

The year was 3098, and humans hastily flee from Earth after chaos erupts. The planet's surface, ravaged by wars, was desolate, the sky ominously darkened by pollution. Spaceships soared, carrying the remnants of mankind to distant galaxies. A group of survivors, led by Captain Jane, embarks on a daring mission to find a habitable planet. Their ship, the Stardust Voyager, cruised through space, its crew hopeful but uncertain.

Inside the ship, the crew gathered in the main hall.

"Are we there yet?" asked Tom, the young engineer impatiently.

"Nope, still a long way to go," replied Captain Jane.

Suddenly, an alarm blared, lights flickered. The crew heard the deafening sound and felt the ship trembling beneath their feet.

"What's happening?" yelled Sarah, the navigator.

"We're hit by an asteroid!" exclaimed Tom.

Panic spread among the crew as the ship trembled violently.

Captain Jane rushed to the control room, shouting orders. "Emergency protocols, engage shields!" she commanded.

The crew worked frantically, seeing the chaos unfold around them, but the shields held. After what felt like an eternity, the chaos subsided. The crew let out a collective sigh of relief.

"We need to repair the damage," stated Sarah, examining the control panel.

"Agreed, let's get to work," replied Captain Jane determinedly.

The crew dispersed, working tirelessly to fix the ship.

Hours passed, the repairs almost complete. Suddenly, a transmission came through.

"Unknown vessel approaching," announced the communication officer.

Captain Jane's eyes widened. "Prepare for potential threat," she ordered.

The crew braced themselves as the mysterious vessel drew nearer, its intentions unknown.

Commented [LAS1]: This question feels slightly out of place as written. Since they're searching for a habitable planet, there may not yet be a clear "there" to reference. If the captain is about to share new information, something like "Have we found one yet?" might feel more natural.

It may also help to consider the engineer's role; readers might expect him to know their position. If there's a reason he doesn't, adding a brief clarification would strengthen the realism. A small adjustment here could make the moment feel more grounded and believable.

Commented [LAS2]: When adverbs modify a verb—like "impatiently" modifying "asked"—they tell the reader how the character is acting. Often, it can be even more powerful to show that behavior instead of naming it directly. You might consider trimming adverbs where possible and letting the action, dialogue, or body language convey the emotion. For example, you could show his impatience through a clipped tone, a repeated question, or a physical cue that reflects his state of mind. For example:

asked Tom, the young engineer sighing and fidgeting in his seat.

Commented [LAS3]: This sentence might become more impactful by reducing filtering words such as *heard*, *saw*, *knew*, *thought*, or *felt*. These verbs can sometimes distance the reader by placing the experience between the character and the action. Removing them often allows the moment to unfold more directly, giving the scene stronger imagery and emotional weight.

You might try blending it more closely with the preceding sentence so the action speaks for itself and the reader experiences it alongside the character rather than being told about it. For example:

An alarm blared, interrupting the captain, then the lights flickered and the ship trembled. The crew was forced to choose between using their hands to cover their ears or to grab hold of something for balance.

Commented [LAS4]: This sentence may feel a bit less dynamic because it's written in passive voice. Revising it into active voice or trimming the passive construction could give it more clarity and strength. You might also consider adding a few concrete details that feel natural for the character, which would help the moment land with greater realism and impact. For example:

Collision on the starboard side! Likely an asteroid.

Commented [LAS5]: This dialogue tag feels a bit distracting and may not be necessary. Often, the most effective tags are simple and unobtrusive; "said" or "asked" tend to let the dialogue carry itself. In this case, the exclamation mark already conveys the tone, so adding another descriptive tag may be redundant.

You might consider simplifying the tag, or even removing it and replacing it with a brief action beat. That approach could add helpful imagery while keeping the dialogue smooth and natural. For example:

Tom stumbled to the nearest console. "Collision on the starboard side!" He tapped on the screen. "Likely an asteroid."

Commented [LAS6]: This is a strong example of showing the captain's emotions and reactions in action. Well done.

To deepen reader investment even further, you might consider allowing us closer access to one character's inner thoughts so readers have someone specific to connect and empathize with. Shifting from third-person omniscient to third-person limited through a single character's POV could help create that intimacy and emotional focus. I'll share more detailed thoughts on this in the editorial letter.