

“The Brilliant Endeavor”

by

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FADE IN

INT. HOJO'S BAR - NIGHT

A dingy, crowded hole-in-the-wall. Most of the crowd are massive, foul, hulking, rock-like creatures - the GONGALONS. Each Gongalon stands about 6 1/2 feet tall. Their laughter sounds like grinding garbage disposals. They stand around chewing on various metal objects – forks, spoons, keys, wire, nails, tin cans, etc. They dress in militia garb – blasters hanging on their waists or slung across their chests. They are extremely unpleasant.

There are also some downtrodden HUMANS at the bar, trying to drink or eat, quietly. The Gongalons knock them aside and bark at HOJO, the beleaguered barkeeper.

GONGALONS

More metal! More metal!

GONGALON CHIEF

'Nother toaster! Keep 'em coming!

HOJO

That's the last one! I haven't got any more!

The Gongalon CHIEF grabs Hojo by the collar.

GONGALON CHIEF

Well, what do you have? Pots? Pans?
Blenders?

GONGALON GRUNT 1

Commander! Commander! Liquid metal!

The GRUNT holds out several large thermometers. The other Gongalons “ooh” and “aah.” The CHIEF waves it about.

GONGALON CHIEF

Who wants to do shots?!

The Gongalons rip open the thermometers and start drinking.

MAXIMILLION FRANCE sits at the bar, nursing a glass of brandy and trying to ignore the Gongalons. A Gongalon knocks into him.

FRANCE

Watch it, rockface!

The Gongalon SNORTS at France and moves off. France looks at Hojo.

FRANCE

God, I hate metal eaters. They've ruined every bar in town.

A smallish Gongalon GRUNT runs by, grimacing, holding his mouth.

GONGALON GRUNT 1

Toothache! Toothache!

FRANCE

I pity his dentist.

Another Gongalon GRUNT approaches Hojo. He shifts from foot to foot.

GONGALON GRUNT 2

Where's the little boy's room?

FRANCE

Why? Are you going to eat one?

HOJO

Back there –

The Grunt runs off, making gurgling and vomiting NOISES. France and Hojo watch, disgusted.

HOJO

There goes another good bathroom.

FRANCE

Please –

HOJO

Every plumber ends up in intensive care –
little pieces of shrapnel embedded all over –

FRANCE

Thank you!

HOJO

(whispering)

Know what I heard?

(beat)

Their prince? Half-human.

FRANCE

Gongalon and human parents? There's a messy one-night stand!

WADE AKRON, a pretty, but serious young woman, enters and approaches the bar. France eyes her up and down, lasciviously.

WADE

(to Hojo)

Are my provisions ready?

HOJO

In the back.

Hojo disappears into the back.

FRANCE

(to Wade)

He-llo!

WADE

Do I know you?

FRANCE

Maybe. It's a small galaxy. Buy you a drink?

WADE

No. I'm in a hurry.

(beat)

Can't wait to get out of this horrid, disgusting –

FRANCE

And the Gongalons are pretty awful, too.

WADE

It gets worse everyday! You know what's coming? Soon as they have enough troops – they'll break their treaties and mount -

FRANCE

(bored)

- a full scale invasion. Yup yup yup.

WADE

Doesn't it bother you?!

FRANCE

Nothing I can do. Might as well drink myself to oblivion.

WADE

I'm going to do something about it.

FRANCE

Pfft! Good luck.

WADE

If the Gongalons take over – Earth is done for! We'll be subjugated! Driven off! Exterminated!

FRANCE

It'll certainly kill the night life!

(beat)

Say – y'know, you've got beautiful – well – you've got a couple of beautiful things. Teeth, hair –

Wade stares at him, remembering, angry.

WADE

France! Maximillion France.

FRANCE

Were we married?

WADE

You deserted my father's ship!

FRANCE

The Constellation?

WADE

No –

FRANCE

The Argo? The Dreadnaught? The Ulysses?
The Pollux? The Bush? The Clinton?

WADE

The Endeavor!

FRANCE

Oh that one.

She pulls out a blaster, shoves it under his chin.

FRANCE

Oh, look at the time!

WADE

You left my father and his crew for dead!
Stole 80,000 creds!

FRANCE

Did I? Well – it didn't last very long -

WADE

You were the most pathetic, miserable
excuse for an officer of the Galactic Union –

The GONGALONS turn, suddenly – their ears perking up. Wade and France look startled. Wade lowers her blaster.

GONGALON CHIEF

What did you say?

WADE

“Pathetic, miserable” - ?

The Gongalon Chief grabs France by the collar, lifts him off the ground.

GONGALON CHIEF

An officer of the Galactic Union!?

FRANCE

Former! Former officer!

GONGALONS

Barbecue! Barbecue!

FRANCE

Uhm – I think I hear my space-bus outside!

GONGALON CHIEF

Take him to the holding area!

They take France out, kicking and screaming.

FRANCE

You can't do this! I'll report you to the highest authority! Darth Vader! George Jetson! The Great Gazoo!

Hojo returns with Wade's bags and a few more toasters. The Gongalon eyes Wade and her bags.

GONGALON CHIEF

And what's in there?

WADE

Provisions...for the settlement.

The Gongalon stares at her. His communicator starts beeping. He answers.

GONGALON CHIEF

Yes? Tonight?! Good!

(to the others)

It's begun! The treaties are broken! The purges start tonight!

(beat)

...after one last toaster for the road –

The Gongalons cheer and laugh, uproariously. Hojo and Wade look terrified.

INT. AKRON'S SANCTUARY

Dimly lit. Wade enters. AKRON, Wade's father (70s), slightly demented, fidgets with control panels in front of a viewscreen. He channel-surfs – stops on a futuristic version of Telemundo – galactic babes in skimpy clothes.

WADE

Dad?

AKRON

Wade?! Oh – I was just uhm - monitoring subspace – !

WADE

Dad! They've started destroying the ships!

AKRON

Not the Endeavor – they haven't gotten her, yet!

(beat)

What's wrong?

WADE

I saw France.

AKRON

Paris?

WADE

Max France.

(beat)

At Hojo's. I – I had him arrested.

AKRON

Oh, Wade – you know what they'll do to him – an officer of the Union –

WADE

He brought it on himself, Dad! He's a thief, a liar, a coward –

AKRON

You always liked him, didn't you?

WADE

He was an embarrassment to the Space Fleet!

AKRON

He was a good flyer – and what a cocksman! What I would've given for a tenth of the action he –

WADE

Dad! The purges! Try to stay on subject!

A Galactic OFFICIAL appears on the viewscreen.

OFFICIAL

Commander Akron?

AKRON

Yes! Yes!

OFFICIAL

You have the subject?

AKRON

I do. Safely secured.

OFFICIAL

Good. We have confirmation. He is the chosen one.

AKRON

We'll depart within the hour.

OFFICIAL

Excellent. Then we'll see you on New Hope.

The Official disappears from the screen. There's a hard, fast THUMPING on the door – the SOUND of storm troopers.

GONGALONS (OS)

Commander Akron! You're under arrest!

AKRON

Wade! Get back! The force shell –

Akron presses a button as the GONGALONS burst in, blasters firing. Akron takes a hit, just as his force shell pops on.

WADE

Dad! Dad – hold on – !

AKRON

Wade – should've gotten you off-planet weeks ago -

WADE

Dad – I'll get you out of here –

AKRON

No, Wade. Too late - Get France –

WADE

Dad – he's not even a Captain! He's – he's –

AKRON

He knows the Endeavor, Wade! He can bring the ship to New Hope. You can do it together – !

WADE

Dad –

AKRON

Wade – love you –

Akron collapses. Wade expands the force shell outward knocking the Gongalons out. She screams.

INT. PRISON CELL

Dank, dingy, dungeon-like. France sleeps, snoring loudly. Wade enters, silently, dressed in black.

WADE

France! Get up!

FRANCE

Oh - ?

He sees in the glimmer of the flashlight, that it's Wade.

FRANCE

Oh it's you – forget it. I'll take my chances with the aliens.

WADE

There's no time for that. I need you to pilot a starship.

FRANCE

Which one?

WADE

The Endeavor. I think you're familiar with it.

FRANCE

(surprised)

The – you want me to – huh!

(beat)

And why should I do that?

Wade sticks her blaster in his face.

WADE

Because I'll kill you, if you don't.

FRANCE

How compelling!

INT. DARK CORRIDOR

Wade and France rush down a dimly lit corridor.

WADE

We've got to get our cargo to New Hope –

FRANCE

The legendary lost planet?! You found it?

WADE

Well...

FRANCE

You've got it mapped out? Co-ordinates?
Star charts? Stuff like that?

WADE

Well...

FRANCE

A quadrant? A string of breadcrumbs
leading to the planet?

(beat)

You don't have the faintest idea where you're
going, do you?

WADE

If I knew where it was, I wouldn't've busted
you out of jail, would I!?

FRANCE

And what do I look like? Mapquest?!

WADE

Get us to New Hope and you get your
freedom, Assistant Captain France.

EXT. FIELD

The starship ENDEAVOR – enormous – glistens brilliantly in the moonlight.
Wade and France run across the field towards the open bay doors.

INT. BRIDGE

Futuristic. A large viewscreen dominates. Wade and France enter. Several
crew people attend their stations: LANCE, LENA, WENDY, CLAIRE and
ROOK.

WADE

Is the cargo secured?

LENA

Yes, Commander. We were only waiting for
you and Captain Akron.

WADE

Captain Akron won't be joining us. Take us
into orbit, please.

The crew stares at her, silently.

WADE

Assistant Captain France will be commanding
the Endeavor until we reach New Hope.

FRANCE

Glad to be here! Alright! Who's up for a little bridge crew poker!?

France pulls out a deck of cards and begins shuffling them atop the console.

WADE

Assistant Captain France is an escaped convict wanted by the Gongalons – and probably half a dozen other races as well.

FRANCE

Seven-card stud?

WADE

It was Captain Akron's wish that Assistant Captain France lead us on our journey to New Hope. Don't ask me why.

FRANCE

Jacks or better?

WADE

In matters regarding the piloting of this starship you are to follow his direct orders.

(beat)

In all other matters you are to follow my orders and ignore him completely.

FRANCE

Eights?

WADE

Is that understood?

The entire crew nods. Wade turns to France.

WADE

Understood?

FRANCE

Have you considered prison management?

Wade leads France around the bridge. She stops next to LANCE.

WADE

This is Ensign Donovan Lance.

Lance jumps up.

LANCE

Nice to meet you, sir! Woo Hoo! Welcome aboard! Wow! Who'd a thunk?! Max France on this ship! And an Assistant Captain no less! Boy - when I tell the boys back home – wait – ! My planet got blown up by the Gongalons! Man! I always blank on that! Anyway! It's a pleasure – an honor – a pleasure and an honor – a pleasure and honor and a privilege to –

FRANCE

Right. Got it.

LANCE

Anything you need – anything! – anything at all –

FRANCE

A little less exuberance, perhaps?

(beat)

Actually, some replicated Courvoisier would be peachy –

LANCE

Yes, sir!

Lance goes off. Wade steps near LENA, a tall, beautiful, leggy, blonde.

WADE

This is Lieutenant Lena Crane, our Science Officer.

LENA

Welcome, Assistant Captain France.

WADE

Beyond being a highly decorated officer, Lena is a renowned Sex Athlete.

FRANCE

(coughs)

Really?! Well, I'd like to hear much much
much much much much more about that!
Perhaps in my cabin – say nine-ish?

WADE

If the Assistant Captain could keep his jolly
roger in his pants...

Wade steps over to a depressed, obese young woman, eating bananas and ice cream.

WADE

This is Lieutenant Claire Olliman, our
Communications Officer. She's also a
telepath.

FRANCE

Pleased to make your –

CLAIRE

You think I'm fat.

FRANCE

Uh – what useful abilities!

CLAIRE

Yes, it will be a long trip.

Wade approaches a foul-looking man in a cheap, three-piece, pin-stripe suit. He also has the dripping head of a bright red Trout. He also continuously makes "bloorp"-ing noises.

ROOK

Boooooorp -

WADE

This is Rook, a Troutian. He's the ship's
accountant.

FRANCE

Ah. Does the ship need an accountant?

ROOK

Byuurp -

WADE

My father found him useful. He's excellent with numbers.

FRANCE

Any special skills?

ROOK

Booorp -

FRANCE

I mean beyond that?

ROOK

Bluurp – chick – magnet. Chicks – dig – gills.

France looks at Lena. She nods. He turns back to Rook.

FRANCE

Excellent.

ROOK

Briiip.

Lance returns with brandy. Wade steps over to a young girl in front of a complicated control panel. Atop the panel, next to the girl, is a can of Pepsi.

WADE

This is Zuul – a Cardovian shapechanger.

France reaches out to shake hands with the girl.

FRANCE

Pleased to meet –

Wade stops him.

WADE

That's Wendy.

(beat)

This is Zuul.

Wade holds up the Pepsi can.

FRANCE

Tell me you're kidding.

WADE

Zuul is our navigator.

FRANCE

No wonder you've got problems.

WADE

Wendy is Zuul's primary point of contact.

FRANCE

The Pepsi can?

WADE

The beverage containment unit is one of the myriad forms Zuul can take.

FRANCE

I see.

France leans down to talk to the Pepsi can.

FRANCE

Zuul! Hello! Could you assume your normal shape, please?! Zuul!? Come out come out wherever you are!

WENDY

He can't.

FRANCE

(unsurprised)

Really?

WENDY

It – it was terrible! On the planet Borf, I was being attacked by a ravenous –

FRANCE

(bored)

And Zuul morphed into a Pepsi can – saved your life – and somehow froze himself in his current form?

WENDY

How did you - ?!

FRANCE

Lucky guess.

(to everyone on the bridge)

Could anyone who's ever seen Zuul's regular form, please raise their hands?!

Wendy raises her hand.

FRANCE

Other than Wendy.

Wendy lowers her hand.

FRANCE

(to Wendy)

Sorry. No little girl navigators on the bridge.

(to Lance)

Happy-boy! Remove Wendy and the Coke –

WENDY

Pepsi!

FRANCE

Whatever.

Lance jumps up.

WADE

Lance, sit!

Lance sits. Wade pulls France aside, whispers to him.

WADE

Look – even if he – it - is just a Pepsi can – and I'm not saying it – he - is.

WADE (CONT.)

They – the can and Wendy have successfully navigated us across twelve known galaxies and outrun dozens of hostile alien forces. The crew trusts them. I trust them They stay.

France and Wade stare each other down. Finally, France turns to Wendy, pissed.

FRANCE

Fine.

He starts to walk away, then turns, picks up the can and shakes it. He starts to open the pull tab.

WENDY

Noooooooooo!!

France stops, places it back down on the console. He taps it to settle it down.

FRANCE

Just kidding. Carry on.

Wendy cradles the Pepsi can, comforting it. France wanders over to the viewscreen. He and Wade stare out at space.

Lance hands the brandy to France. France takes a long sip.

FRANCE

Just what the assistant captain ordered...

(beat)

So this all-important cargo. What is it?

WADE

It's a he. Prince Arook.

France spits out his brandy, chokes.

FRANCE

Prince Arook?! The Gongalon?

WADE

Yes.

FRANCE

You kidnapped the high Gongolan prince?!
Are you crazy?! They won't stop till they've
killed us!

WADE

We had to. It's been foretold - !

FRANCE

By who - ?!

WADE

The Oracle at Kolamar. The Borda Priests.

FRANCE

Well who listens to them?! They predicted
manure-powered warp drive!

WADE

The galactic scriptures tell of young
Gongalon prince - a crossbreed bringing
salvation to the known galaxy. But first he
must reach New Hope.

FRANCE

New Hope?! We won't get past Catalina!

CLAIRE

Commander - we're being hailed by the
Gongalon command ship. They're locking
onto us with a tractor beam.

The ship thrusts to the side. Everyone is thrown off-balance.

FRANCE

Oh great! I vote we give them the prince!

WADE

We can't do that!

WENDY

Commander, Zuul wants to know if we
should take evasive action?

FRANCE

Tell the beverage to keep its mouth shut!

Everyone turns and stares at France. France looks at Wade.

FRANCE

Well, Commander – as this doesn't involve flight or navigation – I'd say you're on your own.

France and Wade stare each other down.

WADE

France - Captain France – I –

FRANCE

Say it again?

WADE

Captain –

FRANCE

One more time, please!

WADE

Captain – please do something!!

France steels himself. He moves towards the console, determinedly.

FRANCE

Lieutenant - turn the Endeavor 180 degrees - and set our own tracking beams on the Gongalon ship.

WENDY

The Endeavor's tractor beams are now locked on the Gongalon ship.

There is a SOUND of TUGGING METAL.

FRANCE

Alrighty. Good. Increase speed away from the Gongalons.

The ship moves slowly, pulling. The walls creak.

WENDY

The Gongalon ship isn't budging, Captain.

FRANCE

Increase speed.

WENDY

Increasing speed, Captain.

The Endeavor makes headway, pulling the Gongalon ship.

WENDY

We're moving, Captain - pulling the Gongalons! They haven't lifted their tractor beam.

FRANCE

Continue to increase speed, Lieutenant
(beat)
- and prepare to jump to hyper-space.

Everyone turns and stares at France, stunned.

WENDY

Not with a ship in tow!

WADE

It'll tear us apart!

FRANCE

Us or them.

Everyone looks at Wade.

WADE

Do what he says!

WENDY

Increasing speed, Captain.

FRANCE

Prepare to jump!

WENDY

They're not letting go!

FRANCE

Release tractor beams! Jump!

WENDY

They –

FRANCE

Jump! JUMP! NOW!

WENDY

Jumping! They've let go!

The Endeavor THRUSTS into hyperspace. Speed picks up exponentially - then – just as suddenly – slows down. Everyone breathes.

LENA

We're 23,000 parsecs away from Earth, Captain. And alone. The Gongalons have not followed us.

FRANCE

Peachy! Reduce speed, Lieutenant.

(to Wade)

I assume I have quarters on this ship?

WADE

Yes.

FRANCE

Have a case of brandy and some raunchy vids sent down. I'll be in the bath.

INT. FRANCE'S CABIN

Sterile, white, futuristic. France rushes around. Dims the lights, sets on some mood music (ala "Girl from Ipanema"), fixes his hair, opens a bottle of brandy. He wears only a white, terry-cloth bathrobe. A "doorbell" RINGS.

FRANCE

Just a minute!

He leaps onto the bed and lays across it, posed romantically - a tall, thin glass of champagne in his hand.

FRANCE

Come in!

Wade enters. She looks annoyed.

FRANCE

Hhn. I was hoping it was the athlete.

WADE

I gave her the night off. The crew was stressed from the jump.

FRANCE

...whatever. Brandy?

WADE

No. I just – I wanted to say –

FRANCE

Actually, let me say something - Ms. Akron -
(beat)

For the record: I don't care about your mission. And I don't care about you. I don't care about your prince, the Gongalons, your crew or even galactic salvation. The only thing I care about is me. Me me me me me me me. Me. And me. My comfort. My booze, my women and lots and lots and lots of my money. And the first chance I get to jump off this pathetic, hopeless ship – I will.

WADE

Well, unfortunately – until we can find an alternative captain we're stuck with you. So...

(beat)

Computer – lock onto Captain France's bio-signature.

COMPUTER (VO)

Locked.

WADE

If Captain France should make any attempt
to leave the ship without my authorization,
have his atoms teleported into space.
Maximum dispersal.

COMPUTER (VO)

Yes, Commander.

WADE

And France –
(beat)
Good job, tonight.

She exits.

FRANCE

Oh...brilliant.

France, depressed, leans back to drink his brandy and spills it all over
himself. He jumps up, annoyed, drenched. He screams.

FADE OUT