

They Can Never Stop the Signal

Timeline α : Traveling to Earth in pursuit of the escaped **Victor Furtado** to prevent him from further jeopardizing their monopoly on the production of **Power Prisms**, a group of **the Lightsmiths** of **Aperion** are startled to discover the presence of the artificial planet known as **Vulcan** in orbit around Earth. Their fear of provoking whatever force overcame the planet destroyer overcomes their fervor to pursue Furtado, and they withdraw to return to Aperion. The pilot of the vessel carrying them, **Dyspemous Khlarish**, is further annoyed by the folly and venality of his masters, but nevertheless heeds their commands ... for now.

Timeline β : Traveling to Earth in pursuit of the escaped Victor Furtado to prevent him from further jeopardizing their monopoly on the production of Power Prisms, a group of the Lightsmiths of Aperion are momentarily perplexed by signs of a great battle that took place in orbit around Earth, but deem them irrelevant. They descend towards the settlement known as Rio de Janeiro, where the organization known as **O Povo de Ouro** are headquartered and broadcast their desire to "discuss" matters with its membership.

To the displeasure of the Lightsmiths, their meeting with the membership of the organization is also attended by a representative of the government of **the Technate** (one **Deleh Massovy**) and a representative of a different Terrestrial organization known as **Argus** (one **Duncan Cassidy**.) The eldest Lightsmith present informs the two of them that they are permitted to observe these discussions but should not participate unless explicitly invited to do so. The elder then addresses Furtado with the only pair of options that he is to be permitted: either to return to permanent captivity on Aperion or to have all information about ways in which a Power Prism functions and how they can be duplicated, as well as any information which might lead him to rediscover such information, forcibly removed from his brain. They are willing to give him a minute amount of time to consider his options before violence becomes necessary.

Furtado smiles and indicates that he will be taking a third option. He turns to the Argus representative and states that he is prepared to offer Argus the information about how the Power Prisms can be created. The Lightsmith representative states that, should Argus accept this offer, the Lightsmiths will do whatever is necessary to destroy whoever has access to the information and prevent it from spreading further. With an uncomfortable glance in the direction of one of the other members of O Povo de Ouro (one **Pedro Blanco**) the Argus representative indicates that, as friendly relations with non-hostile extraterrestrial governments are considered absolutely essential to the security of the planet Earth, Argus declines to accept this well-meant offer.

"Okay," says Furtado, unfazed. "You were the backup, anyway." With that, he taps the face of the anachronistic wristwatch that he is wearing. "So. I just sent a signal to the computer system

of *TSV Adventure*, where a copy of all my research on the Prisms is contained. During my time on that vessel, I set up a program to transmit a copy of that copy to any Technate vessel in reach when I sent that signal. Due to **recent events**, there are a large number of those in this solar system. In addition, the *Adventure* just launched a number of its **hyperspace drones**, now *also* carrying copies of that copy, and heading towards the Technate as fast as their drives will carry them." He turns to a startled looking Technate representative. "I imagine your best scientists will be able to put this information to use just as easily as Argus might have."

"What have you done?" asks the Lightsmith representative, stunned.

"That which can be destroyed by the truth, should be," replies Furtado. "I just revealed the truth about how easy it is to make a Power Prism to a group you *cannot* so easily intimidate, I think."

The next statements made by the Lightsmith representative are too idiomatic to be easily translated into either a terrestrial language or to Technate Standard. (They relate mostly to biological functions that Lightsmiths could but were not supposed to perform.) "We will destroy you for this," they say when they return to comprehensible terms. "We will destroy your entire wretched planet for this. You, all of you, will die for --"

And then Dyspemous Khlarish uses his Power Prism to direct a blast of energy through the Lightsmith representative at a precisely chosen angle that caused the representative to cease forthwith to live. The other Lightsmiths present are not so easily dispatched now that they are on guard, but Khlarish exploits his knowledge of their physical weaknesses to eliminate them almost more quickly than it takes to do it, with the Terrestrial and Technate representatives unable to do much of anything but gape in surprise. When it is done, he turns to them with a calm expression on his face. "I believe that the Council of Aperion will also be most interested in discussing the methods by which Power Prisms can be created *without* relying on the Lightsmiths," he states in a calm, level tone.

"... what have you done?" asks Furtado, stunned.

"I believe the Terrestrial expression is 'coup d'état'," replies **Khlarish**. "As this action is preventing and will prevent attacks on your planet ... you are welcome." He turns from him to regard the Technate representative, who seems no less stunned than Furtado. "Our agents will be in contact with the heads of your Agency to discuss terms. These proceedings are closed."