



Battlestar Prometheus
By Ryan a. Keeton

Based on the sci-fi channel original series
BATTLESTAR GALACTICA
By Ron Moore & David eick

Series based on
BATTLESTAR GALACTICA created by
Glen Larson

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

FRIEND

Commander Jonathan Turner: Commanding Officer of the Prometheus and Battlestar Group 22

Colonel Nigel Alexander: Commanding Officer, Gunstar Sentinel

Colonel Marco Hall: Commanding Officer, Gunstar Vigilant

Colonel James L. Ryan III: Executive Officer of the Battlestar Prometheus

Major Karla 'Ice Queen' Horvath: Commander, Air Group (CAG) of the Prometheus air wing

Captain David Briedis: Chief Engineer of the Prometheus

Captain April 'Doc' Kaplin: Flight Surgeon, Battlestar Prometheus

Captain Jason 'Slider' Allen: Commanding Officer, 101st Viper Squadron "Aces"

Captain Joshua Wakefield: Commanding Officer, 82nd Viper Squadron "Knights"

Lieutenant Allain Halloran: Prometheus Operations Officer

Petty Officer Theresa Madrid: Communications Specialist for the Prometheus.

FOE

Primus Marcus Antonius: Supreme Commander of the Alliance Expansionary Armed Forces

Galaxus Lucius Verenos: Commander of the 7th Legionary Battle Group of the Terran Alliance Expansionary Fleet.

Executor Tyranus Bane: Special Agent of the Alliance Onyx Brigade, also known as Dr. Hal Creighton

Precentor (I) Rollo Thomasi: Commander of the Terran Alliance Battle Cruiser Kraken.

PROLOGUE

INTO THE LION'S DEN

FREE WORLDS CRUISER *LIBERATOR* IN ORBIT OF TERRA TERRAN ALLIANCE

Commander Jonathan Turner, still aching from his recently healed injuries, looked out the observation bay window at the world spinning below him. With the tell tale blue-white marble look of most worlds that supported human life, the world known as Terra reminded him of his own homeworld, Leonon.

“Beautiful sight, isn’t it Commander?”

Turner rotated slowly to find Centurion Lucas Verenos, the commanding officer of the *Liberator*, standing behind him.

“It is.” Turner said.

Verenos smiled. “If you’re looking for Prometheus, you won’t be able to see her. She is docked at Isis station, which is in geo-synchronous orbit above the capital city of Romalin.”

Turner nodded absently.

Verenos could see that there was something different about Turner now that he had recovered and fully absorbed the situation he was in. It had been a full three weeks since the *Prometheus* had been taken into enemy hands, one of which had been spent in planning and maneuvering to make the attempt to retake this ship.

In that week since Turner had regained consciousness, the Commander had seemed haunted, almost like he wasn’t there. Yet, when one could actually get him to engage in conversation, he seemed more motivated and determined than ever to get his ship back and continue on his mission.

This puzzled Verenos but he paid it no mind. They were allies of convenience, not friends. So long as the job got done, he didn’t care much about Turners personal demons.

“Central System Control has cleared us for our approach to Terra.” Verenos announced. “We should make orbit in one hour and go planet side shortly thereafter.”

Turner nodded again, “My team is ready.”

“Good.” Verenos replied and turned to leave.

“Seems like a lot of security just for a crew rotation.” The Commander commented.

Verenos nodded. “C.S.C. keeps a tight control on Warships entering the Terran system— it’s one of our highest laws. No Legion or Warship is allowed into the Terran system except for the ones assigned to guard it. All others are kept on a tight schedule and allowed in only one at a time. That’s why we had to wait three days just outside the solar system.”

“Sounds like they’re afraid of a military coup.”

“It’s not without reason. The Alliance was torn apart by a civil war during our founding days by generals who thought that they knew better than the government. Since then that law has been in place. Any officer who defies it is subject to summary execution.”

Turner nodded but didn’t reply as he stared ahead at the world below.

“The shuttle will depart in one hour and we’ll be on a tight schedule.” Verenos said as he walked out of the room.

Turner continued to stare ahead but in his mind he kept reliving the horrors he had seen in his visions. Dead bodies everywhere, nuclear clouds over the rubble of what had once been gleaming cities. The death of all that he knew.

Shaking the thoughts from his head he turned and walked out into the corridor where he ran into Major Tompkins, the X.O. of the *Sentinel* and the commander of the Marine forces.

“Sir,” Tompkins greeted as he saluted, “The Marines are in the hangar checking their gear one last time and the tech team is already aboard the shuttle. I’ve also notified the *Sentinel* of our situation and they will be waiting on our signal.”

“Good work, Major.” Turner said. “Go ahead and prepare to depart. I’ll join you on the hangar deck shortly.”

“Yes sir.”

**GUNSTAR SENTINEL
SOMEWHERE JUST OUTSIDE THE TERRAN SYSTEM
TERRAN ALLIANCE**

Slider stood by the situation table of the Gunstar *Sentinel* with his arms folded across his chest and a frustrated and impatient expression on his face as Colonel Alexander entered the C.I.C.

“C.O. on deck!” Slider announced as he came to attention.

“Carry on.” Alexander replied. “Well Captain, how do you like playing X.O. of a ship?”

“All things being equal sir, I’d rather be in the cockpit of my Viper.”

Alexander chuckled. “All things being equal, Captain, I would rather be back on Caprica sipping tea.”

“Yes sir,” Slider agreed, “Although I think I would prefer to be on Troy doing some rock climbing.”

“Really?” Alexander asked with raised eyebrows. “I wasn’t aware that you were a climbing enthusiast.”

“Yes sir, been climbing since I was twelve.”

“Any particular spot you prefer?”

Slider smiled as he hadn’t found too many people who shared his love of rock climbing. To be able to discuss it with a fellow enthusiast was a treat for him.

“To be honest, I like the Golgotha Range on Troy.” Slider said.

Alexander shook his head. “Can’t say that I have been there but I have heard that the view from the top is breath taking-- if you can make it.”

Slider chuckled. “I almost made it just before we left. I got to marker sixteen.”

“That’s closer than most.”

“Sir, message from Commander Turner, text only.” Interrupted Lieutenant Hatfield from her Operations station.

Slider and the Colonel exchanged glances and turned to face the display screen above the situation table. "Pipe it here." The acting X.O. said.

The screen first showed a jumble of code before finally resolving into a coherent message.

TO: Sentinel Actual
FROM: Prometheus Actual
RE: Operation Revival

Stage 1 complete. 24 hours to Stage 2 LD. Implement Case Yellow.
Respond with Colonial Encryption Sequence Beta to confirm.

Alexander nodded as he read it. "Respond on this frequency with C.E.S. Beta and attach my security code."

"Yes sir." Hatfield replied as Alexander turned back to face Slider.

"X.O., contact *Vigilant* and inform them of the update. Have them move up to staging point two."

"Yes sir." Slider replied as he picked up the handset in front of him.

Alexander leaned forward and examined the star chart in front of him that Lucas Verenos had provided them. It showed the Terran system with all the orbital tracks of the seven worlds that occupied it. It also showed the blind spots on the Terran Central System Control grid, the ones that he had called the 'Smugglers Trail' because of its use by the black market.

"Lieutenant Hatfield, begin jump prep and lock in coordinates for staging point two."

"Yes sir."

"*Vigilant* reports ready to jump." Slider reported from next to him.

Alexander nodded. "Time to get on with this."

CHAPTER 1

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MIRROR

CYLON BASESTAR 212 SOMEWHERE JUST OUTSIDE ALLIANCE SPACE

The person who still thought of herself as Stacie Percival awoke to find herself in a glowing room. Looking up she saw her own face staring back at her. It made her start for a moment until she remembered where she was.

Until she remembered *who* she was.

“Wake up sister.” The woman with her face said gently, lovingly. “It’s time to start your new life.”

Blinking her eyes, Sheba rose from the bed to find herself in the nude. Having always been a modest person, she immediately began to look for something to wear until she realized that her counterpart was nude to, as were all of the others who had gathered in her room, male and female alike.

“Its ok little sister,” said one of the females called Three, “The first time can be a bit disorienting.”

“Disorienting isn’t quite the word I was thinking of.” Sheba said as he rose to her feet, holding the sheet that had been covering her while she slept in an attempt to hide her body. “What is it you want with me?”

“Nothing,” said a tall and muscular black man, “We’re just here to welcome you home.”

“Home...” Sheba repeated.

“Yes,” said an older white male with a balding head. “You’re home now. You’ve come back from the land of the barbarians.”

“I- I don’t understand.” Sheba said as she sat back down.

“Perhaps we should give her some more time.” Said a woman with almond shaped eyes and long black hair.

“No,” replied a short white male. “our time is growing short. We need the information from her now.”

“What information?” Sheba asked, confused. “What are you talking about?”

“She can answer questions later, Aaron.” Three said, “Let Six and I talk to her for a bit. She needs to understand what’s happened to her.”

“What’s happened to me?” Sheba asked quietly.

“We don’t have time for this D’anna,” The one known as Aaron replied, ignoring Sheba’s question. “Turner and his crew are going to move within the next twenty four hours and we need to have better knowledge of the situation.”

“What’s happened to me?” Sheba asked again, this time a little louder.

“For God’s sake Doral, it isn’t *that* important—” D’anna protested.

“It could change our plans in the most fundamental ways, D’anna.” The black man interrupted.

Sheba began to feel her anger rise. She didn’t like to be ignored.

“What has happened to me?” she asked again, her patience beginning to reach its limit.

“You worry too much Simon.” A fellow Six replied to the tall black man, “It’s not like Turner is going to get them to unite after all. There are too many fundamental differences between the two cultures.”

“*You* don’t take this serious enough, Six. If the humans unite against us—“

“WHAT THE FRAK HAS HAPPENED TO ME?” Sheba shouted angrily, drawing the attention of the other Cylons.

The room went silent as Sheba’s anger seethed openly. Finally, Doral cast an impatient glance at Sheba, and then turned back to D’anna. “You have one hour.”

Turning quickly he walked from the room with Simon and Cavil following in his footsteps.

D’anna, Sharon and Six watched as their Cylon brothers departed and then turned their attention back to Sheba.

“Men.” D’anna snorted derisively.

Sheba rose to her feet and turned to face the three women. “Will one of you tell me what the frak is going on here?”

D’anna smiled. “Well sister, I don’t know how to break it to you but- you’re a Cylon.”

Sheba scowled. “Yeah, I kind of figured that out on my own. What I don’t understand is *how*?”

“That’s a long story--” Sharon began.

“We only have an hour so start talking.” Sheba replied quickly.

D’anna chuckled and looked at the one who shared Sheba’s features, the one called Six. “I like her.” She said with a smile. “She has spunk.”

Six ignored her and approached her identical sibling. “Your mission started ten years ago. You were programmed and sent to the Colonies to infiltrate the Colonial Defense Force and gather intelligence on its current state of readiness and technological advance.”

Sheba looked confused as memories began to flood back into her mind; memories of her stealing away into the night and using a hidden transmitter to relay information into the night sky.

“Why didn’t I remember this until now?” she asked quietly.

“You were programmed with a memory cap.” Sharon explained. “Memories of your life before as well as of your mission were buried in your subconscious mind and kept there. The reason you can remember them now is because your new body hasn’t been programmed with that cap.”

“At the appropriate time, usually when you were asleep, your subconscious mind would activate and take control of you to send the appropriate reports back to us.” D’anna added.

Sheba sat back down as the impact of their words began to register in her mind.

Her whole life, her whole military career was nothing but a lie, a ruse to conduct espionage on the people she had come to call her own. And then there was...

“Oh my Gods, what about Tommy?”

Six smiled. “He is a gift from God, sister. One of the first of God’s new breed.”

Sheba shook her head as her emotions began to overwhelm her. “What is it you want from me?”

Six and D’anna sat down on both sides of her, enfolding her in a loving embrace to provide comfort to her.

“The truth is that you’ve returned to us before your time.” D’anna explained. “You were aboard the Prometheus to evaluate it as a threat and to take possible action should it be needed.”

“Possible action?” Sheba asked.

“Yes.” Six replied. “The Great Debate is over—we’re going home.”

“What do you mean?” Sheba asked as she straightened up.

“What we mean is that *Operation: Divine Justice* has been approved.” D’anna smiled, “In just over ten months humanity is finally going to pay for their arrogance.”

**FREE WORLDS LEAGUE SAFE HOUSE
CITY OF ROMALIN (ROM-AH-LEN)
TERRA**

Commander Turner looked out the window of the safe house he now resided in as multitudes of people walked to and fro in the street in front of him. He marveled at the scenery as Humans and Ovions and several other non-human species that he didn’t recognize, moved about in their daily routines.

“See anything of interest out there Commander?” asked Lucas Verenos as he stepped up beside him.

“It’s amazing.” Turner replied. “Colonial scientists speculated that we wouldn’t find any sort of non-human life in this part of the galaxy and possibly not in this galaxy at all because the elements that form the basics of life for humans are dominant in this region of space, yet here, not even a years travel from our homeworlds, we find that such life is abundant.”

Verenos nodded. “Your scientists are right, but backwards. The elements that support human life are dominant in this region of space, but only in and around the area of Kobol and the Twelve Colonies. In fact, had the Thirteenth tribe not traveled through this area of space thousands of years ago, our scientists speculate that the Ovions would now dominate most of this region of space because they reproduce so quickly. That’s one of the reasons the government keeps such strict control on their reproductive progress.”

“How do you keep their population under control?” Turner asked.

“Simple: We control what they need to reproduce.”

“How?”

Verenos smiled. “Ovions reproduce by depositing their larvae into the bodies of living hosts. The hosts are then cocooned in their nest-hives and used to both feed and incubate the larvae until it has grown enough to survive on its own, usually about two years. We use prisoners who have been sentenced to death to help with that problem.”

“That doesn’t sound pleasant.” Turner said.

“It isn’t. In fact, it’s quite painful from what I’ve been told.” Verenos said as he explained the rest of the process.

Turner nodded as Verenos continued but kept his reactions to himself. Inside he felt a mixture of revulsion at the cruelty of the act and admiration for the efficiency of it. By keeping condemned prisoners on death row until they were needed for breeding, the government kept a steady stream of flesh ready for their Ovion subjects and by limiting the number and sizes of nest-hives the Ovions were allowed to have, they managed to control their population.

Cruel, yet efficient.

“Our sources have reported that Sae’tzar is now in session with the Conclave.” Verenos said after his explanation of, what they termed as ‘*The Ovion Solution*’, had ended.

“Sounds important.” Turner said as he faced away from the window. “What does it have to do with getting my ship back?”

“The conclave is debating what to do with the Prometheus. Until a decision is made, all access to the ship has been restricted to essential personnel and they have doubled their security.”

“What does this mean for us?”

“It means we’re going to have to work fast if we want to our plan to succeed. I’ve already sent my scouts aboard to recon the ship for resistance. I should get word back from them within the hour. I’ve also instructed them to make contact with any of your leadership personnel who are still alive and apprise them of the situation.”

“*Still alive?*” Turner asked, “What do you mean *still* alive?”

“Commander, *surely* you realize that there is a good possibility that some of your crew are dead by now? We’ve already confirmed that Colonel Ryan has been interrogated by one of the best Executors in the Alliance. People don’t usually come out of those sessions in the same shape they were when they went in-- they’re lucky if they come out at all.”

Turner took a deep breath to reign in his emotions and then nodded his understanding. “When do we go?”

“Three hours. Sae’tzar will be taking a shuttle to Isis Station in six hours. We need to be on board and in control by then.”

“Why?”

“Sae’tzar will be bringing a large contingent of troops aboard when he comes to inspect his prize. We won’t have a chance against those kind of odds.”

Turner nodded. “Fair enough. What’s the plan?”

Verenos moved to a small coffee table and rolled out what appeared to be a crude map of the Prometheus.

“Most of the technical and mission essential personnel are being kept here, in this cargo hold.” Verenos explained as he pointed to their location on the map.

“What about the non-essential personnel?” Turner asked as he looked up from the map.

“My sources tell me that they’ve been moved.”

“Moved *where*?” Turner pressed.

Verenos was silent a moment before answering and Turner immediately knew he wouldn’t like what he was about to hear. “They’ve been moved off the ship to the Ironhold Penal Colony on Mars.”

“How many?”

“Look commander, now isn’t the time to--”

“*How many*?” Turner repeated in a low menacing tone.

Caught off guard by the threat in Turner’s voice, it took a moment before Verenos could answer. “Your crew had over two thousand when she was taken and only eight hundred remain aboard her now.”

Turner stood, his eyes narrowed and his jaw clenched tight. “You get me the coordinates and defenses of that facility before we go aboard.”

“You want to mount a *rescue*?” Verenos asked incredulously. “That’s the highest security penal colony we have in all of Alliance space! There’s no way you’ll be able to break in there!”

Turner faced Verenos, his face a grim set of determination and anger. He said only two words but Verenos knew that those two words spelled imminent destruction for those who opposed him.

“Watch me.”

BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS ISIS STATION, IN ORBIT OVER ROMALIN TERRA

Petty Officer Theresa Madrid, known to everyone as Maddie, listened carefully as a tall dark skinned man named Desmond Osis explained the situation to her. Initially, she had been skeptical of him, thinking that he was making another attempt to get information out of her but when he had spoken Commander Turner’s Identification Code to her, she relented.

She listened with anticipation as Osis explained the plan that would lead to their freedom.

“So where is Commander Turner now?” she asked.

“Down on the planet. He and his team will be coming aboard sometime within the next two hours.” Osis explained. “He wants you to inform your teams to be ready to initiate start up procedures and jump prep.”

Maddie nodded her understanding. “I’ll have everything waiting but what about the security detachments roaming the ship?”

Osis smiled. “We have personnel in key positions within those detachments. They won’t be a problem.”

Maddie shook her head. “If you have all of these people in such great positions throughout the Alliance Militia, why weren’t you able to stop this before it happened?”

Osis shrugged his shoulders. “Not my level of knowledge. I’m a soldier, I go where I’m told and follow orders. The ones who make the big decisions are way above me.”

Maddie rolled her eyes. “I know how that is. Okay, we’ll be ready.”

Osis nodded. “Good. I’ll take you back to holding now. Pass the word quickly because when the action starts there won’t be any time for thinking.”

CHAPTER 2

OBJECTS IN MOTION...

PANTHEON OF THE GRAND CONCLAVE CITY OF ROMALIN, TERRA TERRAN ALLIANCE

Galaxus Rollo Thomasi watched with infinite patience as Sae'tzar Claudio Maximus stalked the conclave floor and delivered a rousing speech that extolled the life and service of the recently departed Primus, Marcus Antonius.

Thomasi found it particularly amusing since he knew for a fact that Maximus had personally disliked the former Primus and had even quietly celebrated his untimely demise at the hands of an escaped prisoner aboard the Prometheus.

Still, the speech was a good one. Maximus had always been blessed by Jupiter with the gift of oration. *A shame his intelligence isn't up to the same level* Thomasi thought to himself as another round of applause broke out.

“And now,” Sae'tzar said, “It is my honor and privilege to present to you for your consideration, my candidate for Primus: Galaxus Lucius Verenos!”

Thomasi looked up as Verenos entered from the side and crossed the semi-circular floor to where Sae'tzar stood atop his raised dais. Coming to attention, Verenos snapped his right arm across his chest in the traditional salute.

“Ego ago ministro, Sae'tzar.” Verenos said using the native Terran tongue.

“Vestri muneris est veneration, Galaxus.” Maximus replied as he faced the assembled members of the Conclave. “I now call on anyone who would speak on this nomination to do so at this time.”

Thomasi watched as Count Iblis, the Prefect of the Alliance world of Babylon, rose from his seat and prepared to address the Conclave. As usual, his white toga was spotless and pristine. Three golden chevrons, worn at the end of his sleeves to signify his rank as a planetary Prefect. They gleamed like diamonds in the sunlight. His well groomed salt and pepper hair gave him a look of distinguished authority while his boyish good looks gave him a youthful appearance.

All in all, he looked like the spoiled rich politician that Thomasi took him for.

“Great Sae'tzar,” Iblis began, “Neither I, nor anyone in this room would debate you on the wisdom of nominating this hero of the Alliance for its highest military posting. I move that we accept by acclamation, the nomination of Galaxus Lucius Verenos as Primus of the Alliance Militia.”

Immediately, as if on cue, the rest of the members of the Conclave all rose to their feet and thundered applause for Iblis' words.

Sae'tzar looked to be caught off guard for a moment, although Thomasi was quite sure that he had been the only one to see it. Picking up on the enthusiasm of the crowd, Sae'tzar grasped Verenos' hand and raised it above his head in a gesture of triumph.

"Without opposition, the motion is passed." Sae'tzar announced, "Congratulations, Primus Verenos."

Verenos lowered his arm and bowed respectfully as Sae'tzar took a white toga with four golden chevrons on the sleeves and presented it to him. He took the toga and then knelt as a black cloak with golden trim was draped across his back and fastened on his chest with the golden emblem of his new office.

"Arise, Primus. Go forth and defend the Alliance from her enemies."

Verenos nodded and rose to his feet. "Meus audio atque pareo, Sae'tzar."

Turning quickly, the new Primus marched from the chamber to where Thomasi awaited him.

"Congratulations Primus. All goes according to plan."

"Yes," Verenos replied with a smile, "It does indeed."

"I anticipated more of a fight over your nomination." Thomasi commented as they both began to walk to Verenos new office.

"Yes, Count Iblis was very determined to fight it until I shared some information with him."

"Like?"

Verenos smiled. "Like whom Sae'tzar was going to nominate in my place if I wasn't approved."

"And who would that have been?"

"Michael Pitero."

Thomasi smiled at the implication. The Pitero family had long been a thorn in the side of the Iblis. To have one of their own, a decorated war hero at that, assuming the second highest position in the Alliance would have been a disaster to the Count's political ambitions.

“Sae'tzar didn't think you would be confirmed.” Thomasi said as the realization dawned on him. “He nominated you so that Iblis would shoot you down.”

“And afterwards, Iblis wouldn't have been able to stand up to a second nomination because he would look like he was trying to be a pain in Maximus' ass. He would have lost all credibility.” Verenos chuckled. “The plan would have worked too if I hadn't found out and circumvented it.”

Thomasi nodded. “Well played.”

“Indeed.” Verenos replied as they stopped in the hall. “Is everything in place for stage two?”

Thomasi nodded. “Yes Primus.”

“Good.” Verenos replied. “I am naming you as my new right hand. You will assume command of the Thirteenth Legion and the Terran Sector Fleet immediately.”

Thomasi smiled. “Thank you sir.”

Verenos patted Thomasi on the shoulder. “Don't get too used to it. Soon you'll have a new title and then together, we'll do what we should have done a long time ago.”

Commander Turner watched out the window of the transport he rode in with avid interest as he, Lucas Verenos and the rest of his team made their way through the packed streets of the Silessia district of the city of Romalin.

He was amazed by the difference in culture as compared to his own homeworld.

On Leonon, the thought of soldiers walking armed through the streets was inconceivable, yet here there were armed warriors on every street corner vigilantly watching over the populace.

Not long after they had left the safe house, they had come across a scene where a soldier had two civilians, one human, the other Ovion, on their knees in the street. After what looked to be a quick verbal exchange, the soldier had raised his weapon and butt stroked the human across the back of his head, sending the Ovion into a rage. The soldier had then leveled his gun at the Ovion and shot him through the head.

Turner had flinched at the sight and Verenos had noticed.

“The justice system here is brutal,” Verenos said, “Soldiers assigned to Civilian Security Forces are usually the bottom of the barrel for us. They're the problem cases or the ones so close to retirement that they don't give a damn.”

“Why don’t your civilian leaders do something about it?” Turner asked.

Verenos chuckled. “The members of the Conclave don’t care. So long as order is kept in the streets, the C.S.F. are given a lot of leeway as to how they get the job done and, for all their brutality and faults, they *are* effective. Violent crime is almost non-existent and misdemeanors are rare. Even when they *do* happen, the C.S.F. is so harsh it usually discourages anyone else who might be thinking of trying the same thing.”

“Don’t the offenders have a right to trial?”

This made Verenos laugh. “For over a century officers of the C.S.F. have had the authority to hand down summary judgments and sentences for misdemeanors. Only when one commits a high crime do they get a trial and even *that* is usually just for show.”

“What kinds of punishments are usually handed down for misdemeanors?”

“For most misdemeanors, public lashings are the norm. Sometimes they’re confined for up to a week as well, but usually if a crime is serious enough to warrant punishment by confinement they take them to tribunal.”

Turner had shaken his head and let the subject drop. Their culture was different from his own and he had no right to judge them. Still, it didn’t sit well with him.

Of course, that wasn’t the first thing he had seen on this world that hadn’t sat well with him. Probably wouldn’t be his last either.

“You ready Commander?” Verenos asked from beside him.

Turner nodded. “My men have been briefed.”

“Good,” Verenos replied, “This is one of the most secure installations on the planet. If they don’t play their role exactly, the game will be over.”

‘They’re aware of the stakes.’

Verenos had explained to him earlier that he and his men would be disguised as a technician team and that they would be required to remain silent and subservient during the time it took for them to infiltrate the base and then board the shuttle to Prometheus.

“The military has a rigid structure,” Verenos had explained, “Officers are the top of the food chain with First Line warriors just below them. Second Line warriors and C.S.F. personnel are below them.”

“What about the rank structure?” Major Tompkins had asked. “Can First Line warriors refuse orders from Second Line officers?”

“No,” Verenos had answered shaking his head, “Officers don’t fall into that category, although those assigned to lead Second Line units are looked on less favorably in the officer corps than those assigned to First Line units.”

“So how is rank determined?” Turner had asked.

Verenos chuckled. “*Officially*, all rank is derived by ability. Officers are selected through a series of tests given to soldiers close to the end of their Initial Entry Training. If selected, the warrior becomes an Officer Cadet and attends one of the Alliance Academies. When they graduate, the Officer enters at the lowest rank and has to test annually to either move up, stay in position, or test out.”

“So if they pass a test, they are promoted?” Tompkins asked.

“No, they have to compete with others who are trying to move up. If only eight positions open up for the next rank, only the eight top scoring personnel will get promoted.”

Turner nodded his understanding. “What about the enlisted?”

Verenos smiled. “We like our warriors mean and feisty. They have to fight for their promotions— literally.”

“You’re kidding.” Tompkins said.

“No.” Verenos replied, “If the position of First Spear opened in a Cohort, then all of the Second Spears who are eligible for advancement square off in a series of combat trials. The winner advances, the loser doesn’t. It continues until one person remains. That person gets the job.”

“Has anyone ever died in these contests?” Turner asked.

Verenos shrugged. “It’s rare, but it does happen from time to time.”

Tompkins shook his head in amazement but Turner kept his own reactions to himself.

Now, as they entered the gate to the starport, Turner could see that Verenos hadn’t exaggerated when he described the Alliance military training program as brutal.

In a sand pit not far from where their transport now sat was a ring of shirtless men who faced into the circle as they watched two warriors engage in combat.

“Is that one of the promotion contests?” Tompkins asked as he watched the brutal display.

“No,” Verenos replied with a shake of his head, “That is a Circle of Grievance.”

“A what?”

“It means that the two combatants have some sort of disagreement that they felt couldn’t be settled without combat.” Verenos explain as the transport began to move again. “If two warriors cannot settle their differences in any other way they may challenge each other to the circle. Once inside, rank is no issue, only ability. Of course, officers aren’t legally bound to accept the challenges of enlisted warriors, although there aren’t many who would turn down an honorable challenge.”

“What constitutes an honorable challenge?” Turner asked

“It varies, but for the most part challenges are issued when one warrior believes he has been wronged and he wants to forego the judicial system in favor of resolving it himself. Of course, there are also the rare disagreements that cannot be resolved by peaceful means and so they choose the circle to settle their issues.”

“Sounds barbaric.” Tompkins scoffed.

“Believe what you will Major, but we don’t have violent crime for a reason. If two people have a problem they go to the appropriate authorities and schedule the combat. Once it’s done, it’s done. Grudges aren’t allowed.”

Tompkins was about to argue his point when Turner held up his hand and pointed to the shuttle awaiting them on the tarmac. “We can discuss cultural differences another time. Get your men ready Major.”

“Yes sir.” Tompkins replied as he slipped into the back of the truck.

Turner looked at the shuttle and then to Verenos in the driver’s seat. The success of the plan would depend on the next few moments and the Commander knew it.

Somewhere above him in space his crew was languishing where they had been for almost a month. He was going to end that today and gods help whoever might stand in his way.

CHAPTER 3

LESSONS IN SUBTLETY

PANTHEON OF THE GRAND CONCLAVE CITY OF ROMALIN, TERRA TERRAN ALLIANCE

Galaxus Thomasi bowed deeply as he was ushered into the presence of Claudio Maximus, the Sae'tzar of the Terran Alliance, who sat behind his ornate desk in front of a window that looked out over the Alliance Capital City of Romalin.

"Galaxus Thomasi, come in!" Sae'tzar called to him as he gestured for Thomasi to have a seat. "Would you care for a drink?"

"I would be honored, Sae'tzar." Thomasi replied as he sat across from the ruler of the Alliance.

"Bring wine." Sae'tzar commanded one of his servants as he turned his attention back to his guest. "I want to congratulate you on your promotion, Rollo. It's long overdue."

"Sae'tzar is kind. I am but a humble servant of the Alliance."

"As are we all." Sae'tzar replied taking one of the glasses of red wine offered by his servant. "A toast then, to your continued success and the long life of the Alliance."

Thomasi raised his glass in salute and then took a sip of the wine. It was rich and sweet with a slight tart taste.

Sae'tzar watched as Thomasi drank and then lowered his glass. "Of course, I didn't call you here just to celebrate, I'm afraid. As the new commander for the Terran Theater I wanted to discuss some concerns I have had recently."

"Of course." Thomasi replied.

"Primus Antonius neglected the defense of the central systems in favor of devoting more power to the outer sphere territories. I believe that this has left us vulnerable. Smuggling and pirate raids have increased ten fold in the last year and I have promised the Conclave that I would bring it to a swift end."

Thomasi nodded his understanding. "Primus Antonius had concerns other than the safety and security of the Alliance and he used his influence as Primus to see to them."

"What kind of concerns?"

Thomasi smiled slightly. “I wouldn’t wish to impeach the character of the recently departed—”

“Spare me the drivel and explain yourself.” Sae’tzar said with an impatient wave of his hand.

“Examinations of the late Primus’ records show that he was involved heavily with several of the smuggling outfits that were operating in the central systems. He was, in fact, enjoying sizable pay offs from them in return for diverting the attention of our fleet to other areas of the Alliance.”

Thomasi watched as Sae’tzar fought to keep his calm. His red face and the smoldering set of his eyes told him everything he needed to know.

“Antonius told me that the fleet’s resources were needed in the Outer Sphere Territories because of rising sympathy for the Free Worlds terrorists on several key worlds.”

Thomasi shook his head. “The Free Worlds threat has been exaggerated, Sae’tzar.”

“What of the reports of serving line ships that have defected to their cause?”

“Again, exaggerated. In fact only two ships have defected to their cause and they are both destroyers, so we aren’t looking at a significant loss of firepower.”

Sae’tzar considered Thomasi’s words as he stroked his chin in thought. “Very well,” he said finally, “what do you propose to do about this?”

Thomasi smiled. This was where he had been guiding the conversation all along.

Claudio Maximus had once been a General in the Alliance Militia. Even then he had been overly reliant on politics rather than skill to advance his career. Because of this, his tactical abilities were just enough to grasp the situation in general.

Which meant he had no sense for subtlety.

Maximus wanted to be seen as a strong leader who would put a stop to the illegal activities occurring right under the nose of the Conclave. From that position of strength he could then strike out at the Free Worlds League and put down that incessant annoyance once and for all.

The combinations of that with the fact that Maximus was a reactionary who constantly looked out for himself first and it was easy to lead him right where Thomasi and Verenos wanted him.

“My proposition is simple, great Sae’tzar.” Thomasi explained, “With Primus Verenos’ permission, I will recall the units sent out to track down the Free Worlds terrorists. This will effectively strengthen central system defense by three fold. Using the Prometheus as my flagship, we will then hunt down the smugglers and pirates and destroy them wherever they may be. The entire process shouldn’t take longer than four weeks.”

Sae’tzar nodded and smiled his approval. “A bit optimistic but I approve of your enthusiasm.”

“If you had seen the capabilities of the Prometheus, as I have, you would know that I am actually being quite conservative with my estimates.”

“Yes, I am looking forward to touring your prize ship later on today. Still, you believe that this ship means that much to your plans?”

“Everything hinges on it, Sae’tzar. These smugglers are the very people who are delivering supplies and information to the Free Worlds League. With the Prometheus, I will be able to track them down and destroy them, thus crippling both threats to Alliance security in one fell swoop. All that I need to do this is your permission to conduct military operations in the Terran corridor.”

This brought Sae’tzar up short. “Inside the Terran Corridor? We haven’t had a large fleet presence in Terran space in over one hundred years. The Conclave wouldn’t allow it.”

“With all respect, Sae’tzar, you *are* the Conclave.”

Sae’tzar wagged a finger at Thomasi. “You are wrong, Galaxus. I may serve as head of the Alliance but I am also bound by the will of the Conclave. If I do this, they will charge me with treason and execute me.”

“You can declare an emergency. This will give you authority under the emergency powers act.”

“And when the emergency is through, all of my actions will be subject to judicial review by the Conclave after the fact.”

“Sae’tzar—”

“My answer is no, Galaxus Thomasi.” Sae’tzar said firmly. “However, if you find hard evidence that these smugglers are working in Terran space I will *consider* your request.”

Thomasi sighed in defeat and stood to leave. "As you will it, Sae'tzar." He said bowing deeply.

Sae'tzar nodded. "Thank you for your service Galaxus. You may go now."

Thomasi turned and strode away doing his best to look defeated. Deep inside however, he was pleased.

Sae'tzar had played right into his hands.

CYLON BASESTAR 212 SOMEWHERE JUST OUTSIDE ALLIANCE SPACE

Sheba had listened patiently and tried to hide the horror she felt as the Cylons had carefully, and in detail, explained the plan they had devised to wipe humanity from existence.

The plan itself was quite simple. A Six had infiltrated into Caprica and was even now in the process of seducing the one person who was key to their plans: Gaius Baltar.

The unknowing doctor had allowed her access to the Colonial Defense Force mainframe computer system, the one that tracked every Colonial unit except one-

The Battlestar Prometheus.

"That's where you come in." D'anna had explained. "Your job was to keep tabs on the Prometheus and report on her capabilities and the skills of her crew. At the appropriate time, you would have been required to act either to neutralize or destroy the ship."

"Destroy Prometheus?" Sheba asked. "Why? They're so far away from the Colonies that they couldn't possibly be a factor in your plans."

"We aren't worried about them during the assault." The one called Sharon explained, "It's after the assault that concerns us."

"What do you mean?"

"We follow the will of God, sister." The Six sitting next to her said, "God has decreed that humanity will undergo a culling. Only those worthy of survival will live to see the new civilization where Human and Cylon live together in harmony."

"Ok so why not Prometheus then? Why can't they be allowed to live?"

“For two reasons:” D’anna replied, “The first is that the Prometheus is the one ship the Colonials have that is technologically equal, possibly superior, to anything we have. It would take an enormous amount of effort to destroy her.”

“The second reason,” Sharon interjected, “Is that we have already designated a ship to survive, one that will lead humanity and the Cylons to a new home— a promised land that will yield new life for us all.”

Sheba shook her head as the information sank into her. “Why do you need me then?”

“You know the capabilities of the Prometheus. We need that information.” D’anna said as she held out a hand. “Just do as we tell you and there won’t be any problems.”

Sheba found herself standing and walking towards a shallow pool of water as D’anna and the others led the way. Stepping into the water it felt warm, almost electric, as it made its way up her naked body.

“I— I don’t know what you want me to say...” Sheba said, her voice trailing off.

“You don’t need to say anything sister.” Six replied as she gently lowered Sheba into the water. “Just relax and open your mind.”

Sheba closed her eyes and allowed the warm feeling of the water to flow through her. Suddenly, she began to feel a tingling sensation behind her eyes. “What’s happening to me?”

“Don’t fight it sister.” D’anna said, “We’re linking you with the hybrid to find the information we need.”

Sheba could feel the hybrid as it entered her mind with icy fingers flipping through her memories like they were the pages of a book. She tried to fight back but found she hadn’t the will to do so.

“Stop—” Sheba gasped, “Get- out- of my- mind.”

Inside her head she saw the images of her life fly by at amazing speed. Her life on the Cylon homeworld, the first time she opened her eyes, her first day at the academy, her first kiss, her first night with Jason, the birth of their son, her death in space...

And then a bright flash of light ended her thoughts.

Looking down at Sheba’s still form, D’anna shook her head sadly. “It isn’t here.”

“What do we do then?” Sharon asked.

“We send her back.” Six replied.

“We place several subconscious imperatives in her mind.” D’anna added.

“And when the time is right—” Sharon said

“God’s *will* be done.” Six finished.

BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS ISIS STATION, IN ORBIT OVER ROMALIN TERRA

Maddie jumped up as the door to the cargo bay she was in slid open with a mechanical hiss. Around her, her shipmates also rose to their feet and awaited whatever fate had in store for them.

Since their arrival at Terra, the guards had come at random times to haul off various personnel. Most were never seen again and so the rest of the crew was cautious when the door opened.

This time, of course, things were different.

Maddie and the rest of the prisoners came to attention as the familiar face of Commander Turner entered the bay.

Turner looked around the bay for a moment taking in the sight of it. The room, which had once housed dry food stores, was now a shambles. It smelled of decay and rot and of humans confined too long in a place with no way to clean themselves.

Returning the salutes of his subordinates, he quickly made his way to where Maddie stood and placed a hand on her shoulder. “Good to see you Maddie.” He said with a smile.

Maddie couldn’t help herself as she hugged her commanding officer tightly. Caught off guard by the display of emotion, Turner allowed himself to return the hug with equal intensity.

After a moment, Maddie pulled away and wiped the tears of joy from her eyes. “Sir, everything is ready to go as you planned.”

Turner nodded. “Good work Maddie.” He said as he handed her a pistol he had liberated from one of the arms lockers. “I want you to take these weapons and distribute them to these people. Then you’re coming with me.”

“Where are we going sir?” Maddie asked.

“I need you to help me retake C.I.C. Major Tompkins is going to take a team down and free the pilots on the hangar deck while Lucas takes another team to engineering to liberate that section.. It all depends on us regaining control of the internal counter measures first though.”

Maddie nodded. “With that we can lock down all of the areas where the Alliance has troop concentrations and then retake them one at a time.”

“Right.” Turner nodded.

“Shouldn’t Lieutenant Halloran be helping you with this though?”

Turner shook his head. “He’s still recovering from the shrapnel he took during the evacuation.”

“I’ll bet that pissed him off.” Maddie said with a smirk.

Turner couldn’t help but smile. “You have *no* idea...”

**GUNSTAR SENTINEL
STAGING POINT TWO, SOMEWHERE INSIDE THE TERRAN SYSTEM
TERRAN ALLIANCE**

“Gods damn it, I’m tired of this fraking waiting game.” Allain Halloran griped for the hundredth time as he sat at the tactical control station of the Gunstar *Sentinel*.

Slider shook his head and sympathized with him. “Keep still Lieutenant. Things are likely to get dicey anytime now.”

“I should be there with the Commander, not limping around here on a cane and playing spectator.”

“You would be of no use to the Commander in your current condition, Lieutenant.” Said Doctor April Kaplan as she entered the C.I.C. “The most you would do is provide some amusing target practice for the Alliance soldiers already aboard.”

Halloran steamed in his seat but chose not to respond.

“You think I would be here if I didn’t have to be?” Slider asked. “I’d like nothing better than to be boarding a Viper right now and getting ready to fly out there. The commander wanted me here though, just like he wanted you here.”

“Sir, you can do some good here. You’re trained in ship to ship combat tactics. I’m a Black Beret—”

“Who’s trained in capital ship operations.” Slider said cutting him off, “When the shit hits the fan here in a bit, we’ll need every hand we can get.”

Halloran remained quiet and accepted Slider’s logic, though he wasn’t fond of it.

Halloran had become a Black Beret because he was a man of action. He didn’t like to sit idle when there was a job to be done, especially a job where he could help.

It was the shrapnel that had torn up his left side that had kept him from going on the mission. He had so many holes from his left foot all the way up to his left ear, that some had taken to calling him ‘Pin Cushion’, although no one would say it to his face for fear of him ripping out their tongue.

“Signal from Actual sir.” Lieutenant Hatfield reported from her console. “He’s boarded the ship and is preparing to move on the C.I.C.”

Slider nodded and sprang into motion. “Action stations, set condition one. Wake up the Colonel and tell him it’s time.”

“Yes sir.” Hatfield replied.

“Halloran, spin up the FTL drives and lock in the coordinates for jump.”

“Yes sir.” Halloran replied, happy to finally have something to do.

Slider smiled grimly as he realized that the long nightmare was about to end, one way or another.

“Contact the Vigilant and inform Colonel Hall that it’s time to party.”

CHAPTER 4

OVER THE UNDER

Commander Turner moved quickly and quietly towards the C.I.C., the seven Black Berets and a handful of techs behind him. Each person was armed with rifles liberated from the arms locker on the main deck and each person was ready to use them *especially* after what they had been through at the hands of their Alliance captors.

“Ok,” Turner said as they crouched down by the doors to the C.I.C., “Hand me the flash bang grenade. Nobody shoots unless they have to though. We don’t want to hit something we might need later.”

“Yeah, like the jump navigation system.” Maddie quipped.

Turner nodded and gestured for two soldiers to stand by at the door. “Get ready.”

Both soldiers nodded and Turner reached up to touch the button to open the door.

That’s when it opened by itself.

Looking quickly, Turner saw a man in a tech outfit look down and see him. Just as he was about to speak though, one of the Black Berets snatched him by his shirt front and yanked him through the door.

Sensing the new found urgency of the moment, Turner rolled a flash bang grenade into the C.I.C. and closed the door just in time to hear the muffled WHUMP from inside as the grenade went off.

Turner stormed through the door with his teams behind him to find four guards on the ground trying to get their bearings back. The Black Berets quickly dispatched them with knives while the other techs ran to their fellow techs who had been taken down by the grenade.

“Anyone hurt?” Turner called.

“They’re all stunned sir but no one is hurt.” Maddie replied as she scrambled to the Operations station.

“Good. Get them off to the side and make sure they know that it’s us and not the bad guys.” The Commander ordered. “After that, get busy on system power up. We only have ten minutes before the next shift comes on and this place will be swarming with trouble.”

“Call from Major Tompkins sir-- he’s secured engineering and found Captain Briedis.” Reported one of the Black Berets.

“Good, have them start bringing all of the main power systems back online.” Turner ordered. “I want control of the Class One lockdown systems *now*.”

“Yes sir.”

Turner faced Maddie. “Broadcast on open frequency: Cap City Bucs rule.”

“Huh?” Maddie asked confused.

Turner smiled. “Just do it.”

Slider noticed Lieutenant Hatfield as she looked up from her console with a perplexed expression on her face, something unusual for her. “What’s wrong?” he asked.

“I just recieved a signal over the open frequency sir.” Hatfield reported.

“What did it say?” Slider asked as he moved to her side.

Hatfield arched her eyebrows. “Cap City Bucs rule.”

Slider chuckled, as did Colonel Alexander from his place at the situation table. “That’s our signal.” The Colonel said.

“How do you know sir?” Hatfield asked.

“The Commander hates the Cap City Bucs. He’s a Leonon Lions fan.” Slider explained. “Lions fans hate the Bucs, it’s a rivalry thing.”

Hatfield nodded her understanding.

“All engines ahead full.” Alexander commanded. “Notify Ice Queen to launch her fighters and go after T.R.P. One.”

“Aye sir.” Slider replied as he activated his headphones. “Ice Queen, Sentinel: You are go for T.R.P. One.”

“Roger Sentinel.”

Slider watched with longing as the dots on the Dradis screen that represented the few fighters left streaked away towards their targets.

He wanted desperately to be in a Viper cockpit, in the middle of the action as they tried to wrench the Prometheus back into their control, but he couldn't. His orders were to act as X.O. of the Sentinel until Major Tompkins return.

"X.O., contact the Vigilant and tell Colonel Hall to take out the relay satellites." Colonel Alexander ordered.

"Yes sir." Slider replied taking one last look at the Dradis screen.

Good hunting he silently thought to his fellow pilots.

ISIS STATION, IN ORBIT OVER ROMALIN TERRA

Galaxus Thomasi watched carefully as Sae'tzar stepped out of the lift that both of them had been riding in and into the observation lounge that overlooked the dock where the Battlestar Prometheus was berthed.

"Magnificent." Sae'tzar breathed as he cast his eyes on the ship for the first time. "That ship is truly a work of art."

"I agree." Thomasi said from beside him. "Even if she weren't capable of everything I have told you, I would still want her as my flagship based on her beauty alone."

Sae'tzar chuckled. "You have now spoken on many occasions about claiming this ship as your own but I have heard no such word from Primus Verenos."

"The Primus understands my claim as based on Alliance military tradition. *To the victor go the spoils.*"

"Yes but there is another tradition that states that the Primus or Sae'tzar may claim anything won on the battlefield by their subordinates."

Thomasi kept his calm about him as Sae'tzar turned to face him. This was a play he had been expecting.

"I admit, I hadn't given much thought to resurrecting that tradition until I saw this magnificent ship." Sae'tzar said, "But looking at it now, I see no reason it cannot be used as the Command ship of the Alliance-- as my personal flagship."

"Sae'tzar, that tradition hasn't been used in over five hundred years. And even then it was used as a political tool against someone that Sae'tzar Romero thought could unseat him. Surely, you know I have no ambitions in the political arena."

Sae'tzar chuckled. "Of course Galaxus, but this isn't about you. It's about—"

Sae'tzar was stopped short as Thomasi's communicator beeped. "Excuse me." He said pulling the device from his pocket and putting it to his mouth. "This had better be *important*."

"Galaxus Thomasi, this is Central System Control. You're needed in the System Coordination Center immediately on the orders of Primus Verenos."

Thomasi arched an eyebrow in curiosity. "Inform the Primus I am on my way and send a detachment of warriors to observation lounge four to augment security."

"Something wrong?" Sae'tzar asked.

"I am unsure, Sae'tzar. The Primus has called me away to S.C.C. *but* I will return as soon as I can. In the meantime, I have ordered extra warriors be posted here to be on the safe side."

"Very well, carry on."

Thomasi bowed and stepped into the lift. As soon as the doors closed, he lifted his communicator. "I assume that everything proceeds apace?"

"Of course. My son has never let me down." The voice of Primus Verenos replied.

"How fortunate for us then. Soon Sae'tzar will be dead and we will have the impetus we need to force through the measures we seek."

"Yes, now get down to the planet and prepare to coordinate our- *response*."

Thomasi chuckled. "As you command, *Sae'tzar*."

"Primary systems are back online sir. Awaiting your code to reactivate the network system." Maddie reported to Turner who was once again at his traditional posting in the center of C.I.C.

Turner nodded and made his way to the operations console. Once there he brought up the command access screen and entered his personal code. Around them, like someone had flipped a switch, all of the Prometheus systems began to light up.

"Network systems are coming online." A technician at the helm reported. "Shall I skip startup the diagnostics?"

Turner laughed. "Yes, I think we can forego that for now."

The acting helmsman nodded. "Bringing helm controls online."

"FTL systems are coming online." Maddie reported.

"Launch and recovery systems coming online." Another tech announced.

"Focus on getting us out of here for now and activate the security lockdown system." Turner commanded.

"On it." Maddie replied.

Just then the doors opened and everyone spun, weapons trained, as Major Tompkins and two Marines entered.

"We've managed to free the entire captive crew sir. They're returning to their stations and the pilots on the flight deck are helping round up any of the guards we missed." He reported.

Turner nodded. "What about Verenos?"

Tompkins shook his head. "Haven't seen him since we split up. He freed the prisoners on the port flight deck and then disappeared."

Turner felt his guts turn to ice. He had known that the entire operation had been *too* easy but he had figured on being in a place where he could control anything that might go down.

He just hadn't figured on it this soon.

"Start searching for him." Turner ordered, "Bring him here when you find him."

"Yes sir." Tompkins replied.

"Major," Turner added as an afterthought, "See if you can find Colonel Ryan too."

"Sir- I thought we were going to hold off on the personnel sweeps until after we made it out of Terran space?"

Turner fixed him with a stare that allowed no argument.

"Yes sir." Tomkins nodded.

Banishing the thoughts of his friend from his mind, Turner set to work getting the Prometheus out of enemy hands and hoping that some personal vendetta of Lucas Verenos' didn't ruin everything.

Inside Gun Turret Five, Lucas Verenos glanced again over his shoulder as he worked feverishly to bring the gun's targeting systems online. Below him, three handpicked members of his crew worked quickly to load a round into the main railgun.

Looking out of the large dome that encompassed him he took sight of the observation lounges across from the ship.

Suddenly, the deck began to vibrate and the ship jerked.

"They've got the engines online! Hurry up!" Verenos commanded.

After several more tense seconds, a voice called up to him from down below. "Locked and loaded, boss!"

Sneering, Verenos activated the servos that controlled the gun's alignment and swung the mighty cannon towards the observation lounges where he knew Sae'tzar would be waiting.

"Now begins the liberation of our people." He said as he lowered the targeting reticule over his target....

"Thrusters are active." The tech sitting at the helm reported to Turner as the ship jerked underneath them.

"Disengage the docking clamps and clear all moorings." The Commander ordered.

"I tried sir but we're still locked in from their side."

"Damn." Turner hissed. "I guess we do it the hard way then."

"Sir! Gun Battery Five just went hot!" Maddie suddenly shouted.

In that moment, Turner realized Verenos plan.

"Get Major Tomkins up to gun bat five *now!*" he commanded as he turned back to the helm tech. "All engines ahead full."

Verenos knew that Sae'tzar was going to make a grand triumphal speech with the Prometheus as his backdrop. His plan had never been to help Turner liberate his ship, but for Turner to provide a distraction as he carried out his plan of assassination.

“Sir, the clamps have too strong a hold on us.” Captain Briedis reported from his station in Engineering. “We’re going to start having structural damage to the outer hull if we don’t break free soon.”

Now Turner began to worry. Not only did he have an assassin loose aboard his ship, but if he didn’t break free soon, he would lose everything.

Turner began to feel the pressure of the moment building on him, the threat of losing the initiative looming over his head. It didn’t matter though. Admiral Cain, Turner’s mentor for many years, had always said that he worked best when he was under pressure. This was no exception.

“Maddie, spin up the FTL drives!” he ordered as the idea came to him.

“Sir?”

“Spin up the FTL drives Maddie! If we can’t get physics to work for us then we’ll have to change the laws!”

“Sentinel, this is Ice Queen,” Major Horvath reported as she flew past the wreckage of what had once been a communications relay satellite. “T.R.P. One and Two are destroyed. We also have seven confirmed enemy kills.”

“Good work Ice Queen,” Slider’s voice replied through the static of space, “Any casualties?”

Horvath snorted derisively. “Yeah right.”

The cockpit filled with Slider’s laughter. “Proceed to Checkpoint Bravo and prepare to engage anyone who pops in.”

“Copy that.” Horvath replied as she switched her channel to the squadron frequency. “Form up on me. We’re going to post on station until Prometheus gets clear.”

Lucas Verenos reconsidered his plan for one millisecond as he caught sight of someone in the lounge he had targeted. It wasn’t too late to abandon the plan. After all, Turner was going to escape and deal an embarrassing political blow to Sae'tzar and the Conclave. He might even be stripped of office...

No, that would never happen he thought to himself. Maximus had proven adroit at deflecting the political blame for his mistakes in the past. He would do so again this time as well. There was only one solution.

“Verenos!” he heard from down below and he knew his time had run out.

He pulled the trigger.

In the observation lounge, Claudio Maximus watched with horror as one of the gun batteries on Prometheus swiveled towards him.

“We have to move!” one of his guards yelled as he grabbed Sae’tzar and tried to haul him away.

Maximus knew it was too late though.

A single flash of light followed an instant later by a millisecond of pain spelled the end of the reign of Sae’tzar Claudio Maximus.

EPILOGUE PICKING UP THE PIECES

OBSERVATION DECK TWO BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS SOMEWHERE IN THE TERRAN ALLIANCE

Jonathan Turner watched as the Alliance shuttle carrying Lucas Verenos made its way from the Prometheus back to his waiting ship which was parked in a higher orbit. He had been tempted to shove Verenos out an airlock for his treachery but in the end he couldn’t do it.

Verenos had lived up to his end of the bargain. Turner was back in command of his ship.

“We’ve finished up the sweep of all compartments sir.” Major Tomkins reported from beside him.

“And?”

Tomkins took a deep breath. “We count one thousand four hundred and four missing sir.”

“How many casualties?”

“One hundred and six.”

Turner shook his head. “Too many.”

“Yes sir.” Tomkins agreed.

“Have Maddie lock in the coordinates for rally point alpha and execute jump as soon as possible.” Turner commanded.

“Yes sir.” The Major replied as he turned to carry out his orders.

“Major, one more thing.”

“Sir?”

“Contact Colonels Alexander and Hall and tell them I want to meet with them as soon as they arrive at R.P. Alpha.”

“Yes sir.” Tomkins replied. “Can I tell them what it’s in regards to?”

Turner faced the Major with a grim set on his face. “I know where our people are, Major. Verenos gave me the coordinates to the detention center they’re being held at.”

Tomkins nodded. “We going in sir?”

“You’re damn right we are.”