

## ENCOUNTERED

**LOGLINE:** The captain of a military space vessel must find the truth about an alien encounter that has destroyed a freighter.

FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE - DAY

The heavy cruiser Valiant is parked next to the Platkin, a wreck of a ship a fraction of the Valiant's size.

CAPTAIN (O.S.)  
 Play the log, Ensign. Let's see  
 what happened to her. Hopefully we  
 can make some sense of it.

INT. VALIANT BRIDGE - DAY

Through the front screen we can the Platkin dead ahead, its hull scarred from a recent battle.

ENSIGN LOGAN  
 It's audio only, sir

CAPTAIN  
 (to security officers)  
 Board her. I want a full report.

(to Logan)  
 Play it.

GRABER (V.O.)  
 This is the final report. Acting  
 Captain Miles Graber DVM. There's  
 no hope for survival, I know this  
 now. My first officer is dead as  
 are most of the bridge crew. And  
 I'm sure as hell not trained for  
 this. Bleeding out. I've sewed it  
 up best I could but the wound's too  
 deep.

LOGAN looks at the Captain.

ENSIGN LOGAN  
 The damage doesn't look that bad  
 from here.

A communication signal interrupts.

CAPTAIN  
 Report.

SECURITY (O.S.)  
 We've gained access to the bridge,  
 Captain. S.O.  
 (MORE)

SECURITY (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 Fletcher is hooking up the video  
 feed now. Are you getting this?

The image of the Platkin is replaced by an interior view of the bridge of the damaged ship. Through a haze of smoke we can see the aftermath of an attack, undefined dead bodies scattered. The security officers face cuts in.

SECURITY (CONT'D)  
 The captain's in his chair but he's  
 clutching a carton of cigarettes,  
 sir.

CAPTAIN  
 Cigarettes? I thought those were  
 banned eighty years ago? Who the  
 hell still carries cigarettes?

The image on the screen jumps to a close up of Graber. On the floor next to him is an oddly shaped body.

SECURITY  
 And sir, the crew appear to be  
 animals. I counted three dogs and  
 two cats. They're all dead.

CAPTAIN  
 Animals? Explain yourself crewman?

SECURITY  
 There is the carcass of a dog  
 sitting at the helmsman seat. It's  
 wearing a uniform shirt, sir.

CAPTAIN  
 Show me.

The SO grabs the vidcam and changes the angle to display the dead dog and cat.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)  
 Insanity? What do you make if it?

ENSIGN LOGAN  
 Sir, I just pulled up Graber's file  
 from the database. He's not even  
 the captain, sir. He's a  
 veterinarian.

Logan activates the view screen to include the bio file. A much younger looking Graber is seen standing beside his Golden Retriever, a carton of cigarettes under his arm.

ENSIGN LOGAN (CONT'D)

He graduated the academy in 2122 with a degree in veterinary medicine with a minor in astrophysics. First assignment the USS Excelsior as chief of astrobiology. He served there for three years before suddenly resigning and going freelance on commercial freighters. His last assignment was on the Platkin as...Chief Medical Officer.

CAPTAIN

A veterinarian posing as a doctor? Did they know? Where's the crew for God's sake?

GRABER (V.O.)

After the first attack I had no choice but to take the chair. I shifted Max to XO and Pritzy to Helm, although she was not too happy with the station.

ENSIGN LOGAN

No crewman named Max is in the database for the Platkin. Same with Pritzy.

CAPTAIN

Is he talking about the animals?

INT. PLATKIN BRIDGE

In the command chair Graber, leaning off to one side, is clutching the carton of cigarettes. The security officer approaches him.

SECURITY

(talking to Captain)

Should I remove the cigarette carton from his hand, sir? He seems to be clutching it tightly.

CAPTAIN (O.S.)

Does it appear to pose any danger?

SECURITY

I don't believe so.

CAPTAIN (O.S.)

Do it.

The SO gingerly removes the box from the dead man's hands.

SECURITY

It appears to be empty, sir.

He shakes it and something RATTLES from within.

SECURITY (CONT'D)

Wait, there is something inside.

The SO peels open the top label and peers inside, surprised.

SECURITY (CONT'D)

There is a dead rodent inside, sir.  
It looks like a mouse.

CAPTAIN (O.S.)

Jesus, this whole thing is getting  
stranger by the minute.

SECURITY

There's more, sir. The inside of  
the box appears to have some tiny  
writing on the sides.

The SO peels the sides and opens the box flat, allowing the  
dead mouse to fall to the floor.

GRABER (V.O.)

I have the alien trapped in the  
box. It's clever, changes to appear  
harmless. On several occasions it  
has given the impression of being  
dead, but don't be fooled. It's  
not.

CAPTAIN (O.S.)

(shouting)

Security detail - pick up the  
mouse. I want it intact.

The security team scramble to find where the rodent fell to  
no avail.

SECURITY

Sir, the mouse has disappeared. I  
could have sworn it was dead.

CAPTAIN (O.S.)

What is written inside the  
cigarette carton. Read it to me.

The SO holds the unfolded carton closer.

## SECURITY

To those who come beware. For I have traveled far to find a race such as yours, those who are certain that with their ships they are the strongest of the strong. What you see is what I have given to this crew. I have no need of weapons. We need no battle. I am therefore I win. And I do not come in peace.

## INT. VALIANT BRIDGE

Close on the Captain who has begun to comprehend the magnitude of what has happened.

## CAPTAIN

Security standby.

He signals for communications to be cut.

## ENSIGN LOGAN

Sir, we can't let that thing on board our ship. He can't come back.

## CAPTAIN

I know. I know.

The Captain curses and smashes his fists on the chair arms.

## CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

Dammit. Ensign, lock torpedo on target. Fire on my mark.

## ENSIGN LOGAN

Target locked, sir.

## CAPTAIN

Fire!

We PULL BACK and...

FADE OUT: