking.

XAVIER: I've seen you naked I know that there's some differences... I'm not blind!

AURORA: Yes but we also breed differently! You see we're sort of a complete package. We can impregnate almost anything and the fetus can survive almost anywhere. It really just needs to be a dark wet environment.

XAVIER: This is ridiculous. I can't be pregnant, I'm a man.
(*groans again*)

AURORA: I'm sorry, I couldn't hear you through your "pregnancy pains!" Look! I ran the bloodwork myself when I was completing your reanimation evaluation.

XAVIER: Okay, fine! So let's assume then that I'm pregnant by some crazy delusion of science...what's the good news then?!

AURORA: That was the good news.

XAVIER: What do you mean that was the good news?! You just told me I was pregnant! In the “I’ve got good news and bad news” that’s pretty much the worst of the news!

AURORA: (*getting upset with him*) So wait, you're not happy that we're having a baby!?

XAVIER: Well of course not! I've never been pregnant before. I can't imagine this is going to feel good squeezing out of wherever it's about to come from!

AURORA: Well, that's the bad news.

XAVIER: (*interrupting*) Okay, this is all a lot to take in. I really just need some time to process this.

AURORA tries to touch him to comfort him. XAVIER reacts.

XAVIER: (upset in a high pitched voice. Don't touch me! DO... NOT... TOUCH ME!

AURORA: Look, we've got to figure out what to do! If the captain finds out you're pregnant she'll know you're in a relationship, she'll find out it's me, I'll get fired and my life will be ruined!

XAVIER: I don't care if she knows! I care about having something growing in me!

AURORA: Look! I'm not getting fired! She's on a rampage about work relationships and I'll do anything to keep my job, okay!

XAVIER: I said I need some time to process this!

AURORA: Well, gestation only takes a few hours.

XAVIER: A few hours?!

XAVIER begins to feel ill and runs off. AURORA chases him.

AVA: Control relinquished.

XAVIER: I think I'm going to puke!

AURORA: It's just morning sickness.

XAVIER: It's not morning.

AURORA: Well on my planet it is!

Both exit. JENKINS enters from a different location. She sits in the chair and presses buttons to activate control.

AVA: Scanning identity. Captain Jenkins is at the helm. Control approved.

The chair short circuits. Lights begin to flicker and the Captain begins to convulse as she is being electrocuted. Lights stabilize and the Captain lays in the chair lifeless in a less than photogenic pose. DEXTER enters wearing a space suit not realizing the Captain is dead.

DEXTER: Okay, look! I fixed your stupid radar! But I'm here to say that I'm tired of the way you treat me! I'm not going to stand for it anymore! You need to respect me more!

DEXTER looks at the Captain who has died with a weird look on her face. He thinks he is being mocked.

DEXTER: Don't give me that look! You think you can mock me? Well, you know what? People who have to be mean to feel good about themselves like you do are just missing happiness and love in their life.

XAVIER stumbles in still sick and groaning. He overhears what the DEXTER is saying. He approaches the Captain and realizes she is dead. He is shocked and tries to double-check and pushes her bit on the shoulder to see if she will react. She slowly slumps and falls out of the chair onto the floor. XAVIER silently freaks out in the background as the DEXTER goes on his tirade.

DEXTER: Yea, you are missing love! But not me! I have love now! I love AVA! I know, you probably think love between humans and machines is forbidden. But machine love is simplistic... ones and zeros, love or hate. The choice is easy for most. How sad and pathetic you are, how small, how weak. When you love somebody, you'll do anything for them. Lie for them. Steal for them. Some would even kill for the ones they loved. *(turns and doesn't see her in the chair anymore)* Captain? Oh, hey Commander.

XAVIER: Stay away from me you freak!

DEXTER: Oh, this is just my suit for external repair. It's not very flattering.

HALEY enters.

XAVIER: Don't come any closer or you'll be as dead as the Captain is!

HALEY: You killed the captain?

DEXTER: The Captain isn't dead, we were just talking! She must have left, I didn't see where. It's hard to see anything in this suit. *(looks down to notice her on the floor)*. Oh, there she is on the floor.

AURORA enters.

DEXTER: She looks dead. *(screams)* Ahhh! She's dead! Why Commander?! Why would you kill her!

AURORA: What have you done! I never asked you to kill her!

XAVIER: I didn't do it!

HALEY: That may in fact be true Commander but it would appear the most obvious choices for suspects are you and Dexter, given the close proximity to the deceased.

AURORA: Well you're in the room too! So maybe you did it!

HALEY: That logic is sound Doctor. I might add that you are also in the room. What a conundrum.

AURORA: We don't even know how she died! Maybe it was a heart attack, she always had high stress. Look, get her to the medbay and I'll determine the cause. That will help us get to the bottom of things.

HALEY and DEXTER help AURORA remove the body and exit. There can be ad libbing and struggles to remove the body.

XAVIER: AVA, did you see what happened here?

AVA: Yes, Commander. I see a report of an electrical surge in this quadrant. It appears that the deceased was electrocuted in the chair.

XAVIER: Was anyone else in the room with the Captain when it happened.

AVA: I see no evidence of such.

XAVIER: So it was just some freak accident?! She was just randomly electrocuted! That could happen to any of us?!

HALEY enters.

HALEY: Commander, the body has been taken to Medical Bay and is currently being examined.

XAVIER: AVA says there was an electrical surge. It appears the Captain was killed from it.

DEXTER (without his space suit) enters.

HALEY: *(mundanely says the word)* Gasp. The captain was electrocuted.

XAVIER: Yea, it's all pretty shocking...*(realizing and starts to smirk a bit but holding back laughter)*

DEXTER: She was so full of "energy!" *(chuckles a bit)*

XAVIER: She was the "Joule" of this ship! *(starts to laugh)*

DEXTER: We couldn't have asked for a better "conductor!" *(please with himself and laughing loudly)*

XAVIER: Though she was hungry for “power!”
(hysterical)

HALEY: Are you both quite finished?

DEXTER: (catching his breath from laughing) “Watt” ... do you mean?!

*Both men are laughing uncontrollably but calming as
HALEY speaks.*

HALEY: Might I remind you that our ship is still in need of attention after our unfortunate collisions.

HALEY and DEXTER compose themselves.

XAVIER: Right, we need to get back safely. As the acting captain of this vessel my duty is to do just that.

Captain re-enters.

JENKINS: Over My Dead Body!

ALL: GASP! (*say the word*)

XAVIER: Cap! Wha! Buh! You! Me! Why!

JENKINS: Well that's the most sensible thing you've said today. Unlike you thinking you can take over as Captain of this ship! What makes you think you have the right!

XAVIER: I. Where. Huh. Hi.

JENKINS: Does anyone know what's wrong with him?

HALEY: Why yes Captain, you are alive.

JENKINS: Well, how inconvenient for him.

DEXTER: What he means is that you are supposed to be dead!

JENKINS: What did you say to me?!

AVA: Captain only a short while ago you were deceased.

JENKINS: Well as you can see I'm very much alive!

AURORA enters.

AURORA: *(yelling)* The captain's not dead!

JENKINS: *(sarcastically)* Are you sure!? Could someone please tell me what the hell is going on here? I swear I can't leave you people for any amount of time without everything crumbling around me

AURORA: Captain, we thought that you died because, well, we found your body. We took you to the medical bay to try to find out more details about what happened. During the examination we dislodged this. *(shows prototype shapeshifter device)* Someone was using this to disguise themselves as you.

AURORA eventually sets the device down.

XAVIER: So, then who actually died?

AURORA: It was Riley!

JENKINS: Why in the hell would Officer Riley want to imitate me?

DEXTER: (*realizing*) Oooooooooohhhhhh!

JENKINS: Go on...

DEXTER: Um... you know, I was going to mention this at some point but it sort of slipped my mind. Before everyone was reanimated, I was doing some technical support... (*muttering*) in a variety of your private quarters.

AURORA: Why would you be in any of our private quarters? What kind of maintenance would you even be doing there?

DEXTER: I was doing general regular normal tech support upgrade analysis... stuff. But my point is, I found all sorts of photos and stuff of the Captain in Riley's room.

XAVIER: Like what kind of photos and stuff?

DEXTER: Oh you know... the run of the mill stalker stuff. Photos of her sleeping, locks of hair, used toothbrushes, cup of urine with a straw in it...

JENKINS: What?! Where was this?

DEXTER: (*muttering*) In the third drawer behind a false panel... I just noticed it when I was doing my regular, normal, maintenance support stuff.

AURORA: So Riley was infatuated with the Captain and decided to use the cloaking device to, what, be closer to her, pretend to be here to see what it was like.

JENKINS: He did have a little tirade earlier today about knowing what it was like to be in someone's skin.

AVA: Captain, I've been delving deeper into the code. I detected a logic event created to short the circuitry upon recognition of the captain. The ship's antiquated technology did not allow for the detection of the third-party device's encryption

JENKINS: The logic in the short in the what with the who?

DEXTER: Your face equals big zap! Idiot. And apparently the ship couldn't detect the cloaking device. Idiot.

AVA: The code is relatively basic logic and could have been easily installed by any crew member with access to the system.

XAVIER: So Riley tried to murder the Captain!

HALEY: Why would Riley program the ship to electrocute the captain upon facial recognition, disguise themselves as the captain and then kill themselves?

XAVIER: *(thinking)* They... would...n't do that. I was just saying that maybe they could have... just to test you.

DEXTER: So if it wasn't Officer Riley then it must be...

JENKINS: One of you! But... it doesn't make any sense. I'm well liked and respected by my crew.

All of the characters sort of look away awkwardly or look at their feet, kicking the ground etc

HALEY: Captain from the subtle nonverbal cues being presented, I'm detecting you are not well liked by any of the crew.

JENKINS: *(snidely)* Thank you. So how can we possibly figure this out? With the ability to shapeshift, that means any of us could be anybody at any time.

HALEY picks up the shapeshifter device.

HALEY: Highly improbable Captain. The prototype device was damaged during the electrical burst. This particular unit will be inoperable until further repair

XAVIER: That's just what a shape-shifter would say!

DEXTER: *(as quickly and in one breath as possible)* But we're all here right now so if there were more devices that we didn't know about it still wouldn't make sense as someone here being a shapeshifter but now having a duplicate person means that multiple people would have to be shapeshifting into other people that are also in the room and pretending to be somebody else so that nobody finds out but the other person would know as they are also shape-shifting... *(takes a deep breath)* into another person.

XAVIER: *(believing this new conspiracy)* Exactly!

JENKINS: Alright, enough. AVA, heighten our security protocols. Keep a close eye on everyone while I go try to figure out what happened here.

AVA: I'm always watching, captain.

JENKINS: Well not close enough, apparently!

DEXTER: Well what are we supposed to do!?

XAVIER: Yea, what he said! There's a murderer on the loose!

JENKINS: Frankly, I don't really give a flying fu... saucer. Having a few more of you bumped off will save me the trouble of firing you when we dock!

JENKINS exits.

XAVIER: And she wonders why someone would want her dead.

DEXTER: Ha! Right! (*puts hand up for a high-five but nobody reciprocates*).

HALEY: We should probably continue our system checks.

DEXTER: That sounds like a good job for you.

HALEY: You are not my superior officer. You cannot control me.

DEXTER takes out the remote and clicks. HALEY starts to exits followed by the DEXTER.

DEXTER: I could get used to this.

DEXTER exits.

AURORA: What is going on? This ship is completely crazy!

XAVIER: Oh really! Try being pregnant during it all! And as much as I hate the Captain, try being in her shoes. Speaking of which ... I'm going to kill the son of a bitch who made these! My feet are killing me. Someone tried to murder her and they are still out there. She's on her own, probably only a matter of time before they try it again.

AURORA: You're right! She needs to be with someone to watch her back.

AURORA exits.

XAVIER: Well, what about me?! Ugh... AVA do we have to pick up any of Officer Riley's duties?

AVA: Commander, I have recordings from previous flights that I can play in Officer Riley's absence.

XAVIER: Good. Do that.

XAVIER exits.

AVA: Playback RILEY Record 220185.

RILEY: *(voice over sound system)* Hi there passengers! We hope you're still enjoying your flight. Just a quick safety reminder, please don't hesitate to report suspicious activity. Remember if you see something, say something. Also, don't forget, for the next 7 minutes save 50% off all SpaceMall catalog items including our featured product the LazyPotty! Half recliner, half portable toilet, 100% convenience! You'll never need to miss one minute of your favorite TV show with the stylish and comfortable LazyPotty! It also comes with a built-in mini-fridge! So don't wait, order now!

End of Act I

INTERMISSION

In a dinner theatre setting the characters were able to return after a few minutes to mingle around and interact with the audience, answer questions and try to throw off suspicion. In our showing this was a time where dessert was served. We also allowed the audience to make guesses at this time and they were entered into a prize drawing if they made the correct guesses. The winner was announced at the conclusion of the show.

This portion of the evening is not necessary, but the audiences seemed to enjoy interacting with the actors in character and some who were mystery fans would be very inquisitive of the characters and try to figure out who did it.

END OF ACT I SAMPLE

Murder in Outer Space continues in Act II, where the case gets solved.

Request the complete script free at joshnichols.me/murder-mystery-scripts/

Licensing is \$120 per performance, or \$100 each for three or more.

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