

EvE Online – The Lost Artifacts

Chapter 1 – Death Throes

For so many years each side has struggled with conflict. Conflicts of resources, passion, love, and loss abound around us. Heroes born from this conflict walk among us only to eventually meet their own fate. It is a fate we all share. Technology continues to consume the universe with every side wanting to stay one step ahead of another. It is a tragic circle which has continued throughout the eons. Many stories have been told and passed down through the ages from all of this. So it must continue.

System: Podion

A brief chirp at a console was quickly followed by the hustle of a technician at the communications terminal.

“Sir, incoming message from forward element”

“Put it through”, said the commander.

“Commander Volsh we have detected the transport ship on course as intelligence suggested. We are prepared to engage the vessel in its next gate jump into the Podion system. Please advise.”

Everything was going just as planned thought the commander. One well planned ambush and he was two-hundred million ISK richer. As long as the cargo was delivered that is.

“Engage the ship on contact. Alert me when the cargo has been recovered and meet up at the designated system.”

“Yes sir!” replied the pilot.

The commander signaled the communications technician to end the transmission, leaned back in his chair, and pondered the new things this ISK would buy him. A much needed overhaul, some crash for old times, and a few spirits would do well he thought.

The Occator class transport ship dropped out of warp fifteen kilometers from the jump gate and slowly aligned to progress to its next destination. Captain Thulian peered out the forward view port into the blackness beyond. He briefly felt the awe he once knew as a new ship pilot in the vastness of space. The moment passed, faded to a distant memory.

“Captain Thulian! We have unidentified ships on scope. Reading two Loki class strategic cruisers and one Absolution class command ship at close range. They are targeting us and powering weapons.”

Immediately Thulian reacted, and issued commands to counter the current threat. He had been handpicked for this transport. Unaware of the cargo it contained he was made very aware of its importance to the federation. Adrenaline coursed through his body as a natural reaction to the events which lay before him. Quickly he read over the sensor readings and navigation data.

“Activate the microwarpdrive; we must not let them get our cargo.”

“Drive is not responding sir they have shut it down. We are dead in space. The lead ship is hailing us,” replied the navigations officer.

The enemy ships engaged their stasis webifiers, and the transport ground to a crawl. They were helpless and running out of options. Only a few bulkheads were now between the enemy arsenal and the harshness of space.

“Put it on screen. Now!”

“All we are getting is audio. Channel is open sir.”

“Captain of the transport vessel Artentaga you have one minute to jettison your cargo or you will be fired upon. Should you jettison said cargo you will be free to leave this area. Your time starts now.”

Quickly Thulian recounted the last few minutes. This was too high end for the typical pirate groups in the local area. This was calculated. Someone knew when and where this ship was going to be. He was dead before he even got here. If he jettisoned the cargo he would be executed. If he didn’t the ship would be destroyed and the crew along with it. There had to be another option. A warning shot jerked Thulian out of mid thought.

“You have thirty seconds to comply.”

“Captain Thulian, sensors show a cynosural field twelve kilometers out. Field was produced by a Rapier class recon ship. Additional ships are now appearing on sensors. I am now reading multiple battleships, heavy assault cruisers, and two Nidhoggur class carriers within a twenty kilometer range. Carriers are launching fighters sir.”

Thulian quickly pondered the new arrivals. Were they his rescue? Were they here for the same reason as the previous aggressors? What the hell was going on? More importantly, what was this ship carrying?

“Attempt to contact the carrier flagship. Prepare to engage the microwarpdrive should the stasis fields be removed. I want to be prepared to vacate the area as quickly as possible should we get the chance.”

A flurry of bright flashes drew Thulian’s gaze to the forward viewport. He had to check sensors to make sure. A pair of heavy assault cruisers had engaged the Absolution. He watched as a steady stream of missiles tore through the armor plating of the command ship leaving debris in space. The command ship turned to engage, but the onslaught was just too much. A swarm of fighters from the carriers soon followed and the Absolution exploded with a bright flash indicative of a reactor failing. The two strategic cruisers shared the same fate soon after.

“Get us out of here now!” demanded captain Thulian.

“Sir, we are still unable to move the new fleet has engaged us.”

Thulian once again looked through the forward port and saw the distinctive signs of incoming missiles. He had the sudden urge to scream right before impact, but remembered it to be useless. In space no one would hear his screams.

The grotesque being shrouded in cloth aboard the carrier issued two final commands. Recover the cargo and dispose of any ships used in the engagement. No one was to even know they were here. No trace left behind. There hasn't been for almost sixty years.

“Commander Volsh we have lost all contact with our forward element as of two minutes ago. It seems their ships may have been destroyed”

Volsh knew no one in the area had that kind of firepower. There was an unknown player on the board he thought. Then his thought shifted to his brother. He had been tasked as covert ops to oversee the operation. His instructions had been the same. He was to meet up as the designated coordinates following the operation. It was time to get some answers.

“Proceed to rendezvous point.”

“Yes, sir.”

Chapter 2 – To Be Enlightened

System: Futzchag, Thukker Mix Factory - Orbital

Purpose: Rendezvous Point

Volsh felt the dampening field kick into high gear as his Sleipnir class command ship dropped out of warp near the old Thukker Mix Factory. Peering through the polycarbonate port the old station looked like something which had spawned on the wrong side of hell. Scorch marks and damaged plating dotted the station as a firm reminder of what goes on here. Lower decks of the station still showed signs of explosive decompression. The communication antenna looked like they had been repaired numerous times from scavenged parts.

“Sir, there is an incoming transmission from the station.”

“Put it through Tarseki.”

The view screen came to life, but it took a moment for the audio to be processed through the ship's buffers. Volsh noticed the room behind the docking technician looked just as bad as the rest of the station.

“Commander your ship ID has been pre-cleared for docking sequence. You have been assigned

to bay two section eleven. Please enter the holding pattern and await further instructions.”

“Acknowledged. Proceeding to holding pattern as requested.”

Volsh cut the transmission using his mind-link to the ship, and set course for the co-ordinates received from the docking technician. The mind-link allowed a direct interface of the pilot’s mind to ship systems allowing a pilot to make minute corrections during combat at a speed far faster than having to relay commands throughout the ship or use a console. He could in effect fly the ship alone and operate all systems if needed. This was easy in a smaller vessel, but in larger ones a crew complement allowed him to ease his mind and focus on particular ship functions. A pilot could just as easily be killed due to a sensory overload as to a ship being destroyed. Some pilots were even cyber enhanced these days. The Sleipnir slid into the docking pattern behind an Ark class jump freighter and Volsh throttled the speed down to avoid a collision.

“Well Tarseki, now we wait.”

“It could be worse sir. We could be in Jita.”

They both burst out in laughter. Volsh thought about the last time he tried to dock there to pick up a few things for a mission. By the time he had docked the local market had sold out of the item he needed. A system filled with scumbags, business, and all sorts of people fighting for any cause thinkable. A relative Megacyte deposit if you are looking to make a quick buck. On the bright side Jita does have the universe’s largest selection of exotic dancers.