SPACE ACADEMY:
THE UNIVERSITY
OF THE PLANETS!

Upon entering Space Academy, every cadet pledges his life and career to the service of mankind!

Here is the famous pledge taken by Space Cadets:

I SOLEMNLY SWEAR TO UPHOLD THE CONSTITUTION OF THE SOLAR ALLIANCE, TO OBEY INTERPLANETARY LAW, TO UPHOLD THE LIBERTIES OF THE PLANETS, TO SAFE-GUARD THE FREEDOM OF SPACE, TO UPHOLD THE CAUSE OF PEACE THROUGHOUT THE UNIVERSE... TO THIS END, I DEDICATE MY LIFE!
TOM CORBETT
SPACE CADET

THE USUAL DAY OF STUDY IS INTERRUPTED AT SPACE ACADEMY...

HEY, TOM! ROGER! ASTRO! WAIT FOR ME!

WHAT'S ALFIE Blowing his JETS ABOUT?

THEY'VE JUST POSTED THE SQUADS THAT ARE TO GO ON SPECIAL TRAINING FLIGHTS! WE'RE ON THE LIST!

COME ON! LET'S SEE WHAT SPACE SHIP WE DREW.

WE'RE ASSIGNED TO THE PRINCE OF CEN'TURUS -- PASSU'ER SPACELINER.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS ASSIGNMENT IS IMMENSE! IT'S THE LATEST MODEL FOR PASSENGERS AND FREIGHT. YOU SPACE BIRDS CAN STAY HERE AND BLOW METEOR DUST -- BUT I HAVE WORK TO DO!

WHAT'S INTO HIM? PAST EXPERIENCE TEACHES US THAT IT CAN MEAN TROUBLE.

LOOKS LIKE ROGER'S GOT ANOTHER OF HIS BRIGHT IDEAS.

ATTENTION! CADET SQUADRON ASSIGNED TO SPECIAL TRAINING FLIGHT DUTY MUST BE READY TO BLAST-OFF IN ONE HOUR!

THAT'S US! COME ON! WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME TO PACK!
Now we know why Roger was in such a hurry. Roger wants to be the best-dressed space monkey in the Academy!

Hey, Roger, we’re about to blast off for the spaceways— not going to the annual Space Academy Dance!

There will be passengers on the prance of Centaurus — and somebody has to uphold the dignity of Space Academy.

What’s there to do aboard a passenger spaceliner— except walk around and look dignified?

Don’t discourage the boy, astro. Roger is going to show the earthworms booking passage on the ship what a real space cadet looks like.

Ready, fellows? We’ll just have time to get to the ship!

Right! Let’s blast off!

Space cadet squadron assigned to the prince of Centaurus reporting for duty, Captain Strong!

Stow your gear in your cabin, then report to me in the engine room... on the double!

Aye, aye, sir!

Engine room! That doesn’t sound so good.
WHY DO YOU FIGURE CAPTAIN STRONG WANTS US IN THE ENGINE ROOM?
POSSIBLY TO EXPLAIN THE OPERATIONS OF THIS SHIP. THERE ARE A GREAT MANY POINTS OF DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A PASSENGER SPACELINER AND A CRUISER LIKE THE POLARIS.
THERE IS THE DIFFERENCE IN SPEED AND ACCELERATION A PASSENGER SHIP DOESN'T START AS FAST AS A CRUISER—OR REACH THE SPACE-SPEEDS OF...
MAYBE CAPTAIN STRONG WANTS US TO LOOK THE SHIP OVER? SORT OF GET ACQUAINTED.

STOP DREAMING, ROGER. WE'RE NOT ON A PICNIC!

YOUR FIRST TOUR OF DUTY WILL BE HERE IN THE ENGINE ROOM. GRAB THOSE GREASE BUCKETS AND COVER THE PISTONS OF THE VENTILATION PUMPS!
AYE, AYE, SIR!

BUT, CAPTAIN STRONG, I THOUGHT WE WERE GOING TO THE CONTROL BRIDGE TO GET EXPERIENCE AS COMMANDING OFFICERS.
NEVER MIND WHAT YOU THOUGHT, CADET MANNING. GET BUSY!

WELL, JUST LOOK AT OUR GLAMOUR BOY, TOMSPICK AND SPAN MANNING! I'LL BET THE PASSENGERS ARE GOING TO BE IMPRESSED!
AW! GO BLOW YOUR JETS!
STAND BY FOR BLAST-OFF STATIONS!

LOOKS LIKE THE PASSENGERS WON'T HAVE A CHANCE TO ADMIRE YOU, ROGER? WHAT A SHAME!

WITH A THUNDEROUS ROAR, THE HUGE SPACELINER, PRINCE OF CENTURIOUS, ROCKETS AWAY FROM EARTH -- BOUND FOR THE VAST EMPTINESS OF SPACE AND ITS DESTINATION, VENUSPORT!

ALL RIGHT, CADETS, YOU CAN KNOCK OFF NOW. CLEAN UP AND REPORT TO CONTROL DECK!

WHAT'S THE MATTER, ROGER? THIS IS YOUR CHANCE TO SHOW THE PASSENGERS WHAT A REAL SPACE CADET LOOKS LIKE!

AW, CRAWL BACK INTO A VENUSIAN SWAMP! ALL I WANT TO DO IS REST!

BUT, ROGER -- CAPTAIN STRONG WANTS US ON THE CONTROL DECK. THAT WAS AN ORDER, YOU KNOW!

ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT! A FELLOW CAN'T GET ANY REST WITH YOU JOKERS!

WE'RE NOT GOING ALONG ON THIS TRIP TO ACT IMPORTANT. WE'RE HERE BECAUSE EVERY SPACE CADET MUST LEARN TO OPERATE AT THE BOTTOM OF EVERY TYPE OF SHIP THERE IS!

WE NEVER KNOW WHAT EMERGENCY MAY ARISE, CADET MANNING. I'LL HAVE NO MORE GRIEVES FROM YOU! UNDERSTAND THAT?
When this trip is finished, I expect every one of you to know this ship from top to bottom! An officer of the Solar Guard is able to handle an emergency on any trip.

Beg your pardon, sir. There's a pip on the screen.

Looks like a space ship.

I don't recognize the type, sir. I'm sure there's nothing like her in our text book on space ship designs.

You're right, Cadet Higgins—and I don't like the looks of this! Report to your flight stations. Cadets Mann and Higgins, to astrogation deck. Astro, to power control. Corbett with me.

We noticed the strange ship out in space, Captain Hawks. Thought I'd report for emergency stand-by.

Thank you, Captain Strong.

We've tracked her course and find there's danger of a collision.

Didn't you signal that ship? A passenger spaceliner has priority on course, sir.

Our signals have been ignored, Captain Strong! Every time we changed our course, that ship has done the same it wants to ram us—deliberately!
LET ME TAKE OVER THE CONTROLS! WE MAY HAVE TO TRY MILITARY EVASION MANEUVERS TO AVOID A COLLISION!

TAKE OVER, CAPTAIN STRONG! I'M AFRAID WE'LL NEED ALL THE SPACEMAN'S LUCK WE CAN GET--IF WE ARE TO AVOID THE NAZI MEN AT THE CONTROLS OF THAT SHIP!

THROUGH THE VAST DISTANCES OF SPACE... AT TREMENDOUS SPEEDS... THE TWO SHIPS RAGE AND DOODGE! BUT THE STRANGE SHIP HANGS ON GRIMLY!

NO USE! THAT SHIP IS OPERATED WITH MILITARY PRECISION! THEY'VE MATCHED OUR EVERY MANEUVER!

WHAT CAN WE DO, SIR? WE CAN'T LET THEM RAM US.

YOU CAN'T MEAN THAT--THAT THEY'RE SPACE PIRATES! I'M AFRAID SO, SIR! WHAT KIND OF CARGO DOES THIS SHIP CARRY?

OUR ENTIRE CARGO IS FOOD CONCENTRATES--AND THE PASSENGERS OF COURSE.

IN SOME OF THE OUTER SPACE COLONIES, FOOD CONCENTRATES ARE MORE VALUABLE THAN GOLD--OR URANIUM! THAT'S WHAT THESE SPACE PIRATES ARE AFTER!

I DON'T THINK THEY INTEND TO RAM US, CAPTAIN STRONG?

THEN WHAT PURPOSE WOULD THEY HAVE IN CHASING US, CAPTAIN STRONG?
PASS OUT ARMS TO THE CREW, CAPTAIN HAWKS. GET THE PASSENGERS TO A SAFE PLACE.

GOOD IDEA. STRONG.

GET ASTRO, ROGER AND ALFIE! ARM YOURSELVES AND REPORT HERE TO ME!

RIGHT, SIR.

SPACE ACADEMY CODE SIGNAL! SPACE ACADEMY CODE SIGNAL!

WHAT'S UP, TOM? THIS IS ASTRO! CADET HIGGINS AND MANNING REPORTING?

ROGER? ASTRO? ALFIE! MEET ME AT THE ARMS LOCKER! FAST!

GRAB PLENTY OF AMMUNITION! WE'RE ABOUT TO BE ATTACKED BY SPACE PIRATES!

YOU'VE GOT A HOLE IN YOUR SPACE HAT, TOM! I DON'T LIKE JOKES!


IF THIS IS A JOKE—IT'S A MIGHTY DANGEROUS ONE!

SOMEBODY'S SHOOTING AT US! HEY! A GUY CAN GET HURT THIS WAY!

CUT THE SPACE GAB! LET'S GO!
OUR ONLY CHANCE IS TO FIGHT THEM WHEN THEY CLOSE IN AND TRY TO BOARD US! HOLD YOUR FIRE UNTIL I GIVE YOU MY COMMAND TO SHOOT!

RIGHT, SIR!

NOW THIS IS A MOST PECULIAR AND INTERESTING SITUATION. JUST THINK OF IT, FELLOWS. A THOUSAND YEARS AGO, THEY HAD PIRATES ON THE SEAS AND NOW WE—

AW, GO STICK YOUR HEAD IN A ROCKET TUBE! WE'RE ABOUT TO HAVE HOLES BLOWN IN US AND HE THINKS IT'S INTERESTING!

WITH DEADLY AIM, THE PIRATE SHIP BLASTS THE UNARMED SPACE-LINER'S STARBOARD TUBES!

THAT WAS A HIT, FELLOWS!

FEEL LIKE IT HIT THE ROCKET TUBES.

THEY'RE COMING ALONGSIDE, BOYS! WE'VE GOT THE FIGHT OF OUR LIVES ON OUR HANDS NOW!

WE'RE READY, SIR!

HERE THEY COME! AND THERE ARE PLENTY OF THEM!

WHAT'S THE USE OF FIGHTING? WE DON'T STAND A CHANCE!
DON'T TELL ME THE GREAT SPACE HERO, ROGER MANNING, IS SCARED!

LEAVE HIM ALONE, ASTRO! I DON'T BLAME HIM FOR BEING SCARED! I AM, TOO!

WE'RE ALL SCARED, BOYS! WE WOULDN'T BE HUMAN IF WE WEREN'T BUT JUST THE SAME--WE'RE GOING TO GIVE A GOOD ACCOUNT OF OURSELVES!

I'M AFRAID THERE WON'T BE ANY FIGHT CAPTAIN STRONG!

YOU DON'T MEAN YOU'RE GOING TO SURRENDER WITHOUT A FIGHT, CAPTAIN HAWKS?

I'VE GOT TO THINK OF THE SAFETY OF MY PASSENGERS! NOTHING ELSE TO DO BUT SURRENDER!

IT WAS WISE OF YOU NOT TO RESIST US, CAPTAIN. I WAS READY TO BLAST YOUR SHIP TO ATOMS!

TAKE WHAT YOU WANT! YOU HAVE US AT YOUR MERCY!

WILL YOU ALLOW US TO SEND OUT AN SOS? YOU'LL HAVE PLENTY OF TIME TO TRANSFER THE CARGO TO YOUR SHIP BEFORE HELP ARRIVES.

I INTEND TO SEND THIS SHIP DRIFTING INTO THE SUN WHEN I'M FINISHED, CAPTAIN. NO TRACE OF THE PRINCE OF CENTURIES WILL EVER BE FOUND!
THERE ARE INNOCENT PEOPLE ABOARD PASSENGERS! YOU CAN'T SEND THEM TO A FIERY DEATH IN THE SUN!

I'M TAKING EVERYONE OFF THIS SHIP--TO WORK IN MY MINES ON MERCURY! SO YOU NEEDN'T WORRY ABOUT THEIR SAFETY!

WHY... YOU SPACE RAT!

I COULD MAKE YOU WALK THE PLANK INTO SPACE-- BUT YOU'LL BE MORE VALUABLE WORKING FOR ME IN MY MINES! TAKE HIM AWAY!

SNAP IT UP! WE HAVEN'T A MOON YEAR TO TRANSFER THIS CARGO!

CARGO COMP.

LISTEN CAREFULLY, TOM! I'VE GOT A PLAN TO ESCAPE THESE PIRATES!

HOW, SIR? THEY WATCH US LIKE SPACE VULTURES!

YOU, ASTRO AND ROGER GET TOWARDS THE END OF THE LINE NEXT TIME WE CARRY CARGO OVER THE GANGWAY-- I'LL BE JUST AHEAD OF YOU, WHEN I GIVE YOU THE SIGNAL, YOU BOYS WILL HIDE IN THE SPACE SUIT LOCKERS!

WE CAN'T DO THAT, SIR! YOU'RE ASKING US TO DESERT!
I'm not asking you, Cadet Corbett! I'm giving you an order!

Very well, sir! But you know how I feel about running away and hiding—while the pirates take you and the others off into slavery!

Roger! Tom is signalling us to stay close to him! Something's up!

Don't be a space goof, what can he try with those pirates all around us?

Pssst! Follow me! Quick!

It's our only chance to be freed from the Mercury mines. Remember—those are illegal mines! No one knows where they are located. You'll have to get back to earth and bring help and find us!

All right, Tom! Now!
LET'S HOPE THOSE PIRATES ARE TOO BUSY WITH CAPTAIN STRONG TO NOTICE OUR DISAPPEARANCE.

SIT TIGHT AND WAIT! TOO BAD ALFIE WAS CAUGHT AMONG THE OTHER PRISONERS.

SLOW-MOVING HOURS LATER...

I DON'T HEAR ANY SOUNDS OUTSIDE! I THINK THE PIRATES HAVE FINISHED LOOTING AND GONE! LET'S GET INTO THESE SPACE SUITS.

GOOD THING WE PUT ON OUR SPACE SUITS! THE SHIP'S AIR ESCAPED THROUGH THAT HATCH WHERE THE GANGWAY WAS! CLOSE IT, ASTRO!

I GUESS THE PIRATES WANTED TO MAKE SURE THEY LEFT NO ONE ALIVE BEHIND THEM!

IF THEY HAD CHECKED THE AIRTIGHT LOCKERS, THEY WOULD HAVE NABBED US!

THIS PLACE GIVES ME THE CREEPS! IT'S LIKE A DEATH SHIP!

FIRST THING IS TO GET AIR INTO THIS SHIP! ROGER, GO DOWN TO THE ENGINE ROOM AND CHECK OVER THE VENTILATING SYSTEM! ASTRO AND I WILL GO OUT ON THE HULL AND CHECK THE DAMAGE TO OUR TUBES.

I HOPE THOSE TUBES AREN'T COMPLETELY WRECKED, TOM!
I DON'T THINK WE CAN GET THEM BACK IN SHAPE, TOM. THOSE PIRATES KNEW WHAT THEY WERE SHOOTING AT.

THEY'RE SMASHED BEYOND REPAIR.

LET'S GET BACK INSIDE AND HOPE WE CAN RAISE A SOLAR GUARD STATION OR CRUISER WITH AN S.O.S.

LOOKS LIKE ROGER FIXED THE VENTILATING SYSTEM! AEROMETE.R INDICATES NORMAL ATMOSPHERE IN THE SHIP!

WHAT KEPT YOU JOKERS SO LONG? I WAS GETTING WORRIED.

I CAN SEE HOW WORRIED YOU WERE! YOU DIDN'T LOSE YOUR APPETITE OVER IT, ANYWAY!

AW, GO BLOW YOUR JETS! I GOT SOME SANDWICHES READY FOR YOU. DIDN'T I? NO GRATITUDE!

THANKS, ROGER. BUT WE'VE GOT SOMETHING MORE IMPORTANT THAN FOOD TO WORRY ABOUT!

WHAT'S TROUBLING YOU, JUNIOR?

WE'RE ADrift IN SPACE, ROGER! WITHOUT POWER WE'RE HELPLESS, AND WE'RE MOVING TOWARD THE SUN! DO YOU KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS?

THIS SHIP---AND ALL OF US---WILL BE BURNED TO GIDERS WHEN WE GET TOO CLOSE TO THE SUN! ANNN!
YOU DRASTIC ME INTO THIS? WHY, YOU SPACE GOOF? WHAT'D YOU WANT TO BE A HERO FOR? IF WE'D STAYED WITH THE PIRATES, WE COULD AT LEAST LIVE!

AS SLAVES WORKING IN THE ILLEGAL MINES ON MERCURY?

I'LL TAKE MY CHANCES ON DYING, RATHER THAN BE A SLAVE! AND DON'T FORGET ALFIE AND CAPTAIN STRONG AND THE PASSENGERS! THEIR ONLY HOPE FOR FREEDOM LIES WITH US!

ALL RIGHT! I'M SORRY I BLEW MY TOP!

PIPE DOWN, YOU SPACE MONKEYS! I THINK I'VE GOT THIS WORKING!

SEND OUT AN SOS IF YOU CAN, ASTRO!

I HAVE A SIGNAL BEAM GOING. BY BREAKING CONTACT, I CAN SEND OUT A CODE IN THE DOT AND DASH SYSTEM!

LET'S HOPE THE SIGNAL IS PICKED UP, ASTRO.

AT THAT MOMENT, A MILLION MILES AWAY...

I'VE PICKED UP A STRANGE SIGNAL, CAPTAIN DETREK, DISTRESS CALL IN THE ANCIENT DOT AND DASH CODE.

MUST BE A SHIP IN DISTRESS WITH A BROKEN COMMUNICATION SYSTEM!

CONTROL DECK TO RADAR! LOCATE THE SIGNAL AND PLOT OUT A NEW COURSE ON DIRECTION FINDER!

AYE, AYE, SIR!
I'VE LEFT THE SIGNAL BEAM ON---BUT I GUESS IT WAS NO USE!

IT WAS A GOOD TRY, ASTRO! MAYBE---MAYBE THE SIGNAL WAS PICKED UP BY SOMEBODY!

BAH! YOU'VE ALWAYS GOT TO BE A BOY SCOUT! WE'RE SUNK! NEXT TIME YOU WANT TO BE A HERO, INCLUDE ME OUT OF IT!

THERE'S NOT GOING TO BE A NEXT TIME --- FOR US, ROGER!

LOOK! A SHIP! A SOLAR GUARD PATROL CRUISER!

WE'RE SAVED! YIPPEE!

A COUPLE OF GLOOMY SPACE GOOFS! I KNEW ALL THE TIME WE WERE GOING TO GET OUT OF THIS FIX!

HE KNEW ALL THE TIME WE WERE GOING TO BE SAVED!

I HEARD HIM, BUT I DON'T BELIEVE IT! NOBODY COULD BE LIKE THAT!

ALL RIGHT! SO WE ALL KNEW WE'D BE SAVED!

I OUGHT TO POP YOU ON THE NOSE!

HOLD IT, ASTRO! REMEMBER, WE'VE STILL GOT THE PIRATES TO TAKE CARE OF!
AT EASE, CADETS! AND WHAT IN THE BLUE SPACES HAPPENED HERE?

SPACE PIRATES, SIR! THEY LOOTED THE SHIP AND TOOK OFF ALL THE PASSENGERS AND CREW TO WORK AS SLAVES IN THE MINES ON MERCURY!

I FIGURED WE'D HIDE AND THEN BRING HELP---IF WE GOT OUT OF IT ALIVE, SIR.

YOU FIGURED OUT THE PLAN? WHY, YOU BIG BAG OF SPACE GAS?

SILENCE, CADET ASTRO! I'M NOT INTERESTED IN WHO GETS CREDIT FOR WHAT YOU DID! OBVIOUSLY, YOU ALL TOOK A GREAT CHANCE---AND DESERVE CREDIT FOR IT!

ATTACH MAGNETIC GRAPPLERS! WE'LL TOW THIS WRECK BACK TO EARTH! HEAD FOR HOME STATION AT FULL SPACE SPEED!

AYE, AYE, SIR.

YOU CADETS WILL TAKE YOUR GEAR AND COME WITH ME ABOARD MY SHIP! GET INTO YOUR SPACE SUITS!

YES, SIR.

THIS IS WHERE YOU ARE TO REMAIN FOR THE REST OF THE TRIP! YOU ARE TO SEE NO ONE! ABOVE ALL, YOU'RE NOT TO TELL ANYONE WHAT HAPPENED ABOARD THE PRINCE OF GENTURUS! THIS IS AN ORDER!

WHAT'S HE THROWING HIS WEIGHT AROUND FOR? YOU'D THINK WE WERE UNDER ARREST! OR---ARE WE?
Days later, as they drop through the Earth's atmosphere toward the academy space port...

I still can't figure out why Captain Detrek has kept us locked up as though we were prisoners.

We'll soon know, astro. There's space academy below.

You will report to Commander Arkwright at once! And remember my orders—tell no one what happened!

Aye, aye, sir!

And as the cadets emerge, a sad and forlorn figure watches them quietly...

Steve isn't with them! I'm afraid something's happened to him!

Tom! Roger! Astro! What happened? Where's Captain Strong?

You boys know how I feel about Steve—I mean, Captain Strong! Tell me the truth—is he—is he...

We are under orders not to discuss the matter, Dr. Dale.

He's dead! You—you boys are keeping the truth from me!

Dr. Dale—when we saw him last, he was alive!

Cadet Corbett! You have disobeyed your orders!
IT WAS MY 
FAULT, SIR. 
I----

NEVER MIND, DR. DALE. 
I'M GLAD HE DID! 
OTHERWISE, I WOULD 
HAVE TOLD YOU!

YOU WILL RESUME YOUR 
DUTIES IN THE ACADEMY AS 
THOUGH NOTHING HAPPENED. 
DO NOT DISCUSS THE SPACE 
PIRATES WITH ANYONE. DO 
NOT EXPLAIN YOUR ACTIONS 
TO ANYONE! YOU UNDERSTAND?

YES, SIR!

YOU WILL 
HEAR FROM 
ME LATER, 
DISMISSED!

BOY! IT'S GOOD TO BE 
BACK HOME?

YES, BUT SOMEHOW I CAN'T 
GET CAPTAIN STRONG AND 
ALFIE AND THE OTHERS OUT 
OF MY MIND! I KEEP WONDER-
NING WHAT'S HAPPENED 
TO THEM!

I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL, TON! 
BUT WE CAN'T LET IT GET US 
DOWN. LET'S GO TO CHOW. IT'S 
JUST ABOUT DINNER TIME.

HELLO, 
FELLOWS!

HEY! IT FEELS LIKE THE 
TEMPERATURE DROPPED 
BELOW ZERO HERE! WHY 
THE COLD RECEPTION?

SPACE ACADEMY 
DINING HALL
COME ON, CHARLIE! I DON'T WANT TO SIT AT THIS TABLE!

RIGHT! SUDDENLY I'VE LOST MY APPETITE!

WHAT'S EATING THESE JOKERS? HAVE WE GOT SPACE FEVER OR SOMETHING GATING?

WE'RE GETTING THE SILENT TREATMENT FROM THE CADET CORPS! BUT WHY?

IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS, THE SILENT TREATMENT INCREASED UNTIL NO ONE IN THE ENTIRE ACADEMY SPOKE TO THEM!

WELL, I DON'T HAVE TO GUESS ANYMORE! IT LOOKS LIKE WE'RE NOT WANTED HERE! I'VE GOT A MIND TO QUIT!

DON'T LOSE YOUR HEAD, ROGER! WE'VE GOT TO FIND OUT WHY!

ALL RIGHT, TOM! HERE'S WHERE I FIND OUT WHY—OR PUNCH SOMEBODY'S HEAD OFF!

HOLD IT, ROGER! YOU WON'T GET ANYWHERE WITH YOUR FISTS!

YOU DON'T HAVE TO HOLD HIM BACK, CORBETT! I'M NOT AFRAID OF COWARDS AND DESERTERS! AND THAT INCLUDES YOU AND ASTRO!

YOU'RE CALLING US COWARDS AND DESERTERS! WHY?

BECAUSE YOU DESERTED CADET HIGGINS AND CAPTAIN STRONG—AND THE CIVILIAN PASSENGERS AND CREW OF THE PRINCE OF CENTURUS! YOU'VE DISGRACED SPACE ACADEMY!
NOW YOU KNOW WHY YOU'RE NOT WANTED HERE AT SPACE ACADEMY! HAVE YOU GOT ANYTHING TO SAY IN EXPLANATION?

NO—NO! THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN SAY!

COME ON, ROGER, LET'S GET TO OUR ROOM.

I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF THESE SPACE MONKEYS! THEY CAN TAKE SPACE ACADEMY AND BLOW IT INTO METEOR DUST FOR ALL I CARE! I'M QUITTING!

ASTRO AND I AREN'T GOING TO LET YOU QUIT, ROGER! WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER----AND WE'LL WAIT UNTIL COMMANDER ARKWRIGHT CALLS US IN! YOU DON'T THINK HE'S FORGOTTEN THAT CAPTAIN STRONG IS HELD AS A SLAVE ON MERCURY, DO YOU?

YOU'RE RIGHT, CADET CORBETT! I HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN! IN FACT, WE'VE BEEN MAKING PREPARATIONS TO RESCUE THEM----AND TO SMASH THE ENTIRE RING OF SPACE PIRATES AND ILLEGAL MINERS!

I PURPOSELY LET THE REPORTS OF YOUR COWARDICE SPREAD AMONG THE OTHER CADETS! YOU SEE, I WANTED TO GIVE YOU BOYS A GOOD REASON FOR RESIGNING FROM SPACE ACADEMY!

YOU—YOU WANT US TO RESIGN? TO QUIT?
IT'S NECESSARY THAT YOU
HAND IN YOUR RESIGNATION--
TO ASSURE THE SUCCESS OF
THE MISSION I'M ABOUT TO
SEND YOU OUT ON!

VERY WELL,
SIR! WE HEREBY
OFFER OUR
RESIGNATIONS!

GOOD! I HAVE YOUR RESIGNATIONS. NOW
I WANT YOU TO REPORT TO THE MERCHANT
OF MARS. IT'S A SPACE TRAMP FREIGHTER.
YOU'LL BE TOLD WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO
WHEN YOU GET ABOARD HER.

WAIT A MINUTE, TOM!
I-- I WANT TO THANK
YOU FOR TELLING ME
THAT STEVE IS STILL
ALIVE. AND--

AND SPACEMAN'S
LUCK TO YOU!

ARRIVING AT THE
SPACE PORT...

SO THIS IS THE
MERCHANT OF MARS!
WHERE DID THEY DIG
UP THIS PIECE OF
SPACE JUNK?

IT WON'T
HOLD TOGETHER
LONG ENOUGH TO
GET TO THE
MOON!

DON'T LET HER
LOOKS DECEIVE
YOU, ASTROF! THIS
SPACE BABY WILL GET
US TO MERCURY--
AND BACK!

CAPTAIN DETREX!
INSIDE, BOYS, AND TAKE YOUR STATIONS! WE'RE BLASTING OFF IN TWO MINUTES!

I'LL EXPLAIN ONCE WE'RE IN SPACE... BLAST OFF?

THIS SHIP IS NOT THE PATCHED-UP PIECE OF SPACE JUNK YOU THOUGHT, BUT A FULLY-ARMED SOLAR GUARD PATROL CRUISER--DISGUISED!

I THOUGHT SO! ONE LOOK AT THE POWER DECK, AND I KNEW IT, SIR!

AND WE CARRY PLENTY OF EXTRA ARMS AND AMMUNITION!

YOU MEAN, SIR, WE'RE GOING TO MERCURY?

TO MERCURY--- AND TO-FREE THE SLAVES IN THE MINES!

WE'LL NEVER FIND THE MINES, SIR! THEY'LL SPOT US THE MOMENT WE LAND!

THEY WONT AFTER YOU CHANGE INTO THESE CLOTHES! WE'RE LANDING ON MERCURY AS A TRAMP FREIGHTER--- WILLING TO EARN A DISHONEST BIT OF MONEY WITHOUT ASKING QUESTIONS!
AND TO THINK THAT ROGER WAS ONCE THE GLAMOUR BOY OF SPACE ACADEMY!

LOOK AT YOURSELF! YOU'RE NO BETTER THAN A SPACE HOBGO!

NOW WE LOOK LIKE THE PROPER CREW FOR AN OLD SPACE TRAMP LIKE THE MERCHANT OF MARS! LET'S HOPE WE FOOLED THE SPACE PIRATES OF MERCURY.

PAST VENUS, THE MERCHANT OF MARS ROCKETS TOWARDS THE SMALL PLANET OF MERCURY. THEN...

THERE IT IS, SIR! WE SHOULD BE ENTERING THE ATMOSPHERE OF MERCURY SOON.

WE'LL GO INTO A SLOW GLIDE UNTIL WE SPOT THE SPACE PORT!

BRAKING ROCKETS!

BRAKING ROCKETS IT IS, SIR!

THERE'S A NEW SPACE TRAMP FREIGHTER! SOUND OUT THE CAPTAIN AND FIND OUT IF HE'S WILLING TO PICK UP A CARGO OF MERCURRIUM! IF HE TURNS OUT TO BE HONEST, SLIT HIS THROAT!

SET HER DOWN, TOM!

DOWN IT IS, SIR!

RIGHT, CHIEF! I'LL TAKE CARE OF IT!
WELCOME TO MERCURY, CAPTAIN.
WHAT SPACE WIND BRINGS YOU HERE?

NO WIND BROUGHT ME, MAN! I’VE GOT A SHIP---AND A SHIP NEEDS A CARGO TO MAKE MONEY.

WELL, I MIGHT BE ABLE TO HELP YOU, CAPTAIN---FOR A SLIGHT COMMISSION. COME ALONG WHERE WE CAN TALK!

GET ME A PROFITABLE CARGO---AND I’LL SEE THAT YOU’RE REWARDED.

YOU TWO STAY HERE AND MAKE SURE NO ONE COMES ABOARD TO SNOOP! I’LL GO WITH CAPTAIN DETREK.

SUPPOSE YOU HAD A CHANCE TO PICK UP A CARGO OF MERCURIIUM METALS, CAPTAIN---COULD YOU TAKE IT TO VENUS?

OF COURSE! BUT WHERE CAN I FIND SUCH A CARGO?

ONE OF THE CONDITIONS IS THAT YOU ASK NO QUESTIONS! I’LL TAKE YOU TO A PLACE WHERE YOU CAN GET IT!

ALL RIGHT, I’M YOUR MAN! READY FOR BLAST-OFF ANYTIME YOU SAY!

WE’LL LEAVE NOW! I’LL GO ALONG TO PILOT YOUR SHIP!
CAPTAIN, HOW DO WE KNOW THIS ISN'T A TRAP SET FOR US BY THE SOLAR GUARDS?

GOOD FOR YOU, TOM! I'LL PLAY ALONG JUST TO MAKE SURE THIS SPACE RAT DOESN'T BEGIN TO SUSPECT US.

YOU MAY BE RIGHT, LAD!

THERE'S PLENTY OF MERCURIUM TO BE HAD—ONLY TROUBLE IS, WE DON'T HAVE ENOUGH FREIGHT SHIPS THAT ARE WILLING TO CARRY IT!

YES, I HEAR THE SOLAR GUARD PATROLS ARE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR SMUGGLERS!

NO! NO! I'M NOT A POLICE SPY! I'M REALLY WORKING FOR THE ILLEGAL MINES HERE!

ALL RIGHT, WALK AHEAD OF US! IF YOU TRY ANY TRICKS, YOU'LL HAVE A TASTE OF MY KNIFE BETWEEN YOUR RIBS!

WHAT ABOUT IT? ARE YOU TRYING TO TURN US OVER TO THE SOLAR GUARDS?

I FIGURED IF WE ACT SUSPICIOUS ABOUT HIM, HE WON'T HAVE TIME TO START GETTING SUSPICIOUS ABOUT US! THERE'S OUR SHIP AT THE JUNGLES EDGE, SIR.

I HOPE IT ISN'T FAR FROM HERE! I GET NERVOUS IF I STAY TOO LONG IN ONE SPACE PORT, TOO POPULAR WITH THE SOLAR GUARD!

DON'T WORRY! YOU'RE THE KIND OF A MAN WE CAN USE! WE'LL HAVE PLENTY OF CARGO FOR YOU!
OUR HEADQUARTERS ARE WELL HIDDEN, CAPTAIN. WE'LL BE THERE SOON!

HOW CAN YOU FIND ANYTHING IN THAT JUNGLE?

THERE'S THE PLACE, SIR! FROM THE LOOKS OF IT, THERE MUST BE A LOT OF PEOPLE LIVING HERE!

COMING IN FOR A LANDING.

GET READY FOR THE CARGO! I'LL MAKE ALL ARRANGEMENTS!

RIGHT!

THIS IS IT, BOYS! THEY WILL PROBABLY USE PRISONERS TO LOAD THE SHIP. TOM, YOU STAND BY THE CARGO HATCH AND PICK OUT THE BEST LOOKING MEN AMONG THE PRISONERS AND GIVE THEM GUNS. ROGER, YOU PASS THE GUNS TO TOM!

IMPS OF SPACE! LOOK HOW THE PRISONERS ARE TREATED! LIKE THE SLAVES OF A THOUSAND YEARS AGO!
STEP LIVELY, THERE! WE HAVEN'T ALL DAY! LIVELY!

PSST! TAKE THIS AND WAIT FOR MY SIGNAL! WE'RE FRIENDS!
I'VE PRAYED TO GET A GUN INTO MY HANDS YOU CAN COUNT ON ME!

CAPTAIN STTT---!

HERE, YOU SPACE DOG! BRING YOUR CARGO INTO THIS COMPARTMENT!

AYE, SIR.

TOM, WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? HOW DID YOU---
NO TIME TO EXPLAIN NOW, SIR! ROGER AND ASTRO ARE HERE, TOO! WE'VE GOT GUNS FOR AS MANY PRISONERS AS WE CAN COUNT ON TO FIGHT WITH US!

GIVE GUNS TO EVERY PRISONER! THERE ISN'T ONE OF THEM WHO WOULDN'T FIGHT TO WIN HIS FREEDOM!

AS PRISONER AFTER PRISONER PASSES BY, TOM HANDS OUT THE GUNS... UNDER THE VERY EYES OF THE PIRATE GUARD!
How are we doing, Tom? Captain Detrek wants to know if we'll be ready soon!

Most of the prisoners are already armed! We'll be set in another five minutes.

Tom? Tom Corbett! Am I overjoyed to gaze upon your countenance!

Alfie!

You know this prisoner, huh? What did he say?

Why---you see---

He's a friend of mine---in fact, a classmate at Space Academy!

Alfie! You space goof! You've tipped our plan!

Forget it, Roger! Alfie's been through plenty! He couldn't help it!

My goodness! You were contemplating a rescue---and I've spoiled everything!
CAPTAIN STRONG IS ATTACKING!
DISARM EVERY PIRATE YOU FIND
ABOARD THE SHIP!

JUST THE MEN
I'VE BEEN
LOOKING FOR!

YOU'D DO
BETTER IF YOU'D
LOOK WHERE
YOU WERE GOING!

I MIGHT NOT HAVE CAUGHT YOU
BY SURPRISE IF I'D LOOKED MORE
CAREFULLY! DROP YOUR WEAPONS!

WHAT'S COME OVER YOU?

LOCK THEM UP IN THE STOREROOM
AND DO THE SAME TO THE REST OF THE
PIRATES! THEN SEND SOME MEN OUT TO HELP CAPTAIN STRONG—
IF HE NEEDS IT!

AYE, AYE,
SIR!

THAT WAS QUICK THINKING,
TOM! YOU DID THE RIGHT
THING IN MOVING INTO
ACTION THE MOMENT WE
WERE DISCOVERED.

WHAT DO YOU
THINK WE HAVE
TO DO, TOM?
LOOK OUT
THERE!

THE PIRATE
CRUISER!
WHY, SIR,
THEY'LL
PLASTER THIS
WHOLE AREA
WITH BOMBS!

THANK YOU, SIR.
WHAT DO WE DO NOW?
We're going to blast that pirate ship into atoms, boys! To your stations!

All personnel aboard ship! Stand by for take-off! Emergency acceleration! Hold fast!

With rockets blazing furiously, the disguised Solar Guard cruiser leaps spaceward after the pirate ship!

I never thought that old piece of junk could take off that fast!

Take a good look, friend! That piece of junk is a first-class patrol cruiser!

Control room to power deck! Set fuses on space bombs!

Power deck to control! Fuses set and ready, sir!

Get her on sight, Tom! We can't afford to miss!

On target, sir!

Bombs away, sir! And spaceman's luck!

Give those space rats both barrels, Tom!
Tom's shots hit their mark! In the vacuum of space, the explosions are soundless! The pirate space ship is doomed!

That's the end of the space pirates, Tom!

But not yet the end of the pirates! We've got to get back and see how Captain Strong is doing!

Neat shot, Tom! I couldn't have done better myself!

Don't be so modest, Roger. You probably could do better!

I guess you're right, Tom. I could do better, naturally.

Naturally, Roger-- naturally!
YOU AND THE CADETS HAVE DONE A MAGNIFICENT JOB, CAPTAIN DETREK. I WANT TO THANK YOU ON BEHALF OF ALL THE PRISONERS HERE!

THE CADETS SHOULD GET MOST OF THE CREDIT—AND THE MAN WHO HAS BEEN THEIR COMMANDING OFFICER AND TEACHER! AND THAT'S YOU, CAPTAIN STRONG!

GET ALL THE PIRATES INTO THE WAREHOUSE AND KEEP A STRONG GUARD POSTED OVER THEM!

YES, SIR!

WELL, STRONG, I'VE STILL GOT SOME WORK TO DO HERE. SUPPOSE YOU TAKE COMMAND OF THE MERCHANT OF MARS AND BLAST OFF FOR HOME WITH YOUR BOYS!

WE CAN'T LEAVE YOU HERE——

SOLAR GUARD PATROLS ARE ALREADY ON THEIR WAY HERE TO TAKE OFF OUR PRISONERS. WE'LL BE ALL RIGHT!

IN THAT CASE, I AM ANXIOUS TO GET HOME!

SPACE CADETS, IT WAS AN HONOR TO GO ON A MISSION WITH YOU!

SPEAKING FOR ALL OF US, SIR, I WANT TO SAY—THAT IS, SIR--- WE FEEL——

HE MEANS, SIR, THAT WE FEEL THE SAME WAY ABOUT SERVING UNDER YOUR COMMAND!
WELL, BOYS, IT FEELS FINE BEING CLEANED UP AND IN UNIFORM AGAIN!

IT MOST ASSUREDLY DOES, SIR!

BUT YOU KNOW, SIR, I DID SO WANT TO LEARN ALL THE OPERATIONS OF A PASSENGER SPACE-LINER! I WONDER IF YOU COULDN'T ARRANGE TO HAVE US ASSIGNED FOR ANOTHER ROUTINE FLIGHT——

WHAT HE MEANS, SIR, IS THAT WE SHALL BE VERY GLAD TO GET BACK INTO THE SWING AT SPACE ACADEMY!

I SEE!

A SURPRISE AWAITED THE CREW OF THE MERCHANT OF MARS, AS THE SPACESHIP CAME IN FOR THE LANDING AT THE ACADEMY PORT!

THE ENTIRE CADET CORPS OF SPACE ACADEMY IS HERE TO OFFER A COLLECTIVE APOLOGY FOR OUR UNFAIR BEHAVIOR IN GIVING YOU THE SILENT TREATMENT——AND TO HONOR YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE TO THE PEACE AND SAFETY OF THE SOLAR ALLIANCE!

THANK YOU! WE DID WHAT EVERY SPACE CADET CAN AND WILL DO IF HE WERE IN OUR POSITION!

GEE—— THE WHOLE CADET CORPS TURNED OUT TO WELCOME ME!

HE'LL NEVER CHANGE, ASTRO!