

# The Three Generals

In the not so distant future, extraterrestrial travel has been achieved, and the human race is now connected to hundreds of planets all throughout space. But this is the story of three commanders, who are sent to outer realm planets on missions to form alliance's, and expand interstellar trade. This trio is composed of General Felex Russo, General Alexis Sweney, and General Harvy Smith. Each is given a unique asset, and coordinates to a newly found planet in hopes of breaching the gap between Earth and the outer realm. With all of this in their favor they shouldn't have any trouble making allies, and this mission will go down in history as the start of a new era. Right?

## General Russo

“Cargo holds sealed and locked in. Fuel tanks are full. Radio seems to be connected. Food stash full. Video ga-”

“Are we ready to launch, yes or no lieutenant?” I ask irritantly. New airmen get on my nerves, always cracking jokes and whatnot. It's not the jokes themselves that I mind, it's just they always seem to be at the wrong time.

“Ah- yes sir. Sorry sir” he stumbled over the radio. I heard chuckles from the other stations, even the engine was roaring in the background.

“If you guys are going to eavesdrop, do so stealthily, I don't want to hear your every breath!” The line falls silent after my harsh outburst, but sometimes yelling is needed. All this machinery makes it hard to take a quiet person seriously. Saying a mental apology to my crew, I get back to launch preparations.

Outside the portholes I can see other personnel cramming to get ready for our departure, some are waving clipboards, decorated with USL stickers, while others are directing lifts to stack sacks and boxes. It's always pretty busy on the United Space League's launchpad, but I haven't seen it this busy since Abigail Hinley and her crew went missing. *Oh Hinley, I wish you could see us now. You'd be so proud.* The pilot's voice crackles over the radio, and I turn away from the memories made just outside that porthole.

## General Sweney

You know that feeling you get when everything's topsy-turvy and you're not sure why, and you just feel ill? That's how I feel right now; upside-down and nauseous. We've been in this wormhole for about a month now, and artificial gravity seems to have given up. Of course, I could get it fixed but then it would just groan and sputter as if the gravity was the problem and not the lack thereof, and decide to break again. My only consolation is chocolate, thank The Light for chocolate and the magic within that allows me to keep it down.

## The Three Generals

Cracking my eyes open, the search for the clock begins. I finally see it on the other side of my cabin, floating by the closet door, with its bright red lights screaming 4:28 AM. With a groan I wad up my blanket and use it to propel me back towards the wall. I pull my hair up into a bun and glide towards the hallway door. Emergency lights flash blue, a warning for gravity loss. *Thanks, Starling, I hadn't noticed.* Sometimes I think my ship is a little slow in the computer.

Not meeting anyone in the hallways, (those lazy bones!). How can they even sleep through this? The moment I get flipped upside down I start getting lightheaded and woozy. Makes me wonder if these airmen are even human.

I finally make it to the gravity generator and notice one of the fuses is blown... Again. I wasn't even aware a generator had this many fuses to blow! Finding a replacement (hiding in a box in the corner) I plug it in, but before it turns back on I remember to grab on to something stable. I don't need another bruise to add to my multi-colored arsenal.

I flip the switch, and as soon as my feet touch the ground I hear thumps and groans echo throughout the ship. With a laugh I mentally prepare a lecture for the crew on sleeping through a ship emergency.

I try to channel my inner Sergeant H.; the caring mother but harsh teacher. If she was here, I'm sure she could whip this crew into shape. I mean she did it for us, what's to say she wouldn't be able to do it again?

### General Smith

Serenity... Silence... The ever encompassing darkness. I cannot feel the cold, but I know it's there. I also know that my crew members creep in the corners of the room, with a weapon of mass destruction. Cake.

"Happy birthday, Harvey!" They shout in unison as my cabin lights are turned on. I'm momentarily blinded, but I'd much rather be blind than face these heathens.

"Guys I told you to call me Smith. And didn't I say that we're not celebrating. Don't you listen to anything I say?" I grumble through my pillow. We're about a month away from Earth and I've never wanted to be alone more. This crew is driving me insane.

"We listened when you said 'Fix the walkway grates' and 'Why don't you guys talk more'" My pilot says from the bottom corner of my cot. He's probably the worst of them all, good memory and all that.

"That was a whole month ago, Anderson, short term orders. Now you guys need to talk less, and listen more." I glare at him. As usual he just smiles it off and bounces on the balls of his feet. How does he always have so much energy?

"Just blow out your candles, they've almost burnt your cake!" Shel the cook. Her real name's Shelby, but she's a whole 4'5" so we gave her the honors of a half name with her half height. Shel's temper is about as tall as she is though, so she ends up sounding more like a scolding mother than a 20 year old cook.

I blow out the candles and slip out of bed before they can decide that smashing the dry loaf of cake in my face is a good idea. They boo a bit before gathering their wounded trickster

## The Three Generals

egos and start heading back to work, leaving me to get ready for the day. *Don't worry Sergeant, I still know how to celebrate. It's just not the same without you here. I'd ask you to come home soon, but Alexis and I already know you're not coming back.* I send the silent reassurance her way, wherever she may be, and start preparing myself for more mental labour.

### General Russo

Space is a gruelling, never ending string of regrets, day dreams, and echoes. No matter what I do I can't keep these airmen occupied without breaking something for them to fix. I even had to resort to making a deck of cards for them. Me. Making cards. Is this really what we've resorted to?

According to the navgrid, we're about a month away from our target coordinates and 6 months away from Earth. I've been thinking about Hinley more, how she used to scold us for muddy shoes, how she would spend hours teaching us how to be good leaders. She may have only been our master in training, but to me, Smith, and Alexis she was like our second mother. When she went missing, well...

I pull away from that thought, knowing full well it won't end pretty. Up ahead I see our cook, Old Champ as we like to call him. He's been on space ships since before anti-grav was a thing. Some of his stories though, they seem a little far-fetched. Of course, we can't really counter him, not knowing what really happened and all.

"Champ! What'cha got for gruel today?" I ask once I'm within a reasonable distance.

"Nothin special, just some old-fashioned beans and grits." He mumbles while fiddling with an ancient looking luxcast. What did they call those in his day, phones?

"Ah, I'm not sure I know what you're talking about, good sir, but I'm sure it'll taste great." I say with a faux smile. I'm sure he sees through it, or at least knows something I don't, because all he does is smile and chuckle before walking down the hall again. A strange man indeed.

I meet a few more people in the hallways, mainly just mechanics and other airmen. However we don't chat for long, I'm on a mission. A grand and important mission.

In the communications nest, I excuse the lieutenants on the job and take one of their seats and headphones. I tap myself into the other ships and wait. Then a voice crackles through.

"Honestly, is this necessary? We just talked like last month!" Alexis sounds harsh, maybe even more so than me, however she still holds some energy.

"It's nice to hear from you too, Alex. Where's Smith?" I say into the headset. He's not usually late to our meetings, if you could call them that.

"Not sure, maybe he's finally got around to schooling his crew about manners. Or how to correctly pull a prank." I can imagine her picking at her nails as she says that. Alexis may seem bright and go-lucky but she's pretty laid back and simplistic. Of course the occasional indulgence is

deeply appreciated. Smith, however, got very into pranks and whatnot after moving in with the

## The Three Generals

training squad. Sergeant Hinley deeply encouraged a little bit of chaos, and he followed right behind like an eager puppy.

“Maybe he’s just a bit late” I vouch.

### General Smith

I’m late, I’m so very late. Alex is going to crush me and Felex is going to make me stay a whole nother month with these heathens! It’s my crew’s fault I’m late anyways!

Before we left port on Earth each of us was given a different asset to bring to our planet. Alex got medicine, great glorious medicine. Felex was given wood and crops. I guess that makes sense if the planet has a carnivorous species inhabiting it. And me? Well, I was left with electricity. Of all things. How am I supposed to use electricity to bargain with some under-developed species? “Here, look at this slightly invisible thing. But be careful, cause if you do see it you’re in danger. Oh also, it’s just concentrated energy, we all produce it so I’ll only give it to you if you agree to be allies with us. No? Well great! Let me just get back on my ship and leave.”

Honestly, how many times can you lose a canister of pure electricity? It’s not like it’s small or anything! Sometimes this crew takes extremes to the extreme.

“I’m here, I’m here guys. Sorry about how late I am, I had to deal with a lost canister.” I talk into the comms headset.

“You do realise how late you are, right?” I hear Felex tapping his pen on the table through the headset. I look at the clock on the comm’s dash and notice I’m a full two hours late.

“Uh... yeah... I’m still sorry. You’d think a whole canister of electricity would be easy to keep track of.” I crack a joke to ease the tension, but the only one who laughs is Alex.

“Looks to me you owe me 10 credits, Felix! It’s always that canister with Smith, don’t cha know?” I can hear Alex’s smile through the headset, that’s just how big it is.

I say “Wait you guys bet on me?” At the same time Felix says “It could’ve been food poisoning!” so we end up sounding more like “Wait it youd’ve guys been food on poisoning!”

“Guy’s, I’ve been in space far too long for me to decipher that.” Alex says after a moment.

“It doesn’t matter, all we really need to do now is set our next call time and worry about making it to our designated planets.” Felex expertly brushes off his mistake. Long ago we decided turns would be taken over the radio, so we usually can avoid a mishap like that.

“I say we check back in after our diplomatic segment of the mission is over, preferably once we’re on our way back home.” I jump back into the rhythm of talking with them. The radio just doesn’t do justice to talking with them face to face.

“Sounds good to me” Alex yawns out. I’m guessing her Gravity generator blew again last night. She never was the best in low-grav environments, even during training. We close off and get back to our daily work.

*If I was a canister of pure electricity, where would I hide...?*

## The Three Generals

### General Sweney

Aliens sure are something else, so many strange customs and foods. I'm not sure how the first space league did it, I'm about to crack and us humans have already met these aliens before!

Friends and enemies, it brings me no pleasure to introduce to you: The Kleckles! These furry little blob creatures suffer constant headaches due to lack of bones and bouncing as their mode of transportation. Hence why I'm here, trying to speak Klec to their ruler (failing miserably, may I add.) and trying to negotiate an alliance for tylenol. Literally.

They may only be small, slightly less intelligent aliens but if this alliance doesn't go through it could mean disaster for this mission and the future of earth's progression. If we can't get them to agree to a deal then we won't have any trade, settlement, or future with this species. All of that future, riding on the back of my success.

So, without further adieu, my conversation with their "King", translated into english for easier reading, went as follows:

Me: "Great king, I am pleased to arrive on such a magnificent planet with such a welcoming greeting squad (They weren't, we were surrounded by little blobs with spears)"

King: "Who are you who hails from the stars"

Me: "We are humans, not from the stars but from the planet Earth. I am General Sweney of the USSL"

King: "We do not want you here, leave (more spears join in the poking and prodding right about here)"

Me: "Great king I'm sure we can be of some use, you see we bring with us medicine from our planet. In return for the medicine we would like to build an alliance with your planet.

King: (Thinks for a moment) "We would be pleased to accept your medicine, how does it work"

Me: "Well you see, you take a pill, swallow it, and after a few minutes your headache starts to fade away. All on its own"

King: "Magnificent! (Sounded more like magnificent, just for reference) We accept your proposal to an alliance!"

The end of our conversation was shocking. I thought maybe they'd ask more about the tylenol, perhaps jab us a bit till we tested it for them. Even though I was shocked, I couldn't be more happy. I succeeded in my mission, I brought earth another victory.

And so that's the story of how I traded my way into the king of Kleckle's favor.

### General Russo

By now I'm sure you've heard Alex's grand story of success, and so I'm here reporting yet another success for this mission. However, because the race of aliens on this planet are mute, they agreed rather... differently.

## The Three Generals

Their king (or queen, it was rather hard to tell) greeted us personally with wind chime-looking instruments and played us the tune of “*Cotton Eye Joe*”. Apparently, due to lack of vocal cords, this species learned a wide expanse of songs to communicate with each other. However, since we didn’t know their songs, and because a mute human came and lived on their planet for some time to study their way of life, they also know how to communicate with human songs.

We explained who we were and our goal and reason for being here. Their ruler played a bit of “*Show me what you got*” by Jay-Z and continued to follow us around to the back of our ship so we could unload the cargo bay. Hundreds of cords of wood came tumbling out, and even more stayed stacked inside the bay. I looked at their ruler for approval, to which I got a tune from “*The Other Side*” by Hough Jackman and Zach Effron (That one song where they agree to split the circus show, just for reference).

And that's how I sealed the deal with the inhabitants of this musical planet.

### General Smith

Can’t I ever get a break? First I’m stuck with these insufferable crewmates, then they continuously lose the electricity, and now these aliens can't even use it!

Let's go back to my days on planet metal-less.

We arrived at about blah blah on day whenever, thanks to a broken time regulator, and were greeted not by glistening rocks or fields of green, but by pure wooden cities and forests so thick the sun couldn’t penetrate the canopy. Even the ground was wooden, though after some close observation, we were able to find rock underneath a few layers of wood. Electricity would do them good, except they run the risk of burning everything on this planet to the ground, or the rock underneath the ground!

We left our ship and marched (not really) towards what we hoped was the planet’s ruler. However, he was asleep. In fact, everyone we found was asleep. As it turns out, the inhabitants of this planet hibernate in their winter season thanks to the thick forest blocking out any possible sunlight. We arrived too late.

After a short talk with the base back on Earth, we left the electricity, told them who we were and where to find us, and left. Bad idea on whoever planned this part. We were good for a while, up until about 5 month into our journey back home.

### General Sweney

“No, it’s not 2:30 military time, it's 2:30 PM, get it?” I shout through the headset. We’re back in our comm rooms again, this time for the last time.

“Look, we’re almost home, I’m just going to leave it.” I hear Smith sigh into his comms headset. Yet again, his time regulator broke and they’re without a replacement. Sometimes it’s good to know how machines work (too bad Smith doesn’t).

## The Three Generals

“How have you guys broken so much stuff? I have to keep breaking stuff myself just so my crew has something to do!” Felex is easily confused, so we just leave him hanging on that question. Right as I’m about to say something else, one of my airmen comes barging in out of breath.

“Sir, we’ve spotted something on the navgrid, something with huge energy waves!”

“Where from?” I ask, sitting up. If these energy waves are large enough for the navgrid to pick up but not distort the ships field, they’d have to be about the size of a large planet.

“We believe it’s from the direction of General Smith’s target planet, sir!”

“Smith, did you hear that? What did you do?” I ask into the headset.

“I- I only did what the home base told me to do!” He stumbles out. I know I’m being rough on him but it’s important we know.

“Which was to do what, exactly?” Felex jumps in. Now Felex, he’s genuinely scary when he barks like that. He’s no-nonsense as is, and he just gets worse the more worried he becomes.

“We-well the entire species we encountered was in a hibernation of sorts, so the base told me to just leave the canister and some basic instructions!” He blurts out. I can hear he’s on the edge of hysterics but I can’t dwell on that right now.

“The entire canister?” I’m astonished. That was a lot of electricity to just leave unmonitored.

“Yeah! It was all for them anyway!” He’s getting defensive, which doesn’t help the situation. He may or may not have indirectly killed off an entire planet, and this mission's chance of success.

“Smith, you know there have been containment issues with that canister! What could ever give you the idea it was safe to leave there?” I ask, amazed at the gall of this boy. Another airman interrupts our banter with news.

“It’s confirmed, sir, General Smith’s target planet has exploded.”

As those words left his lips, a shockwave hit the ship and everything went dark. Walls rattled and floor grates jumped up and down. Generators shut off, the engine shut down completely, even the backup reserve powered off. The coms radio crackled out, the last interaction with human life and I found we’ve been doomed. It was almost poetic.

I looked around at my crew, some on the ground and others leaning against the walls. I saw each face change from fear to recognition. We were stranded in space.