



Ashley Griffin

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*For everyone at the Santa Monica Playhouse,
my theatrical home growing up,
especially Evelyn Rudie, Chris DeCarlo, Rina Mimoun,
Alex Cohen and Rachel Galper.*

*From Mary-Mary,
who still sees through rose-colored glasses
and never stopped believing.*

*And for everyone
who ever has or ever will create
and put on a show
with me in my living room.*

Starship MacGuffin!

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Starship MacGuffin! was originally produced by Maor Performing Arts and performed July 2020: Rachel Klein, director.

Starship MacGuffin!

INTERACTIVE COMEDY/MYSTERY. A dire mystery is afoot on board the spaceship “Stargazer,” and time is running out! While crew members are busy rehearsing for their virtual production of *Fish Hamlet on Mars*, Captain Harkness discovers that the spaceship’s power source, the MacGuffin, has been stolen. With just 30 minutes of oxygen left, the intrepid crew calls upon the audience to help find the culprit before they crash land on the lost planet of D’Illyria and are stranded with no hope of returning to Earth. Suspects include the queen of intergalactic disguise, a nerdy cook/translator, Ensign Redshirt, and a drama-loving D’Illyrian. And let’s not forget the robot in the room! Audiences will love this interactive, choose-your-own-ending play. “Starship MacGuffin!” is a hilarious send-up of “Star Trek,” *Return to the Forbidden Planet*, and *The Maltese Falcon*. May be performed virtually or in person. Perfect for Zoom productions. Easy to stage.

Performance Time: Approximately 45 minutes.

Characters

(2 F, 23 flexible)

(With doubling: 2 F, 17 flexible. Tripling possible.)

"Stargazer" Crew

JACKIE/JACK HARKNESS: Captain of the "Stargazer"; flexible.

PENNY/PRESTON LOVELL: Commander of the "Stargazer"; looks like a human version of the Sam the Eagle Muppet; flexible.

ROSALIND/RAYMOND CURIE: Science officer of the "Stargazer"; flexible.

EDITH/EDWARD CLARKE: Chief engineer of the "Stargazer"; flexible.

ENSIGN REDSHIRT: Can never finish a sentence; suspected of stealing the MacGuffin; wears a red shirt; flexible.

A.R.I.E.L. ("Ariel"): Ship's upgraded robot assistant; suspected of stealing the MacGuffin; flexible.

QUINN: Shy, nerdy cook/translator on the "Stargazer"; excited for "Hotdog Night"; suspected of stealing the MacGuffin; flexible.

DR. FADDEN: Prefers to be called "Dancing Doc"; in charge of choreographing a tap dancing extravaganza for the upcoming performance of *Fish Hamlet on Mars*; flexible.

DIRECTOR: Director of *Fish Hamlet on Mars*; flexible.

CREW MEMBER 1: "Stargazer" crew member who plays the role of Fish Hamlet in *Fish Hamlet on Mars*; suspected of stealing the MacGuffin; flexible.

CREW MEMBER 2: "Stargazer" crew member who plays the role of Elsinore Fish in *Fish Hamlet on Mars*; flexible.

CREW MEMBER 3: "Stargazer" crew member who plays the role of Rosencrantz Fish in *Fish Hamlet on Mars*; flexible.

CREW MEMBER 4: "Stargazer" crew member who plays the role of Guildenstern Fish in *Fish Hamlet on Mars*; flexible.

Mission Control

ADMIRAL JEAN: Secretive admiral at mission control who enjoys Volton poetry; suspected of stealing the MacGuffin; flexible.

GRACE/GREG O'MALLEY: Captain who likes Volton jam; flexible.

Designers at the Intergalactic Space Station

EDITH GUISE: Stylish, no-nonsense Head of Undercover Response; as master of disguises, offers tips to blend in with local inhabitants.; in charge of making costumes for *Fish Hamlet on Mars*; suspected of stealing the MacGuffin; speaks with a slight accent; female.

VALENTINA/VALENTINO: Edith's assistant; flexible.

ADRIAN/ADRIANA: Edith's second assistant; flexible.

BETSEY/BARNEY: Head of coloring and frills; flexible.

COCO: Chief editor; flexible.

VERA/VERO: Head of draping; flexible.

STELLA/STELLAR: Head of hair; the only a person with a fake mustache who can withstand temperatures of up to 1,000 degrees; flexible.

Forgotten planet, D'Illyria

PIPPA: Ruler of the lost planet, D'Illyria; flexible.

CAL: Pippa's advisor; flexible.

MIRANDA: Pippa's baby sister; hates living on D'Illyria because she's sick eating mountain carrots and never going to a party or play; suspected of stealing the MacGuffin; female.

NOTE: For flexible roles, change pronouns in the script accordingly.

Options for Doubling

The cast size is flexible. Roles may be doubled or tripled.
Some suggestions are listed below.

DR. FADDEN/CAL (flexible)

DIRECTOR/PIPPA (flexible)

CREW MEMBER 1/BETSEY (flexible)

CREW MEMBER 2/COCO(flexible)

CREW MEMBER 3/VERA (flexible)

CREW MEMBER 4/STELLA (flexible)

Setting

“Stargazer” starship.

Set

This play may be performed virtually via Zoom or in person. If performed in a theatre, a bare stage with “screens” for characters is all that is required. However, the set may be more elaborate, if desired.

Props

Computer, for Captain Harkness

Several "screens" from which characters appear

Shared "screen"

Shopping list that reads, "Grace O'Malley shopping list: *The Pirate Queen* cast album/DVD, Volton jam, eggs, lettuce, remember to pick up uniform from dry cleaning, butter"

Readout of the "Stargazer's" coordinates and trajectory

Fake mustache, for Stella

Plastic fish

6 Disguises, for Designers

6 Non-human disguises (so the wearer can resemble alien plant/animal life and terrain), for Designers

Sand disguise, for Betsey

Sand disguise, for Captain Harkness

Special Effects

Fuzzy "screen" that flickers in and out

Sound of a spaceship crashing

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“Isn’t this
the virtual rehearsal for
Fish Hamlet on Mars?”

—Quinn

Starship MacGuffin!

(AT RISE: On board the starship "Stargazer." Captain Jackie Harkness is making an entry in her video log.)

CAPTAIN HARKNESS: *(Typing on her computer.)* Captain's log, stardate: 6012020.15. We are en route to Galaxy IC 1296 in the Lyra Constellation— *(Another "screen" pops up featuring Quinn.)* Quinn? Quinn! What are you doing?

QUINN: Isn't this the virtual rehearsal for "Fish Hamlet on Mars"?

CAPTAIN HARKNESS: No. How did you get in here? My personal log is password protected.

QUINN: Oh! Sorry! Sorry! *(“Screen” disappears.)*

CAPTAIN HARKNESS: *(To herself, sighs.)* I'll start again. *(Typing on her computer.)* Captain's log, stardate: 6012020.15. We are en route to galaxy IC 1296 in the Lyra Constellation. We are making good time despite the strange gravitational force coming from a large planet in our vicinity— *(Another "screen" pops up featuring Ensign Redshirt.)* Ensign Redshirt, this is not the virtual rehearsal meeting for "Fish Hamlet on Mars."

ENSIGN REDSHIRT: But—

CAPTAIN HARKNESS: I don't know how people are able to gain access—

ENSIGN REDSHIRT: But—

CAPTAIN HARKNESS: Please tell everyone not to use this data stream! *(Hits a button and Ensign Redshirt's "screen" vanishes.)* One more time. *(To herself, typing on her computer.)* Captain's log, stardate: 6012020.15—

(Another "screen" pops up featuring the Chief Engineer.)

CHIEF ENGINEER: *(Alarmed.)* Captain! We've lost the MacGuffin!

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CAPTAIN HARKNESS: What?

CHIEF ENGINEER: The MacGuffin! It's gone!

CAPTAIN HARKNESS: That's not possible!

CHIEF ENGINEER: I know, Captain, but still...we can't find it!

CAPTAIN HARKNESS: Then what's powering the ship?!

CHIEF ENGINEER: Nothing as far as I can tell.

(Another "screen" pops up showing A.R.I.E.L.)

A.R.I.E.L.: Danger! Danger! All systems failing!

(Another "screen" pops up showing Commander Penny Lovell.)

COMMANDER LOVELL: What's going on?

(Another "screen" pops up showing Science Officer Rosalind Curie.)

SCIENCE OFFICER: Is this another test of emergency procedures?

COMMANDER LOVELL: I wasn't notified.

SCIENCE OFFICER: Captain, you need to tell us if –

CHIEF ENGINEER: This isn't a test!

A.R.I.E.L.: Danger! Danger!

CHIEF ENGINEER: The MacGuffin is gone!

COMMANDER LOVELL: What?

SCIENCE OFFICER: If this is some kind of joke –

A.R.I.E.L.: Danger! Danger! The –

CAPTAIN HARKNESS: A.R.I.E.L., turn off the emergency alarm! *(A.R.I.E.L. goes silent.)* Clarke, what exactly happened?

CHIEF ENGINEER: I don't know, Captain! I was doing routine maintenance on the engines. I turned my back for one minute to take a call from Admiral Jean, and when I turned around again, the engine was down! When I did an analysis, I saw the MacGuffin was just...gone!

CAPTAIN HARKNESS: A.R.I.E.L., did the ship's computer register anything?

COMMANDER LOVELL: Why don't you just check the com log? You don't need to go asking that... (*Indicating A.R.I.E.L.*) ...thing.

SCIENCE OFFICER: It's not a *thing*! It's a manifestation of the internal records and commands stored in the entire ship! The fastest way to ask the computer is to ask *her*.

COMMANDER LOVELL: I don't trust anything made of metal that can walk around and think for itself. I've gone my entire career without an...artificial...uh...

A.R.I.E.L.: Artificial Resident Intelligence Emersion Logician. And of course you've gone your entire career without me. I'm an upgrade.

("Screen" pops up showing Ensign Redshirt.)

CAPTAIN HARKNESS: Ensign Redshirt, I told you this is not the rehearsal—

ENSIGN REDSHIRT: But—

COMMANDER LOVELL: You are interrupting an important, private—

ENSIGN REDSHIRT: But—

COMMANDER LOVELL: Meeting!

ENSIGN REDSHIRT: But—

CAPTAIN HARKNESS: Please tell your director this is not the correct login code.

ENSIGN REDSHIRT: But—

COMMANDER LOVELL: We're dealing with an emergency here!

(Commander Lovell clicks a button and Ensign Redshirt disappears.)

SCIENCE OFFICER: A.R.I.E.L., please continue.

A.R.I.E.L.: My system registered nothing out of the ordinary until the actual disappearance of the MacGuffin.

("Screen" pops up showing Ensign Redshirt.)

ALL: *(Except Ensign Redshirt and A.R.I.E.L.)* Ensign Redshirt!

ENSIGN REDSHIRT: But—

(Captain clicks a button and Ensign Redshirt disappears.)

COMMANDER LOVELL: I swear, they won't make it to their first away mission.

SCIENCE OFFICER: A.R.I.E.L., you registered nothing out of the ordinary?

A.R.I.E.L.: That's just it. There was a blip on my readout for exactly 5.5 seconds, as if someone froze my system. When my readings started again, the MacGuffin was gone.

CAPTAIN HARKNESS: Clarke, why did the Admiral call?

CHIEF ENGINEER: I don't know. She was patched through from the kitchens. She was looking for Quinn.

CAPTAIN HARKNESS: Quinn?

A.R.I.E.L.: Quinn...ship's cook and sometimes translator.

COMMANDER LOVELL: *(Annoyed.)* We know who Quinn is!

CHIEF ENGINEER: Quinn was translating some of that Volton poetry we found in the archives a few months ago. Busy work, really. Apparently, the Admiral had some questions about it.

SCIENCE OFFICER: That seems...odd.

COMMANDER HARKNESS: Get Quinn on here now!

A.R.I.E.L.: Patching her in.

(Suddenly, a dozen "screens" join the conversation. [Note: At this point, every performer in the show should be on a "screen" or onstage. If they're not currently playing a speaking part, they should be a Crew Member in the middle of a virtual rehearsal.])

CREW MEMBER 1: *(As Fish Hamlet.)*

“To be a fish Hamlet on Mars, or not to be a fish Hamlet on Mars, *that* is the question!”

SCIENCE OFFICER: A.R.I.E.L., I think you patched in the play rehearsal.

A.R.I.E.L.: Well, that’s the frequency Quinn was on.

QUINN: Huh?

DIRECTOR: What is going on?

CREW MEMBER 1-4: We’re in the middle of a rehearsal!

DR. FADDEN: And we were just about to start the choreography for the end of act one...a tap dancing ghost extravaganza!

COMMANDER LOVELL: We have more urgent matters at hand, Dr. Fadden!

DR. FADDEN: That’s “Dancing Doc” Fadden to you!

QUINN: Is something wrong, Captain?

CAPTAIN HARKNESS: A.R.I.E.L., please isolate our channel.

A.R.I.E.L.: Yes, Captain.

CREW MEMBER 1-4: Hey! We want to know what’s going on! If something important is going on, we should know!

(All the “screens” from the play rehearsal disappear except for Quinn.)

QUINN: Did I do something wrong, Captain? I was just about to leave for the kitchen to start on dinner. I know everyone’s very excited for “Hotdog Night”...although we are in the middle of space, so time of day is relative. *(Laughs at her joke and accidentally snorts.)*

COMMANDER LOVELL: What were you discussing with Admiral Jean earlier?

QUINN: *(Panics.)* That’s...that’s classified information, Commander.

CAPTAIN HARKNESS: I understand, Quinn, but at the exact time when the Admiral was trying to reach you, the MacGuffin was stolen from engineering.

QUINN: What?!

COMMANDER LOVELL: Did your conversation have anything to do with—

QUINN: No! Of course not!

CAPTAIN HARKNESS: Then what were you talking about?

QUINN: Nothing!

A.R.I.E.L.: Excuse me, Captain, but the channel Admiral Jean used to communicate with our ship was highly encrypted and evaded our systems. Even I have no record of it. That is not standard protocol for discussing “nothing.”

(Suddenly, all the “screens” start to shake.)

SCIENCE OFFICER: Whoa!

COMMANDER LOVELL: What’s happening!?

CHIEF ENGINEER: The ship’s without power! We shouldn’t be able to move!

(Two new “screens” pop up, featuring Admiral Jean, and Captain Grace O’Malley at mission control.)

CAPTAIN O’MALLEY: Mission control to the starship “Stargazer.” I am opening a channel for Admiral Jean.

ADMIRAL JEAN: *(To Captain Harkness.)* Captain, I am getting very strange readings coming from your ship.

A.R.I.E.L.: Let me explain, Admiral, Captain O’Malley. The MacGuffin, which powers our spacecraft, seems to have disappeared, leaving our ship with no power supply. We will run out of oxygen in approximately 30 minutes—

QUINN: What?!

CAPTAIN HARKNESS: A.R.I.E.L., why didn’t you tell us that sooner?

A.R.I.E.L.: You didn’t ask, and you told me to disable the alarm. Why else do you think I initiated a red alert?

CAPTAIN O’MALLEY: Science Officer Curie, why is your ship moving toward a planet?

SCIENCE OFFICER: We’re moving toward a planet?!

CAPTAIN O'MALLEY: As Chief Science Officer, I would think you'd be aware of that.

A.R.I.E.L.: We've apparently been caught in the planet's gravitational pull and are being drawn down into its atmosphere.

SCIENCE OFFICER: Do we have a course readout?

A.R.I.E.L.: Negative. There is no power in the ship at all...including the sensors.

ADMIRAL JEAN: Then how are *you* still functioning?

A.R.I.E.L.: I'm battery operated.

ADMIRAL JEAN: O'Malley, send them the readout from down here.

CAPTAIN O'MALLEY: Transmitting your course readout. (*A shared "screen" displays a shopping list that reads, "Grace O'Malley shopping list: The Pirate Queen cast album/DVD, Volton jam, eggs, lettuce, remember to pick up uniform from dry cleaning, butter."*) Oh! Sorry! That's my shopping list. Hold on...

(The shared "screen" changes to a readout of the "Stargazer's" coordinates and trajectory.)

ADMIRAL JEAN: According to our calculations, you'll make first contact with the planet D'Illyria in t-minus 10 minutes.

CHIEF ENGINEER: First contact?! You mean no one's ever been there before?

CAPTAIN O'MALLEY: That's correct.

QUINN: We're all gonna die!

ADMIRAL JEAN: Captain Harkness, I'm going to have mission control patch you into Edith Guise, Head of Undercover Response at the Intergalactic Space Station. She should have some tips for you for blending in with the local inhabitants.

SCIENCE OFFICER: How are we supposed to blend in when we don't even know what sorts of life forms are on the planet...if any at all?!

CHIEF ENGINEER: We need support for starship recovery. If we land on this planet, there's no way we're getting off again...not without the MacGuffin.

COMMANDER LOVELL: You don't think someone wanted to *deliberately* strand us?

ADMIRAL JEAN: Why would anyone want to do such a thing?

CAPTAIN HARKNESS: Admiral, we were actually about to try and contact you —

A.R.I.E.L.: It wouldn't have worked. All systems are down.

ALL: We know!

COMMANDER LOVELL: Admiral, why the secret call to Quinn earlier today?

CAPTAIN O'MALLEY: *(To Admiral Jean.)* You made an unregistered call to a starship?

ADMIRAL JEAN: I was asking about a translation of Volton poetry—

COMMANDER LOVELL: On a secure channel?

CAPTAIN O'MALLEY: What?!

ADMIRAL JEAN: Are you questioning my motives?! Don't forget you're speaking to the highest-ranked —

CAPTAIN O'MALLEY: The space station is coming through, I can't hold both signals at once —

ADMIRAL JEAN: I could have you court marshaled!

(Captain O'Malley and Admiral Jean disappear. A new, fuzzy "screen" appears and flickers in and out.)

SCIENCE OFFICER: A.R.I.E.L., can you help boost the signal?

A.R.I.E.L.: I'll try.

CAPTAIN HARKNESS: Curie, Clarke, go prep the ship and crew for a crash landing.

QUINN: Do you still want me to make dinner?

SCIENCE OFFICER: I don't see how that's possible with the stoves not working.

QUINN: I can serve the hotdogs cold. They're pretty good, and everyone will need their strength.

COMMANDER LOVELL: With your permission, Captain, I'm going to keep an eye on Quinn. We may need to eat, but I'm not leaving her alone. There's something fishy about all this.

QUINN: No, we're not serving fish.

CHIEF ENGINEER: *(To Commander Lovell.)* You don't think it's a planet of fish people, do you?!

COMMANDER LOVELL: Think of it as research for "Fish Hamlet on Mars."

A.R.I.E.L.: Oh, not at all. Martian fish people are entirely different from other species of— *(Commander Lovell, Quinn, Science Officer, and Chief Engineer disappear.)* All right, then.

(The fuzzy "screen" clears up, revealing Edith Guise.)

EDITH: *(To Captain Harkness.)* Hello, darling! Edith Guise here. My goodness, are those the uniforms they have you wearing now? I'm so sorry. But they never listen to me when it comes to simple—

CAPTAIN HARKNESS: Ms. Guise—

EDITH: *(Correcting.)* Oh, Edith! Please, darling.

(Suddenly, Ensign Redshirt appears on a "screen.")

CAPTAIN HARKNESS: *(Annoyed.)* Yes, Ensign? Is there something more important happening than losing our power source and heading for a crash landing on a strange new world we know nothing about when we only have 20 minutes of oxygen left? Please tell me what you so urgently need.

ENSIGN REDSHIRT: But—

CAPTAIN HARKNESS: If you say you were trying to reconnect with your rehearsal and once again accidentally—

ENSIGN REDSHIRT: But—

CAPTAIN HARKNESS: No! Go away!

ENSIGN REDSHIRT: But—

(Captain Harkness pushes a button and Ensign Redshirt disappears.)

EDITH: My goodness, Captain, you do have a lot on your plate! I see exactly why mission control sent you to me. My team and I can prepare you for any circumstance you may encounter on this planet.

CAPTAIN HARKNESS: Edith, Admiral Jean said you're on the space station.

EDITH: Yes, dear.

CAPTAIN HARKNESS: But you look like you're in a bedroom...on Earth.

EDITH: Exactly! I am the master of disguise! Now, I will introduce you to my team. *(Note: As she says each name, the character appears on a "screen." Introducing.)* My assistant, Valentina.

VALENTINA: Hello.

EDITH: *(Introducing.)* My other assistant, Valentina.

ADRIAN: *(Correcting.)* My name's Adrian!

VALENTINA: Shhhh! You don't speak.

EDITH: *(Introducing.)* Betsey, head of coloring.

BETSEY: S'up!

EDITH: She also does frills.

BETSEY: Word.

EDITH: *(Introducing.)* Coco, our chief editor.

CAPTAIN HARKNESS: *(Confused.)* Editor?

COCO: You know that quote, "Before you leave the house, look in the mirror and take one thing off"? That was me. Edit.

EDITH: *(Introducing.)* Vera, head of draping.

VERA: If a garment doesn't look like it has been poured on you—and just stayed that way perfectly like paint but with silk—what's the point? You get me?

EDITH: *(Introducing.)* And Stella. If it involves hair, that's her.

STELLA: (*Wearing a fake mustache.*) I bet you are thinking, "But I don't see Stella...only a person with a fake mustache, which can withstand temperatures of up to 1,000 degrees." Surprise! Is me!

CAPTAIN HARKNESS: I don't think we'll need that particular feature.

STELLA: That's what they all say till they end up on a fire planet with mustache people.

CAPTAIN HARKNESS: Has that happened?

STELLA: Has that happened?!

EDITH: (*To Captain Harkness.*) You don't know what you'll be facing, so we'd better cover all our bases, yes?

DESIGNERS: Yes!

COCO: (*To Captain Harkness, holding up a fish.*) Oh, will you be needing the costumes for "Fish Hamlet on Mars" as well? They're not due for another week, but I had a little extra time. I even made them realistically scented!

ADRIAN: I think they've got bigger things to worry about.

EDITH: Quiet, Valentina!

ADRIAN: (*Correcting.*) Adrian.

VALENTINA: I told you, don't speak!

CAPTAIN HARKNESS: (*To Edith.*) Don't you have someone who specializes in accents and physical movement? I would imagine that would be important—

EDITH: Streamlined, dear. We're streamlined. They cut my budget more than I cut clothes. (*Designers laugh. She cuts them off.*) Now, let me show you some of the things my department has cooked up. (*All of the Designers' "screens" go black. Pause. All the "screens" go live again. The Designers are all wearing some sort of disguise.*) These are some of our latest designs, Captain.

(*Stella, Vera, Coco, Betsey, Valentina, and Adrian adlib about whatever disguises they have on.*)

CAPTAIN HARKNESS: Wow, those are all wonderful. But I don't know if they will really help us if we end up on a non-Earth-like planet.

EDITH: No worries, darling, no worries. *(Claps her hands twice and the "screens" go black. Pause. All the "screens" go live again. The Designers are wearing different nonhuman disguises.)* Now, these are non-human disguises meant to blend the wearer in with all sorts of plant and animal life and general terrain.

BETSEY: *(To Captain Harkness.)* For example, I am sand.

(Betsey, Stella, Vera, Coco, Valentina, and Adrian adlib about whatever disguises they have on.)

CAPTAIN HARKNESS: Wow, those disguises are all so...interesting.

EDITH: We can do anything you want, darling. I could even make you look like another member of your crew, or a robot, or even your lost MacGuffin. I can do anything.

ADRIAN: Captain, do you have any clues as to who might have stolen the MacGuffin?

[END OF FREEVIEW]