



If sound could carry through the vacuum of space, one might well imagine an audible creak and groan issue forth from the massive wormhole generator, many times larger than the gates regularly used throughout the Republic. It had undergone countless cycles of having been under close guard, and intense scrutiny, but in either case it hadn't seemed to ever matter. Bureaucracy after bureaucracy had guarded it, studied it, and eventually given up on it, as it had no seeming means of activation, no seeming connection to any other locale.

The most recent word had come down from Proconsul Therus VII...to leave a monitoring satellite to alert if anything changed, and order the maintenance of said satellite once every five years. That order was issued 80 years ago, and its last service had been 55 years past..

One had to doubt that Captain Aurillus (if a mere hauler of freight even deserves the lofty title "captain") was even aware of the generator, or the satellite, as he passed through this lonely length of space on a route too remote to be part of the ancient wormhole network...but it wouldn't take him long to realize that something else was present...something big.

They came like locusts, like a flood of steel as vast and horrific as that of the Scavengers a generation past that consumed worlds. Orange-marked vessels of strange design, bearing the scars of recent battle and filling the sensors with contacts faster than his tactical officer could count and report.

"Translation coming through sir! They claim to be part of the 'New Sathrican Imperium', and it would seem that they are in need of supplies and materials."

"What do they say that they need?" Aurillus asked his com officer.

"Everything, sir."

It was then that a swarm of fighters surrounded the Vagone, and the captain knew his career was at an end.

While in the distance, an underpowered old satellite sent a signal back to Verus, and a stream of images sure to rock the Republic to its foundations.