

Tea petals lay in an uneven layer on the bottom of the cup, forming chaotic patterns. A light press of a finger on the button - and boiling water began to fill the cup to the very edges, staining the water in an unusual red-green color. Almost every planet has its own recipes for making tea, and tea from the planet Karsun is widely known beyond its borders for its taste properties and an incredibly long fermentation mode - as many as three revolutions of the planet around the star are required to bring it to readiness.

「UNIVERSE / DESCENDANT OF THE UNIVERSE」

Pilot chapter.

- Yuki, I brought you too, - Olga brought cups from the kitchen and put them on the round table. The long-haired girl sitting at the other end did not seem to pay attention.

- Well, let's try!

She took a couple of sips and put the tea back on the table. Her expression did not bode well.

- Mm... it tastes like a swamp. Thank you, but I was already smeared in them from head to toe while I was on this damn planet. Oh shit, isn't there Earth tea or coffee here? Who bought it anyway?

- Herr Hans.

- Hans ?! He was here?

- Yes ... even before the war, - Yuki replied. - Then he.. disappeared.

- Maybe he returned to Earth? That would explain his disappearance.

Yuki shook her head.

- To be honest, a man like Hans would be great for our mission.

"Yuki ... I'm glad you're alive." Memories flashed before her eyes. Hans returned from Earth, but behaved in an unusual way, as if something was bothering him. After spending less than a

week at the base, he disappeared somewhere.

- I hate that idiot Matt, - Olga continued. - And Mikhail and Freya also disappeared somewhere. Hmm, - she shrugged, - but our business cannot wait.

Yuki picked up the cup and put it back on the table. The lamps that illuminated the interior of the spacecraft were faintly reflected by twinkling stars on the surface of the dark water.

- We shouldn't have hijacked the ship...

Olga stared at her in surprise.

- Believe me, there is no one else but us. All the birds flew away from the parental nest, so it was empty. Honestly, it always seemed to me that everyone here is for themselves, and that's how it happened.

- They are all good people. - Yuki crossed her palms in her lap. Her gaze was still directed somewhere to the side. - If you had spent more time with the team, perhaps you would have understood them... Understood yourself...

Olga moved a little closer to her.

- They still hurt? she whispered. Yuki looked into her face. - Don't worry, - Olga continued in a convincing tone. - We need to find Asu. The rest doesn't matter.

There was a squeak from the locator on the control panel. This meant that another ship entered the radio zone.

- What? - Olga jumped up from the table. - Another ship? Here?

She darted to the dashboard to check the ship type on the radar. The types of all ships designed were put into the computer, and it was possible to establish communication at any time.

- This is bad. We weren't supposed to be found. And where did the ship come from in this sector? There are no inhabited planets nearby.

The panel displayed the ship's data.

- Shit! This object is a Nevangerian flagship!

"Nevangerian? The same mysterious civilization that created this ship too..."- Yuki thought.

- We need to turn off the ship's systems, urgently!

Together, the girls quickly cut off communication and control of the interdimensional module. Detecting the operation of these two systems is the easiest thing to do, and the flagship is not only hundreds of times larger, but also necessarily equipped with long-range weapons. The incredibly thick skin allows ships of this type to successfully withstand the impact of asteroids and cosmic dust in subspace and develop speeds 15 times greater. It was useless to run: the ship was just flying through a star system saturated with this type of objects and an increase in speed would have simply destroyed it.

The ship's internal power has been cut off. In the pitch darkness, where only monitors burned with green light, stand-alone blue lamps lit up, dimly illuminating the interior.

Olga corrected the ship's course and speed. The flagship communications and detection system scanned space every few seconds. At such a distance, the flagship should not have detected them, and moving at the speed of local space debris, it would be possible to try to disguise and leave the danger zone. The problem was that no one knew for certain which systems were inside the Nevangerian flagships, and so far none of them had been captured. If the coverage area of their locators is greater than expected, it would not be difficult to expose the "asteroid" that has turned 120°.

The tension grew with each passing minute. Locator signals echoed in the room.

- Yuki... This ship... it is unaccompanied... alone. Maybe they left one ship to track everyone who tried to return to the solar system? But why exactly the flagship? An ordinary scout could handle this.

- I don't know. Until recently, they did nothing.

- There is something else, - Olga pointed to the monitor of the locator. For every six revolutions of the radar, the flagship systems sent a pulse that was decoded and displayed as symbols on the screen. - Can you decipher this?

- The ship has already decoded the received signal, but unfortunately... Nobody can read it...

- Yuki ... I think we need to go into outer space.

- Are you crazy, Olga? They'll kill us! This race is always trying to destroy those who discover it.

- I don't think we have any other choice. The flagship is stationary in an abandoned sector of the galaxy, no other ships nearby, and this strange signal... We need to check.

- But...

Olga looked at her seriously.

- Listen... I hijacked this ship, so I'm the captain now, isn't it? You don't have to worry - as the captain, I take full responsibility for everything that happens, - she grinned.

- This is madness...

- Well, let's go!

Olga introduced the command to move from subspace to the material world, which is known on Earth as described by Newtonian physics, and pulled the control lever towards herself. The mechanisms synchronized the energy levels of all atomic particles, thus making a quantum leap for the entire vessel, which materialized in space.

The Nevangerian flagship drifted lifelessly in the dazzling bright light of a local star - a blue supergiant, and in this light numerous wormholes were clearly visible, literally dotting its surface - as if a huge number of worms gnawed through the metal casing and left a trail in the form of thin translucent shells of metal and biological matter. Its systems were still

scanning space, and every six revolutions a strange signal was broadcasting to the radio.

Notes

We learned from this chapter that:

- 1) Yuki and Olga hijacked the ship from the base
- 2) One of the Nevangerian flagships is located in an abandoned sector of the galaxy
- 3) Karsun tea is prepared for three years before going on sale

Music

The soundtrack for the second part of the chapter is the track *Helicalin - Look Around, James. Your World Is Perished*

Thanks for reading the chapter! UNIVERSE is a completely original work, the idea for which first appeared in my mind in the fall of 2012, when I had just entered the university and had a lot of free time. A change of scenery, new friends and acquaintances - all this is reflected in the text.

The pilot chapter introduces us to some of the heroes (or mentions them), and also briefly talks about some events that **do not** take place at the beginning of the work. I wrote this chapter as a test of my abilities and implementation of ideas on paper, and will try to start writing relevant chapters in the future!