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Аннотация

What to do if you are faced with incomprehensible phenomena? Are you ready to realize to the end what it really is? People learn the unknown.

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Contiguity

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Ball lightning

You always want to spend your vacation well. You do not have to go to distant lands, abroad, to warm islands. I want to communicate with nature, feel the silence of the forest wilderness or wander among the mountains. I just want to distract from the bustle of the city, stop answering endless phone calls.

Fedor picked up his phone and thought about it. You can certainly go somewhere alone, but it would be quite boring. Flipping through the list of phone contacts, he stopped at Martha's number. Maybe she will keep me company. Martha worked with him in the experimental physics department. He liked it for a long time, but natural shyness always prevented him from communicating.

Decided. I will call her and just like that, by the way, I will invite her to come with me. If he refuses, I will turn it all in jest, as if it is just such plans. Maybe I will get a ticket or something. It is hard to compose. We have to start somewhere. There is such a reason.

– Why did you decide to take a vacation now, the project is not finished yet? – Martha asked. I am not going to get a vacation anytime soon.

– Well, take time off; we will go for a week, no more.

– I will think about it if I call you back.

Two hours later, the bell rang.

– Fedor, have you changed your mind about going yet? I might have a little rest, especially the time before the project is still there.

Fedor was even confused at the first moment. He did not think Martha would accept his offer.

– No, of course – he blurted out. There is an offer to go to the cedar forest. It is beautiful nature and I have got everything ready.

The next day the car was already racing on the highway. It was not that long to go, two hours. The weather was perfect. The beginning of June is not so hot and the most important mood of Fedor was as good as it could be. He goes to rest and most importantly, with a girl who he really likes.

After a while, the car swerved into the woods. Fedor knew these places well. Even as a student, he and the boys often came here. Forest road and they went to a large clearing, which was encircled by a small river.

– Well, here we are, – Fedor said. I am going to put up a tent and have lunch.

– I will take lunch, – Martha said with a chuckle. She saw how Fyodor tries to please her and do something nice. Working in the department, she long ago drew attention to Fedor. I could not just walk up to him and propose to meet him. Then he offered her a trip. Martha could have agreed to it at once, but something told her to wait a while.

Dry branches caught fire very quickly. The mood was good. Martha was fussing about the fire, but Fedor had only to keep the

fire. Food in nature is not your restaurant. It is its unforgettable charm.

– Shall we go to the river? – Fedor suggested. There is a hunter's house nearby. There used to be a boat. It could be a ride.

The weather began to deteriorate. Dark clouds ran and already began to scrawl rain.

– Let us go to the house, wait for the rain. Judging by the clouds, it will not last long. They managed only to run to a small hut, as there was a heavy downpour, and a decent thunderstorm broke out.

– Look how raging it is. It was a different forecast, – Fedor said. It is nothing; I do not think it is going to last long.

The lightning sparkled one by one, and a little later, there was a dry crackling of thunder. It was not that scary, but it was somewhat restless. The house stood a little away from the trees, and in a small window, it was clearly visible flashes of lightning, discharges of which went into the ground.

At one point, something cracked near the house, and a small fireball erupted right next to the window. Fedor and Martha from surprise bounced off the window and tried to close the old rotten shutters. The wind outside was strong, and a decent draft was walking around the hut. Once, covering the window, Fedor and Martha moved deep into the room. The fireball outside the window began to approach the window and at some point was inside the room. Martha cried out from surprise, and Fedor was

not in earnest confused.

It was not possible to run outside. The ball moved between the window and the door. There was a smell of ozone in the room, and the whole body seemed to permeate the sharp needles. From a sharp gust of wind the door opened, and in the opening appeared an object, similar to a sick bagel. It was very different from this ball lightning. The colors he was pinkish and did not come from it neither crackling nor hissing. His outlines became clearer.

At one point, this bagel pulled into a ball lightning and it, quietly hissing, disappeared into its space. The feeling of tension in the body immediately disappeared. Fedor and Martha looked at each other with surprise. They, like physicists, could not understand what was happening. Moments later, the pinky bagel swam out and slowly began to rise upwards. The wind did not act on him. For a while, he hung motionless in the air. Then its outlines began to change. It increased in size and took the form of a cigar. At some point, he erupted, gained speed and disappeared beyond the horizon. Fedor and Martha looked at each other. It was impossible to explain. If such a case was told by a simple peasant from a nearby village, no one would believe him. But they are physicists.

– I do not think it is worth telling anyone, – Fedor said, they will not believe it anyway.

Space Carrier

Chapter 1

A normal flight. Muran has already lost count of how many times he flew between two moons of Jupiter, Callisto and Ganymede. They are not far from each other. About five days of flight. Muran's small shuttle ship was carrying various cargoes and equipment. He liked the job, although flying alone was rather boring. Five days of flight, five days of rest. A three-year contract. Then home to Earth. I did not think Muran's job would be so monotonous, but they pay well.

The base at Ganymede was large. The truth was it under the surface of the planet. There are many people. You can have fun. Chat. Learn some news. Even to see some movie with friends and then for Muran was a pleasure. After five days of solitary flight, I wanted to take my soul and share with someone. The staff of the colony lived their own narrow circle. Everyone knew each other well, and they perceived Muran's arrival as the arrival of the mail carrier. He came, handed over the letter, left. Muran wanted to be perceived in a special way. Everyone had his own job, his responsibilities, everyone worked out his contract. Everyone was waiting to return to his or her native Earth.

The only person at the station who understood him was

Linden. He was also a transport shuttle pilot, but he flew to another satellite, Io. Only with him, Muran could share his thoughts, problems. Only Linden could understand him, understand his loneliness.

Linden has this last contract. In a year, he will return to Earth and no longer fly. Age is age. After fifty, they do not take such a job. Linden was already thinking about what he would do on Earth. They will fly home together and it pleased Muran. After all, returning to such a company will not be so boring. In the meantime, we have to work. Tomorrow again, flight to Callisto.

The flight took place as usual. He set the mode on the remote and looked into the porthole. Yes, it is beautiful after all. The view of the huge Jupiter is impressive. A huge red spot slowly floated along the equator. The station on Ganymede has been studying this huge planet for a long time. A lot of research has already been done, but how many more secrets does it keep? The gas giant is very inhospitable. The power of its radiation does not allow building stations on the surface of satellites. Radiation is radiation. Colonists have to move all the structures deep below the surface.

Well, Muran has to fly. He will have only two such contracts for three years. You cannot do it anymore.

How weak a man is in an open cold space? How difficult it is to master even the nearest planets and satellites of the solar system. A gentle and fragile creature is a human being. He should only live on Earth. Well, consider the cosmos only in a telescope

and rejoice that somewhere there is a terrible cold and radio, and on Earth shines gentle sun, birds sing, trees in the wind roar, splash warm waters of the sea.

Muran turned away from the porthole. He tried to ward off such thoughts, so as not to catch up with melancholy. Callisto is coming soon. It is already clearly visible in the porthole. There is also a base under the surface of the satellite. True, there are far fewer people there than on Ganymede. Muran did not like to linger on Callisto. After unloading his shuttle, he usually returned to Ganymede the next day.

Muran checked the landing devices. Everything is fine. In four hours, he will be there. The shuttle gently sank to the rocky surface of Callisto. No one met him. After a while, an all-terrain vehicle pulled up. After loading the car, Muran climbed into an empty cabin, and the rover slowly rolled toward the tunnel leading to the underground station. He did not have to drive; the car was programmed to do that kind of work. Muran was already looking forward to meeting with station workers. After five days of flight, I wanted to talk to someone, share something, and learn the news.

The rover reached the end of the tunnel and stopped. Muran got out of the cockpit and headed for the intermediate compartment. It was very easy to walk. The gravity on the satellite was three times less than on Earth. Muran was bouncing slightly, feeling the weight of his body weakly. Waiting for the pressure in the intermediate compartment to reach normal and

it filled with air, Muran removed his spacesuit and opened the station's entrance hatch. There was light along the long corridor, but none of the inhabitants of the station could be seen.

Turning on the inner connection, he tried to hear someone, but the speaker was quietly hissing, silent. Very strange, thought Muran. Where did everyone go? After passing to the end of the corridor, he opened the door to a large room, where the inhabitants of the station usually gathered. Muran once again turned on the inner connection – in response silence.

Chapter 2

Two days ago, while still on the flight, he contacted a traffic controller. Muran reported on the time of arrival and the nature of the cargo. It was business as usual.

After wandering around the various rooms, he headed to the central knot. The front door opened silently, and Muran cautiously entered inside. Anyone. Everything that happened surprised him rather than alarmed him. Approaching the remote control, Muran contacted the station on Ganymede.

– Muran says clearly, – he said. I am at Callisto Station. There is a strange situation here. I do not see anyone from people. If you have any information?

– You have been contacting them for the last three days, – Ganymede said. It is much unexpected for us. Try checking all the premises. They could not have disappeared without a trace. Keep in touch with us and report any emergency at once.

Muran carefully walked through the remaining rooms. He even went down to the mine, which went deep into the satellite. In the workroom, a pump buzzed noisily, which pumped water from underground sources. There was no one from the attendants here either.

Muran did not know what to do. There was no fear as a current. It is not clear what to fear. It is a complete unknown. If there were an accident, people would stay. There are no bodies.

Did they evaporate?

Returning to the control center, he found a recorder that records all the information about the work of the station, as well as records all the conversations of the inhabitants. He did not listen to everyone, but only included the recording of the station chief Raymond. Since Muran spoke to Raymond two days ago, he has set the replay from now on. Turns out the conversations stopped about a day ago.

To avoid listening to everything, Muran set the replay an hour before the conversations stopped. The beginning of the hour records did not report anything interesting. The usual instructions to the staff, review the readings of the equipment on the surface and at the station.

However, at the end of the recording, something incomprehensible was heard. At first, there was a whistle and a noise resembling sea surf.

– What is going on? – Raymond's voice was heard. Look at this. Where did that blue light come from? No, no. No way.

That was the end of the recording. After making a copy of the recording, Muran sent it to Ganymede. All he had to do was wait for a response and further instructions. Trying to explain what he heard, he fell asleep. He had a hard dream. He dreamed of chasing, falling into some mine, fighting something incomprehensible, again chasing.

– What are you doing here? – Raymond asked. Shaking his shoulder. Muran slowly opened his eyes. The dream seems

to have passed, where did Raymond come from, and what is going on?

Chapter 3

Three years of the contract are over. Muran fixed himself in his chair and looked into the porthole. The satellite Ganymede was getting smaller and smaller. Now home to Earth. The average ship “Vega” began to pick up speed. Yes, a two-month flight and he will sunbathe on the beach, on the shore of the warm sea. Linden’s chair was on the right side. On the way home, you can talk about a lot. Although Muran would like to talk to his neighbor on the left more. He saw this girl a couple of times on Ganymede. Her name was Anna. She also worked out a three-year contract.

– It is good to have a doctor on the team, – Muran said, referring to Anna.

– Not exactly a doctor, – Anna said. I am an assistant surgeon.

– It is still a medic, – Muran said with a smile. If anyone gets sick along the way, there is someone to turn to.

– You will not get sick. When we accelerate the ship, everyone will sleep, Anna said.

– Is this your first contract? – Muran asked. Are you going to fly to Jupiter again?

– No, I do not think so. You know girls only get one race. We are future mothers, – Anna said with a smile. What did you do about Jupiter?

– My job is simple, – Muran said. I am a pilot. A space cab.

Carried cargo between satellites.

– You have an interesting job, – Anna said.

– Well, how do I say it, – Muran said. You worked as a collective, and I am almost constantly alone. It is for the amateur. We had a tough selection for the pilots. Not everyone can be alone for long. Well, flying as a collective is expensive. Maybe something will change over time. As far as I know, they plan to send fully automatic cargo ships to the flight.

– What is in it? – Anna asked.

– Time, – Muran said. More precisely, a delay in the time of the decision. After all, the distances in space are large. Although recently a large number of ships are equipped with artificial intelligence. I guess maybe I won't be needed in five years.

Fifty years ago, the Phoenix spacecraft was sent to explore the Uranus satellites. It was completely automatic. For a couple of years, everything was going well. Then the connection with him was lost.

The ship's commander, Abatir, told all twenty passengers to take their seats and prepare for acceleration. Vega turned on the marching engines and rushed towards the Earth.

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