

Close Encounters of the Absurd Kind extract – Pluck, Orbiton and Titanica

Scene One: *Aboard a Betelgeusian spacecraft on Millennium Eve*

Stirring, upbeat instrumental music as an opening - "Apache by the Shadows". The three main aliens perform the Shadows' famous dance routine, then play air guitar for the bass guitar solo. We are on an alien spacecraft (minimalist set – silver foil Captain Kirk-style seat, shimmering bits of metal, flashing lights, lots of noise, people dashing on and off being issued orders). Orbiton takes up his position in the captain's seat. All three have exaggerated, exclamatory cod American accents.

Orbiton Major Pluck, are we still on course for Planet Blastongury?

Pluck Negative, your spacelordship.

Orbiton Which way are we going?

Pluck The Milky Way, sir. Perhaps we could stop for a drink at the Mars Bar. I've heard it's very good for rest and play after work, Lord Orbiton. The best in the Galaxy.

Orbiton Yet I heard it has no atmosphere. *(Pause, then everyone lurches to the right. SFX – meteor shower)* My Betel-god, what a shower!

Titanica The crew?

Pluck I think he means that meteor shower; the one we've just diverted to avoid.

Orbiton A mightier, if not meatier meteor shower I have never seen!

Pluck Illogical, sir. The meteorological office have given us advance warning of far worse showers before now. *(Pause)* Followed by sunny periods. *(Pluck, Titanica and Orbiton all put on sunglasses and sing "Sunny". Their dance movements start off small and subtle, becoming increasingly flamboyant and hammy as the song progresses).*

*Sunny, yesterday my life was filled with rain
Sunny, you smiled at me and really eased the pain
Now the dark days are gone and the bright days are here
My sunny one shines so sincere
Sunny, one so true, I love you*

*Sunny, thank you for the sunshine OK
Sunny, thank you for the love you brought my way
You gave to me your all and all
Now I feel 10 feet tall
Sunny, one so true, I love you*

*Sunny, thank you for the truth you've let me see
Sunny, thank you for the facts from A to Z
My life was torn like a wind-blown sea
Then a rock was formed when you held me
Sunny, one so true I love you*

*Sunny, thank you for the smile upon your face
Sunny, thank you for the piece that falls in place
You're my spark of nature's fire
You're my sweet complete desire
Sunny, one so true I love you*

Titanica Enough, already. I knew this would happen. We're off course, aren't we?

Orbiton Off course? Of course not!

Titanica Why couldn't you let me take the controls? I could have used my Betelgeusian female intuition to steer us through these great balls of fire!

Orbiton Oh Titanica! Come on baby, you drive me crazy. *(SFX – Engines losing power)*
Goodness, gracious...What is it Major Pluck?

Pluck Report from the engine room, and I quote: *(mock-Scottish accent)* "The thrust generators cannae take much more of this, sir!" *(reverts to own voice)* In addition to which we're being sucked down by gravitational forces beyond our control. Our supernova solar panels have been temporarily put out of action. There's nothing for it but to make an unscheduled landing on the most contingent planet to effect emergency repairs.

Titanica Oh Betel-god, I don't know why I come out with you. Who knows where we'll end up now? Oh, blast, blast, blast!

Orbiton If we could re-deploy your blasts to fullest benefit, dear, we certainly wouldn't need to repair the thrust generators. Braking to warp factor three.

Titanica Another example of your warped sense of humour, darling?

Orbiton All crew to emergency landing stations. Take up the belt and brace position.

(nb, the cast will have prepared the audience for what happens here before the show commences. The belt and brace position involves adopting a half-standing/half-squatting stance, with arms folded across the chest. Following the appropriate cue, the audience sings along with the Status Quo lyrics before sitting down again).

We're going down!

Pluck *(sings) Down, down, deeper and down! (repeated as necessary)*

Orbiton *Brace yourselves! Let's hope for a soft landing. (Audience sits)*

Titanica *If the surface of this planet proves to be of a similar consistency to your brain, my love, we may perhaps be in luck.*

Lots of noise, confusion and simulated unsteadiness, rushing from one side of stage to the other all to the tune of Sabre Dance.