

## Leaving Universe 1

By A. C. Zito

Professor Markwell von Teristaff looked at the data one more time. Then she looked at it again. She sighed. It was true. Only three other universes floated in between Universe 1's spectrum. But she knew the truth. There was that possibility that they weren't like Universe 1. They could be hollow entities carrying empty vacuums. The stats showed that all three of them were most likely the hollow entities. What were the chances that one of them carried the capabilities to sustain what was left of the human race.

"So there are three; this is good Teri." Teri shook her head.

"No, Pluxin. You know that all three of them are empty. What are the chances that they carry anything... anything at *all!*" Pluxin felt like slapping her at her remark.

"You know it's coming. Teri... the Pit *is coming*." Teri looked at the space sonar one last time. The black hole had already taken out  $\frac{3}{4}$ 's of Universe 1. Their little huddle of galaxies was all that was left. It made Teri want to scream. She didn't want the human race to be over. She didn't want Universe 1 to be over. But here was Universe 1... coming to an end. And here was the human race. The last intelligent life that hasn't died out yet. The only intelligent life that saw a point to stick around to see the universe after the lights went out.

"I want to feel the warmth of a star, Teri. They've been gone for so long doesn't it intrigue you?" Plux was the last species of kodins that were born. After the stars went out. He was old. All the other kodins had already died of old age. And fhe was completely different to humans in every way. Plux wasn't male or female. Fhe had told Teri that there were over a million types of genders and sexes for kodins, but fhe didn't like to get into it. Especially with humans who took the art of genders and sexes and made it too complicated for the rest of intelligent life to want to get into it with them. Which Teri understood because her long-dead spouse was a they and them pronoun.

"It's just you and me, Plux, and a bunch of silly humans that have the ships all packed up and ready to take off to the three different swirling entities many consider are possibly universes.

"I bet one of them is just one big creature of some sort and when we fly into it we'll pretty much be flying into its mouth and down into its digestive system." Teri didn't want to think of it that way. She knew fhe was trying to be funny, but the possibilities of what might be inside those three entities are too enormous to even try to contrive up some sort of theory.

"You know I'm not going Plux. I can't bear to think of making it into one of them, and they contain a space that is livable and find that the other two don't. And my *children, Plux!*" Plux understood. All three of Teristaff's children were mandating the expeditions. One in charge of one ship, one in charge of the other and one in charge of the other. All three of them saw hope. Teri had to hand

it to them. They grew up to be fine young people with hopes of a better and brighter tomorrow. Two young girls and one young boy: Flaya, Narka, and Jovian.

“You should join one of them.” Teri shook her head at this. No way in hell was she going to board any of those ships and choose one of her children over the other. It was like choosing a favorite and her and her spouse were always opposed to treating one better than the others. They were all outstanding young people.

“Say one of the ships makes it or say two of the ships make it. What about my children makes you think that I liked making the decision I’ve made?” Plux shook fher head and then shook fhis other head.

“What if all three of the ships make it? What then Miss *Sourpants*?” You’d be dead and all three of your children would forever hate the decision you made.” Teristaff couldn’t take this possibility. It was too much for her. She felt a tear coming to her eye.

“I love my children,” she began to sob out. “I love Narka, I love Flaya, and I love Jovian... but all those people, Plux... three *trillion* on each ship! Only so little of what used to be a vast, endless terrain of life and only *that much* is left! I can’t go and watch it diminish into nothingness. I can’t go and watch life cease to exist. It scares me too much.” She paused to take a breath before she said her last words, “When the pit comes and Universe 1 ceases to exist, so I will do the same.”

“And your foolishness will cost you your life. Do with me what I plan to do. Hide in one of the three ships and come out once it takes off to see which commander I will have chosen. Nor I will choose one of your three children as well so I will let fate decide and carry out my will at random. Your children already know of my plan and think it a glorious and wonderful idea. They have all agreed that you should do the same. But aghast, you see death as the better option so I bid you adieu and look forward to see my first star ever in person and feel its warmth as it welcomes me to my new home!” And at that Plux left feeling a reassurance that there will be hope that Teri will change her mind in the next couple of days before Ships Futkarius, Lonjmwala, and Histeen take off for their new homes... or their new fates.

Pluxin ate a bountiful dinner of worm-meat and fried perindin loaves. The grimy taste of the meal was nothing like what fhe had in his early years of life when the varieties were much more extravagant and fruitful to the choosing.

“Oh be the day when I bite into an apple or a plumlox. The juicy insides can’t compare to the gooey, slimy texture of my worm-meat.” Plux ate the rest of the stale perindin loaves and took fhis/fher last walk on Universe 1 land before the departure planned for today. The lamps glowed an eerie neon green that represented it was Departure Day and green for go has always been universal for humans meaning ‘go’ which Plux has never understood. Fhe had always liked the soothing creaminess of a warm pink to be a better representation for symbolizing a brighter future.

“Oh, Plux.” A fellow human remarked. “You *know* Narka has the best chance to leading us to salvation. Aboard Histeon with me and my family.” The human had a fake smile on that Plux could clearly see through.

“Silly human. Whatever ship I board is none of your business.” Plux kept walking until fhe came across another human which had a *Team Futkarius* hat on.

“Riding with Captain Flaya today, Plux?” Plux shrugged fhis/fher shoulders at the silly human and went on fhis/fher way.

Fhe came upon the three ships looking at the grandness of all three of them. They sat side-by-side together.

“I’m not choosing,” Plux thought to fherself/fhimself proudly. Instead, Plux walked to the nearest elevator connecting to all three of the ships. Now came the waiting game. Fhe plugged fhis/fher ears and watched as family after family began stepping into the elevator sealing their now inevitable fate of whatever was to come. What was to come when leaving Universe 1? Plux had high hopes but the statistics that Teri showed fhim/fher were far too grave. “I might as well be walking into my early grave.” Plux remark as fhe now closed fhis/fher eyes and shut off any gravitational pull fhe felt towards any of the human families. They couldn’t be the source of fhis/fher choosing, but, at the same time, they had to be. And then fhe picked one. Fhe followed their smell into the elevator and then unplugged fhis/fher ears and opened fhis/fher eyes. They all looked saddened beyond believe. And that’s when fhe realized it; they were heading to Jovian’s ship.

“There’s a chance...” The father wouldn’t let Plux finish.

“Just... no. Please?” Plux nodded. No one wanted to go to Jovian’s universe. It had the least amount of chance to contain the capabilities of life. People were drafted into the ships. All nine trillion humans didn’t have a choice besides staying with their immediate family. It still didn’t mean couples were separated that hadn’t wedded yet before the draft and some families still had problems staying together. It was a rough drafting period, and it will be an even rougher departure. But most humans that got *selected* more or less would say to be on Flaya and Narka’s ships feel more certain that there’s more of a chance for them over Jovian’s destination.

They boarded the ship, Lonjmwala. It took several more hours; most of the rest of the day actually until everyone was settled in and ready takeoff. For the past two weeks people have already been slowly moving in and taking up residence inside the tiny, compact, little ships making it their homes for the next twelve-fifty years. Each ship had a different distance than the other. Lonjmwala was supposed to take the longest ranging up to half a century until they were to enter Universe C. Universe A and B were to take only a couple of decades.

At 11:21 pm Futkarius was the first ship to take off. It was Narka’s ship ready to see what lay beyond Universe 1 and what lay inside Universe A. No had ever been outside of Universe 1 and she was

the first to be entering into the Great Abyss. Narka came on the screen inside the main area of Lonjmwala.

“The Great Absyss is now only three hundred lightyears away. Moving in, getting closer... Histen... Lonjmwala... stay where you are. It’s time to find out if Futkarius will follow in Neil Armstrong’s footsteps or crumple like the fall of the Roman Empire.” Everyone began counting down as Futkarius was now only two-hundred and fifty lightyears away, two-hundred lightyears away, one-hundred. The crowd inside the main area of Lonjmwala began to countdown:

“FIVE, FOUR, THREE, TWO, ONE.” Narka slid into the thin layer and broke the skin of Universe 1. What followed was like a balloon losing its air. The ground began to shake beneath the two ships still parked in place.

“GO, GO, GO!” Narka yelled triumphantly. “We made it out! Flaya, Jovian; the air is clean on my side but hazardous on yours! You have to get out!” Flaya and Jovian showed up on the screen. Or what were supposed to be Flaya and Jovian. But no. Instead, only Flaya showed to be on the screen already taking off. But Jovian’s seat was empty.

“WHERE’S JOVIAN?” Narka said panicking as she looked upon the empty seat of where her brother was supposed to be sitting. As Flaya steered and maneuvered her way through the chaotic space vacuum her sister had created for her she quickly cried out:

“I THINK HE WENT BACK FOR MOM!” Everyone in the main area of where Plux was situated began gasping and uttering cries of hysteria.

“Our captain has forsaken us!” One person cried out.

“Let’s leave him! Someone hurry up and get us out of here!” The massive crowd began swarming all over each other like a pile of disease-infected rodents.

“I hate humans.” Plux muttered to himself as he watched in horror as people trampled over one another not knowing what to do. Suddenly, Jovian’s was in the vacant seat not saying a word, only starting up the ship and taking off. Flaya and Jovian came out of the hole that Narka had opened up for them and they came to a halt, each of them beside each other. No one talked for a while... finally Flaya spoke up:

“Did you get Mom?” Jovian shook his head replying:

“I was only going to the bathroom, sis...” There was a silence as the three of them stared out into what they thought would be the Great Abyss. But, instead, it was another universe.

“A universe inside of a universe.” Plux said to himself/fherself whistling as fhe got a look at stars for the first time in fhis/fher life.

“Mom was wrong.” Narka muttered, “There is no Universe A, B, and C.”

“Only Universe 2 now.” Jovian muttered as he looked back at what was left of Universe 1. All that was left now was only a black hole.