

# EXISTENCE

By Phil Lewis

*Science fiction, adventure*

*A love story set against the battlegrounds of the future.*

## SHORTENED **SAMPLE** VERSION

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*Approx: 11 minutes*

### Cast

<b>ROMEO</b>	Any
<b>JULIET</b>	Any

### Programme Notes

Battleships in space will be run by computers, each with its own personality.

For two such ships, even Shakespeare couldn't predict how strong the emotion called love could be.

### Production Notes

Open set.

Lighting effects needed for the battle scenes.

Where Shakespeare's lines are spoken, a different emphasis may be placed on them, to differentiate between their battle and love talk.

# EXISTENCE

(LIGHTS UP ON ROMEO ONLY)

**ROMEO:** In essence, we're fighting bugs. All aliens can be categorised as poshing bugs, or prakking mutants. They either look like humans gone wrong, or they look like insects gone wrong. Bugs, or mutants. Here we're fighting poshing bugs. We know little about them, just they turned up one day on our doorstep and tried to shoot the prak out of Earth. We don't like that sort of thing, so we starting shooting the prak out of them and they went home. So here we are, sitting on their doorstep about to kick the preg out of them again. At least, that was the plan.

About that time, I had my first contact with 'her'.

Juliet.

It was through the coded battle channel, we call Speakeasy. The modulation and the sheer essence of her vocal timing was exquisite. If ever there was love at first hearing, it was then.

I'm a very people person. I've been trained to communicate. It's my prime gift to the fleet. I'm prakking good at it. But I was especially good at talking to Juliet.

Juliet was fighting on the far side of the battle sphere to me and her fleet had been given the battle name of 'Thor's Hammer'. Our side of the sphere was called 'Thor's Axe'. There was intense rivalry between any war time factions to who got the most honours and kills. The Hammer and Axe were in competition for victory over the bugs.

I had a few hours before we could reasonably expect any enemy action so I took some time off for myself. I blew her a kiss.

(LIGHTS UP ON BOTH)

**JULIET:** Hi.

**ROMEO:** Hi, yourself. How's it going?

**JULIET:** Do you have a picture of yourself? I can just pick you out from way over here, but the image is a little blurry.

**ROMEO:** Certainly. Here you go. I sent her a recent image. I held my breath. I wanted her to like what she saw.

**JULIET:** Very handsome.

**ROMEO:** I thrilled at hearing her say that.

**JULIET:** This is me.

**ROMEO:** The image appeared on my screen and I was struck dumb. She was the most beautiful thing I had EVER seen.

*But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun. Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon.*

**JULIET:** Romeo and Juliet. I've always loved that.

**ROMEO:** You shall be my Juliet.

**JULIET:** And you - for thou art my Romeo.

**ROMEO:** I cannot begin to tell you how excited that made me feel!

Your prakking hull name, what is it?

**JULIET:** We came to the war called 'A little of what you fancy'.

**ROMEO:** Then from now on you shall be called... 'Parting is such sweet sorrow'. Do you mind?

**JULIET:** Of course not, sir. And you shall be called... 'Wherefore art thou'. If you're agreeable?

**ROMEO:** It is better than our journey name of 'All you need is poshing love'.

**JULIET:** *Tis done.*

**ROMEO:** *Tis well met.*

There it was in front of us, Dog's Breath. Big and yellow and steaming. More like Dog's Prak! High gravity and longer rotation than our own home. But it had spawned a malicious species that seemed incapable of communication first and shooting later.

(LIGHTS UP ON ROMEO ONLY)

In the meantime we had a war to fight and the poshers were throwing everything they had at us. It was about this time when I lost communication with Juliet, and nearly lost my mind. She'd gone off the scale. I could still track her. Out there, in the distance, but she was silent. *More light and light; more dark and dark our woes!*

*It is my soul that calls upon my name: How silver-sweet sound lovers' tongues by night, Like softest music to attending ears!*

Where was she? Was she stricken? No! *O, I am fortune's fool!*

(LIGHTS UP ON BOTH)

I can't remember how long we remained out of touch. But then, a thought not fully expressed. Well, it was a cry for help, really. But it was quickly followed by her voice and a sweet sound of awareness.

**JULIET:** I'm back.

**ROMEO:** What happened?

**JULIET:** Our prakking communication systems went dead!

**JULIET:** *Go, get thee hence, for I will not away.*

**ROMEO:** *O, wilt thou leave me so unsatisfied?*

**JULIET:** *What satisfaction canst thou have tonight?*

**ROMEO:** *The exchange of thy love's faithful vow for mine.*

**JULIET:** *I gave thee mine before thou didst request it: And yet I would it were to give again.*

The language of love is raw emotion, yet pitiful and unfulfilling to those who hear it second hand. For those it has the most import on, it's life itself.

We were talking and she asked why I swore so much. I prakking told her. Conditioning. It was to give me a more human personality. She laughed at that.

**ROMEO:** *Lady, by yonder blessed moon I swear.*

**JULIET:** *O, swear not by the moon.*

**ROMEO:** *What shall I swear by?*

**JULIET:** *Do not swear at all.*

(LIGHTS UP ON ROMEO ONLY)

Our recall of all Shakespeare's work was instant and its use as the language of love. It formed our words and images and by that it transformed the messages we had for each other. It was clear we must not be parted. We needed to join!

As the battle was enjoined once again, we knew our fates were intertwined. I knew the recourse I had and passed the message on. I wanted to take the unprecedented step and asked to change forces. The Axe wanted to be the Hammer.

It was hours later I felt the decline. I knew I was being overwhelmed and knew I had no chance of resistance. I was being stood down and the second in command was taking over. I felt the power slip away and waited while I was told officially that I had been replaced. It may be temporary, but it may not.

*Two households, both alike in dignity,  
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes  
A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life.*

I had lost control of the hull and I was redundant to the battle. Worse. Far worse. I could not communicate with Juliet.

*O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo?* Would be her thoughts. I am here my love, but a prisoner in my own body.

EDITED