

THAT STRANGE LIGHT FROM THE BLACK HOLE

The commander Lynn gave a hearty laugh, then stopped. The crew of the bridge, in turmoil for hours, was stunned in front of the big black screen at the center of the hall. The stars had literally been devoured.

<<We entered Sector 21>> announced the official Thomas, watching out of the panel for a few seconds.

Lynn turned his head: <<Is that the black hole?>>

No one answered, as a second officer had rushed in. He typed something on the keyboard and on the side screen appeared a red light.

<<What is that?>> Asked Lynn.

<<We would like to know>> said Martin, still with a short breath. <<But it's risky, we have to invert the route>>.

<<What?>> shouted the commander, standing up. <<Call together other two ships of the fleet, and send them on ahead! >>

<<This violates our Naval Security Code, sir>> protested Thomas.

<<Here I'm the commander>> got annoyed Lynn, who returned to his chair, purple with rage.

<<But, sir>> insisted Thomas. <<Article 18, unknown objects... >>

<<Do as I say!>> continued unperturbed Lynn. <<It won't be a stupid light to derail our mission>>.

The officer Thomas lowered his head and nodded to Martin, who soon after went out of the same door he had entered.

The bridge was in turmoil again. Everyone performed the task that had been assigned to him to perfection, without distractions. There were those who went up and down the stairs, who was working frantically at the terminal, who marched with apprehension along the balcony, above the hall.

The red light at the centre of the black hole in the meantime, was dividing into three distinct lights.

<<What happens?>> grunted Lynn, almost slipping out of the station.

<<Don't panic!>> an officer shouted. <<They must be our ships on ahead!>>

In that same instant, the officer Martin entered the hall, more breathless than before.

<<There have been reported two more ships!>>

<<What?>> replied Thomas. <<I thought those were our own ones>>.

<<Quick>> worried Lynn. <<You must immediately give the order to the entire fleet to reach us>>.

Martin did not wait a second, and disappeared behind the grey door.

The atmosphere was electric, a single mistake would not only compromise the mission, but would put at risk the lives of everyone.

After a few hours, more lights appeared on the central screen.

<<We must invert the route!>> worried Thomas.

<<Do not even think about it!>> grunted Lynn. <<How long does it take to get other ships here from our Sector?>>

Thomas did a quick calculation at the terminal, then said: <<About 18 hours>>.

<<Perfect!>> said Lynn. <<Summon Martin and give him the order to send other ships>>.

<<But... >>

Lynn had never been so serious in the face, Thomas lowered his head and turned away with resignation.

Everyone continued to execute their orders, but a veil of seriousness had fallen over the entire troop. Sooner or later someone would have made a fatal mistake.

Hours passed sleepless, seemed eternity. Until something happened on one of the side screens.

<<There are other ships!>> shouted someone.

Thomas looked carefully, then shook his head. <<Something tells me that those dots are always at the same distance from us ... and yet we have been several hours chasing them>>.

At the same time, Martin came running. <<Those ships are our ones!>>

Lynn stood up, annoyed. <<Can someone explain me what's going on?>>

Thomas moved away from the terminal. <<I think I understand: even before the lights came from our ships>>.

<<So>> cursed Lynn, incredulous. <<Do you want to tell me that only the first light was anomalous?>>

<<Neither that>> said Thomas, walking toward the swarm of red dots on the big screen. <<You see... around a black hole there is a space bending, where even the route of the light is bent. Part of it manages to escape, part is captured and a tiny part revolves around the black hole. Those that we are watching are nothing but our own lights, that revolve around the black hole and came back to us. When other ships reach us, their lights come back as well>>.

<<Hey!>> noticed someone from one of the stations, with his finger pointing to a light much larger than the others. <<Are you sure that the black hole has only sent back the light? The one on a collision course towards us ... is really one of our ships!>>